

WESTERN EUROPE

GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND FRANCE



GERMANY

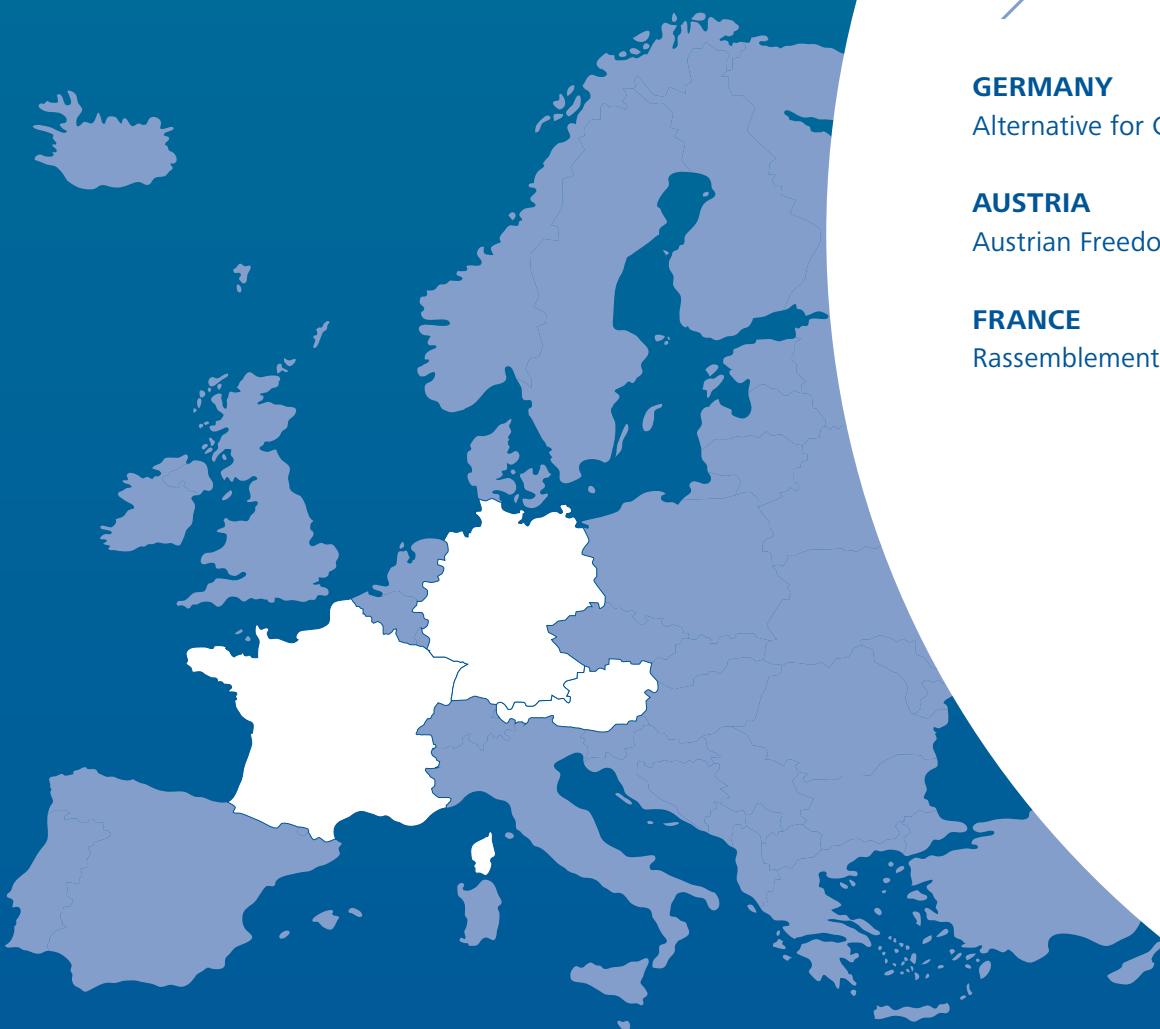
Alternative for Germany (AfD)

AUSTRIA

Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)

FRANCE

Rassemblement National (RN)



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UNDERSTANDING RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE

Since the early 2010s, right-wing populist parties (RWPPs) have been on the rise across Europe. This development has taken place at the expense of the mainstream: while the average electoral score of RWPPs has been steadily increasing over time, support for both the mainstream left and right has declined.

The right-wing populist momentum sweeping Europe since the early 2010s has three features:

1. ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

Many RWPPs have improved their electoral performance over time. The French Rassemblement National (RN) (formerly Front National - FN), the Austrian Party for Freedom (FPÖ), the Greek Golden Dawn (GD) and the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) have all increasingly managed to mobilise voters beyond their core support groups. Countries previously identified as 'outliers' because of the absence of an electorally successful RWPP are no longer exceptional in this respect – for example, Portugal with the rise of Chega and Spain with the rise of Vox.

2. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

A substantial number of RWPPs have either recently been part of governing coalitions, or served as formal cooperation partners in right-wing minority governments. These include the Lega (Italy), the FPÖ, the Polish Law and Justice (PiS), the Hungarian Fidesz, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks (ANEL), the Finns Party (PS), the Danish People's Party (DF), the National Alliance (NA) (Latvia) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

3. ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE POLICY AGENDA

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

PATTERNS OF RWPP SUCCESS ACROSS EUROPE

A close look at the parties' support trajectories reveals interesting regional patterns:

WESTERN EUROPE

In much of Western Europe, RWPP success takes the form of systemic entrenchment – i.e. the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate mainstream ground. Most Western European RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. They increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the system either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

SOUTHERN EUROPE

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. But this trend is changing. These countries are no longer 'exceptional' cases. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of Vox and Chega, respectively.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Nordic countries have witnessed considerable RWPP success. The Danish DF has exerted substantial policy influence as a recognised cooperation partner of the centre-right parties since the early 2000s. The Finns Party (PS) turned in its first good result in 2007, making its electoral breakthrough in 2011, and in 2015 even joining a centre-right coalition government. In Sweden – a 'deviant' case until recently – the Sweden Democrats' (SD) achieved their electoral breakthrough in 2010. While a *cordon sanitaire* strategy has kept them out of government, this consensus may be changing, as the SD has recently become more influential in local coalitions.

EASTERN EUROPE

Eastern Europe has some of the most electorally successful RWPPs, including Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the NA in Latvia. The dominant pattern is a radicalisation of the mainstream. Formerly mainstream parties have radicalised in government, increasingly adopting populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions. Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. In the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, mobilisation occurs along socially conservative lines. In the more ethnically pluralistic societies, such as Estonia and Latvia, RWPPs have mobilised against larger politicised ethnic groups, most notably the Russian minorities that reside in these countries.

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS

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

This report contests the view that the rise of right-wing populism should be predominantly understood as a 'cultural backlash'. A sole focus on culture overlooks:

- (1) the predictive power of economic concerns over immigration and the critical distinction between galvanising a core constituency on the one hand and mobilising more broadly beyond this core constituency on the other (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020)
- (2) the strategies RWPPs themselves are pursuing to capitalise on multiple insecurities, including both cultural and economic; and
- (3) the role of social policies in mitigating those insecurities that drive RWPP support.

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

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



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



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



We address these questions using empirical evidence from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, we perform statistical analyses using nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) to analyse objective and subjective individual characteristics associated with RWPPs' support and thus identify the conditions that drive the RWPP vote at the individual level (demand). Second, we analyse RWPP manifestos using the Comparative Manifestos Project (MARPOR) dataset to map RWPP positions and identify the supply-side conditions that facilitate their success (supply). Third, we draw on our research matching ESS data with social policy datasets to determine the extent to which social policies mediate the risks that drive individuals to vote RWPP (policy).

OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS THE FOLLOWING

At the **people** level, both cultural and economic concerns over immigration increase the likelihood of voting for an RWPP. While cultural concerns are often a stronger predictor of RWPP voting behaviour, this does not automatically mean that they matter more for RWPP success in substantive terms because people driven by economic concerns are often a numerically larger group. The main issue to pay attention to here is **size**: both the size of the effect, and also the size of the voter groups that are subject to this effect. Voters primarily concerned with the cultural impact of immigration are core RWPP voters. Although they might be highly likely to vote RWPP, they also tend to be a numerically small group. By contrast, voters that are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration are peripheral voters. They are also highly likely to vote for RWPP, but in addition they are a numerically larger group. Since the interests and preferences of these two groups can differ, successful RWPPs tend to be those that are able to attract both groups. What determines RWPP success is therefore the ability to mobilise a coalition of interests between core and peripheral voters (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

At the **party** level, we emphasise the importance of nationalism, as opposed to populism, as a mobilisation tool that has facilitated RWPP success. We argue that RWPPs in Western Europe employ a **civic nationalist** normalisation strategy that allows them to offer nationalist solutions to all types of insecurities that drive voting behaviour (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013). This strategy has two features. First, it presents culture as a value issue and justifies exclusion on ideological grounds; and second a focus on social welfare and emphasis on welfare chauvinism. Eastern European RWPPs, on the other hand, remain largely **ethnic nationalist**, focusing on ascriptive criteria of national belonging and mobilising voters on socially conservative positions and a rejection of minority rights.

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

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND? POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis suggests that co-opting right-wing populist policy agendas is, by and large, not a winning strategy for the centre-left. This finding is consistent with the recent literature suggesting that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that employing accommodative RWPP ‘copycat’ strategies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021).

The current hype about ‘new’ issues such as immigration and cultural grievances often overlooks significant economic concerns among voters. Indeed, a large share of the electorate is concerned about inequality. These concerns are not niche, nor are they confined to a shrinking voter group that is becoming irrelevant. Even within the context of emerging cleavages, inequalities are embedded in – and shape the salience of – ‘new’ issues.

Instead, a more beneficial strategy for the centre-left is to try to (re)capture these voters by reclaiming ownership of (in)equality. Articulating a vision of an equitable society will allow progressive parties to re-build their broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue the left already ‘owns’.

WESTERN EUROPE: GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND FRANCE

GERMANY



Alternative for
Germany (AfD)

AUSTRIA



Austrian Freedom
Party (FPÖ)

FRANCE



Rassemblement
National (RN)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

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

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN WESTERN EUROPE?

