

THE NORDICS

DENMARK, FINLAND AND SWEDEN



DENMARK

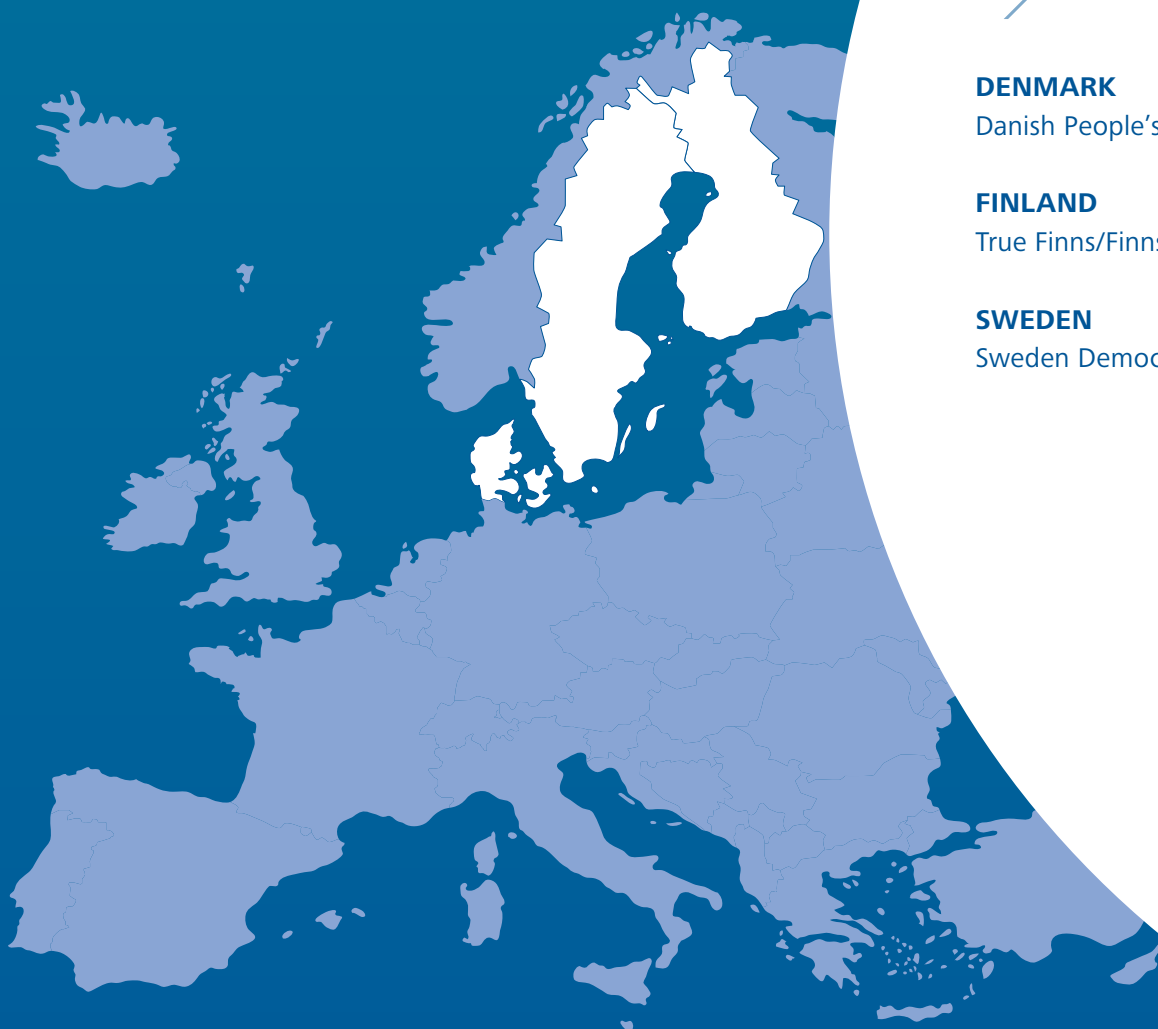
Danish People's Party (DF)

FINLAND

True Finns/Finns Party (PS)

SWEDEN

Sweden Democrats (SD)



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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’.

THE NORDICS: DENMARK, FINLAND AND SWEDEN

DENMARK



Danish People's
Party (DF)

FINLAND



True Finns/Finns
Party (PS)

SWEDEN



The Sweden
Democrats (SD)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

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

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES?

