

“Mapping and  
responding to  
the rising culture  
and politics of fear in  
the European Union...”

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NOTHING TO FEAR  
BUT FEAR ITSELF?

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DEMOS



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# Foreword

*Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself?* was conceived on the idea that Europe – which at the time was thoroughly bogged down with the migrant crisis, economic crisis and a counter-terror crisis – was also experiencing a new type of crisis. One less visible, but with the potential to become just as important. In the declining level of political engagement and trust, the growth of populist parties and anti-immigrant sentiment, we saw a common thread of fear weaving its way through European societies, with the potential to foster a divisive new political culture, to destabilise democratic governance, and to challenge the ‘liberal consensus’ of modern times. Even so, 18 months ago we could not have imagined we would ever arrive where we are now.

This project has sought to capture a snapshot of the common and unique manifestations of fear and insecurity across Europe in a moment that feels particularly important. There is a sense that we are standing on the edge of a new era, one where the core tenets of the past half-century – of representative democracy as an inherent good, of unfettered globalisation, of greater mixing of people, goods and ideas across the world – are being held to trial, challenged and potentially turned away from all together. Just as the changes our European societies have experienced in absorbing this age of free trade, movement and ideas have fostered fears and insecurities, so too does the next phase ahead feel uncertain and uncharted – particularly for those who felt safe in what we had before.

It is clear that the era we are leaving has caused some parts of our societies to feel disenfranchised and disconnected. Too many political leaders, from both the left and the right, have viewed success in primarily economic terms, and have missed simmering social and cultural crises that can feel more important to ordinary people’s day-to-day lives. The sense of

being displaced or ignored, the demoralising impact of precarious work, the loss of culture and community, the feeling of no longer belonging where you once felt at home. Even now, as this research shows, these concerns are often dismissed as intangible, or ‘emotional’ in nature – as if not being able to be measured empirically, or addressed through the traditional prisms of public policy, somehow impeaches their significance.

The political upheavals we have witnessed throughout the course of the project – and the ones that are perhaps yet to come – should underscore to any politicians or institutions the risks that are posed to stability, openness and cohesion by allowing citizens’ fears to bud and flourish. Let us be clear: this is not the time to turn our backs on the many achievements that have also been made over recent decades – not least of all in social liberalism, and improved equality of opportunity across gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, education, international cooperation, conservation, technology, health and innovation. These gains need to be defended, and further advanced, even in the face of growing authoritarian and nationalist attitudes. What is evident from this research project is that this will only be possible if we recognise and address the insecurities plaguing so many citizens’ lives, because – as humans – we are at our most altruistic, generous, inclusive and community-minded when we feel safe.

I would like first to thank the Open Societies Foundation, and in particular Christal Morehouse, Goran Buldiowski and Heather Grabbe, for their unfailing support for this project. I would also like to thank the scores of immensely bright, perceptive and enthusiastic people who have contributed to this project across Europe, including journalists, think tankers, non-governmental organisations, politicians, academics, policy-makers and civil society organisations. The issues addressed in this project are bigger than all of us, and the generous spirit of collaboration from a broad consortium of stakeholders is tremendously encouraging. I am grateful to our partner organisations – d|part in Germany, the Jacques Delors Institute in France,

FORES in Sweden, the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland and the Elcano Institute in Spain, who have produced such high-quality research, and worked so closely with us throughout this project. At Demos, I recognise the outstanding contribution of our chief executive Claudia Wood, as well as research colleagues Peter Harrison-Evans and Sacha Hilhorst, and Alex Porter. Ralph Scott and Charlie Cadywould, who have since moved on to other organisations, were also integral to this project and key authors on the UK case study.

As always, any errors or omissions in this report as a whole remain those of the authors.

Sophie Gaston, Demos  
2017

# Introduction

There is a spectre haunting Europe: a culture of fear that is finding its form and asserting its growing influence in myriad ways.

This is a fear of the unknown: a fear of the other, a fear of the future. Its political consequences have been shown most starkly in the UK's vote to leave the EU, and the electoral success of authoritarian governments in central Europe. However, fear is also taking hold of the politics of other European nations, marked by the growing success of other 'populist' right-wing and Eurosceptic parties, including the Front National, Alternative für Deutschland, and the Swedish Democrats, as well as the rise of street movements such as the anti-Islamic Pegida. This new populist politics is having tangible effects on national public policy, through tighter border controls, the erosion of liberal freedoms and so-called 'welfare chauvinism', where social security eligibility is made ever-stricter. Its social impact can be seen in the increasingly nativist and 'othering' discourse in the public realm, the disintegration of civil society and declining social trust, and the resurgence of exclusive national and regional identities.

The drivers of this are as multifarious and indeterminate as their effects. If 'fear' does not quite do it justice, then perhaps we are talking about what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman calls *Unsicherheit* – 'that complex combination of uncertainty, insecurity, and lack of safety', which results from the economic, social and cultural consequences of globalisation, and their entanglement with national, regional and local contexts.

Some drivers and symptoms of the politics of fear are, therefore, specific to particular regions or countries, however many exhibit some level of commonality across EU member states. It seems clear, then, that this is not an isolated phenomenon with causes to be unpicked, but is part of a wider

rising tide that cuts across traditional geographic, political and analytical boundaries. This fear threatens not only the transnational solidarity underpinning the European project, but the stability of free and open societies across Europe.

This project led by the think tank Demos, working in partnership with think tanks and academic researchers in five other European countries, has set out to explore this culture of fear, understand its influence on social and political attitudes and behaviour, and develop ideas to tackle it. Through cross-national, as well as country-specific, polling, supplemented by qualitative research, this study maps the current political landscape and provides a detailed analysis of public attitudes across France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK. By drawing together this analysis we assess the way forward for political leaders to restore a more positive and inclusive political culture within individual nation states and across the EU.

## Our approach

The starting premise for our research contends that the politics and culture of fear cannot be treated as a discrete phenomenon to be studied in isolation but must instead be observed through the analysis of other social and political trends. With this in mind we identified five key themes to frame our subsequent investigation:

- *party politics*: the rise of populist parties and ‘anti-politics’, with declining trust and participation in electoral politics
- *public policy*: restrictions on citizenship and access to public services and welfare, rising state authoritarianism, and an increased reliance on directly democratic decision-making
- *social cohesion*: declining social cohesion, particularly between different ethnic and religious groups, and real and perceived problems of social integration
- *political narratives and rhetoric*: changes in public discourse – whether media framing, the rhetoric employed by politicians or through social media – with an increase in ‘othering’ language and framing

- *citizens*: including perceptions of identity, rising exclusive nationalist sentiments, and feelings of pessimism and insecurity

We selected six EU member states – France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK – to act as a barometer through which to analyse and explore these five core themes. These six countries were chosen, in part, to represent a breadth of experiences and outcomes across the EU – for example, when looking at party politics our case studies reflect a range of circumstances from the electoral victory of an authoritarian populist party in Poland to a relative absence of right-wing populists in Spain. However, we also selected countries which help to highlight emerging and common trends across Europe – on narrative, for example, we have seen a turn towards more nationalistic political discourse in many of our chosen countries – from a greater emphasis on ‘Swedish values’ by populist and mainstream politicians in Sweden, to the nationalistic, and at times xenophobic, campaigning around the EU referendum in the UK.

Our overarching method has been to establish common research questions and approaches across the countries, while also conducting more detailed country-specific analysis, employing a range of different research methodologies. As well as working with our research partners, we have also sought input from a wider group of academic, policy and civil society leaders and experts through a series of workshops, which have helped frame the research, explore emerging findings and develop possible solutions. The study’s methodology can, therefore, be broken down into three constituent parts:

- *Cross-national polling*: Demos commissioned YouGov to conduct an online survey of adults (aged 18 and over) across our six countries (UK polling did not survey adults in Northern Ireland, therefore when referring to polling we use the term Great Britain). The polling asked common questions across all six countries, with a focus on public attitudes to the EU, globalisation, societal changes (eg increasing



diversity), and political leadership and trust. Samples across the six countries were weighted to ensure the findings were representative of national populations.<sup>1</sup>

- *National case study research:* Demos commissioned case studies produced by independent think tanks in five of the six countries, with Demos conducting the case study research for the UK. The case studies used additional country-specific polling (with additional questions added to the cross-national survey conducted by YouGov), combined with a range of different methodologies, including qualitative interviews with politicians (Germany), regression modelling (UK), and discourse and textual analysis (Sweden and Poland).
- *Expert workshops:* Demos convened workshops in Brussels with academic, policy and civil society leaders and experts from the six case study countries, together with delegates with Europe-wide expertise, including EU policy leaders and journalists. The first workshop involved facilitated discussion around the five key themes, to provide expert input to frame and guide the subsequent polling and case study research. The second workshop was conducted over two days, during the first of which delegates debated emergent findings of the research, while the second focused on gaining insights about potential policy and civil society responses.

In the following sections of this chapter we set out the current political context behind this research, discuss the findings of the cross-national polling, and give an introduction to the six country case studies.

# Context and background

The current era is one of rapid, and at times bewildering, political and social change, in which there have been significant shifts in public opinion over a short space of time, together with seismic events that have confounded expert predictions. It increasingly feels as if crisis after crisis rattle through the political and media landscape, leaving pre-existing institutions with little time to adapt. Fear is often both a product of and a response to this pace of change, contributing to a growing sense of precariousness and anxiety among European publics, at times exploited by insurgent or even mainstream political figures.

There is, therefore, a growing sense of urgency in the need to understand the drivers and symptoms of rapidly shifting tides across our five thematic areas – party politics, policy, society, narrative and individual identity – and build coalitions across disciplinary and political divides to develop effective responses. Below we review the current picture across the five themes, as the first step to getting to grips with the current situation.

## **Party politics**

While 2016 has been widely viewed as the year in which authoritarian populist politics broke through to the ‘mainstream’, the steady rise of populist parties across Europe can be traced back to at least the European elections of 2009, when the likes of the British National Party, Hungary’s Jobbik, the Austrian Freedom Party and the True Finns made significant electoral inroads. By the 2014 European elections the gains made by populist parties were brought into far sharper relief. In France, Marine Le Pen’s Front National topped the polls, while anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) won the most votes in the UK. There were similar

trends in Austria, where the Freedom Party increased its vote share, Germany, where the new party Alternative für Deutschland won its first seats, Italy, with initial success for Grillo's Five Star Movement, and many other countries.<sup>2</sup>

In the years since 2014 successes in European elections have increasingly been replicated in populist gains in national and regional elections. This has been most starkly shown through the victory of the Law and Justice party in the 2015 Polish parliamentary elections. However, there have also been significant gains for other populist parties, across Europe. In Germany, for example the anti-European Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) received double-digit shares of the vote in all the regional elections in March 2016, before surging to 21 per cent in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in September 2016, finishing above the Christian Democratic Union in Angela Merkel's home state. In Austria, the 2016 presidential election between the Green Party's Alexander Van der Bellen and the far-right Freedom Party's Norbert Hofer was notable. First, it was the first time since the Second World War that an Austrian president had not been backed by either of the two establishment parties. Second, while there was widespread international relief that Van der Bellen claimed victory in the re-run of the election in December, this still left 46 per cent of the vote going to the far-right candidate. In the UK, while UKIP was restricted to just one seat in the 2015 general election thanks to the first-past-the-post electoral system, the party managed to gain nearly 13 per cent of the popular vote.

It is worth noting that despite often being referred to as 'far right', many of these groups are not easily placed according to traditional political categories, often combining elements of left-wing and right-wing philosophy, mixed with populist language and rhetoric. For example, under Marine Le Pen, the Front National has campaigned from a strongly left-wing position on welfare, while taking a far-right position on immigration. In some ways, this leaves these parties with a greater capacity to capitalise on the changing contours of national political debates. Recent referendums have produced voting patterns which cut across traditional party lines, and this highlights the waning of the left-right paradigm as the

major dividing line in politics, with others schisms – such as young vs old, educated vs uneducated, open vs closed (or in Le Pen’s words, ‘globalists’ vs ‘patriots’) – becoming increasingly significant.

That said, there have also been major gains for anti-establishment, populist parties from a more resolutely left-wing position, including Podemos in Spain, and most notably Syriza in Greece. ‘Populist’ is therefore an all-embracing term that brings together very different political entities. However, while the term ‘populism’ is not without its conceptual problems, populist parties at the very broadest level tend to have a similar worldview, one defined by prominent political scientist Cas Mudde as:

*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.<sup>3</sup>*

For left-wing populist parties, this concept of ‘the people’ may be framed particularly to exclude financial elites, using language such as the ‘99 per cent’. For right-wing populist parties, ‘the people’ is typically bound to the idea of the nation, which may exclude non-elite groups such as welfare recipients, immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities (albeit often constructed as receiving underserved support from elites).<sup>4</sup> In both cases, however, growing populist support reflects a deep distrust in, or a rejection of, the current political system, which represents a substantial challenge to mainstream parties.

## **Public policy**

Anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic rhetoric is exerting an influence on policy across Europe. In some cases this is the result of populist parties in government. For example, once in power the Law and Justice party reversed the previous government’s pledge to accept 7,000 refugees, citing concerns around terrorism and disease; Jaroslaw Kaczynski accused

refugees of ‘bringing in all kinds of parasites’.<sup>5</sup> In June 2016, Poland also passed new anti-terrorism laws introducing measures such as the wiretapping of foreign citizens without a court order. Critics argue that these laws are inconsistent with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Some commentators have argued that this combination of anti-immigrant and authoritarian policy change seen in Poland reflects the Law and Justice party ‘learning from the Hungarians’ in their approach.<sup>6</sup> Since regaining the premiership in 2010, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been criticised for cracking down on media freedom and political accountability, as well as exploiting terrorist attacks in Europe to spread fear and promote Islamophobia and a narrow, ethnic nationalism. The policy agendas of both governments have brought them into open conflict with the EU – Hungary for its treatment of migrants, and Poland for changes to the country’s constitutional court and state media – which have led to threats to sanction these countries under Article 7 for violating fundamental EU rights.

Even where populist parties have not formed governments, the politics of fear has asserted its influence on policy through restrictions on welfare and social security provision, driven in part by financial constraints, but also a more politicised weakening of social bonds and solidarity. A number of states have recently attempted to tighten eligibility rules for immigrants. This was at the forefront of David Cameron’s EU renegotiation (a now largely academic exercise), which included an ‘emergency brake’ on in-work benefits for EU migrants. Welfare chauvinism towards migrants is part of a wider and much longer-running trend towards tightening eligibility and reduced generosity in many countries’ welfare regimes, however.

Austerity policies, largely implemented by establishment parties in the wake of the financial crisis, have led to significant falls in welfare spending in many countries. According to the OECD’s social expenditure index, spending to gross domestic product (GDP) ratios declined between 2009 and 2014 by 1.5 to 2.5 percentage points in Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland and the UK.<sup>7</sup> In Greece, the impact

of austerity measures imposed by the troika of the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund led to a sharp fall in spending-to-GDP of 2 percentage points in just two years. In 2016 alone, Greece slashed public spending by €5.7 billion.<sup>8</sup>

More fundamentally there's also been a restructuring of the social contract in many countries, and a re-imagining of what constitutes a deserving or undeserving welfare recipient. This is linked to longer-running trends towards the activating welfare state, which places greater emphasis on active labour market policies and benefit conditionality. German academics Peter Bleses and Martin Seeleib-Kaiser have described the 'dual transformation' of the German welfare state, which has experienced a significant expansion of family policy (to support female labour market participation), combined with a far-reaching retrenchment in unemployment protection.<sup>9</sup>

The policy direction of governments is both shaping and being shaped by public opinion, which in many cases has hardened on welfare. According to the most recent British Social Attitudes Survey, 45 per cent of people said that spending on unemployment benefit should be reduced and 60 per cent said unemployment benefit receipt should be time limited.<sup>10</sup> The recent British Social Attitudes Survey also found that 61 per cent of people agreed that a working-age couple without children who are struggling to make ends meet should 'look after themselves', rather than getting government support to boost their wages. While Britain may be somewhat of an outlier on welfare solidarity, academics Paul de Beer and Ferry Koster have argued that there is, at least, a broader shift across Europe from one-sided solidarity (assisting someone else without expecting anything in return) to two-sided solidarity, playing into narratives of a 'something for something' culture.<sup>11</sup> Levels of social trust have been shown to be a key ingredient of public support for the welfare state – therefore the divisive political rhetoric that typifies the politics of fear represents a substantial threat to the social contract across Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Against a backdrop of an ever-present threat of terrorism, it is not surprisingly that many leaders are

themselves embodying the fear of their citizens in hardening security and migration practices. Border checks and controls have been re-imposed in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and Sweden.<sup>13</sup> However, the response to the migration crisis also reflects fears more related to a sense of erosion of cultural and social identity. Some governments, with the notable exception of Germany, have refused to take large numbers of refugees, in part due to the fear of losing support to populist parties.

The current political landscape in Denmark, with a right-wing minority government, dependent on support from the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party, has encouraged a hardline position on refugees, out of step with the country's reputation as a bastion of social democratic generosity. Denmark's response to the refugee crisis has become defined by a series of controversial measures, including the slashing of refugee benefits, placing advertising in Lebanese newspapers urging refugees not to come, and most notably the passing of a law which enables the authorities to seize refugees' cash and valuables. Most recently, the Danish government has indefinitely suspended a programme to receive around 500 refugees per year through the UN Refugee Agency.<sup>14</sup>

Populist rhetoric has exerted an influence on the broader policy agendas of mainstream governments and political parties, which have often taken what Matthew Goodwin terms an 'adoptive' strategy to responding to populist insurgencies.<sup>15</sup> In France, for example, measures have been put in place to reduce access to citizenship, so that now the children of immigrants no longer gain citizenship at birth, but at the age of 18, and only once they show themselves to be 'well assimilated to customs and manners'. The national government in France has been unable to challenge successfully the highly controversial ban on burkinis on public beaches, which was introduced in over 30 municipalities.

Finally, it is also important to recognise recent changes to the policy process itself that are influenced by this culture and politics of fear. Declining trust in politicians generally and an increased emphasis on a 'purer' (more direct) form of democracy has led governments across Europe to respond

positively to calls for more referendums.<sup>16</sup> In the 1970s, Europe averaged just three referendums a year – *The Economist* estimates that figure to now stand at eight. In 2016 alone, there were major referendums in the Netherlands (on the Ukraine–EU Association Agreement), the UK (on EU membership), Italy (on its constitution) and Hungary (on migrant quotas).

The growth in the number of referendums can be seen to reflect politicians promoting a more inclusive form of politics, but they have been proven in many cases to encourage divisive public discourse built around binary narratives, and are largely considered unsuitable as a mechanism for most complex or constitutional matters – particularly if there is little chance that citizens can be sufficiently educated in the subjects at hand.<sup>17</sup>

While encouraging political participation, referendums have the power to destabilise and disempower more deliberative and representative forms of democracy on which most European societies are founded.

## **Social cohesion**

Freedom of movement within Europe, immigration from outside the EU and the ongoing migrant crisis have raised questions about how new arrivals should best be integrated into existing societies. Numerous populist politicians have argued that the pace of change has been too quick, that new arrivals have tended to separate themselves off from the rest of society, and that indigenous cultures are under threat. In December 2016, 45 per cent of respondents to a Eurobarometer survey named immigration as one of their most important concerns at EU level, with 20 per cent naming terrorism, the second most common response.<sup>18</sup>

Whether this apparent lack of integration leads to cultural and social conflict is a matter of fierce debate – and nowhere is the fear of cultural threat felt and exploited more than with Islam. Jeffrey Alexander claims that a backlash against the ‘multiculturalist’ approach to integration began in the mid-1990s, and sped up following 9/11. In 2008 David Cameron called multiculturalism a ‘dangerous’ and



‘wrong-headed doctrine’, and in recent years French commentators have spoken of ‘Balkanisation’, while the German discussion has used the term ‘parallel societies’.<sup>19</sup> Alexander argues: ‘One European nation after another has shifted... from entertaining a more multicultural to demanding a more assimilative mode of incorporation.’<sup>20</sup>

The Cologne assaults in early January 2016 and incidents of home-grown terrorism have raised the profile of problems of social integration, and linked immigration directly to feelings of physical insecurity. This has been seen in a hardening of attitudes to migrants, particularly in Germany; while only one-third of the population thought that their ‘country already has a large number of foreign nationals or people of foreign origin and it is not possible to host additional immigrants’ in September 2015, that proportion had increased to half by March 2016.

EU citizens are far less likely to feel comfortable working alongside a Muslim (71 per cent) than a Christian (94 per cent), atheist (87 per cent), Jew (84 per cent) or Buddhist (81 per cent). The figure for Muslims is far lower in some countries, such as Czech Republic (just 27 per cent comfortable) and Slovakia (37 per cent comfortable). Similarly, just 50 per cent would feel comfortable with their son or daughter being in a relationship with a Muslim person, with 30 per cent saying they would be uncomfortable. In many countries the numbers are much lower: just 12 per cent of Czech respondents would be comfortable with their son or daughter being in a relationship with a Muslim, with less than half agreeing in many EU-15 countries too: Italy (41 per cent), Germany (43 per cent), Austria (44 per cent) and Belgium (47 per cent).

The most recent Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in the EU gives us some insight into the scale of the problems experienced by minorities: 30 per cent of participants belonging to an ethnic minority group said they had experienced discrimination or harassment related to their ethnicity in the previous 12 months; 22 per cent of those from a religious minority said they had experienced discrimination or harassment on the grounds of their religion or beliefs.<sup>21</sup>

While often primarily considered in terms of race relations, social cohesion has also been eroding in European countries across other spheres of interaction and relationships. The elections held in 2016, and the campaigns under way in 2017, have exposed a multitude of social and attitudinal schisms across European societies. The traditional binary division in politics based largely on class (blue-collar–white-collar collar; left–right) has been supplemented, or even superseded, by emerging divisions – between age groups, ethnic groups, graduates and non-graduates, and urban and rural communities – which are increasingly defined by their social values and economic status. There is a sense that social fragmentation is both increasing and hardening, with citizens increasingly unlikely to mix with their counterparts across the new dividing lines.

Education has been shown to be at the centre of many of these emergent social schisms. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK found that educational opportunity was ‘the biggest driver’ of the Brexit vote, with 75 per cent of voters with postgraduate qualifications in favour of Remain, and 73 per cent of those without qualifications voting Leave.<sup>22</sup> While educational divides can be lazily caricatured as the informed vs the unformed, British sociologist David Runciman has written convincingly about the impact of higher education – not in correcting for political or economic ignorance, but instead acting as a socialising force promoting liberal and cosmopolitan values.<sup>23</sup>

While the new dividing lines cut across European countries, where particular social groups stand on key issues can vary markedly between member states. Age, for example, is becoming an increasingly important predictor of attitudes and voting intentions. In Western and Northern Europe younger people tend to have more liberal and internationalist views. However, the reverse is true in parts of central Europe where younger people have been far more receptive to far-right nationalist rhetoric than older generations. The proportion of young people voting for Jobbik in Hungary, Law and Justice in Poland, and the far-right Kotleba party in Slovakia in recent elections has outstripped that of the wider population.<sup>24</sup>

While the Central European case is perhaps more alarming, growing inter-generational divides on either side of the political spectrum threaten social cohesion, particularly in the context of an ageing population reliant on social security transfers from young to old.

Social fragmentation of values and demographics is in some cases set within more tangible geographic fragmentation driven by secessionist movements, most notably in Scotland and Catalonia. Although these campaigns have so far been defeated or constrained, the Brexit vote has heightened the chances of a second Scottish independence vote, and Carles Puigdemont, the head of the Catalanian government, has insisted that a referendum on independence will take place in September 2017 (in defiance of the Spanish government's position). European and national political leaders clearly fear that success in either of these elections could spark a further disintegration of European political space.

### **Political narratives and rhetoric**

Changing political narratives and language have in part been driven by the rise of populist parties, whose rhetoric has gained increased prominence as a result of electoral success.

Populist discourse preys on a sense of precariousness in social and cultural identities through appealing to binary distinctions, encouraging gang-like mentalities that drive cleavages between different groups. These may take the form of hyper-patriotic nationalism against cosmopolitanism; of the 'deserving' recipients of state welfare and users of public services against undeserving interlopers and charlatans; or the authentic, salt-of-the-earth 'people' against the bloated, out-of-touch establishment and ruling elites.

These divisions are powerful in their ability to shape social relations, set a framework for acceptable public debate, and become normalised through mainstream political parties and the media. In their study of political speeches and rhetoric, Ruth Wodak and Salomi Boukala examine speeches given by Geert Wilders and David Cameron in detail.

They argue:

*Debates about European identities – especially since the financial crisis of 2008 – have increasingly been accompanied by debates about both more traditional racialised cultural concerns and more recently about economic security, leading to new distinctions between ‘Us’, the ‘real Europeans’, and ‘Them’, the ‘Others’.*<sup>25</sup>

The most prominent example of the influence of divisive populist rhetoric has been the mainstreaming of strongly negative depictions of immigrants. Analysis of national newspapers in the UK by the Oxford Migration Observatory showed that the most common descriptor for the word ‘immigrants’ was ‘illegal’. Other consistent terms found nearby in newspaper copy included those around legality and security (‘terrorist’, ‘suspected’, ‘sham’), and those using water-based imagery (‘flood’, ‘influx’, ‘wave’).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Alexander Caviedes’ study of centre-right national newspapers in Britain, France and Italy found that 39 per cent of articles related to immigration had a focus on security between 2008 and 2012. Most of these related to border controls, although in the UK and Italy around 1 in 5 related to physical threats, including terrorism and disease.<sup>27</sup>

Research has also shown that the prevalence of these narratives is not highly dependent on local realities. Donatella Bonansinga’s research into attitudes towards Islam in the Czech Republic found that Islamophobic sentiments are gathering momentum and rising quickly, although the country’s Muslim population is ‘tantamount to zero’. Bonansinga hypothesises that media representations and political rhetoric are to blame for such trends:

*The construction of otherness as referred to the Muslim culture is channelling fears about an allegedly inevitable clash of civilisations. In addition, problems concerning immigration to Europe have given birth to dramatic fears of an invasion, as these constant flows of people on the move are perceived as a challenge and threat to both national identities and security.*<sup>28</sup>

Anti-immigrant rhetoric may be the clearest example of the populist influence on contemporary political discourse in

Europe, but the politics of fear, and the policies of fear, are driving wedges between many different societal and cultural groups. In particular, the divisions of nationalism and authoritarianism against liberal values are being fought in the public debates around patriotism and the ‘legitimacy’ of different voices and opinions. In this context, the ‘you’re either with us or against us’ narrative is threatening to stifle free debate, and side-lining the important contributions of ‘experts’ – now considered enemies of the state for their lack of blind national optimism. Nowhere has this become more evident than in the aftermath of the European Referendum, where even fundamental institutions, such as the Bank of England and the Supreme Court, have been politicised to the extent that major daily newspapers have ‘named and shamed’ individual judges and called for marches on the court.<sup>29</sup>

Any caution or concern expressed about the UK’s vote to leave the EU is now branded as an act of ‘remoaning’ by some of the nation’s most influential news outlets, and views of dissent outside the framework of acceptable commentary are labelled treacherous. This dangerous new narrative – perhaps the most explicit form of ‘othering’, with implied consequences for citizenship – is a clear obstacle to maintaining a unified society, and threatens to obscure the urgency of addressing many of the other divisions and conflicts already at play, and the inequalities of power and agency between those asserting and subscribing to the narrative itself.

## Citizens

Finally, how much of this culture of fear is reflected in changing individual identities? Are we seeing new, exclusive nationalisms at the expense of more inclusive identities and transnational solidarity?

As early as 2004, academics such as Mary Kaldor were arguing that a ‘new’ nationalism was on the rise as a direct response to globalisation.<sup>30</sup> Today many commentators believe that the rise of right-wing populist parties is linked to global economic trends, with the core support for these parties coming from blue-collar workers whose career prospects have

been damaged by competition from emerging markets, migrant labour and in some cases the austerity policies imposed by governments and EU institutions.<sup>31</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis Pappas argue in their 2015 book *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*:

*The lack of responsiveness of established parties to the plight of the 'globalisation losers' provided a chance for their mobilisation by the new populist right... the success of the new challengers was mainly due to their appeal to the cultural anxieties of the 'losers', which, given the 'losers' heterogeneous economic interests, provided the lowest common denominator for their mobilisation.*<sup>32</sup>

This is influenced by and feeds into pessimism and a lack of social trust. Research by Demos into the attitudes of online supporters of populist movements across Europe found that these groups had very low levels of optimism about their country's future: only 10 per cent felt their country was 'on the right track'.<sup>33</sup> However, this pessimism was also evident – albeit to a lesser extent – in the wider population with only 28 per cent thinking the same across the European population as a whole. Similarly, when asked a standard question of social trust – whether 'most people can be trusted' – our online study of populist supporters found that they tended to be more fearful or sceptical of others, with 33 per cent saying yes compared with a European average of 40 per cent.

Trends in national identity and attitudes often coincide with negative sentiments towards supranational identity and institutions: Carey, for example, found a negative relationship between national pride and attitudes towards EU integration.<sup>34</sup> In the UK, there has been a clear trend towards a more exclusive sense of English national identity: in 1992, 31 per cent felt English and 62 per cent British, while in 2014, 43 per cent felt exclusively English and the same proportion British. This Englishness is related to attitudes towards the EU, with 52 per cent of those identifying as English supporting Leave against 32 per cent of those who felt British.

Although the UK is to some extent an outlier in this regard – regularly coming bottom of Eurobarometer surveys

of European identity – attachment to the EU as an institution is low across Europe. Just 11 per cent of EU citizens feel ‘very attached’ to the EU, compared with 56 per cent who feel attached to their country and 52 per cent who feel attached to their city, town or village.<sup>35</sup> This lack of attachment, combined with a rising politics of fear and its populist manifestations, could have severe consequences for the future of the EU.

# Cross-national surveys

In 2016, we conducted cross-national surveys of citizens in France, Germany, Great Britain,<sup>36</sup> Poland, Spain and Sweden, which revealed a widespread sense of precariousness, uncertainty and pessimism, which was most clearly evidenced in public opinion on political trust and the EU, and respondents' expectations for the future. In particular the polling found:

- low levels of trust in both EU and national-level governments and political institutions
- greater proportions of citizens in each country (with the exception of Spain) expecting things to get worse rather than better for their country and for Europe as a whole
- majorities (Britain, France, Sweden) or significant minorities (Germany, Poland, Spain) wanting to reduce the EU's powers or leave it all together

Opinions were more mixed when it came to questions on the impact of recent societal changes – with majorities in most countries holding favourable views on female participation in the labour market and same-sex relationships. By contrast a greater proportion of citizens in France, Germany and Poland thought that greater ethnic diversity had made their countries worse rather than better off, while the reverse was true in Britain, Spain and Sweden.

Perhaps surprisingly, our polling found significant majorities holding positive views about the impact of globalisation on Europe, their country, their local area and their own lives. The only exception here came from the French polling where half of people felt that globalisation had had a negative impact on France.

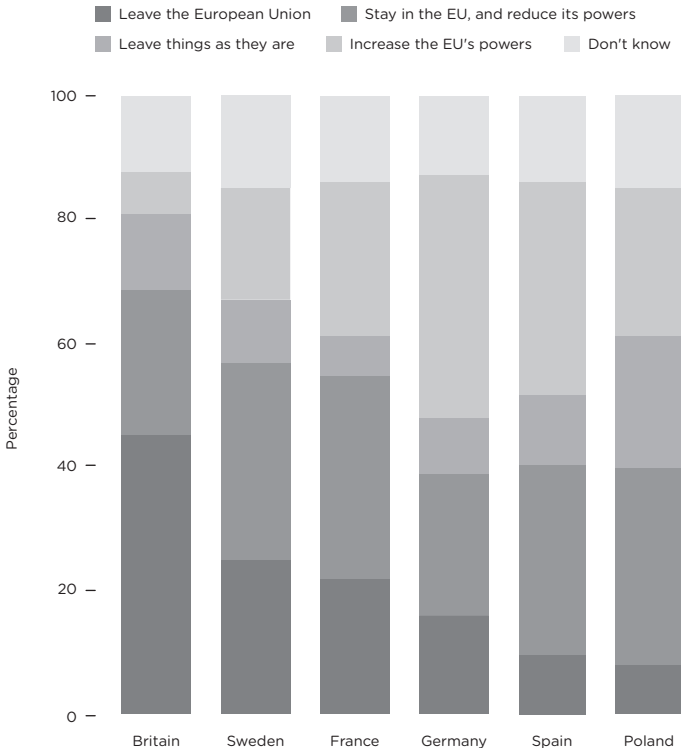
We review the findings from our cross-national polling in greater detail below.



## Euroscepticism

In every country, there is either a majority or a substantial minority in favour of reducing the EU's powers or leaving it altogether. Unsurprisingly, Great Britain is the most Eurosceptic, with 45 per cent (51 per cent excluding don't knows) wanting to leave the EU. Germany is the most pro-European with half (48 per cent) wanting either to leave things as they are or increase the EU's powers, although 16 per cent expressed a desire to leave the EU (figure 1).

Figure 1 **Preferences of respondents in each country, on their country's long-term policy on the EU**



## Attitudes to globalisation

We also asked our survey respondents about globalisation. This is a difficult subject to poll because it is so multi-faceted, and means different things to different people. Rather than using the term explicitly, we described the current situation as one where:

*Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected. There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries.*

We asked respondents whether they thought this trend had had a positive or negative effect at four levels: Europe as a whole, their country, their local area, and their own lives. Overwhelmingly, and somewhat surprisingly, respondents were generally positive about globalisation across the four measures. Poland was the most positive about the effect of globalisation on Europe, with 79 per cent of respondents believing the impact had been positive. French respondents were the most sceptical, with 46 per cent saying it had been positive for Europe, 41 per cent negative, with the remaining 13 per cent answering 'don't know' (figure 2).

Most participants across all countries agreed that globalisation had had a positive impact on their local area and their own lives, again with Poland the most positive and France again the more balanced, with just 42 per cent answering 'fairly' (35 per cent) or 'very' (7 per cent) positive, and 41 per cent answering 'fairly' (27 per cent) or 'very' (14 per cent) negative. While significant majorities in Britain, Germany, Poland, Spain and Sweden agreed that globalisation had had a positive impact on their country, French respondents disagreed, with only 39 per cent believing it had been positive and 50 per cent negative (figure 3).

Figure 2 **Views of respondents in each country who believe globalisation has been positive or negative for Europe as a whole**

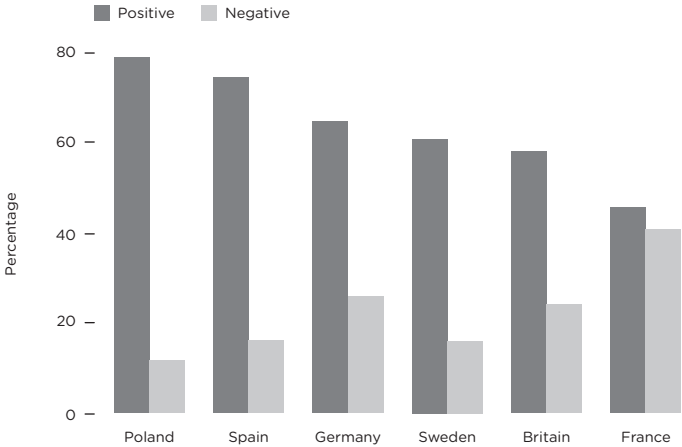
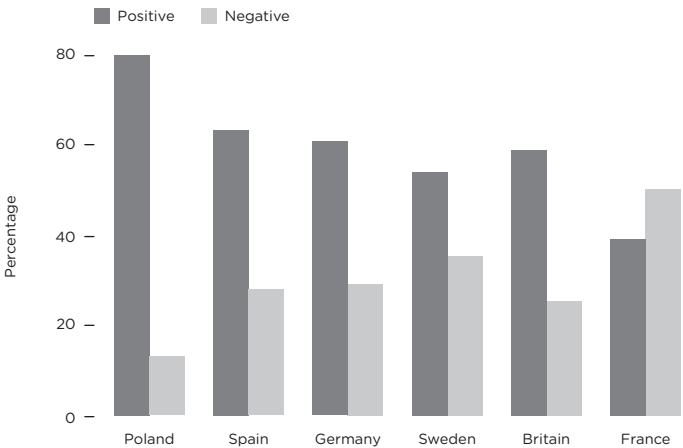


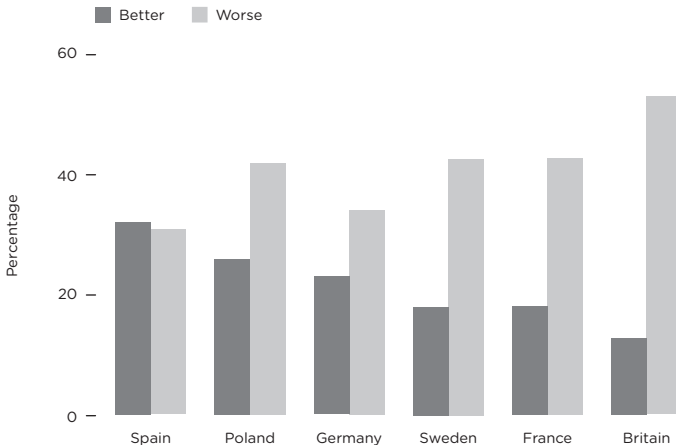
Figure 3 **Percentage of respondents in each country who believe globalisation has been positive or negative for their country**



## Pessimism

On the other hand, we found that respondents in all countries – with the consistent exception of Spain – were overwhelmingly pessimistic about prospects for the next 12 months. Large minorities or even majorities in Britain, France, Germany and Sweden thought things would get worse for Europe as a whole in the next year, while citizens in Poland and Spain felt things would get neither better nor worse. The same trend was seen when we asked about prospects for the respondent’s country: pluralities in Britain, France, Germany and Sweden believe things will get worse, while those in Poland and Spain are more evenly split (figure 4).

