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Populist parties in European Parliament elections: A new dataset on left, right and valence populism from 1979 to 2019

Mattia Zulianello ^{a, *}, Erik Gahner Larsen ^b

- ^a Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS), University of Birmingham, UK
- ^b School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent, UK

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ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing interest in populism, there is a lack of comparative and longterm evidence on the electoral performance of populist parties. We address this gap by using a novel dataset covering 92 populist parties in the European Parliament elections from 1979 to 2019. Specifically, we provide aggregate data on the electoral performance of all populist parties as well as the three ideational varieties of populism, i.e. right-wing, left-wing and valence populist parties. We show that there is significant variation both across countries as well as between the ideational varieties of populism. Most notably, while the success of left-wing and valence populists is concentrated in specific areas, right-wing populist parties have consolidated as key players in the vast majority of EU countries.

1. Introduction

The 2019 European Parliament election was the first EP election taking place after pivotal events such as Brexit in the United Kingdom (Clarke et al., 2017) and the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Unsurprisingly, in the wake of these events significant attention was devoted to the 'populist potential' in the 2019 EP elections among pundits and experts alike. However, this was not the first EP election with populist parties gaining significant support in multiple European countries. Here, we put the 2019 EP elections in a historical context and provide an overview of the key trends and developments with regard to the support for populist parties across Europe.

There has been attention to how populist parties have performed in the 2019 EP election (Mudde 2019b) and a growing body of literature is interested in examining the appeal of populist parties for mass publics across Europe in national elections as well as elections for the European Parliament (e.g. Ford et al., 2012). However, so far there has been no systematic focus on historical trends in the support for different types of populist parties.

To shed light on the performance of populist parties in elections for the European Parliament, we present a new dataset on the support for populist parties over the last forty years for the main ideational varieties of populist parties: left populists, right populists, and valence populists.

Specifically, we introduce an extensive dataset in terms of temporal and spatial coverage including 92 populist parties that in at least one EP election over the period 1979-2019 received at least 1% of the votes. Focusing on the level of the European Union facilitates many possible venues for future research. First, it fosters comparability in key trends across time and space thanks also to the fact that EP elections are held using a proportional voting system since 1999. Second, it enables research on the populist phenomenon across Europe by linking the data to other data sources, such as the European Election Studies (EES) and the various Eurobarometers. Third, it opens up for studies of the interplay between national and European elections. Specifically, while EP elections have historically been defined as second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), recent research suggests that the increasing relevance of this arena of competition (Ehin and Talving, 2020), especially because the success of challenger parties in the EP, may foster their success at the national level (Schulte-Cloos 2018).

To illustrate key dynamics in the data, we focus on each of the four decades of populism in relation to EP elections: the first period of populist support (1979–1989), the expansion of populism (1994–1999), the full coverage of populism across Europe (2004–2009), and the consolidation of populism (2014–2019). In the next section, we briefly introduce our classification of populist parties that we will use to structure the data and historical overview.

E-mail address: M.Zulianello@bham.ac.uk (M. Zulianello).

^{*} Corresponding author.

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2. Identifying and classifying populist parties

For the identification of populist parties, we follow the definition of populism provided by Mudde (2004; 2007). Populist parties are actors for which populism, a thin-centred ideology, constitutes a defining element of their ideational system. Although any political party may occasionally adopt elements of populist communication or style, by adopting an 'inclusive' approach to ideology (see Sainsbury 1980: 8), it is possible to identify the political parties for which populism represents a core ideological concept (Mudde, 2004, 2007) and, as such, constitutes a key element of their belief system and identity. Importantly, using this definition, we are able to determine the crucial ideas characterizing the profile of a political party, even those who declare their 'post-ideological' or 'non-ideological' character.

Populist parties emphasize the moral distinction between the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' while glorifying 'popular sovereignty' (Mudde, 2004). In addition, they can be characterized by a clear ideological positional character in terms of left-right, i.e. in terms of their relative propensity towards egalitarianism (see Bobbio 1996), or predominantly focus on non-positional issues.

Due to the 'thinness' of the populist ideology, populism can be combined with other ideological and programmatic features, which enable the emergence of different types of populist parties. Hence, it is not sufficient to distinguish between populist and non-populist parties: on the contrary, it is necessary to operate a distinction among populist parties, by focusing on their different ideational features. For the classification of populist parties, we follow Zulianello (2020) that group contemporary populist parties in three varieties¹: right-wing, left-wing and valence populism.

Right-wing populists are in themselves a broad church, which include the 'populist radical right' (Mudde, 2007), 'neoliberal populism' (Mudde, 2007), 'national-conservative populists' (Pankowski and Kormak, 2013), and 'national populists' (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018). For the present purpose it suffices to say that right-wing populists are characterized by a clear positioning on Bobbio's understanding of the 'right', resulting from an exclusionary conception of the 'pure people', which can be ideationally informed by the interaction of populism with various forms of nationalism or neoliberalism (Betz 1994). According to the specific interaction between the ideological features, inequality can be framed in socio-economic and/or cultural terms by right-wing populist parties.

The large majority of populist parties in the history of EP elections belong to the right-wing variety²: within this broader group, the lion's share is represented by populist radical right parties. Indeed, populist radical right parties have always been the most common sub-type of right-wing populism in the European continent (e.g. Austrian Freedom Party and Jobbik in Hungary) and the other sub-types, such as the national-conservative (e.g. Alternative Democratic Reform in Luxembourg and Bulgaria without Censorship) and neo-liberal populists (e.g. List Dedecker in the Netherlands and Progress Party in Denmark)

have been a clear minority.

Recent years have experienced a growing number of right-wing populists that have experienced a nativist turn, which became a key element of their profile, to the extent they can now be classified as populist radical right parties themselves. Notable examples include the formerly national conservative populists Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice in Poland which by the end of the 2014–2019 EP legislature had become 'fully radical right populist' parties (e.g. McDonnell and Werner 2019: 7). However, there are also cases of originally neoliberal populist parties that eventually became fully-fledged populist radical right parties, as paradigmatically shown by the case of the UKIP (e.g. Goodwin and Dennison 2017), among others.

