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Master's Thesis [Policy Economics]

**Radicalism and Populism in Europe: Which Voter Attitudes and
Characteristics Explain Voting for the Radical Left?**

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The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, second assessor, Erasmus School of Economics or Erasmus University Rotterdam.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents. Thank you for always believing in me and providing me with the necessary tools to develop myself. I love you and I am glad to know that this achievement will make you proud. Sempre avanti!

Abstract

Recent literature has overlooked the far-left side of the political spectrum when analyzing radical political parties in Europe. Specifically, there is a gap in research concerning the micro-level characteristics that drive voter behaviour. The following paper examines voter attitudes and characteristics that increase the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right and the mainstream left. This thesis examines the effects of Euroscepticism, political discontent, anti-immigration attitudes, material deprivation, and various background characteristics. The analysis employs data from the European Social Survey of 2018. The results indicate that radical left and radical right voters are similar on levels of political discontent. The radical left is characterized by lower levels of Euroscepticism, anti-immigration attitudes, and income compared to the radical right. Radical right voters also tend to be less educated and less materially deprived than the radical left. Mainstream left and radical left voters are similar on levels of Euroscepticism, material deprivation, and education. Voters of the radical left are characterized by lower levels of income and are on average younger compared to voters of the establishment left. Mainstream centre-left voters also tend to be less politically dissatisfied and, surprisingly, have more negative views towards immigration than the radical left. Such findings suggest that all the attitudinal factors studied should be further looked in to better understand these results.

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1. Introduction

During the last decade, academics and scholars have been intrigued with the theme of populism. The Brexit vote in 2016 has been described as populist retaliation against Europe. The Euro crisis and the refugee crisis have severely crippled the European political system and produced a favorable situation for populist actors (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). The consequences of these events prompted scholars to study the facets of this political approach. Unfortunately, this current wave of study is considerably unilateral as it primarily focuses on the populist right, leaving the opposite side of the political spectrum rather neglected.

European populist (radical) left parties have received scant focus as to why they have been able to maintain electoral support after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. While the toppling of the communist regimes at the end of the USSR-era were seen as a sign of the end for extreme left parties (March and Mudde, 2005), various radical left parties in Europe have been able to achieve electoral visibility since then (Olsen *et al.*, 2010; Bale and Dunphy, 2011). Since the Cold War ended, radical left parties have often become direct competitors to the establishment (mainstream) centre-left (Lavelle, 2008). In the early 2010s, extreme left parties were in a national coalition in up to five European nations (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Ukraine), and as a single-party government in the Republic of Cyprus (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015). Podemos became the second largest party in Spain on the same year which it was founded. Syriza in Greece was part of the coalition government from 2015-2019 and remains to this day the second largest political party in the country. These examples serve as illustrations as to why this topic should no longer be overlooked.

The limited amount of literature on the populist left is of significant importance on the understanding of what left-wing populism is. March and Mudde (2005) examined the role filled by populist left parties throughout history and what distinguishes them. Other studies on the subject focus mainly on the aggregate (macro-) level. March and Rommerskirchen (2015) link the success of the radical left to the demand-side factors of elevated levels of unemployment and anti-globalization. The role of micro-level characteristics has not been thoroughly addressed in the academic environment. Specifically, there is a gap on the subject of what voter characteristics increase the likelihood to vote for populist left parties across Europe. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to identify which voter characteristics have a positive effect on the likelihood to vote for

populist left parties across the continent. While research has discussed the attributes of populist left parties, there is limited literature examining the motivation behind voting for these parties. Research shows that the ideology of a party may not be the (only) reason to vote for it. For example, unsatisfied voters can dump their preferred candidate and cast a protest vote for the populist left in order to demonstrate dissatisfaction with establishment politics (Kselman and Niou, 2011).

The central objective of this thesis is to examine, from a micro-level perspective, the factors which explain voter support for populist left parties in several European countries. Particularly, it evaluates the effects of various voter sentiments and background characteristics on the likelihood to cast a vote for the populist left compared to the likelihood to cast a vote for the establishment/mainstream left and the populist right.

As a result, the main research question this master's thesis aims to answer is:

Which factors increase the likelihood of voting for the radical left in comparison to voting for the radical right and the mainstream centre-left?

Empirical analyses are conducted using the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 9 (2018), the most recent wave of this biannual survey. The survey, which includes data on values, norms, and political interests, is recognized worldwide and it is considered trustworthy and representative of the European population (Jowell *et al.*, 2004).

To avoid confusion with the terminology, the terms populist and radical are used interchangeably. According to March and Rommerskirchen (2015), modern populist left wing parties can be labeled as radical because they reject the present capitalist design of society and promote an overall transformation of capitalism to diminish the power that economic and political elites currently hold. Mudde (2007) states that the radical right is described as populist because of their belief that society is a struggle between the corrupt elite and the ordinary people, and due to their anti-establishment approach. Moreover, Rooduijn and Akkerman (2015) claim that the radical right and radical left parties are quite similar in their populism and share the same message: that corrupt elites disregard the interest of the common people.

In its core, this thesis contributes to the scarce academic literature on the radical left in three separate ways. First, it presents what individual characteristics can increase the likelihood to vote for these parties. Second, it demonstrates the extent to which radical left parties have a unique position in the left-side of the political spectrum by comparing the individual characteristics that increase the likelihood to vote for a populist left party compared to voting for an establishment left wing party. Third, it shows the differences in electoral support among distinct types of people. It compares opposite sides of radicalism by analyzing the factors that increase the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right.

In relation to its societal relevance, the results of this study provide information to political parties, as it can provide insight into which characteristics form voting behaviour and what these voters want. Additionally, the results can clear the political landscape and aid in the understanding of election results. Ultimately, the participation of parties with turbulent pasts linked with extremist and/or populist stances increases policy challenges at both a national and at an EU level. It is imperative to understand why some voters support parties with extreme stances, just like research has been done for the right side of the spectrum. March and Rommerskirchen (2015) attribute the success of the radical left to the demand-side factors of economic distress, anti-globalization sentiments, and anti-EU sentiments. The prevalence of these in Europe leads them to believe that radical left parties are likely to be a long-lasting component of the European political landscape. However, the uncertainty of their relevance provides a solid reason as to why this opposite extreme of the spectrum should not stay neglected. Therefore, this thesis explores the effects of Euroscepticism, political discontent, anti-immigration attitudes, material deprivation, and various background characteristics.

The results of this thesis indicate that Eurosceptic sentiments decrease the likelihood to vote for the radical left when compared to the radical right, but it is an insignificant determinant when compared to mainstream left voting. Additionally, political dissatisfaction increases the likelihood to vote for the radical left when compared to the mainstream left, but it has no significant power in the likelihood to vote for either the radical left or the radical right. The results of material deprivation and education indicate that as these two variables increase, the likelihood to vote for the radical left increases when compared to the radical right but they are irrelevant in comparison to the establishment left. Gender has inconclusive results as it is

sometimes a statistically significant factor while other times it is not. Finally, the likelihood to vote for the radical left decreases when compared to both the radical right and the establishment left as age, income level, and negative sentiments towards immigrants increase.

The remainder of this thesis is set up as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the literature of what left wing populism is, the differences between the radical left and the radical right, the factors that could explain voting for the radical left, and the causal economic drivers of populism. Section 3 presents the hypotheses formulated in order to answer the main research question. Section 4 describes the data sources and the procedure followed to decide which countries/parties would be included in the study. The section also presents the computation of the variables employed, it explains the statistical checks that were run on the variables, it displays descriptive statistics, and it explains the methodology. Section 5 reports the results of the analysis conducted and discusses the research findings. Finally, Section 6 concludes with a concise summary of the findings, followed by an examination of the study's limitations and finalizing with suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Left wing populism: What is it?

Understanding the concept of populism is a strong starting point to better understand what left wing populism is. Mudde (2004) interprets populism as an ideology which separates society into two homogeneous and opposing groups, “the nefarious elite” and “the pure people”. The elite is blamed for alienating themselves from the virtuous people and for being incapable, egoistical, and crooked. Additionally, the ideology considers that the general will of the people should control politics. These pillars make populism an ideology which can be adopted by either side of the political spectrum. March (2007) depicts populism as “chameleonic”, meaning that the political style is able to acclimate to various contexts.

Populism is infamous for appealing to prejudices and for its use of simple language, and it often has a charismatic leader (Laclau, 2005). The leader represents a current resentment and he or she makes this resentment present in political institutions and in the media (Thomassen, 2016). While tactics such as simplistic language, heavy use of slogans, and a charismatic authority are

characteristics that are common with many non-populist actors, the ideological focus of the “bad elite” versus the “moral people” is a unique feature of populist actors (March, 2007; Mudde, 2004).

According to March and Rommerskirchen (2015), modern populist left wing parties can be classified as radical as they condemn the current capitalist structure of society and are pursuing a complete transformation of capitalism to reduce the power that economic and political elites have. Rejection of facets of capitalism range from rejection of neoliberalism and consumerism all the way to an opposition of profit incentives and private property (March and Mudde, 2005). On a similar note, March (2007) considers that the main characteristic of anti-elitist radical left parties is that the anti-elitism theme is combined more with economic topics than with cultural themes. Thus, neoliberalism is considered a problem as it is regarded as responsible for inequality and the divide in society of “the corrupt elite” and “the pure people.” “The corrupt elite” refer to the business elite together with the government which protects them, while “the pure people” are the disadvantaged common workers, exploited by the evil elite (Otjes and Louwse, 2015). On this note, March (2007) claims that post-Cold War radical left parties concentrate on “the people” rather than “the proletariat” in order to engage with a wider audience.

While not all radical left parties follow exactly the same ideology, there is consensus in the literature that they can be classified as being part of the same family, which includes social populists, traditional communist parties (either Marxist-Leninist or reformed), and radical socialists (March, 2011). All members of this radical-left family are ideologically located further left than social democrats and green parties (March, 2011; March and Mudde, 2005). Libertarians, anti-fascists, feminists, anti-globalists, environmentalists, and other groups have gained foot in the radical left (Giddens, 1994; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015).

2.2 Comparing the radical left and the radical right

2.2.1 Differences and similarities

The radical left and the radical right are at opposite ends of the political spectrum which is often illustrated as a straight line. Such an illustration implies that supporters of the radical left and the radical right may adamantly oppose each other as they have very few characteristics in common

(Oosterwaal, 2009). Radical left protests being interrupted by supporters of the radical right and vice versa are a perfect example of this interpretation (Visser *et al.*, 2014). The core ideology of the two sides also appears to differ considerably. Radical right parties tend to be concerned with immigration issues. On the other hand, radical left parties do not concentrate on defending the country from threatening outsiders, but instead, they concentrate mainly on increasing social equity and defending the proletariat from capitalist exploitation (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015; Visser *et al.*, 2014). The populist left supports a fundamental restructuring of the neo-liberal globalized economic structure because the inequality created by it is not only economic but also political (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015). The populist left longs for economic redistribution as they want different power and economic structures, which include a substantial reallocation of resources from the current political elites (March and Mudde, 2005).

Both ends of the political spectrum do display similarities in their belief system according to the horseshoe thesis (Faye, 2004). Specifically, the methods in which both the radical left and the radical right attain their objectives can be fairly similar. Both radical ideologies justify the use of violence in order to accomplish social change. McClosky & Chong (1985) showed that supporters of both radical ideologies sometimes turn their back on democratic values, deal with “enemies” harshly, and think in stereotypes. Nonetheless, their research also showed that radical left and radical right supporters hold strongly differing opinions regarding social inequality, justice, and immigration. Additionally, according to Betz (1994), “modernization” caused changes in sociocultural and socioeconomic structures in Europe. Modernization, along with a post-Fordist economy¹ and globalization, caused a vast increase in individualization which led to fragmentation in European societies. Followers of radical ideologies might be among the “modernization losers” which want to reverse changes associated with modernization, because they run the risk of becoming worthless for society, as they cannot handle the acceleration of modernization.