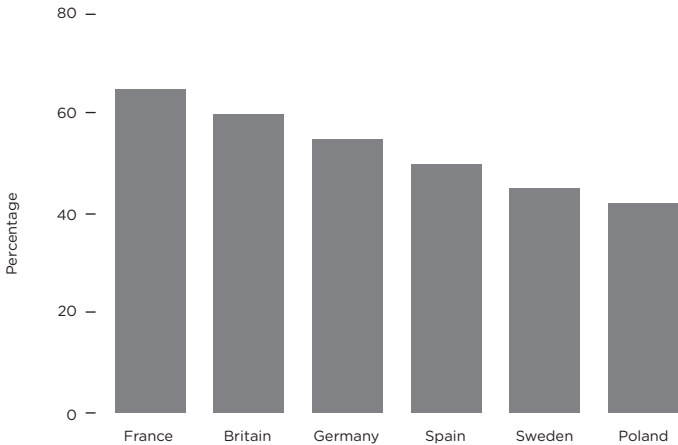
Figure 4 **Percentage of respondents in each country who think things will get better or worse for their country over the next 12 months**



## Political trust

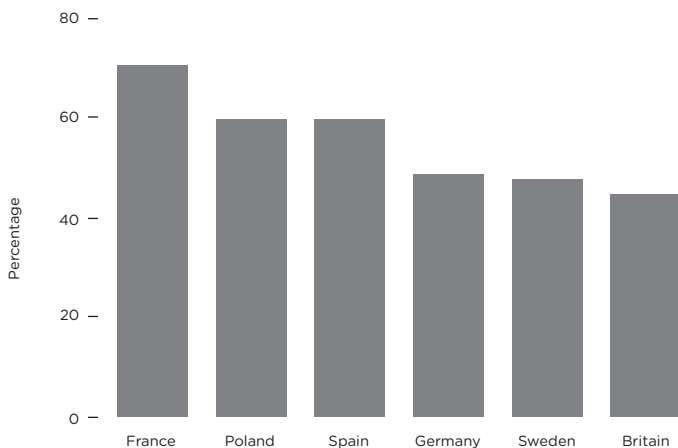
We also asked our survey respondents about their levels of trust in national and European political institutions. We found strikingly low levels of trust across all measures, and in all countries. On a scale from 0 to 10, we found that more than half of respondents in Britain, France, Germany and Spain have low levels of trust (0–4) in the European Commission. Particularly surprising is that French respondents had less trust (56 per cent 0–4) in the Commission than British respondents (51 per cent) (figure 5).

Figure 5 **Percentage of respondents reporting low levels of trust (0–4 on a 10-point scale) in the European Commission**



Conversely, while levels of trust in British political institutions were not as low (45 per cent 0–4 for British government, 43 per cent for parliament), French respondents had even lower trust in national institutions than in EU bodies: 71 per cent of French respondents reported low levels of trust in their government, and 65 per cent for the parliament (figure 6).

Figure 6 **Percentage of respondents reporting low levels of trust (0–4 on a 10-point scale) in their national government**



## Societal changes

Our polling on societal changes found Spain and Sweden to be the most socially liberal countries, particularly in their support for more women going to work (80 per cent and 74 per cent) and sexual equality (74 per cent and 67 per cent).

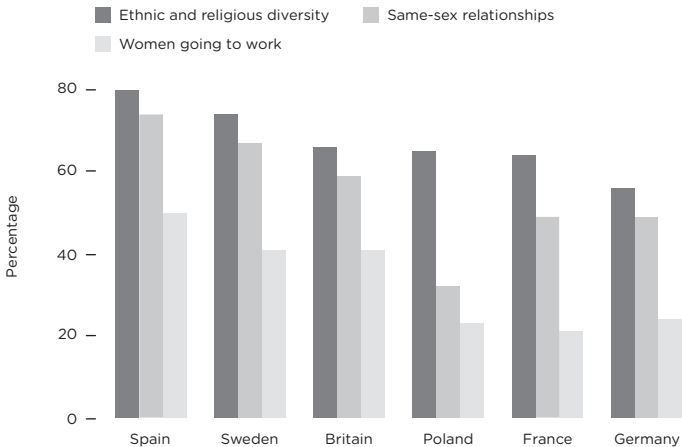
However, we also found broad support for female participation in the labour market and same-sex relationships across the other four countries (with the exception of Poland on same-sex relationships).

That said, small but not insignificant minorities of around 10 per cent in each member state think that women's economic participation has changed society for the worse, although twice as many people in Poland (13 per cent), Germany (12 per cent) and Great Britain (12 per cent) believe this than in Sweden (6 per cent). The Polish (35 per cent) and British (17 per cent) are most likely to regard the acceptance of same-sex marriage as having been a negative development.

However, it is clear that increased religious and ethnic diversity is a much more divisive issue, which gains

significantly less support in the countries we polled. Spain (50 per cent), Sweden (41 per cent) and – perhaps surprisingly – Britain (41 per cent) are the most supportive of diversity, and they are twice as likely to see a positive societal impact than in France, Germany and Poland. In these countries a higher proportion of people say that ethnic diversity has changed society for the worse than the better (eg, in France 46 per cent of people say it has changed society for the worse, compared with 21 per cent saying the reverse) (figure 7).

Figure 7 **Percentage of respondents who think that changes in relation to women in the labour market, same-sex relationships, and ethnicity and diversity have ‘improved society for the better’**



# European case studies

Our six country case studies provide a deeper understanding of the drivers and symptoms of the politics of fear through a detailed analysis of national specificities. Each provides a different analytical perspective and takes a different methodological approach, taking account of national contexts and trends.

In France, we find a toxic political atmosphere, dominated by negative voting intentions, and a population divided between a majority that continues to view the Front National in strongly negative terms, set against a sizeable minority that see its leader Marine Le Pen, as ‘strong’ and a ‘realist’. This political context is underpinned by a more widespread sense of anxiety and crisis, linked to recent attacks, and economic uncertainty.

In Germany, by contrast, citizens’ concerns are shown to be more closely tied to specific issues around the EU’s impact in key areas of policy, including social security and EU payments. The findings here reveal there is a significant gap between the views of the public and those of German politicians, who tend not to recognise these concrete concerns and instead speak of a generalised sense of fear among their citizens.

In Poland, while socioeconomic grievances have played a role in the electoral success of the Law and Justice party, their rise to power also reflects a clear backlash against liberal and European values. The Polish case study argues that the dissemination of systematic political lies and conspiracy theory through social and alternative media has been a key component of the populist right’s success.

In the UK, we find similar social and cultural underpinnings to the Brexit vote, although these are shown to be heavily intertwined with economic and educational inequalities. Social networks are also found to be significant



– internationally and intranationally – with those people who have recently socialised with someone from either a different country or a different UK city more likely to have voted Remain.

Even in the home of social democratic liberalism, Sweden, our findings show a similar (if slighter) turn towards ethnically defined conceptions of national identity in Swedish political discourse. That said, the public polling also reflects the continued strength of civic understandings of identity in Sweden, albeit with Sweden Democrats voters more likely to hold a mixture of civic and ethnic conceptions.

Spain stands as an outlier, with no significant right-wing populist gains despite seemingly fertile conditions – having been particularly impacted by the economic crisis and with high levels of immigration. The Spanish research – ‘the Spanish exception’ – suggests that this unique situation is linked to Spain’s political past, its current electoral system, and the failure of its far-right parties to modernise. However, polling findings from Spain on support for reduced immigration present a warning against complacency even in this country.

The following chapters explore these case studies in detail, and the findings of surveys and interviews conducted in each country with both citizens and elites during the second half of 2016.

## Notes

- 1 Sample sizes: France – 1,001 adults surveyed; Germany – 2,125; Poland – 1,011; Spain – 1,000; Sweden – 1,007; UK – 1,661 (only adults from Great Britain were surveyed in UK polling).
- 2 The genesis and trajectories of some of these movements has been traced in previous Demos research, including the projects *New Political Actors in Europe* (2013) and the *New Face of Digital Populism* (2011), also supported by the Open Societies Foundation.
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# 1 **Great Britain - 'It's who you know': exploring the factors behind the UK's vote to leave the EU**

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# 1 What we already know about Brexit

The UK's decision to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016 was a seismic political event with significant implications for the future of the UK. It also divided Britons into two political camps, which were profoundly different from the election-orientated, party political battle lines that generally define how political scientists, commentators and politicians analyse the country. Since then the characteristics, attitudes, situations and motivations of voters on both sides of the issue – and especially those in the Leave camp – have been the subject of a tremendous amount of analysis.

The Brexit vote also appears to signify a larger change in attitudes to globalisation. Many have read the outcome of the referendum as a verdict on a fast-paced, globalised world where networks matter more than place.<sup>1</sup> Trade-offs between sovereignty, democracy and (economic) globalisation – what political economist Dani Rodrik called ‘the political trilemma of the world economy’<sup>2</sup> – are understandably less appealing to those who feel a networked, globalised world has little to offer people like them. Crucial themes of the Leave campaign such as self-determination and border control fit well with such an understanding. Insofar as the outcome of the referendum is indicative of a larger cultural–political shift, it holds lessons not just for the UK, but for democratic politics in Europe and beyond. This case study provides a thematic summary of the robust, data-driven analysis of the factors behind the UK's decision to leave, examining which factors motivated and mobilised Leave voters, ultimately underpinning the UK's departure from the European Union (EU). As voter theorists have long argued, voting is more than calculating benefits or maximising utility. Rather, it is intimately tied up with who we are and how we see our place in the world.

Part 1 is divided into four sections, starting from the objective characteristics of voters, such as age, education and other demographic factors, and their geographical contexts. Next, it discusses subjective attitudes and value orientations that might have informed the vote, and finally the influence of media representations and the campaigns themselves. In doing so, this chapter both challenges some of the existing narratives around why the UK voted to leave and highlights potentially important factors which remain underexplored. These factors are analysed through new analysis and original polling in part 2.

## **Demographics and identity**

As soon as the results were in, commentators sought to explain the demographic make-up of the Leave and Remain camps. Since the Brexit vote was difficult to map onto the usual party political divides, there were few go-to explanations. The electoral cleavages diagnosed in subsequent reports are almost too many to count. Younger people generally voted to stay in the EU, as did higher-educated people, while pensioners and people with fewer educational qualifications opted to leave. There were geographic splits: it was the Remainers of London versus the Brexiteering regions and a pro-EU Scotland versus a Eurosceptic England and Wales.<sup>3</sup> There were differences by ethnicity, by income, by class. Of the most prominent axes of identity, interestingly, only gender does not appear to have played a significant role, with men and women voting Leave in almost exactly the same numbers.<sup>4</sup> Brexit Britain, some have argued, is a society divided by ‘class, generation and geography’.<sup>5</sup>

### **Age**

One of the most prominent divides lay between younger and older voters. Early on, it became apparent that the youngest segment of voters was far more likely to support staying in the EU than was the oldest. According to British Election Study data, only 28 per cent of 18–25-year-olds voted to Leave,

compared with 59 per cent of those over 65.<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, it was older constituencies that voted to Leave, with 19 of the 20 constituencies with most pensioners voting to leave the EU, while 16 of the 20 youngest ones votes to remain.<sup>7</sup>

There was considerable debate over the turnout numbers of young people. Early reports suggested the vast majority of young people had not voted in the referendum, but later analyses found these claims were likely overstated. About 64 per cent of registered young voters went to the polls, according to researchers at the London School of Economics, compared with a 72 per cent average turnout. This leaves a worrisome double-digit gap in turnout between the oldest and the youngest voters, but it is a world away from the initial figure of 36 per cent turnout among 18–25-year-olds.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the most prominent themes of the campaign, such as sovereignty and controls on immigration, appear to have resonated much less with younger voters. While older groups felt strongly about ‘Britain’s right to act independently’, only 20 per cent of young people said this mattered to them and significantly influenced how they would vote. Instead, young people were more likely to be concerned about economic opportunities, which they saw as imperilled by a potential Brexit.<sup>9</sup>

### Education

The effect of age is not always easy to distinguish from the effect of education, as levels of education vary by generation. Nonetheless, education levels appear to have been the single biggest driver of the decision to either Leave or Remain. According to the British Election Study, the difference in likelihood to vote Leave between people with postgraduate degrees and people with no formal educational qualifications was almost 50 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In their research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath found that, controlling for other factors such as income, the gap between those with a university degree and those with GCSE qualifications or below still stood at 30 per cent.<sup>11</sup> The effects of other important factors such as age and income pale in comparison.

These effects were also visible on an aggregate level, with constituencies with many graduates far more likely to opt to remain. University towns in particular were often Remain outposts within vast Leave territories – Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Exeter, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Warwick and York all had majorities voting to stay in the EU.<sup>12</sup>

The large effects of educational qualifications trigger an important question: did higher education nudge people towards a Remain vote because of the material advantages it confers, because of the (presumably liberal) worldview it instills, or a combination of both? These effects can be difficult to disentangle, although they will be examined through our original analysis. Taking income into account can help us control for some of the labour market benefits associated with a degree, but income per se likely captures only part of the opportunities afforded by (higher) education. A second well-documented phenomenon is the effect of education on one's social and political beliefs, which a large body of work has commented on. These effects will be discussed at length in the section below on values and attitudes, 'Social attitudes and political predispositions'.

### **Income and class**

Although not as strong a predictor as education, most research found that income was nonetheless an important and statistically significant correlate of a Remain vote. Those in the poorest households in the UK tended to support leaving the EU, with 58 per cent of people in households making less than £20,000 annually voting to leave. Of those in the higher income brackets – households making at least £60,000 per year – only 35 per cent chose the same. On an individual level, unemployment was also correlated with support for Brexit: 59 per cent of those out of work voted to leave. That compared with 45 per cent among those in full employment. Finally, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation report also finds that the type of work matters: 71 per cent of those in more manual, more low-skilled work cast their ballots in favour of leaving the EU – 30 per cent more than among those in other types of work.<sup>13</sup>



This leads the authors to conclude that Brexit was about ‘poverty, low skills and lack of opportunities’.<sup>14</sup>

This is in line with the data from the British Election Study about subjective class. Self-defined middle-class people were much more likely to vote to stay in the EU – a clear majority at 59 per cent. Of self-defined working-class people, on the other hand, 55 per cent were in favour of leaving.<sup>15</sup> Objective measures of class by occupational grade also seem to have been influential, with Lord Ashcroft’s research reporting that those in professional and managerial jobs were more likely to be Remainers and those in routine or semi-routine work more likely to be Brexiteers.<sup>16</sup>

### **National identity**

A further difference is visible between the various parts of the UK. In Northern Ireland and Scotland, the Leave vote accounted for a clear minority – 44.2 per cent and 38 per cent of the total votes cast respectively. In Wales, the Leave vote accounted for 52.5 per cent of the votes, and in England 53.4 per cent – 55.5 per cent discounting the capital.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, national divisions within the UK played a role.

These national differences were largely mediated by national identification: 79 per cent of those who defined themselves as ‘English not British’ and 66 per cent of those who defined themselves as ‘more English than British’ voted to leave. Conversely, 63 per cent of those who saw themselves as ‘more British than English’ and 60 per cent of those who defined themselves as ‘British not English’ voted to remain.<sup>18</sup> While feelings of Britishness were generally correlated with a Remain vote, in Scotland they were correlated with a predisposition towards voting Leave: 55 per cent of Remain voters reported feeling ‘Scottish not British’ or ‘more Scottish than British’, while only 46 per cent of Leavers reported feeling predominantly or entirely Scottish,<sup>19</sup> suggesting that a strong identification with national identity per se is not the explanatory factor behind the Leave vote.

It might be argued that a greater level of identification with England or Scotland rather than Britain suggests a greater level of identification with the predominant political

cultures of those countries, rather than purely a reduced interest in or sympathy with internationalism. Here, more subjective questions of national identity come into play. One could argue that Scottish political identity, for example, is currently more associated with internationalism and progressive politics, whereas English political identity is more associated with exclusive nationalist sentiment. Certainly, unpicking the question of how national and British identities and political cultures, predisposition towards internationalism and Euroscepticism interact requires further investigation – it is not simply the case that those who define their identity in geographically narrower terms are more likely to be Eurosceptic.

### **European identity**

Although the effects of national and British identifications differ, the effects of European identity are fairly straightforward. Out of the citizens of the 28 member states, Britons are the least likely to regard themselves as European in any sense, with nearly two-thirds of Britons identifying only with their nation, while less than 40 per cent of French citizens and 30 per cent of Germans feel the same way.<sup>20</sup> This lack of identification is matched by a similar lack of trust in the EU – only Greeks and Cypriots are less likely to ‘tend to trust’ in the EU than Britons, likely a reflection of the EU’s economic interventions in those countries.<sup>21</sup> According to Pew Global research conducted in spring 2016, of the ten major European countries surveyed, only respondents from Greece were more likely to favour the return of powers to national governments.<sup>22</sup> The role of trust in the EU and global governance in general will be further explored in the sections on social and political attitudes.

Of course, the relationship between the EU as an institution and Europe as a cultural entity is complex. Not all European states are part of the EU, and attitudes towards Europe are not the same as attitudes towards the institutions of the EU. Despite the UK’s unique, well-documented lack of European identity, Britons do not dislike Europeans: 84 per cent of Britons across both the Remain and Leave camps

think it is vital to let European nationals living in Britain know that they are welcome to stay.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, identification with Europe or absence thereof closely related to people's voting intention in the referendum. The British Social Attitudes Survey from before the campaigns started found that of those who describe themselves first and foremost as European rather than British (15 per cent of Britons), 92 per cent wanted to stay in the EU, whereas only 51 per cent of those who did not describe themselves as European first and foremost wanted to stay within the EU.<sup>24</sup> The demographic factors discussed earlier played a role here, too, with graduates and professionals being much more likely to identify as European in the first place.

### **The politics of place**

A second important aspect of the referendum vote, besides demographics and identity, is geographical. Although the Brexit vote cannot be condensed into a single narrative, the individual-level demographic data thus far appear to support at least in part the thesis that Leave voters were those who had been 'left behind' – by globalisation, as a result of neglect by government or politicians, or as a result of geographic inequalities in wealth and opportunity across the UK. This observation is contextualised by Eurostat research, which in mid-2015 found that regional inequality in the UK is worse than any other country in Western Europe, significantly ahead of the next most regionally unequal country, Italy.<sup>25</sup>

Overall, it appears that data on the geographical locations of Leave voters (and their own perceptions of these places) both bolster and refine the narrative of the 'left behind'. However, in drawing conclusions regarding geography and the vote share of the two referendum campaigns, it is further worth noting that in every region and nation in the UK there was variation – in 62 per cent of the UK's 395 electoral districts, the range of votes fell between 40 per cent and 60 per cent, evidence that the UK is not as wildly divided as has been suggested by some commentators.<sup>26</sup>

### Economic factors

A straightforward analysis of the referendum result and its socioeconomic context suggests that poorer areas were more likely to vote Leave, and richer areas to vote Remain. The day after the referendum, the Resolution Foundation published an analysis of the result, which suggested that while short-term regional economic changes had not had a profound impact on the vote shares of either campaign, longer-term economic inequality had. This analysis suggested that by local authority, the vote share enjoyed by the Leave vote was positively correlated with lower average hourly earnings.<sup>27</sup>

In the aftermath of the referendum result, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation conducted a poll which reinforced the idea of ‘left behind’ groups as being a core constituent of the Leave vote, and suggested that for many Leave voters perceptions of economic and political neglect were common. It found that Leave voters were twice as likely to feel that their local area did not get a fair share of Britain’s economic success (23 per cent against 11 per cent of Remain voters).<sup>28</sup> More than a quarter (27 per cent) of Leave voters felt their local areas had been neglected by politicians against 13 per cent of Remain voters, while 40 per cent of Leave voters felt that the national government did not listen to their concerns, only 23 per cent of Remain feeling the same way.<sup>29</sup>

Further analysis, however, suggests that if the Leave vote was defined or reinforced by those who were ‘left behind’, it was not simply on the basis of high unemployment. Analysis by political scientist Zsolt Darvas shows that the unemployment rate of a given area was a statistically insignificant factor.<sup>30</sup> However, ‘the estimated parameter of the Gini-coefficient of income inequality is [a] positive and statistically significant’ correlate of referendum voter choice. Darvas found that a 1 percentage point higher level of income inequality boosted the share of Leave votes in an area by around 0.9 percentage points. Poverty rate was also a robust and significant indicator of Leave vote share, with a 1 percentage point higher level of poverty boosting the share of Leave votes by 1 per cent.<sup>31</sup>

Another area-level study, by a research team at the University of Warwick, found a significant correlation

between areas hit hardest by austerity and a vote to leave the EU. They go so far as to say that the outcome of the referendum could have been swayed had the fiscal cuts been slightly less severe.<sup>32</sup> Especially where the quality of service provision of the NHS suffered, people tended to vote Leave in higher numbers. However, this is caveated by the researchers who argue it may simply reflect the fact that poorer areas were more likely to vote Leave: ‘Given the nexus between fiscal cuts and local deprivation, we think that this pattern largely reflects pre-existing deprivation.’<sup>33</sup>

There is some evidence that struggling cities in the UK were more likely to vote Leave, and thriving cities were more likely to vote Remain. Of the 20 cities that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has listed as the most struggling in the UK, and within that of the 16 for which data are available, only 3 voted to Remain – Dundee, Glasgow and Liverpool.<sup>34</sup> While these are notable exceptions to the observation that struggling cities incline towards a Leave majority – and it is further notable that two of the three are situated in Scotland – they are nevertheless exceptions. While there is clearly some correlation between a city performing poorly economically and a majority Leave vote within, the correlation between the best-faring cities and majority Remain votes is weaker – of the 20 cities listed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as best-faring, 7 voted in the majority to leave, and 13 to remain.<sup>35</sup>

### **Immigration**

Another important local factor is experience of migration, given the significance of it in the Leave campaign. Numbers of foreign-born people were in themselves correlated (in aggregate) with a Remain, rather than a Leave vote.<sup>36</sup> Rapid rates of change were, however, significant: while areas with high numbers of immigrants were more likely to vote Remain, in 94 per cent of cases where the foreign-born population of a local authority area grew by more than 200 per cent between 2001 and 2014, the majority in that local authority voted Leave.<sup>37</sup> This suggests that the pace of migration in recent years was a significant determinant

of Leave vote at certain (high) levels. This analysis is supported by analysis presented by Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath, which found that while places with many EU migrants were less likely to vote Leave, places where in the last ten years there had been a sudden influx of EU migrants tended to be more pro-Leave.<sup>38</sup> Academics at the University of Warwick found that an influx of Eastern European migrants, too, was statistically significant at the aggregate level.<sup>39</sup> A case in point is Boston, the constituency with the highest Brexit vote recorded. In a decade, the town went from having virtually no Eastern European immigrants to having more than any other place in Britain. It seems highly likely that this was a factor in its 75 per cent Leave majority.<sup>40</sup>

Further analysis by British Future suggests that the ability of a local area to absorb migrants successfully has a potentially significant impact on their attitudes towards migrants and therefore their predisposition towards a Leave vote. They found that areas that are broadly similar demographically and socioeconomically could often have significantly different numbers of Leave voters. Sandra Wallman's concept of place-based capability suggests that 'open' or resilient communities, characterised by good transport links, mixed economy and housing types, social networks that span dissimilar groups and powerful, inclusive local narratives about group identity, are more capable of absorbing migrants successfully.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, 'closed' areas, which do not have these characteristics, are less able to do so. Applying this theory to a typology of local areas, British Future found evidence that place-based resilience might have influenced the extent to which a local area voted Leave.<sup>42</sup>

### **Review: changing places**

These socioeconomically focused analyses present a complex picture. While older, less wealthy areas containing citizens with a lower average level of education were more likely to vote Leave, these alone are not satisfactory explanatory factors. Regional poverty rates and wealth inequality played a stronger and more consistent role in predicting Leave vote, but wealthier areas also frequently voted Leave – plenty of

wealthy towns in the south of England (outside London and the university towns) had sound Leave majorities. Moreover, the extant analysis suggests that migration matters, but not straightforwardly so. As Oxford professor Sarah Harper put it: ‘The UK did not vote leave on anti-immigrant grounds per se – many voted because they believe in the local over the global, because they see their future grounded in local economic and social concerns.’<sup>43</sup>

The lesson from these data is not that the referendum vote was a simple economic calculation on the part of citizens, but rather that there is a significant group in Britain who feel they have seen their local areas change culturally and stagnate economically. Observations of socioeconomic inequality, poverty and marginalisation should not be analysed in isolation from the values of ‘left behind’ groups, as if Leave voters were solely economic actors. As Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath put it, the Brexit vote was ‘anchored predominantly, albeit not exclusively, in areas of the country that are filled with pensioners, low-skilled and less well-educated blue-collar workers and citizens who have been pushed to the margins not only by the economic transformation of the country, but by the values that have come to dominate a more socially liberal media and political class’.<sup>44</sup> The strength of the correlation between levels of regional poverty, inequality and referendum vote choice should be considered in the light of the strength of the correlation between social values and referendum vote choice.

### **Social attitudes and political predispositions**

Although the EU referendum and its results were in many ways unprecedented, there is a field of academic literature devoted to explaining the values underlying different types of politics. In an academic article titled ‘Trump, Brexit and populism’, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris use the World Values Survey dataset to analyse the worldviews that motivate various types of anti-establishment politics across time and place. They hypothesise that Brexit might be motivated by the same four value orientations that predict votes for populist

parties in Europe: identifying as right of centre, espousing authoritarian values, having little trust in national and global governance, and being anti-immigration.<sup>45</sup>

### **Self-placement on the left–right spectrum**

While, in the UK, attitudes towards the EU are significantly correlated with self-placement on a left–right spectrum, the decision to vote either Leave or Remain in the referendum was far less party political than might be assumed. Officially, both the Conservative party and the Labour party campaigned for a Remain vote, though the Conservative party leadership was more divided than the Labour party on the issue of whether to stay in or leave the EU. Individual Labour supporters were more likely than individual Conservatives to be Remainers, as per Inglehart and Norris's suggestion that the majority of Leavers would identify as right of centre rather than left of centre.<sup>46</sup>

On the level of constituencies, however, these patterns disappear almost entirely. Analysis by Chris Hanretty of the University of East Anglia found that 77 per cent of Conservative-held constituencies voted to Leave, while 70 per cent of Labour-held constituencies voted to Leave.<sup>47</sup> Many areas considered Labour heartlands, such as Stoke-on-Trent, voted decisively for Brexit. The referendum divide, while associated with positioning on the political spectrum, was not strongly associated by areas of party political influence.

### **Authoritarianism**

As the left–right spectrum loses (some of) its dominance as the organising principle of politics, other value orientations become more noticeable. Prime among these is the libertarian–authoritarian divide. Based on his analysis of the 2015 British Election Study, Birkbeck politics professor Eric Kaufmann has argued that social grade only accounts for 1–2 per cent of the variation in voting intention among individuals, while factors like region, age and education level were slightly more effective predictors.

A more valuable predictive factor than these factors was the level of support an individual had for the death penalty.



Similarly strong predictive power is associated with the extent to which people think it is important to discipline children.<sup>48</sup> Kaufmann has suggested that this highlights an important attitudinal divide, between those who prioritise ‘order’, and those who prioritise ‘openness’ or novelty, defined partially by a like or a dislike of difference.<sup>49</sup> Further analysis by Pat Dade of Cultural Dynamics suggested that Euroscepticism correlates with things like general scepticism, a prioritisation of national security and social order, and positive attitudes towards the idea of whipping sex criminals.<sup>50</sup>

This divide is reinforced by more traditional differences between social progressives and social conservatives. Analysis of a survey of 12,369 people on the day of the referendum itself, conducted by Lord Ashcroft Polls, for example found that 81 per cent of those who think that multiculturalism is a force for ill rather than a force for good voted Leave. Similarly, 80 per cent of those who thought social liberalism was a predominantly bad thing, 74 per cent of those who thought feminism was a bad thing and 78 per cent of those who thought the green movement was a bad thing voted Leave.<sup>51</sup>

Authoritarian value orientations are not entirely distinct from other political cleavages; they are known to be strongly related to a set of demographic, psychological and social factors. Inglehart and Norris demonstrate that there are significant interaction effects between self-professed economic insecurity and authoritarian values.<sup>52</sup> And though Kaufmann shows authoritarian values to be only weakly related to income per se, they are known to be strongly related to education.<sup>53</sup> In fact, it is possible that the predictive strength of education on the Remain vote is high precisely because higher education tends to socialise students to adopt a liberal, anti-authoritarian and open worldview, as we will investigate. This also expresses itself as a comfort with global forces and global changes: those who have enjoyed a university education are vastly more likely to see economic globalisation as a force for good, a Harvard study found, even if they have observably not benefited from it.<sup>54</sup> As David Runciman has suggested: ‘Education does not simply divide us on the grounds of what is in our interests. It sorts us according to where we feel we belong.’<sup>55</sup>

### Trust in national and global governance

Political trust also appears to have a significant influence. Representative polling of 5,000 British citizens by YouGov found that lack of trust in government (and David Cameron in particular) was one of the most prominent arguments mentioned by Leave voters.<sup>56</sup> In general, Remain voters were almost three times more likely to trust UK politicians' judgment about the referendum 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' (at 22 per cent versus 8 per cent), while Leave voters were twice as likely to indicate they did not trust UK politicians at all.<sup>57</sup> Another way this scepticism is demonstrated is through conspiracy theories: 28 per cent of Leave supporters, compared with 16 per cent of Remain voters, believed that MI5 was conspiring with the government to prevent a Brexit vote. Moreover, three-quarters of Leave voters suspected that 'there are plans for further EU integration and enlargement that the EU are deliberately not announcing till after the referendum', with only a quarter of Remain voters believing the same. Most shocking of all, approximately half of Leave voters agreed with the statement that the referendum might be rigged, compared with only 11 per cent of Remainers.<sup>58</sup>

This distrust impacted on consumption of news and information in the lead up to the vote: trust in and approval of the EU influenced citizens' readiness to believe positive or negative news stories about the EU. A 2016 YouGov study conducted before the referendum asked supporters of the Remain and the Leave campaign whether they believed a series of statements about how the EU had changed UK law, some of which were true (such as 'banning vacuum cleaners of a certain wattage') and some of which were false (such as 'introducing a maximum size for coffins'). The study found that most frequently, Leave voters were more likely to believe either true or false statements about the influence of the EU on UK laws as long as they were unpopular changes, and less likely to believe true or false claims concerning popular changes. Similarly, Remain voters were more likely to believe either true or false statements about the influence of the EU on UK laws as long as they were popular changes, and less likely to believe true or false claims concerning unpopular changes.<sup>59</sup>

### Anti-immigrant sentiment

In addition to the relation between experience of immigration in one's local area and propensity to vote Leave, there is also the influence of individual attitudes to immigration. Immigration and controls on UK borders featured strongly in the campaign.<sup>60</sup> A British Election Study survey conducted in the run-up to the referendum found that in an open-response question, the most significant factor determining how Leave voters would choose to vote was 'sovereignty', closely followed by 'immigration'.<sup>61</sup> However, these two factors were frequently connected in what voters had to say, as described by the British Election Study researchers: 'In fact reading responses shows that many respondents mention both sovereignty and immigration together, showing that these two issues were closely linked in the minds of British voters.'<sup>62</sup>

As discussed earlier, the salience of immigration as a political issue has a complex relationship with experience of immigrants in one's local area – with the pace of migration in recent years appearing to be the significant factor in influencing a vote to leave, rather than overall proportion of non-UK-born in the population.<sup>63</sup> However, in turn there is not a clear relationship between concern about migration and local experience of it: concern about national levels of immigration is consistently 50 per cent higher than concern about local levels of immigration.<sup>64</sup>

Since anti-immigrant sentiment is not necessarily explained by these factors, some have looked to personality as an explanatory factor. Particularly interesting in this regard is locus of control, which is the extent to which a person feels in control over their life. Previous research has found that people who score low on locus of control scales tend to score high on indicators of authoritarianism<sup>65</sup> and anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>66</sup> The British Election Study asked participants to respond to statements such as 'Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me', or its inverse, 'When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work'. The British Election Study found that those with an external locus of control also were much more likely

to vote Leave.<sup>67</sup> In this light, the ‘take back control’ slogan of the Leave campaign takes on a whole new significance.

### Optimism

To the vast polling data to come out of the referendum, we might add one more predictive factor to Inglehart and Norris’s list of value orientations predicting a vote for populist parties in Europe (identifying as right of centre, espousing authoritarian values, having little trust in national and global governance, and being anti-immigration). Ashcroft polling and British Election Study data suggest that in addition to social attitudes being a strong determinant of referendum voter choice, there is some evidence that a voter’s level of optimism and pessimism regarding the past and the future of the UK is strongly correlated with their referendum vote choice. Leave and Remain voters were presented with pairs of opposing statements indicating pessimism or optimism in a variety of circumstances, and asked which statement they most strongly agreed with. Among Leave voters, there was a 22 per cent net agreement that ‘for most children growing up in Britain today, life will be worse than it was for their parents’, while among Remain voters there was a 4 per cent net agreement with the opposing statement, ‘for most children growing up today, life will be better than it was for their parents’.<sup>68</sup>

As well as being less optimistic about the future, Leave voters were more positive about the past than Remain voters. In Ashcroft’s polling, 73 per cent of Remain voters felt that ‘overall, life in Britain today is better than it was 30 years ago’; 58 per cent of Leave voters, by contrast, felt that ‘overall, life in Britain today is worse than it was 30 years ago’. Both sides thought that economic and social changes would bring more threats than opportunities, but to differing degrees: 42 per cent of Leave voters but only 20 per cent of Remain voters agreed.<sup>69</sup> The British Election Study asked similar questions, with similar results. They found, for instance, that among those who strongly disagreed with the statement that things used to be better in Britain in the past, only 15 per cent voted Leave.<sup>70</sup>

## External and campaign factors

The predictive value of the demographic, geographic and attitudinal variables discussed thus far suggests that some were always more likely to vote Leave, and some always more likely to vote Remain. Still, like all human behaviour, voting behaviour is complex and changeable: our decisions in the voting booth are not predetermined by structural factors, nor do values and attitudes automatically yield a political preference. To fully capture how people voted on 23 June, any analysis must also consider the influences on people in the run-up to the referendum: the media representations, the campaign leaders and the friends and family they spoke to.

### Media representations

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the media influenced voters in the referendum for the same reason that it is difficult to ascertain how the media affect voters in any election or popular vote; media representations are just one of many factors that contribute to a voter's eventual choice and many claimed to have always known how they were going to vote.<sup>71</sup> This being said, some studies have provided evidence that media framing of public discourse around specific EU policies can affect the extent to which those policies are seen positively or negatively.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that among national newspapers in the UK, the Leave campaign enjoyed a number of advantages. A study by Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Communication and Culture released two weeks before the vote found that, based on analysis of media articles from the ten largest newspapers in the UK, favourability of reporting towards either the Leave or the Remain camps was largely balanced within the sample of 1,127. However, when circulation and thus number of probable article 'views' was taken into account, only 18 per cent of the sample were pro-Remain, while 82 per cent were pro-Leave (discounting neutral articles).<sup>73</sup> Similar research undertaken by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, published one month before the referendum vote, which covered two sample days of coverage a week for the first

two months of the official referendum campaign, found that of the 928 articles examined from the nine largest newspapers, 45 per cent were in favour of leaving, 27 per cent in favour of remaining in the EU, and the rest were neutral. Additionally, of spokespeople quoted in these articles, 36 per cent were UK politicians, of whom 69 per cent were Conservatives and only 14 per cent were Labour.<sup>74</sup>

The media advantage enjoyed by the Leave campaign should be further understood within the context of a longer-term, predominant Euroscepticism in reporting and comment related to the EU. The general Euroscepticism of the British mainstream press has been observed in numerous studies, and while the effect of predominantly negative reporting on the EU over a number of years on the eventual outcome of the referendum is impossible to quantify, this longer-term negativity within the British media is likely to have had an effect.<sup>75</sup>

### **Campaign leaders**

During the campaign, prominent politicians on both sides travelled around the country (and its television studios) to make their case. Several studies have attempted to measure the effects of these key figures on the eventual outcome, especially the effect of Boris Johnson, the unofficial leader of the Leave campaign. When he announced his support for the Leave campaign, just four months before polling day, he was relatively popular, scoring 4.5 on a 0–10 likability scale. Though this may not seem like an enthusiastic endorsement from the public, it is high compared to Jeremy Corbyn's 4.2, David Cameron's 3.5 and Nigel Farage's 3.2 ratings.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, a study by the Electoral Reform Society found that most campaign figureheads were so disliked that their effects may have been the opposite of what they intended, with more than half of Leave supporters suggesting that David Cameron, who campaigned to Remain, had made them more likely to vote Leave. The only personalities to influence voters in the intended direction on aggregate, it appears, were Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage and, indeed, Donald Trump.<sup>77</sup> It is worth noting that all of these advocated Brexit.