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

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

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

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

Figure 1: RWPP national election history in Denmark 2000-2021

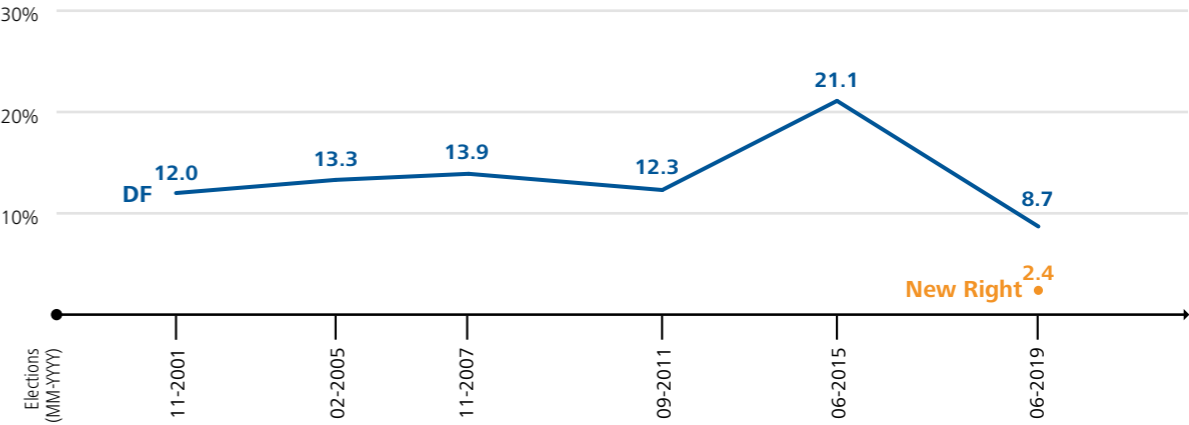


Figure 2: RWPP national election history in Finland 2000-2021

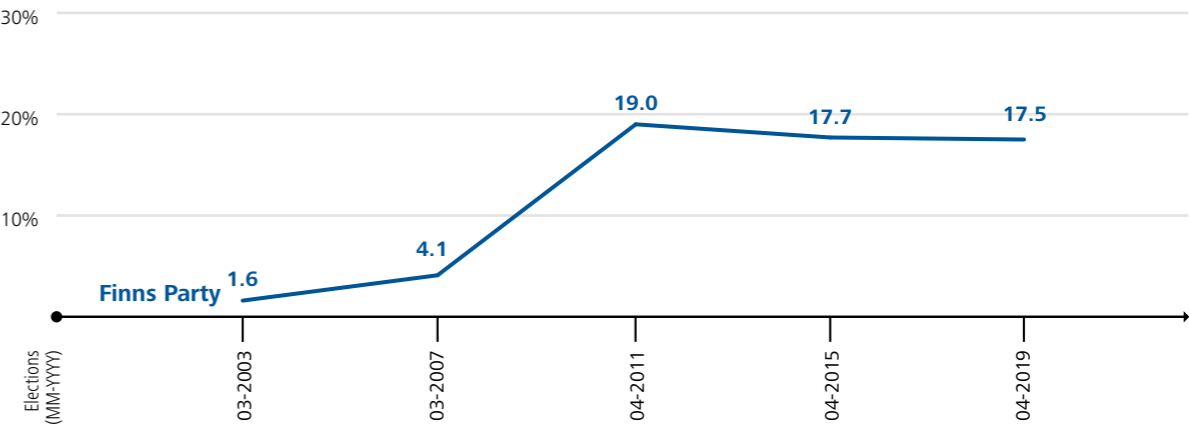


Figure 3: RWPP national election history in Sweden 2000-2021

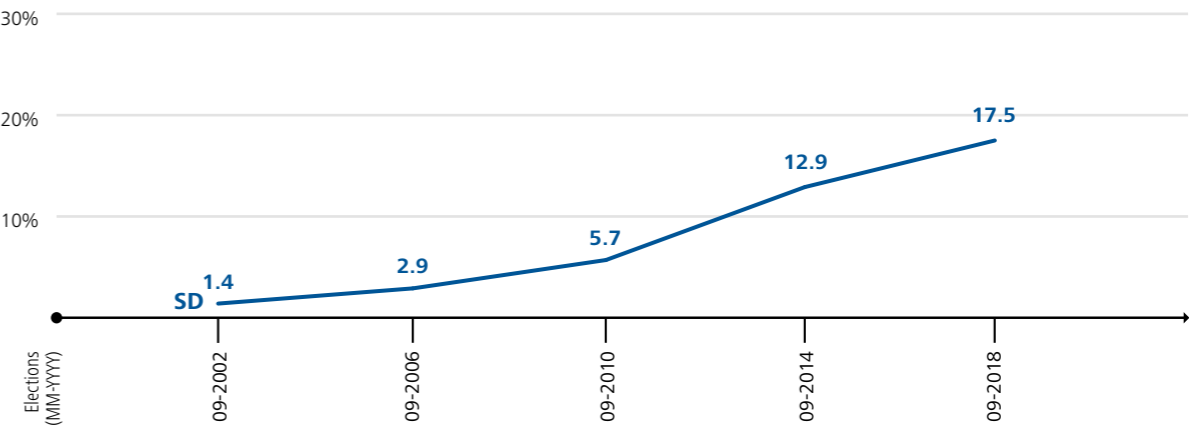
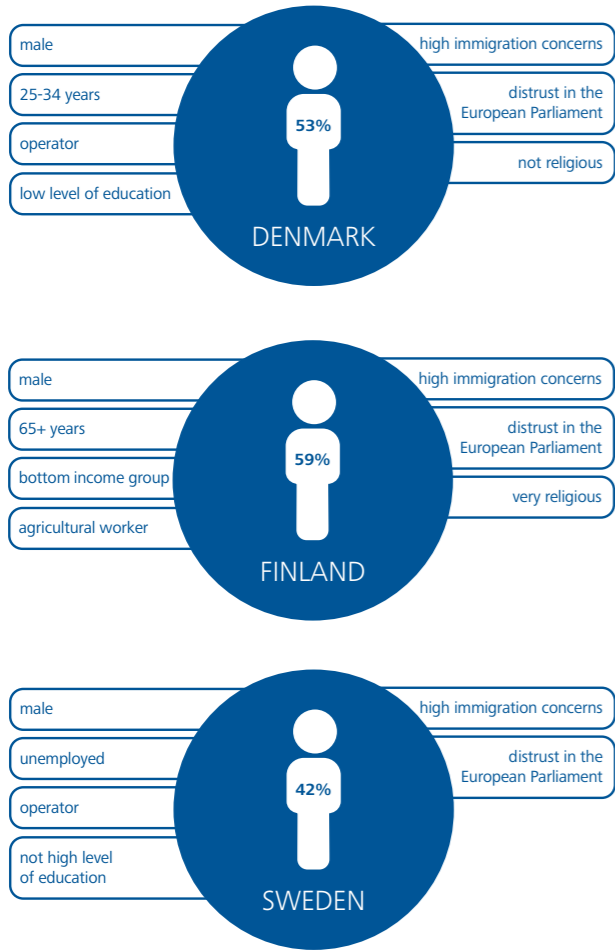
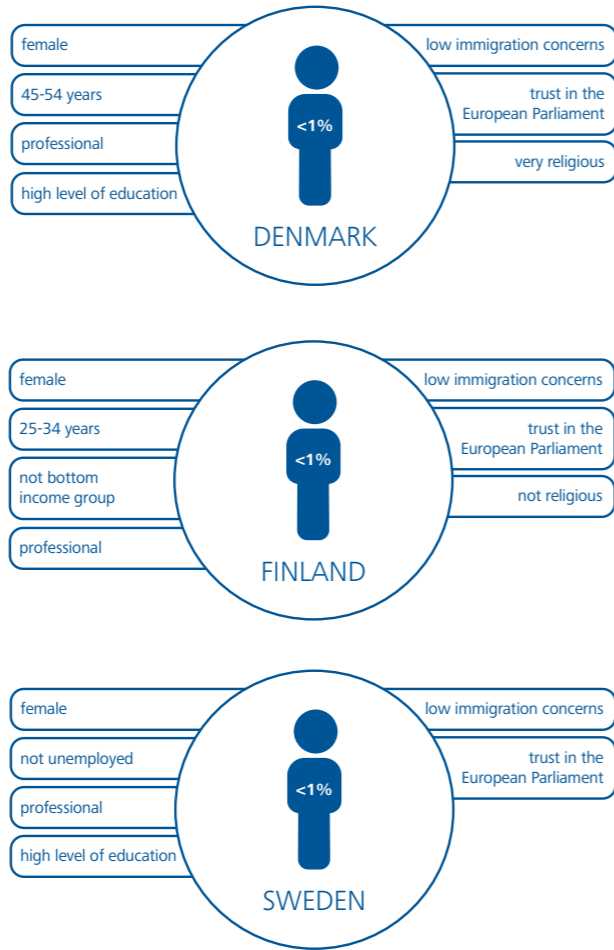


Figure 4: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



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?