¹ Period after the economic development stage prevalent in the 20th century known as ‘Fordism’ which is represented by the introduction of a system of mass production developed by Ford Motor Company. A post-Fordist economy is characterized by a growth in profits driven by technological innovation rents, an increase in productivity caused by process innovations and/or economies of scope, and a rise in demand for new differentiated goods and services that was driven by rising incomes (Jessop, 1996).

2.2.2 Inclusionary vs. Exclusionary Populism

Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) have modified the definition of populism by Mudde (2004) by establishing a distinction between *inclusionary* populism and *exclusionary* populism. The authors examine three dimensions to empirically analyze the inclusive or exclusive character of populist parties: material, political and symbolic. The material dimension refers to the allocation of state resources between distinct groups in society. An inclusionary perspective in the material dimension implies that the most vulnerable groups receive special care by the State (within a logic of social justice), while in an exclusionary perspective, certain groups are excluded from public resources (these are generally ethnic or national minorities). In the political dimension, an inclusionary party develops measures to promote the political participation of groups that are more discriminated against or have been previously excluded, while an exclusionary party would prevent the full participation of certain groups in political life. Finally, in the symbolic dimension, inclusionary populist parties have a conception of the “people” that does not exclude any social group (for inclusionary populist parties, the "people" is the whole society except for the elite). On the contrary, the symbolic exclusionary dimension excludes certain sectors from their concept of the “people,” usually because of their ethnic or cultural traits (most radical right wing populist parties in Europe have chosen Islamophobia and rejection of immigration as priority issues).

March (2017) states that populism on the right is mainly exclusionary (differentiating some groups as outsiders), while populism on the left is mainly inclusionary (centered on policies of political, cultural, and economic incorporation). The radical right’s nativism (protectionist ethnic nationalism) is the base for its exclusionism, while the radical left’s anti-colonial regionalism backs up its emphasis on socio-economic inclusivity (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

2.3 Which factors could explain voting for left wing populist parties?

This section is divided into further subsections to present and examine the possible factors that could explain the left-wing populist vote.

2.3.1 Euroscepticism

According to March and Rommerskirchen (2015), Euroscepticism is a fundamental aspect integrated in the ideology of left populist parties. Studies have shown that radical left parties are more successful in nations where public Euroscepticism is high (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015; Ramiro, 2016). Taggart (2004) argues that populist parties believe that the design of the EU is not representative enough. In contrast, mainstream parties usually have pro-European integration stances (Buhr, 2012).

Halikiopoulou *et al.* (2012) claim that Euroscepticism from the radical left and the radical right is based to a great extent on (distinct versions of) nationalism. Left wing Euroscepticism is based on a “civic nationalism” which focuses on defending the country from economic harm as a result of foreign interference (Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012). In line with this claim, March (2008) states that protectionism has been a key issue in left wing populist parties’ rhetoric throughout history. Left wing Eurosceptics see the EU as an aid to the elite’s business interests which disregards the interests of the common man (Taggart, 2004). Specifically, the radical left believes that market integration jeopardizes national welfare provision by reducing national government’s regulatory powers and by expanding international competition (van Elsas and van der Brug, 2015). Instead, right wing Euroscepticism is largely based in ethno-nationalism, which is concerned with opposing immigration to protect national traditions and culture (Hooghe and Marks, 2007). Consequently, right wing Eurosceptics see the EU as a threat to national sovereignty (Taggart, 2004).

While Euroscepticism was not as big of a determinant of voting preferences as other sociopolitical stances in the first decade of the 21st century (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007), newer research has established Euroscepticism as a stronger predictor of voter support for radical parties. A key reason for the increasing strength in Euroscepticism as a determinant for explaining radical party voting is the Euro crisis which started in 2009 (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014; Clements *et al.*, 2014). Austerity programs, bailouts, and economic issues were key factors in reorganizing the radical left to highlight distributive issues in a Eurosceptic populist way (Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro, 2018). The crisis was proof that the expected economic gains of EU membership could not be fulfilled, and that the supranational organization

could no longer assure growth for its citizens. Therefore, the Euro crisis caused an increase in Euroscepticism among EU nationals (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014; Clements *et al.*, 2014).

2.3.2 Protest voting and political discontent

Loss of legitimacy of both European institutions and national governments creates a window of opportunity for political parties with populist stances and anti-establishment postures (Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro, 2018). There is a positive relation between populist party success and political discontent, which is represented by low levels of satisfaction with democracy and politics (Pauwels, 2014; Rooduijn *et al.*, 2016). This benefits populist parties on both sides of the spectrum because their rhetoric is to protest the political elite (Mudde, 2004). Populist parties exploit their position by claiming that the elite influences democratic processes too much and that the voice of the people should be the foundation of democracy. Consequently, citizens who are unsatisfied with mainstream parties might feel as if populist parties voice their discontent, so the likelihood of voting for these parties increases (Ramiro, 2016; Rooduijn *et al.*, 2016).

In this manner, voting can function as an instrument to express disapproval of mainstream parties (Kselman and Niou, 2011). Kang (2004) argues that voters who are dissatisfied with the party they usually support are more likely to protest vote for a viable alternative rather than abstain. Likewise, Van der Brug (2003) argues that the main intention of protest voters is to demonstrate disapproval towards the political elite by casting a vote for an outcast party. Research in the US shows that citizens vote for a third party to express discontent when the main parties are ignoring a relevant issue (Rosenstone *et al.*, 1996).

2.3.3 Anti-immigration attitudes

A dominant and recurring theme of research on populism is that voters who feel that immigration poses a danger to their way of life are more likely to support right wing challenger parties² (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Van der Brug, 2003). In fact, Taggart (2017) indicates that there appears to be a prevalent inclination to consider parties who fixate on this matter as being equivalent to populist parties in Western Europe. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) argue that the increase in right wing populist parties is connected to multiculturalism and mass

² A challenger party is defined as a political party who has never been in a government coalition (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016).

immigration. Otjes and Louwse (2015) studied the Dutch parliament and demonstrate that negative attitudes towards migration are found in voting behaviour of the populist right party (Party for Freedom), but this is not the case for the populist left party (Socialist Party). Consequently, anti-immigration attitudes can be a relevant factor which differentiates between right- and left-wing populist voting.

Radical right parties claim that European societies have the right to protect their cultural identities (Rydgren, 2007). Their agenda makes use of the concept of ethno-pluralism, which revolves around the belief that the mixing of ethnicities leads to culture destruction (Norris, 2005; Rydgren, 2008). Still, radical right parties use other anti-immigration arguments apart from ethno-pluralism. Schumacher and Van Kersbergen (2016) demonstrate that leftist economic stances may be related to the anti-immigration stances from the populist radical right. The welfare chauvinist concept which outlines natives and immigrants as competing for limited resources is gaining momentum. The welfare states in European societies are threatened by these immigrants who are described as “social welfare refugees” or “economic refugees” (Rydgren, 2005). As a result, the perception that immigrants are economic and cultural threats encourages anti-immigration sentiments (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Werts *et al.*, 2012).

The stance of left-wing populist parties on this matter is less clear. The relation between left wing populism and immigration has received little attention. Halikiopoulou *et al.* (2012) claim that the radical left and the radical right is linked by the underlying characteristic of nationalism. Some case studies like O'Malley (2008) believe that even if the leaders of left-wing populist parties do not incorporate the matter of migration into their speeches and programmes, their voters might feel strongly about it. As the author points out, Sinn Féin supporters (a republican and democratic socialist party in Ireland) are likely to feel that immigration is already too high in Ireland (O'Malley, 2008). Similarly, Santana and Rama (2018) demonstrate in a comparative study of the 2014 European Parliament elections that voters with negative attitudes towards migration are more likely to support left wing populist parties instead of mainstream left-wing parties. A year later, the same authors found that right wing and left-wing populist voters are similar in their views towards immigrants (Rama and Santana, 2019). On the other hand, Hooghe and Marks (2017) endorse that radical left parties do not have a strong stance against immigration and hold a commitment to working-class internationalism. The contradicting and

incomplete evidence does not guarantee a connection between immigration and left-wing populism.

2.3.4 Material deprivation

Populist party success has been repeatedly explained by different economic factors. For example, research has focused on the feeling that the nation's economy is doing poorly (Mols and Jetten, 2017), as well as on the deterioration of personal economic situation (Eatwell, 2003). In relation, aggregate level research has found that the global financial crisis which started in 2008 was important in explaining the rise of populist parties (Ivaldi *et al.*, 2016). Country case studies demonstrate that areas that were hit the hardest by the crisis have seen bigger increases in endorsement of populist parties (Ivaldi *et al.*, 2016; Kestilä and Söderlund, 2007).

Oesch and Rennwald (2018) claim that social deprivation and rising economic insecurity among vulnerable citizens is due to shifts in the occupational framework of the West that develops from the technological economy. Along with the unemployed, vulnerable citizens also include unskilled laborers whose social status and incomes have been firmly declining under mainstream left wing and right-wing parties (Kitschelt and Rhem, 2015). Some authors like Kitschelt and Rhem (2015) argue that a process of electoral realignment is being seen in post-industrial societies. Right wing populist parties take advantage of the fact that unskilled laborers are willing to listen to other parties after socialists and social democrats have not been able to improve their situation (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). Right wing populists blame immigrants, elites, and mainstream parties for their worsening situation, and propose barriers to immigrants and more protectionism in order to better their situations. The promise of easy solutions has caused millions to dump their usual socialist and social democratic parties in order to vote for right wing populist parties in the developed world (Ivarsflaten, 2005). This has caused a "proletarianization" of the voter base of the radical right, which imposes a challenge for traditional leftist parties as they are losing their historical working-class stronghold (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).

The populist promises of left-wing radical parties are also able to attract the most vulnerable citizens. After the global financial crisis, citizens that were hit the hardest by the economic crisis were more willing to vote for left wing challenger parties rather than for traditional parties

(Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). Consistently, Greek unemployed voters were more prone to vote for Syriza in the European elections of 2014 (Teperoglou *et al.*, 2015), and economic factors have been demonstrated to have explanatory power for the success of Podemos in the 2015 general elections of Spain (Bosch and Durán, 2017). Santana and Rama (2018) broaden this line of thought as they find that voters who feel that the economy has worsened have a higher likelihood to vote for a left-wing populist party. The authors find that this higher likelihood to vote for a party of the populist left also applies to voters who have difficulties in paying their bills, presumably because these citizens are not properly protected by the Welfare States that the mainstream left-wing parties usually defend (Santana and Rama, 2018).

2.3.5 Individual background characteristics

Euroscepticism, political discontent, and negative attitudes towards migrants are recognized to be related with an individual's socioeconomic position. They mediate the expected relationship that a lower socioeconomic position increases the likelihood to vote for a party of the populist left.

For example, a lower education is positively correlated with political discontent and Euroscepticism. A proposition of political cynicism entails that people with lower education are usually less interested in politics and have a propensity to be more suspicious about them (Lubbers, 2011). Likewise, Hooghe *et al.* (2012) demonstrate that people with lower education are more likely to have less trust in politics. The perception that the EU is an extension on national politics consequently leads to unfavorable opinions of national politicians, which deteriorate the positive associations with the EU (Lubbers, 2011). Furthermore, a low socioeconomic position molds feelings towards trade openness. People of a low socioeconomic position have a higher likelihood to resist trade openness, which is a fundamental facet of the EU. Their underlying reasoning is that they have to defend their economically fragile position (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2012).

In relation to negative attitudes towards migration, less educated people are more likely to have nationalistic attitudes, as they feel that migrants are a cultural threat which pose a danger to their national identity (Lubbers, 2011). Moreover, peoples' attitudes towards migration are related with their socioeconomic positions, as people from a low socioeconomic positions have to fight

for the same things as migrants, namely, social security benefits, housing, and jobs (Manevska and Achterberg, 2013).