One caveat of this research is that voters might not be able to gauge accurately who influenced them in their vote. Perhaps a more reliable measure of the effect of various politicians' involvement on the outcome of the referendum is the correlation between support for certain politicians and likelihood to vote as they advised – as investigated by Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley, who also model the effect various politicians may have had on voters' assessment of the risks associated with a decision to leave the EU.<sup>78</sup> Of those who gave Boris Johnson a full 10 out of 10 for likability, 93 per cent voted to leave, while those who were at least lukewarm (scoring Boris at 5 out of 10 or more) were also disproportionately likely to vote Leave.<sup>79</sup>

#### **Network and neighbourhood effects**

Perhaps still more important than politicians were people's neighbours, friends, families and colleagues. When Remain campaigners were approaching voters in the weeks leading up to the vote, they reported that voters' response was often the same: 'I don't know anyone who is voting in.'<sup>80</sup> This is likely to be an important factor in people's voting decision, according to political scientists. Earlier British Election Study research found that friends and family were crucial in sustaining or changing party preferences.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, some of the effects of geography discussed earlier may be mediated by social networks. As Ron Johnston and Charles Pattie wrote in 'Social networks, geography and neighbourhood effects',

*People talk to their neighbours and the outcome of their conversations may be changes in what they know and think about a subject – such as the candidates standing at a forthcoming election... [The result is] a spatial polarisation of opinions as more people respond to the information reaching them through their neighbours and thus, in this case, a polarisation of voting patterns.*<sup>82</sup>

Since casual discussions about politics have the potential to change or fortify views, the size, spread and heterogeneity

of networks matters. These effects were visible to some extent in the support for Donald Trump in the USA: people who had never moved away from their home town were among the strongest Trump supporters.<sup>83</sup>

One indicator that networks mattered in the referendum is the fact that graduates in low-skilled areas were much more likely to vote Leave than their peers in high-skilled areas. People who had A-level qualifications, too, were very sensitive to the area they were in: in high-skilled areas, they often voted Remain, while in low-skilled areas they were more frequently Leavers. Some of these effects can of course be explained by structural differences in economic opportunity and quality of life in various areas of the country, which predispose people towards an anti-establishment vote. But social networks, too, are spatially organised, making the effects of the two difficult to disentangle.<sup>84</sup> It is not just who you know: how many people you know also matters. Remain supporters generally had larger and more varied social circles. This may have made them more resilient to changes in their communities, the British Election Study suggests, since they could draw on a larger group of people for support. Their levels of social trust were also much higher; for example, they tended to respond positively to statements such as ‘people are generally trustworthy’.<sup>85</sup>

But if Remainers knew more people, Leavers were more vocal about their preference, at least online. A comprehensive Twitter analysis found that the volume of tweets with the hashtag #voteleave was a full seven times larger than the volume of tweets arguing Britain was #strongerin.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the top three referendum-related hashtags, #Brexit, #Beleave and #VoteLeave, were all Leave hashtags. Vyacheslav Polonski, a network scientist at the University of Oxford, writes: ‘Using the Internet, the Leave camp was able to create the perception of wide-ranging public support for their cause that acted like a self-fulfilling prophecy, attracting many more voters to back Brexit.’<sup>87</sup>

These findings suggest that local and digital social networks may have been important drivers of the Brexit vote. Nonetheless, the effect of networks and mobility on the Brexit



vote (and indeed on populism in general) remains underexplored – which is something we seek to address in part 2 of this study.

**Conclusion**

The next chapter will analyse original polling of the British public to further explore the relation between various political variables on the one hand (including the referendum vote, attitudes to globalisation and social and political trust) and various demographic and geographic factors on the other (including mobility, social networks and deprivation).

## 2 Original analysis on the drivers of Brexit

### Introduction

As part 1 demonstrates, there is already a significant amount of evidence available on the demographic, economic, geographical and attitudinal breakdown of the Brexit vote. Our original analysis has two aims. First, we wanted to refine the existing evidence by combining individual demographic information with a place-based analysis. Existing analysis shows the kinds of areas more likely to vote to leave the EU: rural areas and smaller towns, more deprived areas, and areas that have experienced a rapid increase in immigration. We wanted to see whether there is an environmental effect of living in these areas separate to individual demographic trends.

Second, we wanted to explore key social and political attitudes through the lens of a new political divide that has been termed ‘open versus closed’ outlooks. There is much evidence to suggest the Brexit vote and other recent international political events have in part been driven by a reaction to globalisation, trade, immigration and a perceived lack of ‘control’ over voters’ lives and communities.

If this is the case, we hypothesise that demographic and place-based factors are an important predictor of voters’ attitudes and political behaviour, and their everyday experiences and interactions with the wider world outside their immediate geographic community inform their views, and ultimately their political preferences. This is tangentially related to the ‘contact hypothesis’, which states that – under certain conditions – contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and inter-group conflict.<sup>88</sup> However, we wanted to test whether broader social circles in a geographic sense alone were sufficient to change social and political attitudes.

As part of this project, we commissioned YouGov to conduct surveys of voters in six European countries, and analysis presented in this chapter uses the results of the British survey.<sup>89</sup> These included questions about attitudes to the EU, ethnic and religious diversity, globalisation, international cooperation, and political and social trust. With the aim of testing the above hypothesis, we asked an additional set of survey questions, to measure:

- the geographical extent of respondents' social networks – whether they regularly socialise with people who live outside their local area, in different parts of Britain, or in other countries
- respondents' long-term geographic mobility – whether they have they lived in the same town their whole life, in different parts of Britain or even different countries
- respondents' short-term geographic mobility – whether they have they travelled abroad in the last 12 months

## Method

Geographic mobility and social networks are likely to be partially correlated with socioeconomic factors. Similarly, we wanted to be able to disentangle individual demographics and place-based factors: residents in more deprived areas or those who have experienced more immigration might be more or less likely to support globalisation or the EU, but is this because of where they live, or simply because these places are inhabited by a higher proportion of people with individual traits (eg education or income) that are associated with certain attitudes or behaviours?

To disentangle these overlapping factors, we employ logistic regression analysis. This involves building a model of all the factors we reasonably believe to affect a given outcome such as an individual voting to leave in the EU referendum, or saying they think globalisation has had a negative effect on their life. We are then able to pick out a single factor, or explanatory variable, and measure its 'average marginal effect' on the outcome of interest.

Regression models were built in steps, with demographic factors added in first, followed by place-based statistics, and finally measures of social networks and geographic mobility. Results are reported as significant if they pass the 95 per cent confidence threshold. A full description of the model-building method, calculation of average marginal effects and data tables are available in the technical appendix.

## Results

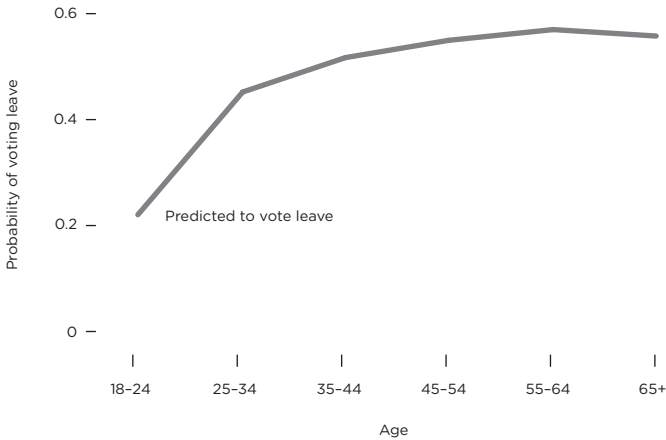
Table 1 presents the predicted probabilities of the demographic and local area variables found to be significant within the model.

The figures in table 1 reinforce much of the previous analysis described in part 1 – for example finding a strong effect by both age and education. Figure 1 illustrates the strong trend by age – the older the respondent, the more likely they were to have voted to leave the EU, even controlling for other factors.

Table 1 **Predicted probability of respondents voting Leave, by demographic and local area variables**

Variable		Predicted probability of voting Leave	Standard error	z	P>z	95% confidence interval	
Age	18-24	22%	0.071	3.12	0.002	0.081	0.358
	25-34	45%	0.046	9.7	0	0.36	0.541
	35-44	52%	0.047	10.87	0	0.423	0.609
	45-54	55%	0.045	12.18	0	0.461	0.638
	55-64	57%	0.036	15.74	0	0.5	0.643
	65+	56%	0.04	13.74	0	0.478	0.637
Education	No qualifications	82%	0.05	16.49	0	0.724	0.92
	GCSEs	64%	0.04	16.05	0	0.563	0.719
	A levels	56%	0.037	14.93	0	0.482	0.628
	degree	38%	0.029	13.14	0	0.32	0.432
Ethnicity	Non-white	30%	0.094	3.2	0.001	0.116	0.484
	White	52%	0.018	28.33	0	0.484	0.556
	No religion	47%	0.024	20.14	0	0.427	0.519
Religion	Christian	56%	0.030	18.62	0	0.501	0.619
	Other religion	56%	0.090	6.16	0	0.381	0.737
Urban-rural (local authority)	Urban	48%	0.020	23.46	0	0.440	0.520
	Rural	61%	0.032	18.52	0	0.544	0.672

Figure 1 **The relationship between respondents' age and predicted probability of voting Leave in EU referendum**



The analysis also finds significant effects for ethnicity, religiosity and the type of area one lives in, with white people, the religious and those in rural areas being more likely to have voted to leave the EU. Holding other variables constant, the predicted probability of an individual voting to leave the EU is 22 percentage points lower among non-white respondents than white respondents. Similarly, identifying with a religion is associated with a 9 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting to leave.

We also tested the impact of various place-based statistics on the likelihood of an individual voting Leave. Previous geographical analyses of the referendum results showed that areas with higher percentages of foreign-born residents were more likely to vote to remain, but areas where the number of foreign-born residents has risen sharply in recent years were more likely to vote to leave.<sup>89</sup> However, when controlling for individual factors, we do not find any significant effect of the speed or scale of immigration at either a local authority or neighbourhood level. Similarly,

neighbourhood levels of deprivation were not found to be a significant factor, once controlling for individual circumstances. It is important to note with this analysis that we cannot be sure that there is no effect, merely that we cannot say with 95 per cent confidence that these place-based factors do have an impact when controlling for other factors. On the other hand, we do see a divide among urban and rural respondents: those living in local authorities classed as urban were 13 percentage points more likely to vote to remain in the EU than those in local authorities classed as rural, holding other factors constant.

Our analysis goes further to show that the education effect is not confounded by other correlates of a good education, such as income or age (as a higher proportion of Generations X and Y have a degree than the pre-war or baby boomer cohorts). On the other hand, although overall higher earners were more likely to vote to remain than those at the bottom of the income spectrum, income is not a significant predictor of an individual's referendum vote once we control for other factors.<sup>90</sup>

Figure 2 **The relationship between respondents' level of income and level of education and predicted probability of voting Leave in EU referendum**

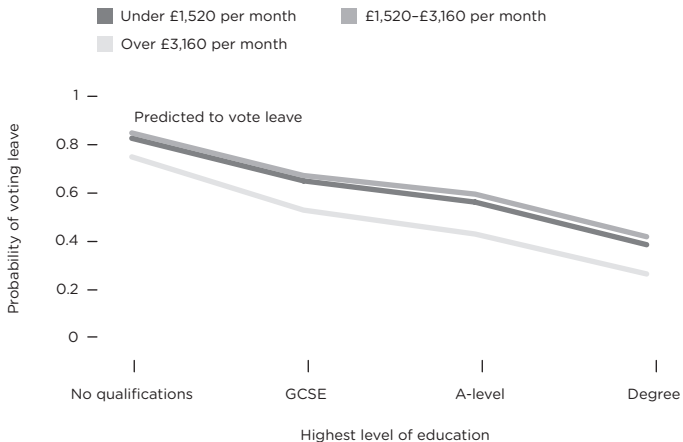
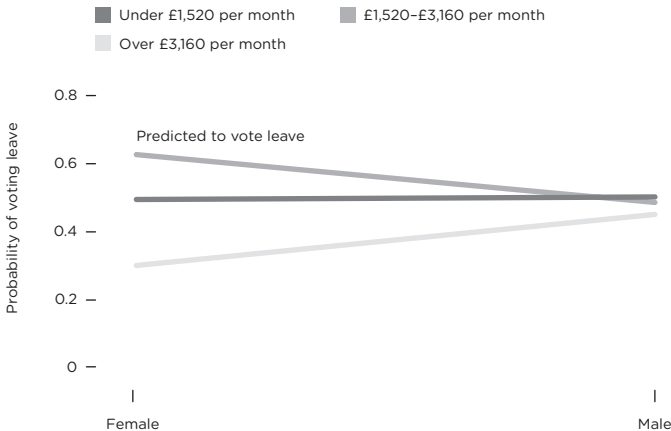


Figure 2 shows the impact of various levels of education on the probability that an individual respondent voted to leave the EU. We also show this trend at different levels of income to show how education is a much stronger predictor. A full list of all the variables included in each model can be found in the technical appendix.

On the other hand, there was a significant ‘interaction effect’ between gender and income. Holding other factors constant, women with a household income of between £1,520 and £3,160 per month are more likely to have voted Leave than those on lower incomes, with those on higher incomes the least likely (figure 3).

Figure 3 **The relationship between respondents’ income and gender and predicted probability of voting Leave in EU referendum**





## Social networks

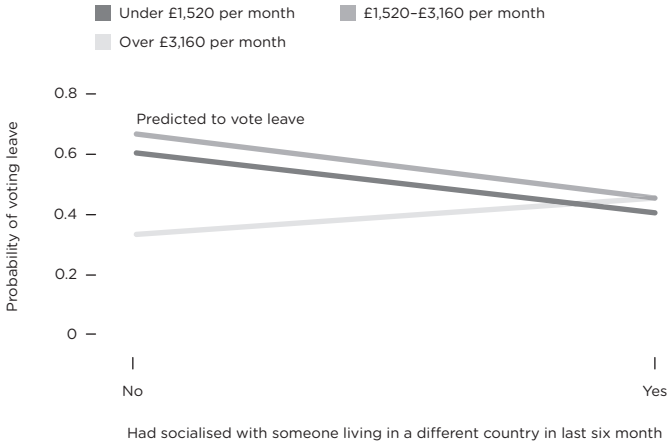
Most important for our analysis is the strong effect of measures of social networks. Table 2 lays out the predicted probabilities for each of our social network variables.

Table 2 **Predicted probability of respondents voting Leave, by social network variables**

Variable		Predicted probability of voting Leave	Standard error	z	P>z	95% confidence interval	
Socialised with someone from another country	No	57%	0.025	23.04	0	0.524	0.622
	Yes	43%	0.025	16.84	0	0.378	0.478
Socialised with someone from another part of Britain	No	58%	0.033	17.47	0	0.511	0.641
	Yes	48%	0.021	22.98	0	0.436	0.517
Socialised with someone from another town or city	No	57%	0.04	14.44	0	0.496	0.652
	Yes	48%	0.019	24.71	0	0.441	0.518

Our analysis finds that those who had socialised with someone who lives in a different town or city in the last six months were 9 percentage points less likely to vote Leave than those who had not. Similarly, those who had socialised with someone from a different part of Britain in the last six months were 10 percentage points less likely to vote to leave than those who had not. Those who had socialised with someone who lives in a different country in the last six months were 15 percentage points less likely to vote to leave than those who had not. Crucially, this is the case controlling for all of our demographic and local area variables – including income, age, whether rural or urban, and local deprivation.

Figure 4 **The relationship between whether respondents had socialised with someone living in a different country in the last six months and predicted probability of voting Leave in EU referendum**



Interestingly, there is an interaction effect here between social networks and income: while those on lower or middle incomes are less likely to have voted Leave if they have wider social networks, the opposite is true for those on higher incomes (figure 4).

### Attitudinal predictors of Brexit

We also explored the link between our attitudinal variables of interest and a vote to leave the EU (table 3).

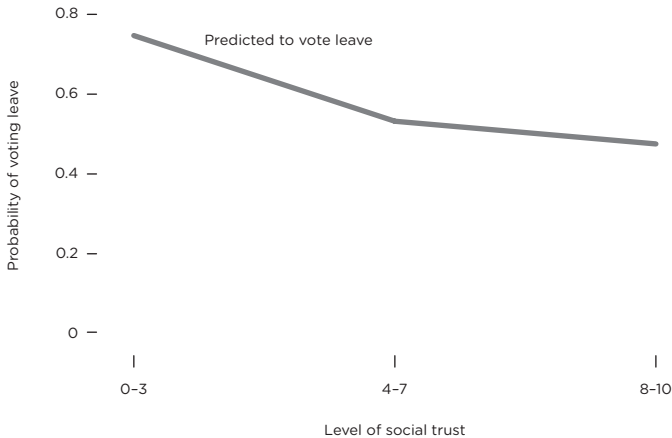
Attitudes towards various recent societal trends are a particularly important predictor. Controlling for other factors, those who believe that increased acceptance of same-sex relationships has had a positive impact on society are 15 percentage points less likely to have voted to leave the EU than those who felt it had a negative impact or neither a negative nor positive impact.

Table 3 **Predicted probability of respondents voting Leave, by their attitude towards various societal trends**

Societal trends		Predicted probability of voting Leave	Standard error	z	P>z	95% confidence interval
View on same-sex relationships	Worse or neither	61%	0.033	18.760	0	0.551
	Better	46%	0.023	20.090	0	0.416
View on women in work	Worse or neither	65%	0.034	18.830	0	0.580
	Better	46%	0.021	22.180	0	0.423
View on ethnic and religious diversity	Worse or neither	65%	0.027	23.960	0	0.598
	Better	36%	0.029	12.500	0	0.303
Level of social trust	0-3	75%	0.084	8.880	0	0.581
	4-7	53%	0.027	19.940	0	0.479
	8-10	47%	0.025	19.110	0	0.425
View of globalisation (Europe)	Positive	40%	0.021	18.900	0	0.358
	Negative	83%	0.032	25.860	0	0.769
View of globalisation (Britain)	Positive	44%	0.021	21.160	0	0.395
	Negative	74%	0.035	21.220	0	0.673
View of globalisation (local area)	Positive	42%	0.022	19.210	0	0.379
	Negative	70%	0.036	19.320	0	0.630
View of globalisation (own life)	Positive	42%	0.022	19.150	0	0.380
	Negative	69%	0.042	16.690	0	0.612
Preferred leadership style	Strong or neither	57%	0.030	19.310	0	0.514
	Consensual	47%	0.023	20.850	0	0.427
View on international cooperation	Put Britain first or neither	78%	0.024	32.380	0	0.730
	Cooperate	26%	0.027	9.710	0	0.206

Those who think that more women entering the workplace has been positive for society are 18 percentage points less likely to have voted to leave the EU. Most strikingly, those who believe that increased ethnic and religious diversity has been good for society are 29 percentage points less likely to have voted Leave. Similarly, those with high levels of social trust were 27 percentage points less likely to have voted to leave than those with low levels of social trust.

Figure 5 **The relationship between respondents' levels of social trust (0-10 scale) and predicted probability of voting Leave in EU referendum**



Attitudes towards globalisation were also found to be particularly important predictors of a vote to leave. Given that 'globalisation' is a contested term and there is no consensus about its meaning among members of the public or in academic circles, we chose not to use the term explicitly in our survey question, instead asking:

*Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected. There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries.*

*Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect?*

We asked whether the effect had been positive or negative at four levels: for Europe as a whole, for Britain as a whole, in the respondent's local area, and in their own life.

Those who felt globalisation had been bad for Europe were 43 percentage points more likely to have voted to leave in the referendum. Those who felt it had been bad for Britain were 31 percentage points more likely, those who felt it had been bad for their local area were 28 percentage points more likely, and those who felt it had been bad for their own lives were 27 percentage points more likely to have voted Leave.

We also found that respondents who expressed a preference for 'strong', principled political leaders compared with more consensual, conciliatory leaders were 10 percentage points more likely to have voted to leave. The single biggest indicator was responses to the question about international cooperation – whether respondents felt that Britain did best when it compromised and worked in partnership with other countries, or when it put Britain's interests first without worrying what other countries think. Those in favour of compromise and cooperation were a full 52 percentage points more likely to have voted Remain than those in favour of putting Britain's interests first (or in favour of neither).

## **Conclusion**

Since the conclusion of the referendum campaign, numerous commentators, civil society organisations and think tanks have sought to explain the result. Much of this analysis has focused on a single trend or theme, if not a single cause. This chapter has highlighted just some of the most prominent interrelated and complex factors that contributed towards

the eventual outcome. Some have argued that structural economic factors are the most important, with next to no role for campaigning and other such factors,<sup>91</sup> while others dismiss the relevance of economic concerns altogether in favour of a more value-focused approach.<sup>92</sup> The evidence presented here suggests instead that the motivation behind the referendum vote is complex – and interrelated demographic, geographic, economic and attitudinal aspects worked together. Insofar as it is useful to speak of the ‘left behind’ or the ‘losers of globalisation’, these terms must be interpreted as a response not just to an economic reality, but also to a perceived cultural consensus.

While there was significant demographic variety on both sides of the referendum debate, Leave voters tended to be older, had fewer educational qualifications, and were less well off. They were more likely to be English or Welsh, and less likely to be Scottish or Northern Irish than their compatriots in the Remain camp. While a number of more well-off cities voted for Leave and a number of less well-off cities voted for Remain, those from more deprived urban areas were more likely to vote Leave than those from more prosperous cities. Those involved in manual labour and those most at risk of poverty were among the most reliable Leave supporters.

Brexit supporters also tended to score high on five value orientations that have previously been identified as important in populist voting: being right of centre, suspicious about national and global governance, interested in order over openness, and worried about immigration. There is strong evidence to suggest that those with a greater disposition towards social order, and pessimism regarding the future of the UK, commonly voted to leave, while those with a disposition towards diversity and optimism regarding the future of the UK voted to stay. While caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from this division between the optimistic and pessimistic – those voting for change are clearly less inclined towards the status quo in any situation – the wider division by social values is significant.

Our original analysis reinforced a number of these findings at the level of the individual voter, particularly the

significance of demographic variables such as age, ethnicity and levels of education. Interestingly, when accounting for individual characteristics, local immigration (whether speed or overall scale) did not appear to matter for a voter's propensity to support Leave – although rural areas were overall more likely to support Brexit. Our analysis also revealed that those who were less positive about globalisation, considered international cooperation to be a zero-sum game, and held socially conservative attitudes on ethnic and religious diversity were more likely to vote Leave. But even controlling for demographic and place-based factors, we found a significant role for social capital in referendum voting: both the geographical spread of social networks and the degree of social trust were significant factors in explaining a vote to leave.

After the referendum, numerous commentators argued that it was time to listen to the people and to take their concerns seriously. Few would disagree. Yet Leave supporters were a diverse coalition with diverse concerns, and did not speak with a single voice. Moreover, leaving the EU will not bridge the deep divides that found their expression in the referendum – the divides between those who prioritise openness and those who prioritise order, between those who feel they have benefited from globalisation and those who feel threatened by it.

# Technical appendix

## Survey details

We commissioned YouGov to survey members of the British public on attitudes towards the EU, globalisation, political and social trust, and a number of other social and political indicators. The survey was conducted online from YouGov's panel of 185,000 people who had agreed to take part in surveys. Response rates to YouGov's surveys are typically 35–50 per cent.

The total sample size for this survey was 1,661 adults, with fieldwork taking place between 23 and 24 August 2016. YouGov provided weights to the dataset to provide a sample representative of the British public according to key demographic indicators. Alongside our survey questions, the dataset includes respondent demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, education qualifications and income. To this, nine new variables were added using respondent location data provided by YouGov:

- percentage of the population in the respondent's neighbourhood (lower super output area; LSOA) who were born outside the UK (2011 census data)
- percentage change in the foreign-born population in the respondent's neighbourhood (LSOA) between 2001 and 2011 (census data)
- percentage of the population in the respondent's local authority area who were born outside the UK (ONS 2015 mid-year estimate)
- percentage change in the foreign-born population in the respondent's local authority area between 2001 and 2015 (Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates)
- relative overall deprivation in respondent's neighbourhood (LSOA), measured in deciles using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)



- relative employment deprivation in respondent's neighbourhood (LSOA), measured in deciles using the IMD
- relative income deprivation in respondent's neighbourhood (LSOA), measured in deciles using the IMD
- rural–urban classification of the respondent's neighbourhood (LSOA), provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- rural–urban classification of the respondent's local authority area, provided by DEFRA

### Model building

Our analysis uses logistic regression analysis to measure the effect of discrete changes in explanatory variables of interest in a total of nine response variables. Logistic regression is used where the response variable is dichotomous. In all models, the weights provided by YouGov were applied.

The full list of variables included in our analysis is set out in table 4. Two additional points should be made here. In some models:

- continuous or ordinal variables are included as a series of dummy variables in order to account for non-linear effects
- certain attitudinal variables coded as dichotomous are changed to include 'neither' responses on one side of the divide; these changes are clearly indicated in the results tables

Table 4 Variables used in logistic regression analysis

Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response	Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response
Age	Continuous	E	Domestic political trust	Continuous (0–10 scale)	E+R
Gender	Dichotomous	E	EU referendum vote	Dichotomous (Leave–Remain)	R
Ethnicity	Dichotomous (non-white–white)	E	Highest educational qualification	Ordinal	E

## 1 Great Britain

Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response	Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response
Religion	Categorical (no religion, Christian, other)	E	Geographic mobility: lives in same part of Britain as when a small child	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Income	Ordinal (income brackets)	E	Geographic mobility: lives in same part of Britain as at age of 10	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Overall deprivation decile	Ordinal	E	Geographic mobility: lives in same part of Britain as 5 years ago	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Employment deprivation decile	Ordinal	E	Geographic mobility: travelled abroad at least once in last year	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Income deprivation decile	Ordinal	E	Social network: has socialised with someone living in a different town or city in last six months	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Foreign-born population (LSOA) (%)	Continuous	E	Social network: has socialised with someone living in a different part of Britain in last six months	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Foreign-born population (local authority) (%)	Continuous	E	Social network: has socialised with someone living in a different country in last six months	Dichotomous (yes/no)	E
Foreign-born population change (LSOA) (%)	Continuous	E	Perceived impact on society: acceptance of same-sex relationships	Dichotomous (positive/negative)	E

Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response	Variable	Scale	Explanatory or response
Foreign-born population change (local authority) (%)	Continuous	E	Perceived impact on society: more women in work	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E
Urban-rural classification (LSOA)	Dichotomous	E	Perceived impact on society: more ethnic and religious diversity	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E+R
Urban-rural classification (local authority)	Dichotomous	E	Perceived impact of globalisation on Europe	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E
Preferred leadership style (conviction-consensual)	Dichotomous	E+R	Perceived impact of globalisation on Britain	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E+R
International cooperation (cooperate or put Britain first)	Dichotomous	E+R	Perceived impact of globalisation on local area	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E+R
Social trust (0-10 scale)	Continuous	E+R	Perceived impact of globalisation on own life	Dichotomous (positive-negative)	E+R

The approach to building regression models has several stages. First, a simple model that includes the response variable and individual demographic explanatory variables is assembled. These statistics (on education, ethnicity, gender, religion and income) remain in the model regardless of their significance or contribution to the explanatory power of the model. Next, place-based statistics are added to the model one by one, in each case removing the previous addition so that only one place-based statistic is included at any one time. Once all place-based statistics have been tested, the variable that gives a test statistic with the lowest p-value is retained in the model.

With this new baseline, we repeat the exercise, adding in all additional place-based statistics one by one. Of any additional variables that are significant, the test statistic with the lowest p-value is once again added to a baseline. This is repeated until no additional variables are significant. This approach is used as an alternative to the likelihood-ratio test, which cannot be used when probability weights are applied to a model. To complete the model, the same approach is then used for a new set of variables: social networks and geographic mobility. Significant interaction terms are then added, and various post-estimation checks are run, including the Box-Tidwell test for non-linearity.

In some cases, more than one final model is reported for a response variable. There are two reasons for this. First, where there are two significant explanatory variables that display substantial multicollinearity but are both of theoretical interest, they are reported separately. This is the case with the three social network variables, for example. Second, where attitudinal variables are of interest as explanatory variables (for example where referendum vote is the response variable), they are reported as separate models.

This is because we consider non-attitudinal and attitudinal variables to be of a different order – our hypothesis is that certain demographic, place-based and behavioural variables influence attitudes rather than the other way around, while different sets of attitudes might tend to be associated with one another or influence political behaviour (such as voting). Therefore, the impact of the breadth of an individual's social networks on the likelihood of holding a particular political view or voting in a certain way is interesting on its own even if it is mediated through another social attitude. Including all attitudinal variables within a model when seeking to quantify the explanatory power of a demographic trait or a life experience would risk muddying or watering down the true scale of predictive power as a result of strong associations between attitudes.

Similarly, when we do put attitudinal variables into the model, they are included one by one (with the rest of the model), as these associations are of theoretical interest

regardless of the possible importance of other attitudinal variables. For example, it is interesting if respondents' attitudes to same-sex relationships are strongly associated with a vote to leave the EU regardless of whether attitudes to ethnic and religious diversity are also important.

### **Reporting**

Effects are reported as significant at a 95 per cent confidence level. In some cases confidence intervals are relatively large because of small sub-samples or missing data, but all reported margins and coefficients have a p-value less than or equal to 0.05.

In the logistic regression models, there are broadly three methods to report marginal effects: marginal effects at the means, marginal effects at other values decided by the researcher (such as modes or medians), and 'average marginal effects'. In this analysis, we report average marginal effects.<sup>93</sup>

Table 5 The main Brexit predictive model

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.355448	0.5479525	2.47	0.013	0.2814807	2.429415
35-44	1.689128	0.5534602	3.05	0.002	0.604366	2.77389
45-54	1.858809	0.5597221	3.32	0.001	0.7617743	2.955845
55-64	1.971858	0.5339147	3.69	0	0.9254048	3.018312
65+	1.898366	0.537191	3.53	0	0.8454905	2.951241
<b>education2</b>						
GCSEs	-1.136426	0.440053	-2.58	0.01	-1.998914	-0.2739378
A-Levels or higher, below degree	-1.569419	0.4337769	-3.62	0	-2.419606	-0.7192321
degree	-2.439014	0.4197594	-5.81	0	-3.261727	-1.616301
1.white	1.232452	0.5959748	2.07	0.039	0.0643633	2.400541
1.ruralla	0.6894382	0.2101209	3.28	0.001	0.2776088	1.101268
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.059817	0.2872928	-3.69	0	-1.622901	-0.4967339
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4651931	0.2087088	2.23	0.026	0.0561314	0.8472547
other religion	0.4590905	0.5128065	0.9	0.371	-0.5459918	1.464173
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.7481792	0.2929094	-2.55	0.011	-1.322271	-0.1740874
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.7418954	0.3609421	-2.06	0.04	-1.449329	-0.0344618
over £3,160	-2.485991	0.5644772	-4.4	0	-3.592346	-1.379636
<b>male#incomenom1</b>						
male#under £1,520pm	0.794986	0.4061168	1.96	0.05	-0.0009884	1.59096
male#over £3,160	1.519846	0.5728461	2.65	0.008	0.3970879	2.642603
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.0776491	0.4102226	0.19	0.85	-0.7263723	0.8816706
over £3,160#yes	1.56205	0.5760419	2.71	0.007	0.4330285	2.691071
_cons	-0.2417419	0.8851385	-0.27	0.785	-1.976581	1.493098

Logistic Regression      Number of obs = 715  
Wald chi2(20) = 171.54  
Prob > chi2 = 0  
Log pseudolikelihood = -362.22919      Pseudo R2 = 0.2114

Table 6 **Brexit model with socdifbrit (social network - different part of Britain)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.310609	0.6073538	216	0.031	0.1202175	2.429415
35-44	1.747973	0.6042527	2.89	0.004	0.5636598	2.77389
45-54	1.950882	0.611457	3.19	0.001	0.7524482	2.955845
55-64	2.053577	0.5939692	3.46	0.001	0.8894186	3.018312
65+	1.943229	0.5899863	3.29	0.001	0.786877	2.951241
<b>education2</b>						
GCSEs	-1.117543	0.4450537	-2.51	0.012	-1.989832	-0.2452536
A-Levels or higher, below degree	-1.495116	0.4389677	-3.41	0.001	-2.355477	-0.6347548
degree	-2.423104	0.4243214	-5.71	0	-3.254759	-1.59145
1.white	1.220537	0.602015	2.03	0.043	0.0406097	2.400465
1.ruralla	0.6480308	0.2080497	3.11	0.002	0.2402608	1.055801
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-0.9483851	0.3416816	-2.78	0.006	-1.618069	-0.2787014
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4625524	0.2019088	2.11	0.035	0.0308183	0.8222864
other religion	0.324939	0.487735	0.67	0.505	-0.6310031	1.280883
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.6896035	0.2929094	-2.36	0.018	-1.263258	-0.1159493
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.651011	0.4272702	-1.38	0.168	-1.577526	0.2755036
over £3,160	-3.639948	0.838833	-4.34	0	-5.284031	-1.995866
<b>male#incomenom1</b>						
male#under £1,520pm	0.6573993	0.4029989	1.63	0.103	-0.132464	1.447263
male#over £3,160	1.613362	0.5803072	2.78	0.005	0.4759805	2.750743
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.0962631	0.480585	0.2	0.841	-0.8456731	1.038199
over £3,160#yes	2.452025	0.79726	3.08	0.002	0.8894237	4.014626
_cons	-0.1503411	0.9217084	-0.16	0.87	-1.956856	1.656174

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 721  
Wald chi2(20) = 141.44  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -368.60842 Pseudo R2 = 0.2013

# 1 Great Britain

Table 7 **Brexit model with socdifctown (social network - different town or city)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.322133	0.6058235	2.18	0.029	0.1347413	2.509526
35-44	1.763448	0.6020656	2.93	0.003	0.5834216	2.943475
45-54	1.988278	0.6112011	3.25	0.001	0.7903457	3.18621
55-64	1.950939	0.5880067	3.32	0.001	0.7984673	3.103411
65+	1.885311	0.5850678	3.22	0.001	0.7385991	3.032023
<b>education2</b>						
GCSEs	-1.210558	0.45319	-2.67	0.008	-2.098794	-0.3223217
A-Levels or higher, below degree	-1.575364	0.4486518	-3.51	0	-2.454706	-0.6960232
degree	-2.501104	0.4345606	-5.76	0	-3.352827	-1.649381
1.white	1.286912	0.6090524	2.11	0.035	0.0931912	2.480633
1.ruralla	0.6705575	0.2060934	3.25	0.001	0.2666219	1.074493
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-0.6611432	0.3869411	-1.71	0.088	-1.419534	0.0972474
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4869297	0.197652	2.46	0.014	0.0995389	0.8743206
other religion	0.3584251	0.4815733	0.74	0.457	-0.5854412	1.302291
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.581899	0.2843425	-2.05	0.041	-1.1392	-0.024598
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.1261168	0.5478195	-0.23	0.818	-1.199823	0.9475896
over £3,160	-3.424705	1.102689	-3.11	0.002	-5.585937	-1.263474
<b>male#incomenom1</b>						
male#under £1,520pm	0.5583373	0.3956099	1.41	0.158	-0.2170438	1.333719
male#over £3,160	1.356807	0.583554	2.33	0.02	0.2130626	2.500552
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	-0.4316664	0.5367725	-0.8	0.421	-1.483721	0.6203884
over £3,160#yes	2.124158	1.036838	2.05	0.04	0.0919936	4.156323
_cons	-0.03869513	0.9625025	-0.4	0.688	-2.273421	1.499519

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 721  
Wald chi2(20) = 141.44  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -368.60842 Pseudo R2 = 0.2013



Table 8 **Brexit model with attitudes to same-sex relationships**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>  z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.271662	0.5488237	2.32	0.021	0.195987	2.347336
35-44	1.536489	0.5598816	2.74	0.006	0.4391411	2.633837
45-54	1.684395	0.557221	3.02	0.003	0.5922618	2.776528
55-64	1.712349	0.5335943	3.21	0.001	0.6665231	2.758175
65+	1.478559	0.545666	2.71	0.007	0.4092684	2.54785
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5251782	0.078313	-6.71	0	-0.6786688	-0.3716877
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.537462	0.2234242	2.03	0.042	0.0158429	0.8916495
other religion	0.4015126	0.5139388	0.78	0.435	-0.605789	1.408814
1.ruralla	0.5814139	0.2161413	2.69	0.007	0.1577847	1.005043
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.6281017	0.3706145	-1.69	0.09	-1.354493	0.0982894
over £3,160	-2.503735	0.5647177	-4.43	0	-3.610562	-1.396909
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.8004649	0.3064866	-2.61	0.009	-1.401168	-0.1997622
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.02904	0.293292	-3.44	0.001	-1.615714	-0.4423656
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.008873	0.4285642	0.02	0.983	-0.8310973	0.8488433
over £3,160#yes	1.699351	0.580728	2.93	0.003	0.5611456	2.837557
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.7484264	0.423635	1.77	0.077	-0.0813509	1.578204
over £3,160#male	1.531427	0.6029756	2.54	0.011	0.3496165	2.713238
<b>samsex1</b>						
better	-0.8372346	0.2212489	-3.78	0	-1.270874	-0.4035948
_cons	-0.1982647	0.825019	-0.24	0.81	-1.815272	1.418743

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 690  
Wald chi2(20) = 175.37  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -336.63582

Pseudo R2 = 0.2415

Table 9 **Brexit model with attitudes to women in work**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.474622	0.5638878	2.62	0.009	0.3694224	2.579822
35-44	1.649226	0.5662371	2.91	0.004	0.5394219	2.759031
45-54	1.833732	0.5643447	3.25	0.001	0.7276364	2.939827
55-64	1.830715	0.5387474	3.4	0.001	0.7747893	2.737435
65+	1.663679	0.5478446	3.04	0.002	0.5899236	2.737435
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5391039	0.0767285	-7.03	0	-0.6894891	-0.3887187
1.white	1.191468	0.5900896	2.02	0.043	0.0349137	2.348022
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.5323742	0.2253474	2.36	0.018	0.0907015	0.9740469
other religion	0.3832696	0.5345351	0.72	0.473	-0.6643999	1.430939
1.ruralla	0.6702096	0.2142258	3.13	0.002	0.2503348	1.090084
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.6311579	0.378092	-1.67	0.095	-1.372205	0.1098887
over £3,160	-2.354791	0.5772421	-4.08	0	-3.486164	-1.223417
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.7205906	0.2978646	-2.42	0.016	-1.304394	-0.1367868
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.076872	0.2892838	-3.72	0	-1.643857	-0.5098858
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.0157121	0.4302462	0.04	0.971	-0.8275549	0.8589791
over £3,160#yes	1.685102	0.5934232	2.84	0.005	0.5220142	2.84819
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.7785664	0.4263135	1.83	0.068	-0.0569928	1.614126
over £3,160#male	1.475785	0.6018073	2.45	0.014	0.2962639	2.655305
<b>womenwork1</b>						
better	-1.014215	0.2285272	-4.44	0	-1.46212	-0.5663098
_cons	0.1007031	0.8255299	0.12	0.903	-1.517306	1.718712