Left-wing populists, on the contrary, can be located on Bobbio's understanding of the 'left' given their ideological focus on equality. As March (2011: 122) underlines, left-wing populism 'emphasizes egalitarianism and inclusivity rather than the openly exclusivist antiimmigrant or anti-foreigner concerns of right-populism'. More specifically, left-wing populists³ embrace some form of socialism and adopt a conception of 'the pure people' that includes the 'socioeconomic underdog' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018: 1670). Most commonly left-wing populist parties qualify as 'social populist' parties (Mudde, 2007) characterized by a typical radical left profile which 'mostly rely on different interpretations or hybrids of socialism' (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019: 13) (e.g. The Left in Slovenia and Podemos in Spain). However, some of them are better understood as 'national-social' populists, as they combine left-wing populism with some form of nationalism (e.g. the Irish Sinn Fein, and Self-Defense of the Republic) (see, respectively, O'Malley 2008; Krok-Paszkowska 2003; cf. March, 2011).

Finally, despite the persisting tendency to dichotomize parties into either 'left' or 'right', a significant number of populist parties lack a clear positional character in ideological terms and have been defined as valence populist parties, which is a distinct type of populism rather than a residual category (Zulianello, 2020). Valence populist parties (e.g. the Czech ANO, 2011 and the Italian Five Star Movement) place an overwhelming emphasis on non-positional issues which, in addition to populism itself, are the core feature of their ideational profile such as the fight against corruption, morality in political life, democratic reform, transparency and performance (Zulianello, 2020). For instance, it can be noticed that valence populists often emphasize technocracy, using 'the appeal of technical expertise to connect directly with the people' (Buštíková and Guasti 2019: 302).

While valence populist parties are often defined as 'centrist' populists, a term that 'directly or indirectly refers to the ideological or geometric centre of the party system' (e.g. Učeň 2004: 47), we find the very term misleading as the term 'centrist' points to a specific position or, at least tendency, in positional terms. However, as Hazan (1997) argues, the notion of 'centre party' should be restricted to an 'ideologically positioned party' (Hazan, 1997: 27, emphasis added), while the distinctive feature of valence populists is precisely the prevailing emphasis on non-positional issues, such as competence and performance. Hence, valence populists may adopt more or less clear stances on a limited range of positional issues, ⁴ but their overall ideational system is primarily informed by a 'pure' form of populism in isolation, rather than by the interaction of the latter with other thick or thin ideologies (e.g. nativism,

¹ By focusing on the European context with a broader historical perspective, a fourth main variety of populist parties was constituted by agrarian populism. However, in the context of EP elections, the only case of an agrarian populist party is represented by the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland. This party fits our tripartite categorization given that, in addition to be an agrarian populist party, it was *also* a case of left-wing populism (Mudde 2007: 48).

² There are some right-wing populist parties that are best understood as regionalist and right-wing populist parties, as paradigmatically shown by the (old) Northern League. Surely, under the leadership of Matteo Salvini the League (Lega per Salvini Premier) evolved as a fully-fledged populist radical right party (Albertazzi et al., 2018; see also Albertazzi and Zulianello 2021). However, 'old' the Northern League was better understood as a regionalist populist rather than a populist radical right party. However, as Albertazzi and McDonnell (2015: 43) underline, the Northern League was nevertheless 'firmly placed within the broader sphere of the populist right in Europe'.

³ Within the broader group of left-wing populist parties it is possible to identify some sub-types, in particular the 'social populists' and 'national-social populists' (see March, 2011; Mudde 2007; Zulianello 2020). Among the 16 left-wing populist parties included in our dataset, 13 are typical social populist parties, while 3 – Cypriot Citizens' Alliance, the Irish Sinn Fein, and Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland are better understood as 'national-social populists', as they complement left-wing populism with various forms of nationalism (March, 2011).

 $^{^4}$ We linked our data introduced below to the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey to confirm this, cf. Online Appendix D.

socialism). Valence populists embrace a pure notion of populism, which is the only element that can be considered as of core importance within their ideological morphology. This feature makes their policy positions flexible, free-floating, and erratic across the various policy domains.

3. A dataset to assess the performance of populist parties in EP elections

We provide the first systematic investigation on the electoral performance of populist parties in EP elections held between 1979 and 2019. To the best of our knowledge, our dataset is the most extensive in terms of temporal and spatial coverage, as it includes 92 populist parties that in at least one EP election over the period 1979–2019 received at least 1% of the votes. 61 qualify as right-wing populists, 15 as valence populists and 16 as left-wing populists (see Online Appendix A for the full list of populist parties included in our dataset).

Given its importance within the European continent, we also provide a comprehensive list of populist radical right parties. In this way, scholars can decide whether to use the data to explore the broader variety (i.e. right-wing populism, which includes, inter alia, national-conservative, neoliberal and radical right populists) or that specific type (populist radical right parties).

Our strategy to identify and classify populist parties took place in various stages. First, we consulted the list developed by Rooduijn et al. (2019) and compared it with other authoritative lists available in the literature (e.g. Buštíková 2019; Enyedi and Mölder, 2018; Mudde 2007; Norris and Inglehart 2019; van Kessel 2015, van Kessel, 2016; Zulianello 2019, 2020). Second, we performed an extensive literature research for every single party mentioned in those lists in an iterative fashion. In the end, more than 250 sources were consulted (for the full list of the consulted sources, distinguished between comparative works and national case-studies, see Online Appendix E). Third, by relying on such an extensive number of sources, we identified populist parties that were absent from the above-mentioned lists, which were again validated using additional sources in an iterative fashion. Fourth, thanks to this large number of sources, it was possible to not only identify populist parties, but also to classify all of them into their main ideational varieties rather than lumping some parties into residual categories. This is important because, for instance, all populist parties that are neither 'far left' nor 'far right' are de-facto squeezed into a residual category by the list by Rooduijn et al. (2019). However, it is clear that parties such as the Italian Five Star Movement, the Independent Greeks and Forza Italia have very little, if anything, in common.