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

PARTY PROFILES

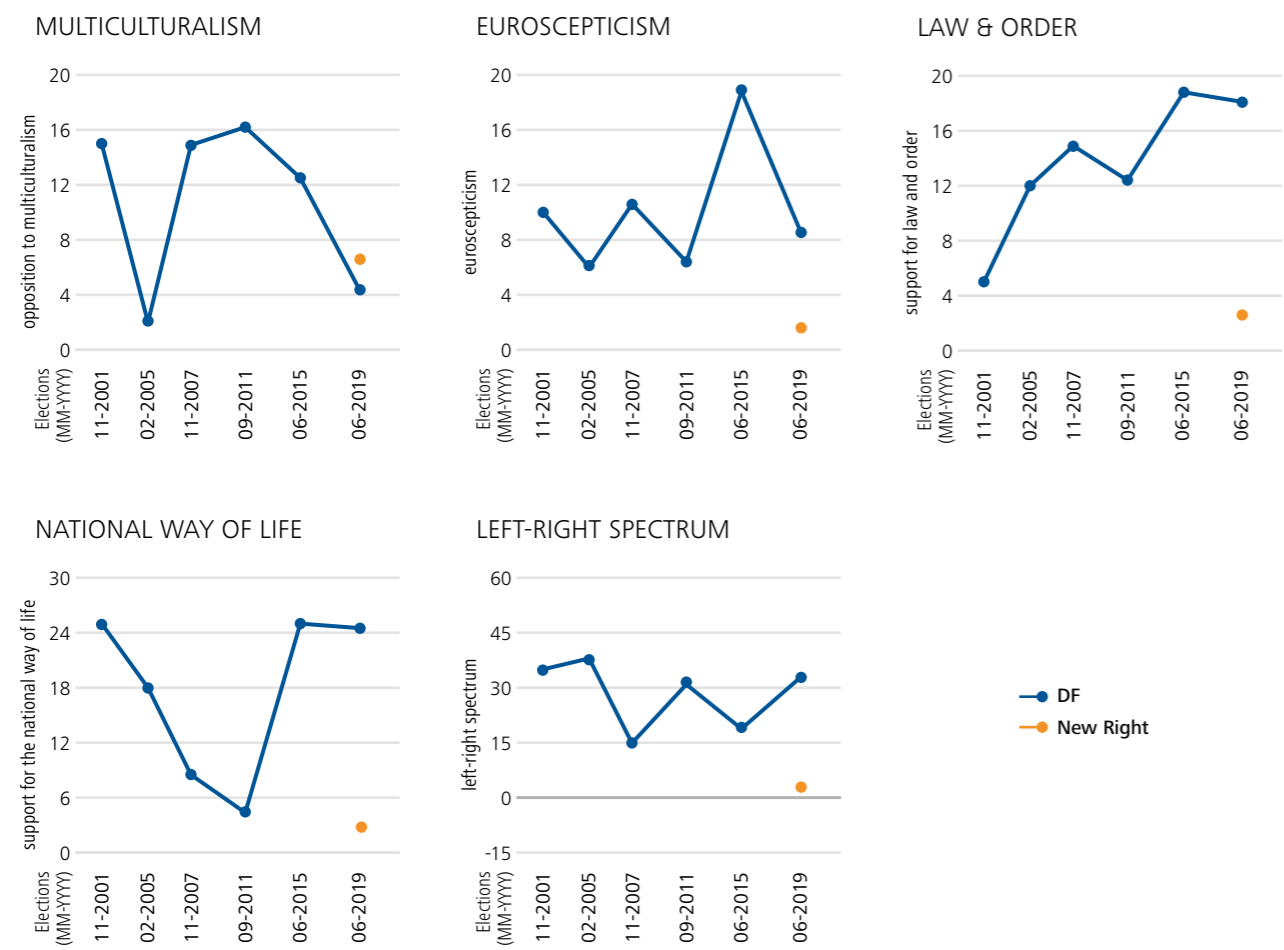
DANISH PEOPLE’S PARTY (DF)

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

DF’S VALUE PROFILE: CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY

The DF deliberately distances itself from fascism, actively showing its willingness to participate in the democratic system. In its programmatic agenda, it consciously conveys this normalised image, ‘speaking’ a language of democracy and rights. For example, its manifesto states the party wishes to see ‘our country and its democracy evolve freely’, and for this reason, it will ‘oppose any attempt to curtail the free rights of our government and citizens’ (DF 2021). At the same time, the party emphasises law and order issues and clearly veers to the right, albeit with some fluctuations across time. The DF is also overall Eurosceptic and nationalist (Figure 6). The party presents immigrants as a multi-dimensional threat. However, its emphasis is less on multiculturalism in broad terms, and more on specific groups. In particular, it targets Muslims, who it portrays as a danger to society in cultural, economic and security terms. Indeed, the DF stepped up its anti-Islam rhetoric in the early 2000s. However, compared to other Western European RWPPs, its ‘civic nationalism’ positions are less explicit. In contrast to Marine Le Pen’s secularism, the DF offers religious justifications for its anti-Islamic positions, claiming that ‘the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church is the church of the Danish people’ (DF 2021). But at the same time, it links this to Western liberal democratic ideas, arguing that Christianity is intertwined with ‘freedom, openness and democracy’ (DF 2021).

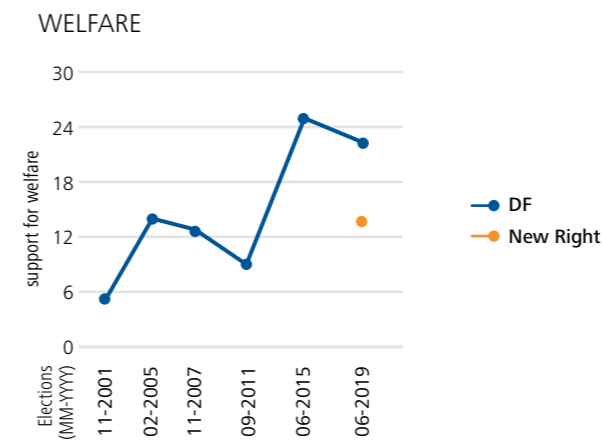
Figure 6: **DF's and New Right's stance on multiculturalism, euroscepticism, law & order, the national way of life and the left-right spectrum**



DF'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The DF follows the Nordic pattern in that it combines anti-immigrant with pro-welfare positions. While it commenced as a party with tax-cut proposals, these have been significantly toned down in its rhetoric, emphasising instead increasing priority being assigned to a Danes-only welfare system. Overall support for welfare policies has increased over time (Figure 7). The party blames the elites for cutting welfare provisions for deserving 'natives', and the non-natives for depleting the welfare state (Schumacher and Van Kersbergen 2016). They do blur some economic liberal positions in their manifesto, such as 'empowering free Danish citizens to fend for themselves' (DF 2021). But at the same time, the party emphasises that the state should take overall responsibility for those in need (Widfeldt 2018): 'the state is bound to render support to those Danes who are in need and bring them security and peace of mind' (DF 2021). This support 'should be available through an efficient social and healthcare system' and 'should, in principle, be publicly financed through taxation' (DF 2021).

Figure 7: **DF's and New Right's stance on welfare**



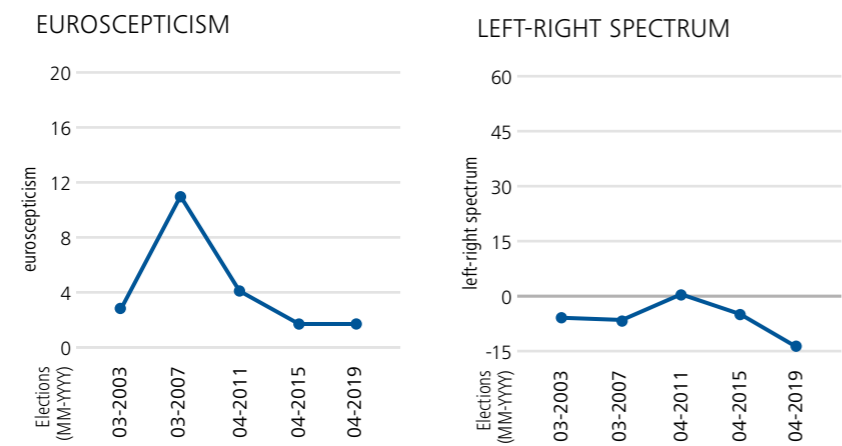
TRUE FINNS/FINNS PARTY (PS)

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

PS’ VALUE PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

The literature has debated the extent to which the PS belongs to the RWPP party family because it combines right-wing and left-wing positions (Kuisma 2013; Jungar and Jupskås 2014; Widfeldt 2018), and has increasingly become more left-wing (Figure 8). The party is openly populist and nationalist (Kuisma 2013). It faces similar internal tensions, as do some Western European RWPPs between moderate conservative and radical nationalist anti-immigration elements. Its rhetoric is explicitly nationalist, advocating a ‘Finland First’ strategy. Its 2019 manifesto commences with the statement that ‘the very reason for the existence of a country defined as Finland is to defend and promote the interests of Finland and Finnish citizens’ (Finns Party 2019). The party’s signature theme is anti-immigration, but its civic nationalist justification is predominantly economically oriented. According to the PS, non-EU immigration to Finland should be permitted only in cases that bring an economic advantage. It discriminates against certain ethnic groups such as the Roma, but on the grounds that they constitute a crime threat.

