Decomposing the Rise of the Populist Radical Right*

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Abstract

The support for populist radical right parties in Europe has dramatically increased in the 21st century. We decompose the rise of radical right parties into four potential factors: changes in party positions, changes in voter demographics and opinions, changes in voters' priorities, and a residual. We merge data on voter characteristics from the Integrated Value Survey with data on party positions from the Comparative Manifesto Project. Using a probabilistic voting model, we estimate voting priorities: the parameters of the utility function, which determine the weights voters place on different party positions, given their characteristics. We find no evidence that changes in voters' opinions and demographics, or shifts in party positions explain the rise of the radical right. Instead, the main driver behind the success of radical right parties lies in changing priorities. Specifically, we find that voters increasingly place a higher priority on cultural issues compared to economic issues, allowing radical right parties to tap into a preexisting reservoir of culturally conservative voters.

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1 Introduction

The rise of populist radical right parties is one of the most important political developments of the twenty-first century. Figure 1 shows that while radical right parties were a marginal force in European politics in the early 1990s, they capture close to 20% of the vote today. Radical right parties have joined governments as junior members and even led governments in a growing number of countries (Akkerman et al., 2016; Funke et al., 2020). When in power, they have managed to impact policy-making on multiple issues, from immigration to welfare programs (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2021). In certain contexts, they have significantly eroded democratic norms and institutions (McCoy and Somer, 2019).

In recent years, there has been an abundance of new research identifying reduced-form effects of various factors on the support for radical right parties (Rodrik, 2018; Guriev and Papioannou, 2020; Noury and Roland, 2020). Still, there is no consensus on what is the main explanation for the extensive rise of the radical right across Europe, and which factors are idiosyncratic and apply only in certain contexts. Additionally, little is known about the broad mechanisms behind the rise of the radical right, including whether this trend is driven by supply or demand forces. On the supply side, a shift in party positions may explain the rise of the radical right if, for example, radical right parties moderated their positions and, as a result, attracted more mainstream voters. On the demand side, there is an ongoing debate regarding which changes among voters are responsible for the rise of the radical right. A common view argues that voters' *characteristics* have changed. For instance, the increased support for the radical right could be due to voters adopting more nativist attitudes. The alternative view argues that a large share of the population has always held conservative cultural positions, but voters' *priorities* have changed. Specifically, the rise in the radical right could have occurred because voters started prioritizing cultural issues when deciding which party to support (Bartels, 2017).

In this paper, we compare the explanatory power of these three classes of arguments—changes in party positions, voter characteristics, and priorities—by introducing a decomposition method to the study of voting behavior in Europe. We couple information on voter characteristics from the Integrate Values Survey (IVS) with rich data on party positions from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and employ a probabilistic voting model to estimate voters' priorities. On the supply side, we find that changes in party positions cannot

explain the rise of the radical right. On the demand side, we find that voters' demographics and opinions have not changed in a way that is expected to yield greater support for the radical right. Instead, changes in priorities drive most of the radical right's growing support. Particularly, over the last two decades, voters have attached increased importance to cultural issues at the expense of economic issues. These priority changes allowed radical right parties to harness the support of a preexisting reservoir of culturally conservative voters.

Our decomposition analyses rely on a probabilistic voting model, where voters select a party that maximizes their utility. In the model, a voter's utility from supporting a specific party is a function of that party's position vector, weighted by the voter's individual voting weights. Each weight corresponds to a different party position and can be positive or negative, depending on whether the voter supports or opposes this position. Weights with higher absolute values have a greater influence on the voting decision.

We assume the voting weights are a function of voter characteristics. For instance, voters who favor more redistribution are expected to place a positive weight on a position expressing support for welfare spending, and younger voters are expected to place a positive weight on environmental positions. The magnitude of each weight can change over time, for example, when specific positions become more salient or legitimate, even if voters' opinions remain unchanged. In our model, voters' priorities correspond to the parameters of the utility function. These parameters determine the weights each voter places on each issue position, conditional on their opinions and demographics.

By including voting priorities, voting characteristics, and party positions in the same empirical model, we can decompose their relative contribution to the overall rise of the radical right. However, we note that this parsimonious unifying framework comes at the cost of abstracting away from other voting considerations, such as strategic voting.

Armed with our empirical voting model, we develop a decomposition method that builds on commonly used methods in the study of income inequality (Fortin et al., 2011; Juhn et al., 1993; DiNardo et al., 1996). The model allows us to calculate counterfactual voting shares for every party, given the party positions, distribution of voter characteristics, voter priorities, and a residual. We use these counterfactuals to quantify the relative importance of each component by fixing the three other components and predicting how support for the radical right would change as only one component changes with time. We then calculate which share

of the overall rise of the radical right is attributed to each of the components.

We bring the model to the data by merging the IVS and CMP datasets. The IVS includes a rich and consistent set of demographic and opinion questions. We analyze approximately 100 variables over three waves: 2005-2009, 2011-2013, and 2017-2020.[1] The CMP provides data on 56 party positions, based on the share of mentions of each topic in each party manifesto. We classify parties as radical right based on the PopuList dataset.[2] Our merged dataset includes approximately 60,000 respondents in 22 countries.

We estimate the model in two steps. First, we estimate the parameters determining the probability of voting for each party. These include a vector of party fixed effects, which capture the common utility voters receive from each party, and a matrix defining the slope of the voting weights as a function of voter characteristics. We estimate these parameters separately for each survey wave using a penalized maximum likelihood estimator. We search for the set of parameters that maximizes the likelihood that each respondent votes for the party they supported in the survey. We include all available variables in our datasets, allowing the data to decide which combinations of variables are most relevant for voting decisions. To reduce the dimensionality of the problem and avoid over-fitting, we penalize the slope matrix according to its nuclear norm. We maximize the combined objective function using proximal gradient descent.

The party fixed effects are themselves a function of both the average voting weights and the party positions. For instance, if all voters place a more positive weight on nationalistic positions, this would increase the party fixed effects of nationalistic parties. Therefore, in the second step, we estimate the voting weights intercepts, which capture the average weight voters place on party positions. The intercepts are estimated by combining all survey waves and regressing the party fixed effects that were estimated in the first stage, on party positions, using only within-party variation over time.

We first analyze the weights different voters place on multiple party positions. Reassur-

[1]While the IVS survey data provides us with rich respondent-level information on voter characteristics, it limits our ability to identify whether respondents would actually vote. Hence, in this project, we do not focus on the turnout margin, despite its importance.

[2]Scholars and media commentators sometimes use 'populist radical right' and 'radical right' interchangeably. While these two concepts have distinct theoretical definitions, in practice 91% of the radical right parties in out data are populist radical right parties and 99% of supporters of radical right parties in our data are supporting parties that are populist radical right (the definitions of populist and radical right are discussed in Section 4.2.2). Therefore, our empirical results remain very similar whether we focus on radical right parties or on populist radical right parties and we use both terms in this paper.

ingly, on key issues, the weights are in line with common expectations. For example, we find that green voters place higher positive weights on support for environmental protection policies, compared to other voters. Interestingly, we find that the weights radical right supporters place on economic positions are similar to mainstream right-wing voters; it is in the great importance attached to cultural issues that radical right voters differ from those who support the mainstream right.

Next, we decompose the increase in support for the radical right into four components: party positions, voter characteristics, voter priorities, and a residual. We find that changes in priorities explain most of the increased support (45.1%) for the radical right. In contrast, voter characteristics and party positions explain only 2.9% and 3.0% of the change in radical right support, respectively. Finally, a large share of the increased radical right support is due to the residual in our model. Most of this factor is explained by the entry of new radical right parties in this period.

We complement the decomposition results and explore mechanisms for the trends in each of the four components. On the supply side, we rule out the hypothesis that radical right parties gained substantial support across Europe by moderating their positions. In fact, radical right parties have become more extreme on their core issues of national identity over time. We also do not find much support for the argument that the rise of the radical right is driven by mainstream parties' shift to progressive positions or by an ideological convergence of the center-left and center-right.

On the demand side, we first investigate our striking finding that changes in voter characteristics do not drive radical right support. We calculate a 'radical right score' for each voter, defined as the probability that each voter would vote for the radical right based on individual-level opinions and demographics. We find that the score has not changed substantially. In other words, based on a rich set of observable variables, there is no shift in public opinion in the direction of the radical right. In contrast, while the relevant voter characteristics are stable over time, they vary substantially across countries. We use a similar decomposition method to predict the counterfactual support the radical right would have received in different countries if voters in all countries were facing the same choice set. We find that the spatial variation in voter characteristics can partially explain why the radical right is stronger in some areas (e.g., Eastern Europe) and weaker in other (e.g., Scandinavia).

We then explore in detail how changes in priorities contributed to the rise of the radical right. We find that the relative importance voters attach to economic positions had decreased since the mid-2000s. In other words, voters today are less likely to choose which party to vote for based on that parity's economic positions. In contrast, the importance of cultural topics has not declined. Moreover, weights on conservative cultural positions have become more positive on average. This means that culturally conservative voters are now more likely to vote for a party because of its conservative cultural positions, while culturally progressive voters are now less likely to penalize parties that support conservative cultural values.

Finally, we show that the increase in the residual component is mainly a result of the entry of new parties. The average number of radical right parties in a country increased by 105% between 2005 and 2019. Our counterfactual analysis suggests that parties with radical right positions could have received some support had they entered earlier. We attribute entry to the residual component because we do not know whether parties did not enter earlier due to supply or demand factors.

Our analysis is descriptive and we view it as complementary to causal research. By better understanding the channels through which support for radical right parties rises, we can reject several leading hypotheses for this rise. The first contribution of this paper is to an ongoing debate about whether the rise of the radical right reflects a shift in voters' worldviews or a change in their priorities. It is often argued that rising levels of support for the radical right are driven by shifts in mass public opinion toward the positions of the radical right (Hangartner et al., 2019; Berman and Kundnani, 2021).[3] Others argue that radical right parties mobilized voters by activating a pre-existing reservoir of attitudes and resentment (Bartels, 2017; Sides et al., 2019; Magistro and Wittstock, 2021). We directly compare these explanations and show that changes in voter priorities explain the rise of the radical right, in contrast to opinions or demographics.

In addition to studying demand-side forces, our paper contributes to the literature on supply-side forces, which study the role of political parties in shaping their electoral fortunes. Recent papers discuss how changing party positions led to working-class voters abandoning left-wing parties (Zeira, 2022), the convergence of the center-left and center-right opened

[3]Other papers show that specific voter characteristics are associated with voting for the radical right including financial hardship (Algan et al., 2017; Becker et al., 2017; Guiso et al., 2020), age (Norris and Inglehart, 2019), subjective social status (Gidron and Hall, 2020), and social capital (Giuliano and Wacziarg, 2020).

a space for radical challengers (Berman and Kundnani, 2021; Berman, 2021), and radical right parties gained support by changing their positions on issues of traditional morality (Akkerman, 2015; Lancaster, 2020). We do not find evidence that a change in the positions of existing European parties is a major driver of radical right support. However, the entry of new parties is a substantial factor driving their support.

This paper also contributes to a rich literature studying the effects of shocks on radical right support, including technological change (Anelli et al., 2019), the financial crises (Funke et al., 2020), trade shocks (Colantone and Stanig, 2018b,a; Autor et al., 2020; Dippel et al., 2020), and new media technology (Guriev et al., 2021; Manacorda et al., 2022). We complement these papers by establishing the channels through which these shocks operated. For example, if trade shocks dramatically increased populist support, this occurred by changing the priorities of voters and not their opinions.

Finally, this paper contributes to a small literature estimating the weights voters place on issues when determining which party to support. Kendall et al. (2015) conduct an information experiment to estimate the weights voters place on valence and ideology. Other papers have used surveys to determine the most important issues for voters (Johns, 2010). We take a different approach. Using a structural model, we estimate the weights placed on party positions by combining the positions of parties with the voters' preferred party. While our approach is still descriptive in nature, it makes two contributions. First, we show how weights change flexibly based on the characteristics of voters and in different periods. Second, our method allows us to analyze the weights placed on any party position. Specifically, we compare the weights placed on economic and cultural issues and provide quantitative evidence to a recent theoretical literature discussing the growing importance of cultural issues (Bonomi et al., 2021; Enke, 2020).

2 Background

European radical right parties share three main characteristics: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2007; Bonikowski, 2017). Their nativism is expressed in an ethno-nationalist exclusionary view of society, which considers minorities as a threat to the purity of the 'real people.' These parties' authoritarianism is reflected in support of traditional

hierarchies and social orders. And their populist politics is predicated on a moral opposition between the corrupt elites and the pure and unified people (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). In the populist discourse of radical right, local elites are often blamed for colluding with outgroups such as local minorities or outside enemies against the interests of the people.

In the analyses below, we limit ourselves to Europe as our universe of cases. This is not because the radical right has not flourished elsewhere: some of its standard-bearers are found in the Americas (Belew and Gutierrez, 2021; Kuo, 2019; Lieberman et al., 2019; Mudde, 2021; Weyland, 2020). By limiting our analyses to Europe, we focus on radical right parties that have long defined themselves in opposition to similar political developments, such as European integration, and that have formed transnational networks of cooperation in supranational institutions such as the European Parliament (McDonnell and Werner, 2020).

3 Model

In this section, we describe our voting model and explain how we use it for our decomposition exercise.

3.1 Working Hypothesis

We follow classic probabilistic voting models by assuming that utility is a function of voter preferences, party positions on issues, and an error term. Voters use a standard utility maximization framework and support the party that maximizes their utility. This model serves as the backbone of our empirical investigation into the rise in populism.

Voter i's utility from voting to party j is a function of the party's positions weighted by her individual voting weights. Specifically, we assume the following functional form for voters' utility:

$$U_{ij} = w_i' z_j + \zeta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

The L-dimensional vector z_j represents party j's positions. w_i is a corresponding L-dimensional vector of voter weights. Each individual weight w_i^l represents the impact of the corresponding party position z_j^l on voter i's utility. The sign of the weight is positive when the voter supports a position (i.e., utility increases when voting for a party with this position) and negative if she opposes it. The weight's magnitude measures how much the voter cares about

this topic compared to other topics. We use ζ_j to capture the party's valence–an unobserved party quality that increases the utility from supporting the party among all voters. Valence could capture factors such as the party leader's popularity or the party's historical reputation. We use ε_{ij} to represent all unobserved idiosyncratic factors that affect voters' decisions.

We assume that the voting weights are a linear function of voter characteristics. In particular, we assume the following function

$$w_i = x_i'\Phi + \beta \tag{1}$$

The M-dimensional vector x_i represents the observed characteristics of voter i. The matrix Φ is an $M \times L$ matrix, which determines how each voter characteristic affects the weights voters place on a specific position. When a higher value of voter characteristic x^m generates larger support for position z^l, Φ_{lm} will be positive, and vice versa. For instance, if x^m measures the support of voters for larger spending on welfare and z^l measures the support of parties for larger welfare spending, we would expect Φ_{ml} to have a large positive value. We standardize the distribution of x_i such that the L-dimensional vector β represents the average weight of the full population.

Taken together, the utility function is a quadratic form function of the voter and party characteristics. We define a vector δ such that $\delta_j := \zeta_j + \beta' z_j$. δ_j captures the utility gain from party j that is common across voters. Hence we can write the utility as

$$u\left(x_i, z_j, \varepsilon_{ij};\right) = x_i'\Phi z_j + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{2}$$

This parametrization can capture the first-order approximation of any functional form. This includes the standard bliss point utility functions where voters vote for the party closest to them ideologically.[4] It also allows a more complex utility function, where voters vote based on multiple dimensions and where demographics, such as education (Piketty, 2020), can also affect voting choices.

To take this model to the data, we assume that ε_{ij} have a general extremum value type-I distribution, $F(\varepsilon) = e^{-e^{(-\varepsilon)}}$ (Gumbel). This assumption allows us to write the probability of

[4]By including in $f(x_i)$ the estimated voter's bliss point, and in $g(z_j)$ the party's position, we can define Φ based on the standard bliss point utility function: $u\left(x_i, z_j, \varepsilon_{ij}\right) = -\left(x_i - z_j\right)^2 + \varepsilon_{ij}$, in which case $\Phi = \frac{d^2U}{dxdz} = -\nabla_f'\nabla_g$

voting for a party as a function of the utility and a constant.

$$\log P(z_j|x_i) = E[u(x_i, z_j, \varepsilon_{ij}] + c$$

and using Equation 2 we get

$$P(z_j|x_i) = \frac{\exp(x_i'\Phi z_j + \delta_j)}{\Sigma_k \exp(x_i'\Phi z_k + \delta_k)}$$

We will use this expression to calculate the likelihood function of the model parameters.

3.2 Decomposition

Building on the aforementioned model we can decompose the rise of the radical right into changes in voter priorities, voter characteristics, party positions, and a residual. For each component of our decomposition, we simulate the counterfactual increase in support for the radical right if only that input of the model changed while others remained fixed.

The statistic that we decompose is $S_P^{t,c}$, the share of voters supporting a radical right party in country c at period t. Formally, we note by $\mathcal{P}$ the set of radical right parties and use Π to note the event of voting for one of those parties ($\arg\max_j U_{ij} \in \mathcal{P}$). We use θ to note the set of utility parameters $\theta = (\Phi, \beta)$. We then mark by f_t^c the density of voter characteristics at time t in country c and use $Z_t^c = \{z_{j,t}\}_{j \in \mathcal{J}(c,t)}$ to note the matrix of observed party positions. We use $\zeta_t = \{\zeta_{j,t}\}_{j \in \mathcal{J}(c,t)}$ to note the residual.

$$S_P^{t,c} := \int P(\Pi|x_i; \theta_t, Z_t^c, \zeta_t^c) f_t^c(x_i) \mathrm{d}x_i$$

Using this notation we can write the total change in voting for the radical right between period t and $t+1$ as

$$\Delta_t^{t+1} S_P^c = \int P\left(\Pi|x_i; \theta_{t+1}, Z_{t+1}^c, \zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_{t+1}^c\left(x_i\right) \mathrm{d}x_i - \int P\left(\Pi|x_i; \theta_t, Z_t, \zeta_t^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right) \mathrm{d}x_i$$

This parameterization allows us to decompose $\Delta_t^{t+1} S_P^c$ into the sum of four components.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\Delta_t^{t+1} S_P^c \;=\; & \underbrace{\int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_t^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i - \int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_t^c,\zeta_t^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i}_{\text{Residual}} \\
+ \; & \underbrace{\int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_{t+1}^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i - \int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_t^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i}_{\text{Party Positions}} \\
+ \; & \underbrace{\int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_{t+1}^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_{t+1}^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i - \int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_{t+1}^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_t^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i}_{\text{Voter Characteristics}} \\
+ \; & \underbrace{\int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_{t+1},Z_{t+1}^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_{t+1}^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i - \int P\left(\Pi|x_i;\theta_t,Z_{t+1}^c,\zeta_{t+1}^c\right) f_{t+1}^c\left(x_i\right)\mathrm{d}x_i}_{\text{Voting Priorities}}
\end{aligned}
\tag{3}
$$

Each component represents a counterfactual exercise where only one input changes, while the others are held fixed. The order of the four components in the decomposition can affect the results as it determines whether to fix the components not being analyzed to their level at the start (t) or end ($t+1$) of the period. We chose to start with the residual component, such that the rest of the components fix the residuals to their value at $t+1$. Since our residual component also includes entries, this allows us to quantify the increase in support due to changes in other components for new parties that did not exist in period t. Otherwise, the other components would be mechanically zero for all countries that did not have a radical right party in the first wave, as voters cannot change their support for parties that have not yet entered.