Visser *et al.* (2014) have found that support for radical left ideologies is likely to be found among people with lower incomes and the unemployed. Ramiro (2016) has shown that people who identify with the working class are more prone to vote for the radical left, while Lubbers and Scheepers (2007) demonstrate that individuals of lower classes are more likely to vote for populist left parties rather than other parties. Education is often found to have a positive effect on radical left voting, most likely because ideals highlighted by radical left parties such as equality or solidarity are often advocated by people with a higher education (Rooduijn, 2017). For example, Pauwels (2014) demonstrates that education does not have an overall negative effect on voting for populist parties.

O'Malley (2008) demonstrates that younger people are more likely to vote for the democratic socialist party Sinn Féin. In fact, several studies have found that supporters of radical left parties are younger than supporters of other parties (e.g., Beaudonnet and Gomez, 2017; Ramiro, 2016). Santana and Rama (2018) show that young people are more likely to vote for left wing populist parties rather than mainstream left parties, while older people are more prone to support right wing populist parties. Rama and Santana (2019) find that older individuals are less likely to vote for left wing populist parties than for right wing populist parties.

Literature regarding the effect that gender has on likelihoods is quite divided. O'Malley (2008) shows that men are more prone to vote for Sinn Féin than women are. On the other hand, other studies find no effect of gender on voting for a party of the populist left (e.g., Beaudonnet and Gomez, 2017; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2007; Santana and Rama, 2018). Instead, some studies find that men are significantly more likely to support a radical right party than women are (e.g., Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Oesch, 2008).

2.4 Causal economic drivers of populist voting

Recently, there is an increasing awareness that the typical left-right dimension is becoming less relevant (De Vries, 2017). Both extreme ends of the spectrum promote a narrow-minded strategy against the mainstream political center which defends globalization and markets. While this shift of the political landscape has led multiple academics to look for non-economic reasons for the

late rise in populist voting, there is evidence which demonstrates that some economic factors still matter.

Albanese *et al.* (2022) study Italian municipalities that were equally hit by economic shocks like the Great Recession, but that received distinct levels of EU structural funds, which are used to build infrastructure and produce job-creating investments. Using a spatial regression discontinuity design for causality, the authors demonstrate that municipalities that received EU financing had a 9% decline in populist preferences. Algan *et al.* (2017) demonstrate the causal impact that the rise in unemployment during the Great Recession had on the increase in populism in Europe. The authors trace voting for populist parties and changes in unemployment before and after the Great Recession. After controlling for regional fixed-effects and employing an instrumental variable analysis for causality, they find that an increase of one percentage point in the unemployment rate leads to an increase of two percentage points in populist voting. Additionally, their study identifies that an increase in unemployment leads to a decline in trust in national and European political institutions and produces negative attitudes towards immigrants. Similarly, Guiso *et al.* (2017) find that attitudes towards immigrants and trust in politics are causally affected by shocks to economic insecurity. The same authors confirm and expand these results in Guiso *et al.* (2021) by showing that economic insecurity driven by the Great Recession has a causal effect on voter turnout, voting choices, and voter trust in political parties. Lechler (2019) also partially supports Algan *et al.* (2017) findings, by identifying a causal effect of shocks to regional employment on Eurosceptic sentiments.

While the Great Recession was a one-time occurrence, technological progress and globalization are the medium-term economic trends that are commonly associated with the current rise in populist voting. Aksoy *et al.* (2018) show that, in line with traditional trade theory, unskilled and skilled workers react to globalization based on the skill structure of imports and exports. The authors use a decade long dataset to study how confidence and approval of the national government in over one hundred countries differs between skill levels depending on trade structure. Their study controls for year and country fixed effects and employs an instrumental variable analysis for causality. The authors find that an increase of ten percentage points in skilled exports to GDP leads to an increase of three percentage points in political approval by the skilled workers relative to the unskilled. On the other hand, an increase of ten percentage points

in skilled imports to GDP leads to a decrease of seven percentage points in political approval by the skilled workers relative to the unskilled. On a similar note, Rodrik (2021) identifies a demand-side causal mechanism in which regions with declining employment prospects due to increasing imports are more likely to cast a vote for a protectionist candidate who promotes tougher restrictions against foreign exports. Lastly, Guriev (2017) demonstrates that higher inequality of opportunity has a negative effect on market reforms support and a perception of higher corruption reduces confidence and approval of the government.

3. Hypotheses

This section introduces hypotheses to the main question defined in the Introduction. The hypotheses create a straightforward path to answer the key question of this research.

Euroscepticism is one of the factors with the most congruent evidence explaining why people vote for the populist left. Especially since the Euro crisis, some EU nationals became Eurosceptic as they realized that the supranational organization could no longer guarantee economic gains for its members (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014; Clements *et al.*, 2014). Euroscepticism is a core feature of the populist left's ideology as they complain about a lack of representation. They believe that the EU protects the interests of the elite while disregarding the common people (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015; Taggart, 2004). Both radical sides of the spectrum, however, are Eurosceptic due to different forms of nationalism (Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012). Radical leftists are dissatisfied with the expansion of international competition that the Union creates, whilst the radical right opposes immigration in hopes of keeping cultures and traditions alive (Hooghe and Marks, 2007; van Elsas and van der Brug, 2015). Therefore, the first set of hypotheses of this paper is formulated:

H1a: Euroscepticism has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the populist right

and,

H1b: Euroscepticism increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left

Political discontent/protest voting is another factor that seems to benefit both populist sides of the political spectrum. By protesting the political elite for influencing democratic processes and

minimizing the voice of the people, both the populist left and right have produced a positive relation between political discontent and their own success (Pauwels, 2014; Rooduijn *et al.*, 2016). Because dissatisfied voters are more likely to vote for an alternative rather than refrain from voting, protest voting can function as a mechanism to exhibit disapproval of the political elite (Kang, 2014; Kselman and Niou, 2011). These findings then lead to the second set of hypotheses:

H2a: Political discontent has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the populist right

and,

H2b: Political discontent increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left

Attitudes towards immigration can be a significant factor in differentiating left- and right-wing populist voting. While right-wing populism's link with anti-immigration attitudes has been clear-cut, the position of left-wing populist parties on this matter is inconclusive, and highly controversial. O'Malley (2008) claims Sinn Féin supporters feel immigration is too high in Ireland, while Hooghe and Marks (2017) argue that radical left parties are committed to working-class internationalism rather than holding negative views towards immigration. Otjes and Louwse (2015) demonstrate in the Dutch parliament that anti-immigration attitudes are found in voters of the populist right but not in voters of the populist left. The deficient and contradicting evidence does not support a link between left-wing populism and immigration. On the contrary, there is substantial evidence which shows how mass immigration has fueled support for the populist right as these voters feel their cultural identities are threatened (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Van der Brug, 2003). Based on these findings and arguments, the third set of hypotheses are formulated:

H3a: Anti-immigration attitudes decrease the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the populist right

and,

H3b: Anti-immigration attitudes have no statistically significant effects on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the mainstream left

The success of populist parties was fueled by the global financial crisis of 2008, especially in the most affected areas (Ivaldi *et al.*, 2016; Kestilä and Söderlund, 2007). Citizens that suffered the

most were more willing to vote for challenger parties of the left rather than establishment parties (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). This is driven mainly by material deprivation and the feeling that the Welfare States endorsed by the establishment left-wing parties have not done a proper job to protect them (Santana and Rama, 2018). Syriza was able to attract unemployed workers in the 2014 European elections (Teperoglou *et al.*, 2015), while right-wing populist parties attract unskilled workers which situations have not bettered under social democratic parties (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). Rico and Anduiza (2017) believe that people who feel that the country's economy has worsened may be more likely to criticize ruling elites and instead give their vote for populist parties. With this, the fourth set of hypotheses are:

H4a: Material deprivation has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the populist right

and,

H4b: Material deprivation increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left

As shown in the Literature Review, lower education has a positive correlation with Euroscepticism and political discontent (Hooghe *et al.*, 2012; Lubbers, 2011), illustrating why a negative relationship is expected between education and the likelihood to vote for a party of the populist left. A negative relationship with education is, however, also expected in the likelihood to vote for a party of the populist right, as lower education is also positively related to anti-immigrant attitudes (Lubbers, 2011).

Studies have found that people in a lower socioeconomic position are more likely to vote for a left-wing populist party (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2007; Ramiro, 2016). Furthermore, Euroscepticism (via resistance to trade openness) also has a positive relation with a lower socioeconomic position (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2012). This justifies the expected relationship that a lower socioeconomic position increases the likelihood to vote for a populist left party. Manevska and Achterberg (2013) also show a positive relationship of anti-immigrant attitudes with a lower socioeconomic position.

There is conflicting and inconclusive evidence regarding gender as a factor. Evidence ranges from men having higher likelihoods to vote for the populist left (O'Malley, 2008), to men having higher likelihoods to vote for the populist right (Oesch, 2008), to studies finding no significant

effect on gender (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2007). On the other hand, multiple studies have shown that age seems to have explanatory power. Studies have found that younger people are more likely to vote for populist left parties rather than other parties including mainstream left parties (Ramiro, 2016; Santana and Rama, 2018), while older people are more likely to vote instead for right-wing populist parties than for left-wing populist parties (Rama and Santana, 2019). As anticipated, the last set of hypotheses state the following:

H5a: A lower education has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the populist right

H5b: A lower education increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left

H5c: A lower socio-economic status has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left or the populist right

H5d: A lower socio-economic status increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left

H5e: Gender has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the populist left, the populist right, or the mainstream left

H5f: A lower age increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the populist right and the mainstream left

4. Data and methodology

This section specifies the source of the data and explains country/party selection. Next, descriptions and computations of the variables are presented, and statistical checks are conducted. Further, descriptive statistics of the final sample are presented and described. Finally, the methodology is detailed.

4.1 Data

This section describes the sources of the data and outlines the country/party selection methods.

4.1.1 Source and content

Empirical analyses conducted to examine populist left voting from a micro-level perspective use the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 9 (2018), the latest wave of this biannual survey. This survey contains cross-sectional data on 49,519 individuals from twenty-nine different countries. The ESS is recognized around the world and considered trustworthy as it is representative of the European population (Jowell *et al.*, 2004). The dataset contains data on values, norms, political interests, who the respondents voted for in the last national election, and their individual background characteristics. The interviewees in the dataset are residents in the European countries surveyed and are representative of all persons from 15 years old and up. The individuals are selected by strict random probability sampling and the data is compiled by an hour-long face-to-face interview (ESS, 2021).

As the central objective of this thesis is to identify the most recent factors that have an influence on voting behaviour, this study employs only the most recent wave of the ESS. The ninth round of the ESS represents the conditions and the state of the world between the Euro crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that the results of the eighth round of the survey, conducted in 2016, were still heavily driven by the Euro crisis aftermath. Therefore, the relevant factors that affect voting behaviour in this thesis are less influenced by the European debt crisis, but still represent the political landscape prior to the pandemic.

The dataset makes this study a large N design, due to the large number of responses from the survey. A study like this requires a large N design, as the factors that can increase the likelihood to vote for a populist left party can vary exceedingly among all the interviewees from the different countries. Due to the number of participants, the biggest advantage of a large N study is that it has higher generalizability. As much countries as possible are included in this thesis in order to increase external validity.

4.1.2 Country and party selection

Parties pertaining to the far-left and far-right were classified based on the PopuList study (2019), which categorizes European political parties according to their location on the Euro-sceptic, radical, and populist spectrum. Close cooperation between journalists and academics resulted in the PopuList dataset which has been employed in multiple publications of both public media and

academic journals. More than eighty academics have meticulously peer-reviewed the list (PopuList, 2019). The PopuList 2.0 was used due to the multiple updates the dataset received after getting feedback from country and party experts, following the release of the 1.0 version. The list includes European political parties from thirty countries; however, the ESS data of 2018 does not include all of these countries. Thus, only the European countries which are included in both the ESS and the PopuList are included in this study.