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

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

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

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

Figure 1: RWPP national election history in Germany 1990-2021

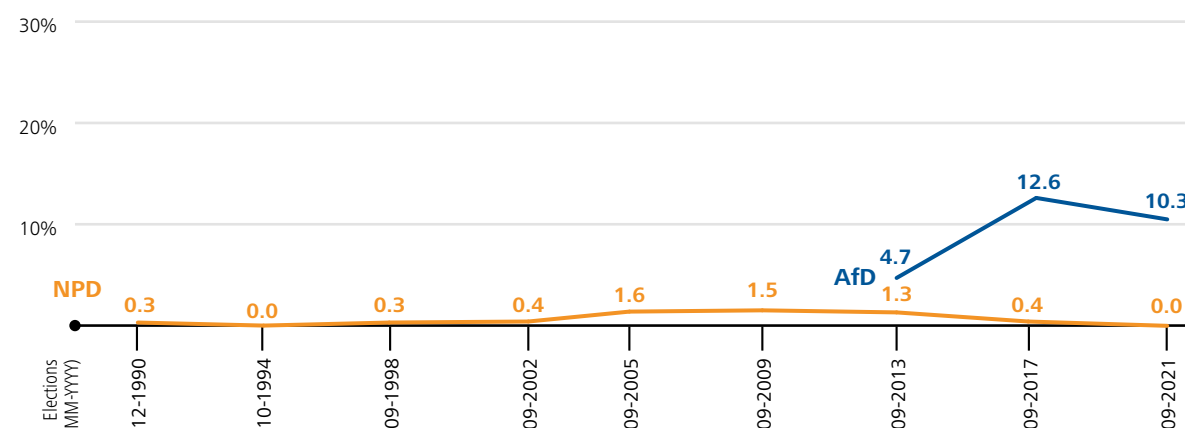


Figure 2: RWPP national election history in Austria 1990-2021

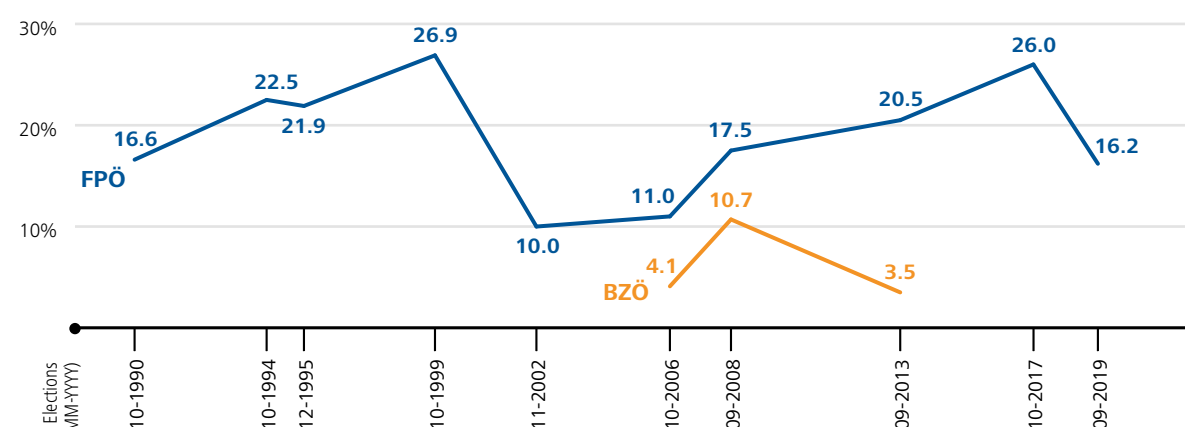


Figure 3: RWPP national election history in France 1990-2021

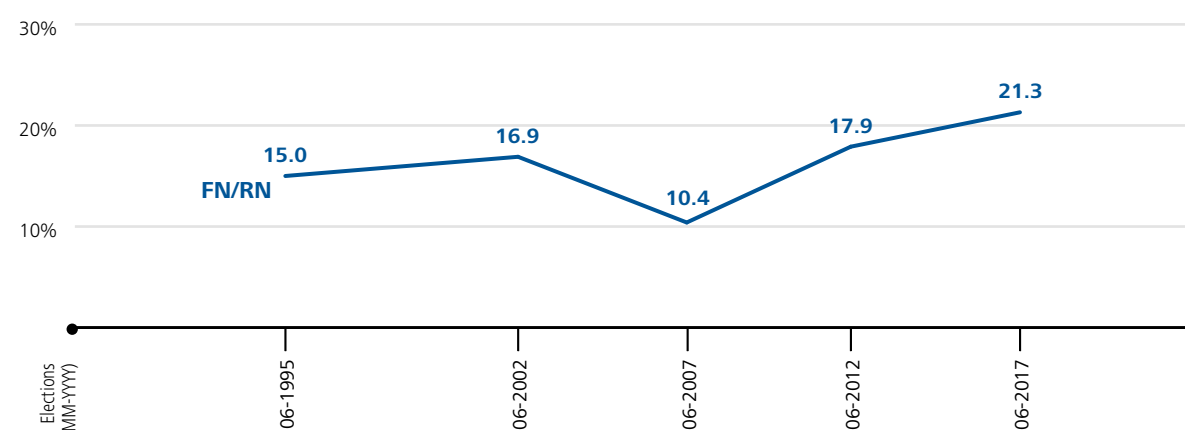
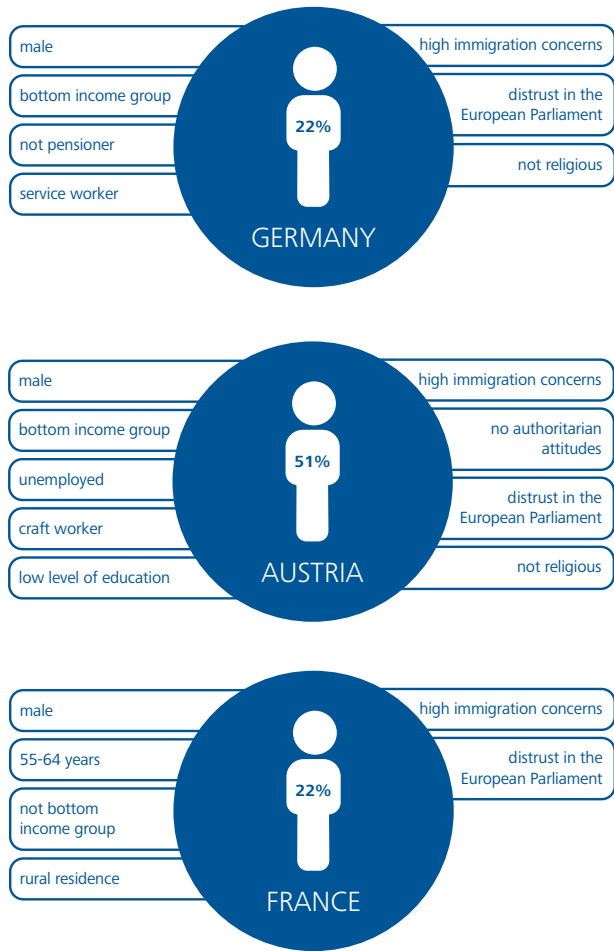
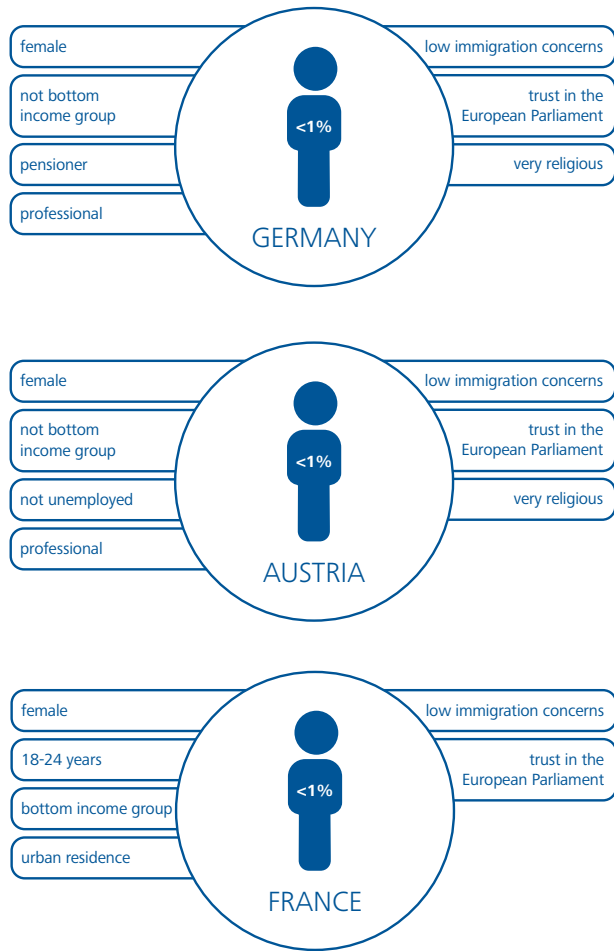


Figure 4: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



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

Figure 5: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



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

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

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

PARTY PROFILES

ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AfD)

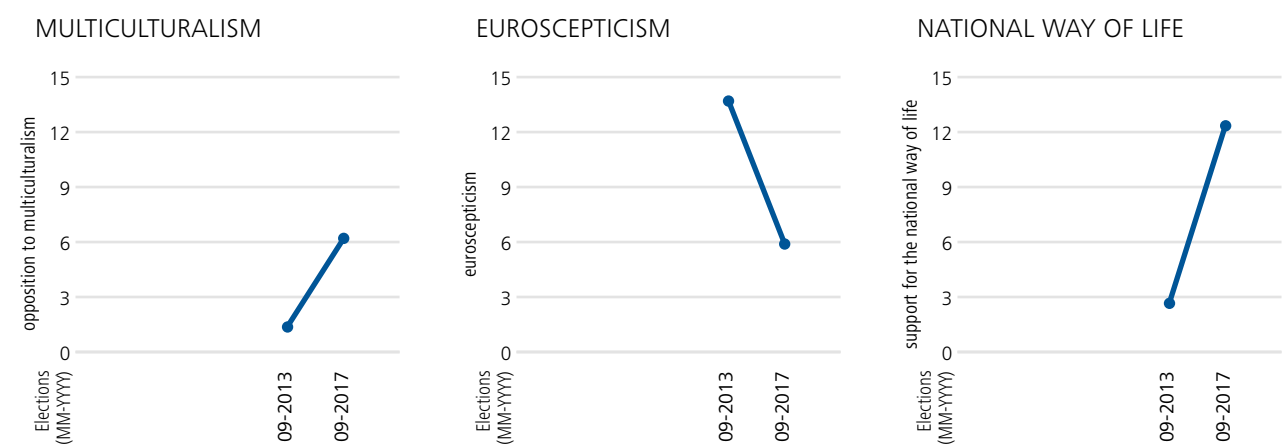
The AfD was established in 2013 as a single-issue party against EU bailouts to southern Europe. Though initially a party of academic elites directed against the EU and the monetary union, after the national-conservative branch took over in 2015, the party changed direction, emphasising identity, immigration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

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

The AfD is a typical RWPP that follows the Western European pattern, i.e. it increased its support by adopting populist-nationalist narratives that target immigrants using value-based arguments (Betz and Habersack 2019). Figure 6 illustrates changing positions on various value issues: an increasing emphasis on the national way of life and critiquing multi-culturalism, and a declining focus on the EU. The party places an extensive emphasis on German identity defined by two criteria: language and German lead culture (Heinisch and Werner 2019). The party’s populist rhetoric is similar to other Western European RWPPs. It seeks to promote itself as the advocate of the pure people, which corrupt mainstream elites have betrayed. It equates the ‘people’ with a culturally defined in-group and justifies the exclusion of the out-group on the basis of ideology (Halikiopoulou 2018).

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

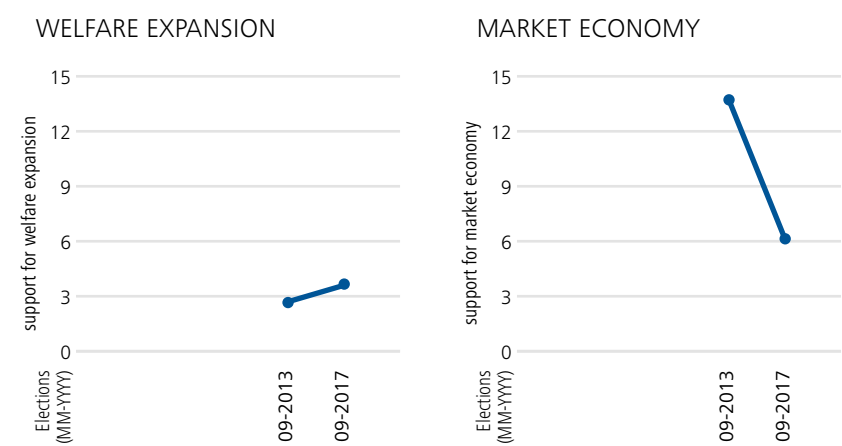
Figure 6: AfD’s stance on multiculturalism, euroscepticism and the national way of life



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

The AfD’s welfare and economic policy profile is inconsistent and ambivalent in accordance with the RWPP ‘blurring’ strategy (Enngist and Pinggera 2021). Overall the party combines neoliberal economic positions with welfare chauvinism, but devotes little attention to social policy in its manifesto (Enngist and Pinggera 2021). The AfD started up as a party advocating Euroscepticism, socially conservative policies and market-liberal positions (Arzheimer and Berning 2019). While it has retained its economically liberal positions to some extent, opposing redistribution and remaining critical of benefits, it has also strengthened its welfare-chauvinist position, which centres mostly on excluding the out-group from welfare provisions, for example, by limiting benefits to long-term residents (Arzheimer 2015). In its 2017 electoral campaign, the party adopted a new focus on social policy and welfare (Figure 7) that appears inconsistent with its overall neoliberal economic programme, for example, advocating privileges for Germans in benefits distribution. The AfD frequently invokes pensioners and large families with children as social groups in need of protection (Heinisch and Werner 2019).