We use manifestos from $t+1$ when the party did not exist at wave t. The party position could still be different from zero, because of changes in manifestos of parties that existed before. We use party position as the second component such that the manifestos are fixed to their value at $t+1$, and will not combine manifests from different waves. The order of voting weights and voter characteristics can be reversed and does not significantly affect the results.

The components analyzed correspond to a different set of potential hypotheses for the rise of the radical right, which we review below.

Residual The first component captures changes in the residual component. This includes both unobserved party characteristics, as well as entries and exits, which we model as having

$\zeta = -\infty$. We chose to attribute entries to the residual component as entries could generate an increase in support for the radical right due to both supply and demand. On the supply side, mechanically, once a party enters, voters who always supported the party's positions can express their support for it. On the demand side, it is likely that the choice of parties to enter is endogenous and corresponds to changes in voter priorities or characteristics. The residual component will be large if radical right parties increased their support due to a positive change in valence: for instance, due to more charismatic leaders, or another characteristic that is not correlated with the observed party positions.

Party Positions The second component thus captures changes in the supply of party positions Z, holding the voting weights and the valence fixed. Below we provide two concrete examples of how party positions can affect radical right support.

Populist radical right parties could have shifted their positions from neoliberal, anti-tax policies toward welfare chauvinism, understood as generous welfare benefits which exclude those who are deemed as unauthentic members of the nation. In the early 1990s, these parties proposed a combination of extreme nativist positions and free-market economics—famously labeled 'the winning formula' (Kitschelt and McGann, 1997). Yet as these parties increasingly attracted working-class voters, they may have intentionally moderated or blurred their economic positions (Rovny, 2013) until a new winning formula emerged: the bundling of anti-immigration positions with support for an exclusionary welfare state (Careja and Harris, 2021; Lefkofridi and Michel, 2016; Schumacher and Van Kersbergen, 2016).

It is also possible that radical right parties gained support because of changes in the position of competing parties. For instance, Berman and Snegovaya (2019) argue that the convergence of center-left and center-right parties on economic issues has allowed populist challengers to capture the vote of economically discontent voters. Furthermore, this mainstream convergence on economic policies heightened the salience of cultural issues, which benefit the radical right (Berman and Kundnani, 2021).

Voter Characteristics The third component captures changes in f, the distribution of voter characteristics x_i, holding the utility parameters and party positions fixed. This component is associated with the dominant image of the rise of the populist right as a political tsunami: a swift and powerful shift in public opinion toward the ethnonationalism and au-

thoritarianism of these parties.

One source that could explain such a shift in mass preferences is economic shocks that generate authoritarian attitudes. Analyzing British survey data, Ballard-Rosa et al. (2017) argue that people who live in regions exposed to trade shocks adopted more authoritarian values—which, in turn, nudge voters toward populist right parties and causes (such as Brexit).[5] Dehdari (2022) argues that in Sweden, unemployment increases support for the radical right among low-skilled workers, and points at growing hostility toward immigrants among the less well-off as a key mechanism at work. In these accounts, economic shifts push mass attitudes in the direction of the radical right.

Another line of research suggests that changing demographics and growing ethnic diversity led to the adoption of nativist anti-immigration attitudes in Europe. Examining Greek public attitudes following the refugee crisis of 2015, Hangartner et al. (2019) show that greater exposure to refugees fuels anti-minority sentiments and induces opposition to immigration—the positions that lie at the core of the radical right's agenda. Similar findings have been documented in Austria (Rudolph and Wagner, 2021) and Norway (Nordø and Ivarsflaten, 2021) but not in some other contexts (Cools et al., 2021; Schaub et al., 2021).

Voting Priorities The final component captures changes in the voting weights w_i for voters with the same characteristics x_i. Namely, it measures how support for the radical right would have changed between periods t and $t+1$ if only the utility function parameters changed, while the voter characteristics and party supply are held fixed (at their value in $t+1$). These voting weights parameters include the matrix Φ and vector β. Together they determine whether different voters support or oppose each party position and how they prioritize the different positions, given their opinions, values, and demographics.

Voting weights can lead to increased support for the radical right even in the absence of a major shift in either voters' characteristics or the supply of parties. As evocatively argued by Bartels (2017), radical right parties may have increased their support by activating a pre-existing reservoir of culturally conservative attitudes, and not because of a sudden shift of mass attitudes in their direction. In Italy, for instance, Magistro and Wittstock (2021) argue

[5] Ballard-Rosa et al. (2021) make a similar case with regard to the United States, arguing that because of more intense competition from Chinese imports Americans adopted more authoritarian attitudes and voted for Trump in 2016.

that support for radical right parties increased while anti-immigration attitudes remained stable—it was only the salience of anti-immigration issues that has changed, according to these authors. Closely related, Sobolewska and Ford (2020) explain that support for Brexit occurred due to the activation of preexisting ethnonationalist attitudes and Cantoni et al. (2020) argues that the emergence of the AfD in Germany gained support due to existing demand for its nationalist positions. Bonikowski (2017) refers to this as the growing resonance of the radical right's message in the electorate.[6]

4 Data

4.1 Voter Characterises: Integrated Values Survey

We measure voter characteristics using the Integrated Values Survey (IVS). The IVS is composed of two large-scale cross-national repeated surveys: the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Values Survey (EVS). This dataset provides several advantages for our analysis. First, it includes broad information on a variety of voter characteristics including demographics, religious beliefs, social values, and opinions on various topics, such as state intervention in the economy and immigration. Second, many of the questions in the IVS are consistently asked over time. This feature is critical for our decomposition analysis and typically does not exist in similar datasets, such as European Social Survey. Third, the data covers a broad range of countries.

We study three survey waves: 2005-2009, 2011-2013, and 2017-2020. Besides 2011-2013, each of the waves includes data from both a WVS and EVS survey. We include in our study all 22 European countries that were surveyed in the most recent wave, in the 2005-2009 wave, and where we were able to match the parties most respondents supported with CMP data in each survey wave. Figure 2 presents the countries included in our database along with the support radical right parties received in the 2017-2020 survey. The figure shows that we cover countries with a wide range of radical right support spanning from 0% to above 70% in Hungary. Table 1 summarizes the constructed IVS data and Appendix A includes further

[6]The activation of pre-existing attitudes may also explain the support for the radical right in the United States. Sides et al. (2019) show that the Trump candidacy captured voters who already expressed negative affect toward minority groups such as Muslim Americans and opposition to immigration. Mason et al. (2021) analyze rich data set collected since 2011 and show that latent animosity toward minority groups associated with the Democratic Party, such as LGBTQ persons and Black Americans, has driven voters toward Trump.

details about how we processed the data.

To estimate changes over time and provide our model with as much flexibility as possible, by default we include in our analysis all variables that appear in all three survey waves. We exclude several variables that ask about priorities or general positions and not about opinions, behaviors, or demographics, as we capture priorities separately in the decomposition exercise. One concern throughout this project is that voters' opinions may be affected by the party they support, instead of voters choosing a party based on their opinion. This is especially common when a new government is elected and as a result voters immediately change their opinions on the government. Therefore, we test which opinions tend to change once parties join the governing coalition and exclude from our analysis the three most elastic variables: 'confidence in parliament', 'confidence in political parties', and 'confidence in government'.[7] Appendix Table A.2 describes the final set of 101 opinion and demographics variables included in our data.

Our main outcome variable is respondents' preferred party, the party participants said they would vote for or the party that appeals to them most.[8] We harmonize party names and identifiers across surveys to ensure that each party appears only once in the dataset using the PartyFacts and CMP databases when possible and manually in many other cases. Appendix A.2 describes the process of party identification in the IVS data. We use the EVS/WVS survey weights when they are available to adjust the demographic characteristic in the samples to their distribution in the population (typically based on some combination of age, sex, education, and region).[9]

[7] In particular, for each opinion in our data, we run a linear regression where the dependent variable is the opinion and the independent variable is whether the party supported by the respondent is part of the governing coalition, as determined by the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow, 2020). We include party fixed effects and country-wave fixed effects. We exclude from our data the three the variable most strongly affected by a party's coalition status.

[8] Most surveys asked participants who they would vote for and if participants did not know, they asked which party they support. In the last EVS wave participants were only asked which party appeals to them most. We use the answers to both questions to define the outcome for as many respondents as possible.

[9] Survey weights are currently used in the reduced-form analysis. We are in the process of adding them to the model estimates. They are not expected to substantially change the results.

4.2 Party data

4.2.1 Party Positions: Comparative Manifesto Project

We characterize parties' positions on various issues using the CMP (Volkens et al., 2020).[10] This dataset codes how many times each topic was mentioned in a manifesto (the party's platform) and for many topics details the number of positive and negative mentions. The dataset has been used by countless papers analyzing electoral politics (Adams, 2012). The key advantage of this data is its objectivity: it relies on the texts parties produce and not on how experts perceive the parties' positions. Moreover, the dataset covers a large variety of topics, including economic issues, cultural issues, stands on globalization, national security, and foreign policy.[11]

Our analysis often focuses on two indices of party positions, created by the CMP. The economic index measures the overall manifesto position on the government intervention-free market scale. In incorporates 14 party positions including positions on the welfare state, economic systems, protectionism, and regulation. The cultural index (originally called the society index) summarizes cultural positions on a progressive-conservative scale. It includes 15 party positions on issues including traditional morality, nationalism, multiculturalism, international relations, and environmental protection. Both indices are constructed by adding conservative party positions and subtracting liberal positive positions such that a high value reflects more support for a free market or more conservative cultural value. We prefer analyzing pre-existing indices to avoid cherry-picking specific positions. Appendix Table A.3 presents the full list of CMP party positions along with a short description.

By definition, the CMP data is measured around elections, while the IVS surveys are not necessarily conducted close to elections. When merging the datasets, we assign to each party the CMP variables defined for the election closest to when the EVS/WVS survey was taken. We define the party position as missing if no CMP data is available five years before or after the survey. We include in the analysis only respondents that we were able to match

[10] Another potential data source on party positions is the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). Yet the coverage of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey is more limited than that of the Comparative Manifesto Project. Furthermore, we prefer the CMP because it provides an objective measure of positions. Previous work suggests that the CMP measures are strongly correlated with that of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Adams et al., 2019).

[11] We include in our analysis all of the CMP main categories (three-digit variable names) as these variables are available across countries and over time.

with manifesto data. Fortunately, Table A.1 shows that we match 94% of respondents who mentioned a party. However, we are limited in focusing only on voters who support a specific party and abstract from any analysis of voter turnout.

4.2.2 Classifying Radical Right Parties

We determine whether a party is a radical right party according to the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2019). The dataset classifies European parties since 1989 based on a cooperation between academics and journalists. We use this dataset since PopuList is comprehensive and has been recently updated.[12]. As noted above, there is almost a complete overlap between the categories of the radical right and the populist radical right; we use the more expansive category of the radical right.

We use the CMP data to classify parties to other families. Specifically, we define parties as left-wing parties if the CMP defines them as social democratic, socialist or other left parties; mainstream right parties are those coded in the CMP defines as liberal, Christian democratic, or conservative parties; and we define parties as green parties if the CMP defines them as ecological parties.

5 Estimation

In this section, we describe how we estimate the model parameters using a two-step procedure. We first estimate the matrix Φ and vector δ using a penalized MLE method, separately for each IVS wave. These parameters fully determine the likelihood of voting for each party (Equation 2). We then estimate β and ζ with a linear regression, using the estimands for $\hat{\delta}$ from all three waves between 2005-2020.[13]

5.1 Estimation of Φ, δ

Our wide datasets imply that our parameter space is highly dimensional. We prefer not to make any a-priori assumptions regarding which combination of variables is important for ex-

[12]There are three cases where the classification of parties based on the Populist is not constant in our data. Since such changes are so rare, we define a party as a radical right party if the PopuList defined it as radical right in any time period

[13]We currently do not present confidence intervals for our results. We will incorporate statistical inference in future versions of the paper.

plaining voting decisions and instead use all available variables and let the data determine the important variables. This approach is especially important when studying an open question, such as the rise of populism, where many competing theories have been proposed and we would not want to rule out any hypothesis in advance. As a result, the dimension of matrix Φ is approximately 5,000 (the number of voter characteristics multiplied by the number of party positions). This could generate noisy estimates of Φ due to overfitting.

To solve this problem, we rely on techniques from the machine learning literature. Specifically, we restrict the support of Φ such that $\|\Phi\| < c$. We use the nuclear norm as our matrix norm for two reasons. First, the nuclear norm is known to generate low-rank solutions. Low-rank matrices are easier to interpret and imply that the voters decide which party to support based on relatively few dimensions, as the literature suggests (Kriesi et al., 2008; Abou-Chadi and Hix, 2021). Second, the nuclear norm generates a convex optimization problem that is computationally easier to solve. For these reasons, this norm has been frequently used in recent econometric research (Athey et al., 2021).

We estimate Φ and δ using a penalized maximum likelihood estimator. We solve the following maximization problem

$$\max_{\Phi,\delta} \mathcal{L}(\Phi, \delta) + \lambda \|\Phi\| = \max_{\Phi,\delta} \sum_i \log \frac{\exp\left[x_i \Phi z_{j(i)} + \delta_{j(i)}\right]}{\sum_k \exp\left[x_i \Phi z_k + \delta_k\right]} + \lambda \|\Phi\|$$

We estimate the parameters separately for each IVS wave. We choose the value of the penalization parameter λ using cross-validation. Similar to Athey et al. (2021), we solve this maximization problem using proximal gradient descent (Hastie et al., 2019).[14]

5.2 Estimation of β, ζ

In the second stage, we use the estimators of $\hat{\delta}_t$ to estimate β_t, the mean value for each voting weight, and ζ, each party's valence. We assume the following linear model for all waves jointly

$$\delta_{j,t} = \beta_t z_{j,t} + \eta_j + \nu_{j,t}$$

Taking the difference between two consecutive waves, we get the following equation:

[14] Since the nuclear norm is non-differentiable, standard optimization methods (e.g. gradient descent) would not work.

$$\Delta_t^{t+1}\delta_j = \underbrace{\Delta_t^{t+1}\beta\bar{z_j}}_{\text{Voter Priorities}} + \underbrace{\bar{\beta}\Delta_t^{t+1}z_j}_{\text{Party Positions}} + \underbrace{\Delta_t^{t+1}\nu_j}_{\text{Residual}} \tag{4}$$

This equation decomposes the contribution of changes in voter priorities, party positions, and residuals to the overall changes in δ. The first component is changes in the average weights placed on party positions (β), the second component is changes in party positions (z), and the final component is changes in the residual component (ν). Voter characteristics do not affect δ since δ is defined as the common utility all voters receive from a party, regardless of their characteristics. The coefficients $\Delta_t^{t+1}\beta$ and $\bar{\beta}$ can be estimated by using a linear regression of $\hat{\delta}$ on $\bar{z_j}, \Delta_t^{t+1}z_j$.

Since the number of party positions is relatively large compared to the overall number of observations (the total number of parties in each wave) we make two additional assumptions to avoid over-fitting. First, we assume that for countries that appear in the 2011-2013 intermediate wave, the change in beta is constant over time such that $\beta_{t+1} = \frac{\beta_{t+2}+\beta_t}{2}$. This implies that if we sum Equation 4 for Δ_t^{t+1} and Δ_{t+1}^{t+2} we get

$$\Delta_t^{t+2}\delta_j = \Delta_t^{t+2}\beta\bar{z_j} + \bar{\beta}\Delta_t^{t+2}z_j + \Delta_t^{t+2}\nu_j$$

where the average is taken over all three periods.

Second, we use the estimation results from the first stage to reduce the dimension of the estimation. We assume that the combinations of party positions that generate differences in utility among voters are the same factors that determine the average utility across all voters.[15] Formally, the weights vector for every voter can be written as $w_t(x_i) = x_i\Phi_t + \beta_t$. Using $\Phi_t = U_t\Sigma_t V_t^T$ to describe the singular value decomposition of matrix Φ_t, this can be written as $w_t(x_i) = x_i U_t\Sigma_t V^T + \beta_t$. Defining $\tilde{\beta} = \beta V$ we can write $w_t(x) = (x_i U_t\Sigma_t + \tilde{\beta}_t)V^T$. Since we restrict the nuclear norm of Φ in the first stage, the last components of $x_i U\Sigma$ would be close to zero (assuming the diagonal of Σ is ordered). Similarly, we restrict $\tilde{\beta}$ such that only the first k components are different from zero. Therefore, β_t has to be a linear combination of the first k components in matrix V, such that $\beta_t \in \text{span}\{[V_t]_k\}$.[16] We choose

[15] This assumption would be violated if all voters have a strong and homogeneous taste for certain party positions. For instance, if all voters equally support parties expressing positions regarding improving the quality of the education system regardless of their characteristics.

[16] Using the first k components in an SVD of a matrix yields the best approximation for the matrix for the Frobenius norm based on the Eckart–Young–Mirsky Theorem.

$k = 5$ though other values yield similar results.

5.3 Estimation Results

The estimates of the model parameters Φ, β allow us to calculate the weights that each voter places on each party position. Each weight is a linear function of the voter characteristics, based on Equation 1. We measure weights in units of standard deviation to utility units, defined as how a one standard deviation increase in this variable would affect voter utility. We also compute aggregated weights for the two main indices of the CMP, the economic and cultural index. We take a simple average of the weights of all variables that are used in an index and flip the sign of the weights of variables that enter the index negatively.[17] To provide some intuition for these units, with two parties the utility is the logarithm of the odds ratio. So, for example, an increase of one utility unit is equivalent to a change from a 50/50 vote share to approximately 73/27.