The list of countries was further shortened by only selecting countries which had the existence of a radical left party. Additionally, countries were eliminated if their radical left parties did not have a value on the dependent variable question of this study: “Which party did you vote for in the last national election?.” Reasons for a missing value in these questions could be either because the radical left party received too few votes, so the ESS designers decided to classify the party in the ‘Other’ category, or the party did not participate in the last elections.

March and Mudde (2005) state that the mainstream left is classified as being in the social democratic category in the party-family classification. Academics describe social democracy as favoring social and economic interventions to increase social justice within a structure of liberal-democratic politics and a capitalist-aligned mixed economy (Berman, 2020). The party-family method conceptualizes political parties not by functional equivalence or by name, but by how these political parties are characterized fundamentally by their ideological affinity (Mair and Mudde, 1998). With this in mind, the party-family classification of the Manifesto Project (2021) was used in order to label the parties pertaining to the mainstream left. The Manifesto Project evaluates over one thousand parties’ election manifestos in over fifty countries in order to learn parties’ policy preferences. From their party-family classification, parties categorized as social democratic were labeled as the left-wing mainstream parties in this study. Tables A1-A3 in the Appendix show the lists of the radical left, radical right, and mainstream left parties in 14 European countries (12 in the case of the radical right parties list due to Ireland and Portugal not having a radical right party listed either in the PopuList or the ESS dataset).

Similar to March and Rommerskirchen (2015), the parties used in this study were cross-referenced with their position on the aggregate left-right index from ParlGov (2020). The ParlGov data infrastructure collects information for all EU and almost all of the OECD

democracies, containing data of approximately one thousand elections results and information on 1700 parties' positions. Their aggregate left-right index is the mean of multiple L-R indexes on other surveys (e.g., Chapel Hill Expert Survey and Benoit-Laver). Castles and Mair (1984) placed communist parties L-R mean at 1.4 with a range of 0.5 – 2.7. Radical left parties in the present have a mean of 1.6, with a range of 0.4 – 3.0. If the cut-off is made at 1.0 or 2.0 on the L-R index, this would exclude some obvious communist parties, while making the cut-off at 4.0 would include most social democratic and Green parties (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015). Therefore, the cross-reference requires that the radical left parties have a position on the L-R index of less than 3.0 to be kept in this study. Similarly, radical right parties require a L-R index of at least 7.0 to be kept, while the mainstream left parties require a 'soft' cut-off of 4.0 (but larger than 3.0).

Tables 1-3 show the proportion of votes for the respective parties in the ESS data, the proportion of votes the parties got in the last two national elections, and their position on the L-R index. Roughly, the proportion of votes in the ESS data is close to the actual proportion of votes that the party got in the last two elections. Parties which do not adhere to the cut-offs specified above are excluded from this study. Nonetheless, the vast majority of parties identified are located in their respective ranges on the left-right scale. Lastly, Switzerland is excluded from this study given that there is no voting data in the ESS (2018) for the Swiss radical left party (Swiss Party of Labour). This leaves a total of thirteen countries in the study.

Table 1
List of radical left parties proportion of votes in data, in elections, and position in L-R index

Country	Radical left party	N of country in data	N of party (% votes in data*)	Percentage votes in last two elections		L-R index
Cyprus	AKEL	293	78 (26.2)	32.7 (2011)	25.7 (2016)	1.05
	SYM/SYPOL		2 (0.7)	-	6 (2016)	3.3**
Czech Republic	KSCM	1360	108 (7.8)	14.91 (2013)	7.8 (2017)	0.75
Denmark	En-O	1230	91 (7.5)	7.8 (2015)	6.9 (2019)	0.89
	SF		73 (5.2)	4.2 (2015)	7.7 (2019)	2.13
Finland	VAS	1205	65 (5.6)	7.13 (2015)	8.2 (2019)	2.18
France	FI	946	78 (9.2)	-	11.03 (2017)	1.3
	PCF/FdG		22 (2.9)	6.91 (2012)	2.7 (2017)	1.37
Germany	Li	1627	125 (7.6)	8.6 (2013)	9.2 (2017)	1.22
Ireland	SF	1410	155 (12.2)	13.85 (2016)	24.5 (2020)	2.79
Netherlands	SP	1206	94 (8.0)	9.7 (2012)	9.1 (2017)	1.37
Norway	SV	1101	98 (8.4)	4.1 (2013)	6 (2017)	1.58
Portugal	BE	599	59 (10.3)	10.6 (2015)	10 (2019)	1.64
	CDU – PEV & PCP		30 (5.5)	8.6 (2015)	6.7 (2019)	2.22
Slovenia	L	627	52 (8.3)	6 (2014)	9.3 (2018)	1.3
Spain	ECP	983	7 (0.8)	2.4 (2019)	2.3 (2019)	1.2
	Podemos		129 (13.3)	11.1 (2019)	9.8 (2019)	1.2
	BNG		3 (0.3)	0.36 (2019)	0.5 (2019)	2.91
Sweden	V	1312	125 (10.5)	5.7 (2014)	8 (2018)	1.55

Notes: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal had elections in 2021-22 but given that the ESS data represents the conditions and state of the world for the elections before the COVID-19 pandemic, the last election before the pandemic started is considered in this table.

* The proportion of votes in the ESS data is calculated after the statistical program (STATA) is commanded to recognize the ESS dataset as a survey design. Therefore, the point-estimates of proportions are adjusted for both post-stratification weights and for population size weights.

** The position on the L-R index of the party is above the 3.0 cut-off, so this party is excluded from the study.

Source: European Social Survey (2018) and ParlGov (2020) databases.

Table 2
List of radical right parties proportion of votes in data, in elections, and position in L-R index

Country	Radical right party	N of country in data	N of party (% votes in data*)	Percentage votes in last two elections	L-R index
Cyprus	ELAM	293	9 (2.9)	1.1 (2011) 3.7 (2016)	8.8
Czech Republic	SPD	1360	72 (5.0)	- 10.6 (2017)	8.8
Denmark	DF	1230	172 (16.2)	21.1 (2015) 8.7 (2019)	8.23
Finland	Ps	1205	135 (11.9)	17.7 (2015) 17.5 (2019)	6.63**
France	FN/RN	946	103 (12.3)	13.6 (2012) 13.2 (2017)	9.69
	DLR/DLF		14 (1.5)	- 1.17 (2017)	7.4
Germany	AfD	1627	111 (7.6)	4.7 (2013) 12.6 (2017)	8.7
Netherlands	PVV	1206	82 (7.5)	10.1 (2012) 13.1 (2017)	8.8
	FvD		18 (1.6)	- 1.8 (2017)	7.4
Norway	FrP	1101	102 (10.2)	16.3 (2013) 15.2 (2017)	8.76
Slovenia	SDS	627	152 (24.4)	20.7 (2014) 24.9 (2018)	7
	SNS		20 (3.3)	2.2 (2014) 4.2 (2018)	4.79**
Spain	VOX	983	104 (9.9)	10.3 (2019) 15.1 (2019)	8.8
Sweden	SD	1312	141 (11.9)	12.9 (2014) 17.5 (2018)	8.8

Notes: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway had elections in 2021-22 but given that the ESS data represents the conditions and state of the world for the elections before the COVID-19 pandemic, the last election before the pandemic started is considered in this table.

* The proportion of votes in the ESS data is calculated after the statistical program (STATA) is commanded to recognize the ESS dataset as a survey design. Therefore, the point-estimates of proportions are adjusted for both post-stratification weights and for population size weights.

** The position on the L-R index of the party is below the 7.0 cut-off, so this party is excluded from the study.

Source: European Social Survey (2018) and ParlGov (2020) databases.

Table 3
List of mainstream left parties proportion of votes in data, in elections, and position in L-R index

Country	Centre-left party	N of country in data	N of party (% votes in data*)	Percentage votes in last two elections		L-R index
Cyprus	EDEK	293	7 (2.6)	8.9 (2011)	6.2 (2016)	3.29
Czech Republic	CSSD	1360	188 (13.8)	20.5 (2013)	7.3 (2017)	3.05
Denmark	SD	1230	338 (30.5)	26.3 (2015)	25.9 (2019)	3.8
Finland	SSDP	1205	203 (17.2)	16.5 (2015)	17.7 (2019)	3.56
France	PS	946	154 (15.5)	29.4 (2012)	7.4 (2017)	3.25
Germany	SPD	1627	355 (22.2)	25.7 (2013)	20.5 (2017)	3.64
Ireland	Lab	1410	89 (6.6)	6.6 (2016)	4.4 (2020)	3.63
	DS		7 (0.7)	3 (2016)	2.9 (2020)	3.3
Netherlands	PvdA	1206	99 (8.2)	24.8 (2012)	5.7 (2017)	3.61
	DENK		7 (0.7)	-	2.1 (2017)	6**
Norway	DNA	1101	302 (27.9)	30.8 (2013)	27.4 (2017)	3.37
Portugal	PS	599	246 (37.5)	33.6 (2015)	38.2 (2019)	4.05
Slovenia	SD	627	79 (12.1)	6 (2014)	9.9 (2018)	3.06
	LMS		130 (20.9)	-	12.6 (2018)	3.3
Spain	PSOE	983	313 (31.1)	28.7 (2019)	28 (2019)	3.74
Sweden	SAP	1312	384 (27.2)	31 (2014)	28.3 (2018)	3.44

Notes: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal had elections in 2021-22 but given that the ESS data represents the conditions and state of the world for the elections before the COVID-19 pandemic, the last election before the pandemic started is considered in this table.

* The proportion of votes in the ESS data is calculated after the statistical program (STATA) is commanded to recognize the ESS dataset as a survey design. Therefore, the point-estimates of proportions are adjusted for both post-stratification weights and for population size weights.

** The position on the L-R index of the party is above the 'soft' 4.0 cut-off, so this party is excluded from the study.

Source: European Social Survey (2018) and ParlGov (2020) databases.

4.2 Variables employed and statistical checks

Before the creation and recoding of variables, people who did not vote in the last national election are excluded from the study. This is due to the lack of data on the non-voter's political stance and the reasoning behind their absence of vote.

The dependent variable in this thesis comes from the survey question: "Which party did you vote for in the last national election?." A new variable is constructed which consists of three categories: a vote for the radical left, a vote for the radical right, and a vote for the mainstream left. People who did not vote for parties within the three categories or did not answer the question are excluded from this study. The following paragraphs introduce the independent and control variables. The first four independent variables are attitudinal, and the rest are sociodemographic variables.

The first of the independent variables is Euroscepticism, which is quantified by only one item in the data: whether European unification should go further or has already gone too far. This variable has a range from 0 to 10, and it is recoded so that a higher value means higher feelings of Euroscepticism. Although there are two other variables concerning the EU in the data, these variables do not capture the sentiments individuals have in favor or against European unification and integration. The variable detailing whether the respondent trusts the European Parliament focuses more on the respondents perceptions of whether the European Parliament has their best interests in mind or if the institution has any power. The variable detailing emotional attachment to the European continent does not really fit the definition of Euroscepticism previously stated either, as one can support the EU while not feeling attached to the continent, or vice-versa, a person can oppose the EU while at the same time feel as if being European is a core aspect of their identity.

The second independent variable is a scale made up of five items which form the political discontent variable. The scale is made up of three items which signal multiple levels of trust: trust in the national parliament, trust in politicians, and trust in political parties. The scale also includes two items which signal political satisfaction: satisfaction with the national government and satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country. The five items have a range from 0 to 10 and they are recoded so that a higher value means higher levels of political discontent.

The third independent variable is again a scale composed of three items which form the anti-immigration attitudes variable. The three items ask interviewees whether they think that immigration is bad or good for the country's economy, whether immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live, and whether the country's cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants. The three items have a range from 0 to 10 and they are recoded so that a higher value means a higher level of anti-immigrant attitudes. Both the anti-immigration attitudes scale and the political discontent scale are made by taking the mean of the items.