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 692

Wald chi2(20) = 171.23

Prob &gt; chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -334.82753

Pseudo R2 = 0.2465

Table 10 **Brexit model with attitudes to ethnic and religious diversity**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.282488	0.5413378	2.37	0.018	0.2214852	2.34349
35-44	1.502042	0.5649804	2.66	0.008	0.3947006	2.609383
45-54	1.700371	0.5595347	3.04	0.002	0.6037027	2.797038
55-64	1.584298	0.5214252	3.04	0.002	0.5623238	2.606273
65+	1.414513	0.5403797	2.62	0.009	0.3553881	2.473638
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.4796191	0.0847807	-5.66	0	-0.6457862	-0.313452
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4856132	0.2373345	2.05	0.041	0.0204461	0.9507804
other religion	0.602837	0.4746672	1.27	0.204	-0.3274935	1.533168
1.ruralla	0.5678419	0.2191492	2.59	0.01	0.1383174	0.9973665
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.6655545	0.3890372	-1.71	0.087	-1.428053	0.0969445
over £3,160	-2.291817	0.5929367	-3.87	0	-3.453952	-1.129683
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.6653625	0.3144853	-2.12	0.034	-1.281742	-0.0489826
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.145391	0.3136778	-3.65	0	-1.760188	-0.530594
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.1526358	0.4513572	0.34	0.735	-0.732008	1.03728
over £3,160#yes	1.738443	0.623701	2.79	0.005	0.516011	2.960874
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.8504372	0.4508759	1.89	0.059	-0.0332634	1.734138
over £3,160#male	1.174471	0.6182012	1.9	0.057	-0.0371814	2.386123
<b>multicultural1</b>						
better	-1.555394	0.2198987	-7.07	0	-1.986387	-1.1244
_cons	0.6147333	0.8670532	0.71	0.478	-1.08466	2.314126

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 679  
Wald chi2(20) = 191.23  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -310.2622

Pseudo R2 = 0.2864

Table 11 **Brexit model with levels of social trust**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.793987	0.6310889	2.84	0.004	0.5570757	3.030899
35-44	2.026917	0.6391752	3.17	0.002	0.7741571	3.279678
45-54	2.178513	0.6320035	3.45	0.001	0.9398089	3.417217
55-64	2.299213	0.6071426	3.79	0	1.109236	3.489191
65+	2.265572	0.6064029	3.74	0	1.077044	3.4541
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5582819	0.0784971	-7.11	0	-0.7121334	-0.4044304
1.white	1.275547	0.6544262	1.95	0.051	-0.0071048	2.558199
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4488639	0.2127661	2.11	0.035	0.03185	0.8658779
other religion	0.420326	0.5303171	0.79	0.428	-0.6190765	1.459728
1.ruralla	0.6761046	0.2100748	3.22	0.001	0.2643655	1.087844
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.7535278	0.370463	-2.03	0.042	-1.1479622	-0.0274336
over £3,160	-2.317528	0.5806413	-3.99	0	-3.455564	-1.179491
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.8038296	0.2982439	-2.7	0.007	-1.388366	-0.2192822
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-0.953439	0.2968335	-3.21	0.001	-1.535222	-0.3716559
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.1284486	0.4281261	0.3	0.764	-0.7106632	0.9675604
over £3,160#yes	1.509081	0.5913802	2.55	0.011	0.3499967	2.668165
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.7859251	0.4263775	1.84	0.065	-0.0497595	1.62161
over £3,160#male	1.55748	0.5885303	2.65	0.008	0.4039815	2.710978
<b>soctrust1</b>						
04-Jul	-1.289572	0.6063319	-2.13	0.033	-2.477961	-0.1011836
08-Oct	-1.611063	0.5970109	-2.7	0.007	-2.781183	-0.4409435
_cons	0.3368493	1.085019	0.31	0.756	-1.789748	2.463447

Logistic Regression      Number of obs = 693  
Wald chi2(20) = 168.71  
Prob > chi2 = 0  
Log pseudolikelihood = -341.63936      Pseudo R2 = 0.2335

Table 12 **Brexit model with attitudes to globalisation (Europe)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.27012	0.6090076	2.09	0.037	0.0764869	2.463753
35-44	1.184893	0.5940277	1.99	0.046	0.0206203	2.349166
45-54	1.457002	0.5939093	2.45	0.014	0.2929616	2.621043
55-64	1.381286	0.5693809	2.43	0.015	0.2653201	2.497252
65+	1.292294	0.5640453	2.29	0.022	0.1867853	2.397802
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5045843	0.0849808	-5.94	0	-0.6711436	-0.338025
1.white	1.596494	0.762329	2.09	0.036	0.1023567	3.090632
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.7917461	0.2545319	3.11	0.002	0.2928727	1.290619
other religion	0.1689743	0.5386787	0.31	0.754	-0.8868167	1.224765
1.ruralla	0.7952901	0.2353882	3.38	0.001	0.3339377	1.256642
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-1.139291	0.4307787	-2.64	0.008	-1.983602	-0.2949803
over £3,160	-2.92856	0.8113665	-3.61	0	-4.518809	-1.33831
<b>male</b>						
male	-1.016657	0.3335248	-3.05	0.002	-1.670354	-0.3629606
<b>socdfcountry</b>						
yes	-1.049536	0.3265969	-3.21	0.001	-1.689654	-0.4094178
<b>incomenom1#socdfcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	-0.0456634	0.4848669	-0.09	0.925	-0.995985	0.9046582
over £3,160#yes	1.916262	0.7687773	2.49	0.013	0.4094858	3.423037
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	1.352823	0.4781883	2.83	0.005	0.4155908	2.290054
over £3,160#male	1.581352	0.6805341	2.32	0.02	0.2475294	2.915174
<b>glob1b</b>						
negative	2.666646	0.3142108	8.49	0	2.050804	3.282488
_cons	-1.178349	0.9584769	-1.23	0.219	-3.056929	0.7002316

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 657  
Wald chi2(20) = 175.29  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -277.56236

Pseudo R2 = 0.3436

Table 13 Brexit model with attitudes to globalisation (Britain)

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.661903	0.51143	3.25	0.001	0.6595184	2.664287
35-44	1.665384	0.5049061	3.3	0.001	0.6757862	2.654982
45-54	2.095342	0.5018235	4.18	0	1.111786	3.078898
55-64	1.964873	0.4710256	4.17	0	1.04168	2.888067
65+	1.871387	0.4737149	3.95	0	0.9429227	2.799851
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5352892	0.0827533	-6.47	0	-0.6974826	-0.3730957
1.white	1.694507	0.7200055	2.35	0.019	0.2833219	3.105692
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.6015602	0.2411341	2.49	0.013	0.1289462	1.074174
other religion	0.3148585	0.5044619	0.62	0.533	-0.6738686	1.303586
1.ruralla	0.7274999	0.2212049	3.29	0.001	0.2939464	1.161053
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.8231745	0.397295	-2.07	0.038	-1.601858	-0.0444906
over £3,160	-2.557213	0.6779805	-3.77	0	-3.886031	-1.228396
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.7739486	0.3132832	-2.47	0.013	-1.387972	-0.1599247
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.0657	0.309236	-3.45	0.001	-1.671792	-0.459609
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	-0.0460725	0.4680971	-0.1	0.922	-0.9635261	0.871381
over £3,160#yes	1.74722	0.6707517	2.6	0.009	0.4325704	3.061869
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	1.120504	0.4644086	2.41	0.016	0.2102796	2.030728
over £3,160#male	1.520633	0.6365075	2.39	0.017	0.2731016	2.768165
<b>glob2b</b>						
negative	1.813317	0.2779732	6.52	0	1.2685	2.358135
_cons	-1.705457	0.8730996	-1.95	0.051	-3.416701	0.0057871

Logistic Regression      Number of obs = 665  
Wald chi2(20) = 170.58  
Prob > chi2 = 0  
Log pseudolikelihood = -302.61027      Pseudo R2 = 0.2923

Table 14 **Brexit model with attitudes to globalisation (local area)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>  z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.862248	0.552563	3.37	0.001	0.7792445	2.945252
35-44	1.788315	0.5571647	3.21	0.001	0.6962923	2.880338
45-54	2.279196	0.5478568	4.16	0	1.205416	3.352976
55-64	1.934603	0.5206578	3.72	0	0.914132	2.955073
65+	2.073528	0.5286855	3.92	0	1.037324	3.109733
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5593059	0.0848867	-6.59	0	-0.7256808	-0.392931
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4853065	0.2475239	1.96	0.05	0.0001685	0.9704445
other religion	-0.059904	0.4711146	-0.13	0.899	-0.9832716	0.8634636
<b>1.ruralla</b>						
1.ruralla	0.7595397	0.2420101	3.14	0.002	0.2852086	1.233871
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.8617273	0.4282071	-2.01	0.044	-1.700998	-0.0224569
over £3,160	-2.562885	0.8082602	-3.17	0.002	-4.147046	-0.9787242
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.7238127	0.3346159	-2.16	0.031	-1.379648	-0.0679776
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.029289	0.3280562	-3.14	0.002	-1.672268	-0.3863111
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.0042826	0.4833729	0.01	0.993	-0.943111	0.9516761
over £3,160#yes	1.789991	0.7603536	2.35	0.019	0.2997249	3.280256
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	1.073628	0.4780715	2.25	0.025	0.1366252	2.010631
over £3,160#male	1.574177	0.6885049	2.29	0.022	0.2247324	2.923622
<b>glob3b</b>						
negative	1.600475	0.2648202	6.04	0	1.081437	2.119513
_cons	-1.286814	0.8584077	-1.5	0.134	-2.969262	0.3956344

Logistic Regression      Number of obs = 607  
Wald chi2(20) = 150.46  
Prob > chi2 = 0  
Log pseudolikelihood = -283.60905      Pseudo R2 = 0.2753

Table 15 Brexit model with attitudes to globalisation (own life)

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	2.128536	0.5767968	3.69	0	0.9980351	3.259037
35-44	2.018186	0.5883192	3.43	0.001	0.8651012	3.17127
45-54	2.345339	0.5868823	4	0	1.195071	3.495607
55-64	2.311586	0.5555125	4.16	0	1.222801	3.40037
65+	2.301402	0.5702286	4.04	0	1.183774	3.419029
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5632384	0.0889705	-6.33	0	-0.7376174	-0.3888593
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.6711543	0.2678068	2.51	0.012	0.1462627	1.196046
other religion	0.2015327	0.5221228	0.39	0.7	-0.8218092	1.224875
1.ruralla	0.6589097	0.2406382	2.74	0.006	0.1872674	1.130552
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.652963	0.4112525	-1.59	0.112	-1.459003	0.1530771
over £3,160	-2.494873	0.6863733	-3.63	0	-3.84014	-1.149607
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.5610426	0.319424	-1.76	0.079	-1.187102	0.065017
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-0.8858376	0.3168724	-2.8	0.005	-1.506896	-0.2647791
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	-0.0532684	0.4874833	-0.11	0.913	-1.008718	0.9021812
over £3,160#yes	1.590677	0.7126725	2.23	0.026	0.1938646	2.987489
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.7529648	0.4801523	1.57	0.117	-0.1881164	1.694046
over £3,160#male	1.575893	0.6796225	2.32	0.02	0.2438573	2.907929
<b>glob4b</b>						
negative	1.55371	0.2882326	5.39	0	0.9887845	2.118636
_cons	-1.742764	0.904825	-1.93	0.054	-3.516189	0.0306601

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 594  
Wald chi2(20) = 163.96  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -272.7166

Pseudo R2 = 0.2853



Table 16 **Brexit model with preferred political leadership style  
(consensual vs strong or neither)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.440666	0.5378152	2.68	0.007	0.3865673	2.494764
35-44	1.744874	0.5352011	3.26	0.001	0.6958987	2.793849
45-54	1.927284	0.5422538	3.55	0	0.864486	2.990082
55-64	2.06618	0.5070442	4.07	0	1.072392	3.059968
65+	1.966977	0.5108311	3.85	0	0.9657667	2.968188
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.5996438	0.0802994	-7.47	0	-0.7570277	-0.4422599
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.5349257	0.217184	2.46	0.014	0.1092528	0.9605986
other religion	0.6504472	0.5235499	1.24	0.214	-0.3756918	1.676586
1.ruralla	0.5542725	0.213787	2.59	0.01	0.1352577	0.9732874
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.9247793	0.3820564	-2.42	0.015	-1.673596	-0.1759626
over £3,160	-2.648528	0.5882963	-4.5	0	-3.801568	-1.495488
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.8261431	0.3028058	-2.73	0.006	-1.419631	-0.2326547
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.181874	0.3008092	-3.93	0	-1.771449	-0.5922985
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	0.1423095	0.4357065	0.33	0.744	-0.7116595	0.9962786
over £3,160#yes	1.692764	0.6051272	2.8	0.005	0.5067365	2.878791
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.8872693	0.4263684	2.08	0.037	0.0516026	1.722936
over £3,160#male	1.698101	0.6106393	2.78	0.005	0.5012698	2.894932
<b>consensual</b>						
consensual	-0.5822296	0.2258108	-2.58	0.01	-1.024811	-0.1396486
_cons	-0.4070814	0.8406769	-0.48	0.628	-2.054778	1.240615

Logistic Regression      Number of obs = 668  
Wald chi2(20) = 168.33  
Prob > chi2 = 0  
Log pseudolikelihood = -323.04264      Pseudo R2 = 0.2427

## 1 Great Britain

Table 17

**Brexit model with attitudes to international cooperation  
(cooperate vs put Britain first or neither)**

leave	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	(95% Conf. Interval)	
<b>age3</b>						
25-34	1.379287	0.6733361	2.05	0.041	0.0595726	2.699001
35-44	1.992022	0.6748388	2.95	0.003	0.6693624	3.314682
45-54	1.74318	0.6168398	2.83	0.005	0.5341962	2.952164
55-64	2.073719	0.6218387	3.33	0.001	0.8549376	3.292501
65+	1.956028	0.6169567	3.17	0.002	0.7468149	3.165241
<b>education1</b>						
1.white	-0.4762585	0.0957761	-4.97	0	-0.6639762	-0.2885408
<b>religion1</b>						
Christian	0.4710541	0.2645078	1.78	0.075	-0.0473717	0.9894799
other religion	0.4631358	0.561161	0.83	0.409	-0.6367195	1.562991
1.ruralla	0.529269	0.2837055	1.87	0.062	-0.0267835	1.085322
<b>incomenom1</b>						
under £1,520pm	-0.5186517	0.4428839	-1.17	0.242	-1.386688	0.3493847
over £3,160	-2.22161	0.7465685	-2.98	0.003	-3.684857	-0.7583628
<b>male</b>						
male	-0.3040613	0.3611871	-0.84	0.4	-1.011975	0.4038524
<b>socdifcountry</b>						
yes	-1.012278	0.3602688	-2.81	0.005	-1.718392	-0.3061645
<b>incomenom1#socdifcountry</b>						
under £1,520pm#yes	-0.4153401	0.5363815	-0.77	0.439	-1.466629	0.6359484
over £3,160#yes	2.057513	0.77995	2.64	0.008	0.5288393	3.586187
<b>incomenom1#male</b>						
under £1,520pm#male	0.7906286	0.5381362	1.47	0.142	-0.264099	1.845356
over £3,160#male	1.188076	0.7048558	1.69	0.092	-0.193416	2.569568
<b>intcoop</b>						
cooperate	-3.048002	0.2589008	-11.77	0	-3.555439	-2.540566
_cons	0.2723731	1.082688	0.25	0.801	-1.849656	2.394402

Logistic Regression

Number of obs = 669  
Wald chi2(20) = 215.41  
Prob > chi2 = 0

Log pseudolikelihood = -237.71372

Pseudo R2 = 0.4467

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# 2 **France -** **Living together in the** **face of fear: the French** **political dilemma**

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## Summary

*How do we live with fear?* This question is being asked with ever greater intensity in French society. In recent years France has been particularly exposed to an economic, geopolitical and political environment marked by crises, instability, insecurity and emotional shocks. The feeling of fear seems to be nourished by the accumulation of concerns that are different but interconnected to a greater or lesser degree – fears about Islamist terrorism, economic and financial globalisation, declining social status and the rise of the extreme right; and ambivalent attitudes towards the European Union (EU). This convergence of diverse fears sustains a climate of collective pessimism that has already been identified in many opinion surveys.

In order to better understand the situation of French fears and their impact on political debate in the country, Demos asked the Institut Jacques Delors to analyse the results of an exclusive survey carried out by YouGov in six European countries (France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK). The results of this YouGov survey provide illuminating comparative perspectives and strengthen the findings of previous studies. There are three distinctive elements that emerge in particular:

- Fear is a structuring element of French public debate, in many forms.
- The upcoming elections in 2017 are likely to be an outlet for a feeling of mistrust, and will determine whether the Front National is seen as a possible solution or a further threat.
- The growing Euroscepticism among French people should not be seen as the expression of a Europhobic desire to leave the EU.

# Introduction

## *Fear exists in France as a force of its own*

Alain Duhamel

Already in 1993, in his main book devoted to the analysis of the increase of 'fear' in the French political discourse, the famous French journalist Alain Duhamel highlighted the main French paradox of the last 25 years. This paradox is rooted in the fact that France, despite being protected from major internal and external crises, is still struggling to find a reassured state of mind within the new globalised world. The result is that the country is sliding backward into a negative, fearful and sometimes overcritical mentality about the future of the country. In his view, this has been the norm since the end of the 'trente glorieuses' ('glorious thirty years', a period comprising the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s).

This anxiety, specific to France, is the core feeling that is structuring the politics of fear in the country. One cannot be understood without the other. Frank Furedi, for instance, has pinpointed this subconscious and more profound origin that transcends particular periods of time.<sup>1</sup> Fear can be generated by manipulating public opinion, but in France it also exists as 'a force in its own right': a 'fatalistic sensibility coexists with anxieties concerning the future, which in turn disposes the public to feel uncomfortable about managing uncertainty'.<sup>2</sup> In such a context fear has become synonymous with disagreement in modern political discourse, when in fact it should be analysed as a symptom of exhaustion, disengagement and, more importantly, uncertainty and insecurity about the future.

## French déclinisme

Anyone who has studied the French political temperament knows that the worst weakness in the country, the most common, and also the most damaging, is the declinist attitude. This could perhaps be analysed as the logical and natural consequence for countries with an emerging national consciousness, but in France this consciousness is part of history and the specific political narrative of the country. Voltaire's account of the *Siècle des Lumières*<sup>3</sup> already casts a light on the French political nature: France must rise, shine, and then immediately the fear of losing that leadership plunges the country into a declinist period. French political history is made of those ups and downs, of those incredible milestones followed by spectacular falls: the Revolution and the fall of the Empire in 1814; the victory in 1918 and the collaboration with the Nazis in 1940; the trente glorieuses and the challenge posed by decolonisation; the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the geopolitics of globalisation.

In a new bestseller published in September 2016, with the self-explanatory title *Pathologies Françaises*, Alain Duhamel updates his thesis and explores the idea that it is precisely this notion of France, this dual historical framing theory, that seems to have encapsulated the whole country in its own past and memory: France as a country is being held a prisoner of its own narrative. 'The nation of crusaders' (Sieburg), 'The oldest daughter of the church' (Pope Paul VI), 'The great nation and the second motherland of all men' (Thomas Jefferson), 'The pilot of the vessel of humanity' (Michelet). There is a heavy political and historical burden for a country that is failing to find a way to reframe a new vision for its people.<sup>4</sup> This case study argues that the politics of fear in France is a combination of insecurity regarding new sociological phenomena, the rise of a political discourse manipulating such insecurities, and the unresolved question about the French role in the world and as a driver of the European integration ideal.

This chapter addresses some of the main psychological and social 'fears' that are crucial nowadays in France. The social psychology of fear is politically relevant for a number

of reasons. It affects how citizens associate with various social demographic groups that they perceive to be the same or different to them, the tendency to express or support socially exclusive or even violent tendencies towards such groups, and political activity and voting behaviour. France is not an exception in having increased fears associated with migration. In *The Politics of Insecurity*, one of the most cited books in that field, Huysmans analyses the impact and political significance of new political forces framing immigration and asylum as dangers to society which can ‘sustain security policies’, ‘be used in a competition between political parties’ and reinforce certain concepts about ‘what a political community’ consists of.<sup>5</sup> Unsurprisingly, this thesis is synonymous with the type of narrative used increasingly – but not exclusively – by the Front National.

The second factor behind the politics of fear in France is undeniably the rising use of fear as a political tool, both by a large part of the political spectrum in the country as well as by the media and main channels of information. This dimension is interesting because political and media discourse influences public opinion both by modulating as well as by directly shaping public opinion on matters where fear (of real or imagined threats) is relevant. Therefore, we can argue that fear is instrumentalised only after actors with high visibility in the public debate introduce layers of structured meaning that give sense and purpose to this fear – which thereupon becomes a political motivator and can be exploited by parties.

This specific cycle – politicians get exposure, exposure creates salience, salience creates new political faces – was particularly rich between 2006 and 2013, as pointed out by Hobeika and Villeneuve in their study at Counterpoint on the topics of the Front National and the agenda of the French press.<sup>6</sup> The two authors conducted a thorough enquiry analysing thousands of news stories related to the more salient topics for the extreme right in France. Interestingly, they found that that the articles containing the terms ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslim’ show that journalists have a special interest in some topics on very specific occasions. Those occasions correspond basically to two types: when scandals related to Islam emerge

outside the political world (for example in the educational or the cultural world), and when politicians speak repeatedly about Islam. This conclusion is striking because it points out a well-known phenomenon of partial dependency between the topics covered in the media and the topics conveyed by politicians. The original finding of Hobeika and Villeneuve is that this dependency also applies to the extreme right in France, irrespective of the morality or acceptability of the purposes held by this political faction.

More interestingly for the French case study, the same study also confirmed that the topics of the extreme right have a particular 'ranking' among the press. What are the topics that have the greatest influence on the political agenda when covered repeatedly by newspapers and news channels? Significantly, at the top of the list we found security and immigration, two of the main topics that have climbed to the top of the political agenda since 2013 – and which constitute the two pillars of the discourse of the Front National.<sup>7</sup>

Undeniably, the Front National is using this 'fear agenda' for political means, with the objective of creating and capitalising on social insecurities. This strategy has been studied in depth by the literature on fear politics, on the discursive side as well as on the political style.

In the discursive analysis of how populism is evolving in France, there is a clear pattern of re-enacting the divide between the 'people' – as a disenfranchised political entity – and the elite – allegedly corrupt and disconnected. This divide has been the core theoretical matrix since the 1970s, after the Essex School of Discourse Analysis came up with the best definition of populist rhetoric: 'an anti-status quo discourse that simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing society between "the people" (as the "underdogs") and its "other"'.<sup>8</sup> Alongside such classical rhetoric, the rise of the Front National equally illustrates the political style of a populist force and its main characteristics.

First, there is the appeal to 'the people' – the populists' audience, and the subject they 'render present'. Second, there is the evocation of a systemic crisis, a breakdown and a series of threats to the 'French nation', which fuels the populist

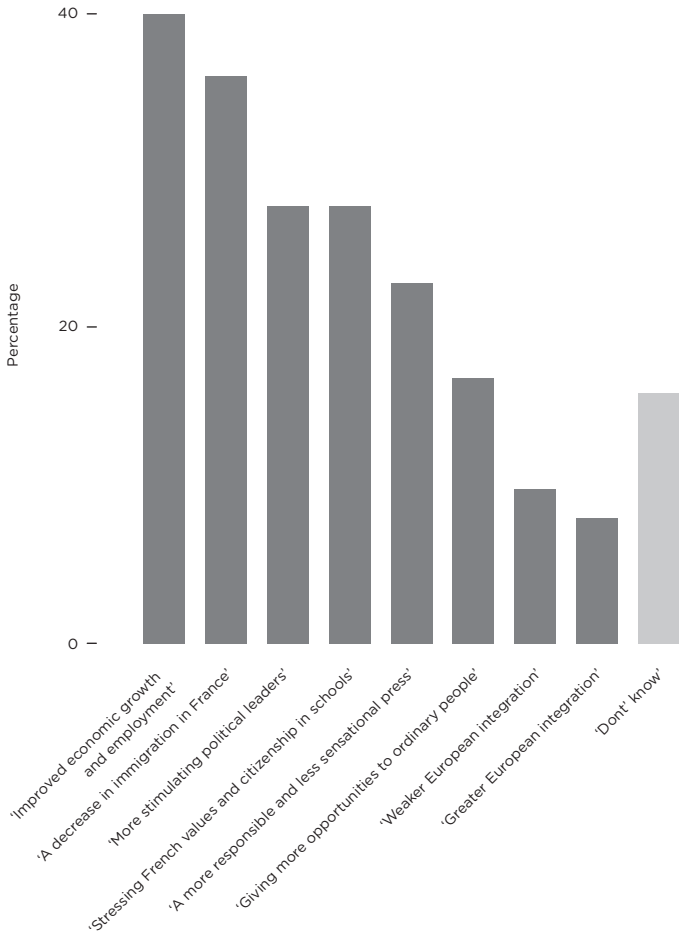
impetus that originates in the public perception of any or all of these factors. In other words, the ‘evocation of emergency’ that has been present in France for the last 12 years can be either a driver for positive and constructive change or, in the hands of populists, the best trigger for a simplified political discussion justifying a more conservative, protectionist and exclusionist agenda.

Nevertheless, in the French scenario, the rise of ‘fear’ in the populist discourse is not necessarily framed as a single-issue debate (as could be seen in the UK in the last year). The current French populism is complex and sophisticated ‘as a number of previously disconnected grievances can find articulation under a new populist claim’.<sup>9</sup> This thesis is illustrated in particular by one of the main questions in the Demos and YouGov survey analysed in this chapter (see below).<sup>10</sup>

When asked to choose the three things that would do most to reduce support for the Front National, French respondents focus on the economy, immigration, education and the political class. Regarding the economy, the most quoted remedy is as simple as ‘achieving more economic growth and job creation’ (40 per cent), followed by the option of getting a ‘reduction of immigration into France’ (36 per cent). The third most quoted solution is electing ‘more inspiring mainstream political leaders’ (28 per cent) and ‘more emphasis on French values and citizenship in schools’ (28 per cent), both quoted at similar rates.

These data could be interpreted in different ways, but it is already useful to identify the challenges that play into hands of the Front National. In other words, it helps to measure what makes the Front National popular today and from that perspective we could say that the four key ‘weaknesses’ in the country currently consist of a mix of unemployment, decreasing multiculturalist values, a lack of citizenship education and distrusted political elites.

Figure 1 **Responses by survey respondents when asked which of three options would in their opinion reduce support for the Front National**



\*Total greater than 100%: more than one answer possible.

Another illustration of French political malaise and fear can be found in the relationship established between French society and the construction of the EU. Why has France always struggled with the idea of sharing its sovereignty when the very idea of a European union was essentially a ‘French idea’? The European genesis cannot be understood without the work and writings of French decision-makers of the 1930s such as Briand, Herriot, Painlevé and Paul-Boncour, all of them followed, of course, by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, two of the main ‘founding fathers’. So why all this resistance to leading a more consolidated and even ‘federal’ EU?<sup>11</sup> Duhamel asked the same question in the 1990s by defining the French political outlook as ‘a paradoxical and even irrational anxious state of mind in the oldest nation-state in Europe’.<sup>12</sup>

However, it is striking that in the French part of the survey led by Demos and YouGov, European integration does not seem to play a big role. When presented with the possibility of the European project moving forward or backward, neither of the two options are considered to be a potential way to reduce the rise of the Front National. This seems to confirm that the relationship of France with the EU is definitively not as critical a factor as it was in the case of the UK, the rise of UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the victory of the Brexit vote in June 2016.

Other French concerns resonate in other European countries but it is difficult to find a clear and identifiable common path. For example, the Brexit debate was greatly influenced by the immigration argument, and unemployment has been a common trait in Italy and Spain, but France is the only country with this particular mix of problems. That is probably how populism should be analysed in Europe. The classical metaphor of the ‘wave’ could be replaced by that of a ‘soup’, with a different mix of ingredients in each country. Built on the basis of the Demos and YouGov survey’s main findings and other complementary studies, this chapter mainly shows that, unfortunately, France seems to have found quite a balanced recipe.



# 1 Fear, a structuring element of public debate in France

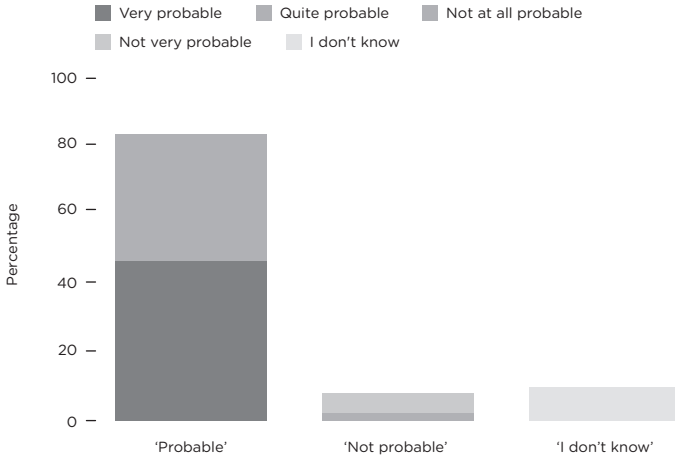
The YouGov survey shows that fear constitutes a structuring element of public debate in France, and that this fear arises from manifold threats: most recently Islamist terrorism, but also financial and economic globalisation that is considered to be frightening, and the fear of a collective deterioration in status.

## **The French people and the terrorist threat**

The most common concern among the French population is the possibility of major terrorist attacks in the very short term (figure 2). Just over 8 in 10 French people think that another attack is ‘probable’, and a majority of these (46 per cent) deems it even ‘very probable’. This belief in the inevitability of a terrorist incident is one of the major changes in French society over the last two years. Today, the issue of terrorism has become one of the cornerstones of French politics and of political and media discourse, and is very likely to be one of the determining elements in the upcoming elections.

In Ifop-Atlantico’s survey carried out in July 2016 on the determining issues in the 2017 presidential election (‘Enjeux déterminants du vote à l’élection présidentielle de 2017’), the ‘fight against terrorism’ was mentioned by 90 per cent of French people as an issue that will count ‘a lot or quite a lot’ during the elections in 2017 – putting it at the same level as France’s economic recovery and the fight against unemployment.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 2 **Responses by survey respondents when asked how likely they think it is that there will be another major attack in France in the next six months**



The fear of terrorism voiced by French people is an immediate reaction to the attacks that scarred the collective consciousness during 2015 and 2016, and which provoked unrelenting feelings of extreme violence, unpredictability and repetition (Charlie Hebdo, Hyper Cacher, the Bataclan, the Stade de France, Magnanville, Nice, Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray). At the national level, this psychological shock expressed itself as mass civic mobilisation around the victims and republican values, while at the same time as support for exceptional legal measures, such as the corpus of new anti-terrorism laws<sup>14</sup> and the state of emergency, which has been prolonged five times over the last 12 months. Despite criticism from organisations including Amnesty International,<sup>15</sup> this extension is widely supported by 76 per cent of the population, according to one of YouGov's recent surveys.<sup>16</sup> This exceptional context also explains why most French people today cite insecurity as their primary concern, ahead of jobs and unemployment.<sup>17</sup>

## A more structural issue: French collective anxiety about globalisation

When asked about the fact that the world today is more interconnected, French opinions are positive or negative depending on proximity and geographical scale (region, country, Europe...) (figure 3).

Figure 3 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on whether globalisation has had a positive or negative impact on Europe, France, their region and their life ('In recent decades, the world has become increasingly interconnected. There is more free trade between countries and it has become easier to communicate across the world. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries are exchanged much more easily between countries. Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative impact on...')**

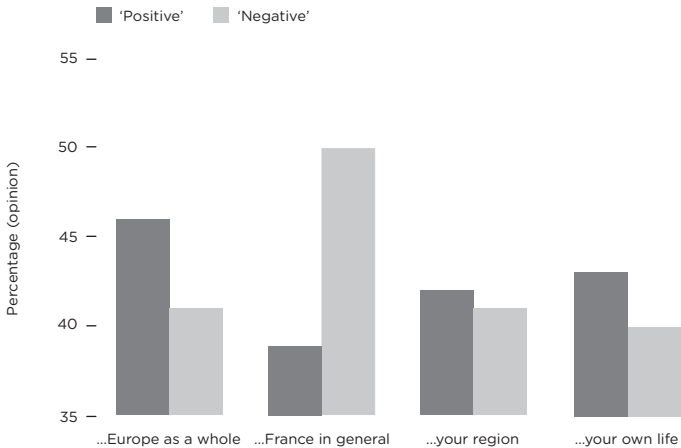


Table including subtotals ('positive': very positive + quite positive; 'negative': very negative + quite negative).

Slightly more French people consider the impact of globalisation on their own lives to be generally positive (43 per cent compared with 40 per cent who have a negative opinion). At the regional level, there are still more positive opinions than negative ones, although there is just a single percentage point gap between them (42 per cent compared to 41 per cent). The same is true when asked to judge for Europe as a whole; there are more positive than negative opinions, and the gap between the two is widest (46 per cent compared with 41 per cent, a +5 point difference).

Conversely, when asked about the impact of globalisation on France in general, responses are much more clear-cut (see figure 4). It is the only territorial level where respondents thought globalisation had a negative impact (50 per cent compared with 39 per cent of positive opinions). It is also the area where the gap between views on the impact of globalisation is widest (+11 points for negative opinions): 1 in 5 French people (21 per cent) judges the impact of globalisation on France as ‘very negative’.

On balance, the French perceive globalisation in a positive way for Europe, in a positive way – but less so – for themselves and for their own region, and in a distinctly negative way for France. This curious ‘ranking’ of the winners and losers of globalisation supports the hypothesis that there is a certain defeatism at national level and the fear of a collective decline in status. Is globalisation perceived as incompatible with the nation state in France? This reading can be further supported by other national studies such as ‘Fractures Françaises’, carried out in May 2016 by Ipsos and Sopra\_Steria.<sup>18</sup> They found that nearly 6 in 10 French people believed that globalisation was a threat to the country, and nearly 57 per cent believed that France should ‘protect itself more from the world of today’.

These results are specific to France: of the six countries analysed by YouGov, it is the only country where negative opinions on globalisation outweigh positive ones (figure 5). No other country has a public opinion that is so evidently concerned about globalisation and its impact on the national community.

Figure 4 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on whether globalisation has had a positive or negative impact on France**

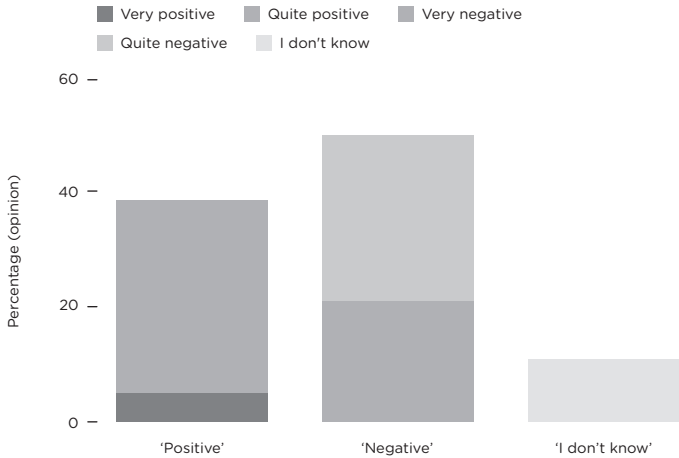


Figure 5 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on whether globalisation has had a positive or negative impact on six countries in the EU**

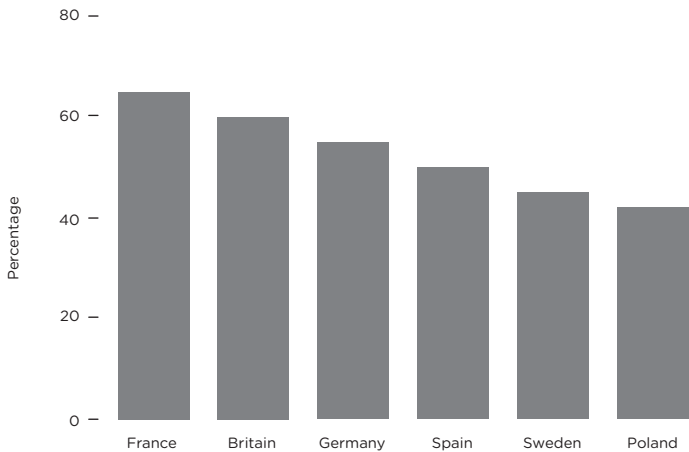


Table including subtotals ('positive': very positive + quite positive; 'negative': very negative + quite negative).

The situation in Poland, for example, provides a stark contrast to that in France, with 80 per cent of Poles judging that globalisation has had a positive overall impact on their country, compared with just 13 per cent who think the opposite. In the UK, public opinion is also much more optimistic, despite traditional Euroscepticism among the British people. Even in a country that was struck hard by the crisis, such as Spain, the population still sees the impact of globalisation on their country in a more positive way than the French population does (63 per cent of Spaniards believe that overall globalisation has had positive effects on Spain, compared with 28 per cent who think the opposite).