Some populist parties participated in one or few EU elections (e.g. Respect in the UK in 2004), some never reached the 1% threshold (e.g. the National Renovator Party in Portugal), and some never contested EP elections despite being active in that period (e.g. Way of Courage in Lithuania). All EU countries are included in our dataset with the exception of Northern Ireland, 6 Latvia and Malta. No populist party reached the 1% threshold in the Latvia in EU elections and there were no populist parties altogether in Malta.

The vast majority of parties can be considered as populists throughout their existence, but others, for instance the Dutch Socialist Party and Alternative for Germany (see below) only in specific phases. For details on the EU elections in which a given party was classified as populist, see Online Appendix A.

It is important to underline a few differences between our list of populist parties and that developed by Rooduijn et al. (2019), which focuses on national parliamentary elections since 1989. First, we exclude the parties that, according to the latter, have a 'borderline status', with some noticeable exceptions that, in our view, warrant inclusion such as ANO 2011 in Czech Republic (Buštíková and Guasti 2019; Havlík 2019) for its entire lifespan, and rather than considering the Luxembourgian Action Committee for Democracy and Pensions' Justice/Alternative Democratic Reform and the Dutch Socialist Party as populist for the entire period of interest, we consider the former as being populist only from the 1994 EP election onwards (Hirsch 1995; see also Hanley 2011), and the latter until the 1999 EP election (Lucardie and Voerman 2019). Second, we included the parties that were classified as populist radical right parties by Mudde (2007), with the exception of one party that is better understood as belonging to the extreme right (and hence non-populist⁷), namely the Tricolour Flame in Italy (Tarchi, 2015). Third, we include parties that can be classified as ideationally populist but are absent on the list of parties provided from Rooduijn et al. (2019), for instance Belgium Arise, the Czech Party of Common Sense, the Brexit Party in the UK, and Course of Freedom in Greece. Fourth, we classify Alternative for Germany as being non-populist in 2014 but as a populist party in the 2019 election (see Arzheimer 2015). Fifth, we consider the case of the Greek PASOK as populist only during Andreas Papandreou's leadership (Mudde, 2007: 48; see also Lyrintzis 2005), who was its leader from its foundation until 1996. This means that the PASOK is classified⁸ as populist until the 1994 EU elections and as non-populist from the 1999 EU elections onwards.

Finally, we pay considerable attention to distinguish between populist varieties: in addition to avoid treating all the parties that are neither 'far right' nor 'far left' as falling in an unspecified residual category, we have adopted a fine-grained approach to the study of rightwing populism. In particular, differently from Rooduijn et al. (2019) we adopt a fine-grained approach to identify populist radical right parties within the broader group of right-wing populists rather than just employ the term 'far right'. Indeed, although the latter should technically refer to parties having both nativism and authoritarianism in the core position of their ideational morphology, it is unfortunately used by the above-mentioned researchers to refer to some parties that – for specific periods or even their own entire lifespan – did not have both nativism and authoritarianism in a core position of their ideological morphology (see Mudde 2007). Given the absence of a unified database on European election results covering the entire period of interest (1979–2019) as

⁵ The number of parties considers as single entities successor parties such as Forza Italia/The People of Freedom in Italy, the Flemish Block/Flemish Interest in Belgium, as well as mergers where, despite the change in party name, an older party effectively 'swallowed' the other organizations, as in the case of the Lombard League/Northern League (cf. Bolleyer 2013: 26).

Our dataset include data for Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom. We excluded Northern Ireland because of its 'ethnic' party system (Mitchell 1995) and different electoral system adopted for EP elections.

 $^{^{7}}$ As Mudde (2019: 8) underlines 'the extreme right is, by definition, not populist, while the radical right can be – and, in the twenty-first century, predominantly is'.

⁸ As Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis (2014: 124) underline, while during Papandreou's years the party was an 'archetypal' case of left-wing populism, 'during the 1990s PASOK gradually turned "anti-populist" under the leadership of the "modernizer" Costas Simitis', who became party leader in 1996

⁹ Following Mudde (2019), the umbrella term 'far right' should encompass radical right and extreme right parties. However, Roodujin et al. (2019) classify far right parties that were neither radical right nor extreme right. In this respect, the most immediate example is provided by the usage of such a label to classify parties that were, instead, best understood as neo-liberal populists for their entire lifespan (such as the Progress Party in Denmark) or until recently (e. g. the UKIP until 2015). The same applies to other right-wing populists that, until recently, could not be considered as fully-fledged populist radical right parties, such as Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice in Poland (McDonnell and Werner 2019).

well as the fact that minor parties are often aggregated in an 'Others' category, we relied on a broad range of sources¹⁰, such as official electoral results provided by the national countries as well as on various issues of the Political Data Yearbook of the *European Journal of Political Research*. In this respect, we decided to collect the data on electoral results rather than relying on, for example, the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow, 2019). The specific reason is that the election results of certain populist parties in specific elections are missing¹¹ in the ParlGov dataset, while others are inaccurate.¹²

Last, we included the coalitions between different political actors that met one of the following conditions (coalitions between different parties are indicated with an asterisk in Online Appendix A): a) those constituted only by individual populist parties, indicated in the Online Appendix (e.g. the coalition between the Slovak National Party and the Real Slovak National Party in the 2004 EP election) and b) when a single populist party or more than one populist parties played a predominant role in terms of their visibility or leading candidates within a coalition that included non-populist parties as well, e.g. Podemos in the Unidos Podemos coalition in 2019 or Chega in the Basta! Coalition in Portugal in the same year. Accordingly, we adopted a conservative approach and excluded all other coalitions that did not meet either of the criteria. ¹³

4. Support for populist parties in EP elections

The dataset is publicly available at https://doi.org/10.7910/D VN/RFRCZS and https://www.mattiazulianello.com/. Fig. 1 provides a historical overview of the aggregate performance of populist parties in the elections for the European Parliament. From the figure we can see an increase in the number of countries in which populist parties have gained one percent or more of the vote at least once between 1979 and 2019

Fig. 2 outlines the performance of right-wing, left-wing and valence populists over time. We can see that the development in support is not homogeneous across the different types of populist parties. Specifically, among the electorally successful populist parties within the most recent EP elections, a majority of those are right-wing populist parties (the radical right populist parties are showed with triangles). Furthermore, we see a lot of variation in the support within the different types. A majority of the parties are right-wing populist parties (61 out of the 92 parties), 16 are left-wing parties and 15 are valence parties.