The fourth and last attitudinal independent variable is material deprivation. The item used for material deprivation is how satisfied the respondents are with the present state of the national economy. It has a range from 0 to 10 and it is recoded so that a higher value means higher levels of dissatisfaction with the economy.

The following sociodemographic variables function as control variables in this paper, but they also have hypotheses tied up to them due to evidence, or lack thereof, that has been shown in previous literature. Gender is recoded into a dummy variable so that '0' means male and '1' means female. Age is left as a continuous variable. Education is divided into two dummy variables based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)³. One dummy indicates lower education while the other dummy indicates higher education. The higher education dummy includes levels 5-8 on the ISCED scale, meaning the variable contains people whose highest level of attained education is either short-cycle tertiary education, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral (ESS, 2021; Eurostat, 2020). Finally, a variable indicating household total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, is used and it is measured in ten deciles of income.

Before assessing the effects that the explanatory variables have on the outcome variable, a few statistical procedures have to be executed in order to check if the scales made are formulated in an acceptable statistical manner and if these scales, which were inspired by previous literature, are supported by the data.

³ The ISCED is a statistical framework for arranging information on education worldwide as maintained by UNESCO (UNESCO UIS, 2017).

4.2.1 Reliability analysis

To examine if different items fit inside a scale and to check the homogeneity of these items in the scale, a reliability analysis has to be run (Bland and Altman, 1997). Due to all the items in the scales having the same number of possible values, the items do not have to be standardized and raw results are sufficient. With this in mind, Cronbach's alphas are run in order to verify how much the items inside the scales are measuring the same underlying dimension. Table A4 in the Appendix shows the Cronbach's alphas of the political discontent and anti-immigration attitudes scales⁴. The former scale has $\alpha = .884$ and the latter scale has $\alpha = .880$, which indicate that both scales are of acceptable internal consistency and reliability as both scores are above the 0.7 minimum.

4.2.2 Factor analysis

A factor analysis demonstrates which items fit inside a certain factor. This statistical analysis aids in variable reduction as it examines multidimensionality in a set of items. Specifically, an exploratory factor analysis on the attitudinal items is used in this paper as it is not known which items have a high load on which factors. The factor analysis is executed with the extraction method principal factor as it is the default of the statistical program used and the most common extraction method in statistical research. In addition, the factors are rotated so that they are cleaner and more interpretable. An oblique rotation is used as it cannot be assumed that the items are independent and not correlated (Kim and Mueller, 1978). The rotated factor loadings of the attitudinal items were examined to discover which of the items have a high loading on a factor, and thus, to confirm whether the different independent variables created from literature are, in fact, confirmed by the data.

Two tests are run first, and the results can be found in Table A5 in the Appendix. First, a Bartlett's test of sphericity is run, and it is found that it is significant, meaning that there are sufficient intercorrelations in the items to conduct a factor analysis. Second, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy is performed, and the value is above the .5 minimum. The KMO shows an overall measure of the shared variance between pairs of variables

⁴ A robustness check was run where the items of both scales were standardized, but the Cronbach's alphas are extremely similar with their raw counterparts.

and higher values are preferable as they indicate overlap but not enough to hinder the analysis due to multicollinearity.

As seen in Table A6 in the Appendix, all items have communalities (1-Uniqueness) above .5 except for the Euroscepticism and material deprivation item. Thus, these two items might have trouble loading significantly on any of the factors, but as shown below, these low communalities do not pose a problem. The eigenvalue of the first and second factors is higher than one⁵, which is two factors less than expected from the literature, but the statistical program retains and performs the factor analysis on four factors. Three of the items of the political discontent scale have high loadings on the first factor. Factor loadings that are higher than .3 are considered a good factor score and signifies that the items belong to that factor (Zwick and Velicer, 1982). The Euroscepticism item loads high on the second factor, while the three anti-immigration attitudes items load high on the fourth factor. The third factor is more problematic and not so clear-cut. Factor three loads high on the two remaining items of the political discontent scale and on the material deprivation item, contradicting previous literature.

A closer look is taken at the political discontent scale by running a factor analysis on just the political discontent items (both Bartlett's test and KMO were passed, see Table A5 in the Appendix). Table A7 in the Appendix demonstrates that while only one factor has an eigenvalue higher than one (as expected by the literature), the statistical program retains instead two factors. Again, the same three items that had a high load on factor one in the previous factor analysis, now again have a high loading on factor one⁶. These three items seem to represent a trust dimension, as the items ask the respondents how much they trust parliament, politicians, and political parties. The two other items which represent a satisfaction dimension (satisfaction with national government and with the way democracy works in the country), load high instead on factor two. While literature does not mention two dimensions in political discontent, the factor analysis shows that the political discontent scale should be divided into a trust dimension subscale and a satisfaction dimension subscale. As seen in Table A4 in the Appendix, the trust dimension scale has a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .904$ while the satisfaction dimension scale have a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .736$, acceptable scores that are above the 0.7 minimum. Finally, even

⁵ Kaiser's (1960) rule.

⁶ The item representing trust in parliament also has a loading above .3 (.315) in the second factor, but according to Stevens (2009), this should not be a problem as there is at least a .2 difference between factor loadings.

though in the first factor analysis the items of the satisfaction dimension of political discontent are loaded on the same factor that the material deprivation item is, material deprivation is left apart as its own individual explanatory variable as literature supports that material deprivation by itself is an important variable to explain voting patterns for radical parties.

4.2.3 Descriptive statistics

Table 4 consists of the descriptive statistics of the variables used. The proportion of votes designated to the parties studied are shown. In this sample, 24.8% of the respondents voted for radical left parties, 22.1% for radical right parties, and 53.1% for mainstream left parties.

For the Euroscepticism, political discontent and material deprivation variables, voters of radical right parties have the biggest values on average, while voters of the mainstream left parties have the lowest values, and voters of radical left parties are in between. For these three variables, it was expected that voters of the radical left and right would be somewhat equally Eurosceptic, politically discontented, and materially deprived. While voters of parties of the radical right have higher values than those who vote for radical left parties (except in the case of material deprivation where the means are quite similar), voters of mainstream left parties did have lower values in these variables than voters of the radical left.

As expected, voters of the radical right have the highest average value of the anti-immigration variable, and, surprisingly, voters of the mainstream left have stronger feelings against immigration than voters of radical left parties.

In this sample, voters of the radical left have the lowest income on average, while voters of the mainstream left have the highest income. However, the means of the incomes of the three categories of voters are quite similar. The lower and higher education variables indicate that voters of the radical left have the highest educational level, as 44.5% of those voters have attained a higher education degree. Voters of the radical right have the lowest educational level as 76.9% of those voters' level of education is a high school degree or lower. Voters of the radical right are composed of more men while voters of the mainstream left are composed of more females (radical left voters' gender distribution is in the middle). Finally, the mean age of voters of the radical left is the lowest while voters of the mainstream left have the highest average age.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics

Variable	Party*	Proportion (%**)	Mean**	Std. dev.**	Range
Vote	RL	24.8			
	RR	22.1			
	ML	53.1			
Eurocepticism	RL		4.04	2.73	0-10
	RR		6.18	2.54	
	ML		3.74	2.51	
Political discontent (trust dimension)	RL		6.13	2.11	0-10
	RR		7.36	1.96	
	ML		5.67	2.15	
Political discontent (satisfaction dimension)	RL		5.84	2.12	0-10
	RR		6.85	2.07	
	ML		4.79	1.99	
Anti-immigration attitudes	RL		3.50	2.15	0-10
	RR		6.42	2.00	
	ML		3.93	1.99	
Material deprivation	RL		5.18	2.44	0-10
	RR		5.45	2.48	
	ML		4.32	2.35	
Income	RL		5.34	2.70	1-10
	RR		5.48	2.54	
	ML		5.57	2.67	
Lower education	RL		.555	.509	0-1
	RR		.769	.403	
	ML		.641	.483	
Higher education	RL		.445	.509	0-1
	RR		.231	.403	
	ML		.359	.483	
Gender	RL		.487	.511	0-1
	RR		.424	.472	
	ML		.513	.504	
Age	RL		46.79	17.99	16-90
	RR		50.54	15.32	
	ML		56.12	17.40	

Notes: * RL stands for radical left, RR stands for radical right, and ML stands for mainstream left.

** Adjusted for sample survey design and for both post-stratification and population size weights.

Source: European Social Survey (2018) database.

4.3 Methodology

To evaluate the multiple hypotheses, multinomial logistic regression models with the thirteen countries altogether were performed. A multinomial logistic regression model was chosen because the dependent variable has two or more categories, but these categories do not have an underlying order. In this type of regression, the logarithmic odds of the dependent variable are modeled as a linear combination of the independent variables. This type of logistic regression makes it easy to compare the effects of attitudes and individual characteristics on voting for the radical left compared to the effects of these characteristics on voting for the radical right and the mainstream left. The radical left is used as the reference category (baseline comparison group) in the model. The following logistic regressions are run:

$$\log(Y = RRV) = \log \frac{P(Y=RRV)}{P(Y=RLV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HEDUC_i + \beta_2 INCOME_i + \beta_3 GENDER_i + \beta_4 AGE_i + \theta_i + \varepsilon_i$$

(1)

$$\log(Y = MLV) = \log \frac{P(Y=MLV)}{P(Y=RLV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HEDUC_i + \beta_2 INCOME_i + \beta_3 GENDER_i + \beta_4 AGE_i + \theta_i + \varepsilon_i$$

(2)

The first two equations include only the individual background characteristics of individual i , where HEDUC is a dummy variable and it has a positive value if the individual attained a higher education degree, INCOME is the total household income after tax and compulsory deductions (in deciles), and GENDER and AGE are a dummy for gender (1 = female) and a continuous variable for age, respectively. θ_i are country-fixed effects made by including country dummies into the models and they are necessary to control for country specifics, which decreases unobserved heterogeneity bias. RRV stands for radical right voting, RLV stands for radical left voting, and MLV stands for mainstream left voting. β_0 is the intercept and ε_i is the error term. Apart from background characteristics, Equations 3 and 4 include the attitudinal variables which are the main focus of this study. EURO is the Euroscepticism variable, TPOLDIS is the political discontent trust dimension subscale, SPOLDIS is the political discontent satisfaction dimension subscale, ANTIIM is the anti-immigration attitudes scale and MADEP is the material deprivation variable.

$$\log(Y = RRV) = \log \frac{P(Y=RRV)}{P(Y=RLV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EURO_i + \beta_2 TPOLDIS_i + \beta_3 SPOLDIS_i + \beta_4 ANTIIM_i + \beta_5 MADEP_i + \beta_6 HEDUC_i + \beta_7 INCOME_i + \beta_8 GENDER_i + \beta_9 AGE_i + \theta_i + \varepsilon_i$$

(3)

$$\log(Y = MLV) = \log \frac{P(Y=MLV)}{P(Y=RLV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EURO_i + \beta_2 TPOLDIS_i + \beta_3 SPOLDIS_i + \beta_4 ANTIIM_i + \beta_5 MADEP_i + \beta_6 HEDUC_i + \beta_7 INCOME_i + \beta_8 GENDER_i + \beta_9 AGE_i + \theta_i + \varepsilon_i$$

(4)

4.3.1 Weights and survey sample design

Analyses which use ESS data should always be administered using sampling weights. By weighting the data, the results based on samples use estimates that consider how likely each interviewee was to be part of the sample. Weights applied in this study consist of design, post-stratification, and population size weights. Design weights are used to correct for the fact that individuals have different probabilities of being part of the sample in different countries due to the sampling design employed. Post-stratification weights modify design weights in order to also reduce potential non-response bias and sampling error. The survey design uses information on education, age-group, region, and gender. Population size weights are needed because most countries in the survey have differing population sizes, but the sample sizes are roughly the same (ESS, 2014).