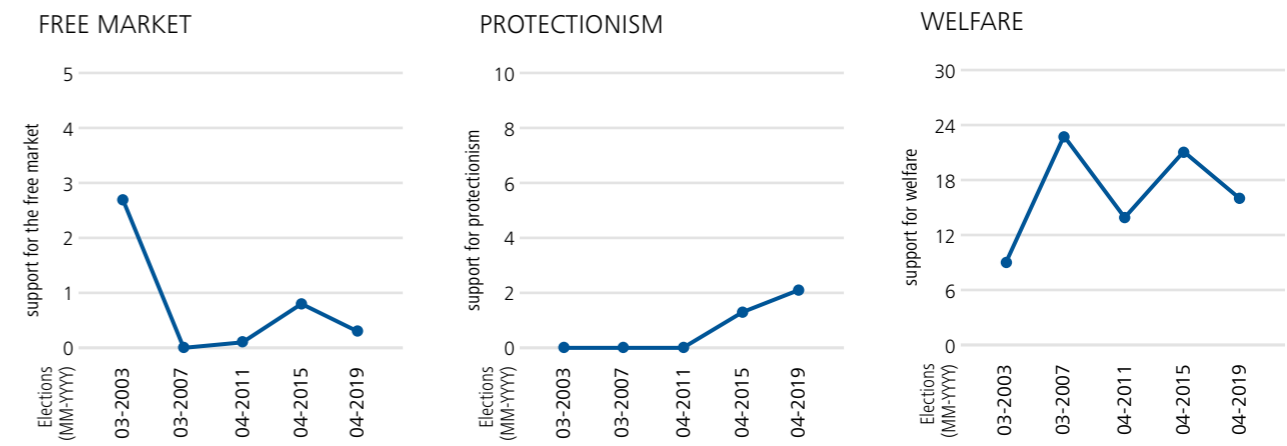
Figure 8: PS’ stance on euroscepticism and the left-right spectrum



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

The PS adopts left-wing economic policies. It is a strongly economic nationalist party (Kuisma 2013), welfarist, protectionist and against a free market economy (Figure 9). This economic nationalism goes beyond support for protectionist economic policies to inform the party’s overall ideology. The party justifies its anti-immigration positions on predominantly economic grounds. The question of welfare is the first one to be addressed in the party’s 2019 manifesto under the heading ‘one can share only what one has with the needy’ (Finns Party 2019). In accordance to the welfare chauvinist agenda that it shares with the other Nordic RWPPs, the PS advocates that social and health care should be offered primarily to natives.

Figure 9: PS’ stance on the free market, protectionism and welfare



THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SD)

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

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

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

SD'S VALUE PROFILE: NATIONALIST NORMALISATION

Although the SD party has its roots in Swedish fascism and white nationalism, the normalisation of its discourse suggests it may be categorised as a radical RWPP variant with a nationalist, populist and anti-EU narrative (Figure 10) that centres on immigration scepticism. Although the party articulates an anti-establishment message, it works within the country's democratic framework. Its conscious efforts to normalise its image have included a series of initiatives, ranging from changing the party's designation from nationalist to social conservative in 2011 and introducing a 'zero tolerance for racism' policy in 2012, which resulted in numerous expulsions of party members (Widfeldt 2018). In its manifesto, the party itself emphasises that 'we have been in the wrong sometimes, not least in the early years. But we have matured, and we have learned from our experience' (SD 2021).

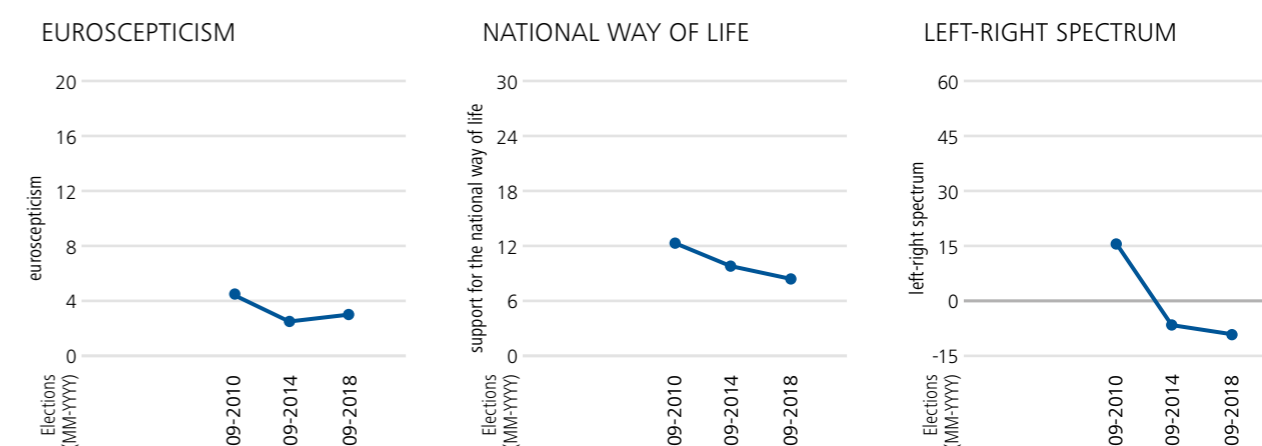
Part of this move is the adoption of a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises value-based and institutional criteria of national belonging: 'We welcome those who contribute to our society, who abide by our laws and who respect our practices. In contrast, those who come here to take advantage of our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

The SD claims to represent all Swedish people, drawing on both the working class and other societal groups: 'We are men and women, young and old. We work in traditional labour industries in the countryside and we are academics in the city. Many of us are parents, some of us run businesses, others are students and some are retired' (SD 2021). In line with their civic nationalist narrative, they emphasise 'the foreign background' (SD 2021) of some of their members and elected representatives, suggesting that it is not all outsiders they oppose, but only those who threaten Sweden's value consensus and stability. The party has also become progressively more left-wing (Figure 10).

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

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

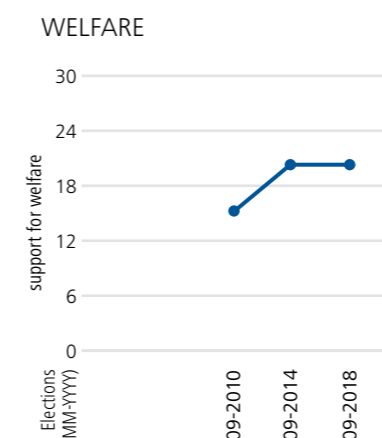
Figure 10: SD's stance on euroscepticism, the national way of life and the left-right-spectrum



SD'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Similarly to the other Nordic RWPPs, the SD is pro-welfare and welfare chauvinist (Figure 11). The party favours redistribution to support those in need. It advocates universal health care, generous pensions and accessible schooling, but only for Swedes, as they feel that 'Swedish welfare should be for Swedish citizens' (SD 2021).

Figure 11: SD's stance on welfare



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF RWPPS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

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

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

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

In Denmark, the rise of DF has coincided with the increased salience and politicisation of the immigration issue – and low unemployment numbers. This correlation suggests – as research also shows – that DF's success is related to the increasing importance of socio-cultural issues (see e.g. Arndt 2018). However, there is also an economic story behind the DF vote. DF support consists of considerable numbers of blue-collar workers. Indeed, the party became the most clearly defined working-class party between 2001 and 2007 (Heinze 2018). Our empirical analysis confirms that male, either young or old individuals in low or middle-skill occupations or the agricultural sector, and not highly educated who have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Denmark (Figure 13). The distribution of voters with different immigration concerns among the RWPP electorate also tells an economic story: 46% of RWPP voters have both cultural and economic concerns, while 17% have economic concerns alone (Figure 12).