Next, we group the various EP elections into four temporal periods in order to present the most important trends: 1979–1989, 1994–1999, 2004–2009 and 2014–2019. The discussion focuses only on 'regular' EP elections (i.e. every fifth years between 1979 and 2019) to ensure a structured comparison, while we do not focus on the elections held in specific countries after their accession into the EU (e.g. Greece, 1981; Austria, 1996 and Croatia, 2013).

5. 1979-1989: the first period of populist support

In the first EP election held in 1979, the only populist party was the right-wing Progress Party in Denmark (obtaining 5.8% of the votes and one seat). The number of populist parties grew to six in 1984 and eleven in 1989. Between 1979 and 1989 the most successful populist party was the left-wing PASOK in Greece as it obtained 41.6% in 1984 and 36% in 1980

Overall, with the exception of PASOK, parliamentary representation was achieved only by right-wing populist parties, who grew their total proportion of seats in the EP parliament from 0.2% in 1979 to 3.7% in 1989. The most successful right-wing populist parties in this period are found in France (Front National, 11% in 1984; 11.7% in 1989), Germany (The Republicans, 7.1% in 1989) and Denmark (Progress Party, 5.8% in 1979; 3.5% in 1984; 5.3% in 1989).

6. 1994-1999: the expansion of populism

In the first period, the aggregate electoral performance of populist parties exceeded a double-digit percentage only in France and Greece. In the period of 1994–1999, there was a populist expansion where the aggregate support for populist parties was above ten percent in at least one election in France (10.5% in 1994), Greece (37.6% in 1994), Austria (23.4% in 1999), Belgium (10.8% in 1994; 10.9% in 1999), and Italy (37.2% in 1994; 29.7% in 1999).

The expansion of populism in this period should be understood in terms of electoral expansion of right-wing populist parties. The average electoral performance of right-wing populist parties was 7.0% in 1994 (it averaged 4.6% in the first period) and 6.2% in 1999. In 1994, right-wing populists gained seats in three countries (Belgium, France and Italy), while in 1999 the number grew to six (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain and Italy). The left-wing populists only gained representation in one country in 1994 (Greece), while the number increased to three in 1999 (Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands).

7. 2004-2009: populism becoming widespread across Europe

The EP elections held in the new millennium took place after the EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe (25 countries in 2004 and 27 countries in 2009). In comparison to the previous period, in which the aggregate support for populist parties exceeded 10% in at least one occasion in five countries, a double-digit performance for such parties occurred in at least one election in 15 countries in the 2004–2009 period. The average support for populist parties in the third period was especially high in new member states, such as Hungary (60.4%), Bulgaria (49%, only 2009 given its accession in 2007) and Poland (27.8%).

Valence populist parties made their appearance in the period 2004–2009, and were successful in countries such as Bulgaria in 2009 (GERB, 24.4%, and National Movement Simeon II, 8%) and obtained at least 10% of the votes in Austria (Hans-Peter Martin's List, 14% in 2004 and 17.7% in 2009) and Lithuania in 2004 (Labour Party, 30.2%). The average performance of the valence populists was 16.3% in 2004 but declined to 10.7% in 2009. Left-wing populist parties grew especially in Ireland (Sinn Féin, 11.1% in 2004, 11.2% in 2009), and this variety averaged 9.3% in 2004 and 6.2% in 2009. More generally, only in Ireland did the left-wing populists average more than 10% of the votes

¹⁰ This is important especially for triangulating the data. For example, in various cases the data provided by the European Parliament website (https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/european-results/2 019-2024/) differ from the official data provided by the member states. In such cases, we relied on official data provided by the member states.

¹¹ For instance, the electoral performances of the Danish Progress Party in 1999, the Independent Greeks in 2019, the Dutch Socialist Party in 1989, and the Alliance for the Future of Austria in 2014 are missing (accessed 10 April 2020).

¹² For instance, the ParlGov dataset attributes to Dutch Centre Party in the 1984 EP election the 1.3% of the votes, but it obtained the 2.5%, and in the 1989 EP election the same party is attributed a 0.8% of the votes, but the party did not contest that election (Voerman and Lucardie 1992: 39). Another example is represented by the case of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia which was not a mere 'successor' of the People's Union of Estonia but rather a 'virtually a new party' in terms of ideology and membership (Saarts, 2015: 214).

¹³ Examples of coalitions not meeting either of the two criteria include, inter alia, the coalition in which the left-wing populist Cypriot Citizens' Alliance took part in the 2019 EU elections together with the non-populist Movement of Ecologists - Citizens' Cooperation; the case of the right-wing IMRO-Bulgarian National Movement in 2009, when it participated in coalition Forward together with the non-populist Agrarian People's Union and the George's Day Movement; and the left-wing populist Croatian Labourists – Labour Party in 2019, when they contested as part of the broad electoral alliance name Amsterdam Coalition.