This fear of national decline is also accompanied by a fear of social and economic decline, particularly in the many households that have been unable to secure their long-term stability and professional future since the crisis that struck in 2009. This is particularly true among those at the start and end of their careers, the two population groups that are most sensitive to economic fluctuations. According to figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – which are almost identical to those of the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) – the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–24 in France has increased over the last five years, rising from 22.57 per cent in 2009 to 24.68 per cent in 2015,<sup>19</sup> almost 12 percentage points more than the OECD average. As for unemployment among the over-50s, this has risen from 5.3 per cent in 2009 to 6.9 per cent in 2014.<sup>20</sup> So, whether this is just a perception or a perceptible reality, the fear of a drop in status remains constant in France.<sup>21</sup>

### **Another key element in French public debate: collective pessimism for the next 12 months**

Despite seeing the start of an economic recovery in 2016, the French are generally concerned about the next 12 months and think that the situation will get worse in Europe and at local and national levels (figure 6). The most frequently cited source of concern is again the future of France as a whole. Thus, more

than 1 in 2 (53 per cent) French people think that the situation will get worse for the country, while 47 per cent are concerned for the future of the whole of Europe. Although the gap is less wide, the French are also pessimistic about the next 12 months at local and individual levels, since 40 per cent think that the situation will deteriorate in their region, and 1 in 3 (33 per cent) say they are pessimistic about their personal situation and that of their family.

Figure 6 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on their expectations for the next 12 months for Europe, France, their region, and themselves and their family ('Generally speaking, do you think things will get better or worse over the next 12 months for...?')**

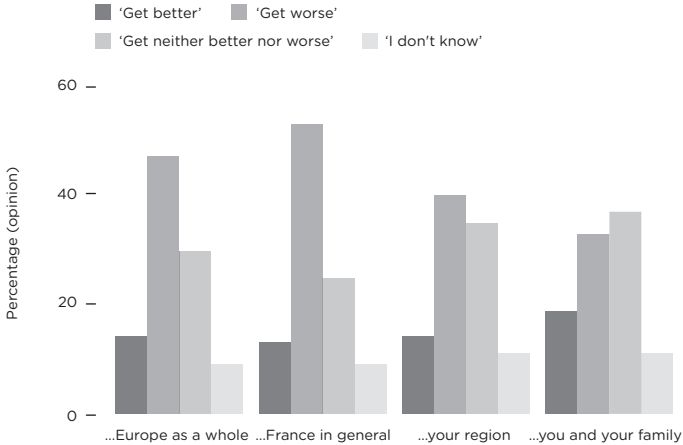
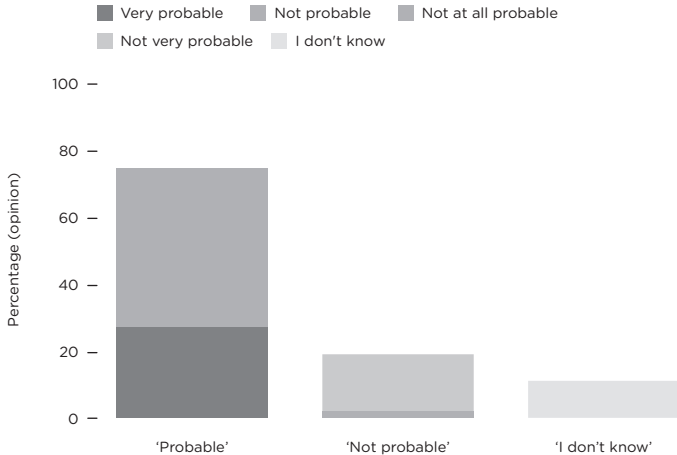


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The French political climate is fed by fears that still loom over the post-crisis period. Indeed, the French do not seem convinced that France has done everything necessary to learn from the lessons of 2009 as regards the possibility of another major financial crisis (figure 7). This results in a concern shared by 7 in 10 French people who think that such an event is 'probable' in the medium term. This concern is particularly significant since the question asked about a relatively short and imminent period of time (the next two years), suggesting that for a significant part of the population, the crisis that began in 2008/09 – considered to be historic and without parallel in decades – could happen again.



Figure 7 **Responses by survey respondents when asked if they think it is likely that there will be another major financial crisis in the next two years**



This perception among a majority of French people reflects a certain rejection of all efforts made by EU member states since 2009 – bank bailouts (in Spain) or rescue packages for national public finances (in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal), the European Stability Mechanism, Banking Union, reform of the Stability Pact... These data can be interpreted in many ways; in particular, they cast doubt on the level of public information or assimilation of all the mechanisms that have been established. Ultimately, however, the fear of a crisis, and thus the fear of encountering economic and social difficulties, is evidently still a current concern for most French people.

Figure 8 **Responses by survey respondents aged 18–34 to a statement on their expectations for the next 12 months for Europe, France, their region, and themselves and their family ('Generally speaking, do you think things will get better or worse over the next 12 months for...?')**

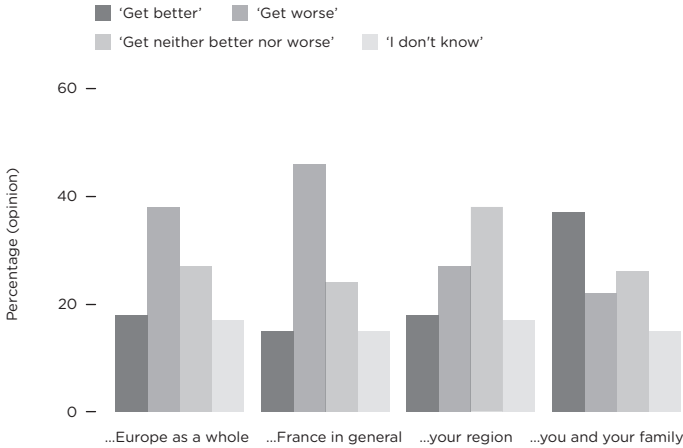


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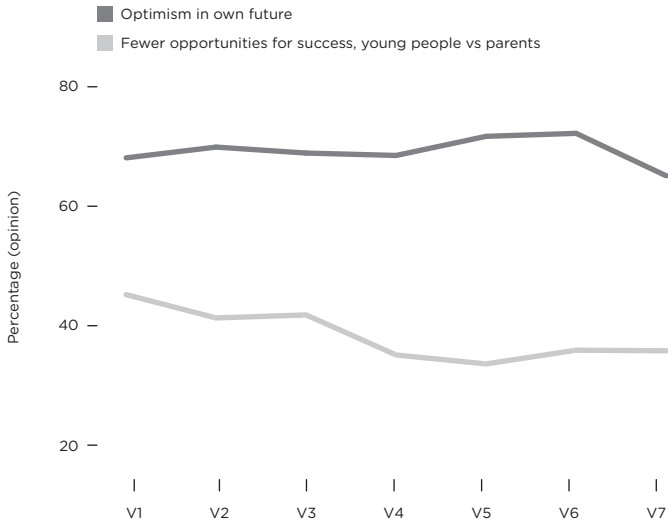
While the French population as a whole thus seems mired in generalised pessimism, young people aged between 18 and 34 constitute an exception. This is the only age bracket where there is a majority who think that things will get better in the next 12 months for them and their family (figure 8). Those in this age group are thus broadly pessimistic about the future of the country, but the difference is -31 per cent (compared with -40 per cent).

Similarly, when asked about the future of their region, the young pessimists still outweigh the optimists with a difference of 9 points, but this gap is 26 points when looking at the whole population. This more nuanced pessimism among the younger age brackets is an interesting finding, since

paradoxically this is the age group that might have suffered most from the effects of an underperforming job market.

Figure 9 shows the responses by survey respondents to a statement on their optimism for the future.

Figure 9 **Responses by survey respondents when asked to what extent they agree with the statements ‘I am optimistic when I think about my own future’ and ‘Do you think young people today will have more, the same, or fewer opportunities for success than their parents did in the French society of tomorrow?’**



Source: Chanvriil, 'Baromètre de la confiance politique CEVIPOF.'<sup>22</sup>

## 2 Elections at a time of political distrust: is the extreme right a possible solution or a further threat?

The perspective of presidential and legislative elections in spring 2017 requires us not only to measure the impact of fear on French public debate to evaluate its possible influence on the results at the ballot box, but also to consider another emotion that is distinct from fear, and which is very present in France (and beyond): anger towards the political system as a whole, particularly since the French question its capacity to tackle the main challenges facing their country effectively.

In this context, one of the determining factors in the upcoming presidential election is to know whether the extreme right could be considered a credible solution in the face of these challenges, or if it is seen more as a threat in the eyes of the French people. The data collected in the YouGov survey also provide confirmation and clarification of how French public opinion has evolved with regard to this issue.

### **More a feeling of mistrust than fear: the French political and institutional crisis**

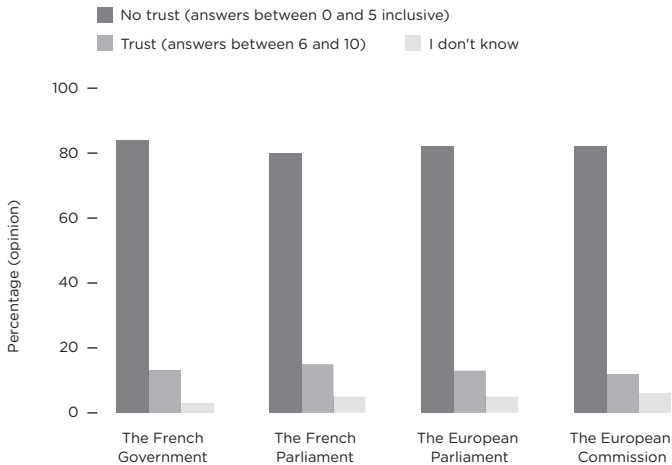
Alongside a singular vision of their country's destiny, the French also show a certain political disillusionment and an almost total lack of confidence in their institutions and principal representative bodies.

Thus, 8 in 10 French people do not trust the government, the parliament, the European Parliament, or the European

Commission. Similarly, nearly 1 in 4 French people believe that the best leaders ‘have strong principles and apply them without worrying about what others think, even if that means losing support’, which can be interpreted as dissatisfaction with recent political leadership.

Mistrust for the main political institutions remains dominant in the survey organised by the Institut Jacques Delors and Demos, since 84 per cent and 80 per cent of respondents do not trust the government or the French parliament respectively (figure 10). Mistrust in the European Parliament and the European Commission is also very high, since, on a scale of 1 to 10 measuring trust, 82 per cent of the population gives a score below 5 to both of these institutions.

Figure 10 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on trust in institutions (‘On a scale of 0 [no trust at all] to 10 [total trust], where appropriate, what degree of trust do you have in the following institutions?’)**



These results are particularly significant because they show the erosion of trust in the European institutions, which traditionally had a more positive image than national ones. The July 2016 Eurobarometer still shows the public trust the European Commission slightly more than their national parliaments: 33 per cent, compared with 26 per cent of citizens who trust their national parliaments. In comparison, before the crisis, 1 in 2 Europeans trusted the European Commission (50 per cent in 2008), while just 1 in 3 Europeans had the same trust in their national parliament (34 per cent).<sup>23</sup> The EU institutions are thus no longer sheltered from the political crises striking individual member states.

This mistrust among French people in political actors, deemed incapable of providing reassuring and convincing answers to the challenges of the 21st century, echoes the findings of the seven waves of the Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (CEVIPOF) barometer on political trust in France, which highlights a triple crisis in the system:

- A crisis of confidence in traditional political party divisions: since 2009, France has witnessed a continued rise in the share of the population who lack confidence in the left or the right to govern the country (67 per cent in 2015, +5 points compared with 2009).<sup>24</sup>
- A general decline in trust in figures like the president of the Republic, the prime minister and members of the European Parliament. There is an overall drop of between 4 and 9 points between 2009 and 2015.<sup>25</sup>
- A crisis of confidence in the future and more precisely in the government's capacity to govern interdependencies: the desire for protection from globalisation grows until 2013 (47 per cent against 31 per cent in 2009, +16 points), before declining slightly.<sup>26</sup>

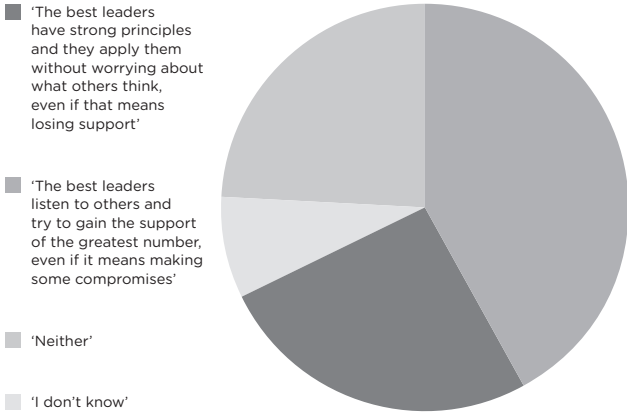
We see a lack of confidence in the French political system, while at the same time part of the French population finds that the third defining feature of Marine Le Pen is precisely that she is 'strong' (27 per cent), after 35 per cent who mention her 'authoritarian' character and 28 per cent who judge her to be

‘racist’ (figure 15). With a public opinion that is generally disappointed by the political options on offer, it is logical that when asked about the upcoming presidential election nearly 1 in 2 French people believes that voters will have to vote by default, ‘choosing the candidate that they think is best placed to prevent the election of a candidate who would be dangerous for France’. Altogether, these elements are not only strong warnings for the health of democracy in France and in Europe, but also betray a mindset that is vulnerable to binary and anti-elitist discourses such as those embodied by the Front National.

Should we therefore see this criticism of institutions as a deeper criticism of the system of representative democracy? No such claim can be made, since citizens continue to be attached to inclusive leadership models (see figure 11). The largest group of respondents (42 per cent) believe ‘the best leaders listen to others and try to gain the support of the greatest number, even if that means making some compromises’. In comparison, just 26 per cent of those questioned consider that political leadership should equate to ‘strength’ and ‘imposition’. This gap (-16 points) is not necessarily clear-cut, since 1 in 4 French people (24 per cent) are not satisfied by either of the two models.

Other recent studies, such as the second wave of the Democracy Observatory (published by *Revue Civique*, *Viavoice* and the *Fondation Jean Jaurès*), also show that despite the tensions in France over the last two years, there is a recovery in confidence in the functioning of French democracy.<sup>27</sup> According to the Observatory, 36 per cent of the population believe that democracy is functioning well, which is six points higher than in April 2014.<sup>28</sup> As was emphasised by the *Fondation Jean Jaurès* when the results were published, the Observatory also found that it is not because citizens are critical that they are not at the same time ‘very vigilant and concerned: 72 per cent think that democracy could be called into question in the years to come, with the vision of a threat brought simultaneously by political extremism, religious fundamentalism, and a growing divide between citizens and their representatives’.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 11 **Responses by survey respondents when asked to assess statements on political leadership ('Which statement best reflects your own opinion?')**



### The 2017 national elections, a choice by default?

For 1 in 2 French people, the 2017 presidential election will be mainly a choice by default. Nearly half (49 per cent) of those surveyed think that the vote will be principally a negative vote – choosing the candidate that voters think is best placed to prevent the election of a candidate who would be dangerous for France (figure 12). In comparison, just 1 in 4 French people (24 per cent) think that voters will cast their vote as part of a 'positive' process, choosing the candidate who proposes the best policies for the country. These results highlight a certain dissatisfaction with the politics on offer in the 2017 elections, since a majority of French people believe that the country will vote mainly in a 'tactical' way, and so 'against' candidates rather than 'for' particular individuals.



Figure 12 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on the 2017 election and the ‘tactical vote’ (‘As regards the upcoming presidential elections in 2017, do you think that the voters’ choice will be mainly...?’)**

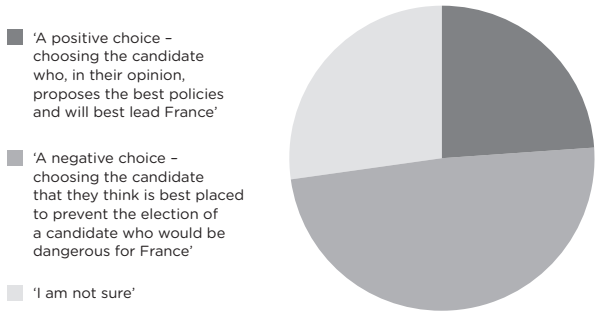
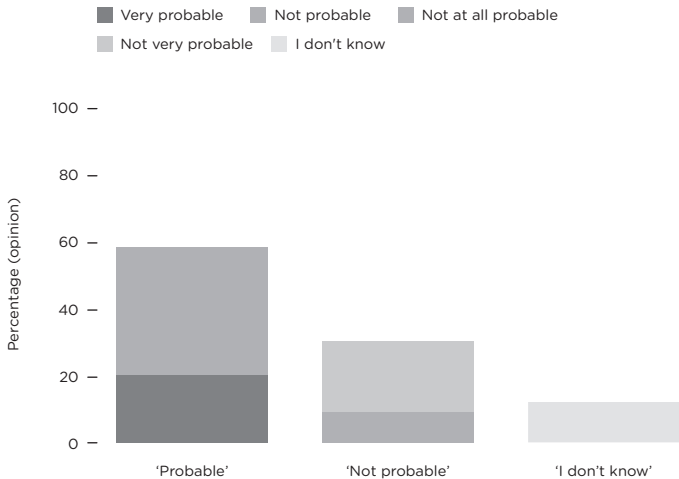


Figure 13 **Responses by survey respondents to the question ‘In your opinion, how likely is it that the following things will occur in France? The coming to power of a fascist or extreme-right political party in the next ten years’**



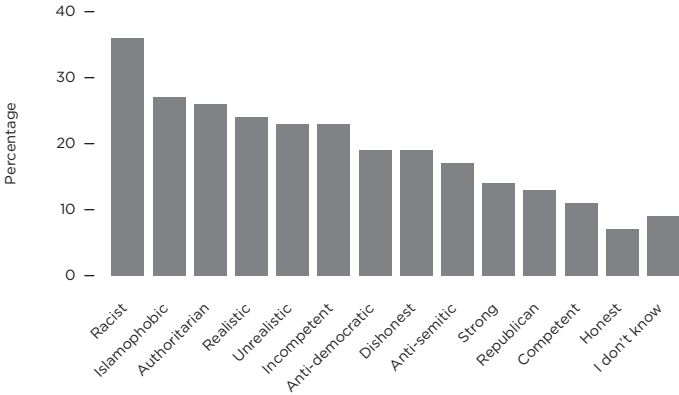
One of the parties that is likely to mobilise voters around this idea of a ‘tactical vote’ is the Front National, considered by most French people as a party that is ‘dangerous’ for France. For example, the most recent wave of the annual barometer organised by TNS-Sofres for Le Monde, France Info and Canal+ shows that 56 per cent of the population believe the Front National ‘represents a danger for democracy in France’.<sup>30</sup> This percentage has been rising since 2012, when it was 47 per cent, but it is still far from the 75 per cent of those surveyed in the 1990s, the time of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who thought that the party was dangerous for the country.

However, more than 1 in 2 French people consider the possibility of the extreme right coming to power in France as ‘likely’, and 1 in 5 consider this to be ‘very likely’ (figure 13). This result seems to confirm the normalisation of the Front National, particularly in the long term. Indeed, the question focuses on a long period of time – the next ten years – in order to minimise the boost related to the current political context and in particular the presidential election. In this respect, the percentage of those surveyed who believe that a fascist or extreme-right government is likely becomes all the more significant, and shows the degree to which concern or fear about the rise of extremism is the result of a deep structural change in French political life.

### **The image of the Front National, a crucial element in the 2017 presidential election**

When asked about the image of the Front National, the French think that this party’s three distinctive features are ‘racism’ (36 per cent), ‘Islamophobia’ (27 per cent) and ‘authoritarianism’ (26 per cent). Paradoxically, the fourth most frequently cited feature is ‘realism’ (24 per cent), listed with the same frequency as ‘incompetence’ (23 per cent), reflecting the image promoted by a party that claims to be more ‘sincere’ and less ‘conformist’ (figure 14).

Figure 14 Responses by survey respondents to the question ‘As regards the Front National, which three or four adjectives from the following list best describe the party and its politics?’



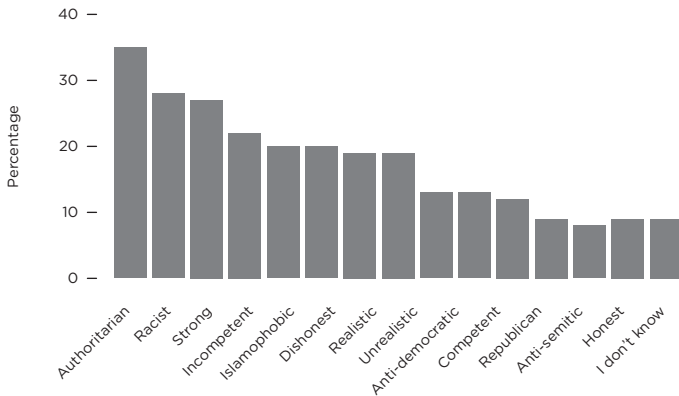
\*Total greater than 100%; more than one answer possible.

This image of the Front National is similar to that of Marine le Pen, but with several very significant differences. First of all, Marine Le Pen is considered to be ‘strong’ (figure 15). Thus, while just 14 per cent of French people describe the Front National as a ‘strong’ party, 27 per cent use this term to describe the personality of its leader. It is a character trait that is particularly important, since it is the third most cited trait when describing Marine Le Pen, behind her ‘authoritarian’ (35 per cent) and ‘racist’ (28 per cent) nature. Conversely, the number of French people who believe the Front National is ‘realistic’ is higher than the number who credit Marine Le Pen with this characteristic (19 per cent, -4 points difference).

Ultimately, Marine Le Pen’s image seems to be much more defined by authority and strength – values that could be seen as guarantees of conviction and firmness – while the party has a more ‘realistic’ side – which could be more associated with

the idea of ‘plain speaking’. Nonetheless, it has to be emphasised that the Front National and Marine Le Pen are still very widely associated with negative, extremist and discriminatory traits, particularly racism, Islamophobia, authoritarianism and incompetence. This begs the question of the paradox of a party that continues to win votes at each election, while still being described by the whole country as essentially an extremist party – far from being a ‘normalised’ and majority party as claimed in Front National communications.

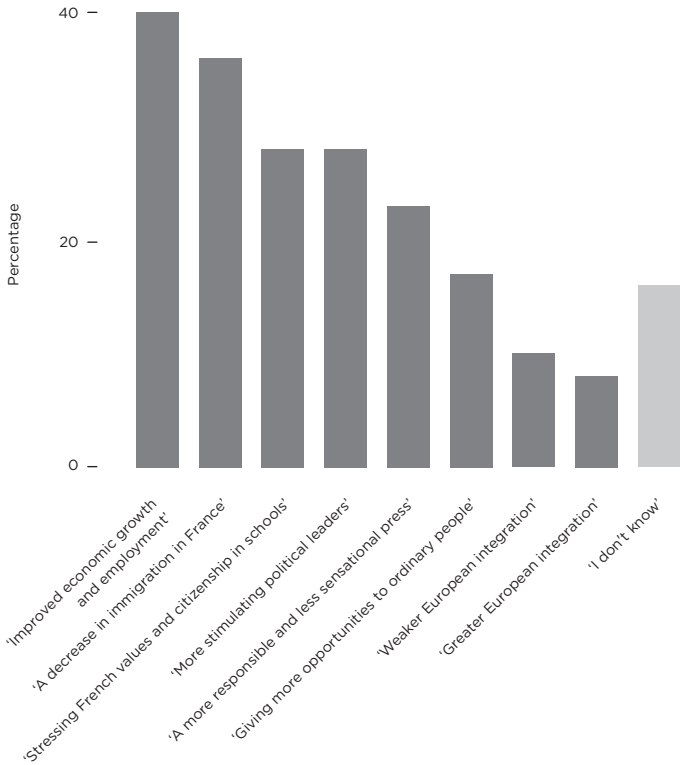
Figure 15 **Responses by survey respondents to the question ‘As regards the Front National, which three or four adjectives from the following list best describe its leader, Marine Le Pen?’**



\*Total greater than 100%: more than one answer possible.

The French people believe that the two best ways to reduce support for the Front National are to improve the economy (40 per cent) and reduce immigration in France (36 per cent) (figure 16).

Figure 16 **Responses by survey respondents to the question 'Among the following options available, which three could in your opinion reduce support for the Front National?'**



Total greater than 100%: more than one answer possible.

The fact that these two issues gain the most backing among the list of options to reduce support for the Front National reflects a certain propensity among French people to subscribe to the idea that the economy and migration are not dealt with as they should be by other political formations. It is therefore mainly the Front National that exploits these issues as the foundation of their political and electoral success, especially since suggestions such as 'a more responsible press' (23 per cent) or 'more stimulating policies' (28 per cent) are not considered as useful for hindering the rise of the extreme right. Significantly, the European question does not seem to play an essential role in the eyes of the French people, either in a pro-European way, or in the opposite sense. Thus having 'greater European integration' is considered to be a good way to combat the rise of the party by only 8 per cent of respondents, while almost the same percentage (9 per cent) think that 'weaker European integration' could significantly change the situation.

### 3 French citizens are increasingly Eurosceptic but not Europhobic

The European dimension of the YouGov survey allows us not only to appreciate the singularity of the French position compared with their British, German, Polish, Spanish and Swedish neighbours, but also to put the deterioration in their feelings for Europe into perspective. In a context of growing uncertainty and fears, the EU evokes contrasting emotions among French people, which are more akin to a growing Euroscepticism than a Europhobic desire to break ties with the EU.

#### **The EU evokes contrasting emotions**

The gap in France today between those in favour of ‘more Europe’ and those in favour of ‘less Europe’ is considerably wide (figure 17). More than 1 in 2 French people adopt negative positions about the European project, either by expressing a desire to reduce the EU’s powers (33 per cent) – the most widely chosen option – or, to a lesser degree, by supporting France’s exit from the EU (22 per cent).

These Eurosceptic (wanting to bring powers back to national level) and Europhobic (wanting to leave the EU) positions contrast with pro-European or federalist positions, which fewer respondents support. Thus, just 11 per cent of French people think that the long-term policy should be to stay in the EU while trying to expand its powers, and only 14 per cent go even further and think that the priority should be to work on creating a single European government. In any case, neither group is satisfied by the status quo, since just 6 per cent of those surveyed want to leave things as they are.

Figure 17 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on the future of France in the EU ('Do you think that France's long-term policy should be above all to...')**

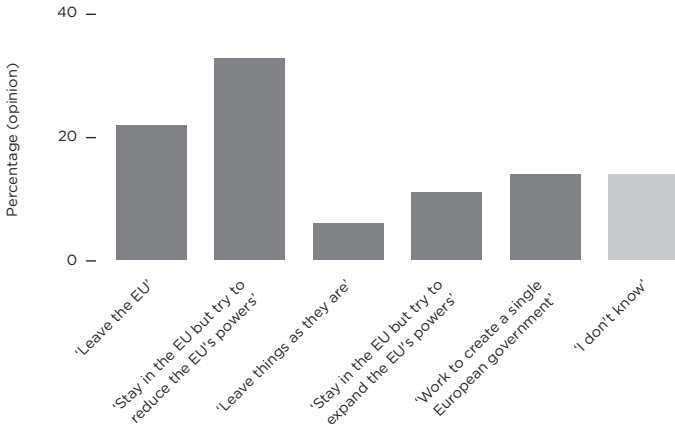
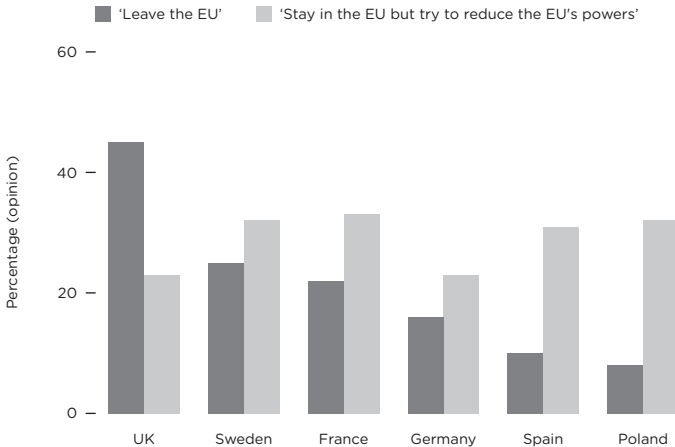


Figure 18 **Responses by survey respondents to a question on their country's long-term policy towards the EU ('Do you think [your country's] long-term policy should be above all to...')**





In today's European political context, particularly in light of the victory of the Brexit camp in the British referendum of June 2016, it is important to stress that the French remain nonetheless attached to their membership of the EU and do not call into question France's role as a member state. Compared with the 22 per cent who clearly wish to leave, 64 per cent support long-term projects that, despite their differences, still see France as a member of the EU.

The level of Euroscepticism in France is not the highest among the European populations surveyed (the UK has by far the highest levels, followed by Sweden, where public opinion appears quite similar to that in France). Importantly, the UK is the only country where the option 'leave the EU' surpasses the option 'stay in the EU but try to reduce its powers'. This only confirms once again the specificity of the British case in this regard (figure 18). Furthermore, while 33 per cent of French people do wish to stay in the EU while trying to limit its powers, this percentage is similar to that of Sweden (32 per cent), Poland (32 per cent) and even Spain (33 per cent) – one of the traditionally more pro-European countries.<sup>31</sup>

The relative weight of the European question is also shown by answers to the question on 'the best ways to fight against the Front National' (figure 16). Only 10 per cent of French people think that weaker European integration could reduce support for the Front National, while at the other end of the spectrum just 8 per cent think greater integration could make a difference. The two measures receive the least support of the options suggested, far below 'improved economic growth and employment' or 'a decrease in immigration in France'.

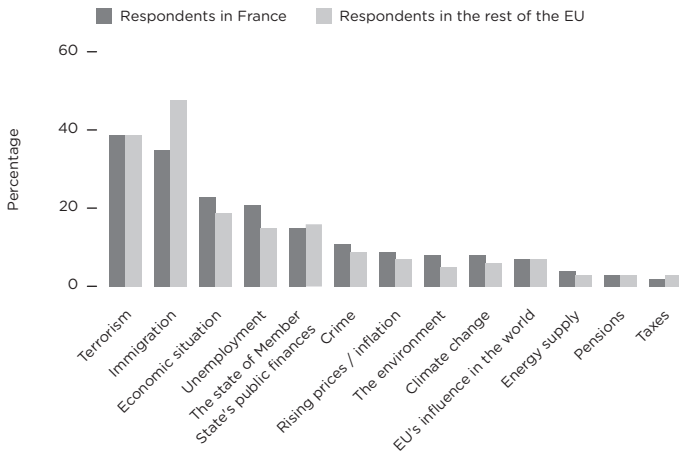
The findings from the YouGov study echo those from the study by Daniel Debomy entitled 'Europe malgré tout?' ('Europe in spite of everything?'), published by the Institut Jacques Delors in June 2016. Indeed, the author emphasises,

*Citizens' perception of their country's membership of the EU and the benefits it gains from membership has remained positive throughout the period [of the last ten years], and, in a significant proportion of Member States [including France], it is even more positive in 2015 than in 2005.*<sup>32</sup>

As in the YouGov survey, Daniel Debomy also mentions the most recent Eurobarometer surveys to explain how, on the other hand, the EU's image and the degree of confidence that its citizens feel towards it have declined significantly between 2005 and 2015 – by 10 points on average for the former and more than 10 points on average for the latter.

## The dissonance between French priorities at national and European levels

Figure 19 Responses by survey respondents to the question 'What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (%)'



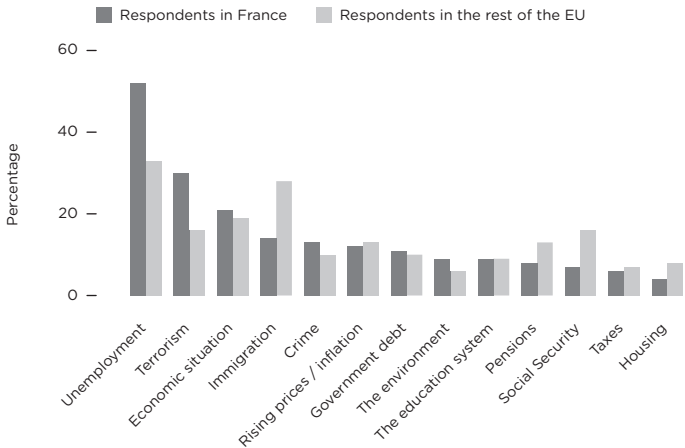
Source: European Commission, 'Public opinion in the European Union',<sup>33</sup>

Analysis of the European question in French public opinion reveals a dissonance between the priorities at national and European levels. Figures 19 and 20, taken from the Standard Eurobarometer of spring 2016, show respondents have a range of views about the priorities facing the EU and those facing their country, which varies depending on the territorial level

in question. Thus, when asked about priorities for France, French people first cite unemployment, terrorism and the economic situation (figure 20). But when asked about priorities for the EU, unemployment slides down to fourth place, and terrorism and immigration rise to the top of the list of the most urgent priorities (figure 19).

This dissonance might hide a certain disillusionment among French people over the fight against unemployment, a matter which is seen more as a national priority than a European challenge. To reduce this dissonance, the EU could develop a more hard-hitting strategy for national public opinion, particularly in the case of France, with the aim of showing that the EU can address the main threats facing its citizens effectively, but above all that the protections given by the European project – and which today are ignored by an apathetic public – are directly threatened by and incompatible with the populist wave.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 20 Responses by survey respondents to the question ‘What do you think are the two most important issues facing your country at the moment? (%)’



## Conclusion: the need to put an end to Franco-scepticism

The complete analysis of the results of the study by Demos and the Institut Jacques Delors lends further weight to the conclusion that there is a general malaise within French society, particularly over the future of France faced with phenomena such as globalisation. In general, three challenges seem particularly urgent: the negative perception of economic and financial globalisation, pessimism in the short term, and the feeling of insecurity in the face of multiple crises in the medium and long term. Considering such an overview in the run-up to the national elections in spring 2017, it must be stressed that the expression of manifold fears in French public debate is even more dangerous because it takes place in a context of great distrust in the ability of institutions to meet the challenges facing France effectively. The rise of the Front National therefore appears not only to be a reflection of fears felt by French people, but also the expression of their anger towards the political system. The rise of the Front National will be contained as long as a majority of French people considers the possibility of the Front National coming to power to be not a possible solution but another threat to the stability and destiny of their country.

Finally, the comparative analysis of French public opinion also highlights that this country is not characterised by growing British-style Europhobia. Rather, we see the relative growth of a Euroscepticism that echoes the current polymorphous crisis in the EU, but is also the expression of frustration arising from a dissonance between French priorities and European actions. From this perspective, anger and frustration seem to be two emotions that are distinct from fear, the latter being more directly connected to the development of the global economic and geopolitical context.

It would probably be possible to ease these feelings of anger and frustration in France more easily if the national authorities recovered the ability to deal effectively with the challenges facing French citizens, drawing them away from the Franco-scepticism that seems to have pervaded them for many years.

## Notes

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- 10 YouGov surveyed adults (aged 18+) in six countries online between 23 August and 7 September 2016. The sample sizes were as follows: France – 1,001; Germany – 2,125; Poland – 1,011; Spain – 1,000; Sweden – 1,007; UK – 1,661 (only adults from Great Britain were surveyed in UK polling). The figures have been weighted and are representative of adults aged 18+ on age, gender and region. Four YouGov panels (GB, France, Germany and Sweden) also took account of other factors such as last political vote, education and political affiliation. Two non-YouGov panels (Poland and Spain) were sampled by age, gender and region and weighted by these variables in addition to last political vote and education post-fieldwork. All respondents were asked a set of common questions. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.
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# 3 **Germany – Mind the gap: understanding public opinion and elite interpretations of EU concerns in Germany**

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## Summary

Germany has long been viewed as a country of Europhiles, but recently the country has been displaying signs of growing Euroscepticism. When asked to think about Europe, a sizeable minority of Germans expresses concern over a loss of social security or jobs, a loss of national identity and culture, or Germany's financial contributions to the European Union (EU). German political elites across the left–right spectrum have left these concerns largely unaddressed and continue to advocate for the European project. This raises questions about there being a potential gap between public and elite conceptions of EU fears.

Our comparison of survey data on German public opinion with insights from elite interviews with political leaders reveals that there is indeed a gap between public opinion and elite interpretations of the EU. Political decision-makers across the left–right spectrum perceive fears in Germany to be largely generalised, non-concrete and unrelated to evaluations of the EU. However, this is the case for a minority of Germans only. The majority show a pattern of concrete, distinguishable concerns, suggesting that we cannot speak about EU fears in the aggregate. Citizens' levels of anxiety are directly related to their evaluations of Germany's future strategy in the EU: those who are more worried overall are more likely to want Germany to leave the EU or work towards reducing the EU's powers. While we find citizens' concerns to be dependent on both pragmatic economic evaluations and more emotive variables such as the degree of national and European identification, politicians focus on pragmatic economic evaluations. They underestimate the impact of emotional affiliations as expressed through identity on German public opinion.

Given German political elites' limited understanding of the public's concerns, it is not surprising to find that

politicians have difficulties addressing them. Although politicians recognise the importance of representation for citizens' evaluations of the legitimacy of the EU, the measures they suggest remain largely one-dimensional, centred on explaining the EU's procedures and increasing identification with the EU. Politicians, it seems, struggle to think of measures to improve the EU's problem-solving capacity.