Appendix Figure A.8 presents the largest coefficients in the linear function between the voter characteristics and their corresponding weights for the two indices. For each index, we plot the absolute value of the ten largest coefficients in the 2017-2020 wave. We find that holding all else equal, individuals who express confidence in unions tend to reward parties with left-wing economic positions (put a large negative weight on an index of right-wing economic positions). Individuals with higher income and older individuals tend to reward parties with more right-wing economic positions. Studying the weights placed on the cultural index reveals that individuals who believe jobs should prioritize natives and those that don't want immigrants as neighbors reward parties with right-wing cultural positions. In contrast, individuals who have confidence in the environmental protection movement or confidence in the EU will tend to reward left-wing cultural positions.

Figure 3 shows that voters tend to put more weight on cultural issues, compared to economic issues. The figure presents the distribution of weights for different topics, for voters of different party families. We plot the weights placed by the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile of voters in each party families for the 2017-2020 wave. Interestingly, we find that the weights radical right voters place on the economy index are similar to other right-wing

[17] This is equivalent to assuming that each position in the index contributes equally to the change in the index.

voters, while radical right voters seem to care more about conservative cultural positions, compared to mainstream voters. More generally, the cultural index differentiates between supporters of different party families better than the economy index. We will revisit this result when discussing the changes in voting weights.

Examining weights on individual party positions reinforces our conclusion that radical right voters are distinct mostly in their weights on conservative cultural issues. Figure 3 presents the weights on the eight CMP variables with largest variation in weights across party families. We find that radical right voters tend to put high and positive weights on positive mentions of a national way of life and on negative mentions of the European Union. They also put negative weights on positive references for multiculturalism. On economic issues, they tend to be more similar to mainstream right-wing voters, though they also place higher weight on a free-market economy. Reassuringly, Figure 3 also shows that green parties tend to place higher weights on environmental protection, suggesting that our model captures heterogeneity in specific priorities.

6 Decomposition Results

Figure 4 presents aggregated decomposition results from all 22 countries in our data. To create this figure, we first decompose the trends in radical right support in each country separately, based on Equation 3. We then aggregate the results using a weighted average of all countries, where the weights are the inverse of the share of radical right support in the 2017-2020 wave. Hence, we average the contribution of each component compared to the overall support in that country. This guarantees that the results are not driven mainly by countries with very large radical right support (e.g. Hungary or Poland). In order to focus on the *change* in radical right support, we fix the initial support to 0% and the final support to 100%. For countries that are unavailable in the 2011-2013 wave, we impute their decomposition values as the average of the 2005-2009 and 2017-2020 waves.

Our decomposition results in Figure 4 show that changes in voter priorities, together with the residual component, explain the rise in support for the radical right. Changes in voter positions, as well as party positions, can not explain the increase. Negative values imply that based only on the changes in this component, radical right support would have been

expected to *decrease* during this period. Taking the two periods together, voter priorities explain 45.1% of the change in radical right support. In a striking contrast, party positions and voter characteristics can explain only 3.0% and 2.9%, respectively. The remainder of the increase is driven by a residual increase.

Figure A.1 shows the results by country. While there is clear variation across countries, in almost all countries voter characteristics, as well as party positions, cannot explain the rise of radical right parties.

In the rest of this section, we will discuss additional evidence for the change in each component.

6.1 Changes in Voter characteristics

It may seem surprising that voters' characteristics cannot explain the rise of the radical right. In this section, we explore this claim in more detail using reduced-form analyses of IVS data.

Figure 5 shows that on average voters did not move closer to the positions of populist radical right parties since 2005. To create this figure we first run a LASSO and find the coefficients that predict supporting radical right parties in the 2017-2020 survey wave. We then predict for each voter whether they would vote for such a party based on their characteristics and define the standardized fitted value as their "radical right score".[18] Appendix Figure A.2 shows the covariates that are most strongly correlated with the radical right score and demonstrates that these variables are indeed typically associated with right-wing populism, including prioritizing natives and decreased confidence in the EU. The radical right score in 2017-2020 is very similar to the score in 2005-2009. The blue line in Figure 5 shows the average value of the radical right scores across all countries, where the grey lines show separately the trends in each country. While in specific countries there are some significant trends in both directions, there is no clear trend in aggregate. The difference between these periods is only 6% of the difference between the score of radical right supporters and other voters.

Appendix Figure A.3 presents the result separately by country. While in some countries the average radical right score has been increasing (e.g. Hungary), in other countries, including countries where support for the radical right increased, the radical right score has been

[18] We ensure that all the country indicators are taken into account in the LASSO regression by forcing the model not to penalize these countries. However, we do not use the countries when calculating the radical right score since our purpose is to capture the characteristics at the voter level.

decreasing (e.g. Germany), such that overall there is no clear trend across the continent.

Appendix Figure A.3 also shows that there is no clear shift in opinions specifically among potential radical right voters, i.e., voters with a higher radical right score. We look at the mean score among the voters at the top 5, 10, and 20 percentiles of the distribution. While there is an increase in the radical right score among these voters in some of the countries analyzed, the increase is not dramatic and does not occur in many countries.

The radical right score may not be capturing the most relevant variables. In Appendix Figure A.4 we focus on six specific variables typically associated with right-wing populism and present their evolution in each country and in aggregate. Once again, we find that on average, opinions on these topics are relatively stable. The biggest changes aggregate change we detect is a shift in opinions away from radical right parties. As before, the results are a bit noisier when looking at the country level (in grey), as each value changes slightly differently in each country. However, it is clear that in aggregate voters are not developing more populist radical right attitudes.

To verify that we are not missing important variables, in Appendix Figure A.5 we take into account all variables and present the opinions that changed the most between 2005 and 2020. Interestingly, some of the most important changes move in the opposite direction of radical right parties. For example, voters become more tolerant toward LGBTQ individuals.

This section, along with the results of our decomposition exercise, brings into question the common argument that voters' opinions and demographics have changed and this change explains the rise of populist radical right parties. The reduced-form evidence shows that voters have not become substantially more populist in their opinions. Any theory claiming that the rise in support for the radical right reflects more nativist and authoritarian positions (opposition to immigration, for example) or stems from changing demographics (such as greater economic insecurity), should explain why these opinions and demographics are not changing along with radical right support.

6.1.1 Explaining Cross-Country Differences

This section shows that while differences in voter characteristics do not explain the increase in support for the radical right across time, they do explain some of the difference in support across countries.

Throughout this paper, we decompose the temporal variation in radical right support. However, a similar decomposition can be used to decompose spatial variation across countries. For voters in each country, we simulate their counterfactual support for the National Front, had they faced the same choice as voters in France. In other words, we fix the parties, their positions and residuals, to the values in France in 2017-2020 and only allow voter characteristics to differ across countries. Formally we calculate the following counterfactual:

$$\tilde{S_P^{t,c}} = \int P(\Pi|x_i; \theta_t, Z_t^{France}, \zeta_t^{France}) f_t^c(x_i) \mathrm{d}x_i \tag{5}$$

Figure 8 shows that the support for radical right parties ($\tilde{S_P^{t,c}}$) is different across countries partly because of voter characteristics.[19] The variation across countries is consistent with the variation in the actual support for the radical right that exists in the data and is presented in Figure 2. The potential support for radical right parties is smallest in the Nordic countries and largest in Eastern European countries. As expected, in the U.K. and U.S. we predict much larger counterfactual support for radical right parties than exists in the data. This is likely driven by the first-past-the-post system in these countries that tends to favor two-party systems (Duverger, 1959; Fujiwara et al., 2011).

The counterfactual support for the National Front can be interpreted as the reservoir of potential populist radical right voters. Clearly, substantial variation in this reservoir is explained by voter characteristics. This section focuses on France only for convenience. Appendix Figure A.9 conducts a similar exercise using German parties and presents the counterfactual support for the AfD. The results are similar, demonstrating that our finding in this section is not unique to France.

6.2 Changes in Party Positions

Our decomposition estimates reveal that changes in parties positions contribute little to the rise in radical right support, in contrast to several theories discussed in Section 3.2. We further investigate the potential importance of party positions by analyzing their changes over time.

The top panel of Figure 6 shows the average economic position index for the four main

[19] We are able to include the U.S. in this map because the World Value Survey was conducted there as well. For the U.S., we impute all values related to the European Union to their average level in our sample.

party families in 2005-2018 and finds that on aggregate, parties' economic positions have remained fairly stable during this period.[20] We find that mainstream right and radical right parties have similar economic positions. Green parties and left parties have similar economic positions, which lean towards more left-wing economic policies, unsurprisingly. The green and the left have shifted towards more left-wing economic policies during this period, such that overall, parties became more distinct in their economic positions. We do not find evidence that radical right parties gained votes by moderating their positions or that the blurring distinction between mainstream right-wing parties and left parties pushed voters toward the radical right.

The bottom panel of Figure 6 shows the average party cultural position index for the four party families. In contrast to a common claim that the wokeness of mainstream parties on cultural issues pushed their voters to the populist right, we find no evidence that green, left-wing or mainstream right-wing parties have shifted to the left. The cultural position index, shows a clear distinction between the four party families, where the radical right holds the most culturally conservative positions, while the greens are the most liberals. Again, We find no evidence for any moderation among the radical right. In fact, the radical right parties shifted toward the right, further distinguishing themselves from the other parties. Clearly, these parties did not attract more votes by moderating their populist positions.

In order to better understand the shift to the cultural right, we further explore the trends in individual party positions. Appendix Figure A.6 shows the trends for the five positions with the largest distinction between the radical right and other parties. The most important change occurred in positive mentions of a national way of life. We also find that some of the topics most widely discussed on radical right platforms, such as negative references to the European Union, internationalism, and multiculturialism, are barely mentioned by other parties.

While the reduced form evidence rules out dominant supply-side explanations, there could be other potential supply-side hypotheses that are consistent with the position trends. For example, it is possible that radical right parties gained votes by becoming more extreme on cultural issues. However, our decomposition results suggest that such alternative hypotheses

[20] To create this figure we weight each party by its vote share within a country and then weight all countries equally to calculate the party positions in a given year. Since elections are typically held every few years we present five-year moving averages.

are unlikely to be major drivers of the support for radical right parties. When predicting the counterfactual increase in support for the radical right, holding weights fixed to their value in the 2005-2009 wave, while changing only party positions, we find very little effect on the radical right vote share.

6.3 Changes in Voting Priorities

Our decomposition results show that a large share (45.1%) of the increase in support for the radical right is driven by changes in priorities. These are changes in the utility parameters, which change the voter weights for every given set of demographics and opinions. In this section, we analyze in more detail how priorities changed during this period.

Figure 7 shows that voters today care less about economic issues and place a more positive weight on culturally conservative party positions. It presents changes in the weights placed on the economic index and cultural index over time. To isolate the changes in priorities from the changes in characteristics (demographics and opinions), we fix the distribution of voters' characteristics to its value in the 2017-2020 wave. Therefore, the changes in weights in Figure 7 are driven only by changes in the utility function parameters. We find that the distribution of the weights placed on the economy index became more concentrated around zero in 2017-2020 and these weights are now substantially closer to zero. The average absolute value of weights placed on the economic index decreased by 63%. Ceteris paribus, the economic positions of parties have become a less decisive factor when individuals decide their vote.

On the other hand, the right panel of Figure 7 shows a shift to the right in the weights placed on the cultural index. Fewer voters now place a very negative weight on the cultural index, while more voters place a very positive weight. This implies that cultural positions have become a more decisive factor in the voting decision of right-wing voters. Moreover, there are fewer voters who penalize parties for holding right-wing social positions.

This finding corroborates previous work, although more limited in its empirical scope, regarding the growing role of cultural issues in shaping political identities and behavior. (De Vries et al., 2013), for instance, analyze survey data from the Netherlands and show that since the early 1980s, political identities have become more weakly associated with voters' redistributive preferences while more strongly tied to their attitudes on immigration. In Italy, anti-immigration attitudes have also become more strongly predictive of voting

behavior since the early 2000s (Magistro and Wittstock, 2021). As summarized by Norris and Inglehart (2019) from a broader cross-national perspective, "[T]oday the most heated political issues in Western societies are cultural, dealing with the integration of ethnic minorities, immigration, and border control, Islamic-related terrorism, same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights" (see also Gidron et al. (2020)). Cultural issues continued to gain political importance even following the 2008 financial crisis, as economic developments were discussed through cultural frameworks that emphasize questions such as national sovereignty in the context of economic globalization (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019; Sides et al., 2019).

6.4 Residual

The second substantial component in our decomposition is the residual, which accounts for 49.0% of the overall increase. This component measures changes in the party valence as well aa changes driven by entry and exit, as discussed in Section 3.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the entry of new parties is a particularly important driver.[21] First of all, mechanically the radical right will not receive votes if they are not running a national election campaign. Second, the existence of more radical right parties could have provided voters with more options that match their preferences. Figure A.7 shows that the average number of radical right parties increased from 0.57 to 1.17 between 1999 and 2019. To create this figure, we use CMP data to count the average number of radical right parties that received at least 1% of the vote across all elections in the past five years and then average the result over all the countries in our sample.

An important question for future research is why did populist radical right parties not run earlier? Our counterfactual analysis suggests that based only on their positions, the potential support for the radical right had already existed in 2005-2009, and that these parties would have received a large number of votes, had they entered earlier. This late entry could be driven by both supply and demand channels. On the supply side, we can consider the time it took parties to learn from the success of radical right parties in other countries and the high fixed cost of establishing a national party that voters are willing to consider. On the demand side, it is possible that in some countries the valance of the radical right (the utility voters receive from the party that is not related to party positions) was not sufficiently high,

[21] In the next version of this paper, we will further decompose this component to separate these two trends.

perhaps due to limited media attention. Low valence could explain the failure of radical right parties in countries such as Sweden, where the Swedish Democrats ran in elections but did not enter the parliament.

In addition to new entries, the residual component is also responsible for changes in support for parties that are not driven by the voter characteristics, voter priorities, or party positions. This could include changes in unobserved party positions that are not correlated with the observed party positions, such as leader charisma, or party salience. Alternatively, this could also represent changes in priorities that voters place on such unobserved party characteristics.

7 Conclusions

There is no lack of explanations for the rise of the populist radical right. Our goal in this manuscript is not to introduce another factor that may drive the support for these parties but rather to provide a framework for organizing existing explanations into distinct categories—changes in party positions, voter characteristics, and voter priorities—and assessing their explanatory power.

Our findings cast strong doubt on the idea that changes in voters' demographics or opinions, driven by either economic forces, such as trade shocks, or cultural threats, such as growing ethnic diversification, can explain the rise of radical right parties.[22] While public opinion may explain idiosyncratic changes in these parties' support, it cannot explain the dramatic rise in support over the last two decades across Europe.

Rather than changes in voters' characteristics, it is growing weights attached to the issues owned by radical right parties that explain their growing electoral appeal. In Bartels (2017) memorable phrasing, populist radical right parties are not surfing into power on a wave of growing nativism and authoritarianism in public opinion; instead, these parties have proved apt at mobilizing pre-existing reservoirs of potential support. This implies that significant electoral changes can occur not only when people change their minds but also when certain issues become more important (Schattschneider, 1975).

While explaining why priorities have changed is beyond the scope of this paper, we note

[22] It is still possible that trade shocks or ethnic diversification affected the weights voters place on different issues.

several potential explanations: An increase in the quality of life that allowed voters to focus on moral good (Enke, 2020), a change in the media environment that decreased the agenda-setting power of tradition gatekeepers, such as mainstream newspaper, and voter's perception that they have less say on economic issues in a globalized era where many decisions, such as the interest rate or EU policy, are not made by local representatives. Whatever the reason, the change in the priorities of voters dramatically shifted the political map in Europe and should be the focus of future research.