In Finland, the PS took advantage of the euro crisis between 2007 and 2013. During this time, the party combined anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric with a left-populist defence of the welfare state and a nationalist defence of the sovereignty of the Finnish people. This rhetoric was specifically directed against market-led policies (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). The party's main targeted voter base included lower and lower-middle-class individuals with conservative attitudes that resided in rural areas (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). This strategy won the party 4.1% of the votes in 2007. While Finland itself did not suffer from the crisis comparable to Southern Europe, the PS exploited the crisis from a creditor country perspective, positioning itself against the idea that Finnish taxpayers should bail out countries like Greece. This position enjoyed broad support from the Finnish electorate, as the Euro crisis was a particularly salient issue among voters, especially PS voters (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). Our empirical analysis confirms the lower and lower-middle-class voter base of the PS. Male, middle-aged or older, bottom-income-group individuals in low or middle-skill occupations, but not with low education levels, are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Finland. These people distrust the EU and have strong cultural and economic concerns over immigration (Figure 14). A substantial proportion (33%) of RWPP voters in Finland have exclusively economic concerns over immigration, while 47% have no immigration concerns at all (Figure 12).

In Sweden, the SD also receives strong support from the working class (Kenes 2020). Research suggests that the decline of class politics and the resulting weakening ties between the working class and the Social Democratic Party in Sweden, as well as the decline in trade union membership, have facilitated this process (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019; Oskarson and Demker 2015). The growing salience of socio-cultural politics has accompanied this, particularly the politicisation of the immigration issue (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019), which is framed largely along the lines of native competition with immigrants in the labour market (Oskarson and Demker, 2015). The majority of SD supporters take a harsh stance against immigrants and refugees (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019). Our empirical analysis confirms that male benefit recipients in agriculture or operator occupations with medium levels of education are more likely to support RWPPs in Sweden. These individuals have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU (Figure 15). Among them, a sizeable 26% have exclusively economic concerns over immigration, 46% have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns and 20% have no concerns at all (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Distribution of immigration concerns

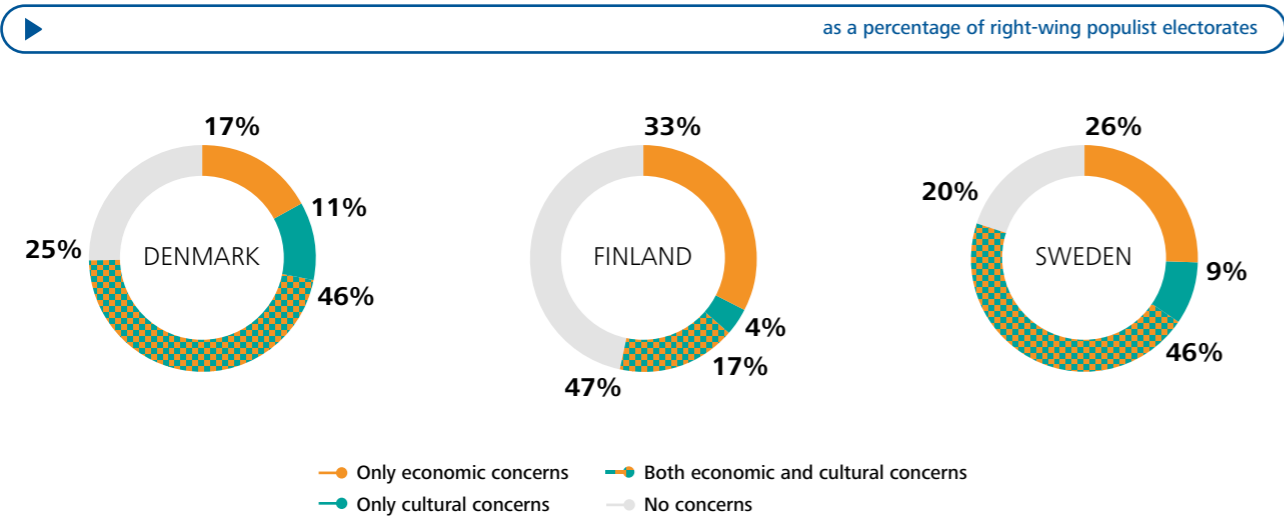
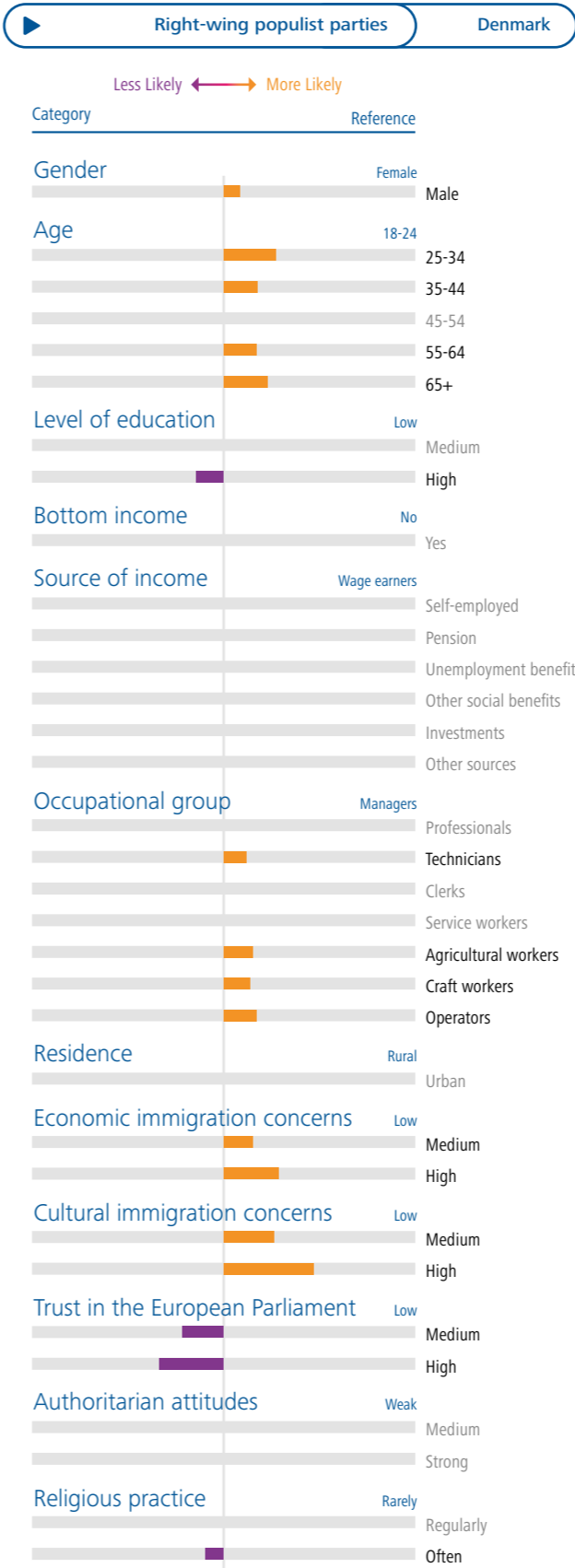
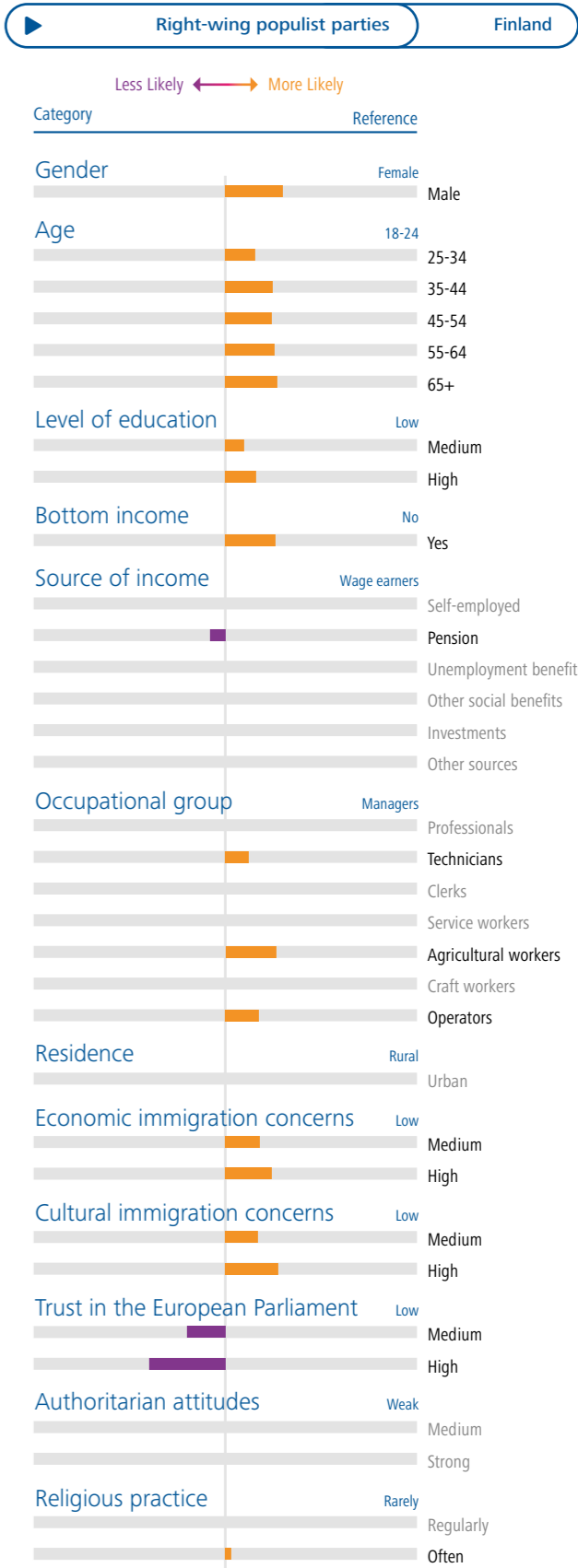