In order to close the gap between public and elite conceptions about the EU in Germany, it is crucial to support politicians in their task of understanding and addressing citizens' worries. This requires research and debate on EU-related concerns, strategies for the transfer of knowledge about their underlying drivers and instruments to facilitate public–elite interaction about the EU as well as a broader range of policy options to address EU concerns across several levels of governance.

# Introduction

Germany has long been viewed as a country of Europhiles. A recent survey conducted for the purpose of this project concludes that of the six European countries in the study (France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK), Germany has the least Eurosceptic citizenry.<sup>1</sup> However, while Germany is perhaps less Eurosceptic than other places in Europe, recurring crises in the EU have left their mark on German society and public opinion towards the EU. The German public has recently shown signs of increasingly Eurosceptic attitudes.

German public attitudes towards the EU seem paradoxical at first. On the one hand, more Germans than ever agree that membership in the EU is a good thing (71 per cent) and that overall their country has benefited from EU membership (62 per cent).<sup>2</sup> At the same time, after a first low during the Eurozone crisis in 2010/11, the EU's image in Germany is on the decline, and faster than before. In spring 2016 only 29 per cent of Germans said the EU conjured up an overall positive image. These latest Eurobarometer measurements attest to one of the sharpest drops in public perception of the EU's image (-16 percentage points from spring 2015 to spring 2016). Few countries have a more negative perception of the EU: it fares worse only in the Czech Republic, Cyprus and Greece.<sup>3</sup>

Many have expressed surprise at the EU's negative image in Germany, which is deemed the most powerful and most trusted member state in the EU;<sup>4</sup> concerns are perceived to be much less material than those of many other Eurosceptics around the continent. Economic indicators provide clear evidence of the German economy's outstandingly fast recovery after the financial and Eurozone crisis.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to many of its neighbours it is deemed an 'island of the fortunate'. Yet, the decline of the EU's image

among the German public suggests that there may be a difference between pragmatic evaluations of Germany's structural position within the EU and more ideological or emotional evaluations of the EU as an institution itself. Public opinion surveys point towards fear as one of the underlying drivers of the EU's negative image in Germany: when asked to think about the EU, a sizeable minority of Germans expresses concerns about the loss of social security or jobs, the loss of national identity and culture, or increasing payments to the EU.

These apprehensions have remained largely unaddressed by political leaders in Germany. Over the past few decades German political elites across the left–right spectrum have carefully crafted an identity that is anchored in an integrated Europe. Most established political parties in Germany continue to advocate for the European project and pursue policies that are geared towards deeper European integration, focusing on the technical and pragmatic evaluations of the EU's benefits. Even Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – often portrayed as Germany's answer to right-wing Eurosceptic populists such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) or the French Front National – has not always campaigned against the EU or European integration per se. It was initially set up as a platform opposing Germany's financial commitments to the EU in particular, and has now turned towards advocating for conservative migration policy rather than against EU integration as its core issue.<sup>6</sup>

The paradox of the EU's declining image among German citizens while Germany is currently the EU's most influential, most prosperous and – at least in terms of political elites – most Europhile member state raises the question of whether there is a gap between public and elite conceptions of the EU in Germany. What exactly drives fears about the EU among German citizens? Are EU-related fears in Germany a mere expression of a general culture of fear? Are political elites in Germany aware of these fears and, if so, how do they interpret them?

In this report we present findings from a case study of concerns about the EU in Germany and their evaluation by

German political elites. We combine analysis of public opinion data with insights derived from elite interviews with German politicians and political analysts to further the understanding of these worries and explore how political elites evaluate and address them. Key insights presented in this report focus on the different types of concerns expressed by citizens, their drivers, and how they can be addressed by political elites. Throughout the report we compare citizens' expressions of concern with how political decision-makers evaluate them. Using our understanding of the anxieties of German citizens and political elites we ultimately recommend strategies to approach these fears in the broader European context.

# Methodology

To further the understanding of concerns about the EU in Germany and determine whether there is a gap between citizens' EU fears and their evaluation by political elites in Germany we contrast the analysis of public opinion data about attitudes towards the EU with insights derived from elite interviews with German politicians and political analysts. We aim to provide some explicit contrasts between elite and mass views and understand where public perceptions are adequately understood by decision-makers and where gaps in understanding may exist that demand further exploration.

## **Analysis of public opinion survey data on EU attitudes in Germany**

To gain an understanding of citizens' attitudes towards the EU in Germany, we analyse the German dataset from a comparative survey commissioned by Demos for the purpose of this project. A sample of 2,125 German adults (aged 18+), representative in age, gender and region, were interviewed about their fears about and attitudes towards the EU and their representation in it.

In addition to capturing demographic data, education and income, the survey consisted of twelve questions, of which eight were asked across all countries included in the study (Germany, France, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK) and four were specific to the German case study. Where possible, survey questions were adopted from existing standard surveys on political attitudes, such as the European Social Survey and the European Value Survey. The survey was conducted online by YouGov between 23 August and 7 September 2016. Respondents were invited through YouGov's online panel and were included in the final dataset if they answered all questions. The final data have been weighted, taking into account last political vote, education and political affiliation.

## Elite interviews with political leaders

To understand the extent to which we can speak of a gap between public and elite conceptions of the EU in Germany, we contrast data on public opinion with the views of political decision-makers, as expressed in our interviews with them. In doing so, we employ a broad definition of political elites that comprises all those who act as key representatives, decision-makers and gatekeepers or hold exclusive information about political processes. Within this definition political elites can include politicians at various levels of government or representation, staff at political institutions, political analysts and researchers' as well as journalists.

In this report we present insights from nine interviews with political elites in Germany. The sample includes politicians from several levels: regional, national and European. Regional party functionaries, members of the German Bundestag (MPs) and members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have been interviewed. All four political parties constituting the current German parliament are represented in the sample. The sample further includes analysts from different political party think tanks and a journalist. The participants represent various regions in Germany (figure 1).

Participants were recruited via d|part's network and at high-level workshops about current policy issues. With the exception of analysts from party think tanks, they were selected in order to represent various areas of policy expertise, not specifically European affairs. The sample includes politicians focused on energy and transport policy, environmental policy, regional development, home and foreign affairs. In conversations lasting 45–60 minutes, we asked participants about their conception of citizens' evaluations of the EU, the concrete concerns and fears of citizens in their constituency, and how they evaluate and plan to address them. Interviews took place in person or via telephone and were conducted between 14 September and 17 October 2016.

Figure 1 **Areas represented by participants interviewed**

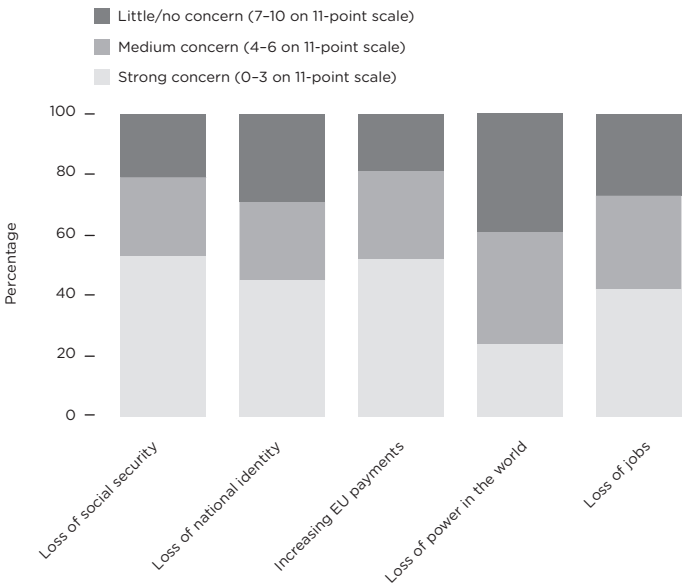




## Results

Sizeable numbers of Germans participating in our survey expressed strong fears about the impact of the EU. There are majorities with strong concerns about the loss of social security (53 per cent) and increasing payments to the EU (52 per cent) and significant minorities with strong fears about the loss of jobs (45 per cent) and the loss of national identity and culture in Germany (42 per cent). We observe the lowest level of concern for the loss of power in the world, where only 24 per cent of respondents can be classified as strongly concerned (figure 2).

Figure 2 **Percentage of respondents expressing concern about the EU**



Taking a closer look at these aggregate figures we find that the levels of concern vary significantly across the different issues. Someone who is very worried about the loss of jobs may very well express little or no apprehension over other factors, suggesting that the driver of such concern is not a general sense of fear, but rather a more specific motivation.

What is more, the population shows at least some fear about all five areas discussed. The loss of social security and increasing payments to the EU are of at least some concern for 1 in 5 citizens. When asked about the loss of national identity and the loss of jobs more than 40 per cent of citizens say they are not at all worried, while 29 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively, express strong concern.

These differences in distribution require further investigation. They suggest there are differences in the underlying drivers of fears: there are various reasons why citizens express distinct and specific worries. In the following section, we focus on the individual perspectives citizens and political decision-makers take over concerns about the EU in Germany. We investigate how far we can speak of similar drivers of apprehension in the German population and how politicians perceive citizens' concerns.

### **Insight 1: Diffuse, generalised perceptions of fear vs concrete, distinguishable concerns**

Politicians in Germany believe there are no concrete, distinguishable fears or worries about the EU. Four out of six politicians say that they have not heard of or spoken to citizens in their constituency about concrete concerns in relation to the EU. Instead, they describe a latent feeling of general malaise. Looking at the macroeconomic condition rather than at people's individual perceptions, politicians say that – in contrast to five or ten years ago when Germany was considered 'the sick man of Europe'<sup>27</sup> – the loss of social security or loss of jobs are not concrete fears of citizens in their constituency. If concrete concerns are mentioned at all, then they are only held by citizens who are perceived to hold extreme political opinions:

*I have honestly never heard of anyone afraid about a loss of power in the world for Germany.*

MP, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

*The loss of jobs or social security is not an issue here at the moment. Whoever wants to work can work in Germany at the moment.*

MEP, Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU)

*I haven't heard anyone in my constituency be concerned about the loss of their national identity or German culture. Maybe this is more of a concern in Frauke Petry's constituency?<sup>8</sup>*

MP, CDU/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU)

Instead, politicians theorise about non-concrete fear and insecurity among the German public. This general feeling of insecurity is believed to originate from recurring crises and global challenges, but also in particular from citizens' pragmatic evaluations of Germany's economic condition. According to politicians, citizens may fear that Germany's current economic prosperity is in danger and that social and economic decline are looming. Some mention that the recurring crises in the EU might lead citizens to project a general feeling of insecurity and precariousness onto the EU:

*There is a general concern that stems from the constant crises that we are facing. They are mixed up somehow.*

MP, SPD

*It is less of a concrete fear that you could personally be affected, but more a general emotional state.*

MP, CDU/CSU

*There is an accumulation of many anxieties about the future piled up. What will happen to my future? How about my job, my pension?*

Analyst

*When looking at all the crises around us at the moment, I am not surprised when I hear people say ‘How is this going to affect Germany?’ The underlying question is of course whether we, too, will not do so well anymore in the future.*

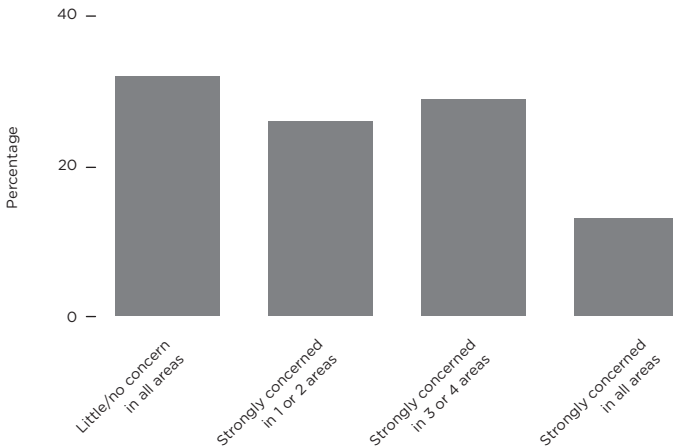
Analyst

*In particular the refugees impersonate the worries of citizens whether or not we will be able to keep our current level of prosperity.*

Journalist

If we were to assume that there is indeed a generalised, diffuse feeling of fear among the German public, we would expect to see the majority of citizens report generalised concerns about all or most areas included in the survey: social security, jobs, national identity, power in the world and increasing EU payments. Yet, the survey data reveal that this is the case for a minority of Germans only: less than 15 per cent of respondents express concerns about all areas included in the survey (figure 3).

Figure 3 **Respondents expressing strong concern (0-3 on 11-point scale) across the five areas included in the survey (%)**



In other words, when we compare the concerns expressed by German citizens with political elites' perceptions of their fears, we find that there is indeed a gap between public opinion and the political elite's interpretations in Germany. While political decision-makers perceive fears and insecurities among the German public to be largely generalised, non-concrete or unrelated to their evaluation of the EU, citizens show a pattern of concrete, distinguishable fears that are relevant to their evaluation of the EU. There are various reasons why citizens are worried about the five areas included in this survey. It is necessary to distinguish carefully between different types of concerns, to uncover the experiences and views that motivate them.

As figure 3 shows, a minority of Germans are worried about the EU across the board. This group has a distinguishable profile: those who express similarly high levels of concern across all five dimensions are most likely to identify with the AfD (though closely followed by those who do not feel close to any party). They tend to be older, tend to identify as Germans only and feel least represented in the EU, especially by German political actors. Similarly 32 per cent of respondents find very little to be afraid of in relation to the EU. Those who feel close to the Green Party are least likely to show fears regarding the EU overall, but at times they share that position with other parties. For instance, those identifying with the liberal Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) tend to share the Greens' low level of concern about potential social security losses, while they are significantly more uneasy about other aspects of EU membership.

In contrast to politicians' perceptions of a generalised feeling of insecurity, the majority of citizens show a pattern of concrete, distinguishable concern. More than 50 per cent of respondents express significant anxiety about only a few topics. This suggests that we cannot speak about EU fears as an aggregate, generalised feeling, but need to distinguish between different types of concerns and their drivers.

It is difficult to make out a particular demographic profile for those who express different types of apprehension although some of the variation in levels of concern correlates

with different demographic characteristics. On all five indicators, women are somewhat more likely to be fearful than men (figure 4). Younger people (aged 18–34 years) tend to be less apprehensive about the EU, but not to the same extent across all dimensions (figure 5). Eastern Germans are on the whole more worried about the EU than those who live in the west of the country (most pronounced for loss of social security and loss of national identity), but the differences are marginal (figure 7). We will take a closer look at Germany’s history of reunification and the particular age groups driving this East–West difference in the section ‘Deep dive: where the East–West divide continues to exist’, below. The most consistent effect is found for education. Those who have enjoyed higher levels of education tend to be significantly less concerned about the EU. The strength of this relationship is mostly consistent across all five dimensions (figure 6).

Figure 4 **Fears of respondents by sex (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)<sup>9</sup>**

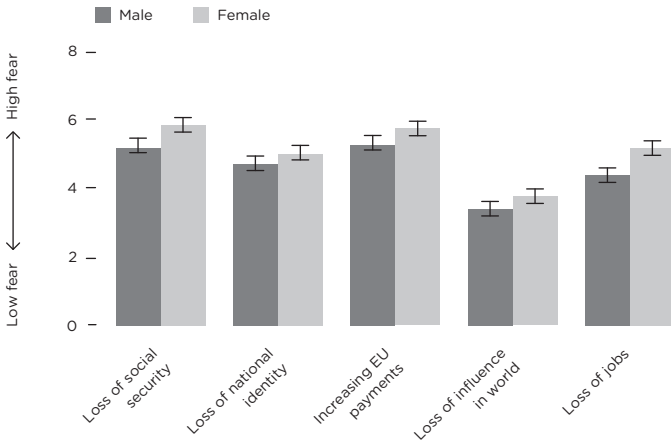


Figure 5 **Fears of respondents by age (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**

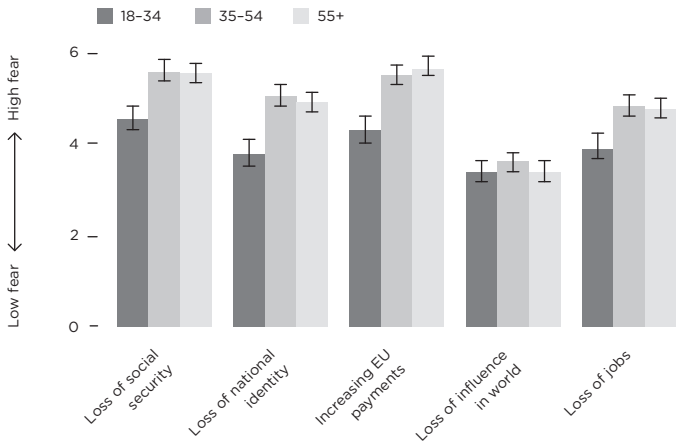


Figure 6 **Fears of respondents by education (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**

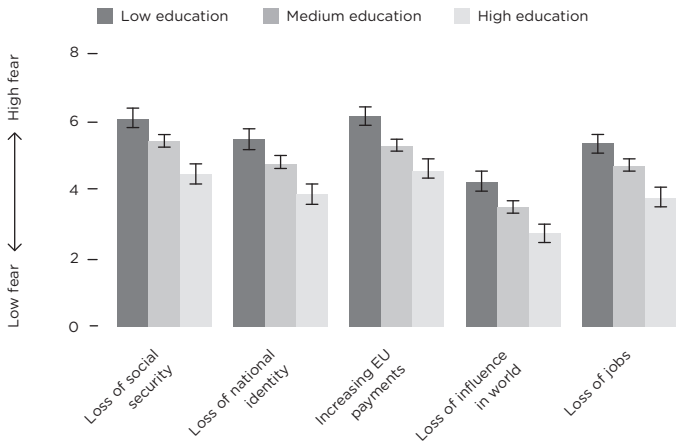
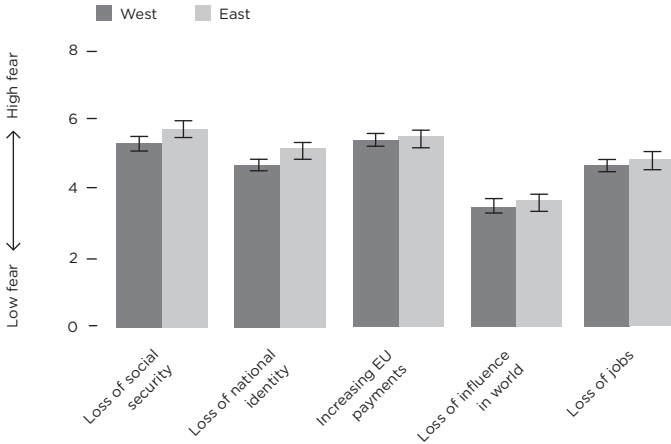


Figure 7 **Fears of respondents by old states (East) and new federal states (West) (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**

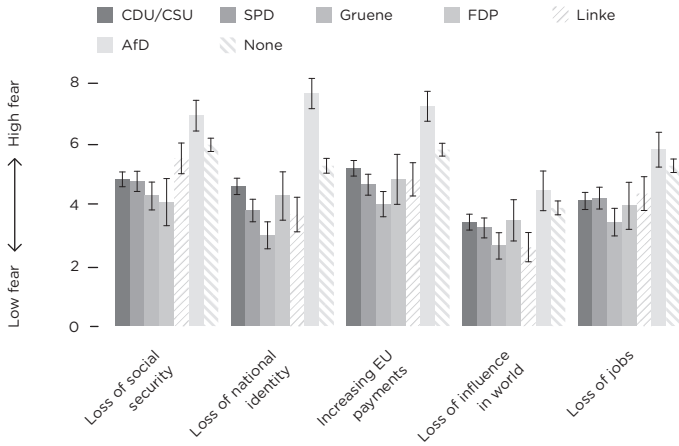


It is especially differences in party identification across the types of concern that illustrate how we cannot speak of a latent sentiment of fear across the German population. There are some parties whose supporters show distinct positions, but also clear differences between types of fears. Supporters of different political parties have different priorities and worries (figure 8), suggesting that we should not talk about EU fears in the aggregate but distinguish between them carefully.

Looking at the parties that form the current coalition government in Germany (CDU/CSU and SPD), CDU/CSU supporters are more worried about increasing payments from Germany to the EU and a loss of national identity than people supporting the Social Democrats. Yet, regarding fears of losing jobs, a loss of influence in the world and a loss of social security, SPD and CDU/CSU supporters appear to be equally concerned. Citizens who identify with Die Linke (together with those who feel closest to the Green Party) are least likely to show anxiety about a loss of influence in the world, while they are most concerned about a potential loss of social security.



Figure 8 **Fears of respondents by political party they have affinity for (excluding other parties with small sample sizes) (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**



Thus far, the results demonstrate that particular positions on the political spectrum are not so much associated with a general level of concern about the EU, but rather with worry about specific aspects of it. This suggests that if we can speak of a ‘latent fear’ at all, then it applies only for a small part of the population. While we do find that high levels of general concern often coincide with support for the AfD or for no party at all, everything in between is quite complex. Because of this complexity we can refute claims that one party’s supporters are clearly more or less positive in appraising the EU than others. The exception is those who identify with the AfD or no party at all: they are most likely to show a pattern of generalised concern. For the remainder, we need to distinguish between different types of fears and drivers of fear.

## **Insight 2: Citizens’ concerns are related to their evaluations of the future of the EU**

Some politicians believe that citizens project their generalised

feeling of insecurity onto the EU, suggesting that citizens' attitudes towards the EU bear little relation to concrete EU outputs. Recurring crises in the EU and a lack of legitimacy of EU institutions are believed to forge a connection between generalised fears and criticism of the EU and Germany's long-term strategy in it:

*I don't think there are concrete EU-related fears or worries. It is more a diffuse, abstract feeling of insecurity among citizens.*

MP, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

*For many people, the EU is the scapegoat for all sorts of problems.*

Regional party functionary, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

*We have only talked about crises in Europe lately. No wonder citizens believe everything bad comes from the EU.*

MP, SPD

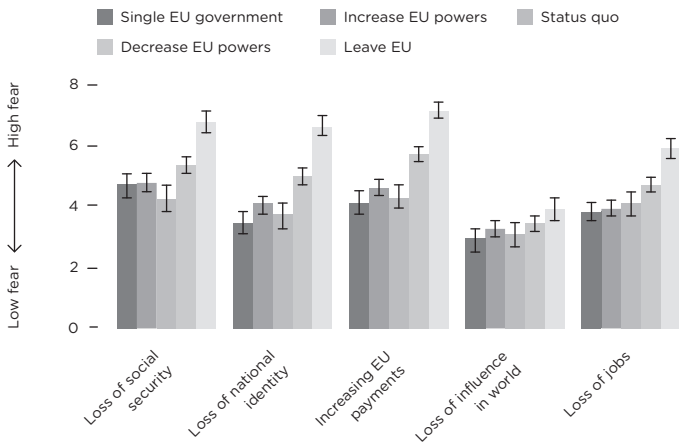
We find, however, that citizens' concerns are directly related to their evaluations of Germany's future strategy in the EU. Those respondents who say that Germany should leave the EU are significantly and substantially more likely to express fears across the different domains under investigation than any other group (figure 9). We also find that those who think that powers should be returned to the member states are significantly more likely to be concerned than those who want to maintain the status quo or increase the EU's powers (though the difference tends to be smaller than with those advocating a full exit from the EU, except for increasing EU payments).

At the other end of the spectrum, however, there is no simple linear relationship between the degree of concern and Germany's long-term strategy in the EU. In other words, a step towards more pro-EU views is not necessarily associated with decreasing EU fears. For most domains investigated there are no significant differences between those who want to expand the powers of the EU, those who want a single European government and those who favour the status quo. Those who favour the status quo are in fact less worried about

a loss in social security, for example, than those who want to see more governance at the EU level.

This suggests that the relationship between fears about the EU and constitutional preferences about Germany's relationship with the EU is not simple or linear; it is asymmetric. While those who want to see the powers of the EU reduced or Germany to leave the EU indeed express more concern about the EU across the different areas under investigation, we do not find that the same applies for those favouring the status quo or an enhancement of EU powers compared with the most Europhile respondents. Taken together, those who favour the EU's status quo are the least concerned across all areas. Those who want to either reduce or increase the EU's competencies express distinct concern in at least some of the areas included in this survey. In the widest sense, this can be interpreted as a mandate for EU reform to alleviate individual concrete worries about the EU in Germany.

Figure 9 **Fears of respondents by view of what Germany's long-term strategy towards the EU should be (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**



### **Insight 3: Concerns about the EU depend on both pragmatic economic evaluations and emotive (latent) variables**

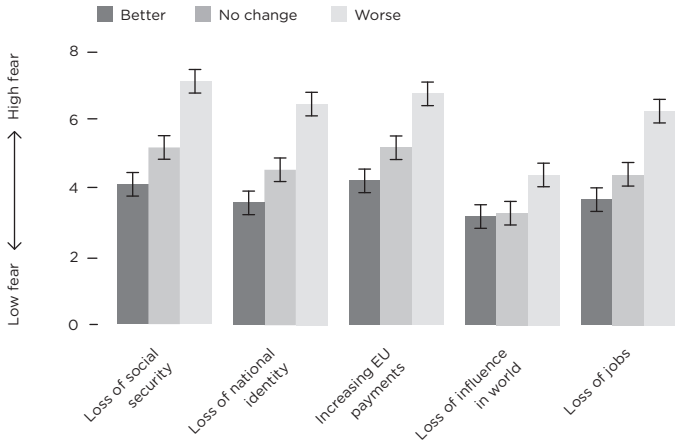
What drives citizens' concerns about the EU? The complexities in the distribution of concern, demographic patterns and party identification – as well as the asymmetric relationship between fears about the EU and constitutional preferences about Germany's relationship with the EU we have seen so far – suggest that the underlying drivers of anxiety about the EU are not uniform either. We indeed find that citizens' concerns about the EU depend on two types of considerations: pragmatic economic concerns and emotive variables such as the degree of national and European identification.

#### **Pragmatic economic evaluations as a driving force of EU concerns**

We find a significant correlation between citizens' concerns about the EU and their individual appraisal of their own economic prospects over the next 12 months. Those who have a negative outlook on their own position in the near future are also more concerned about the EU than those who have a positive outlook. Citizens who say that they have positive expectations for their own future are less likely to express unease across all five dimensions included in this study.

However, the strength of the effect varies across the different domains of concern. It is least pronounced for the question of whether people fear a loss of influence in the world, where there is no significant difference between those thinking their own situation will be better and those who think there will be no change. In all cases the negative effect is stronger than the positive effect: the difference between those who expect their situation to become less favourable (and have greater fears) and those who expect no change is greater than the comparison between those expecting an improvement in their situation and those who expect no change.

Figure 10 **Fears of respondents by expectations about how their personal situation will develop over the next 12 months (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**



In their analysis, politicians and political analysts acknowledge that pragmatic economic considerations are the main driver of public concern. However, many focus on macroeconomic conditions. Looking at Germany's outstanding economic indicators, they believe that citizens understand how the country's current economic development is 'completely different from that in the rest of Europe' (MP, SPD) and how Germany is 'an island of the fortunate' (MP, SPD). Citizens are thought to understand that 'Germany is only doing well [economically] when others [in the EU] are doing well' (analyst). According to politicians, citizens' pragmatic evaluations of Germany's export-oriented economy and its prospects in a crisis-ridden EU give rise to general insecurity and an overall 'gloomy outlook'. Concerns about Germany's economic prosperity are ultimately related to a feeling of relative economic precariousness and an (unfounded) fear of social and economic decline.

Few politicians differentiate between macroeconomic and individual evaluations of the economic situation: only two

of the politicians interviewed for this study admit that the economic evaluations are very different depending on who they speak to:

*If someone has just lost their job, it doesn't really help to gush about the macroeconomic benefits we gain from being a member of the EU.*

MP, SPD

They recognise that there are big discrepancies between, for example, citizens in different types of work relations, economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups, citizens in Eastern and Western Germany, and those in urban and rural regions in Germany.

#### **Deep dive: where the East-West divide continues to exist**

Some 25 years after German reunification, differences between East and West Germany are still apparent in some areas of public opinion. While in most domains investigated for the purpose of this case study East–West differences are marginal, they persist especially in the evaluation of one's personal (economic) situation and outlook on the future. One reason is that our evaluation of our personal situation is relative to the situation of others and to earlier life experience. The older we are the further we can look back: we compare whether our current situation is better or worse than previous experiences over the life course. This makes differences in evaluations of the personal (economic) situation especially sticky.

Three interviewees (two political analysts and one politician whose constituency is in one of the new federal states) mention that it is the older generations of East Germans for whom evaluations of one's personal economic situation matter the most. Particularly the generation of today's 50–65-year-olds, who grew up and started their careers in the former German Democratic Republic, went through several major transformations over the course of their working lives (reunification during the 1990s, digitalisation, social and welfare reform during the 2000s, financial crisis during the 2010s):

*What we have seen are repeated devaluations of living conditions since 1989: first there was reunification, then the Hartz reforms, the financial crisis and now a refugee crisis. Naturally, this presented recurring challenges to identity.*

Analyst

*90 per cent of these people do a completely different job today than they did in 1990.*

MEP, CDU

These transformations brought challenges and significant hardships and left a number of people behind, especially in the new federal states of the former East. Even for those who successfully adapted to the changing environment of their working lives, the experience of knowing at least one family member or friend who failed to adapt to the many changes in state, labour market and economic conditions creates the perception that Germany's current economic success is hard-earned and not to be taken for granted. As a consequence, this generation of (Eastern) Germans is especially wary of potential economic or social decline, the loss of social security (in particular over pensions) and potential increases in tax rates caused by ever-larger payments to the EU. In simple terms, nobody has any interest in going through further hardships:

*It is almost a reflex that many people now have zero interest in going through similar transformations or to have to take similar risks yet again.*

MEP, CDU

Accordingly, when we look at the expectations about how people's personal situation will develop over the next 12 months in both East and West Germany across different age groups, we find that it is especially the middle-aged group of Eastern Germans (those who underwent most transformation in their working lives) who are most likely to have a pessimistic outlook. Differences between age groups are more pronounced in East than West Germany.

Figure 11 **Fears of respondents by expectations about how their personal situation will develop over the next 12 months (West vs East Germany) (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**

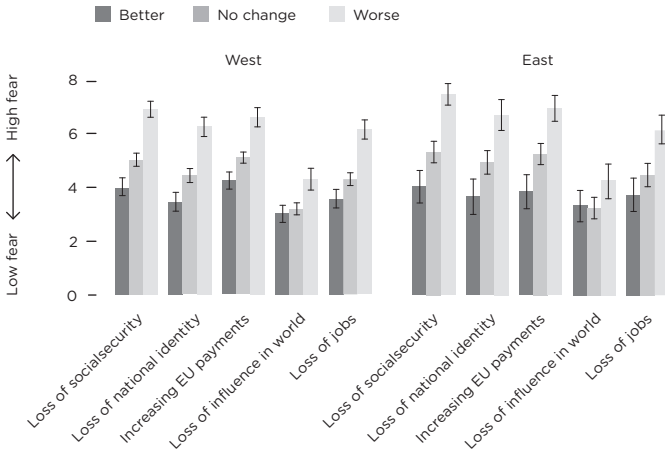
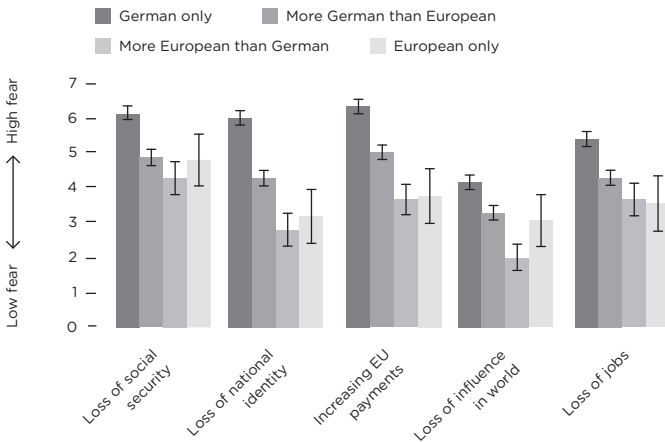


Figure 12 **Fears of respondents by identity (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**





This difference is also apparent in the levels of apprehension expressed about the EU: while the overall effect of pragmatic economic evaluations as a driver of different types of concern exists among both East and West Germans, it is more pronounced in East Germany, especially for fears of a loss of social security and increasing payments to the EU (figure 11).

### **Identity as a driving force of EU concerns**

However, not everything is determined by pragmatic evaluations of the economic situation. There are also more emotive factors that we find to be connected to the fears people have about the EU. There is a clear association between national identity and concern about the EU (figure 12). Those who identify as solely German are significantly more likely to be worried about the EU, but even those who say that they are more German than European are more worried than those who say they are more European than German. However, the strength of the relationship varies greatly. Unsurprisingly it is most strongly correlated with fears about losing one's national identity, but also quite a lot with a more pragmatic factor: the fear of increasing payments to the EU.

It is a widely accepted myth that matters of national identity and culture have little impact on German public opinion. While it is true that German public opinion is less impacted by national identity than that of other EU member states,<sup>10</sup> this does not mean it plays no role at all. It is therefore not surprising that politicians largely underestimate the impact of identity when assessing what drives EU-related concerns.

Some claim that citizens in their constituency have not mentioned concerns about a loss of national identity and culture. Others argue that fears over a loss of German culture are important only in relation to objections to international trade agreements. If at all, it is at the extreme margins of public opinion that politicians believe evaluations of identity and culture can be a driver of insecurity and fear. Calls for 'Germanisation' and a heightened awareness of German national identity are perceived to be an extreme view of a few members of the citizenry only:

*I haven't heard anyone in my constituency be concerned about the loss of their national identity or German culture.*

MP, CDU/CSU

*Nobody in my constituency would say something as extreme as 'Germany is not German enough anymore!' But there are worries about the future of our cultural assets. For example, people are worried what will happen to our Franconian Bratwurst when things like CETA [Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement] or TTIP [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership] come into place.*

MP, SPD

*This [national identity and culture] is a topic that is addressed by [a] few people with radical opinions only. The general public is less concerned about this.*

MEP, CDU

#### **Insight 4: Citizens' perceptions of their representation in the EU matter**

All politicians acknowledge that it is mainly their responsibility to address citizens' anxieties. Civil society organisations, public administration, the media, and German industry and businesses (in their role as employers) are expected to contribute, but politicians as representatives of the people in their constituency carry most of the responsibility to address (and ideally offer solutions to) citizens' concerns:

*That's our role as representatives. And I don't want to shy away from it.*

MP, CDU/CSU

*If citizens come to me to complain about the EU, that's my role as an MP – to solve their problems.*

MP, Greens

*Politicians are responsible for crafting a positive vision of Europe.*

Regional party functionary, Greens

Those politicians who perceive fears to largely be latent, non-concrete and (somewhat unfoundedly) projected onto the EU suggest the best way to restore trust in the EU among the German public is to explain the advantages of the EU to citizens:

*We have only talked about crises lately. We need to talk more about success stories in Europe.*

MP, SPD

*We need to explain better what Europe is all about.*

MP, Greens

*We need to take time to explain once more what it is that the EU offers.*

MEP, CDU

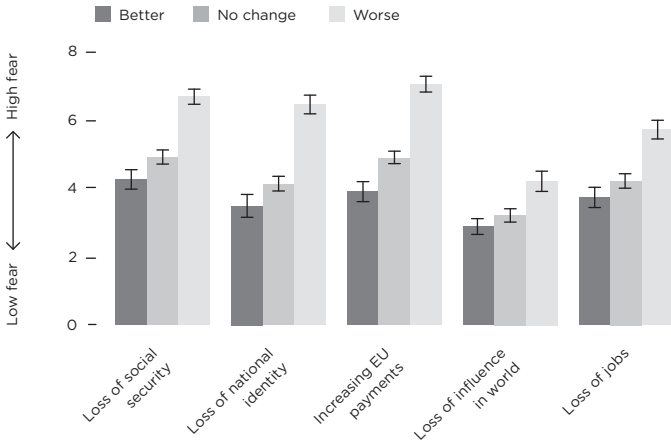
*Citizens are taking the EU's successes for granted and only pay attention to the problems. We need to make them aware of the true achievements again.*

MP, SPD

If explaining the benefits of the EU to German citizens were enough to restore trust in the EU, we would not expect a strong link between citizens' evaluations of representation and fears about the EU. With a mere lack of understanding of the EU as a driver of concerns, we would have no grounds to expect that representation at any level – local, national or European – mattered in a distinct way, unless it was in some way related to citizens' understanding of EU institutions. Instead, we would expect to find concerned citizens who feel well represented and those who feel less well represented.

By contrast, however, we find that perceptions of political representation matter a lot. There is a clear association between evaluations of representation at the national and European level and concerns about the EU in Germany. The better citizens feel that Germany is represented, the lower are their levels of fear across the five different domains (figure 13).

Figure 13 **Fears of respondents by how well people see Germany represented in the EU compared with most other member states (mean scores with 95% confidence intervals)**



The relationship is least pronounced for worries about a loss of influence in the world, but still significant. Again, we find that positive effects are less pronounced than negative ones: compared with those who think Germany's representation is neither better nor worse than that of other countries, those who think it is better show somewhat lower levels of fear, but those who consider the representation worse are much more fearful. There is a clear imperative for politics: it is not ultimately important to make people feel that Germany is in a better situation than others, but to make them feel that it is at least not worse.