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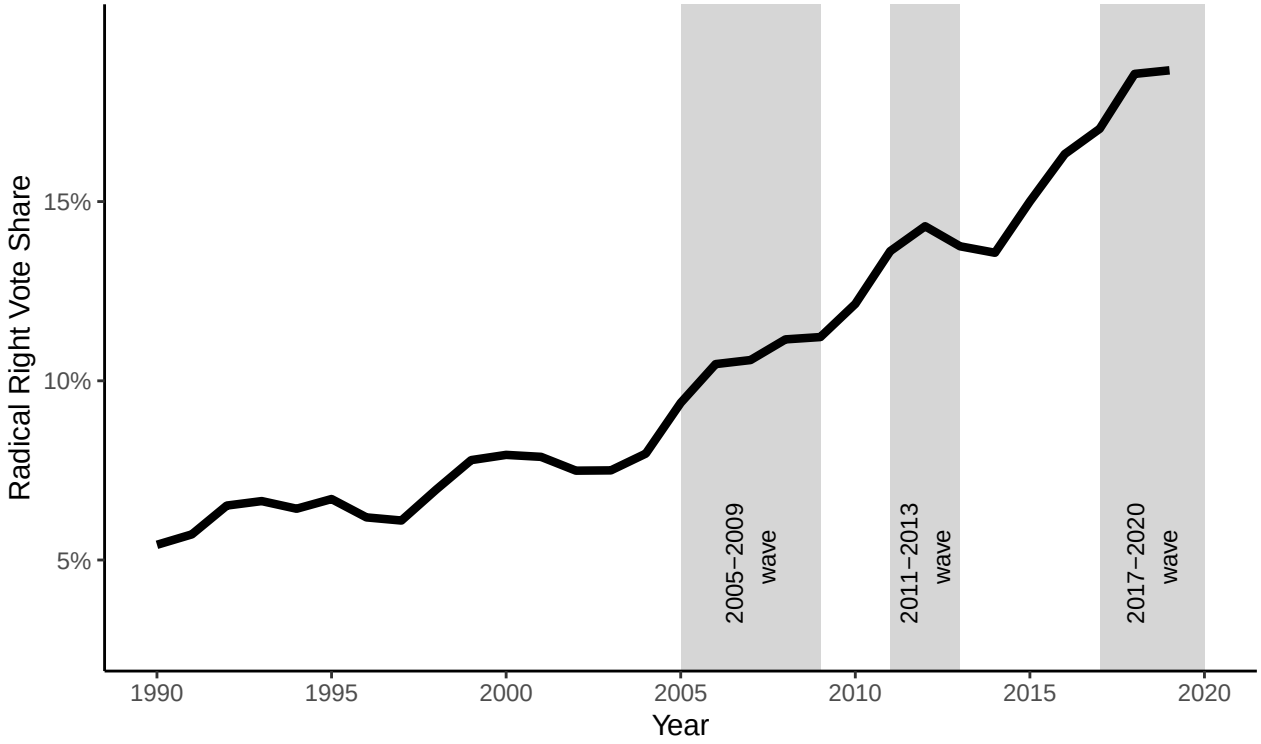
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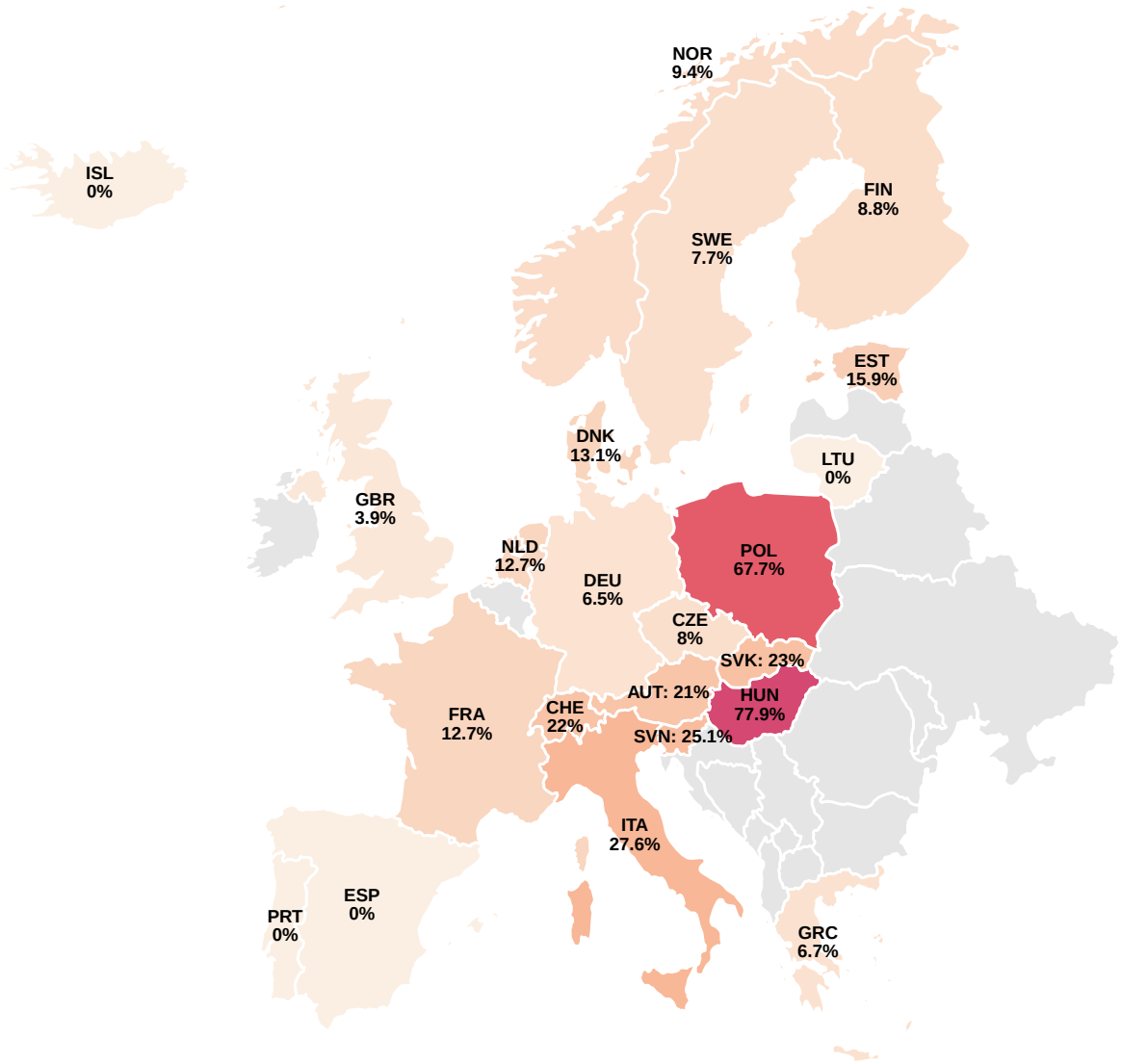
Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Support for Radical Right Parties Over Time



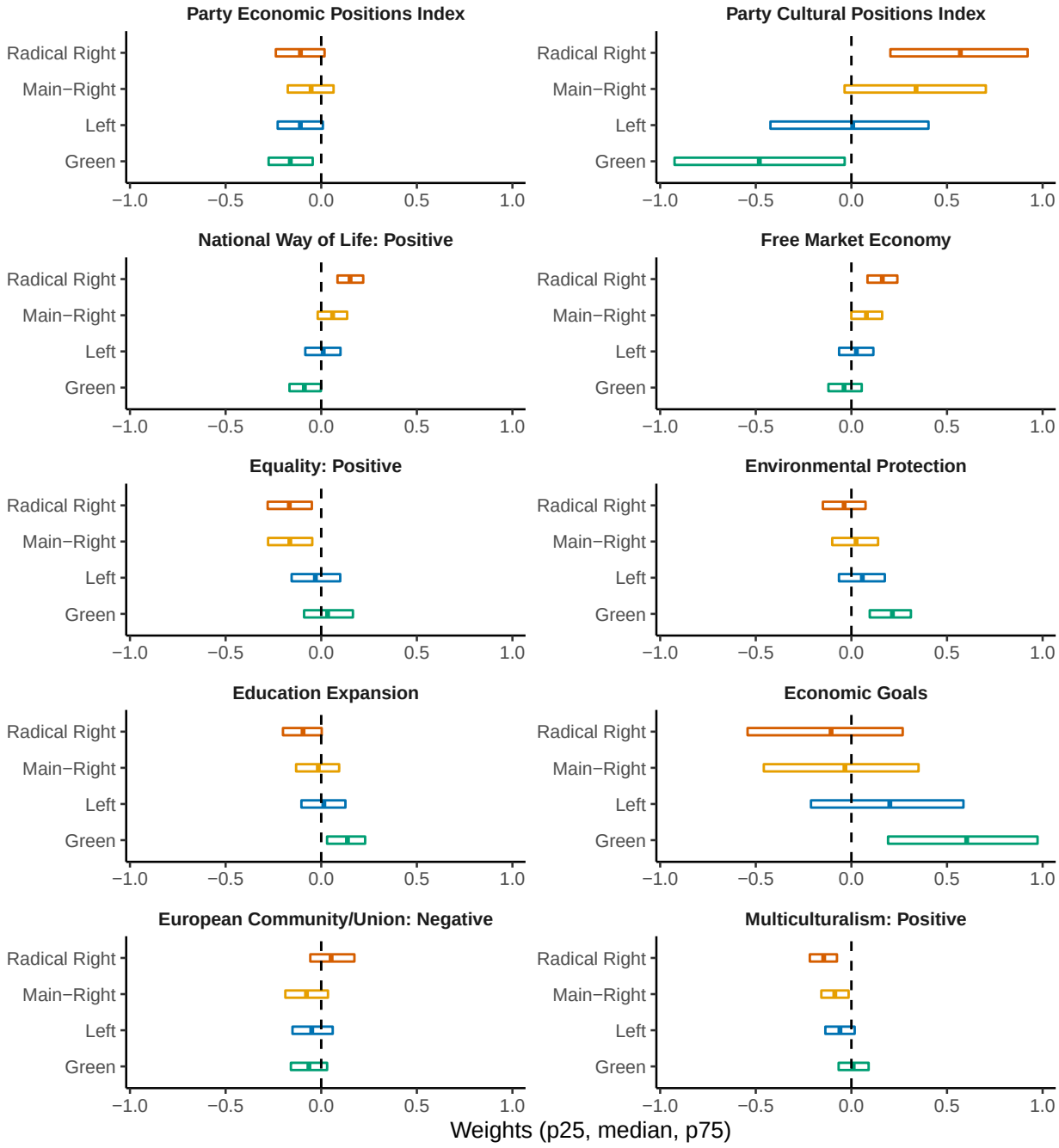
This figure shows the average vote share of radical right parties. Within each country, the vote share every year is calculated as the average radical right vote share among all parties appearing in the CMP dataset in all parliamentary elections in the five years ending that year. We then calculate the average share across all 22 countries, with each country weighted equally.

Figure 2: Support for Radical Right Parties by Country, 2017-2020 IVS Survey Wave



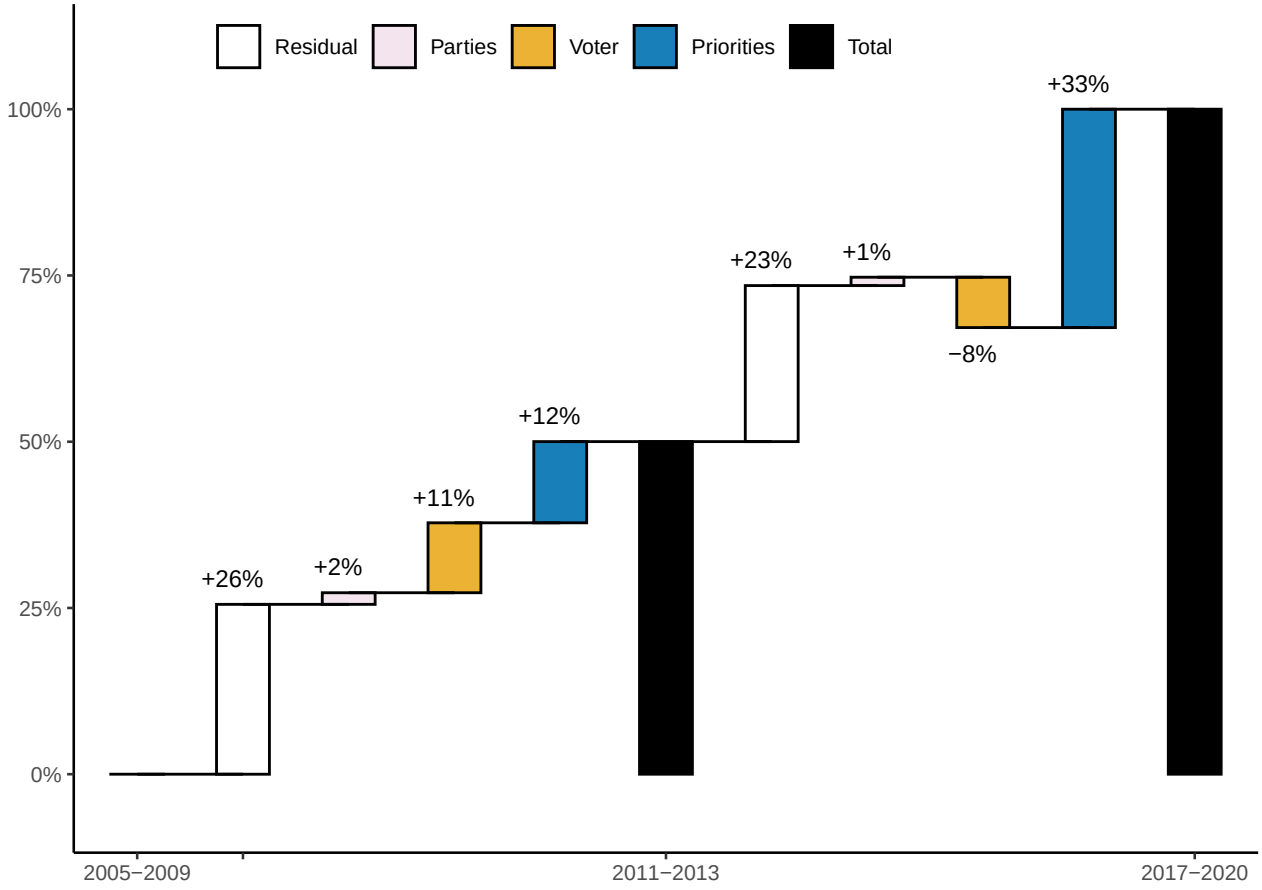
This figure shows the average vote share of radical right parties in the 2017-2020 IVS Survey Wave

Figure 3: Voting Weights in the Last Survey Wave



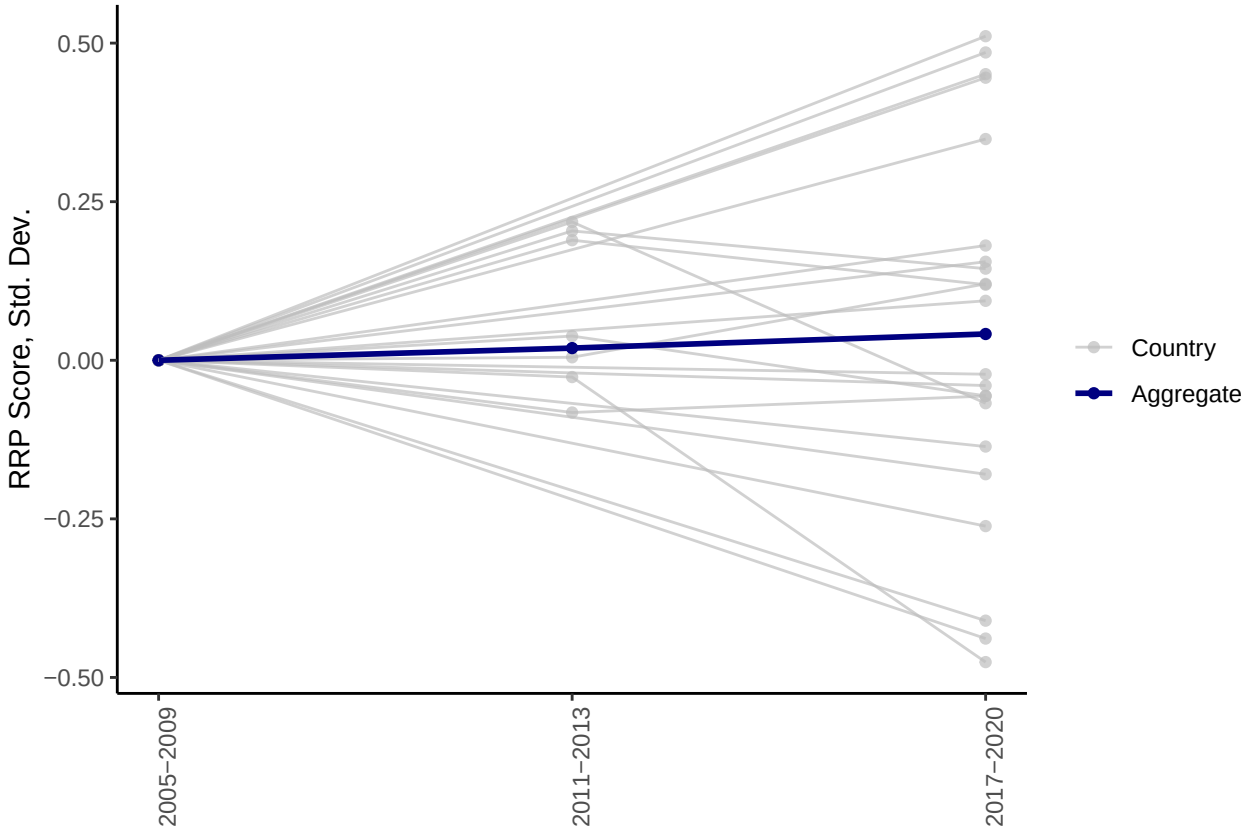
This figure shows the weights voters place on various party position indices and eight manifesto variables in the most recent survey wave (2017-2020). The chosen manifesto variables have the largest variance of weights across the four party families. We estimate the model on the latest wave and for each voter calculate the weights based on her characteristics using Equation 1. For the two indices, the weights are the average weights on the party positions comprising each index, where weights for positions that enter the index with a negative sign are multiplied by -1. Weights are in standard deviation to utility units – the increase in utility for an increase of one standard deviation in the index. We present the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of weights for voters in different party families: radical right voters, mainstream right-wing voters, left-wing voters, and voters supporting green parties. The indices are discussed in Section 5.3 and their manifesto components are described in Appendix Table A.3.

Figure 4: Decomposition of radical right support



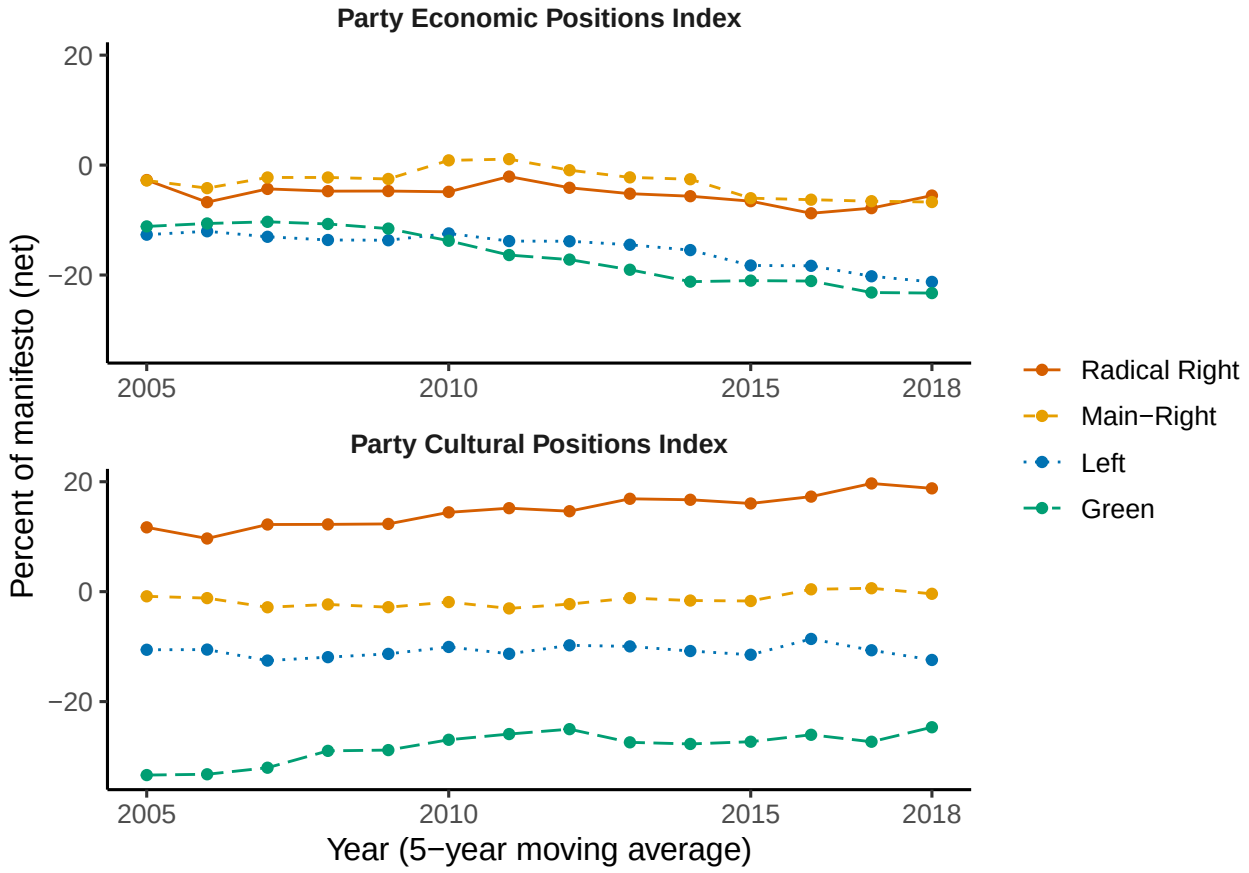
This figure presents the result of our main decomposition exercise. The black bars present the share of the increase in radical right support between 2005-2009 and 2017-2020. We aggregate across all 22 countries by using a weighted average of their decomposition results (that appear in figure A.1). Weights are the inverse of the share of radical right support in the 2017-2020 wave. Hence, we average the contribution of each component compared to the overall radical right support in that country. This guarantees that the results are not driven mainly by countries with a large radical right support (e.g. Hungary or Poland).