Figure 7: AfD’s stance on welfare expansion and market economy



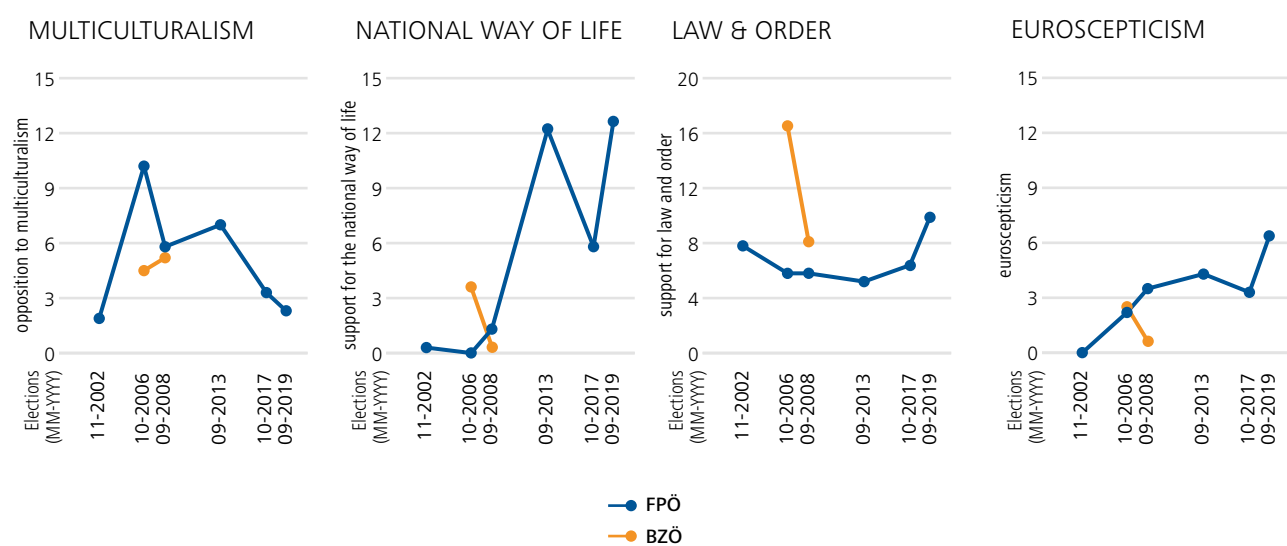
AUSTRIAN FREEDOM PARTY (FPÖ)

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

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

The FPÖ is a classic RWPP party. Its exclusionary platform has oscillated between extreme and radical positions while consistently – at least since the 1990s – centring on anti-immigration narratives that seek to put ‘Austria First’. Similarly to the AfD and the RN, the party specifically targets Islam, presenting Muslims as threatening ‘others’ who do not share the same values. Its positions have changed over time, with the party focusing less on multi-culturalism, more on the EU and more on strict law-and-order policies (Figure 8). We can also observe an overall increase in its focus on the national way of life.

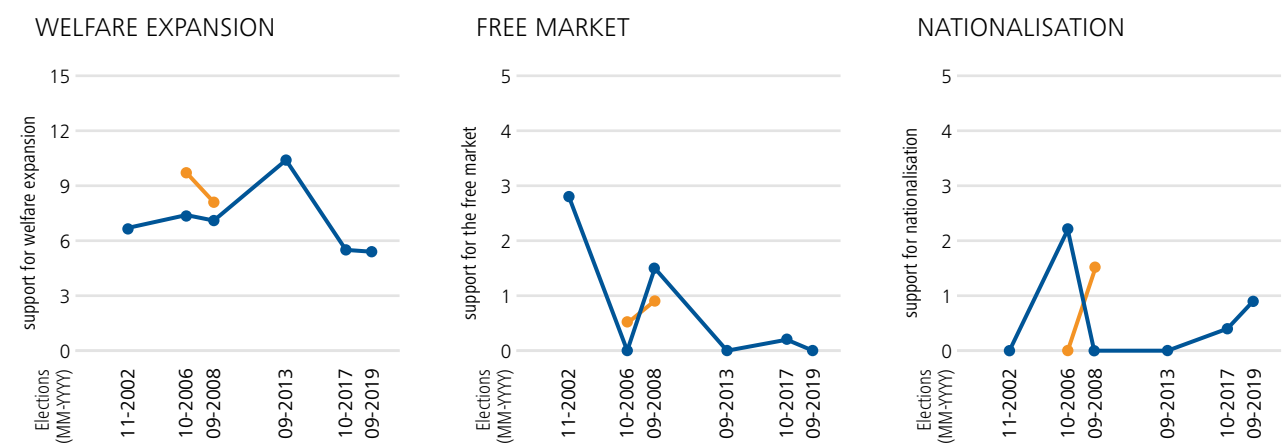
Figure 8: FPÖ’s and BZÖ’s stance on multiculturalism, the national way of life, law & order and euroscepticism



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

The FPÖ also fits the 'blurry' and inconsistent economic and welfare policy profile. The party's positions are at the same time both 'left-wing' (pro welfare benefits) and 'right-wing' (pro tax cuts and union disempowerment) (Rathgeb 2021). An analysis of the party's manifesto illustrates this inconsistency, and shows some important variations across time (Figure 9). There was a clear break in 2006 when FPÖ became more explicitly pro-welfare, though this emphasis was toned down in the mid-2010s. In line with its welfare chauvinist narratives, the party juxtaposes 'prosperity' to 'migration' (Stockemer and Lamontagne 2014) and focuses its campaigns on specific at-risk groups, including welfare recipients, pensioners, large (German/Austrian) families, those residing in rural areas as well as farmers (Heinisch and Werner 2019) that are in need of protection.

Figure 9: FPÖ's and BZÖ's stance on welfare expansion, the free market and nationalisation



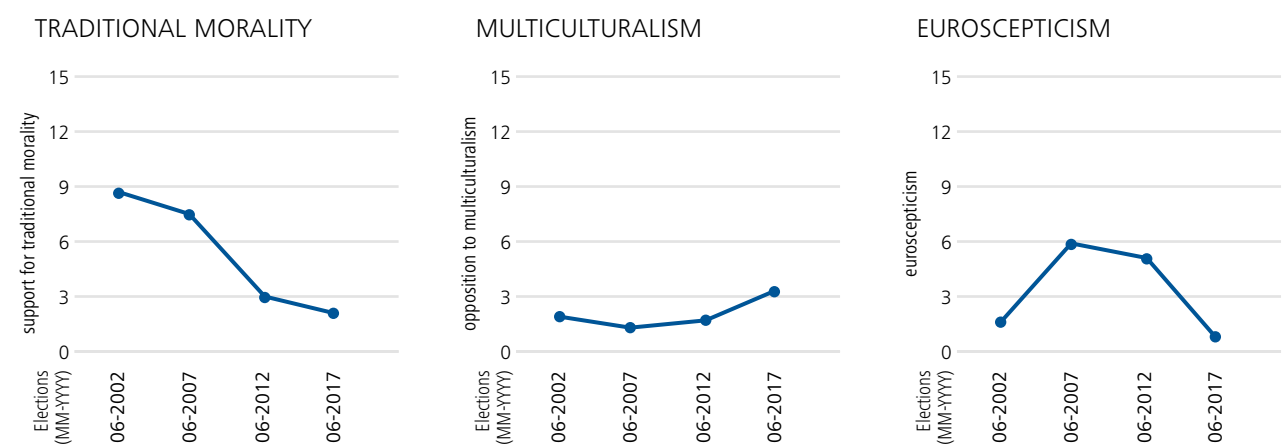
RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL (RN)

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

THE RN'S VALUE PROFILE: CIVIC NATIONALIST NORMALISATION

The RN's value profile is consistent with the Western European RWPP pattern. The party focuses heavily on immigration, which it places it within a framework of a broader value conflict and rejects, primarily on ideological grounds,. Under Marine Le Pen's leadership (2012-), the party has adopted a de-demonisation or civic normalisation strategy characterised by a toning down of language and a defence of French values on secular grounds. The party's name change from FN to RN is part of this conscious endeavour to distance the party from its former reputation for exclusionist discrimination. At the core of this strategy, which is marked by an overall turn towards support for French Republicanism, sovereignty and support of laïcité, lies a rejection of Islam along secular lines. For example, Marine Le Pen has criticised Islamic values as contradictory to French liberal democratic values and centred her hostility on the Shariah doctrine on the grounds that it constitutes an intrusion by the religious into the secular realm (Betz 2013). Consistent with this, our analysis of the party's manifestos reveals an increasing focus on opposition to multiculturalism, and a decreasing focus on traditional morality and the EU (Figure 10).