Figure 13: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



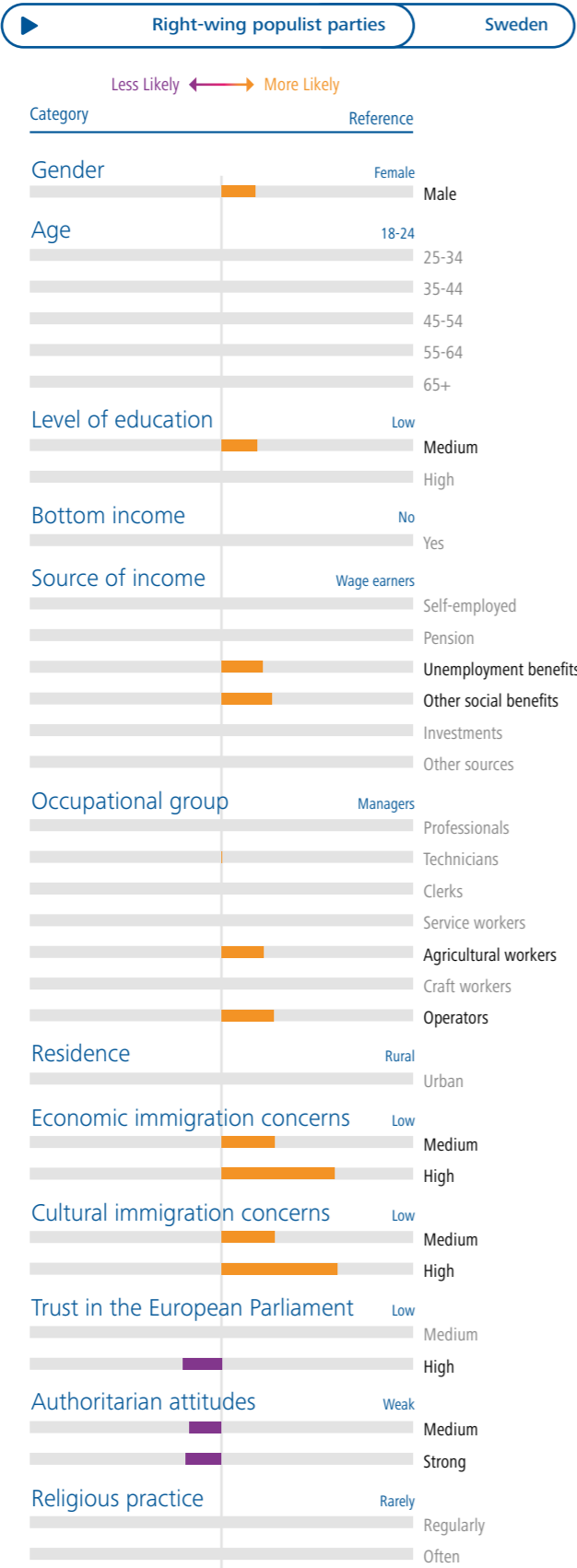
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 14: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 15: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



HOW TO READ THESE GRAPHS

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 Sweden*. 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).

Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

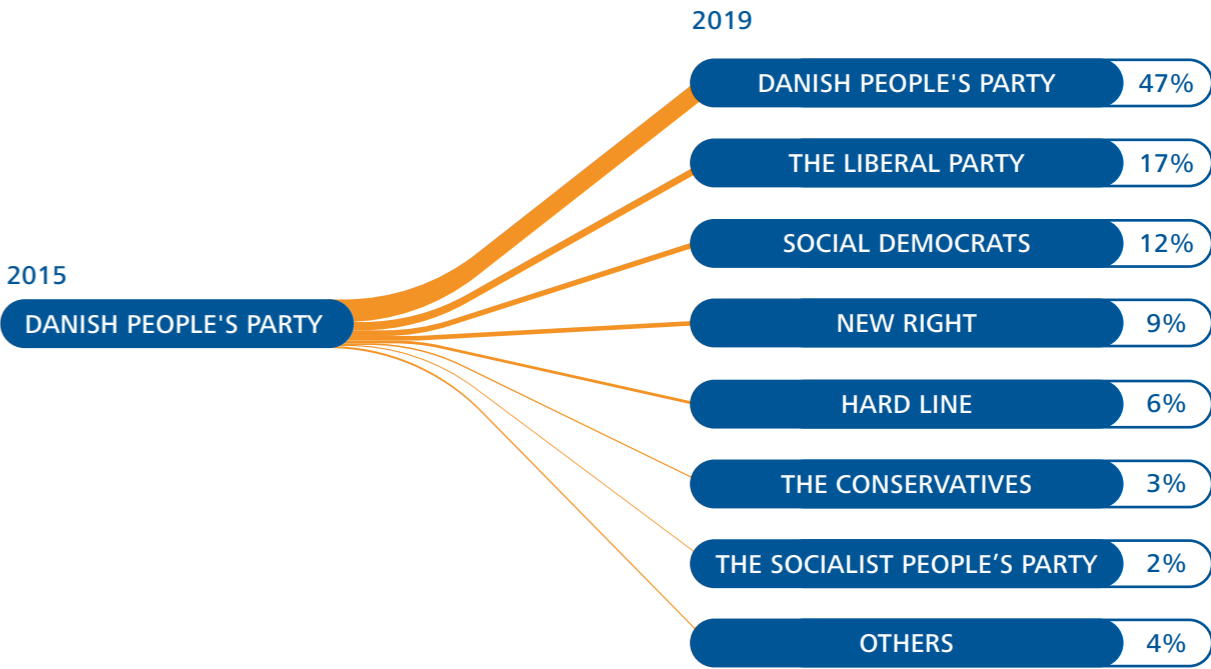
HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

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

First, from the 47% of those who leaked from the party in 2019, 35% moved to other right-wing parties, including the Liberal Party (17%), the New Right (9%), Hard Line (6%) and the Conservatives (3%) (Figure 16). This supports the idea that vote-switching is more likely to take place between the centre-right and RWPP electorates rather than between the centre-left and the RWPP electorates.