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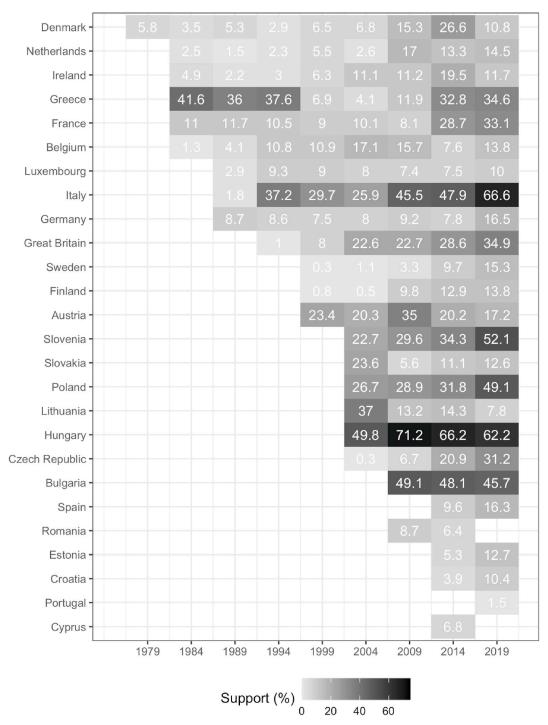


Fig. 1. Aggregate support for populist parties in EP elections, 1979–2019.

throughout the period.

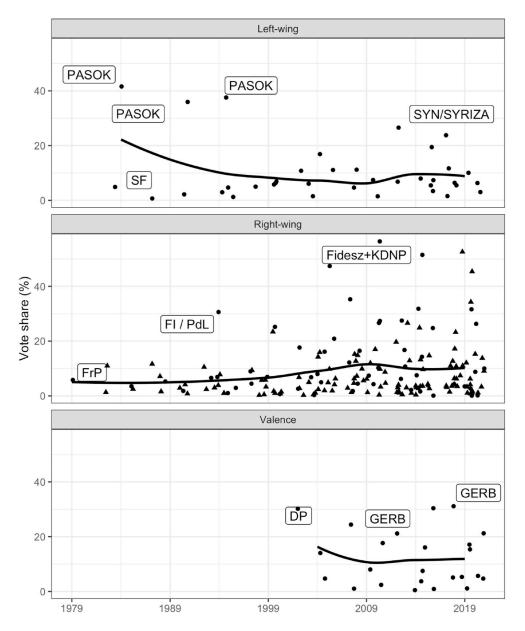
Finally, right-wing populist parties confirmed their status as the most successful ideational variety in Europe. The right-wing populists in Hungary averaged 60.4% in the two elections, and while this represented an outlier across the EU, in Italy the average support in this period was above 30% in Slovenia, Poland and the Great Britain above 20% and more than 10% in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, and Denmark. The rise of right-wing populism is highlighted by its diffusion across Europe, whereas valence populists and left-wing populists were limited to few countries.

8. 2014-2019: the consolidation of right-wing populism

The number of countries where the support for populist parties achieved 10% in at least one election jumped from 16 countries in 2014 to 22 countries in 2019, with the few exceptions being Cyprus, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania. Most notably, the recent EP elections held in 2014 and 2019 demonstrated the electoral consolidation of rightwing populism in Europe.

Right-wing populists remained particularly strong in Hungary (66.2% in 2014; 62.2% in 2019) and showed a considerably increase in France (28.7% in 2014 and 26.8% in 2019), Poland (31.8% in 2014 and 49.1% in 2019) and Great Britain (28.6% in 2014 and 34.9% in 2019).

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Note: Triangles denote populist radical right parties within the broader category of right-wing populism.

Random jitter is added to the points to enable the presentation of all observations. The lines are obtained with

local polynomial regression fitting. For the exact numbers, see Online Appendix C.

Fig. 2. Support for left-wing, right-wing and valence populist parties, Note: Triangles denote populist radical right parties within the broader category of right-wing populism. Random jitter is added to the points to enable the presentation of all observations. The lines are obtained with local polynomial regression fitting. For the exact numbers, see Online Appendix C.

The most substantial expansion of right-wing populists occurred in the case of Italy in 2019, where right-wing populists gathered 49.5% in 2019, due in particular to the spectacular rise of the Salvini's League (34.3%). Noteworthy, considerable gains to right-wing populists also occurred in countries they were previously weak, for example in Sweden (9.7% in 2014; 15.3% in 2019), or virtually non-existent, for example in Germany (11% in 2019), Estonia (from 4% in 2014 to 12.7% in 2019), and Spain (from 1.6% in 2014 to 6.2% in 2019). On average, right-wing populists obtained 10.1% of the votes in 2014 and 10.2% in 2019.

The most considerable breakthrough of left-wing populism occurred in Greece, where SYRIZA, a non-populist radical left party until 2008 (cf.

Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014), obtained 26.6% in 2014 and the 23.8% in 2019. More generally, left-wing populism obtained more than 10% of the votes in at least one of the elections only in Greece (26.6% in 2014; 28.4% in 2019), in Ireland (19.5% in 2014; 11.7% in 2019), and in the Spanish case in 2019, albeit in the form of a coalition led by a populist party (Podemos Unidos, 10.1%). On average, the support for left-wing populist parties in 2014 was 11.0%, but declined to 8.5% in 2019

Valence populists remained strong in Bulgaria thanks to the performance of GERB (30.4% in 2014; 31.1% in 2019), and recovered some strength in comparison with the previous period in Lithuania

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(Lithuanian Centre Party, 5.1% in 2019) and Slovakia (Ordinary People and Independent, 7.5% in 2014 and 5.3% in 2019). However, the most relevant development for this ideational variety was constituted by the rise of new actors resulting in considerable performances in countries where valence populism was previously absent, e.g. Czech Republic with ANO 2011 (16.1% in 2014 and 21.2% in 2019).

In sum, the history of populism in EP elections over the last four decades shows the growing and persistent support to populist parties, especially right-wing populist parties.

9. Concluding remarks

This research note has presented the first systematic overview on the electoral performance of populist parties in European Parliament elections from 1979 to 2019. The dataset introduced here provides insights on both the aggregate electoral performance of populist parties in general as well as for the three main ideational varieties.

In particular, whereas left-wing and valence populism is territorially concentrated in specific areas, right-wing populist parties are present in the majority of EU countries and are characterized by a remarkable electoral performance, although important cross-national variations do emerge. Accordingly, we have seen the consolidation of right-wing populism at the European level. Specifically, we see a greater number of right-wing populist parties and these parties occupy a great number of seats in the European Parliament.