Figure 5: Voters' Radical Right Score Over Time



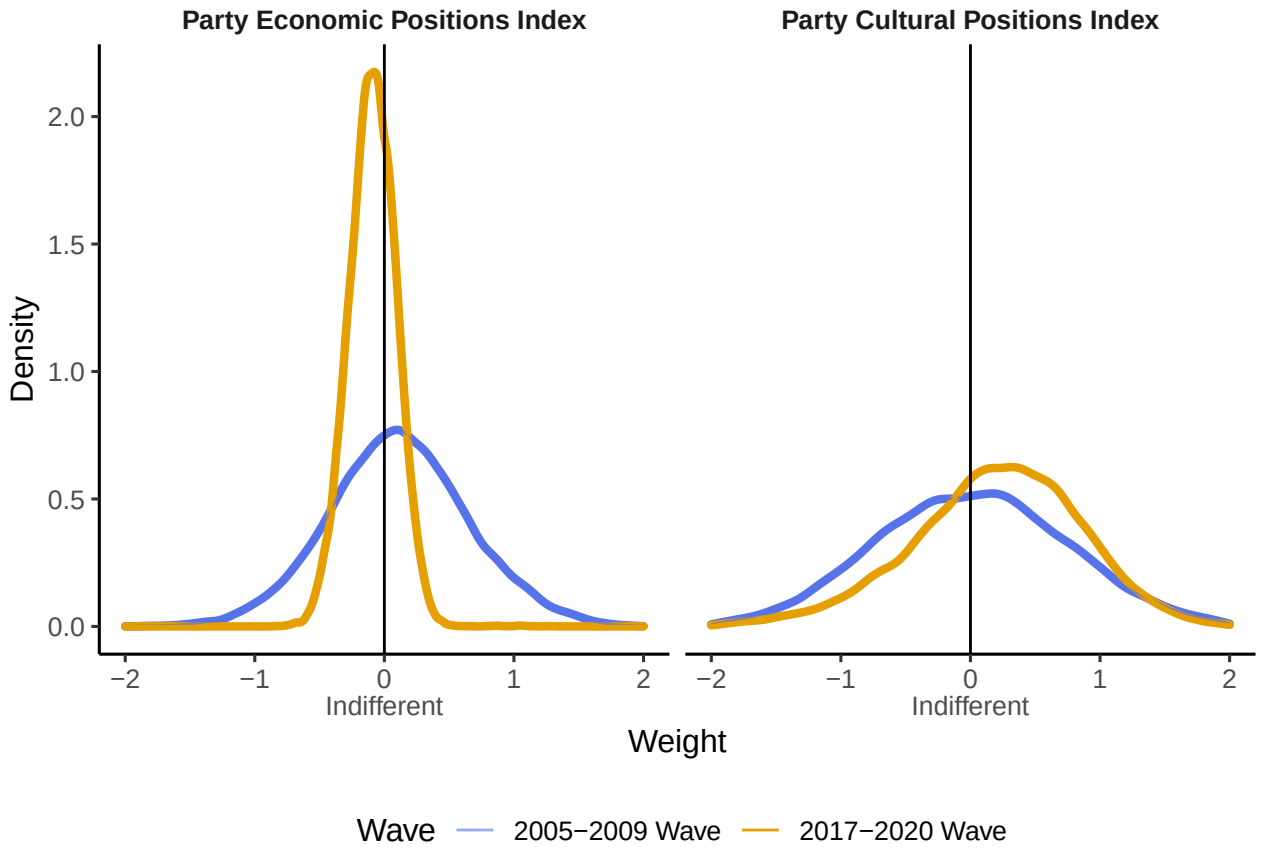
This figure presents the voters' radical right score by survey wave. The score is calculated by running a LASSO regression predicting a vote for a radical right party. The regression is run on the most recent survey and includes all IVS variables and country fixed effects, with no penalty on the country coefficient. To calculate the radical right score we standardize the fitted value based on the regression coefficients (excluding country) and then subtract from each country its mean value in the 2005-2009 wave.

Figure 6: Changes in Party Positions Over Time



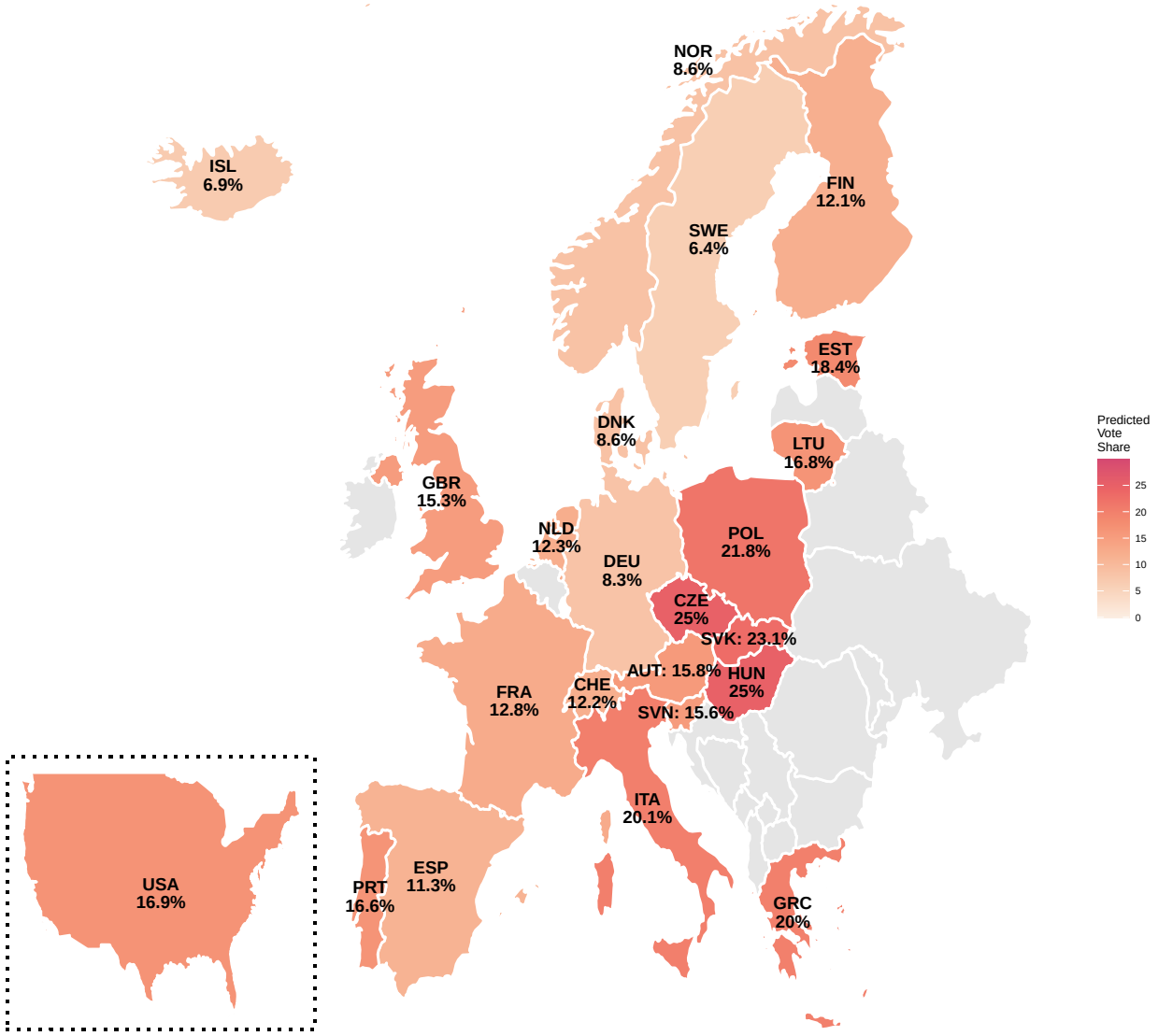
This figure shows the changes in party positions for four party families (Radical Right, Main Right, Left, and Green) since 2005. The figure presents the moving average values for each index and group of parties for five-year periods. Each country is weighted equally, and parties within each country are weighted by their average voting shares. For each index, we sum all the values composing the index (some values have a negative sign). Thus, the y-axis represents the average net share of the manifesto dedicated to the party positions composing each index. The indices are discussed in Section 5.3 and their manifesto components are described in Appendix Table A.3.

Figure 7: Changes in the Distribution of Voting Weights



This figure shows the distribution of weights voters place on the economic and cultural indices of party positions for different waves based on the model results. The weight placed on an index is the average weight corresponding to each party position that comprises the index, where weights for positions that enter the index with a negative sign are multiplied by -1. Weights are in standard deviation to utility units – the increase in utility for an increase of one standard deviation in the index. The indices are discussed in Section 5.3 and their manifesto components are described in Appendix Table A.3.

Figure 8: Predicted Vote Share for the National Front if France Voters had the Characteristics of Other Countries



This figure calculates the counterfactual support for the National Front in the 2017-2020 wave if French voters had the characteristics of voters in other countries. We calculate the counterfactual separately for each country based on the formula in Equation 5. In all countries, we use the party positions (Z_t^{France}) of French parties in the 2017-2020 wave along with the estimated residuals for French parties (ζ_t^{France}) and the model parameters that were estimated for this wave. For each country, predict the share of voters for the National Front according to the voter characteristics in that country. For the U.S. sample, we impute the responses for questions related to European topics (e.g., opinion on the European Union) based on the sample averages.

Table 1: IVS Data

	Countries	Parties	Radical Right Parties	Observations
2005-2009	22	151	19	26,153
2011-2013	7	53	6	6,377
2017-2020	22	173	28	27,105

This table provides descriptive statistics on the final dataset analyzed. Each row represents an Integrated Values Survey wave. The observations include only respondents who were successfully matched with the Comparative Manifesto Project data.

Table 2: IVS Descriptive Statistics

	2005-2009		2017-2020	
	Radical Right	Other Parties	Radical Right	Other Parties
Demographics				
College education	0.16	0.29	0.17	0.34
Age	45.89	48.27	48.30	49.48
Male	0.54	0.49	0.56	0.48
Right Wing	0.66	0.41	0.73	0.42
Urban	0.21	0.28	0.17	0.25
Most Distinctive Opinions				
Jobs should prioritize natives	0.46	-0.03	0.55	-0.13
Confidence in EU	-0.13	0.07	-0.53	0.04
Homosexuality justifiable	-0.57	-0.16	-0.26	0.27
Oppose redistribution	-0.07	-0.07	0.19	0.04
Prefer private business ownership	0.09	-0.01	-0.02	0.02
Personal over govt responsibility	-0.15	-0.01	0.01	0.03
Abortion justifiable	-0.40	-0.15	-0.13	0.24
Have freedom of choice	-0.19	-0.08	-0.06	0.11
Prostitution justifiable	-0.11	-0.08	0.03	0.05
Divorce justifiable	-0.39	-0.15	-0.12	0.23

This table provides descriptive statistics on variables in the Integrated Values Survey data. The first five rows show the average of each demographic variable. We define urban as living in a city with more than 100,000 people and right-wing as a self-reported ideology that is more conservative than the median. The next ten rows show the average of each voter opinion variable, which we choose using a random forest predicting whether each voter is a radical right supporter or not. The first two columns present the averages of each variable in 2005-2009 and the last two columns present the averages in 2017-2020.

Table 3: CMP Descriptive Statistics

	2005-2009		2017-2020	
	Radical Right	Other Parties	Radical Right	Other Parties
Party Economic Positions Index	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3	-0.9
Party Cultural Positions Index	1.0	-0.5	1.4	-0.5
Top 10 Distinctive Variables				
European Community/Union: Negative	3.1	0.3	3.2	0.5
National Way of Life: Positive	6.5	2.1	11.2	2.7
Multiculturalism: Negative	3.7	0.6	2.8	0.9
Internationalism: Negative	1.3	0.2	1.3	0.2
Law and Order: Positive	7.1	4.0	7.2	4.1
Military: Positive	2.4	1.5	4.0	2.0
Protectionism: Positive	1.7	0.1	0.8	0.5
Welfare State Limitation	0.9	0.4	1.7	0.6
Traditional Morality: Positive	2.8	1.2	3.1	0.9
Free Market Economy	2.2	1.4	2.8	1.6

This table provides descriptive statistics on variables in the CMP data. The first two rows show the averages of the two party position indices and the next ten rows focus on the ten positions with the largest difference between radical right parties and other parties. The first two columns present the averages of each variable in 2005-2009 and the last two columns present the averages in 2017-2020.

Appendix

A Data Appendix

A.1 Data Processing

We clean categorical variables in the IVS data to keep the number of potential categories clear and reasonable and merge similar variables when possible.[23] For all variables, we impute missing values using random forests for each country-wave separately. When a value is missing for an entire country-wave, we typically exclude the variable from our final dataset. In rare cases, where the variable is available for almost all other countries, we impute the values for the specific country-wave using the nearest survey waves for that country, as mentioned in Table A.2.[24]

A.2 Merging Datasets

We merge party data across the various datasets using PartyFacts (Döring and Regel, 2019). When parties change names or run in various coalitions, it is often not clear if a new party was established or whether the same party runs in a different name or constellations. We follow the CMP to deal with this issue and define unique parties.

B Theory Appendix

In this section, we discuss the similarities between our model and a bliss-point model. Assume that voters have a bliss point which is a linear function of their observables, Ax_i. Voters support parties that are closer to their bliss point. Formally, define the distance between two vectors of party positions as

$$dist(u, v)^2 = \Sigma_k \beta_k^2 (u_k - v_k)^2$$

The vector β represents the relative importance of different party positions in this model. Using this distance function, we can define the bliss-point utility function as

$$U_{ij} = dist(z_j, Ax_i)^2 + \zeta_j + \epsilon_{ij}$$

Defining $\Phi = A * diag(\beta)$ and $\delta_j = z^2\beta^2 + \zeta_j$, we can write the utility function as

$$U_{ij} = x_i \Phi z_j' + \delta_j$$

[23] For example, we aggregate the answers to the question asking the respondent about her religion to the following variables: Protestant, Catholic, other Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, and other.

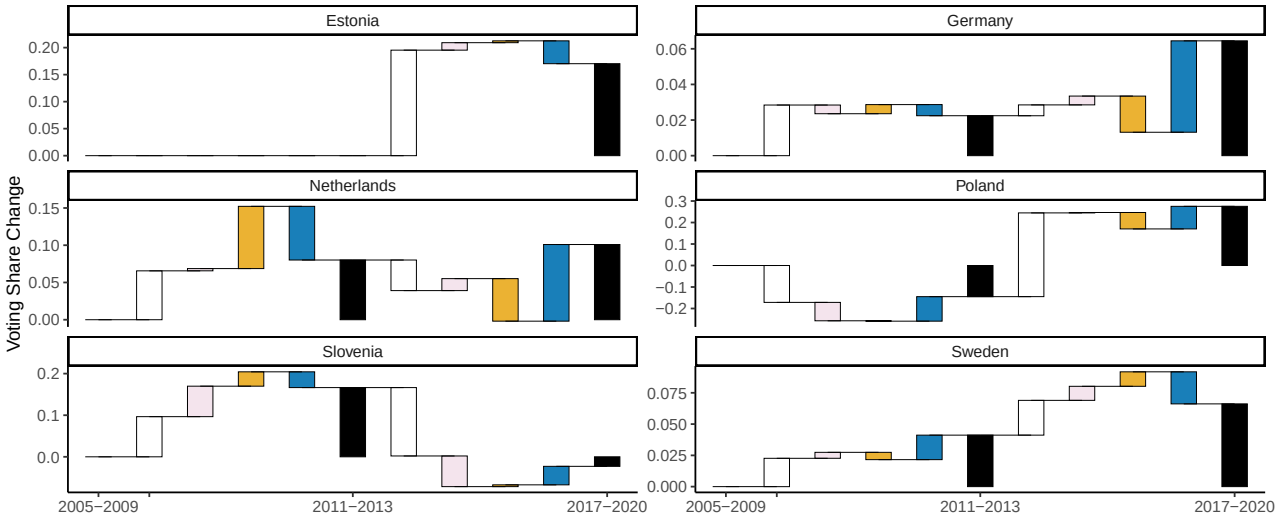
[24] When the variable is available in both a proceeding and a succeeding wave we impute the variable as the weighted mean of the mean values in each of these waves weighted by their distance in years from the imputed wave. In cases where we have only a proceeding or a succeeding wave, we impute the value as the mean value of the available wave. For the imputation process we also use survey waves conducted before 2005

which is exactly the utility function we estimate in the first stage (Equation 2). Therefore, our estimation of the first stage will be unbiased in the case of a bliss-point model.