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

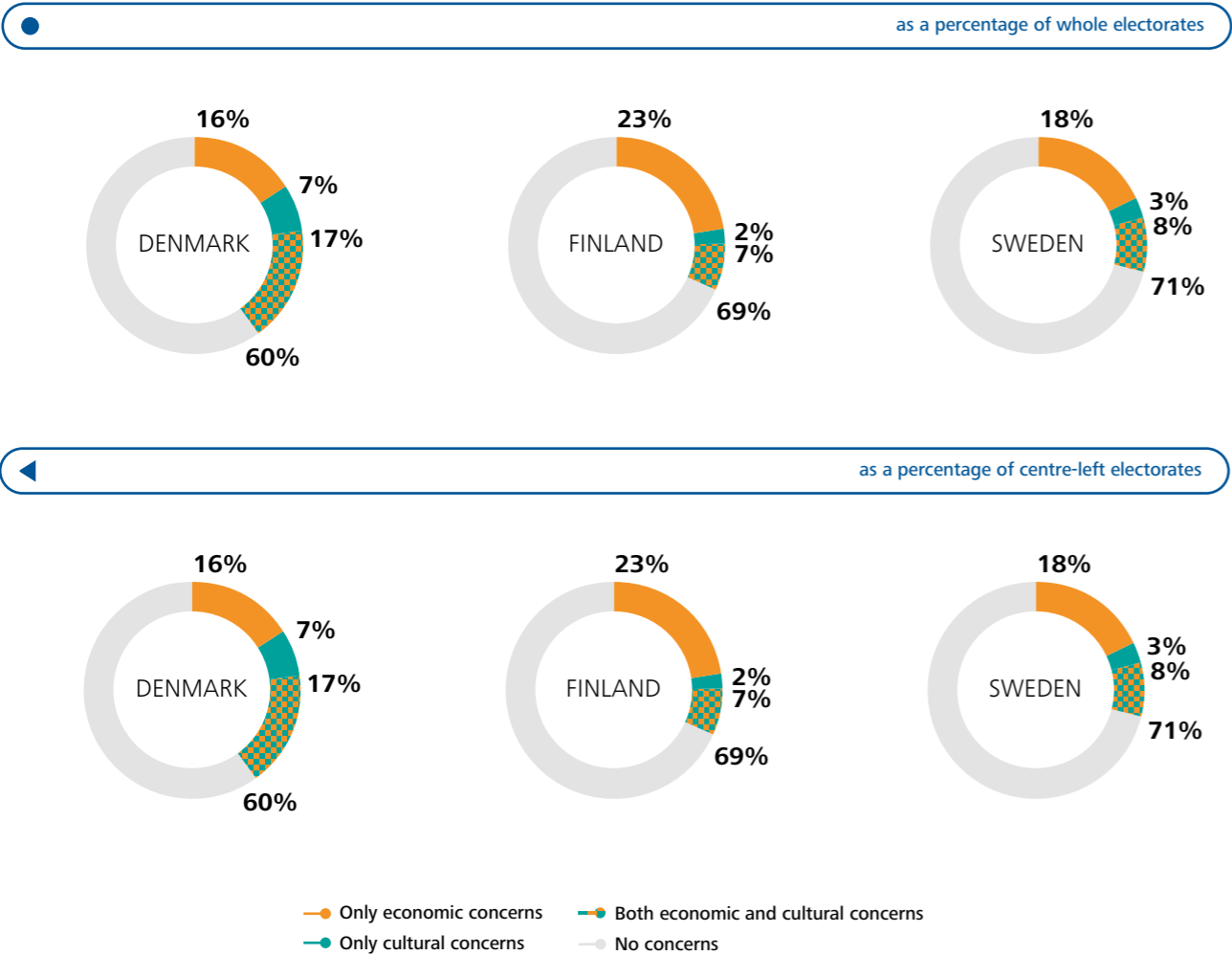
Figure 16: Voter shift Danish People's Party (Jupskås 2019)



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

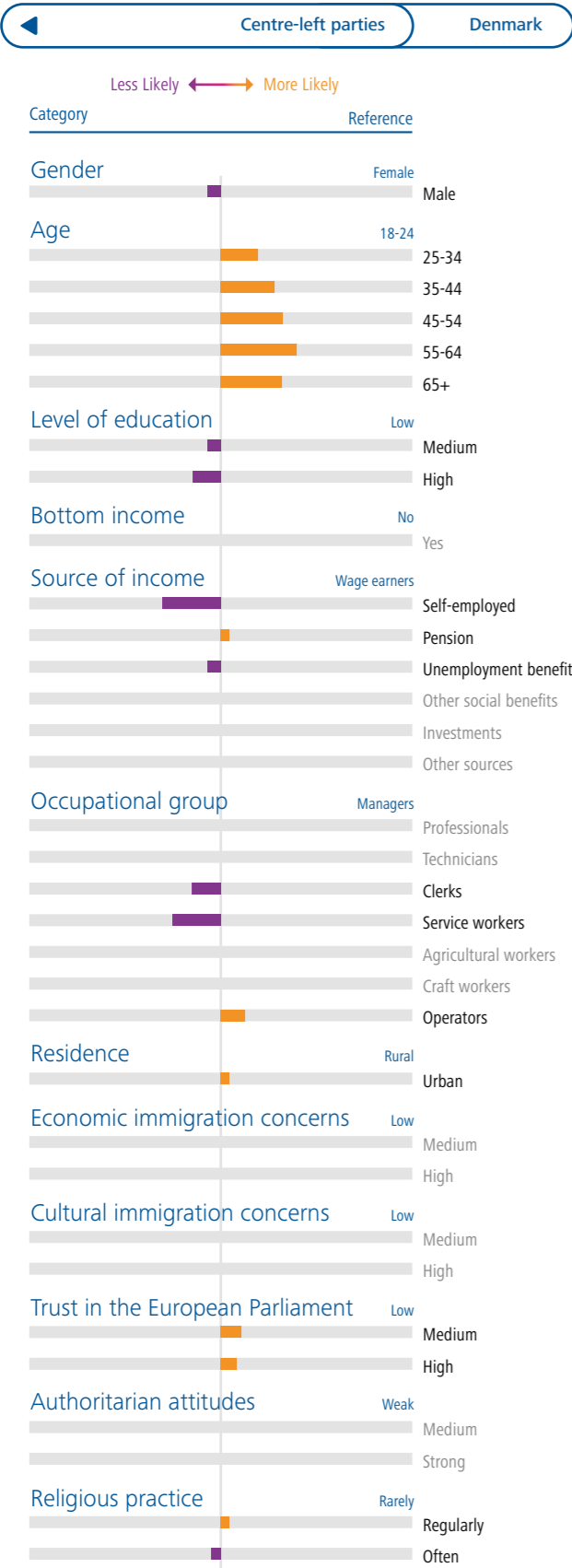
- The Nordic countries are unique compared to Western Europe in terms of their strong welfare states and long history of corporatist traditions. These suggest that the three countries’ electorates are strongly motivated by economic considerations.
- RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the whole electorate in all three countries. These voters are a larger group in Denmark, accounting for 7% of the electorate. In Finland and Sweden, the proportion of these voters is extremely small, respectively accounting for 2% and 3% of the electorate as a whole (Figure 17). These are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group. The fact that this voter group is so small in the three countries underpins the argument that the mechanism through which immigration scepticism becomes a salient vote issue in the Nordic countries is economic rather than cultural.