It is important to underline that the rise and consolidation of rightwing populism in Europe is in essence the story of the rise and consolidation of populist radical right parties (cf. Fig. 2). In this story, populism played a crucial role but it did so only in interaction with two thicker ideological elements, authoritarianism and, in particular, nativism (Mudde, 2019a; see also Art 2020). This interaction, rather than populism in isolation, produced a powerful competitive cocktail that has proved successful across virtually every corner of the European continent and appears, more than ever, as here to stay.

Given its broad temporal and geographical scope, the dataset presented here constitutes a valuable foundation for future empirical research on the populist (radical) right and the EU. For instance, to explain the contextual factors behind the uneven performance of the different types of populist parties across EU member states over time, the attitudinal correlates of different types of populist voters, as well as the implications of populism for EU politics. In particular, future research should examine the root of support for the different types of populist parties in a comparative perspective. This possibility is enhanced by our effort to further distinguish among right-wing populists to identify populist radical right parties, opening additional routes for research.

Data availability

is publicly available https://doi. at org/10.7910/DVN/RFRCZS and https://www.mattiazulianello.com/

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi. org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102312.

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A: List of parties

Table A.1: Overview of parties

Country	Party name	Abb.	Variety	Elections
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria	BZÖ	Right	2009–2014
	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	Right	1999–2019
	Hans-Peter Martin's List	Martin	Valence	2004–2009
Belgium	National Front	FN	Right	1994–2009
	Belgium Arise	DLB	Right	2014
	List Dedecker - Libertarian, Direct, Democratic	LDD	Right	2009
	People's Party	PP	Right	2014-2019
	Flemish Block / Flemish Interest	VB	Right	1984–2019
Bulgaria	Attack	Ataka	Right	2009–2019
	Bulgaria without censorship / Reload Bulgaria	BBZ/BBT	Right	2014*, 2019
	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	GERB	Valence	2009–2019
	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria	NFSB	Right	2014–2019
	National Movement Simeon II / National Movement for Stability and Progress	NDSV	Valence	2009, 2019*
	Order, Lawfulness and Justice	RZS	Right	2009
	IMRO – Bulgarian National Movement	IMRO	Right	2014*, 2019
	Volya	Volya	Right	2019
Croatia	Croatian Labourists - Labour Party	HL-SR	Left	2014
	Bridge of Independent Lists	Most	Valence	2019
	Alliance for Change / Human Shield	ZiZi	Valence	2014–2019
Cyprus	Citizen's Alliance	SYM	Left	2014, 2019*
Czech Republic	ANO 2011	ANO 2011	Valence	2014–2019
	Party of Common Sense	SZR	Right	2004, 2009*, 2014-2019
	Sovereignty - Jana Bobosikova Bloc / Czech Sovereignty	S-JB/CS	Right	2009*, 2014-2019
	Freedom and Direct Democracy Tomio Okamura	SPD	Right	2019
	Dawn of Direct Democracy / Dawn – National Coalition	UPD	Right	2014
	Public Affairs	VV	Valence	2009
Denmark	Danish People's Party	DF	Right	1999-2019
	Progress Party	FrP	Right	1979-1999
Estonia	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	EKRE	Right	2014-2019
	Estonian Independence Party	EIP	Right	2014
Finland	True Finns / Finns Party	PS	Right	1999-2019
France	Republic Arise / France Arise	DLR/DLF	Right	2009-2019
	National Front / National Rally	FN/RN	Right	1984-2019
	Unbowed France	LFI	Left	2019
	National Republican Movement	MNR	Right	1999-2004
Germany	Alternative for Germany	AfD	Right	2019
	German People's Union – List D	DVU	Right	1989, 2009
	The Republicans	REP	Right	1989-2014
	Party of Democratic Socialism / The Left	PDS/LINKE	Left	1994-2019

Great Britain	Brexit Party	BP	Right	2019
	British National Party	BNP	Right	1999-2014
	Respect – The Unity Coalition	RES	Left	2004
	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	Right	1994 - 2019
Greece	Independent Greeks	ANEL	Right	2014-2019
	Democratic Social Movement	DIKKI	Left	1999
	Greek Solution	EL	Right	2019
	Popular Orthodox Rally	LAOS	Right	2004-2014, 2019*
	European Realistic Disobedience Front	MeRA25	Left	2019
	Panhellenic Socialist Movement	PASOK	Left	1984-1994
	Course of Freedom	PE	Left	2019
	Coalition of the Radical Left / SYRIZA	SYN/SYRIZA	Left	2009-2019
Hungary	Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Union	Fidesz	Right	2004, 2009*-2019*
	Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary	Jobbik	Right	2009-2019
	Hungarian Justice and Life Party	MIÉP	Right	2004
	Our Homeland Movement	MH	Right	2019
Ireland	Sinn Fein	SF	Left	1984–2019
Italy	Forza Italia – The People of Freedom	FI / PdL	Right	1994–2019
·	Brothers of Italy	FdI	Right	2014–2019
	Lombard League – Northern League – Lega Salvini Premier	LL/LN/Lega	Right	1989–2019
	Five Star Movement	M5S	Valence	2014–2019
Lithuania	Labour Party	DP	Valence	2004
	Lithuanian Centre Party	LCP	Valence	2019
	National Resurrection Party	TPP	Valence	2009
	Order and Justice - Liberal Democratic Party	TT	Right	2004–2019
Luxembourg	Action Committee for Democracy and Pensions Justice' / Alternative Democratic Reform Party	ADR	Right	1994–2019
	National Movement	NB	Right	1989–1994
Netherlands	Centre Democrats	CD	Right	1989–1999
	Centre Party	CP	Right	1984
	Forum for Democracy	FvD	Right	2019
	List Pim Fortuyn	LPF	Right	2004
	Party for Freedom	PVV	Right	2009-2019
	Socialist Party	SP	Left	1989-1999
Poland	Kukiz'15	Kukiz'15	Right	2019
	League of Polish Families	LPR	Right	2004
	Law and Justice	PiS	Right	2009-2019
	Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland	SRP	Left	2004–2009
Portugal	Coalition Basta – Enough	В-С	Right	2019*
Romania	People's Party - Dan Diaconescu	PP-DD	Valence	2014
	Greater Romania Party	PRM	Right	2009–2014
Slovakia	Alliance of the New Citizen	ANO	Valence	2004
	Ordinary People and Independent	OL'aNO	Valence	2014 - 2019
	Slovak National Party	SNS	Right	2004*, 2009-2019
	Real Slovak National Party	PSNS	Right	2004*
	-		•	