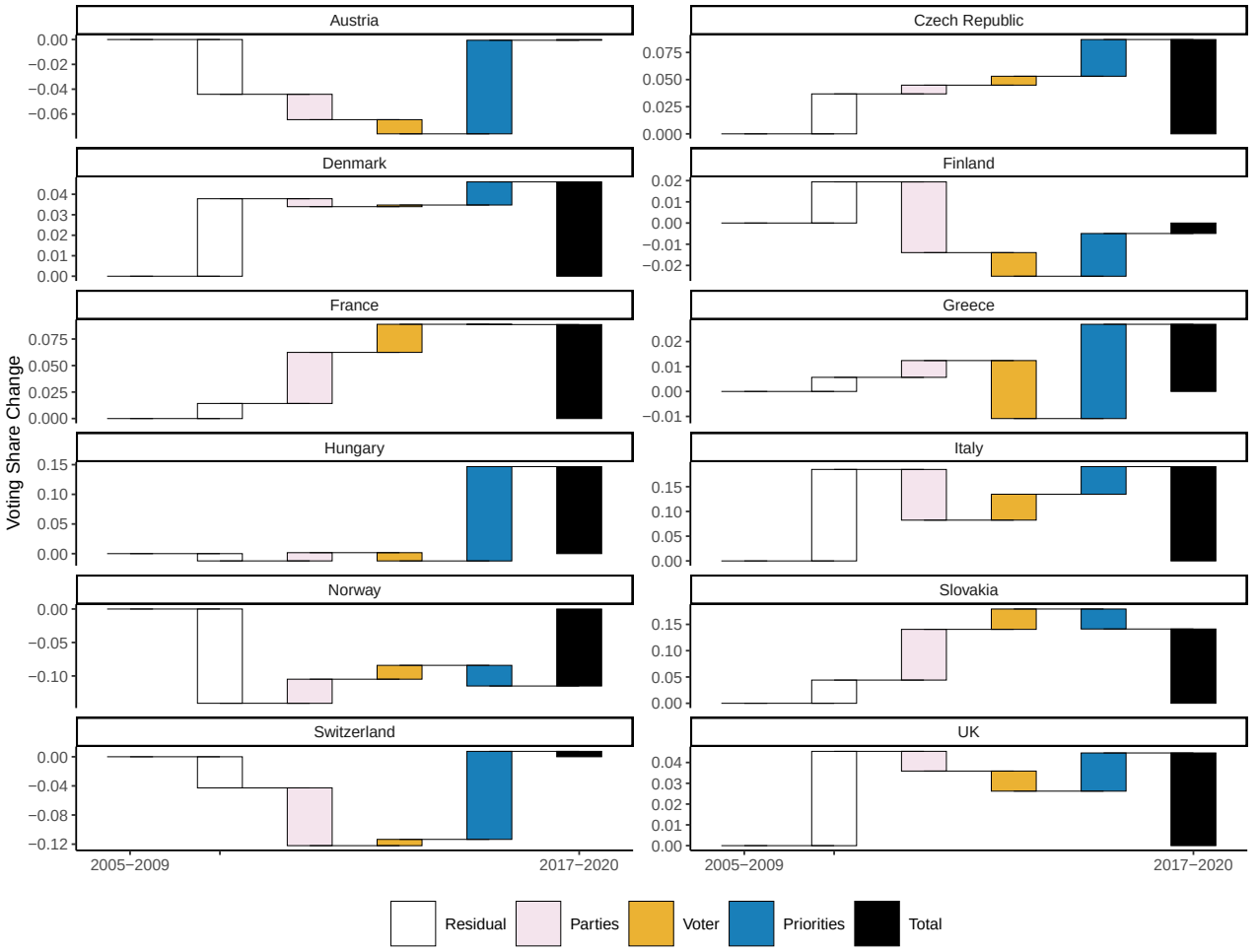
Our estimation of the second stage will be biased. To fully accommodate for a bliss-point utility model, we need to allow δ to depend on a quadratic function of the party positions. The misspecification error would be attributed to the residual component ζ_j.

Figure A.1: Decomposition of Support for the Radical Right, by Country

(a) Countries with intermediate waves

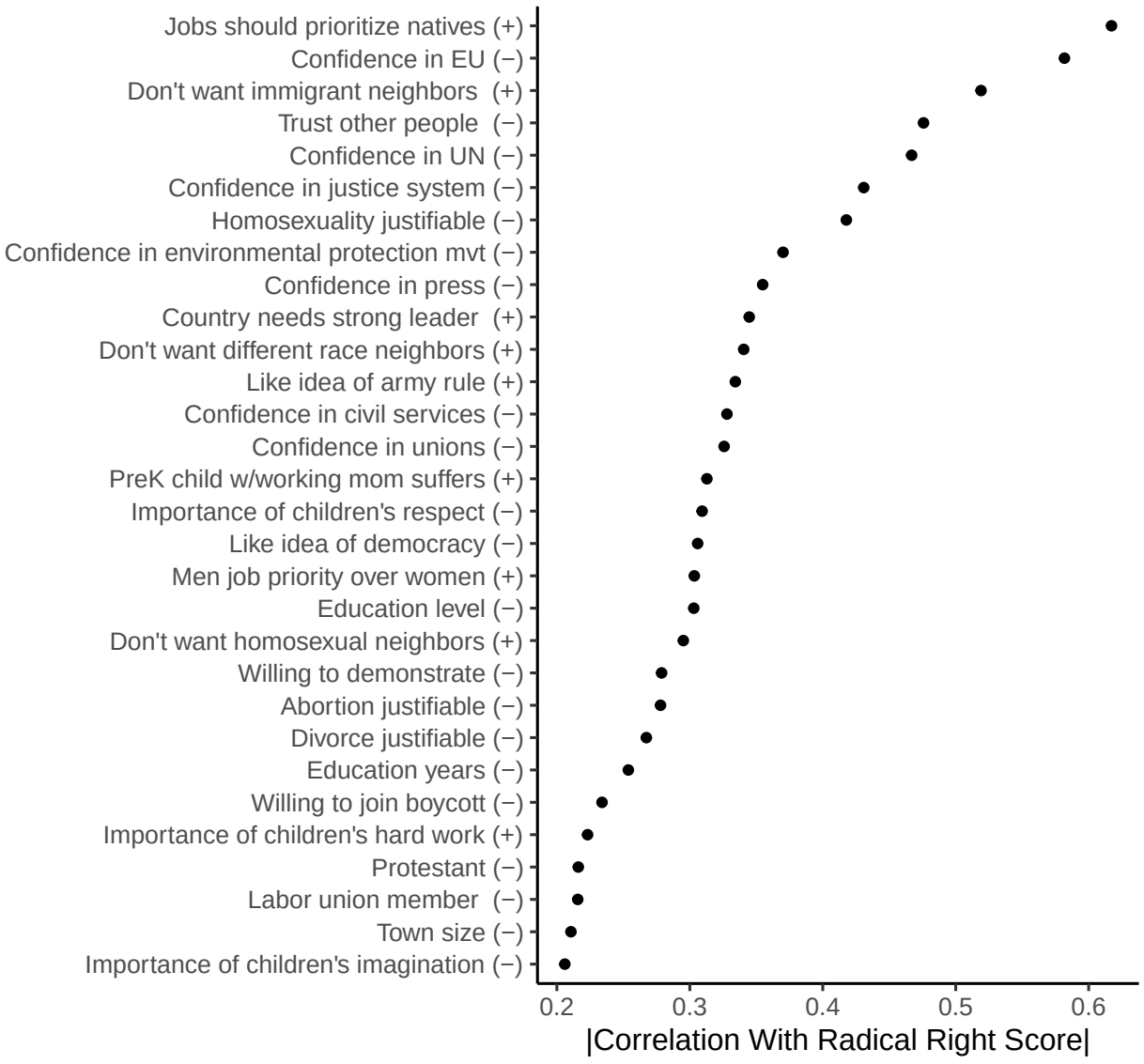


(b) Countries without intermediate waves



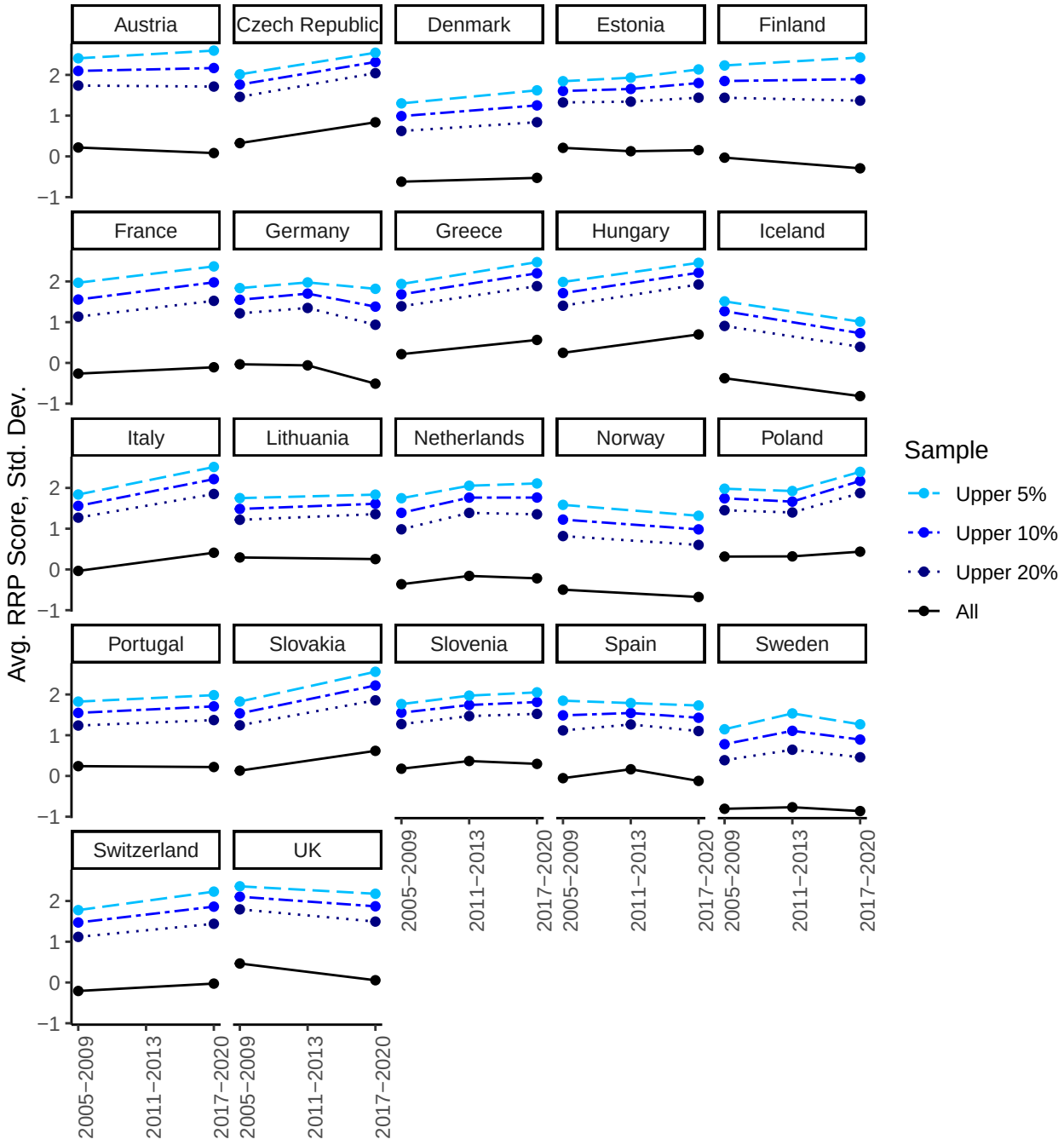
This figure presents the results of our decomposition by country. The black bars present the share of the increase in radical right support between 2005-2009 and 2017-2020. We decompose the rise in the share of radical right voters based on Equation 3. Each component represents the counterfactual change if only that input had changed while the other two are held fixed. We present the results separately for countries where we have data from the 2011-2013 wave and countries where that data is not available.

Figure A.2: Covariates Most Strongly Correlated with the Radical Right Score



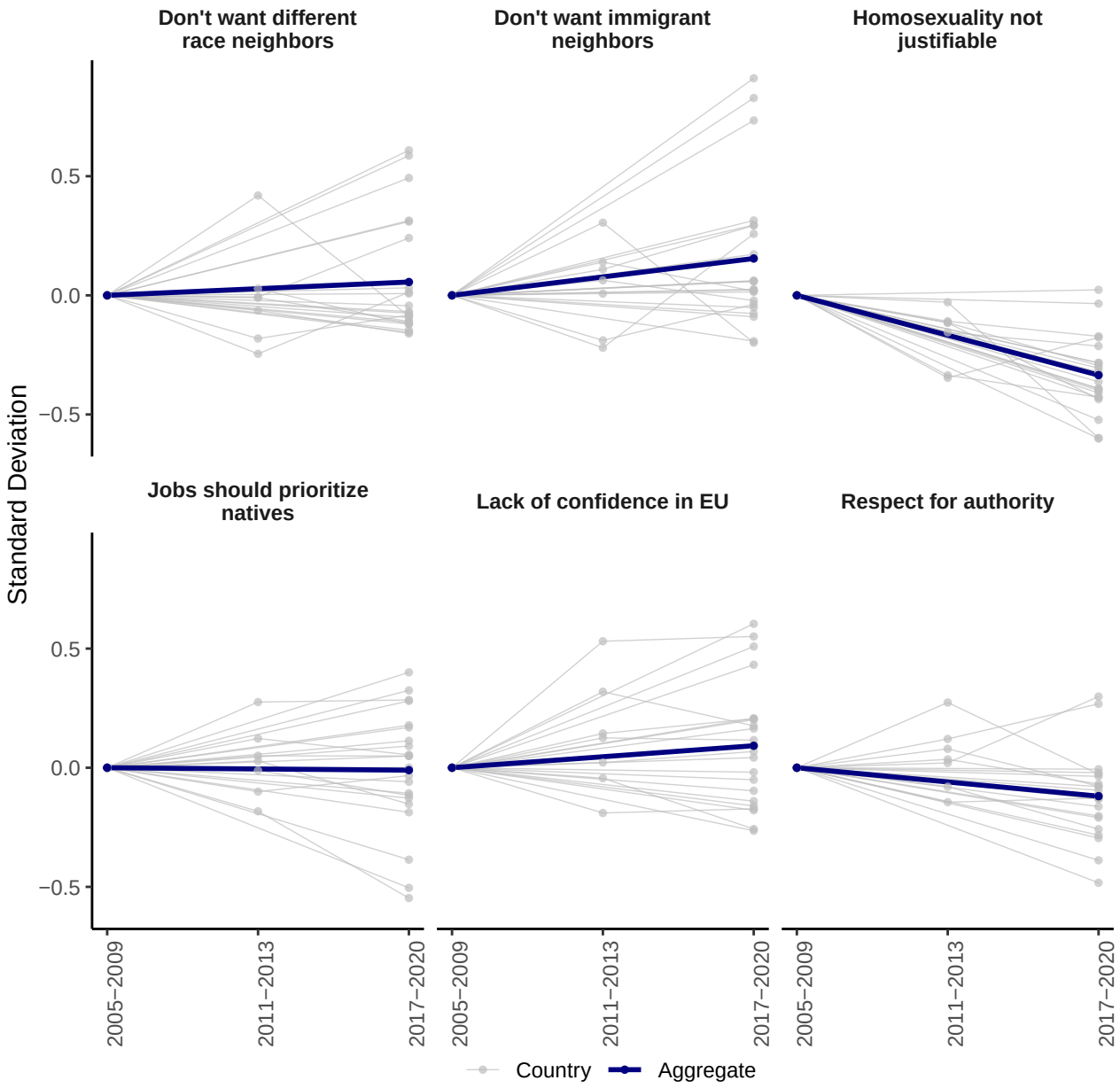
This figure presents the voter characteristics most strongly correlated with the radical right score. For more details on the Radical Right score, see Figure 5 .

Figure A.3: Voters' Radical Right Score By Country



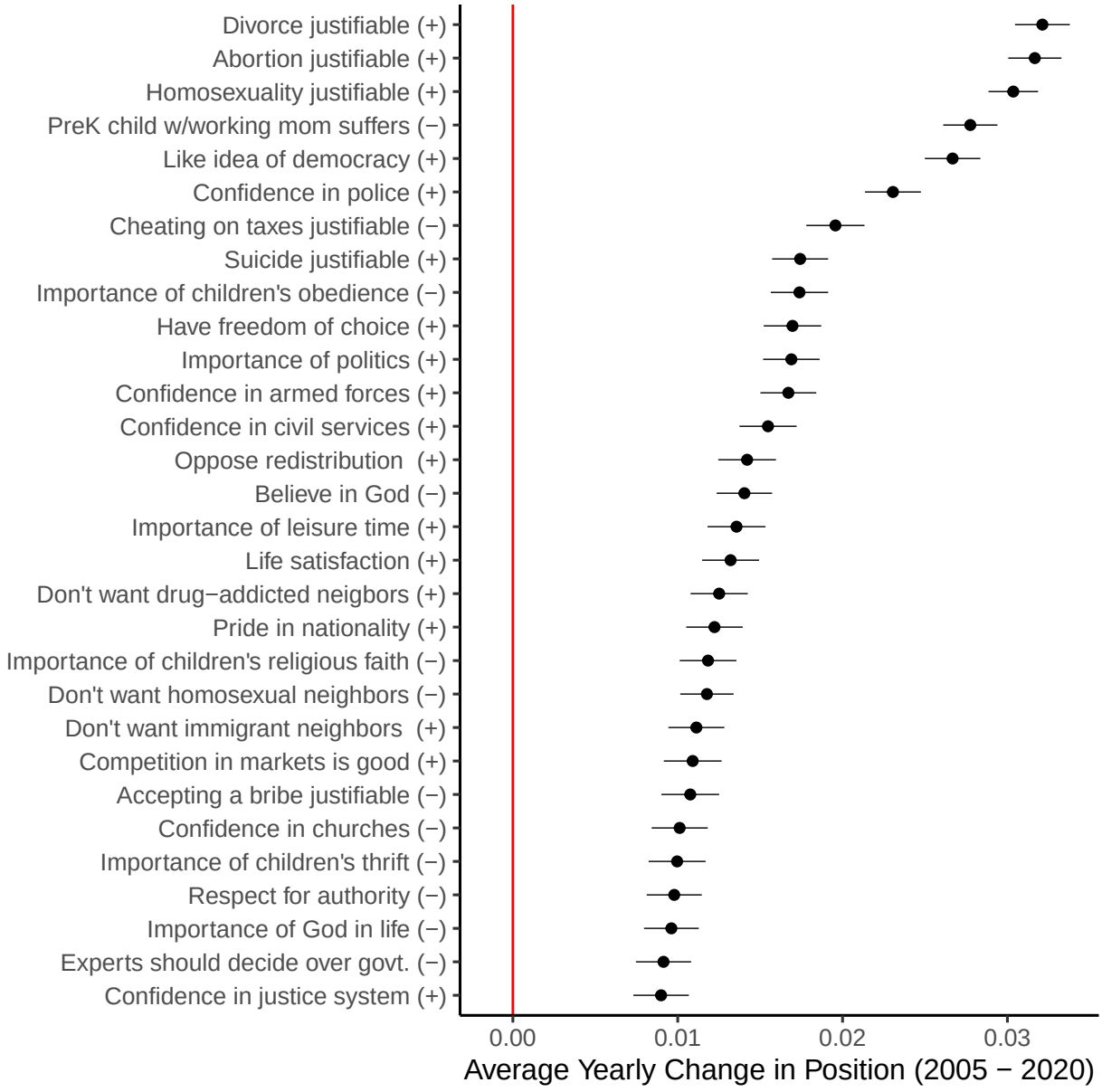
This figure presents the voters' radical right score by country and survey wave, along with the average score for the voters with the highest score. For more details on the radical right score, see Figure 5.