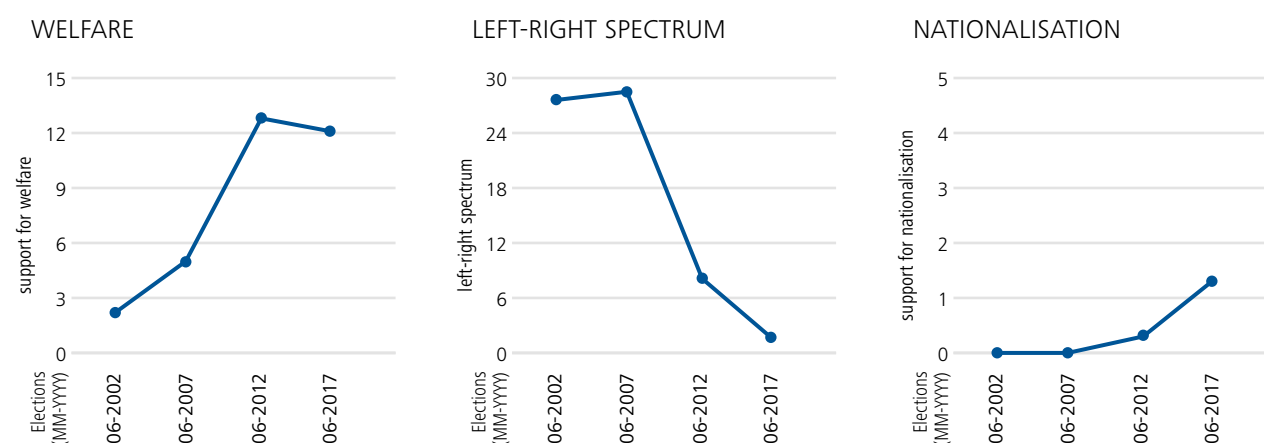
Figure 10: RN's stance on traditional morality, multiculturalism and euroscepticism



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

The RN differs from the AfD and the FPÖ in that it more openly and explicitly endorses pro-welfare policies. This is part of a broader change in its welfare/economic policy positions across time. From loosely corporatist ideas in the 1970s, the FN adopted free market policies in the mid-late 1980s, supporting tax cuts and privatisation. The party significantly shifted its economic platform from a predominantly right-wing to a left-wing stance with a strong emphasis on social issues when Marine Le Pen took over (Ivaldi 2015; Bastow 2018). It also dedicated more time in its manifestos to economic and social policy issues, advocating nationalisation policies, increased taxation and the introduction of various pro-welfare policies and measures in support of working-class groups (Figure 11). Research on the RN has attributed these shifts to a conscious attempt to appeal to voters from lower socio-economic backgrounds and to appear credible and competent to address deteriorating economic conditions (Betz 2013; Bastow 2018).

Figure 11: RN's stance on welfare, the left-right spectrum and nationalisation



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS IN WESTERN EUROPE

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

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

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

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

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

Our empirical analysis confirms that male, bottom-income individuals or service workers who have cultural concerns over immigration and distrust the EU are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Germany (Figure 13). These individuals are less likely to be on pensions and be strongly religious. Overall, while much recent research suggests that anxiety about voters' economic situation does not appear to be a direct driver of AfD support (e.g. Hansen and Olsen 2019), support from groups with lower socio-economic status, especially in eastern Germany and within the working class, did increase in 2017, with the party doing particularly well among workers (Diermeier 2020). Our analysis of the composition of the RWPP electorate (Figure 12) confirms that it is indeed diverse: 28% of RWPP voters have no immigration concerns at all, while 43% have both cultural and economic concerns combined.

In Austria, the FPÖ has also expanded and diversified its electorate, but unlike the AfD it has a longer-standing reputation as a workers' party. The party already received 47% of the blue-collar vote in 1999, and this share has increased over time: in 2017 the FPÖ attracted 59% of the blue-collar vote (Heinisch and Werner 2019). Our empirical analysis confirms that male, bottom-income craft workers or unemployed individuals are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Austria. These individuals are less likely to be strongly religious. They have both economic and cultural concerns over immigration and tend to distrust the EU (Figure 14). Among the RWPP electorate, 19% of voters have no immigration concerns at all, while the majority (56%) have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (Figure 12).

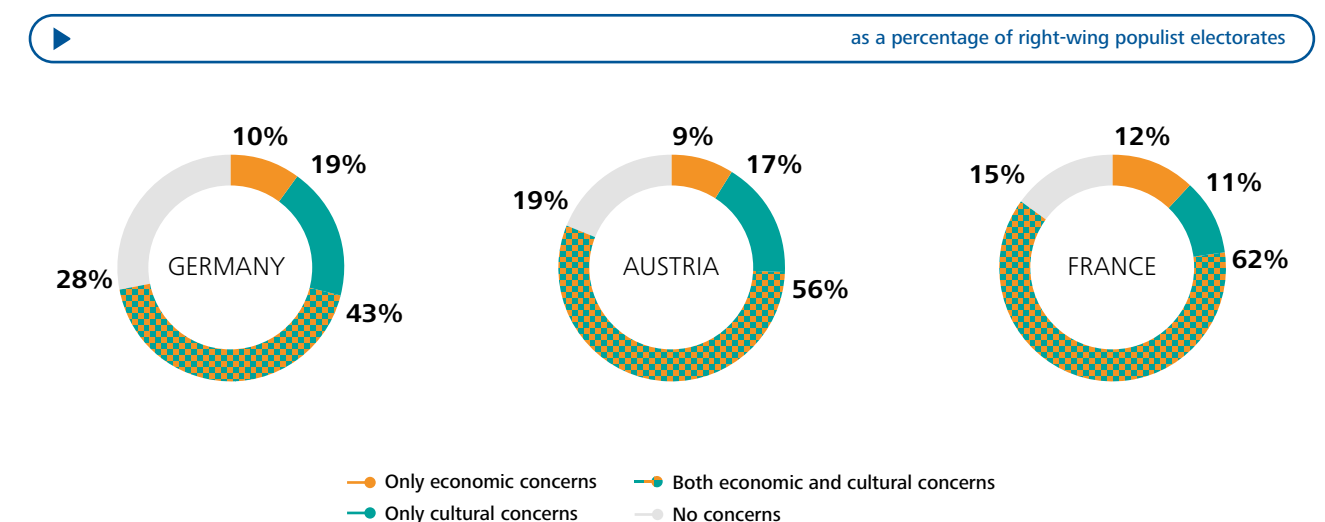
Within-country variations are less telling here, as the contrast with the BZÖ is more about internal divisions. Both parties fall within the radical RWPP category and work through the democratic political process. The BZÖ was established in 2005 by Jörg Haider following his decision to leave the FPÖ because of internal personal rivalries. Both the FPÖ and the BZÖ gained substantial support during the 2008 parliamentary elections, producing a combined result of 28.2% of the vote. However, Haider's death in 2008 was detrimental to the party, which experienced internal splits thereafter (Stockemer and Lamontagne 2014).

In France, the electoral success of the RN and the breadth of the party's electoral appeal have coincided with its programmatic shift from predominantly ethnic to predominantly civic nationalism. The French case allows us to make this observation across time by comparing the party's agenda during Jean Marie Le Pen's and Marine Le Pen's leaderships. The rhetorical shift that combines civic nationalism and pro-welfare policies has helped the party increase its popularity, reaching a broader electoral base that also captures younger and female voters (Bastow 2018). Labour market competition has also played a role particularly at the local level, where native workers are directly affected by immigrants

with similar skillsets (Bolet 2020). Our empirical analysis confirms middle-aged, male individuals who reside in the countryside, distrust the EU and share both economic and cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPPs in France (Figure 15). Among the RWPP electorate 15% have no immigration concerns at all, while a sizeable 62% have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (Figure 12). This RWPP voter profile and composition of the RWPP electorate in France suggests multiple routes to RWPP voting, including a direct economic mechanism and an indirect mechanism through the perception of labour market competition with immigrants.