Citizens' evaluations of representation and government depend on assessments of legitimacy. Fritz Scharpf provides a helpful distinction when thinking about evaluations of legitimacy. He distinguishes between input-oriented and output-oriented legitimising beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Input legitimacy, according to Scharpf, refers to the institutional settings that enable citizens to have their voices heard and justify the existence of institutions, even if this may not serve to further

one's individual preferences. Output legitimacy, by contrast, arises from the substantive problem-solving capacity of governing institutions. Studies on legitimacy in the EU find that there is generally an emphasis on output legitimacy to justify EU governance.<sup>12</sup>

Most politicians recognise these two dimensions of legitimacy. Input legitimacy is believed to be lacking, in the sense that citizens perceive the EU to be distant and feel they have no say in it. According to politicians in Germany, the EU is an undefined political entity, far away from citizens' daily lives. It is complicated for both citizens and politicians to understand what is going on in the EU. A weak European Parliament and an EU that is perceived as a political community without a face to citizens are deemed to further contribute to the impression of a lack of transparency and democratic control. The argument that an unreasonable piece of legislation 'comes from Brussels' or 'from the EU' is considered conclusive in itself when citizens question political decisions:

*Nobody really knows who the leader of the Commission or the Parliament is really.*

Regional party functionary, Greens

*The EU is perceived as a bureaucratic monster.*

MP, SPD

*'This comes from Brussels' has become a legitimate excuse that no one [in Germany] questions any further.*

MP, Greens

*Even as a member of parliament, I sometimes don't understand what's going on at the EU level.*

MP, SPD<sup>13</sup>

Output legitimacy is also perceived to be lacking, because citizens see an EU that does not offer solutions to global challenges. According to politicians, citizens perceive the EU to be especially incapable of dealing satisfactorily with those

issues that are the EU's ascribed core competency: enforcing migration and border security, preserving peace and economic prosperity, and implementing a joint environmental policy. The recurring crises in the EU have made the shortcomings of EU governance clear to many citizens in Germany: there is no common ground for joint solutions:

*The crises of the last couple of years showed that the EU has reached its limits as a political system.*

Analyst

*All European success stories are worth nothing if EU cannot find solutions to problems in imminent crises.*

Journalist

However, when asked how to address citizens' specific concerns, politicians focus on measures of input legitimacy only by explaining the EU's procedures and increasing identification with the EU. Education about the EU and its institutions (eg in schools) and explaining the advantages of the EU better are first steps to address the EU's legitimacy issues, according to some politicians.

Politicians mention a range of concrete measures: city partnerships across the EU, an Interrail pass for young Europeans, school visits to Brussels, education about the EU in school curricula, a continuation and extension of the Erasmus programme. Some grasp that it is only a combination of these that can manage to address citizens' concerns about their voice in the EU:

*[An Interrail pass for young Europeans] might sound ridiculous at first, but if you think about it that's exactly the kind of positive sign that creates the sense for cooperation that we called for.*

MP, CDU/CSU

*This [an Interrail pass for young Europeans] is something concrete at least. That's worth looking into.*

Regional party functionary, Greens

Politicians focus on measures to increase input legitimacy in the EU to the neglect of measures to increase the EU's problem-solving capacities. Only one politician specifically pointed out that soft measures to explain the EU are probably not enough to address concrete fears among dissatisfied citizens. Instead, the EU needs to offer solutions to concrete issues in order to improve its perception among the public. Another politician seemed to feel similarly, stating that a joint refugee policy in the EU would be perceived as a real success and could potentially change citizens' evaluations of the EU.

By contrast, all political analysts in the sample mentioned that the EU's capacity to offer solutions to current crises and future challenges is key to addressing citizens' concerns and alleviating the growing culture of fear:

*Explaining more [about the EU] would probably help little. Those who are disgruntled already are also not coming to any of our events, not listening to us anyway.*

MP, SPD

*Europe needs to be able to offer solutions to concrete issues, such as the refugee crisis.*

MP, CDU/CSU

*If the EU managed to craft a picture of all member states acting in concert, this would be a real boost to citizens' evaluations of the EU.*

Analyst

*[Our party] has a major strategic problem: that there is no strategy with regard to EU reform... There are several avenues for reform available, however, and they would make a big difference for how our supporters view the EU.*

Analyst

We can only speculate as to why this view is so much more prevalent among political analysts than among politicians. While the sample of participants for our qualitative interviews is small and by no means representative of the entire political elite in Germany, one reason could be that political analysts

are able to draw on comparative information. The political analysts interviewed for the purpose of this project referred to a range of empirical data, on both German public opinion and public opinion across Europe, which allowed them to compare the variety of views expressed by the German public with dominant views in other EU member states. Political analysts could then assign a key role to German political elites in the reform of EU institutions and policy:

*Germany's role in the EU has changed drastically; it is no longer the junior partner to France. But this new position doesn't come without problems: Germany is obviously challenged to lead the way in finding joint solutions at the European level.*

Analyst

*The German [representation] carries a lot of responsibility in Europe. It has to play a big role in restructuring how we look at the EU and its structure. Otherwise our entire party will just sink into insignificance in Europe.*

Analyst

Politicians, on the other hand, focus on the views of citizens in their individual constituency as that is their main task: to solve their constituents' problems. A number of politicians mention that they find it difficult to create opportunities to talk to citizens about the EU: it is the citizens in their constituency who largely determine which events representatives are supposed to visit and what kind of topics they are supposed to speak about. If the EU is brought up as a topic by constituents, it is mostly in connection with complaints about specific pieces of regulation that affect local industry or people:

*It is difficult to deliver a message about the EU to my constituency. If I just randomly started talking about the EU when I was meant to report back from Berlin, voters would probably say 'Well, he didn't get the problem, this is not of interest to us.'*

MP, CDU/CSU



*It doesn't happen often that citizens approach me with questions about the EU. If at all, then just as a torrent of complaints about bureaucracy and over-regulation.*

MP, Greens

*Recently I was invited to speak at a local business and the employees were invited to ask questions. Someone asked about the advantages of the EU. That was a rare opportunity for me to say something positive about the EU – this doesn't usually happen.*

MP, CDU/CSU

Comparative perspectives, access to empirical data and the opportunity to take a step back from the daily business of representation are all possible factors allowing political analysts to take a more holistic look at the current culture of fear in Europe, compared to politicians themselves.

# Conclusions

Using the latest assessments of public opinion in Germany, in particular the contradiction between positive pragmatic evaluations of Germany's membership in the EU and the drastic decline in the image of EU as an institution, we can speculate on what might happen to German public opinion in the coming months. Among a range of possibilities, two alternative scenarios stand out:

- *Scenario 1:* The EU's image will bounce back to match the previous, rather low levels of Euroscepticism. This would suggest that the recent drastic decline in the perception of the EU among the German public was merely a temporary dip that could have been caused by citizens' projections of generalised fear and insecurity onto the EU, which were particularly pronounced at the time of our research (summer 2016).
- *Scenario 2:* The German public will become more Eurosceptic, also in their pragmatic evaluations of the country's structural position within the EU, or make more vehement demands for German politicians to drive EU reform. The former would involve some citizens changing their views on Germany's long-term strategy in the EU (advocating for Germany to leave the EU or to work towards reducing the EU's power). The latter would put significant pressure on German politicians to put forth concrete ideas for EU reform.

Our analysis indicates that there are concrete and distinct reasons why citizens in Germany hold a negative image of the EU: we find no evidence of them having a generalised, abstract feeling of fear. Overall, the majority of citizens hold distinguishable concerns, suggesting that we cannot speak about EU fears in the aggregate. What is more: we find that citizens' apprehensions are directly related to their perception

of Germany's future strategy in the EU. This is reason to believe that the German public do not simply project a generalised feeling of insecurity onto the EU as an institutional scapegoat. Instead, they hold genuine concerns, which – if they remain unaddressed by politicians – may induce German people to become more Eurosceptic or to demand concrete measures of EU reform.

However, political elites perceive fears in Germany to be largely generalised, abstract or unrelated to evaluations of the EU, which is not borne out by our analysis. While we find citizens' concerns to depend on both pragmatic economic considerations and emotive (latent) variables such as the degree of national and European identification, politicians focus on pragmatic economic aspects. They underestimate the impact of identity for the German public. Given this gap in understanding of fears between the public and political elites in Germany, it is not surprising that politicians have difficulty in addressing citizens' concerns over the EU.

Although all politicians recognise their particular responsibility to address citizens' concerns, the measures they suggest to alleviate those that are EU-related are largely one-dimensional. Politicians realise that representation is crucial for the EU's legitimacy and acknowledge that many citizens believe the EU currently lacks input as well as output legitimacy. However, they struggle to think of measures that specifically address output legitimacy and use various different ways to improve the EU's problem-solving capacity (through reform of the EU or through national political institutions). Concrete suggestions increase input legitimacy directly at the EU level: they typically revolve around explaining the EU's procedures and encouraging identification with the EU. Suggestions for EU reform are rarely mentioned.

Should the German public indeed become more Eurosceptic overall and should German politicians come under pressure to offer concrete measures for EU reform over the next months, their difficulty with exactly this task poses a major problem for German political institutions as well as the EU as a whole. The EU's capacity to offer solutions to current crises and future challenges is key to addressing citizens'

concerns and alleviating the emergent culture of fear. With Germany currently being the EU's most influential member state, political analysts assign an important role to German political elites in the reform of EU institutions and policy. In order to fulfil this role, it will be crucial for political decision-makers to understand and address citizens' worries as concrete, distinct and directly related to the EU.

We can only speculate as to why it is so difficult for political elites in Germany to understand and address citizens' concrete anxieties about the EU. Comparative perspectives, access to empirical data from across Germany and the opportunity to take a step back from the daily business of political representation are all possible reasons why political analysts can take a holistic look at the current culture of fear in Europe. In contrast, in their daily work MPs and MEPs zoom in on the views of citizens in their constituency. It is the citizens who largely dictate their agenda. Unless they are asked to address concrete concerns about the EU, politicians find it difficult to create opportunities to talk to citizens about the EU.

## Recommendations

In order to close the gap between elite and public opinions on the EU in Germany, it is crucial to contest the perception that there is a generalised, non-concrete feeling of fear among the German public. Instead, politicians need to be supported in their task of understanding and addressing citizens' concrete concerns. It has been shown in different contexts that engaging and interacting with citizens about their various anxieties is often more effective in contesting a culture of fear than ignoring or opposing such views.<sup>14</sup> The following suggestions are aimed at achieving four overarching goals, that we:

- further the understanding of EU-related fears among political elites in Germany
- shape the discourse about EU-related concerns in Germany
- provide opportunities for public–elite dialogues about concerns
- support politicians in addressing concerns about both types of legitimacy

It is important to enable politicians to understand and address the variety of citizens' fears about the EU as well as the underlying drivers, both now and in the future. This requires a broader understanding of specific concerns, an ongoing discourse about future concerns and opportunities for dialogue between the public and political elites. Ultimately, a broad understanding of citizens' distinguishable and concrete fears will enable politicians to address them adequately and phrase concrete measures that improve the EU's capacity to offer solutions to current crises and future challenges.

The measures that can contribute to achieving these goals are discussed below.

### **Provide avenues for knowledge transfer from analysts to politicians**

To further the understanding of EU fears among political elites in Germany, political institutions, analysts and third-party organisations that hold knowledge about public opinion need to provide avenues for knowledge transfer to allow politicians to draw on this knowledge. This includes transferring to politicians knowledge from analysts within political party think tanks, and that held by external organisations (such as independent think tanks, research institutions and commercial research organisations). In particular, third-party organisations which hold knowledge about the drivers of public opinion need to work more closely with political party foundations and staff of political representatives to develop explicit strategies for knowledge transfer.

### **Make insights publicly accessible to shape discourses about EU concerns**

Politicians need to be made aware of citizens' views regularly, as these views evolve and change. To this end, we need actively and continuously to shape discourses about the EU. It is key that those who hold and generate knowledge about public opinion work with political institutions, civil society organisations and the media to make insights accessible and allow for broader engagement with these insights. Work with media professionals can play a particularly important role. Setting up good online information that makes insights accessible and easy to interact with is equally important to allow for general engagement.

### **Develop instruments that facilitate mass-elite interaction about the EU**

As politicians report that they find it difficult to create opportunities to talk to citizens about the EU, developing instruments to facilitate interactions with citizens about the EU and their concrete concerns will further politicians' ability

to understand and address citizens' concerns. Political institutions and third-party organisations (eg civil society organisations, associations, cultural institutions, local businesses or the churches) play a key role in this: they can offer (physical and virtual) spaces for politicians and citizens to come together, identify and address communities that have distinct views on the EU, and act as credible and neutral hosts for mass–elite dialogue. It is crucial to facilitate public–elite interaction at various levels: it is not necessarily the big national-stage dialogue, but rather small-scale community-level interaction between citizens and local elites that can make all the difference for a better understanding of concrete concerns.

### **Increase the range of suggestions to address EU concerns across levels of governance**

With a better understanding of citizens' concerns, we also need a broader range of potential measures to address them. It is crucial to work with political elites and citizens on increasing the range of suggested measures along different pathways of legitimacy. Instead of focusing on the EU level only, we need also to develop policy options that address citizens' apprehension about the EU at national, regional and local level. Measures to amplify citizens' voices within EU institutions are just as important as policy options aimed at increasing the EU's problem-solving capacity.

### **Conduct further research on mass–elite comparisons that involves the public and elites**

To counter the dominant narrative of a generalised feeling of insecurity, it is important to conduct further research that provides insights into some of the questions we raise in this preliminary analysis. What exactly drives individual concerns? Can we identify patterns of concern? Why do politicians have such difficulty in understanding the variety of citizens' concerns? How can they address them adequately? To answer some of these questions, further research and explicit

public–elite comparisons are necessary. Ideally, future studies will be designed in such a way that they involve political decision-makers and citizens in their roles as both informants and audiences from early on in the research process. This offers the opportunity for research in itself to create inroads for actual change by bringing citizens and political elites together.



# Appendix 1: Survey questions – comparative and Germany-specific

## Nothing to fear but fear itself? Survey questions – comparative and Germany-specific

### Demographic and background variables captured

- Sex (male/female)
- Age group (18–24 years / 25–34 years / 35–44 years / 45–54 years / 55 years and older)
- Region:
  - Nielsen 1: Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein
  - Nielsen 2: North Rhine-Westphalia
  - Nielsen 3a: Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland
  - Nielsen 3b: Baden-Württemberg
  - Nielsen 4: Bavaria
  - Nielsen 5: Berlin
  - Nielsen 6: Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony-Anhalt
  - Nielsen 7: Saxony, Thuringia
  - Not living in Germany
- Education (low/medium/high)
- Monthly household income (net after tax):
  - €0–980
  - €981–1,350

- €1,351–1,660
  - €1,661–1,990
  - €1,991–2,340
  - €2,341–2,730
  - €2,731–3,200
  - €3,201–3,820
  - €3,821–4,840
  - €4,841+
  - Do not want to say
- 
- Voting behaviour in last parliamentary election, 2013:
    - CDU/CSU
    - SPD
    - Die Linke
    - Bündnis 90/Grüne
    - FDP
    - AfD
    - Other
    - Did not vote
    - N/A
- 
- Long-term party affiliation:
    - CDU/CSU
    - SPD
    - Die Linke
    - Bündnis 90/Grüne
    - FDP
    - AfD
    - NPD
    - Piratenpartei
    - Freie Wähler
    - Other
    - No party

### Comparative questions across countries

- Q2. Do you think [country of respondent]'s long-term policy should be...

*<Single Select>*

- 1 to leave the European Union
- 2 to stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers
- 3 to leave things as they are
- 4 to stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers
- 5 or, to work for the formation of a single European government?
- 6 don't know

- Q3. Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected. There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries.

Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect on...

*<Single select per each of these items>*

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| a Europe as a whole    | 1 Very positive   |
| b [Country] as a whole | 2 Fairly positive |
| c Your local area      | 3 Fairly negative |
| d Your own life        | 4 Very negative   |
|                        | 5 Don't know      |

- Q4. Generally speaking, do you think things will get better or worse for the following over the next 12 months?

*<Single select per each of these items>*

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| a Europe as a whole    | 2 A little better          |
| b [Country] as a whole | 3 Neither better nor worse |
| c Your local area      | 4 A little worse           |
| d You and your family  | 5 Much worse               |
| 1 Much better          | 6 Don't know               |

- Q5. Which of the following best reflects your view?

*<Single select>*

- 1 The best leaders have strong principles and carry them out without worrying what other people think, even if that means losing support
- 2 The best leaders listen to other people and try to win the backing of as many people as possible, even if that means making some compromises
- 3 Neither
- 4 Don't know

- Q6. Below are some ways that society has changed over recent decades. In each case, please say whether you think this has changed society for the better, or for the worse?

*<Single select per each of these items>*

- |   |  |   |                                    |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| a | A greater acceptance of same-sex relationships               | 1 | Has changed society for the better |
| b | A larger proportion of women going to work                   | 2 | Has changed society for the worse  |
| c | Our society becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse | 3 | Neither                            |
|   |  | 4 | Don't know                         |

- Q7. The next question is about how much trust you have in certain institutions. On a scale from 0 ('No trust at all') to 10 ('Completely trust'), how much, if at all, do you trust each of the following institutions.

*<Single select per each of these items>*

- |   |                              |    |    |                  |
|---|------------------------------|----|----|------------------|
| a | The (Nationality) Government | ↕  | 10 | Completely trust |
| b | The (Nationality) Parliament | 88 |    | Don't know       |
| c | The European Parliament      |    |    |                  |
| d | The European Commission      |    |    |                  |
| 1 | No trust at all              |    |    |                  |

### Germany-specific questions

- DE1. Do you see yourself as...?

<Single select>

- 1 (Nationality) only
- 2 (Nationality) and somewhat European
- 3 European and somewhat (Nationality)
- 4 European only
- 5 (Skip)

- DE2. Some people may have fears about the European Union. Here a number of things which some people have said they are afraid of with regard to the European Union. For each, please state how much you – personally – are currently afraid of, if at all:

<Single select>

<Randomize a–e>

<Scale 1–10, Don't know mutually exclusive with answer>

- |   |  |    |                   |
|---|--|----|-------------------|
| a | The loss of social security  | 1  | Very much afraid  |
| b | The loss of national identity and culture                          | ↕  |                   |
|   |  | 10 | Not afraid at all |
| c | [Country of respondent] paying more and more to the European Union | 88 | Don't know        |
| d | A loss of power in the world for [Country of respondent]           |    |                   |
| e | The loss of jobs in [Country of respondent]                        |    |                   |

- DE3. There are different people and organisations working to represent Germany in the European Union. For each of these, can you please tell me how well you think they represent Germany in the EU?

<Single select per item>

3 Germany

- |   |   |   |                                    |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| a | Angela Merkel   | 1 | Very well represented              |
| b | The German government   | 2 | Rather well represented            |
| c | German members of the European Parliament                             | 3 | Neither well nor badly represented |
| d | Lobby groups of German industry                                       | 4 | Rather badly represented           |
| e | German NGOs [in German, please use: Deutsche Verbände und Stiftungen] | 5 | Very badly represented             |
|   |   | 6 | Don't know                         |

- DE4. Compared to the interests of other countries, how well do you think Germany's interests are represented in the European Union?  
<Single select>

- 1 Better than the interests of most other countries
- 2 Neither better nor worse than the interests of most other countries
- 3 Worse than the interests of most other countries
- 4 (Skip)

# Notes

- 1 Demos, 'The Age of Fear: new polling reveals a gloomy, divided Europe', press release, 2016, [www.demos.co.uk/press-release/the-age-of-fear-new-polling-reveals-a-gloomy-divided-europe/](http://www.demos.co.uk/press-release/the-age-of-fear-new-polling-reveals-a-gloomy-divided-europe/) (accessed 17 Jan 2017). Survey of 1,661 GB, 1,001 French, 2,125 German, 1,011 Polish, 1,000 Spanish, 1,007 Swedish adults, conducted by YouGov between 23 August and 7 September 2016.
- 2 European Parliament, *European Parliament Eurobarometer (EB/EP) 84.1, Parlemeter 2015, part II*, [www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2015/2015parlemeter/eb84\\_1\\_synthese\\_analytique\\_partie\\_II\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2015/2015parlemeter/eb84_1_synthese_analytique_partie_II_en.pdf) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 3 European Parliament, *Standard Eurobarometer 85*, 'Public opinion in the European Union, wave EB85.2', 2016, [https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130\\_85\\_2\\_STD85\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130_85_2_STD85_ENG) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 4 R Hilmer, 'EU vor Bewährungsprobe – was erwarten, worum sorgen sich die Bürger? Eine repräsentative 8-Länderstudie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, durchgeführt von policy matters', Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Berlin, 2016, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/12328.pdf> (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 5 G Erber and H Hagemann, 'Growth and investment dynamics in Germany after the global financial crisis', *DIW Economic Bulletin* 2, 2013, [www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw\\_01.c.415240.de/diw\\_econ\\_bull\\_2013-02-3.pdf](http://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.415240.de/diw_econ_bull_2013-02-3.pdf) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).

- 6 T Lochocki, *The Unstoppable Far Right? How established parties' communication and media reporting of European affairs affect the electoral advances of right-populist parties*, Europe Policy Paper 4, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2014, [www.gmfus.org/file/3500/download](http://www.gmfus.org/file/3500/download) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 7 'The sick man of the euro', *Economist*, 3 Jun 1999, [www.economist.com/node/209559](http://www.economist.com/node/209559) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 8 Frauke Petry is the leader of Alternative für Deutschland, a right-wing political party.
- 9 Sample mean plus or minus 1.96 times its standard error.
- 10 J Eichhorn, C Hübner, and D Kenealy, 'The view from the continent: what people in other member states think about the UK's EU referendum', d|part, 2016, <http://aqmen.ac.uk/projects/euukreferendum> (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 11 F Scharpf, *Legitimacy in the Multilevel European Polity*, MPIfG Working Paper, 2009, [www.mpifg.de/pu/workpap/wp09-1.pdf](http://www.mpifg.de/pu/workpap/wp09-1.pdf) (accessed 17 Jan 2017).
- 12 J Eichhorn, J Hensing and C Hübner, 'Economic crisis and political legitimacy' in M Voicu, IC Mochmann and H Dülmer (eds), *Values, Economic Crisis and Democracy*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016.
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Reher S, 'Explaining cross-national variation in the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy', *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no 1, 2015, pp 160–81.

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# 4 **Spain -** **The Spanish exception:** **unemployment,** **inequality and** **immigration, but no** **right-wing populist** **parties**

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# Introduction

Very few European countries have proven immune to the appeal of right-wing populism. The exception is Spain: despite economic crisis and fast-eroding political trust, Spain has not seen any right-wing populist party obtain more than 1 per cent of the vote in national elections in recent years. What might explain this remarkable absence of an electorally successful Spanish right-wing populist party?

Using public data (including statistics and opinion polls), interviews with experts and original polling, this case study scrutinises various factors influencing right-wing populist success in Spain – or lack thereof.<sup>2</sup> First it sets out why it is so remarkable that Spain should not have a right-wing populist presence in politics. Several explanations are discussed, including the historical weakness of the Spanish national identity and the Spanish people's pro-Europeanism. These factors all seem to influence the (lack of) demand for a populist message by Spanish people. In and of themselves, however, these factors fail fully to explain the absence of a right-wing political party. Finally, this case study considers so-called supply-side factors, particularly the failure of parties that have tried to appeal to right-wing populist sentiments in Spain and the effects of the Spanish electoral system.

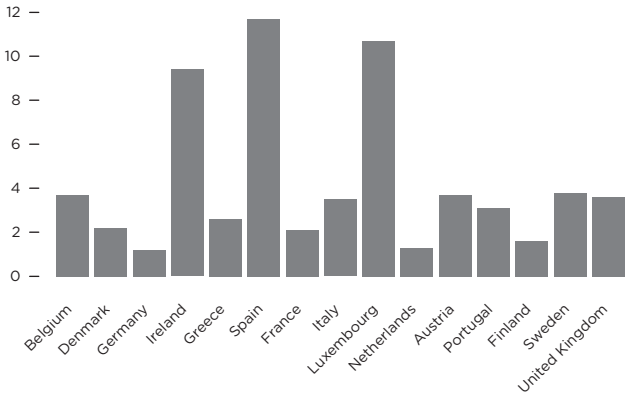
# 1 Migration, economic crisis and political dissatisfaction

Three sets of issues are particularly associated with the rise of right-wing populism: political corruption, economic crisis and concern over immigration.<sup>3</sup> Spain has experienced all three. Between 1996 and 2007, the Spanish economy underwent a remarkable boom, based largely on a construction bubble, which led to (and was fuelled by) a massive influx of immigrants. While in 1998 immigrants accounted for 3 per cent of the population, by 2008 this number had risen to 13 per cent, and remained steadily high in subsequent years. The years of rapid economic, demographic and social change between 1996 and 2007 were in many ways a golden period for Spain. Yet even then Spain had higher inequality, unemployment and population at risk of poverty than the Western European average (the rate of the so-called EU-15), and well below the EU-15 average of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Only in 2005 and 2006 did Spain come close to reaching the EU-15 averages.

## Migration

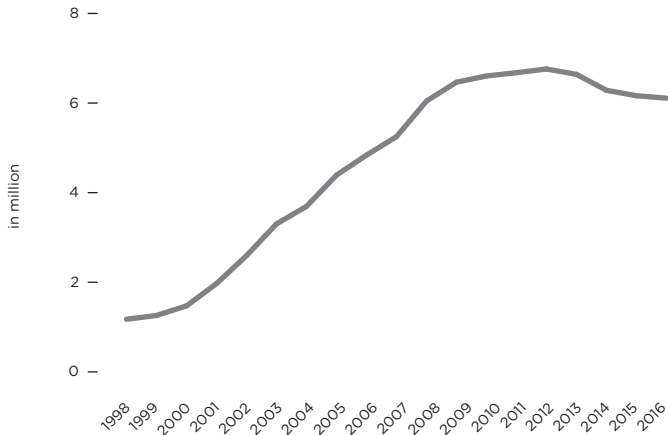
Between 2000 and 2009, Spain received half of all migrants to the EU-15 (figure 1). The net immigration per capita was the highest of any European Union ('EU') country. No other country in Europe has experienced such an intense and quick process of immigration in modern times.

Figure 1 **Average net migration in EU-15 countries per 1,000 inhabitants, 1998–2009**



Source: Calculated from Eurostat figures.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 2 **Foreign-born population of Spain, 1998–2016**



Source: INE, 'Padrón municipal'.<sup>5</sup>

During the rapid economic expansion of the 2000s, immigrants from poorer countries (excluding Western European migrants) filled an ‘occupational gap’. They worked jobs which were often unskilled, mainly in construction, domestic service, retail, catering, other personal services and agriculture, where they occupied the least-desired positions. Very few were able to move up the occupational ladder and most remained in precarious, manual work.<sup>6</sup> Figure 2 shows the figures of the foreign-born population in Spain between 1998 and 2016.

### **Economic change**

Then, in 2007, the bubble burst. The financial crisis hit Spain slightly earlier than it hit the rest of Europe, when the construction industry collapsed. In the following years more than 3 million jobs were destroyed and there was a surge in the unemployment rate, which rose from 8 per cent in 2008 to 26 per cent in 2013, (compared with a rise from 7 per cent to 11 per cent across the EU in the same period). Also between 2008 and 2013 real GDP fell by 8.9 per cent (compared with 1 per cent in the whole EU), and average household spending fell by 14.5 per cent.

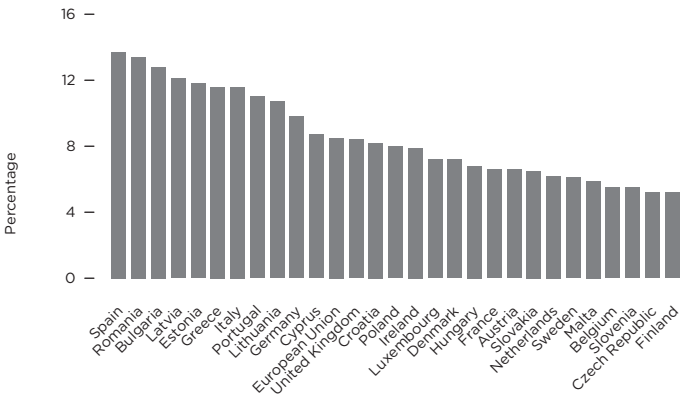
The crisis affected two groups particularly: immigrants and lower-qualified male native workers, because of their concentration in the construction sector. Immigrants especially were put in a precarious position, lacking a safety net provided by family. They also had a difficult time finding new employment, as their social and professional networks tended to be narrower and their professional qualifications are on average lower than those of non-immigrants. According to the most recent data (for the second quarter of 2016), the unemployment rate among the Spanish foreign-born population is 27 per cent, compared with 19 per cent among Spanish citizens. Despite the crisis, the immigrant population continued to grow until the end of 2011 and only began to shrink in 2012. During three years, 2012–2014, the foreign-born population decreased by 650,000 persons or 10 per cent of the total, but in 2015 it began to increase again.<sup>7</sup>



The crisis has provoked a very visible rise of poverty – mostly due to unemployment – and increased inequality (figures 6 and 7).<sup>8</sup> From 2000 to 2015 there was a hike in the Gini coefficient of almost 3 percentage points (figure 5). In 2014, no EU country had a wider gap between the income of the richest 10 per cent and that of the poorest 10 per cent; 29 per cent of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion (figure 3). This is 6 points more than in 2007, as well as 6 points above the EU-15 average and 5 points above the EU-28 average.<sup>9</sup>

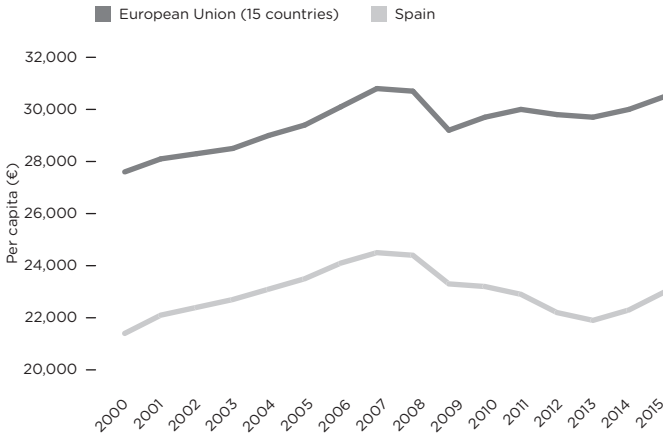
Consumer spending decreased every year between 2009 and 2014, after years of continuous increases (figure 8). Finally, the budget cuts implemented since 2011 have affected the level of service provision, including public education and public health, likely impairing equality of opportunities. In 2014 and 2015 the first signs of economic recovery could be seen, but levels of average well-being are still much lower than in 2007, as the effect of recovery in the labour market is still modest. Figure 4 shows the GDP in Spain compared with 15 EU countries between 2000 and 2015.

Figure 3 **The gap between rich and poor (10% with highest income; 10% with lowest income) in EU countries, 2014**



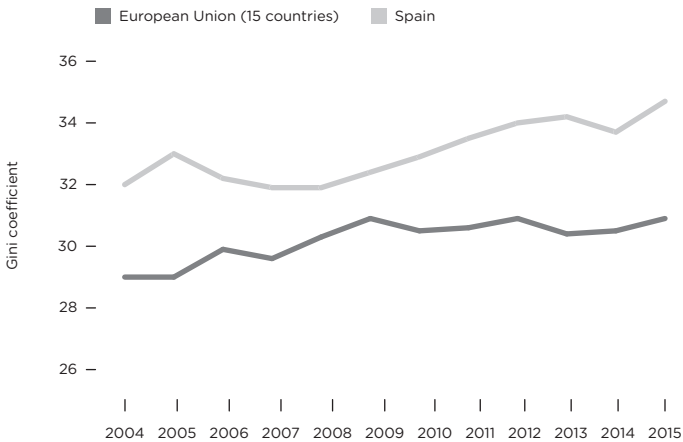
Source: Eurostat.

Figure 4 **GDP (adjusted for inflation) in Spain compared with 15 EU countries, 2000-2015**



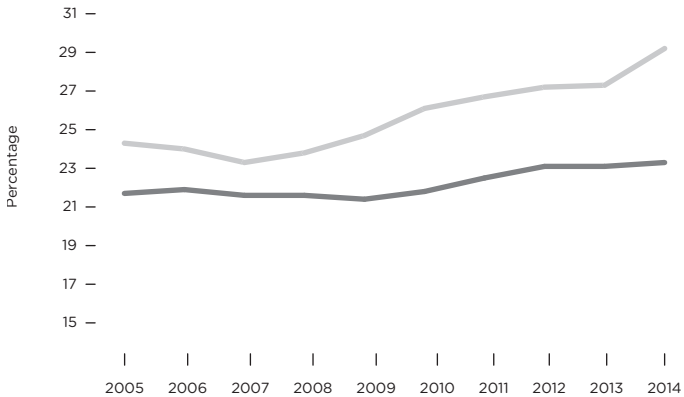
Source: Eurostat.

Figure 5 **Gini coefficient in Spain compared with 15 EU countries, 2000-2014**



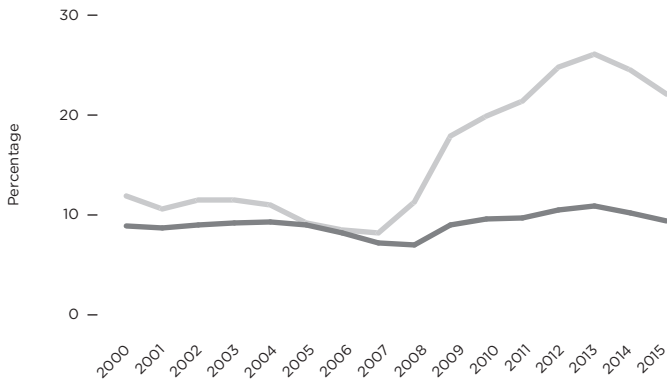
Source: Eurostat.

Figure 6 **Percentage of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Spain compared with 15 EU countries, 2005-2014**



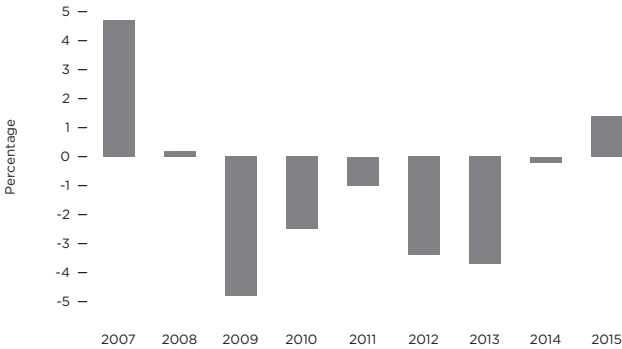
Source: Eurostat.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 7 **Unemployment rate in Spain compared with that in 28 EU countries, 2000-2015**



Source: Eurostat.

Figure 8 Household expenditure in Spain, 2007–2015



Source: INE, 'Encuesta de presupuestos familiares'.<sup>11</sup>

## Political trust

In the political realm, the crisis correlated with a sizeable drop in trust in all kinds of public institutions, be they domestic, European or international. Political parties, which already enjoyed a very low level of trust before the crisis, have been the worst affected. The effects of the economic crisis were exacerbated for the main political parties by the discovery of corrupt practices. Scandals hit the ruling Partido Popular (Popular Party), and to a lesser extent the opposition, the Partido Socialista (Socialist Party), and the leading Catalan nationalist group Convergència Democràtica. According to a Standard Eurobarometer report in 2014, 91 per cent of Spaniards did not trust political parties (13 points above the European average) and 69 per cent were dissatisfied with the democratic system (21 points above the European average).<sup>12</sup>

Around the same time that the extent of the corruption became apparent, the government enacted painful budget cuts. The size of these cuts, imposed from 2011 onwards, was frequently compared to the vast quantities of money

embezzled by politicians. This connection between austerity and corruption in the eyes of the public further fuelled popular anger at the political status quo. When asked about the most pervasive negative aspects of Spain, corruption is the single most-mentioned issue, ahead of economic problems or unemployment.<sup>13</sup>

The loss of trust in the parties that had dominated Spanish political life since the beginning of its democratic era has challenged Spain's two-party system, with third parties winning a significant share of the vote for the first time since 1977. Two relevant new parties appeared, Ciudadanos and Podemos. Ciudadanos (Citizens), which could be described as centre-right, has mainly campaigned on the fight against corruption and zero tolerance towards peripheral nationalism (such as the Catalan and the Basque independence movements). The second and more successful party is Podemos ('We can'). Podemos is still balancing between a populist and a leftist profile, and has become the main electoral beneficiary of the strong protest movements that sprang up between 2011 and 2014. The so-called *Movimiento 15M* was the most visible civil society response to the crisis and the social foundation of what became Podemos. Nothing similar has appeared on the right wing. Surprisingly, no group is currently mobilising traditionally right-wing voters who have suffered from the impact of the crisis, such as the shopkeepers and owners of small businesses affected by the loss of purchasing power and competition from immigrant shopkeepers and big supermarkets.

Hence, the protest has been dominated by the left, perhaps because a right-leaning party, the Partido Popular, has been governing since 2011. There are only the smallest signs of rightist responses, such as the appearance of an non-governmental organisation (NGO) called *Hogar Social Ramiro de Ledesma*, inspired by the Greek *Golden Dawn*. This group, based in Madrid, provides help (food, clothes, lodging) only to Spanish citizens, and it is connected to *Falange Española* and other small anti-democratic parties operating at the intersection of anti-capitalism, nationalism and fascism.

In short, high levels of migration, economic crisis and low political trust are usually populism's perfect storm, yet right-wing populist groups remain exceptionally weak in Spain.