Figure A.4: Evolution of Specific Opinions over Time



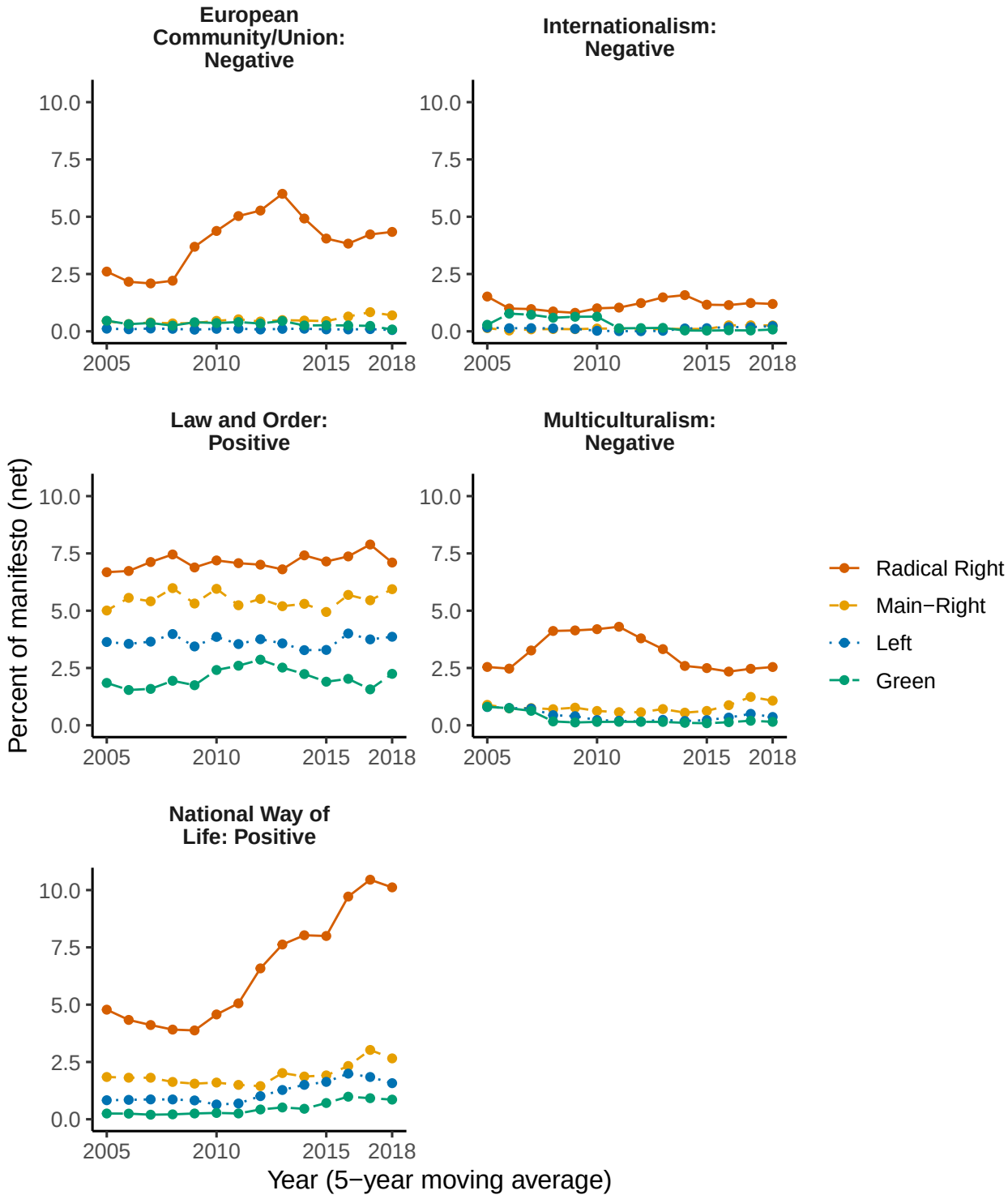
This figure shows the evolution of six specific voter opinions over time. Each gray line shows the trend in a single country and the bold blue lines show the average across all 22 countries, with all countries weighted equally. We standardize the variables within each country using means and standard deviations from the 2005-2009 IVS wave. We omit Italy from the question regarding the justifiability of homosexuality since it was not asked in the country in 2005-2009.

Figure A.5: Opinions that changed the most between 2005 and 2020



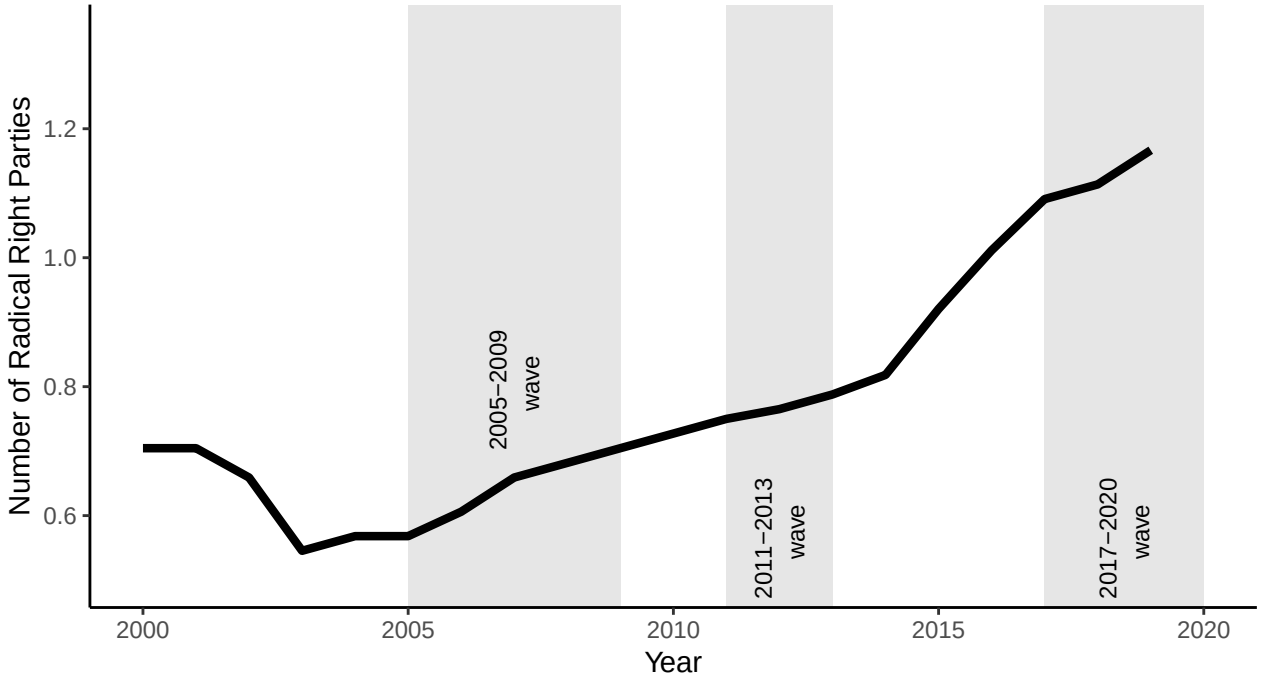
This figure shows the opinions that changed the most in the past three decades. To create this figure we regress each opinion on the survey year with country fixed effects.

Figure A.6: Changes in Most Distinctive Party Positions Over Time



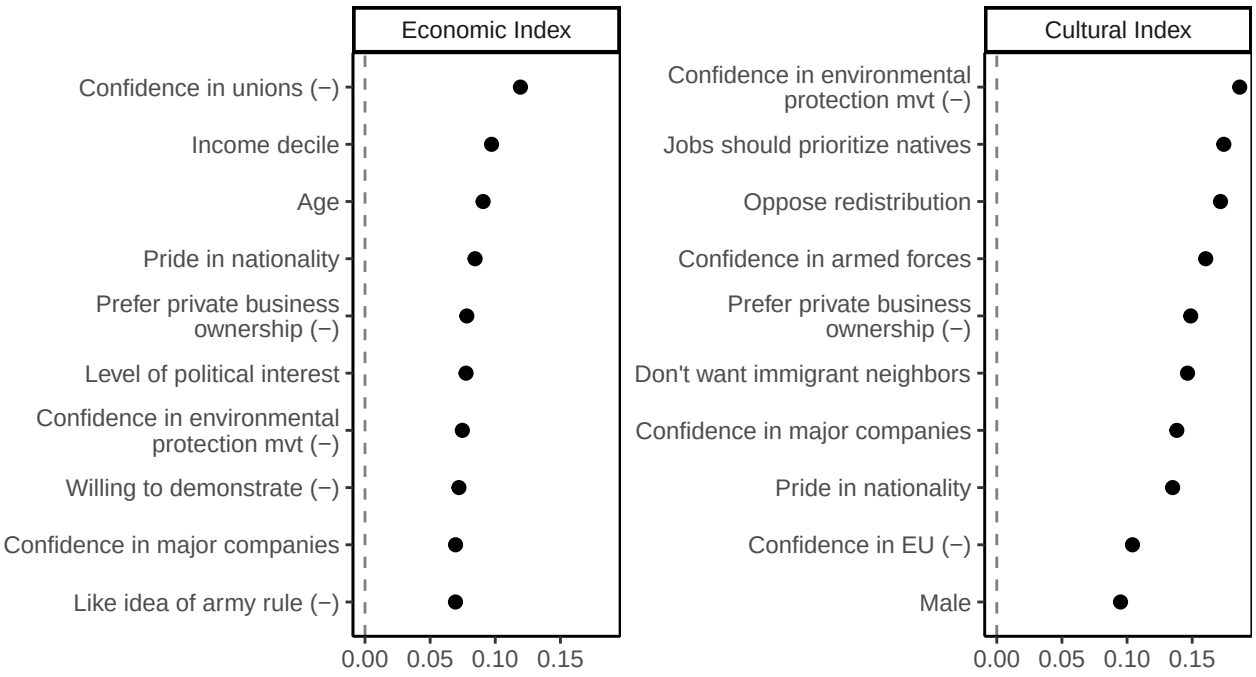
This figure shows the five positions with the largest difference between radical right parties and other parties. The manifesto components are described in Appendix Table A.3. The figure presents the moving average values for each component for groups of parties for five-year periods. Each country is weighted equally, and parties within each country are weighted by their average voting shares.

Figure A.7: Average Number of Radical Right Parties



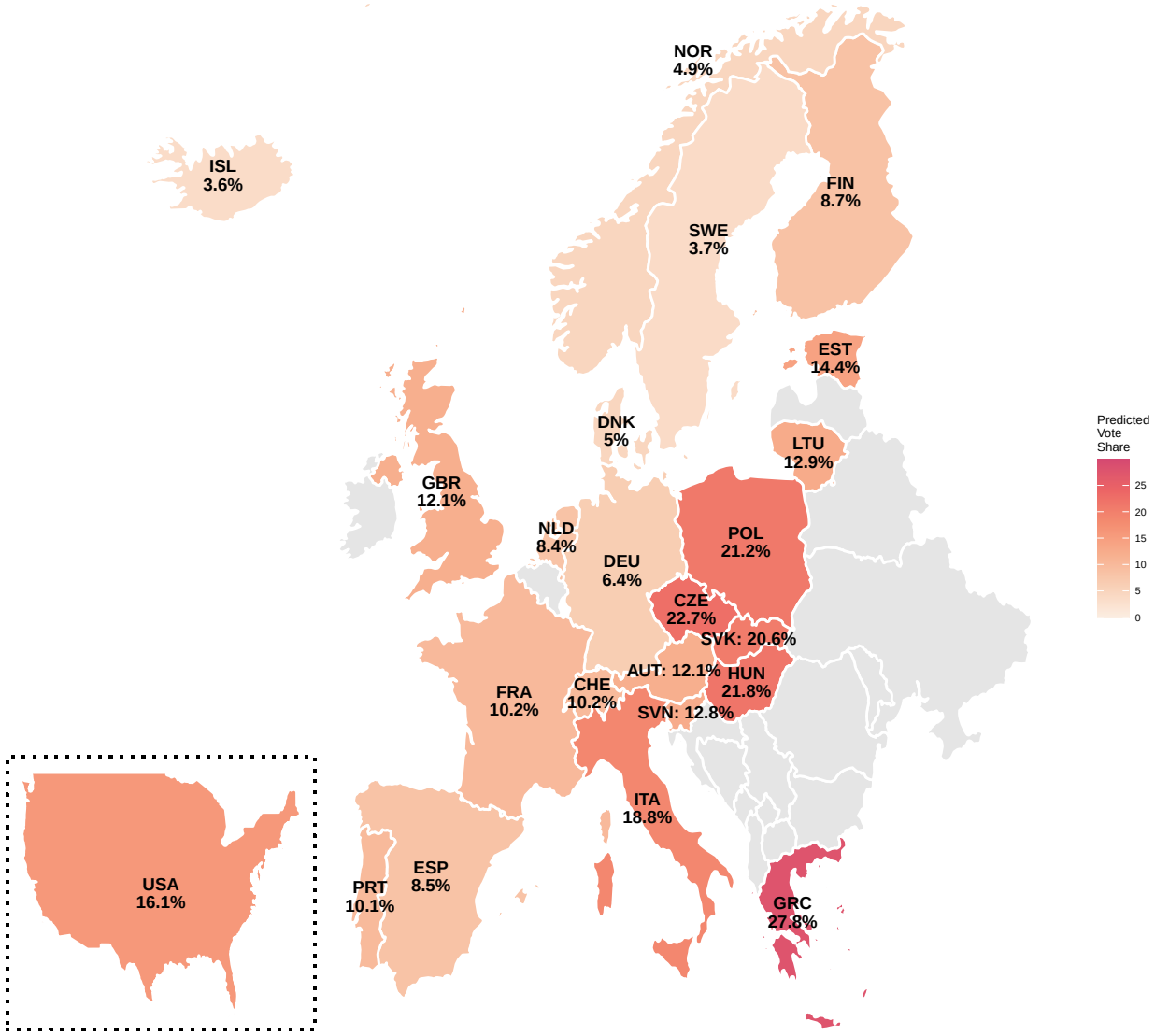
This figure shows the average number of radical right parties that received at least 1% of the vote share. Within each country, the number of radical right parties in each year is calculated as the average number of radical right parties receiving at least 1% of the vote in all parliamentary elections in the five years ending that year. We then calculate the average number across all 22 countries, with all countries weighted equally.

Figure A.8: Largest weights placed on the economic and cultural index



This figure presents the prominent coefficients on the IVS variables generating the weights for the economic and cultural index. For each index, we present the ten largest coefficients, in absolute value. We include a (-) sign for variables with a negative coefficient. The indices are the sum of the relevant manifesto variables, multiplied by (-1) for left-wing positions. We calculate weights for individual variables using Equation 1. We aggregate the corresponding variable weights for the indices, multiplying by (-1) when accordingly. We standardize the weights such that they represent the utility effect of a one standard deviation in the index.

Figure A.9: Predicted Vote Share for the AfD if German Voters had the Characteristics of Other Countries



This figure calculates the counterfactual support for the AfD in the 2017-2020 wave if German voters had the characteristics of voters in other countries. We calculate the counterfactual separately for each country based on the formula in Equation 5. In all countries, we use the party positions (Z_t^{France}) of German parties in the 2017-2020 wave along with the estimated residuals for German parties (ζ_t^{France}) and the model parameters that were estimated for this wave. For each country, predict the share of voters for the National Front according to the voter characteristics in that country. For the U.S. sample, we impute the responses for questions related to European topics (e.g., opinion on the European Union) based on the sample averages.

Table A.1: IVS Data Matched with CMP

	Unique Parties	Unique Radical Right Parties	Observations	Radical Right Supporters
1) All data	.	.	91,425	.
2) Respondents supporting a party	354	.	63,187	.
3) Respondents matched with CMP	210	32	59,635	7,934

This table provides descriptive statistics on the Integrated Values Survey data. The first row shows the total number of respondents in the country-waves we analyzed. The second and third rows present descriptive statistics for the subset of respondents supporting a specific party and the subset that could be matched with the CMP, respectively.