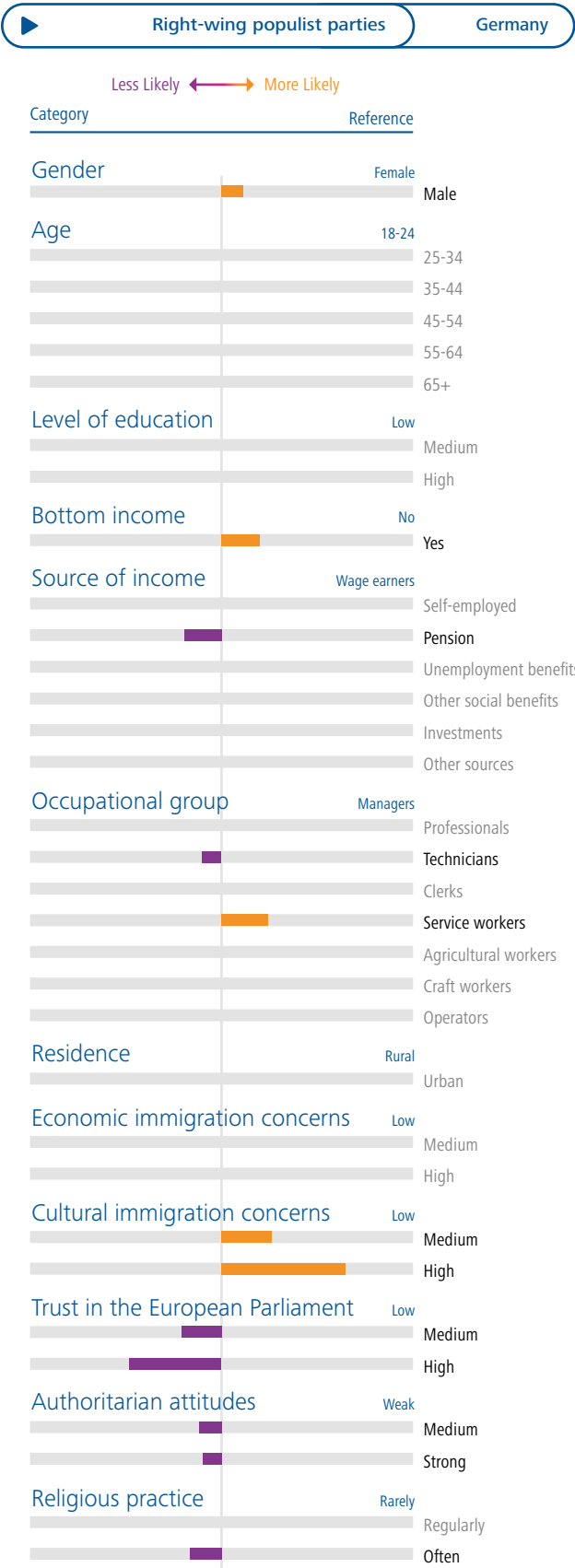
Overall, these cases illustrate that civic nationalism does not shield from extremism. Ironically, ideals such as liberal democracy, universal human rights and multiculturalism can become tools that RWPPs are able to use to increase their electoral success. By shifting the boundaries of toleration and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

Figure 12: Distribution of immigration concerns¹



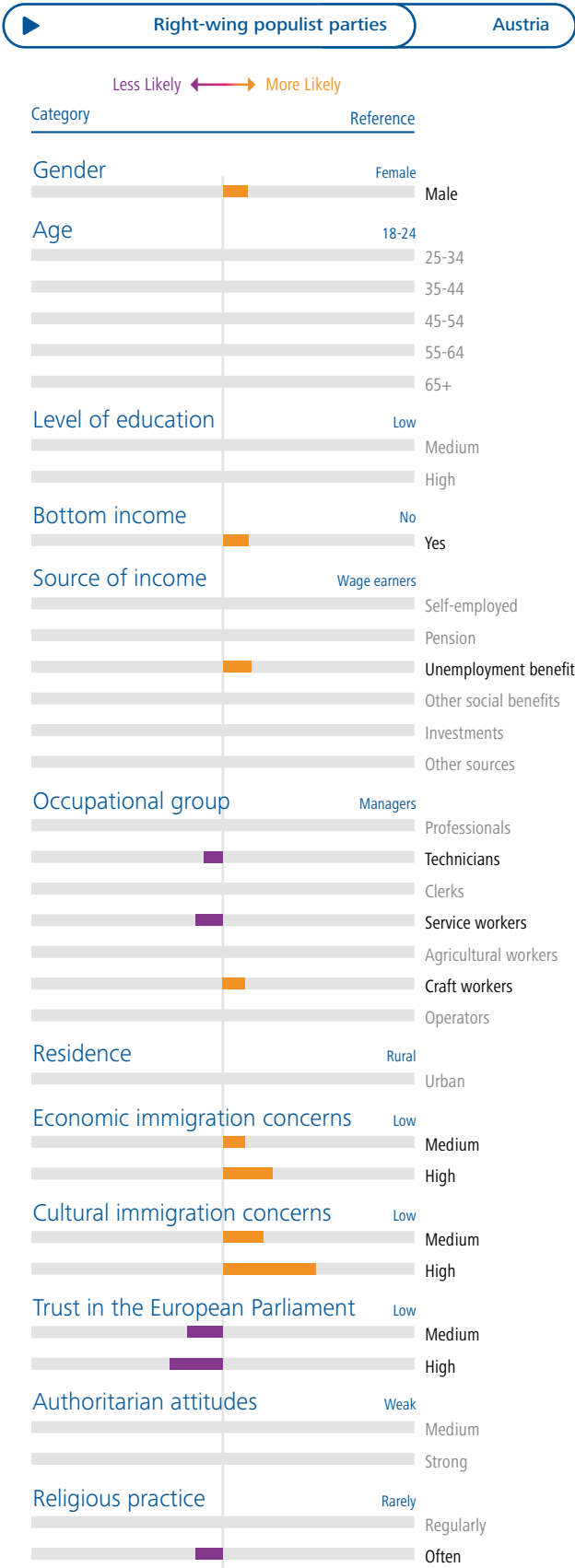
¹ The indicated numbers in the distribution figures occasionally do not add to 100% but 99% or 101%. These are only rounding errors as one decimal point was deleted for design reasons. This applies to all distribution pie figures in the report.