Figure 17: Distribution of immigration concerns



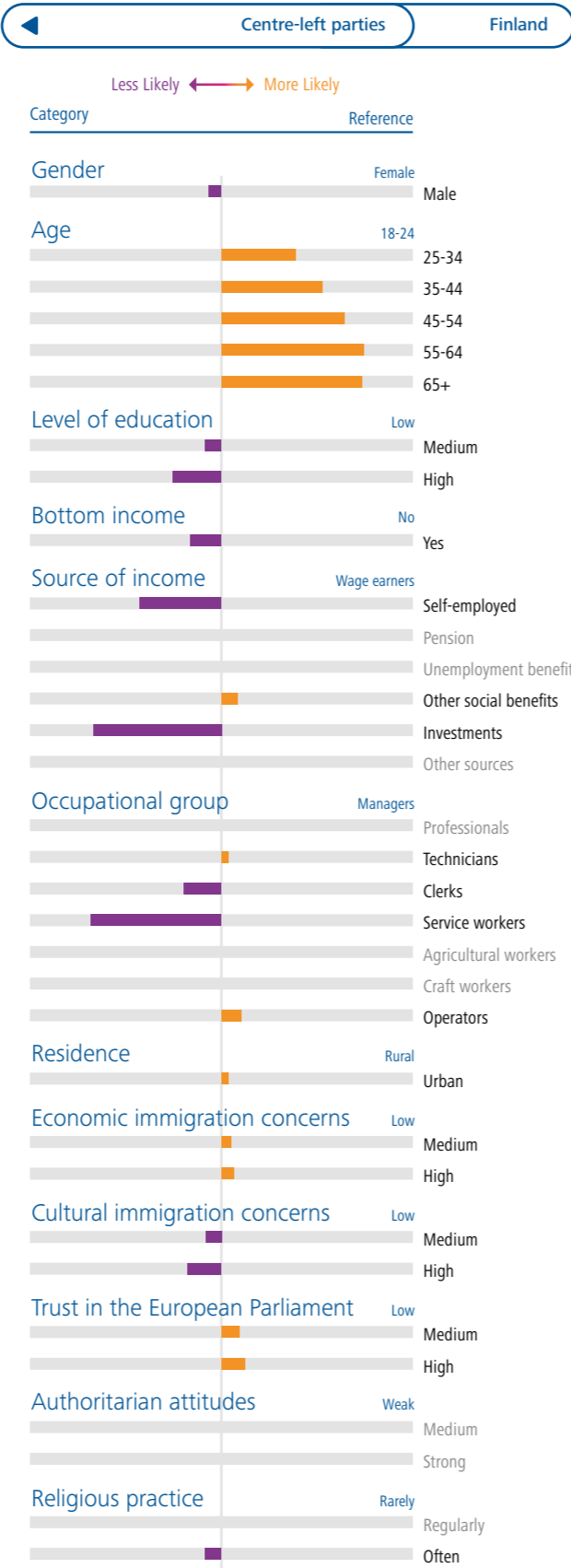
- Comparing the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles reveals some interesting similarities and differences. The centre-left voter in Denmark is a middle-aged, female, secular urban dweller, unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration (Figure 18). In Finland, this voter is also a secular female urban dweller and is unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration, but is likely to have economic concerns over immigration (Figure 19). In Sweden, centre-left voters are also secular and share a working-class base (bottom income group) (Figure 20). These individuals are unlikely to be attracted by cultural anti-immigration narratives, but could be mobilised through economic anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorates in three countries, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence: 5% in Denmark, 1% in Finland and 3% in Sweden (Figure 17).
- Even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all three countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either combined economic and cultural concerns (46% in Denmark and Sweden, and 17% in Finland) or only economic concerns (17% in Denmark, 33% in Finland and 26% in Sweden – Figure 12). Interestingly, just under half of the Finnish RWPP electorate (47%) have no immigration concerns at all. This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent. They likely feel economically insecure and have salient inequality concerns. These voters may be mobilised through anti-immigrant narratives that emphasise labour market competition, but they may also be mobilised by centre-left issues that centre on economic security. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader ‘equality’ narrative.
- The proportion of voters with no immigration concerns among the centre-left electorates in the three countries is fairly high: 65% in Denmark, 68% in Finland and 73% in Sweden (Figure 17). As noted above, those centre-left voters that are motivated by immigration concerns tend to be driven primarily by economic considerations.

Figure 18: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



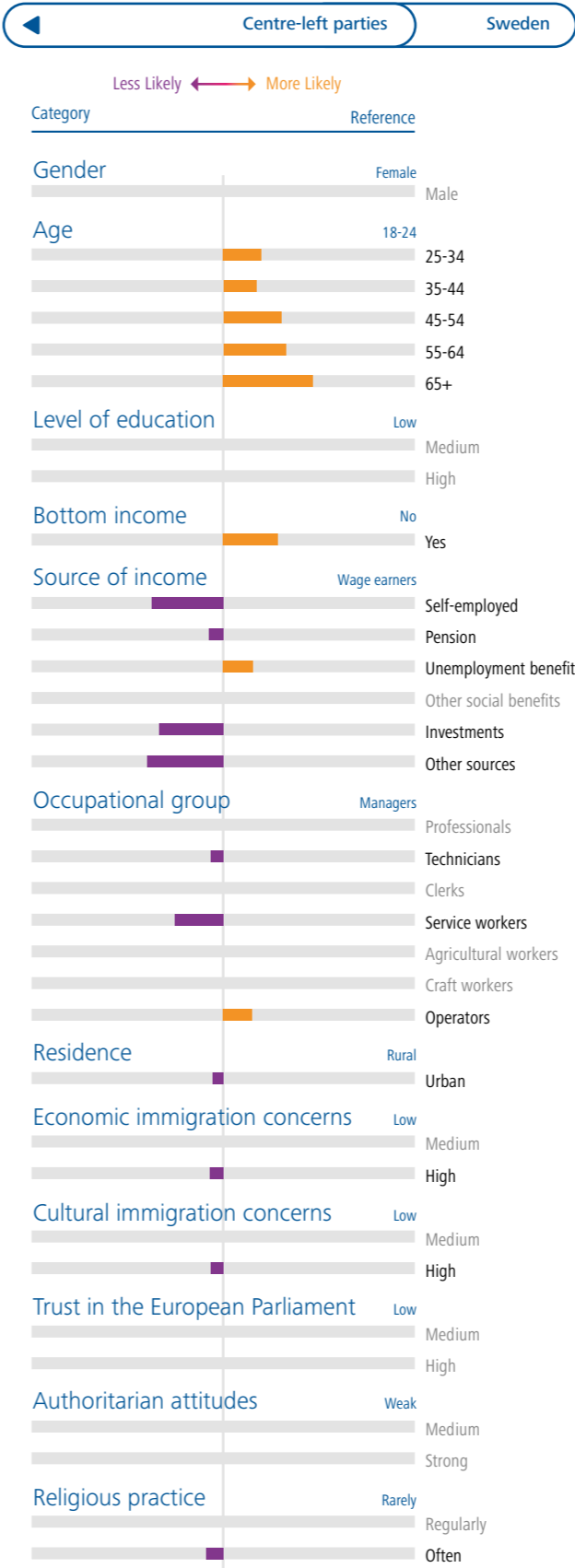
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 19: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 20: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

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