Table A.2: IVS Variables

Variable	Description	Coding and notes
Demographics		
Town size	Size of town where the interview was conducted	The possible answers depended on the exact survey: {2,000 and less; under 5,000; 2,000-5,000; 5,000-10,000; 10,000-20,000; 5,000-20,000; 20,000-50,000; 50,000-100,000; 20,000-100,000; 100,000-500,000; 500,000 and more}. For every range of town size we use the log of the average of the two bounds. for the top category, for which we have no upper bound, we calculated the log of the minimum value multiplied by 8.35 (Rosen and Resnick, 1980)
Religious	"Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are..." A religious person, Not a religious person, A convinced atheist	1 = A religious person, 0 = {All other options}
Athiest		1 = A convinced atheist, 0 = {All other options}
Male	Respondent's sex	1 = Male, 0 = Female
Age	"This means you are _____ years old (write in age in two digits)."	Open numeric response
Married or living together	"Are you currently...": Married, Living together as married, Divorced, Separated, Widowed, Single	1 = {Married; Living together as married; Living apart but steady relation (married,cohabitation)}, 0 = {All other options}
Divorced, separated, or widow		1 = {Divorced; Separated; Widowed; Divorced, Separated or Widow}, 0 = {All other options}
Single		1 = {Single/Never married}, 0 = {All other options}
Number of children	"How many children have you ever had", "How many children do you have - deceased children not included" (EVS 2008-2010)	Open numeric response
Employment status	"Are you employed now or not? If yes, about how many hours a week? If more than one job: only for the main job" Scale: Yes, has paid employment = {Full time employee (30 hours a week or more); Part time employee (less than 30 hours a week); Self employed}. No, no paid employment = {Retired/pensioned; Housewife not otherwise employed; Student; Unemployed}	2 = {Full time; Self employed}, 1 = Part time, 0 = {Retired; Housewife; Students; Unemployed}
Self-employed		1 = Self employed, 0 = {All other options}
Retired		1 = Retired, 0 = {All other options}
Housewife		1 = Housewife, 0 = {All other options}
Student		1 = Students, 0 = {All other options}
Unemployed		1 = Unemployed, 0 = {All other options}
Other employment		1 = Other, 0 = {All other options}
Income decile	"On this card is an income scale on which 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 the highest income group in your country. We would like to know in what group your household is. Please, specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in."	1 = Lower step, 2...9, 10 = Higher step. For Sweden 1990-1993 Wave values imputed based on the 1994-1998 Wave, For Hungary and Slovenia 1994-1998 Wave values imputed based on the 1990-1993 and 1999-2000 Waves. For Portugal 1999-2000 Wave values impute based on the 1990-1993 and 2005-2009, For 2017-2020 wave we inpute the valuse based on 2005-2009 (Waves 1994-1998 and 2011-2013 in Portugal are missing).
Labor union member	"Now I am going to read out a list of voluntary organizations; for each one, could you tell me whether you are a member, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?" Labour Union. In the 1989-1993 and 1999-2000 Waves possible answers was Mentioned or Not mentioned.	1 = {Active member; Inactive member; Mentioned}, 0 = {Not a member; Not mentioned}

Protestant	"Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination?. If yes, which one?"	1 = Protestant, 0 = {All other options}
Catholic		1 = Roman Catholic, 0 = {All other options}
Muslim		1 = Muslim, 0 = {All other options}
Other type of Christian		1 = {Other Christian (Evangelical/Pentecostal/Free church/etc.); Orthodox (Russian/Greek/etc.)}, 0 = {All other options}
No religion/atheist		1 = Do not belong to a denomination, 0 = {All other options}
Jew		1 = Jew, 0 = {All other options}
Other religion		1 = {Other; Buddhist; Hindu}, 0 = {All other options}
Education level	"What is the highest educational level that you have attained?"	The possible answers to this question depend on the survey wave. We coded education into six levels: 0 = {Inadequately completed elementary education; Not applicable/No formal education; ISCED 0/ no education; Less than primary}, 1 = {Completed (compulsory) elementary education; ISCED 1; Primary}, 2 = {Incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type; Incomplete secondary: university-preparatory type/Secondary; ISCED 2; Lower secondary}, 3 = {Complete secondary school: technical/vocational type/secondary; Complete secondary: university-preparatory type/full secondary; ISCED 3; Upper secondary}, 4 = {Some university without degree/higher education - lower-level tertiary; ISCED 4; ISCED 5; Post-secondary non tertiary; Short-cycle tertiary}, 5 = {University with degree/higher education - upper-level tertiary; ISCED 6, ISCED 7; ISCED 8; Bachelor or equivalent; Master or equivalent; Doctoral or equivalent}. For Croatia in wave 1994-1998 the variable is missing so we imputed the mean value of wave 1999-2000.
Education years	"At what age did you (or will you) complete your full time education, either at school or at an institution of higher education?"	Open numeric response. Winsorized at 70. For Greece in wave 2017-2020 we impute the mean value from wave 2005-2009 (wave 2011-2013 in Greece is missing). For US in wave 2017-2020 we impute the mean value from wave 2011-2013
Behavioral		
Frequency of attending religious services	"Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?"	0 = Never practically never, 1 = Less often, 2 = Once a year, 3 = Other specific holy days, 4 = Only on special holy days/Christmas/Easter days, 5 = Once a month, 6 = Once a week, 7 = More than once a week.
Member environment organization	"Now I am going to read out a list of voluntary organizations; for each one, could you tell me whether you are a member, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?" In the 1989-1993 and 1999-2000 Waves, possible answers were Mentioned and Not mentioned. Environmental organization.	1 = {Active member; Mentioned}, 0 = {Not a member; Inactive member; Not mentioned}
Member of religious organization	Church or religious organization	
Member of sports organization	Sport or recreational organization, football, baseball, rugby team	
Member of artistic organization	Art, music or educational organization	
Member of political party	Political party	

Member of professional organization	Professional association	
Member of other organization	Other organization	Same as above. Germany 2011-2013 Wave values imputed based on the 2005-2009 and 2017-2020 Waves
Willing to sign petition	"Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it." Signing a petition	0 = Would never do, 1 = Might do, 2 = Have done
Willing to join boycott	Joining in boycotts	
Willing to demonstrate	Attending peaceful demonstrations	
Willing to join strike	Joining strikes	
General		
Self-reported ideology	"In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?"	0 = Left, 1...8, 9 = Right
First aim order, second say in government	"If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? And which would be the next most important?" Maintaining order in the nation, Giving people more say in important government decisions, Fighting rising prices, Protecting freedom of speech, Don't know.	1 = {First aim = Maintaining order in the nation, Second = Give people more say}, 0 = {All other options}. UK 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on the 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves (relevant for other variables based on this question as well).
First aim order, second low prices		1 = {First aim = Maintaining order in the nation, Second = Fighting rising prices}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim order, second freedom of speech		1 = {First aim = Maintaining order in the nation, Second = Protecting freedom of speech}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim say in government, second order		1 = {First aim = Give people more say, Second = Maintaining order in the nation}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim say in government, second low prices		1 = {First aim = Give people more say, Second = Fighting rising prices}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim say in government, second freedom of speech		1 = {First aim = Give people more say, Second = Protecting freedom of speech}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim low prices, second order		1 = {First aim = Fighting rising prices, Second = Maintaining order in the nation}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim low prices, second say in government		1 = {First aim = Fighting rising prices, Second = Give people more say}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim low prices, second freedom of speech		1 = {First aim = Fighting rising prices, Second = Protecting freedom of speech}; 0 = {All other options}.
First aim freedom of speech, second order		1 = {First aim = Protecting freedom of speech, Second = Maintaining order in the nation}, 0 = {All other options}.
First aim freedom of speech, second low prices		1 = {First aim = Protecting freedom of speech, Second = Fighting rising prices}, 0 = {All other options}.
Opinions		
Respect for authority	"Here is a list of various changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please tell me for each one, if it were to happen whether you think it would be a good thing, a bad thing, or don't you mind?:" Greater respect for authority	0 = Bad thing, 1 = Don't mind, 2 = Good thing
Jobs should prioritize natives	"Do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following statements?" When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants.	0 = Disagree, 1 = Neither, 2 = Agree

Men job priority over women	When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	0 = Disagree, 1 = Neither, 2 = Agree. For Greece in wave 2017-2020 we impute the mean value from wave 2005-2009 (wave 2011-2013 in Greece is missing)
Prefer private business ownership	"Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between." Private vs state ownership of business	0 = Private ownership of business should be increased, 1...8, 9 = Government ownership of business should be increased
Personal over govt responsibility	Government responsibility	0 = The government should take more responsibility, 1...8, 9 = People should take more responsibility
Competition in markets is good	Competition good or harmful	0 = Competition is harmful, 1...8, 9 = Competition is good
Oppose redistribution	Income equality. 1999-2000 Wave version: "In order to be considered 'just', what should a society provide? Please tell me for each statement if it is important or unimportant to you. 1 means very important; 5 means not important at all." Eliminating big inequalities in income between citizens	0 = Incomes should be made more equal, 1...8, 9 =We need larger income differences as incentive. Since the 1999-2000 version has only five levels, we calculate a new value for the answers that ensure the question are on the same scale. 4.46 = Very important, 5.21 = 2, 6.22 = 3, 7.12 = 4, 7.65 = Not at all important. For Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on the 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves.
Country needs strong leader	"I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?" Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections	0 = Very bad, 1 = Fairly bad, 2 = Fairly good, 3 = Very good
Experts should decide over govt.	Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country	
Like idea of army rule	Having the army rule	
Like idea of democracy	Having a democratic political system	
Pride in nationality	"How proud are you to be of nationality of this country?"	0 = Not at all proud, 1 = Not very proud, 2 = Quite proud, 3 = Very proud, missing = Not applicable/ Foreigner/ Has not [country] nationality
Happiness	"Taking all things together, would you say you are:	0 = Not at all happy, 1 = Not very happy, 2 = Quite happy, 3 = Very happy. UK 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on the 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves.
Trust other people	"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?"	0 = Can't be too careful, 1 = Most people can be trusted
Life satisfaction	"All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Please use this card to help with your answer."	0 = Dissatisfied, 1...8, 9 = Satisfied
Have freedom of choice	"Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use this scale where 1 means 'none at all' and 10 means 'a great deal' to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out."	0 = None at all, 1...8, 9 = A great deal
Importance of family	"For each of the following aspects, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is very important, rather important, not very important or not important at all" Family	0 = Not at all important, 1 = Not very important, 2 = Rather important, 3 = Very important
Importance of friends	Friends	
Importance of leisure time	Leisure time	
Importance of politics	Politics	

Importance of work	Work	
Importance of religion	Religion	
State of health	"All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? Would you say it is..."	0 = Very poor, 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Very good
Importance of children's hard work	"Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five." Hard work	0 = Not mentioned, 1 = Important. Croatia 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves.
Importance of children's responsibility	Feeling of responsibility	
Importance of children's imagination	Imagination	
Importance of children's respect	Tolerance and respect for other people	
Importance of children's thrift	Thrift saving money and things	
Importance of children's determination	Determination, perseverance	
Importance of children's religious faith	Religious faith	
Importance of children's unselfishness	Not being selfish (unselfishness)	
Importance of children's obedience	Obedience	
Importance of children's independence	Independence	
Don't want drug-addicted neigbors	"On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbors?" Drug addicts	0 = Not mentioned, 1 = Mentioned. Hungary 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves
Don't want different race neighbors	People of a different race	Same as above. Hungary 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves
Don't want immigrant neighbors	Immigrants/foreign workers	Same as above. Hungary 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves
Don't want homosexual neighbors	Homosexuals	Same as above. Hungary 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves
Don't want heavy-drinking neighbors	Heavy drinkers	0 = Not mentioned, 1 = Mentioned. Hungary 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1994-1998 and 2005-2009 Waves
PreK child w/working mom suffers	When a mother works for pay, the children suffer	0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Agree strongly. Austria 1999-2000 Wave values imputed based on 1989-1993 and 2005-2009 Waves
Level of political interest	"How interested would you say you are in politics?"	0 = Not at all interested, 1 = Not very interested, 2 = Somewhat interested, 3 = Very interested
Confidence in press	"I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?" The press	0 = None at all, 1 = Not very much, 2 = Quite a lot, 3 = A great deal
Confidence in unions	Labour Unions	
Confidence in police	The police	
Confidence in justice system	The courts	
Confidence in UN	The United Nations	
Confidence in churches	The churches (mosque, temple etc.)	
Confidence in civil services	The civil services	
Confidence in major companies	Major companies	

Confidence in environmental protection mvt	Environmental organizations	
Confidence in EU	The European Union	0 = None at all, 1 = Not very much, 2 = Quite a lot, 3 = A great deal. Austria 1989-1993 Wave values imputed based on the 1999-2000 Wave
Confidence in armed forces	The armed forces	0 = None at all, 1 = Not very much, 2 = Quite a lot, 3 = A great deal. Iceland 2017-2020 Wave values imputed based on the 2005-2009 Wave
Believe in God	"In which of the following things do you believe, if you believe in any?" God	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Believe in hell	Hell	
Importance of God in life	"How important is God in your life?. Please use this scale to indicate. 10 means 'very important' and 1 means 'not at all important'"	0 = Not at all important, 1...8, 9 = Very important
Avoiding public transit fare justifiable	"Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card." Avoiding a fare on public transport	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable
Cheating on taxes justifiable	"Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card." Cheating on taxes if you have a chance	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable. Germany 2011-2013 Wave values imputed based on the 2005-2009 and 2017-2020 Waves
Homosexuality justifiable	Homosexuality	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable. Italy 2005-2009 Wave values imputed based on the 1999-2000 and 2017-2020 Waves
Prostitution justifiable	Prostitution	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable. Spain 2011-2013 Wave values imputed based on the 2005-2009 and 2017-2020 Waves
Abortion justifiable	Abortion	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable. Denmark 1989-1993 Wave values imputed based on the 2005-2009 Wave
Divorce justifiable	Divorce	0 = Never justifiable, 1...8, 9 = Always justifiable
Accepting a bribe justifiable	Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	
Suicide justifiable	Suicide	

Table A.3: CMP Party Positions

Variable	Description	Index	
		Economic	Cultural
Foreign Special Relationships: Positive (per101)	Favourable mentions of particular countries with which the manifesto country has a special relationship; the need for co-operation with and/or aid to such countries		
Foreign Special Relationships: Negative (per102)	Negative mentions of particular countries with which the manifesto country has a special relationship		
Anti-Imperialism (per103)	Negative references to imperial behaviour and/or negative references to one state exerting strong influence over other states		
Military: Positive (per104)	The importance of external security and defence		+
Military: Negative (per105)	Negative references to the military or use of military power to solve conflicts		-
Peace (per106)	Any declaration of belief in peace and peaceful means of solving crises absent reference to the military		-
Internationalism: Positive (per107)	Need for international co-operation, including co-operation with specific countries other than those coded in Foreign Special Relationships		-
European Community/Union: Positive (per108)	Favourable mentions of European Community/Union in general		
Internationalism: Negative (per109)	Negative references to international co-operation		+
European Community/Union: Negative (per110)	Negative references to the European Community/Union		
Freedom and Human Rights (per201)	Favourable mentions of importance of personal freedom and civil rights in the manifesto and other countries		
Democracy (per202)	Favourable mentions of democracy as the only game in town		
Constitutionalism: Positive (per203)	Support for maintaining the status quo of the constitution		
Constitutionalism: Negative (per204)	Opposition to the entirety or specific aspects of the manifesto country's constitution		
Decentralization (per301)	Support for federalism or decentralisation of political and/or economic power		
Centralisation (per302)	General opposition to political decision-making at lower political levels		
Governmental and Administrative Efficiency (per303)	Need for efficiency and economy in government and administration and/or the general appeal to make the process of government and administration cheaper and more efficient		
Political Corruption (per304)	Need to eliminate political corruption and associated abuses of political and/or bureaucratic power		
Political Authority (per305)	References to the manifesto party's competence to govern and/or other party's lack of such competence		
Free Market Economy (per401)	Favourable mentions of the free market and free market capitalism as an economic model	+	
Incentives: Positive (per402)	Favourable mentions of supply side oriented economic policies	+	
Market Regulation (per403)	Support for policies designed to create a fair and open economic market	-	
Economic Planning (per404)	Favourable mentions of long-standing economic planning by the government	-	
Corporatism/Mixed Economy (per405)	Favourable mentions of cooperation of government, employers, and trade unions simultaneously	-	
Protectionism: Positive (per406)	Favourable mentions of extending or maintaining the protection of internal markets	-	

Protectionism: Negative (per407)	Support for the concept of free trade and open markets	+	
Economic Goals (per408)	Broad and general economic goals that are not mentioned in relation to any other category		
Keynesian Demand Management (per409)	Favourable mentions of demand side oriented economic policies	-	
Economic Growth: Positive (per410)	The paradigm of economic growth		
Technology and Infrastructure: Positive (per411)	Importance of modernisation of industry and updated methods of transport and communication		
Controlled Economy (per412)	Support for direct government control of economy	-	
Nationalisation (per413)	Favourable mentions of government ownership of industries, either partial or complete; calls for keeping nationalised industries in state hand or nationalising currently private industries	-	
Economic Orthodoxy (per414)	Need for economically healthy government policy making		
Marxist Analysis (per415)	Positive references to Marxist-Leninist ideology and specific use of Marxist-Leninist terminology by the manifesto party	-	
Anti-Growth Economy: Positive (per416)	Favourable mentions of anti-growth politics	-	
Environmental Protection (per501)	General policies in favour of protecting the environment, fighting climate change, and other green policies		-
Culture: Positive (per502)	Need for state funding of cultural and leisure facilities including arts and sport		
Equality: Positive (per503)	Concept of social justice and the need for fair treatment of all people		-
Welfare State Expansion (per504)	Favourable mentions of need to introduce, maintain or expand any public social service or social security scheme	-	
Welfare State Limitation (per505)	Limiting state expenditures on social services or social security	+	
Education Expansion (per506)	Need to expand and/or improve educational provision at all levels		
Education Limitation (per507)	Limiting state expenditure on education		
National Way of Life: Positive (per601)	Favourable mentions of the manifesto country's nation, history, and general appeals		+
National Way of Life: Negative (per602)	Unfavourable mentions of the manifesto country's nation and history		-
Traditional Morality: Positive (per603)	Favourable mentions of traditional and/or religious moral values		+
Traditional Morality: Negative (per604)	Opposition to traditional and/or religious moral values		-
Law and Order: Positive (per605)	Favourable mentions of strict law enforcement, and tougher actions against domestic crime		+
Civic Mindedness: Positive (per606)	Appeals for national solidarity and the need for society to see itself as united		
Multiculturalism: Positive (per607)	Favourable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality within domestic societies		-
Multiculturalism: Negative (per608)	The enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration		+
Labour Groups: Positive (per701)	Favourable references to all labour groups, the working class, and unemployed workers in general		
Labour Groups: Negative (per702)	Negative references to labour groups and trade unions		
Agriculture and Farmers: Positive (per703)	Specific policies in favour of agriculture and farmers		

Middle Class and Professional Groups (per704)	General favourable references to the middle class	
Underprivileged Minority Groups (per705)	Very general favourable references to underprivileged minorities who are defined neither in economic nor in demographic terms	-
Non-economic Demographic Groups (per706)	General favourable mentions of demographically defined special interest groups of all kinds	