Figure 13: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



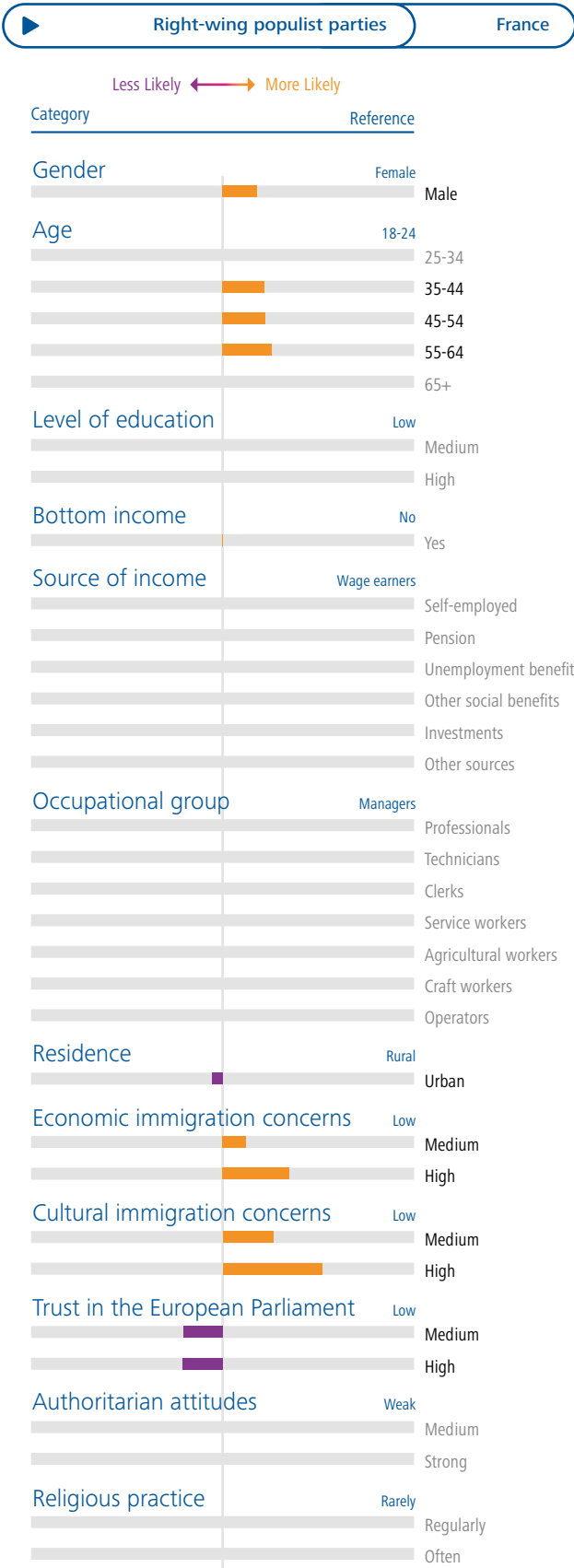
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 14: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 15: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

The graphs **characteristics affecting the probability to vote** frequently appear in this report. They all show the significant coefficients of the regression analyses of our empirical analyses for a specific party family and region. Here you see for instance *the characteristics affecting the probability to vote FOR right-wing populist parties IN France*. The arrow icon in the top left corner pointing to the right indicates the respective party family shown in this particular graph (here: right-wing populist parties).

In the graph itself you see what objective (e.g. gender; age) and attitudinal (e.g. economic immigration concerns) characteristics make people more or less likely to vote for a party family and how big that effect is (indicated by the size of the orange and purple bars). The effect is always shown in relation to a reference category (e.g. men in relation to women; people with medium level of education in relation to people with low level of education).

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

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

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the whole electorate in all three countries. These voters are a larger group in Austria, accounting for 14% of the electorate. In Germany and France they make up 8% and 9% of the electorate, respectively (Figure 16). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles (Figures 17-19) in Germany, Austria and France shows considerable differences. Older female individuals who are not self-employed, not on benefits, not service workers, but are likely to be professional urban dwellers who trust the EU and have favourable attitudes towards immigrants are more likely to vote for the centre-left in the three countries. These individuals are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore unlikely to be attracted to culturalist anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorate, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence. As described above, this percentage is higher in Austria (16%), while in Germany and France it is a very low at 6% and 7%, respectively (Figure 16).

Third, even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all three countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (28% in Germany, 19% in Austria and 15% in France) or combined economic and cultural concerns (43% in Germany, 56% in Austria and 62% in France – Figure 12). This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration these voters can ‘switch’ to parties

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

Fourth, the percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is rather low. By contrast, the vast majority of people among the centre-left electorates in Germany, Austria and France have no immigration concerns – 69%, 57% and 66%, respectively (Figure 16). Those that do – 15% in Germany, 10% in Austria and 11% in France – are driven primarily by economic considerations. As such, their underlying frustrations could be understood as being driven by inequality / material considerations and would likely switch if their economic concerns are met.