	We are family - Boris Kollár	SR	Right	2019
	Direction - Social Democracy	Smer-SD	Left	2004
Slovenia	List of Marjan Šarec	LMŠ	Valence	2019
	Slovenian Democratic Party	SDS	Right	2004-2014, 2019*
	Slovenian National Party	SNS	Right	2004-2019
	United Left / The Left	ZL/Levica	Left	2014 - 2019
Spain	Podemos	Podemos	Left	2014, 2019*
	Vox	Vox	Right	2014-2019
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	SD	Right	1999 - 2019

Note: * indicates coalitions between different parties.

Table A.2: List of populist radical right parties

Country	Party name	Abb.	Notes
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria	BZÖ	
	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	
Belgium	National Front	FN	
<i>6</i>	Belgium Arise	DLB	
	People's Party	PP	Fully-fledged populist radical right at
	1 copie s 1 alloy		the time of the 2019 EP election;
			previously neoliberal populist (e.g.
			Pauwels 2014; Tassin & Brabant 2016;
			de Jonge 2020)
	Flemish Block / Flemish Interest	VB	de Jonge 2020)
Bulgaria	Attack	Ataka	
Duigaria		NFSB	
	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria Order, Lawfulness and Justice	RZS	
		IMRO	
	IMRO – Bulgarian National Movement		
C 1	Volya	Volya	
Czech	Freedom and Direct Democracy Tomio Okamura	SPD	
Republic	D (D' (D (D))	LIDD	
	Dawn of Direct Democracy / Dawn – National	UPD	
	Coalition		
Denmark	Danish People's Party	DF	
Estonia	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	EKRE	
	Estonian Independence Party	EIP	
Finland	True Finns / Finns Party	PS	
France	National Front / National Rally	FN/RN	
	National Republican Movement	MNR	
Germany	Alternative for Germany	AfD	Fully-fledged populist radical right at
			the time of the 2019 EP election;
			previously the most evident trait of the
			party was Euroscepticism rather than
			populism or nativism (e.g. Arzheimer
			2015; Arzheimer & Berning 2019;
			Berbuir et al. 2015)
	German People's Union – List D	DVU	
	The Republicans	REP	
Great Britain	British National Party	BNP	
	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	Fully-fledged populist radical right at
	cinica rimguom maopenaonee raivy	OTH	the time of the 2019 EP election;
			previously neoliberal populist (e.g.
			Goodwin & Dennison 2017; Mudde
			2007)
Greece	Independent Greeks	ANEL	2007)
51000	Greek Solution	EL	
	Popular Orthodox Rally	LAOS	
Hungary	Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Union	Fidesz	Fully-fledged populist radical right at
riungary	Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Onion	FIGESZ	the time of the 2019 EP election;
			previously national-conservative
			populist (e.g. McDonnell & Werner
			2019; cf. Buštíková & Guasti 2017;
	Johnie Movement for a Dotton House	Table!!e	Mudde 2017; Pytlas 2018)
	Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary	Jobbik	
	Hungarian Justice and Life Party	MIÉP	
T. 1	Our Homeland Movement	MH	
Italy	Brothers of Italy	FdI	
	Lombard League – Northern League –	LL/LN/Lega	Fully-fledged populist radical right at
	Lega Salvini Premier		the time of the 2019 EP election;

			previously regionalist populist and right-wing (e.g. Albertazzi et al. 2018; Albertazzi & Zulianello 2021)
Luxembourg	National Movement	NB	
Netherlands	Centre Democrats	CD	
	Centre Party	CP	
	Forum for Democracy	FvD	
	Party for Freedom	PVV	
Poland	Kukiz <u>''</u> 15	Kukiz' <u>'</u> 15	
	League of Polish Families	LPR	
	Law and Justice	PiS	Fully-fledged populist radical right at the time of the 2019 EP election; previously national-conservative populist (e.g. McDonnell & Werner 2019; cf. Buštíková & Guasti 2017; Mudde 2017; Pytlas 2018)
Portugal	Coalition Basta – Enough	B-C	
Romania	Greater Romania Party	PRM	
Slovakia	Slovak National Party	SNS	
	Real Slovak National Party	PSNS	
	We are family - Boris Kollár	SR	
Slovenia	Slovenian National Party	SNS	
Spain	Vox	Vox	
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	SD	

B: Aggregate support

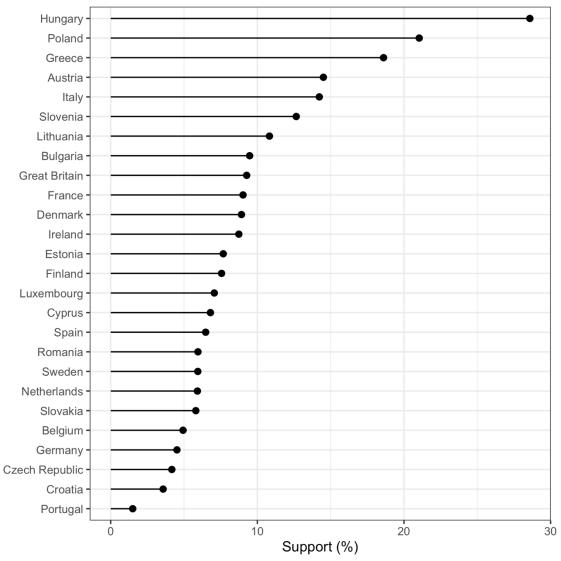


Figure B.1: Average support for populist parties

Note: The figure shows the average of the average support for populist parties in each election.