If clustering and weights are not indicated, the statistical software used would assume that the dataset is from a simple random sample (SRS) with 100% response rate. This assumption would affect estimates with unpredictable bias because the data comes instead from a complex sample design. For example, standard errors would be under-estimated, and this could potentially lead to wrong conclusions. Clustering increases standard errors due to lower efficiency relative to SRS. On the other hand, stratification decreases standard errors and makes the analyses more efficient. Therefore, this paper follows the ESS' advice to always take into account the full sample design, including clustering, stratification, and weighting (Kaminska, 2020). Finally, the statistical software is also commanded to center strata with one sampling unit at the grand mean rather than the stratum mean (Lynn, 2019).

4.3.2 Multicollinearity diagnosis

To determine if collinearity presents a threat to the reliability of the results, variance inflation factors (VIFs) are estimated. A linear regression is run as multicollinearity is found when at least two independent variables have a high correlation. Table A8 in the Appendix shows that all variables have a VIF below 3. As the threshold for problematic VIFs is 10 (Gujarati & Porter, 2009), this dataset does not have a collinearity problem.

5. Empirical Results

Table 5 contains the results from running the various models indicated in sub-section 4.3. The regressions are run after the statistical software is commanded to take into account stratification, clustering, and weighting. The reference category is a vote for the radical left. Country-fixed effects are included, and all the models are run with the same number of observations to restrict results from changing due to the number of observations.

Models 1 and 2 contain the effects that background characteristics have on voting behaviour. Models 3 and 4 include the attitudinal variables Euroscepticism, political discontent (both dimensions), anti-immigration attitudes, and material deprivation. The first two models have a pseudo $R^2=.081$, while the latter two models have a pseudo $R^2=.249$. This means that 24.9% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the five attitudinal variables and the four individual background characteristics. The models which include the attitudinal variables on top of the individual background characteristics predict the outcome variable better than the individual background characteristics alone.

Model 1 shows that being higher educated is related to a lower likelihood to vote for a party of the radical right compared to the likelihood to vote for a party of the radical left. Concerning the level of income, model 1 shows that having a higher income increases the likelihood to vote for the radical right compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical left. Gender has no significant effect on the likelihoods, and older people are more likely to vote for the radical right relative to voting for the radical left.

Model 2 shows that being higher educated has no significant effect on the likelihood to vote for either a party of the radical left or a party of the mainstream left. Concerning the level of income,

a higher income increases the likelihood to vote for the mainstream left compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical left. Gender has no significant effect on the likelihoods, and older people are more likely to vote for the mainstream centre-left relative to voting for the radical left.

Table 5
Multinomial logistic regressions results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Euroscepticism			.084*	-.052
			(.035)	(.027)
Political discontent (trust dimension)			.222***	.051
			(.053)	(.035)
Political discontent (satisfaction dimension)			-.012	-.311***
			(.056)	(.048)
Anti-immigration attitudes			.634***	.193***
			(.055)	(.042)
Material deprivation			-.134**	-.049
			(.047)	(.038)
Higher educated	-1.054***	-.233	-.340*	-.180
	(.151)	(.123)	(.173)	(.131)
Income	.077*	.100***	.121***	.088**
	(.032)	(.026)	(.034)	(.029)
Gender	-.213	.216	-.432*	.296*
	(.144)	(.119)	(.171)	(.126)
Age	.009*	.032***	-.000	.030***
	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Constant	-2.525***	-4.385***	-7.914***	-3.156***
	(.509)	(.562)	(.770)	(.713)
Pseudo R ²	.081	.081	.249	.249
N	4597	4597	4597	4597

Notes: The number of the model represents the number of the equation model from sub-section 4.3. Baseline category is a vote for the radical left. Country-fixed effects are included. Linearized standard errors are in parentheses. The coefficients and linearized standard errors of the variables are calculated after the statistical program (STATA) is commanded to recognize the ESS dataset as a survey design. Therefore, the coefficients, linearized standard errors, and Pseudo R² are adjusted for both post-stratification weights and for population size weights. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

5.1 Euroscepticism

The first set of hypotheses regard Euroscepticism. *Hypothesis 1a* expected negative feelings towards European unification to have no effect on the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right. Instead, model 3 shows that Eurosceptic attitudes in fact increase the likelihood to vote for the radical right relative to the likelihood to vote for the radical left. This result rejects *Hypothesis 1a*. Eurosceptic voters are more likely to support the radical right compared to the radical left, making this a key attitude which separates radical voters from both sides of the political spectrum. With regards to *Hypothesis 1b*, model 4 shows no significant effect of Euroscepticism on the likelihood to vote for the mainstream left compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical left. This result rejects *Hypothesis 1b*.

Therefore, *Hypothesis 1* is completely rejected; Euroscepticism increases the likelihood to vote for the radical right compared to the radical left and it has no significant effect on likelihoods when the comparison is between parties of the radical left and parties of the mainstream left. Most of the studies that were cited while formulating *Hypothesis 1* are from 2015 and prior. They specify that Euroscepticism is supposed to be a significant factor which increases the likelihood to vote for the radical left. Specifically, the factor is supposed to be significant due to the Euro crisis from the late 2000s to early 2010s. The crisis made Euroscepticism a bigger determinant of voting preferences as expected economic gains of EU membership could not be fulfilled, and the supranational organization could no longer assure growth for its citizens. As a result, Eurosceptic individuals were less likely to vote for parties who would defend European unification. The results of this thesis could perhaps indicate that because these problems were not as relevant anymore by 2018 (year of ESS Round 9), Euroscepticism has lost statistical significance to explain radical left voting.

When considering literature that investigates causal economic drivers of populism, a similar explanation for these results is contemplated. As shown by Algan *et al.* (2017), unemployment during the Great Recession led to a deterioration of trust in European political institutions and an increase in populist voting. Lechler (2019) also found that Eurosceptic sentiments increase with shocks to regional employment. Integrating the results from these papers and the results from this thesis, a possible underlying mechanism could come from the rising unemployment caused by the Great Recession and the Euro crisis. The worsening employment conditions increased

Eurosceptic attitudes, and these attitudes had a positive correlation with populist voting. As multiple European countries have recovered since then, Euroscepticism has lost statistical significance to explain radical left voting. However, through an unidentified mechanism, radical right voting and Euroscepticism are still related.

5.2 Political discontent

The second set of hypotheses concern political discontent. *Hypothesis 2a* expected that political discontent has no effect on the propensity to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right. Model 3 shows that the satisfaction dimension has no significant effect on the likelihood while higher political discontent feelings in the trust dimension (i.e., less trust in parliament, politicians, and political parties) increase the propensity to vote for the radical right as compared to the radical left. Thus, *Hypothesis 2a* is only partially confirmed. Model 4 reversely shows that higher political discontent feelings in the satisfaction dimension (i.e., lower satisfaction with national government and with how democracy works in the country) decreases the propensity to vote for the mainstream left as compared to the radical left, while the trust dimension has no significant effect on the likelihood. Thus, *Hypothesis 2b* is also only partially confirmed.

To conclude, both political discontent hypotheses are only partially confirmed. In both Models 3 and 4, it is the satisfaction dimension which supports the hypotheses. A higher level in the political discontent satisfaction sub-scale has no statistically significant effect on the propensity to vote for the radical right or left, while it decreases the likelihood to vote for the mainstream left compared to the radical left. The fact that lower levels of satisfaction with the government and democracy yield these results points out to how protest voting is a key reason behind an individual voting for radical parties of either side of the spectrum. Voting for anti-establishment parties helps voters voice their discontent with mainstream politics.

On the other hand, the trust dimension of political discontent completely rejects *Hypothesis 2*. Looking back at the Literature Review, it seems as if the satisfaction dimension is the proper operationalization of the political discontent variable. The research cited found a positive relationship between dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and populist/radical party success (Lubbers *et al.*, 2002; Pauwels, 2014; Ramiro, 2016). Other studies like Lubbers and Scheepers (2000) use personal situations (whether respondents notice deprivation of their socio-

economic situation and if they expect it in the future) as a proxy for political discontent, while Rooduijn *et al.* (2016) operationalize political discontent with items asking the respondents whether they believe congress members do not care about their opinions, whether political parties only care about their vote, and whether they believe they have any influence on policies. It seems as if no studies truly focus just on the effects that the items of the trust dimension variable have on voter behaviour. This can explain why the satisfaction dimension confirmed the hypotheses while the trust dimension of political discontent instead rejected them. These results warrant future research.

Literature which examines causal economic drivers of populism can aid in further understanding these results. Algan *et al.* (2017) and Guiso *et al.* (2021) found that an increase in unemployment and economic insecurity, driven by the Great Recession, led to a decline in trust in political parties and in national political institutions. Aksoy *et al.* (2018) show that confidence in the government decreased when skilled imports to GDP increased, while Guriev (2017) finds that higher inequality of opportunity also brings down confidence in the government. The results demonstrate a possible underlying channel. Rising economic insecurity that comes from either a big economic recession or imports at someone's skill level can deteriorate political trust, which has a positive correlation with populist voting. As seen in the results, political distrust only had statistical significance for the radical right when compared to the radical left. As shocks to employment prospects from the Great Recession have halted, it seems as if this mechanism could currently be coming from individuals exposed to foreign exports, the so-called "losers of globalization." It would be interesting to investigate this possible mechanism further, by examining if radical right voters are more exposed to the negative consequences of globalization than radical and mainstream left voters.

Figure 1 displays the effect that political dissatisfaction has on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left (all the other variables are held at their means). The figure underlines how the propensity to cast a vote for the mainstream left decreases as dissatisfaction with the government and democracy grows, while instead the likelihood increases for parties of the radical right and specifically, for parties of the radical left. Whereas for those individuals who are extremely satisfied (=0) with the government and democracy the predicted probability of voting for a radical left party is .07, this value rises to .56 for those

individuals who are instead extremely dissatisfied (=10). For the mainstream left, the probabilities decrease with political dissatisfaction from .91 to .33.

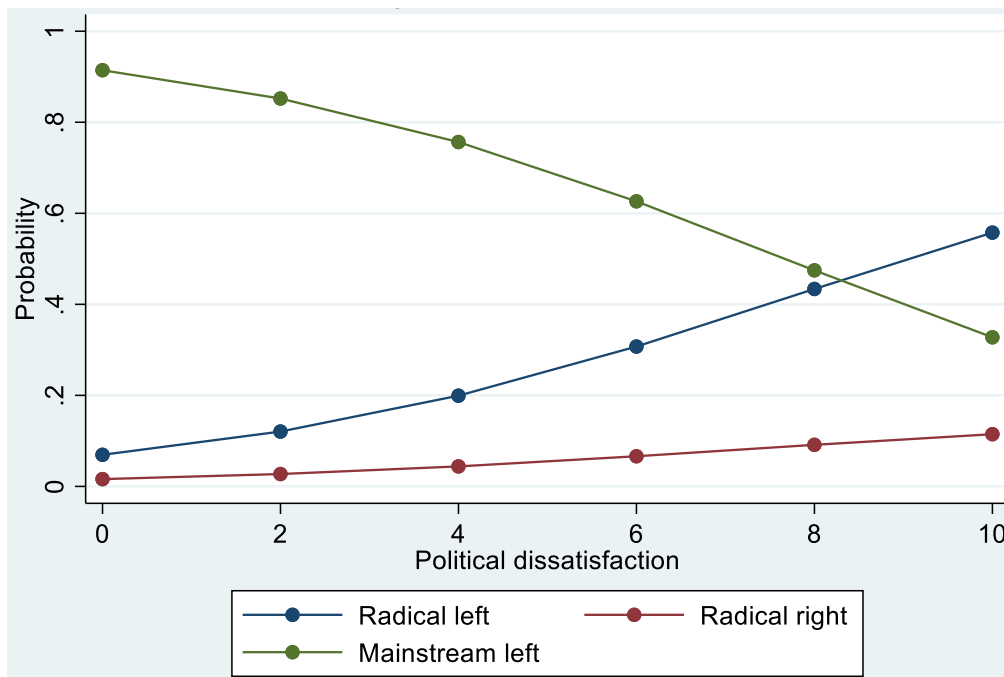


Figure 1
Predictive margins for the effect that political dissatisfaction has on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left

5.3 Anti-immigration attitudes

The third set of hypotheses concern anti-immigration attitudes. Confirming *Hypothesis 3a*, model 3 shows that stronger anti-immigration attitudes increase the likelihood to vote for a party of the radical right compared to a party of the radical left. Surprisingly, however, *Hypothesis 3b* is rejected, as model 4 shows that stronger anti-immigration attitudes increase the likelihood to vote for a party of the establishment left compared to a party of the radical left.