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

Figure 16: Distribution of immigration concerns

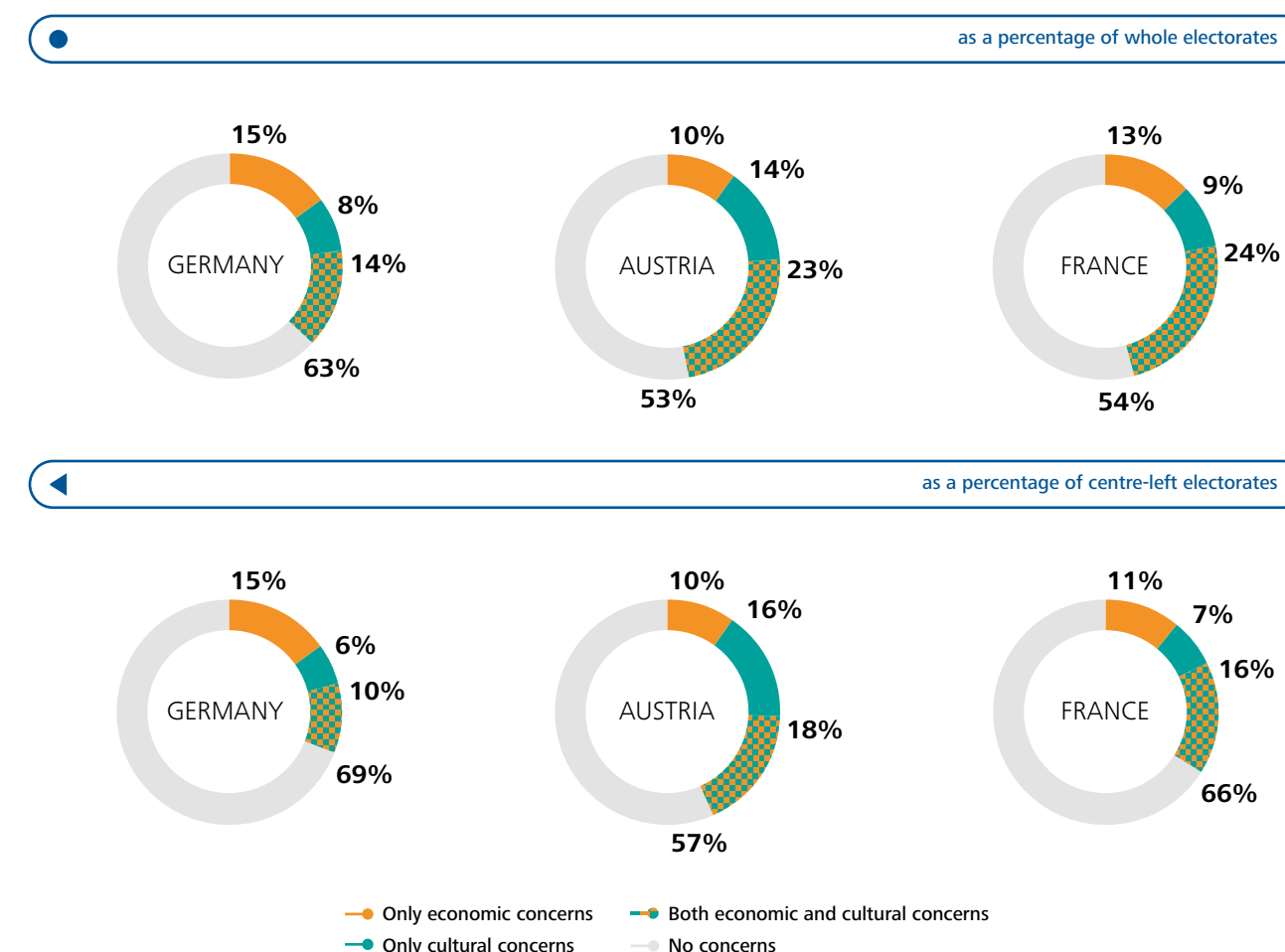
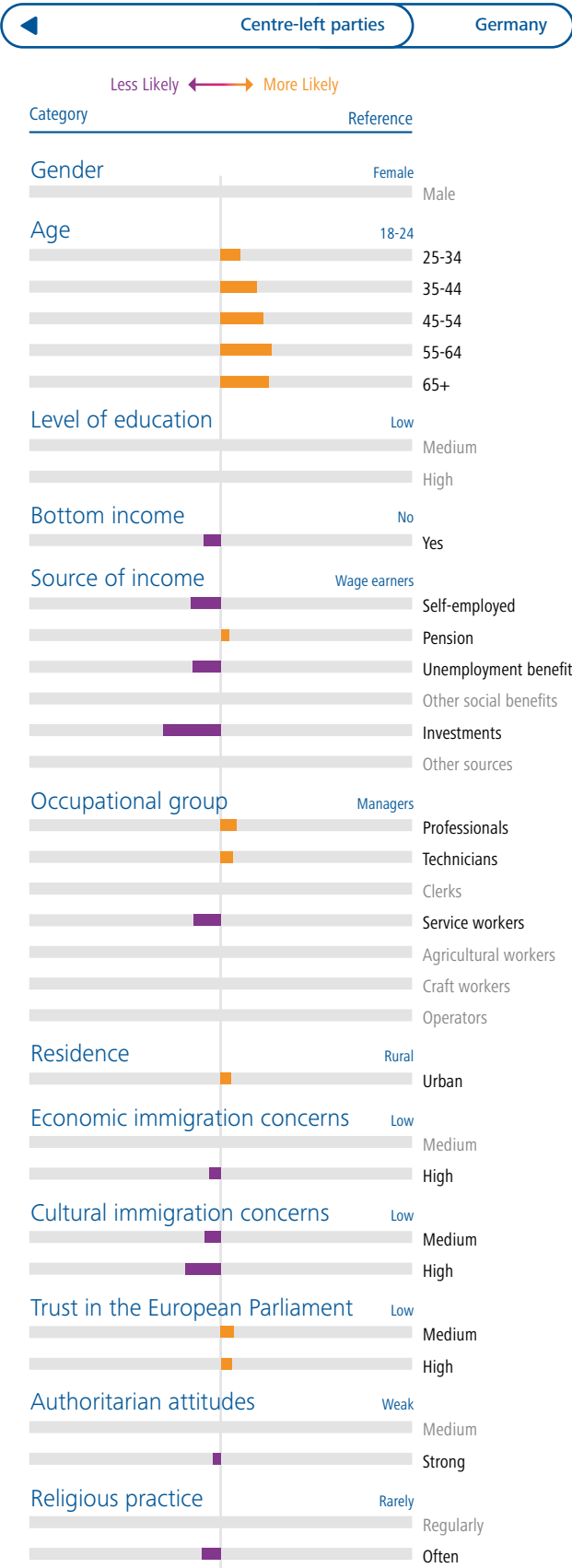
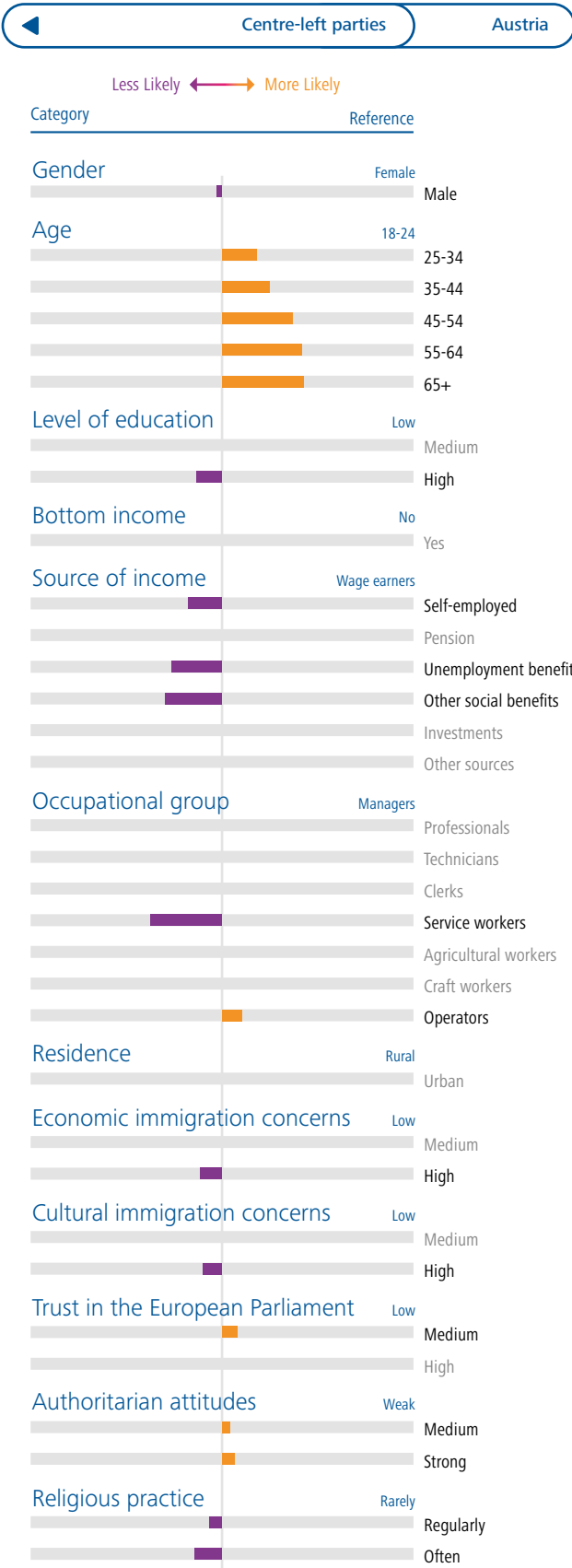


Figure 17: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



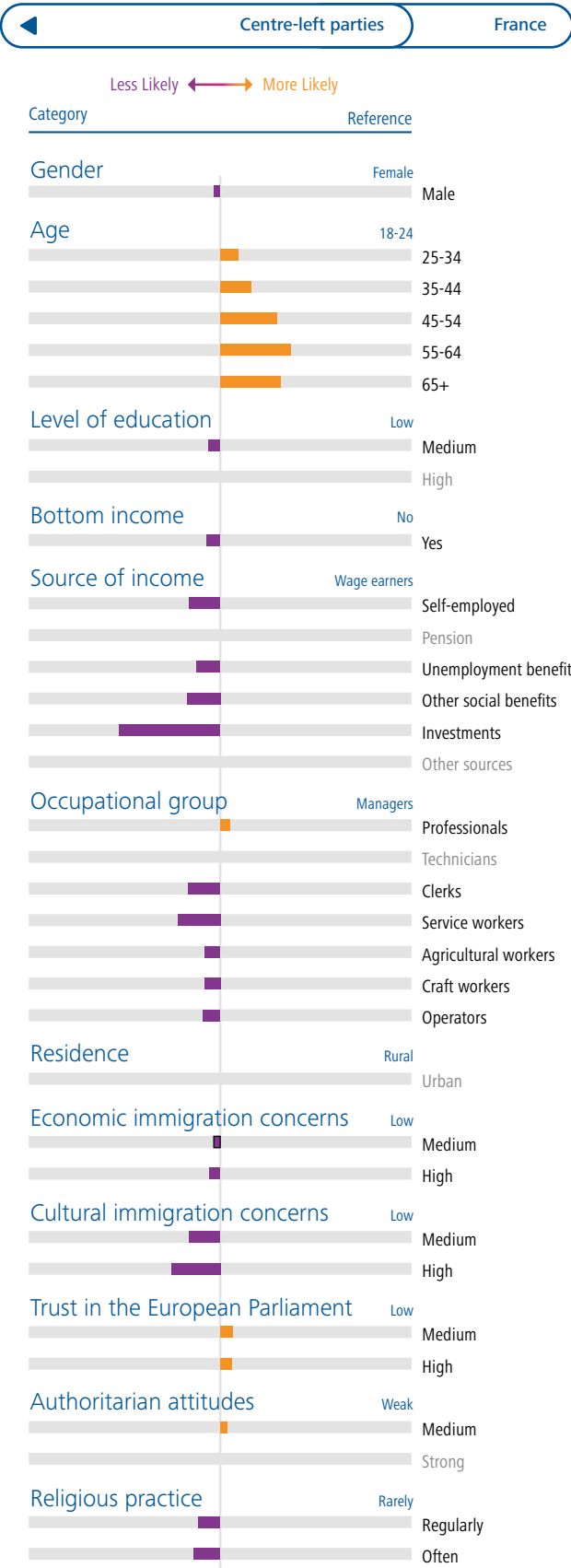
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 18: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 19: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

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