C: Support for ideational varieties of populism

Table C.1: Left-wing populist parties

	100			<u> </u>				
	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Greece	41.6	36.0	37.6	6.9		4.7	26.6	28.4
Ireland	4.9	2.2	3.0	6.3	11.1	11.2	19.5	11.7
Netherlands		0.7	1.3	5.0				
Germany			4.7	5.8	6.1	7.5	7.4	5.5
Great Britain					1.5			
Poland					10.8	1.5		
Slovakia					16.9			
Croatia							3.4	
Cyprus							6.8	
Slovenia							5.5	6.4
Spain							8.0	10.1
France								6.3

Table C.2: Right-wing populist parties

	1979				1999	_		2014	2019
Denmark	5.8	3.5	5.3	2.9	6.5	6.8	15.3	26.6	10.8
Belgium		1.3	4.1	10.8	10.9	17.1	15.7	7.6	13.8
France		11.0	11.7	10.5	9.0	10.1	8.1	28.7	26.8
Netherlands		2.5	0.8	1.0	0.5	2.6	17.0	13.3	14.5
Germany			8.7	3.9	1.7	1.9	1.7	0.4	11.0
Italy			1.8	37.2	29.7	25.9	45.5	26.7	49.5
Luxembourg			2.9	9.3	9.0	8.0	7.4	7.5	10.0
Great Britain				1.0	8.0	21.1	22.7	28.6	34.9
Austria					23.4	6.3	17.3	20.2	17.2
Finland					0.8	0.5	9.8	12.9	13.8
Sweden					0.3	1.1	3.3	9.7	15.3
Czech Republic						0.3	4.3	4.8	10.0
Greece						4.1	7.2	6.2	6.2
Hungary						49.8	71.2	66.2	62.2
Lithuania						6.8	12.2	14.3	2.7
Poland						15.9	27.4	31.8	49.1
Slovakia						2.0	5.6	3.6	7.3
Slovenia						22.7	29.6	28.8	30.3
Bulgaria							16.7	16.8	13.5
Romania							8.7	2.7	
Estonia								5.3	12.7
Spain								1.6	6.2
Portugal									1.5

Table C.3: Populist radical right parties

Tuon	1984						2014	2019
Belgium	1.3		10.8					13.8
France	11.0	11.7	10.5	9.0	10.1	6.3	24.9	23.3
Netherlands	2.5	0.8	1.0	0.5		17.0	13.3	14.5
Germany		8.7	3.9	1.7	1.9	1.7	0.4	11.0
Luxembourg		2.9	2.4					
Austria				23.4	6.3	17.3	20.2	17.2
Denmark				5.8	6.8	15.3	26.6	10.8
Finland				0.8	0.5	9.8	12.9	13.8
Great Britain				1.0	4.9	6.2	1.1	3.3
Sweden				0.3	1.1	3.3	9.7	15.3
Greece					4.1	7.2	6.2	6.2
Hungary					2.4	14.8	14.7	62.2
Poland					15.9			49.1
Slovakia					2.0	5.6	3.6	7.3
Slovenia					5.0	2.9	4.0	4.0
Bulgaria						16.7	6.1	13.3
Romania						8.7	2.7	
Czech Republic	;						3.1	9.1
Estonia							5.3	12.7
Italy							3.7	40.7
Spain							1.6	6.2
Portugal								1.5

Table C.4: Valence populist parties

	2004	2009	2014	2019
Austria	14.0	17.7		
Lithuania	30.2	1.0		5.1
Slovakia	4.7		7.5	5.3
Bulgaria		32.4	31.3	32.2
Czech Republic		2.4	16.1	21.2
Croatia			0.5	10.4
Italy			21.2	17.1
Romania			3.7	
Slovenia				15.4

D: Economic and social positions of populist parties

To confirm that valence populists are not merely a residual category but a rather distinct variety of populism, we linked the dataset on populist parties to the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (available at https://www.chesdata.eu/2019-chapel-hill-expert-survey). This data provided information on not only the positions of the parties on 1) economic and 2) social (GAL-TAN) scales, but also how clear or blurry the parties positions are.

Figure D.1. shows that valence parties are more likely to take blurry positions on both economic and social issues, as shown by the data on both the economic and cultural left-right dimensions. This provides evidence that valence populists should not be considered as 'centrist' populist because that location is not the outcome of an ideological positioning at the centre or middle position of the political space (as it would be the case for actual centre, cf. Hazan 1997), but instead, because of blurred and ambiguous positions across the various issues. The blurred and ambiguous positions of valence populists on the economic and cultural left-right dimensions are made even more elusive given the disproportionate focus of such parties on non-positional (i.e. valence) issues.

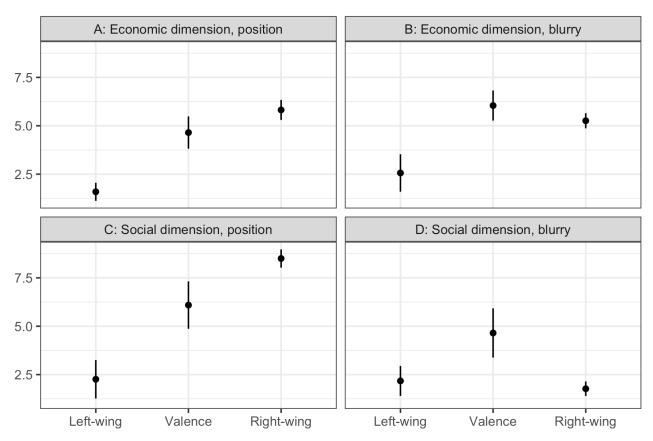


Figure D.1: Economic and social positions of populist parties, CHES

E: Sources used for the identification and classification of populist parties

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