Hypothesis 3a is confirmed as anticipated while the rejection of *Hypothesis 3b* is an unexpected finding. The only literature partly explaining this result comes from Hooghe and Marks (2017). Parties of the radical left do not have a strong stance against immigration and instead hold a commitment to working-class internationalism. Therefore, voters of the radical left see stronger divisions across classes (working class vs the elite) rather than across nationalities/races. Voters

of the mainstream left probably do not feel working-class internationalism as much and instead see more division regarding nationalities or ethnicities.

Algan *et al.* (2017) and Guiso *et al.* (2017) found that an increase in unemployment and economic insecurity leads to a deterioration of attitudes towards immigrants. Algan *et al.* (2017) also find that populist voting increases due to higher unemployment rates. A possible underlying mechanism could be that shocks to economic insecurity increase negative attitudes towards immigrants and this has a positive correlation with voting for the radical right. However, the ESS survey was taken during a relatively calm economic period, and therefore warrants future research on what other underlying mechanism could be driving these results. Perhaps, the relation between anti-immigrant attitudes and populist voting has a more cultural channel than an economic one. Additionally, this possible underlying mechanism cannot explain why anti-immigrant attitudes increase the likelihood to vote for the mainstream left compared to the radical left.

Figure 2 exhibits the effect that anti-immigration attitudes have on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left (again, all other variables are held at their means). The figure indicates how the likelihood to cast a vote for the radical left decreases as anti-immigration attitudes increase, while instead the propensity grows for parties of the radical right. Whereas for those individuals with no negative attitudes towards immigrants (=0) the predicted probability of voting for a radical left party is .50, this value declines to .06 for those individuals with extremely negative attitudes towards immigrants (=10). For the radical right, the probability grows from .01 to .49 as the attitudes worsen.

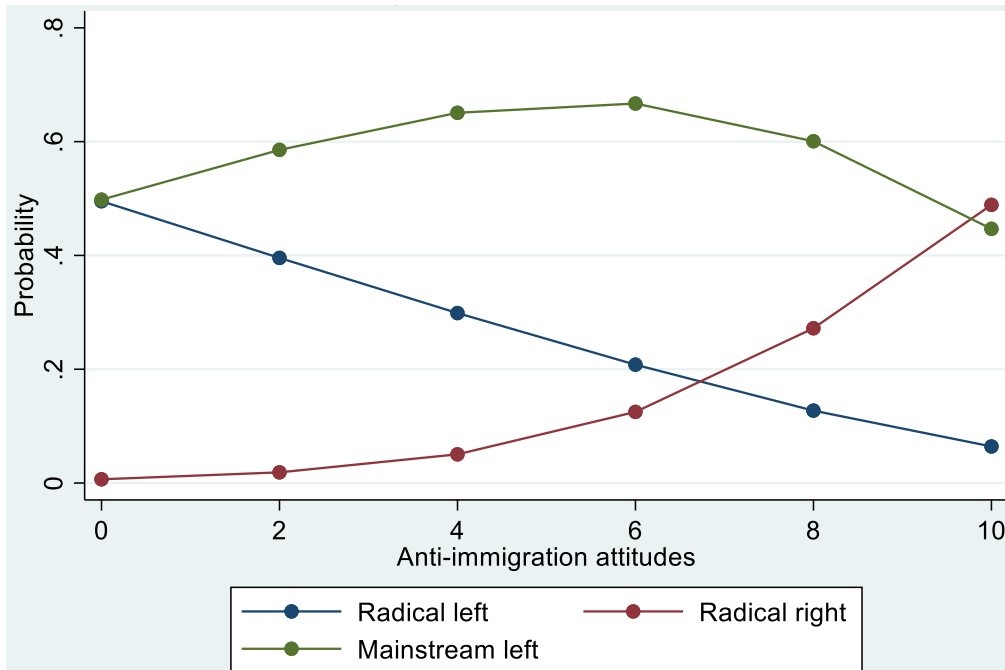


Figure 2
Predictive margins for the effect that anti-immigration attitudes have on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left

5.4 Material deprivation

The fourth set of hypotheses are about material deprivation. *Hypothesis 4a* expected material deprivation to have no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the radical left or radical right. However, model 3 shows that material deprivation lowers the likelihood to vote for the radical right compared to voting for the radical left, rejecting *Hypothesis 4a*. Furthermore, *Hypothesis 4b* is also rejected as material deprivation in fact has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the mainstream left compared to the radical left.

The complete rejection of the *Hypothesis 4* can be due to the limitation in the data. In this study, material deprivation is measured using only one indirect item which is probably not substantial enough to fully measure material deprivation. An item where respondents express how likely they are to be unemployed in the next year or how likely they are to have financial needs in the next year would have tapped into the material deprivation factor much better. Furthermore, economic literature has shown that rising economic insecurity causes populist voting to increase (Algan *et al.*, 2017; Askoy *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the results could again be explained by limitation in the data as causal economic literature also supports *Hypothesis 4*.

5.5 Individual background characteristics

Hypotheses 5a and *5b*, which concern how education affects voting preferences, have been completely rejected. In both models 1 and 3, higher educated individuals are more likely to vote for parties of the radical left compared to voting for parties of the radical right. *Hypothesis 5a* is rejected as it expected instead that the level of education would have no significant effect. Rooduijn (2017) states that the reason why education has this positive effect on voting for the radical left is probably because the ideals that are often emphasized by radical left parties such as solidarity or equality are also frequently promoted by higher educated individuals. With this in mind, models 2 and 4 show that education has no significant effect on the propensity to vote for either the radical or the mainstream left, therefore *Hypothesis 5b* is rejected. The insignificant result is in accordance with findings that while educational levels are rising in most European democracies, this does not consequently mean that the propensity of voting for populist parties would decrease (Pauwels, 2014). The fact that in the models the results for education stay the same after adding the attitudinal variables means that education does not indicate mediation of attitudinal variables like Euroscepticism or political discontent.

Hypothesis 5c expected that a lower socio-economic status should not have a significant effect on the likelihood to vote for the radical right compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical left. This hypothesis is rejected as models 1 and 3 show that in fact a higher household's net income increases the propensity to vote for the radical right compared to the radical left. *Hypothesis 5d* is confirmed, as a lower socio-economic status increases the likelihood to vote for the populist left compared to the mainstream left. Again, the fact that in the models the results for income stay the same after adding the attitudinal variables means that a household's income does not indicate mediation of attitudinal variables like Euroscepticism or anti-immigration attitudes.

The effect of gender on voting behaviour attains statistical significance when the attitudinal variables are included. Compared to voting for the radical left, it is found that females have a lower likelihood of voting for the radical right while they have a higher likelihood of voting for the mainstream left. Because *Hypothesis 5e* expected no statistical significance of gender, there is a tentative rejection of this hypothesis because in models 1 and 2 the effect is indeed

insignificant. This conclusion is not surprising as the effect that gender has on likelihoods is controversial and without any clear direction.

Finally, *Hypothesis 5f* expected that a lower age would increase the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right and the mainstream left. This hypothesis has a tentative acceptance, as the likelihoods to vote for the radical right and the mainstream left indeed increase with age when compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical left in three out of four models.

Figure 3 illustrates the effect that age has on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left (rest of the variables held at means). The figure indicates how the likelihood to cast a vote for the radical left decreases as individuals get older, while instead the propensity grows for parties of the mainstream left. Whereas for 20-year-olds the predicted probability of voting for a radical left party is .49, this value declines as individuals age to .11 for 90-year-olds. For the mainstream left, the probability grows from .39 to .84 as individuals age.

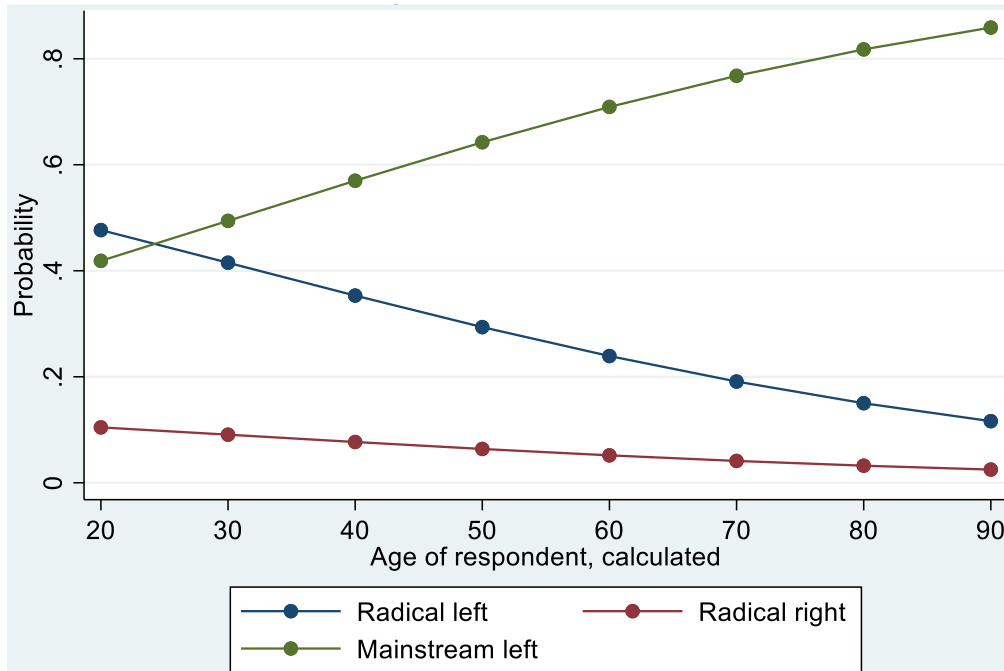


Figure 3
Predictive margins for the effect that age has on the probability of voting for the radical left, the radical right, and the mainstream left

6. Conclusion

The resurgence of populist and radical parties since the global financial crisis of 2008 has drawn a vast quantity of attention into parties of the radical right. In comparison, there is limited research concerning the other side of the spectrum, specifically, there is insufficient research into what individual characteristics and attitudes increase the likelihood to vote for the radical left. In order to fill the existing gap, this thesis evaluates the effects of multiple attitudes and individual background characteristics of voters on the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the likelihood to vote for the radical right and the establishment left across Europe. The central question that this thesis sought to answer is: *which factors increase the likelihood of voting for the radical left in comparison to voting for the radical right and the mainstream centre-left?* Specifically, the focal point of this paper is to present insight into the peculiar and distinctive characteristics that sets radical left voters apart.

To answer the research question, this thesis employs data from the European Social Survey (2018) Round 9. Multinomial logistic regressions are conducted where the attitudinal variables of Euroscepticism, political discontent, anti-immigration attitudes, and material deprivation are examined together with the individual background characteristics of education, income, gender, and age.

Overall, the results from this study support some of the hypotheses formulated from literature but are contradicting in others. Confirming *Hypothesis 2a*, the radical left voter is similar to the radical right voter in terms of political discontent. Rejecting *Hypotheses 4a* and *5a*, higher levels of material deprivation and a higher educational level increased the likelihood to vote for the radical left when compared to the radical right. Individuals with higher levels of Eurosceptic sentiments and higher levels of income are less likely to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right, therefore rejecting *Hypothesis 1a* and *5c*. *Hypothesis 5f* is confirmed, as older people are also less likely to vote for the radical left compared to the radical right while gender has inconclusive evidence. Finally, as expected by *Hypothesis 3a*, the lack of strong anti-immigration attitudes increases the likelihood to vote for the radical left relative to the radical right.

Hypotheses 1b, 4b, and 5b are rejected, as Euroscepticism, material deprivation, and education level have no statistical significance in the likelihood to vote for the radical left compared to the establishment left. Confirming *Hypothesis 2b*, higher political dissatisfaction makes voters more likely to vote for the radical left than the mainstream left. Confirming *Hypotheses 5d and 5f*, wealthier and older individuals are more likely to vote for the mainstream left relative to the radical left while gender has inconclusive evidence. Finally, against expectations in *Hypothesis 3b*, stronger anti-immigration attitudes increase the chance to vote for the establishment left compared to the radical left.

As explained in the Results section, it is possible that economic factors could have a role in the current wave of populism. The inability of governments and markets to maintain security has decreased the trust in traditional institutions and political parties (Guiso *et al.*, 2017). To a certain extent, economic factors could also be an underlying channel for the results shown in this paper. This possibility indicates the urgency for policies which address the economic causes of populism. Social support policies and labor market reforms are the best way to address this problem. However, structural reforms, which can aid in overcoming unemployment, cannot be executed if there is no political trust. Individuals can only truly support policymakers if they believe that their long-run interests are being considered. Windows of opportunity come during periods of robust growth and low unemployment, as trust in politics is high during these periods. These time periods give policymakers the resources to improve targeted social policy, to improve redistribution policies (Albanese *et al.*, 2022), to fix supranational institutions, to fight corruption (Guriev, 2017), to invest in skills, and to enhance labor market flexibility (Guriev, 2018). Lastly, as some drivers of populism, like technology and import shocks, are geographically concentrated, it is important to prevent that regions get left behind by using place-based policies (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2020).

There are some limitations that affect the reliability and the conclusions that can be drawn from this paper's findings. First, the internal validity is likely restricted by the initial theorizing and subsequent operationalization of the concept of material deprivation. While the amount of literature on material deprivation was not necessarily scarce, the number of items in the data that could represent or measure material deprivation was. The ESS (2018) dataset only contained one item that could seemingly measure material deprivation. As a consequence, this can challenge

the validity of those results. The second limitation concerns the structure of the research. Because this study employs cross-sectional data, only correlations between voting for the parties studied and the factors can be demonstrated. A robust criterion for causality is temporality of association, therefore cross-sectional studies cannot prove causal relations. Accordingly, longitudinal data is required to prove causality, which the ESS does not contain. Similarly, the third limitation concerns causality/underlying channels. In order to examine the underlying mechanisms behind people's support for radical parties, the study would have needed to incorporate contextual level factors along with the individual level factors. In other words, this study's conclusions are limited, as underlying channels cannot be identified with certainty. Both micro- and macro-level characteristics must be examined. Further studies could employ a multilevel analysis to replicate and expand this thesis.

The last limitation concerns the restricted range of the dataset, caused by the exclusion of non-voters in this study. Formulating meaningful conclusions from correlations between attitudinal variables and non-voters is challenging. Much more so than those drawn from attitudinal variables and active voters. For example, when examining means and correlations between the attitudinal factors studied and the extreme left, the average radical left voter can be singled out as lacking negative attitudes towards immigrants and as being highly distrustful of politics. However, formulating similar conclusions for non-voters is more difficult, due to plethora of reasons literature has shown for individuals not showing up to vote. Studies in the US and Europe have demonstrated reasons such as: low interest in politics or personal impression of political impotence (Laponce, 1967), insufficient knowledge about the candidates to formulate a decision (Pew Research Center, 2006), disliking the candidates (Amandi *et al.*, 2020), or they were simply stuck at work, sick, or missed registration deadlines (McElwee, 2015). If the analysis would have included non-voters, it would not have been known to which specific type of individual the conclusion is being made to. As Amandi *et al.* (2020) describe, non-voters are not a monolithic group, but instead, are quite varied. There is no unifying explanation for their absence in election day and non-voters are spread out across levels of income, education, and their position on the political spectrum. Furthermore, because of the variety of reasons against voting, the status of "non-voter" does not define their political stance, as it incorporates both left, right, radical, and mainstream supporters. The various different reasons that classify individuals as non-voters could create a spurious correlation, therefore the correlations found in the analysis

would not be as meaningful as the values found for your average radical/mainstream voter. If the ESS contained information regarding the reasons why non-voters are absent during election day, more relevant conclusions could be formed in further research. However, this is currently beyond the scope of this study.

Based on the findings, numerous directions for future research are suggested. First, future studies which follow a similar framework to this paper should take into account additional and especially more precise items that measure material deprivation in order to improve internal validity. An item where respondents express how likely they are in the next year to be unemployed or have financial needs would tap into the material deprivation factor much better. Second, future literature could focus on using a political discontent variable which includes items representing the trust dimension shown in this study. Consistency with this paper's results could be checked and reasoning behind the results can be formulated. Third, future studies could group non-voters according to the distinct reasons they have for not casting a vote. Then, a similar analysis can be run to examine the correlations each group has with the attitudinal variables studied. Fourth, future research could further investigate the unexpected finding that higher anti-immigrant attitudes have statistical power which increased the likelihood to vote for the mainstream centre-left when compared to the radical left. Lastly, Lubbers and Scheepers (2007) find that Euroscepticism only increased the likelihood to vote for the far-right and not the far-left in a sample from the early 2000s. Euroscepticism became a more prominent factor which explains radical party voting following the Euro crisis (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014; Clements *et al.*, 2014). However, this thesis showed that the factor does not seem to explain radical left voting with data from 2018. Future studies can examine the statistical significance of Euroscepticism on radical left voting over time and, if they find comparable results to this thesis, attempt to explain why Euroscepticism lost statistical power.

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Appendix

Table A1
List of radical left parties in fourteen European countries

Country	Abbrev.	Name (English)	Name (Original)
Cyprus	AKEL	Progressive Party of Working People	Anorthotikon Komma Ergazemenou Laou
	SYM/SYPOL	Citizen's Alliance	Symmaxia
Czech Republic	KSCM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	Komunisticka strana Cech a Moravy
Denmark	En-O	Red-Green Alliance	Enhedslisten -- De Rod-Gronne
	SF	Socialist People's Party	Socialistisk Folkeparti
Finland	VAS	Left Alliance	Demokraattinen Liitto Vasemmistoliitto
France	FI	Unbowed France	La France Insoumise
	PCF/FdG	French Communist Party / Left Front	Parti Communiste Francais
Germany	Li	The Left	Die Linke
Ireland	SF	Sinn Fein	Sinn Fein
Netherlands	SP	Socialist Party	Socialistische Partij
Norway	SV	Socialist Left Party	Sosialistisk Venstreparti
Portugal	BE	Bloc of the Left	Bloco de Esquerda
	CDU – PEV & PCP	Unified Democratic Coalition	Coligacao Democratico Unitaria
Slovenia	L	The Left	Levica
Spain	ECP	In Common We Can	En Comú Podem
	Podemos	Podemos	Podemos
	BNG	Galician Nationalist Bloc	Bloque Nacionalista Galego
Sweden	V	Left Party	Vansterpartiet (Kommunisterna)
Switzerland	PdA	Swiss Party of Labour	Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz

Notes: Parties that are classified as far left in the PopuList (2019) and that have a value in the ESS data.

Source: The PopuList 2.0 (2019) and the European Social Survey (2018) databases.

Table A2
List of radical right parties in twelve European countries

Country	Abbrev.	Name (English)	Name (Original)
Cyprus	ELAM	National Popular Front	Ethniko Laiko Metopo
Czech Republic	SPD	Freedom and Direct Democracy	Svoboda a prima demokracie
Denmark	DF	Danish Peoples Party	Dansk Folkeparti
Finland	Ps	Finns Party	Suomen Puolue Perussuomalaiset
France	FN/RN	National Front / Rally	Rassemblement national
	DLR/DLF	Republic Arise France Arise	Debout la republique Debout la France
Germany	AfD	Alternative for Germany	Alternative fuer Deutschland
Netherlands	PVV	Party for Freedom	Partij voor de Vrijheid
	FvD	Forum for Democracy	Forum voor Democratie
Norway	FrP	Progress Party	Fremskrittspartiet
Slovenia	SDS	Slovenian Democratic Party	Slovenska demokratska stranka
	SNS	Slovenian National Party	Slovenska nacionalna stranka
Spain	VOX	Voice	VOX
Sweden	SD	Sweden Democrats	Sverigedemokraterna
Switzerland	LdT	Ticino League	Lega dei Ticinesi
	MCR	Geneva Citizens' Movement	Mouvement Citoyens Genevois
	SVP	Swiss People's Party	Schweizerische Volkspartei -- Union Democratique du Centre

Notes: Parties that are classified as far-right in the PopuList (2019) and that have a value in the ESS data.

Source: The PopuList 2.0 (2019) and the European Social Survey (2018) databases.

Table A3
List of mainstream left parties in fourteen European countries

Country	Abbrev.	Name (English)	Name (Original)
Cyprus	EDEK	Movement for Social Democracy	Kinima Sosialdimokraton
Czech Republic	CSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party	Ceska strana socialne demokraticka
Denmark	SD	Social Democrats	Socialdemokraterne
Finland	SSDP	Social Democratic Party of Finland	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue
France	PS	Socialist Party	Parti socialiste
Germany	SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
Ireland	Lab DS	Labour Party Social Democrats	Labour Party Daonlathaigh Shoisialta
Netherlands	PvdA DENK	Labour Party Think	Partij van de Arbeid Beweging DENK
Norway	DNA	Norwegian Labour Party	Det norske Arbeiderparti
Portugal	PS	Socialist Party	Partido Socialista
Slovenia	SD LMS	Social Democrats List of Marjan Sarec	Socialni demokrati Lista Marjana Sarca
Spain	PSOE	Spanish Socialist Workers Party	Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol
Sweden	SAP	Social Democrats	Socialdemokraterna
Switzerland	SP-PS	Social Democratic Party of Switzerland	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz -- Parti Socialiste Suisse

Notes: Parties that are classified as social democrats in the party-family classification of the Manifesto Project (2021) and that have a value in the ESS data.

Source: The Manifesto Project (2021) and the European Social Survey (2018) databases.

Table A4
Cronbach's Alpha of scales used

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Political discontent	.884	5
Anti-immigration attitudes	.880	3
Political discontent (trust dimension)	.904	3
Political discontent (satisfaction dimension)	.736	2

Table A5
Pre-factor analysis tests

Attitudinal items used	Bartlett's test of sphericity (p-value)	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
All ten items	.000	.860
The five political discontent items	.000	.820

Table A6
Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances sorted for all ten items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Uniqueness
Trust in politicians	.923				.163
Trust in political parties	.912				.212
Trust in parliament	.623				.345
Euroskepticism		.315			.798
Material deprivation			.652		.533
Satisfaction with democracy			.615		.384
Satisfaction with government			.604		.487
How immigration affects place to live				.862	.301
How immigration affects culture				.840	.286
How immigration affects economy				.729	.371
Eigenvalue	4.288	1.449	0.373	0.010	

Table A7
Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances sorted for the five political discontent items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Uniqueness
Trust in political parties	.856		.212
Trust in politicians	.849		.165
Trust in parliament	.544	.315	.354
Satisfaction with democracy		.653	.445
Satisfaction with government		.630	.530
Eigenvalue	3.074	0.221	

Table A8
Multicollinearity diagnosis: variance inflation factors

Variable	VIF
Political discontent (satisfaction dimension)	2.18
Political discontent (trust dimension)	1.89
Material deprivation	1.60
Anti-immigration attitudes	1.54
Euroscepticism	1.33
Higher education	1.19
Income	1.17
Age	1.08
Gender	1.04

Notes: Post-stratification weights and population size weights are employed in the linear regression from which the VIFs are estimated from.