## 2 Public opinion: a weak national identity

### The decline of the Spanish national identity

An explanation for the absence of a right-wing populist response to the crisis may lie in Spain's particular relationship to national identity. Spanish national identity is relatively weak, as the Eurobarometer surveys show. The latest data from this survey indicate that Spain is below the EU average in its citizens' feelings of 'attachment' to their country (by 4 points), while it clearly exceeds the average in their attachment to the EU (by 7 points).<sup>14</sup> Another rough indicator of this same phenomenon is the self-esteem of citizens of each country, measured through the Country RepTrak poll, in which Spain stands out in recent years because of its very low self-esteem, well below the valuation of this country abroad.<sup>15</sup>

The causes of the weak Spanish national identity have been extensively debated by historians, sociologists and political scientists. One frequent explanation is the legacy of the Franco regime. During this period, the Spanish admired the achievements of Western European countries – their political freedoms and material gains. This experience reinforced the inferiority complex of the Spanish, which had already begun in 1898 with the loss of the last Spanish colonies (Cuba and the Philippines). During Franco's dictatorship, the regime exploited nationalist and Catholic rhetoric and national symbols, presenting Spain as an island of spiritual values in a sea of corrupt, materialist and egotist countries, and labelling all kinds of domestic or external criticism of its authoritarianism as fruits of an 'international conspiracy led by Jews, communists and Freemasons'.<sup>16</sup> The imperial past was continually evoked and the 'brotherhood' with Latin American countries emphasised. In fact, during years of international isolation, Latin American countries, many

of them also illiberal, were Spain's main international partners.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, during the entire Francoist period, the regime established very good relations with Arab countries. As discussed below, this rhetoric about the friendship between Spaniards and Latin Americans has had an impact on the attitudes towards immigration during the 21st century.

The overuse of national symbols and of references to national identity during Francoism caused a counter-movement which still persists, a phenomenon which has been described by sociologists and historians.<sup>18</sup> The pro-democratic opposition to the regime rejected the exhibition of national symbols, the flag and the anthem, and Spanish nationalism was completely absent from their discourses. Instead, they looked to Europe. Spain was frequently presented as a backward country whose political, social and intellectual underdevelopment was due to the Francoist policies. Democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation were seen as three parts of the same process.

In the same period, the late 1970s and early 1980s, strong peripheral nationalist movements were formed or reappeared in different regions, mostly in Catalonia and Basque Country, but also in Galicia, Valencia, the Canary Islands and Andalusia. The Spanish left enthusiastically supported these movements, presenting them as liberators and progressive forces both during the transition and for several decades after, further contributing to the weakness of Spanish national identity. Any person exhibiting the colours of the Spanish flag – in a watch strap, for instance – was immediately classified by the left and the peripheral nationalists as a Franco supporter. The very word 'España' (Spain) became suspicious and was often replaced by 'the Spanish state', an expression of little emotional resonance. Even the territorial organisation of the state in Autonomous Communities has diminished this identity, as regional educational policies have emphasised local histories and identities. Ruiz-Jiménez et al explain,

*Although it seems that the right has returned to an explicit reformulation of democratic Spanish patriotism more easily than*



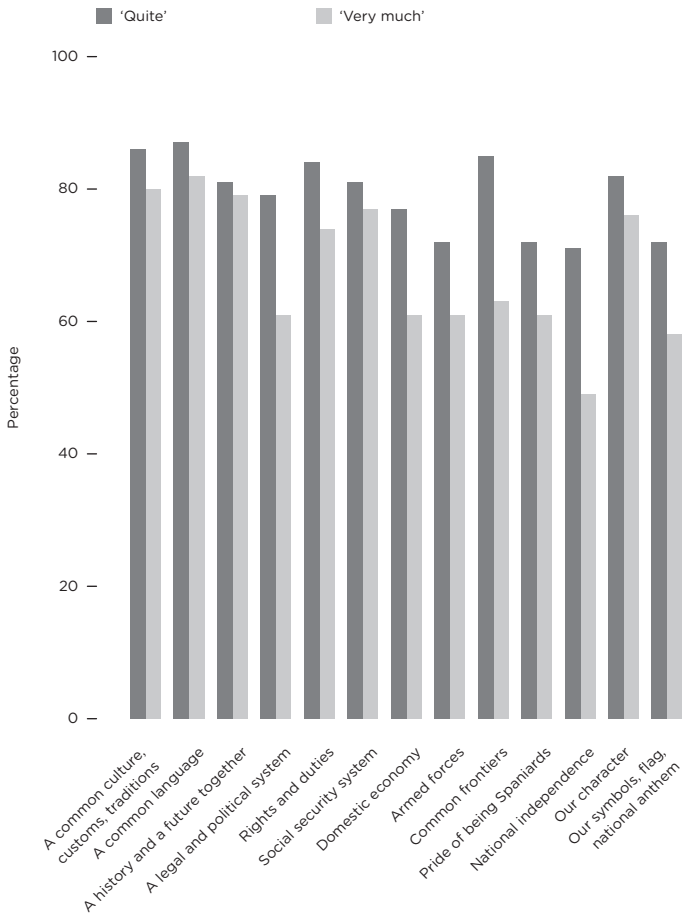
*the left, the definition of Spain as a nation continues to be an object of political controversy, not only among nation-wide parties but also between these and regionalist/nationalist parties. In summary, Spanish parties have not instilled consistent feelings of identification with Spain as a political community.*<sup>19</sup>

Spanish national pride grew following the country's entry into the EU in 1986. From the late 1990s onwards, it was further strengthened by a decade of solid economic growth. By the time the crisis hit in 2007, the Spanish were quite proud of their country, but their pride swiftly declined as the country was hit by economic decline and corruption scandals. This is visible in various statistics on national pride and national identification: if we compare the results of a wave of opinion polls conducted in 2002 (a period of intense economic growth in Spain) with the wave of 2015 (a time of enduring crisis) we see a decrease in the degree of identification with the country. Those who feel 'very' or 'somewhat' close to Spanish people (compared with other groups, such as other Europeans, the inhabitants of their town or the inhabitants of their region) formed 90 per cent of respondents in 2002, but 85 per cent in 2015, while the number of people who feel 'just a little' or 'not close at all' to Spaniards has increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent (table 1).<sup>20</sup>

When comparing levels of identification with different elements of feeling Spanish between 2002 and 2015 we see a marked drop in national identification across the board. There is a decrease in identification with the Spanish culture, the Spanish language, its history and its symbols. The strongest decline is observed in identification with independence, borders, the political and legal system and economic life (figure 9).

Interestingly, the comparison between these two polls show local identities do not seem to be filling the void left by a weakening national identity. The percentage of Spanish people who feel close to the residents of their town and those who feel close to the inhabitants of their Autonomous Community have fallen 5 and 6 points respectively (table 1). Hence, localism is not replacing national identities.

Figure 9 **The proportion of respondents who agree 'quite' or 'very much' with various statements on what they share with other Spaniards about Spanish life, 2002 and 2015**



Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 57, and Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano, 36 Oleada*.<sup>21</sup>

## The European identity of Spanish people

A related factor is the prevalent and persistent pro-European sentiment of the Spanish population. Identification with Europe and Europeans has remained steadily high, even increasing slightly during the last years: 59 per cent of Spaniards feel quite or very close to other Europeans, up 2 points from 2002, while the percentage of those who feel only slightly or not at all close to other Europeans decreased four points (44–40 per cent).

Table 1 **Groups towards whom Spaniards feel attachment, 2002 and 2015**

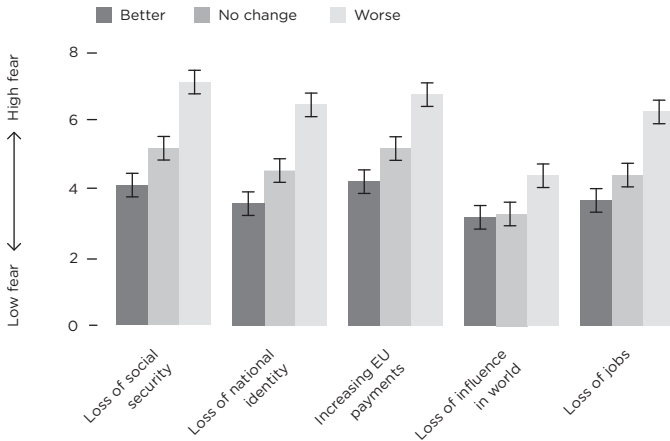
	2002 (%)	2015 (%)	Change 2002-2015 (%)
Inhabitants of the town or village	92	87	-4
Inhabitants of the region	86	80	-6
Spaniards	90	85	-5
Europeans	57	59	+2

Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 57, and Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano, 36 Oleada*.<sup>22</sup>

Eurobarometers usually show Spaniards to be more pro-European than average: in 2008 only 6 per cent of Spaniards had a negative image of the EU, well below the EU average (14 per cent). The economic crisis provoked a rise of anti-EU feeling all over Europe, including Spain, but even now negative attitudes towards the EU are less prevalent in Spain than elsewhere (23 per cent in Spain compared with a 27 per cent EU average). The high levels of identification of Spanish citizens with the EU are confirmed by the fact that only 28 per cent of Spaniards did not consider themselves in any way European citizens (compared with an average of 39 per cent across the EU).<sup>23</sup>

This Europeanism presents itself not only as a cultural identification with Europe, but also as sympathy with the EU as a political project. The Pew Research Center has recently confirmed this remarkable Europeanism of the Spanish population.<sup>24</sup> As figure 10 shows, the Spanish are least inclined of any European people to support returning power from the EU to the member states.

Figure 10 **The views of respondents in EU countries on whether power should be returned from the EU to the member states, spring 2016**



Source: Global Attitudes Survey, spring 2016.

Our own polling also shows there is a high level of Europeanism among Spanish citizens: only 10 per cent would prefer for the country to leave the EU, and those who would like to reduce EU powers are outnumbered by those wanting to leave things as they are, increase EU powers or even advance towards a politically unified Europe. With Poland, Spain is least likely to favour leaving the EU, and with Germany the most likely to favour an increase of EU powers. Europeanism is especially strong among older citizens, who remember most acutely the period before Spain's EU membership (tables 2, 3 and 4).

Table 2 **The views of respondents on what the long-term policy of Spain towards the EU should be, by age group, Sep 2016**

	Total (%)	18-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55+ (%)
To leave the EU	10	10	7	13	15	7
To stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers	31	35	35	31	23	31
To leave things as they are	11	12	11	4	19	10
To stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers	23	19	29	22	14	24
To work for the formation of a single European government	12	14	8	8	13	17
Don't know	14	10	10	23	16	11

Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

Table 3 **The views of respondents in six EU countries on what they think their country's long-term policy towards the EU should be, Sep 2016**

	UK (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Poland (%)	Spain (%)	Sweden (%)	Average (%)
To leave the EU	45	22	16	8	10	25	21
To stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers	23	33	23	32	31	32	29
To leave things as they are	12	6	9	21	11	10	12
To stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers	5	11	23	14	23	14	15
To work for the formation of a single European government	2	14	16	10	12	4	10
Don't know	12	14	13	15	14	15	14

Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

The most recent Standard Eurobarometer again shows the political climate in Spain to be much more pro-EU than in most member states.

Table 4 **The proportion of Spaniards who agree with statements about the EU, compared with that of all EU respondents, 2015**

	EU average (%)	Spain (%)
'The EU means loss of our cultural identity'	15	7
'The EU means not enough control at external borders'	25	15
'In general, the EU conjures up for me a negative image'	27	23
I see myself as [nationality] only'	39	28
'I oppose a common European migration policy'	26	12
'[Our country] could better face the future outside the EU'	33	25
'I oppose the European Economic and Monetary Union'	38	27

Source: European Commission, 'Public opinion in the European Union.'<sup>25</sup>

On the downside, this remarkable Europeanism does not mean the Spanish are not critical of the functioning of the EU. Especially notable is a lower assessment of EU political life and EU management of the economy (comparing data from 2002 and 2015). But this criticism of the workings of the EU, which seems to be caused by the economic crisis, does not diminish the will to stay in it.<sup>26</sup>

## The acceptance of globalisation

Spanish people hold remarkably favourable attitudes to globalisation compared with other EU countries, a trait they have in common with the people of another country in the Demos sample, Poland. Both countries, which share a relatively late incorporation to the EU and a long experience of authoritarianism and international isolation, stand out for their enthusiasm for globalisation. Both countries are well above the average in their perception of the positive character of the impact of globalisation on Europe as a whole, on the country, on the local area and on the personal life of respondents (figures 12, 13 and 14). The economic crisis has hit Spain much harder than Poland, which may serve to explain the differences between two countries which are otherwise remarkably similar (table 5 and figure 11).

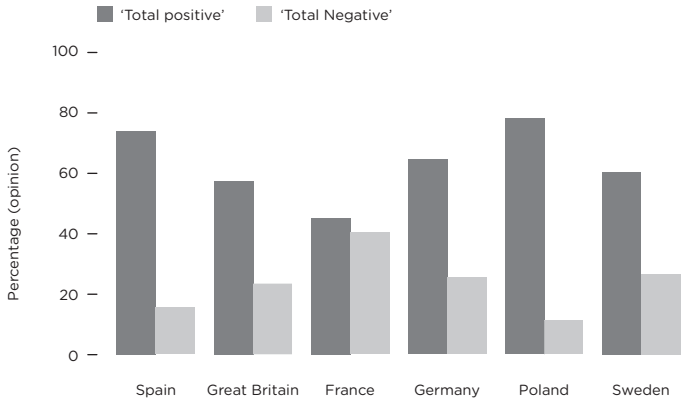
Table 5 **The proportion of Spaniards who have a negative opinion of globalisation and are against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, compared with those views held by all EU respondents**

	EU average (%)	Spain (%)
Negative opinion of globalisation	40	32
Against TTIP	34	28

Source: European Commission, 'Public opinion in the European Union'.<sup>27</sup>

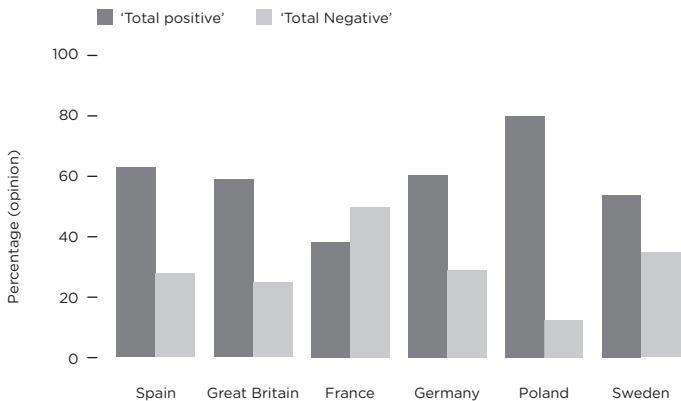


Figure 11 **The views of respondents in six EU countries on whether or not globalisation has had a positive or negative effect on Europe as a whole**



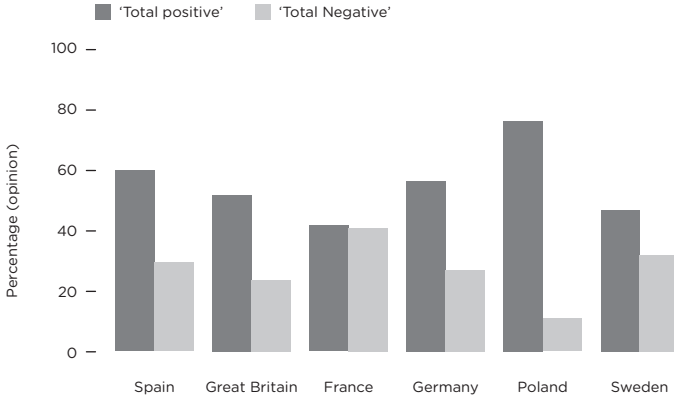
Source: YouGov polling for Demos, Sep 2016.

Figure 12 **The views of respondents in six EU countries on whether or not globalisation has had a positive or negative effect on their country as a whole**



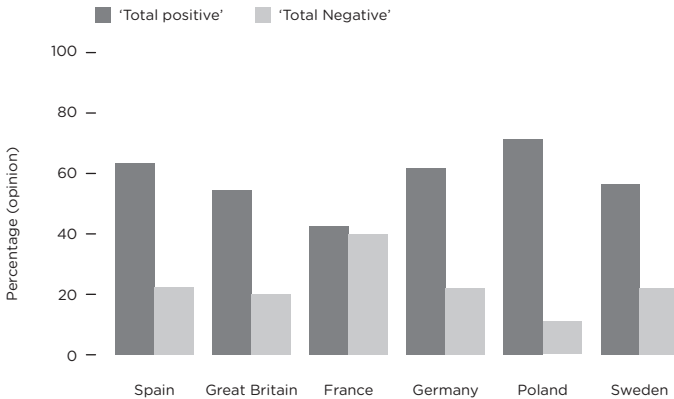
Source: YouGov polling for Demos, Sep 2016.

Figure 13 **The views of respondents in six EU countries on whether or not globalisation has had a positive or negative effect on their local area**



Source: YouGov polling for Demos, Sep 2016.

Figure 14 **The views of respondents in six EU countries on whether or not globalisation has had a positive or negative effect on their own life**



Source: YouGov polling for Demos, Sep 2016.

Table 6 **Respondents' answers to a question on how close they feel to various ethnic groups, 2002 and 2015**

	2002 (%)	2015 (%)	Change 2002-2015
<i>How close do you feel to Moroccans?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	82	80	-2
Quite or very close	14	18	+4
<i>How close do you feel to Latin Americans?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	66	59	-7
Quite or very close	32	38	+6
<i>How close do you feel to US citizens?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	83	74	-9
Quite or very close	14	23	+9
<i>How close do you feel to Sub-Saharan African people?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	82	72	-10
Quite or very close	15	25	+9
<i>How close do you feel to Roma people?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	77	71	-6
Quite or very close	19	27	+6
<i>How close do you feel to Chinese people?</i>			
Slightly or not at all close	No data	82	No data
Quite or very close	No data	15	No data

Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 57, and Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano, 36 Oleada*.<sup>28</sup>

### Increased acceptance of differences

When migrants started coming to Spain in large numbers around the start of the new millennium, most Spanish people saw these people as outsiders with whom they shared little. In an environment that had hitherto been extremely homogeneous, the presence of these new groups reinforced national identity. Opinion polls conducted by the Centre of Sociological Investigations showed little closeness between the Spanish and various national and ethnic groups. The 2002 questionnaire included Moroccans, Latin Americans, sub-Saharan Africans, Roma people and US citizens, with Chinese people added in the 2015 survey.

A comparison between the results of the two surveys clearly indicates that in the 13 years since 2002, the level of acceptance of all groups has increased substantially in Spain. In all cases the number of respondents who feel 'not at all close' to Moroccans, Roma people, sub-Saharan Africans and other groups has fallen significantly. This is compensated by a rise in the number of respondents who feel only a 'bit close' to those groups, which could be just a more socially acceptable expression of the same sentiment, but there is also a significant increase in responses expressing closeness, especially noticeable towards US citizens and sub-Saharan Africans. The Moroccan population is the least affected by this trend and, with Chinese people, tops the list of groups to whom Spaniards feel least close (table 6).

According to these data, Spanish society has in these 13 years become closer to 'others', for various reasons: the accumulated practice of cohabitation with immigrants; improvements achieved in socially integrating the local Roma population; Spaniards' greater international experience through tourism and stays abroad as students or migrants; and the increased presence of Spanish companies in Latin American, European and Asian countries.

In sum, Spanish people have come to identify less with national and regional collective identities over the past decade and a half. It seems as if the Spanish have on average become more accepting of ethnic difference, more individualistic and more cosmopolitan. At a time when many European states are

reappraising their nationhood, national identity and sovereignty, Spain appears to counter the trend. These indicators suggest that popular demand for a right-wing populist message is limited.

### **The evolution of public opinion on immigration**

Yet it would be too simple to say that Spain is straightforwardly accepting, open-minded and globally oriented. Public opinion on immigration, for one, has been volatile. Spain began the new century as the least xenophobic country in Europe, the most tolerant of cultural differences, and most favourable to immigration, significantly different from the European average (tables 7 and 8). Several factors were influential here: the low number of non-EU immigrants and their high concentration in a few geographic areas, leaving virtually no immigrants in most of the country; the recent memory of the Spanish migration to central and northern Europe; the influence of the Catholic Church, which has maintained a vocal favourable position towards immigrants; and the visibility of NGOs specifically devoted to immigration, asylum or anti-racism. Finally, the fact that many of the early migrants came from Latin American countries, speaking the Spanish language and sharing the Catholic religion, eased their acceptance into the Spanish society. The Catholic Church played a role in this process, as it found in Latin American migrant communities a new and more conservative inflow of believers.

Table 7 **The percentage of respondents from five EU countries who agree with statements on immigration and immigrants, 1999**

	Italy (%)	France (%)	Spain (%)	UK (%)	Germany (%)	Mean (%)
Immigration is a threat to our culture and our identity	27.3	25.6	10.6	31.0	25.1	25.0
Immigrants are a threat to employment	32.2	28.3	18.7	-	28.8	-
Immigrants are a threat to public order and security	46.1	29.4	13.7	26.2	22.5	28.4

Source: Diamanti, 'Immigration et citoyenneté en Europe.'<sup>29</sup>

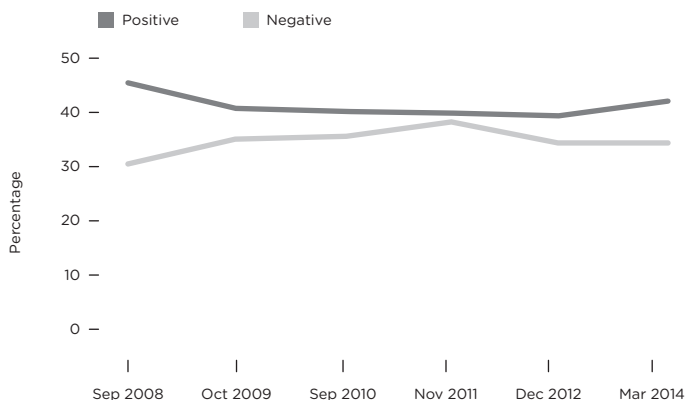
As the country started receiving greater numbers of immigrants from the year 2000 onwards, Spanish public opinion on migration moved closer to the European average. In the boom years, the labour market could still absorb the newcomers, who were arriving at a rate of some 400,000 people per year. Yet already then, the public mood was changing, as the result of several factors: a deterioration of social services, increased crime levels, increased competition in some sectors of the labour market, and everyday tensions between locals and immigrants where they shared apartment buildings, parks and public spaces.<sup>30</sup> By 2006, 59 per cent of Spanish people saw migration as the country's biggest problem.<sup>31</sup>

Table 8 **The proportion of respondents from several EU countries answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you personally find the presence of another [nationality, race, religion] disturbing in your daily life?', 2000**

	Other nationality (%)	Other race (%)	Other religion (%)
Greece	38	27	31
Denmark	24	24	26
Belgium	20	23	21
Ireland	17	20	17
UK	17	19	17
Netherlands	17	17	17
Germany	16	16	13
France	16	14	12
Austria	15	14	12
Italy	11	11	10
Sweden	11	11	10
Luxembourg	9	11	8
Portugal	9	10	8
Finland	8	9	8
Spain	4	5	6

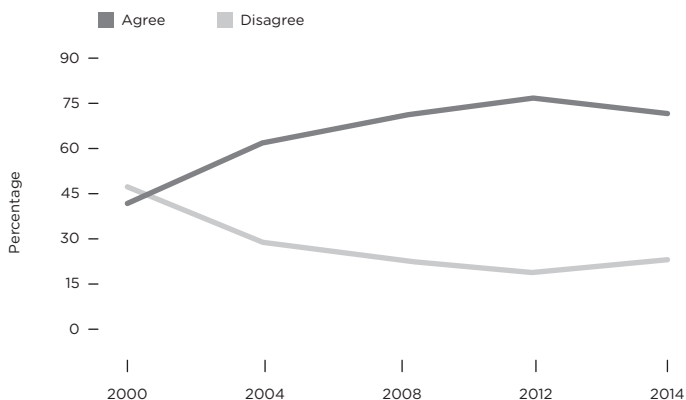
Source: European Commission, 'Racism and xenophobia in Europe',<sup>33</sup>

Figure 15 **Views of respondents on whether immigration has had a positive or negative effect for Spain, 2008–2015**



Source: Centre for Sociological Research, Opinion Barometer, several years.

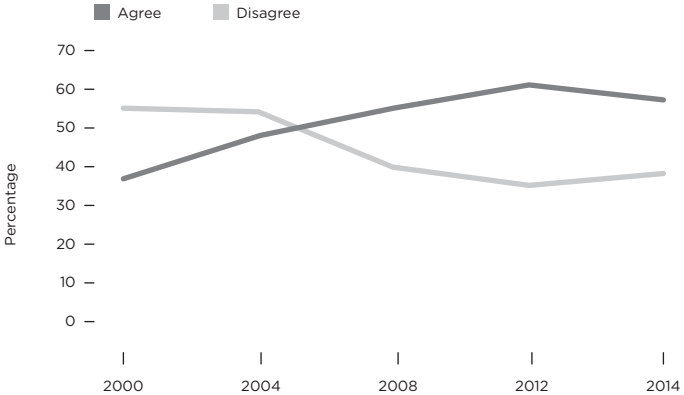
Figure 16 **The extent to which respondents agree with the statement 'By accepting lower salaries, foreign workers bring down salaries in the country [Spain]', 2000–2014**



Source: Centre for Sociological Research, Opinion Barometer, several years.



Figure 17 **The extent to which respondents agree with the statement 'Immigrants take jobs from Spaniards', 2000–2014**



Source: Centre for Sociological Research, Opinion Barometer, several years.

The economic crisis provoked a surge of anti-immigration sentiment, recorded by several opinion poll sources,<sup>34</sup> which reached its peak in 2011–2012. Around that time, the number of immigrants residing in the country started to decline, a fact broadly reported by the media, and negative attitudes became less prevalent, though they are still above pre-crisis levels (figures 15–17).

Our results show that more than three-quarters of Spanish people feel that native workers should be hired over foreigners (77 per cent), a percentage that declines to 61 per cent when respondents are voters for Unidos Podemos (table 9).

Table 9 **The extent to which respondents agree with the statement 'If there are two equally qualified workers, one Spanish and one from another country, the employer should hire the Spanish worker', by political party affiliation**

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos (%)
Strongly agree	37	43	41	27	37
Tend to agree	40	40	38	34	44
Tend to disagree	17	10	16	29	16
Strongly disagree	6	7	4	10	2

Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

Another major element of concern regarding immigration is crime. In fact, surveys suggest that perceptions of criminality are a bigger driver of unfavourable attitudes to immigrants than the economy and the labour market. Already by 2000, more than half (51 per cent) of those surveyed by the Centre of Sociological Investigations agreed with the statement 'The increase in the number of immigrants contributes to the rise of crime in our country', with 35 per cent disagreeing. The question was replaced in 2003 by another, asking people to respond to the statement: 'Today in Spain there is a link between diminishing security and immigration'. More than half (58 per cent) of respondents agreed and 26 per cent disagreed. In the 2014 Centre of Sociological Investigations immigration survey, 'crime and insecurity' were the most frequent spontaneous answers to the open question about

potential negative consequences of immigration at 22 per cent, followed by labour market competition at 19 per cent and cultural integration problems at 16 per cent.<sup>35</sup> However, despite these concerns about security and the terrorist attack of March 2004 in Madrid, Islamophobia is relatively weak in Spain. The association between terrorism and a specific religious or ethnic group has not gained popular support in a country that has suffered terrorism from the Basque nationalist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) for decades and has never blamed the whole Basque population for the crimes committed by ETA terrorists.

Moreover, the perceived impact of immigration on the welfare state has had a negative effect on public opinion: 58 per cent of those surveyed by the Centre of Sociological Investigations in 2014 thought that immigrants receive more or much more from the Spanish state than they contribute to it; 52 per cent believed that immigrants 'overused' health care services; 48 per cent agreed that 'immigrants receive more health services than Spaniards'; and 54 per cent felt that 'immigrant children receive more school-related financial aid than Spanish ones'. Nearly half (47 per cent) of respondents thought that immigrants receive some kind of help from the state, while only 21 per cent said the same about the elderly and pensioners and only 12 per cent about unemployed workers.

In line with this evolution of public opinion on the effect of immigration on Spanish society, public opinion on immigration policy has become more restrictive. While at the beginning of the 2000s, 36 per cent of Spaniards considered immigration laws to be tolerant or too tolerant, this had increased to 60 per cent in 2014 (Centre of Sociological Investigations), offering a sizeable public opinion base to support restrictive migration policies.

In 2016, 74 per cent of Spaniards thought that the number of immigrants in the country is 'a little too high' or 'much too high', compared with just 22 per cent saying that the number is 'about right'. The age group most active in the labour market, the 35–44 age bracket, was the most discontented with the level of immigration in Spain (table 10).

Table 10 Respondents' views on the current level of immigration into Spain, by age group, 2016

	Total (%)	Age 18-34 (%)	Age 35-44 (%)	Age 45-54 (%)	Age 55+ (%)
Much too high	34	37	44	21	29
A little too high	40	42	33	38	52
About right	22	19	19	33	13
A little too low	3	2	3	6	1
Much too low	1	1	1	2	5

Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

This rise in discontent over immigration has brought Spain closer to the European mainstream mood, but the country is still well below EU averages (table 11).

Could these attitudes towards migration translate into political support for right-wing populist parties? Some 19 per cent of those surveyed in 2014 believed that an eventual 'xenophobic or racist party' could obtain popular support in the country. The equivalent percentage was 17 per cent in 2012. But the results are very different when the question is modified to: 'Imagine there was a political party at the next election whose main aim was to reduce immigration to Spain. How well or badly do you think they would do at the election?' According to our original polling, 61 per cent of respondents believe that such a party would do well or very well, while 32 per cent think that such a party would not receive electoral support.

Table 11 **Spanish respondents' views on migration and migrants, compared with those of all EU respondents, 2015 and 2016**

	EU average (%)	Spain (%)
Negative feelings towards immigration from other EU countries	35	22
Negative feelings towards immigration from non-EU countries	58	39
Disagreement with the sentence: Immigrants contribute a lot to my country	52	40
Immigration is one of the two main issues facing the country	28	9
Disagreement with the sentence: My country should help refugees	30	14
Would feel uncomfortable working with a Roma person	20	7
Would feel uncomfortable working with a black person	6	2
Would feel uncomfortable working with an Asian person	6	3
Would feel uncomfortable working with a Jewish person	6	3
Would feel uncomfortable working with a Muslim	13	7

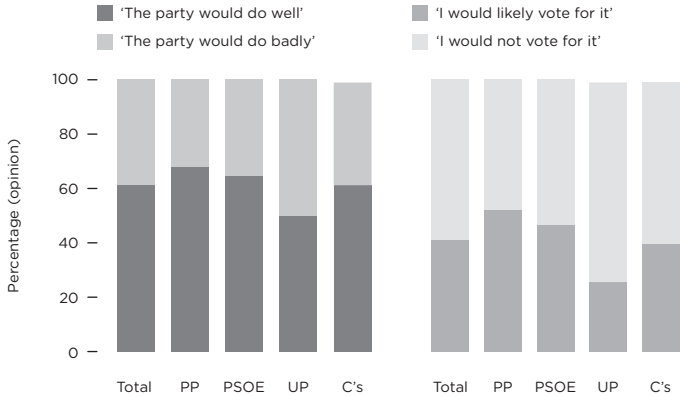
Sources: European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 85 and Special Eurobarometer 437.<sup>36</sup>

When the question asks interviewees if they would vote for such a party, 41 per cent say they are 'fairly likely' or 'very likely' to vote for it, and 48 per cent say they are fairly or very unlikely to do it. Again, people between 35 and 44 years old

are most inclined to vote for an anti-immigration party. We found that voters of the right-of-centre Partido Popular would be most willing to vote for that party, followed by followers of the centrist Ciudadanos (figures 18 and 19).

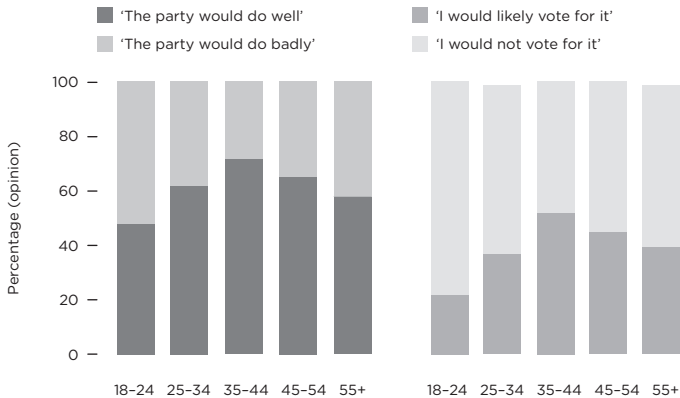
In a climate of widespread distrust of traditional political parties, any new party could benefit from anti-establishment sentiment. But a single-issue party devoted to reducing immigration would almost inevitably have to appeal to nationalist feelings, as the refusal to accept immigrants can only be argued on the basis of their 'otherness' regarding a common national identity and shared interests. But such a discourse would face widespread mistrust in Spain because, as already explained, Spanish nationalism has not recovered from being overused during Francoism, while centrifugal territorial tensions have furthered eroded it. Finally, people do not consider immigration to be one of the most important problems the country faces. Currently only 3 per cent mention immigration when asked an open question about the three main Spanish problems, far outnumbered by unemployment (71 per cent), economic problems (24 per cent), corruption (38 per cent), the low quality of politicians and political life (30 per cent), or problems with health and education provision (12 per cent and 11 per cent).<sup>37</sup> These data do not imply that migration is not a relevant concern for Spaniards: they only demonstrate that other issues, especially unemployment, are much more pressing.

Figure 18 **Respondents' views on whether a political party at the next election whose main aim was to reduce immigration to Spain would do well or badly, and how likely they would be to vote for this party, by party affiliation, 2016**



Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

Figure 19 **Respondents' views on whether a political party at the next election whose main aim was to reduce immigration to Spain would do well or badly, and how likely they would be to vote for this party, by age, 2016**



Source: Demos and YouGov poll, Sep 2016.

### 3 Electoral and party political factors

The flip side of the demand side of populism (the interest of the Spanish people in a populist message) is the supply side (the availability of groups and political parties offering such a message). Political demand influences the political offer and vice versa. In this respect, too, Spain occupies an interesting position. The electoral offer has been very limited, because of the disproportional effects of the Spanish electoral system and factors internal to these parties, which further explains the lack of populist mobilisation in Spain.

#### **A brief history of the far right in Spain**

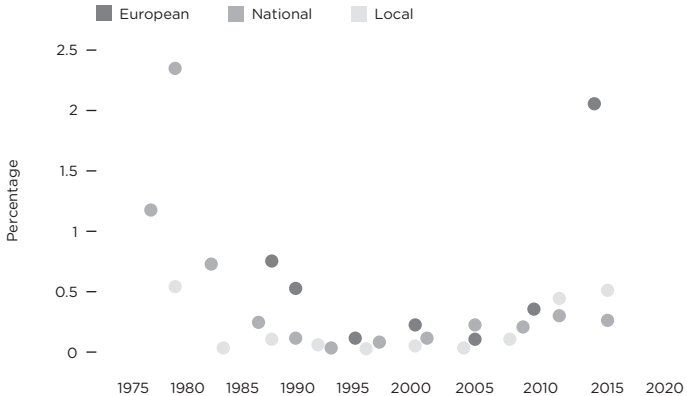
Since the beginning of the Spanish democracy in 1977, extreme rightist parties have had little electoral appeal. They were already weak in the first parliamentary election, when the so-called Fuerza Nueva (New Force) obtained no seats and only 0.3 per cent of votes. Its ideological core was Francoist nostalgia, and the party supported various anti-liberal and anti-democratic measures. Two years later, in the second parliamentary elections of 1979, they won a single seat with 2.1 per cent of votes. That was the last time they achieved parliamentary presence. During those first years of Spanish democracy, a bigger party, Alianza Popular, headed by a leading figure of the Francoist period, Fraga Iribarne, incorporated many high- and medium-rank officials from the Francoist period, and managed to attract the conservative and religious vote. This party, the predecessor of the now ruling party, Partido Popular, obtained 8 per cent of votes in 1977, and 6 per cent in 1979, and became the country's second biggest party in 1982 after the collapse of the Unión de Centro Democrático, the



centre-right reformist group, which had been at the forefront of the transition to democracy.

As Xavier Casals Meseguer explains, the extreme right in Spain was not affected by the wave of ideological renovation which modified the nature of extreme rightist parties in other European countries during the 1960s as a result of reactions to decolonisation or to the 1968 cultural revolt.<sup>38</sup> During the first decades of the new democracy, the extreme right in Spain was the heir of Falange Española, the 1930s fascist movement that provided the ideological legitimisation of the Franco regime during its first years. In 1977, its discourse felt obsolete, with no resonance among the Spanish population, which saw them as a Civil War relic. Meanwhile, the Alianza Popular, a 'law and order' party which was ideologically close to Francoism while at least formally accepting the basic rules of liberal democracy, left little space for other rightist parties.

Figure 20 **Percentage of vote extreme-right parties in Spain have won in European, national and local elections, 1975-2020**



Source: Elaborated by authors from data from the Ministry of Interior.

The extreme right was disconcerted by transition to democracy and unable to react: soon it was divided into several groups, each of them claiming to be the true heirs of Falange Española, losing a common leadership. They gradually lost the voters they had gathered in 1979, who fled towards the Alianza Popular or abstention, and they have not gained near 1 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections since. During the last two decades they have not even reached 0.5 per cent in those elections. Their most salient success was the 2 per cent of all votes obtained in the 2014 European elections by a new party, Vox, led by a former Partido Popular leader, who almost managed to obtain a seat. But this same party won less than 0.3 per cent in the 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections (figure 20).

### **The right wing and the political spectrum**

Very few Spaniards would define themselves as extreme right on a 1–10 scale, where 1 is the extreme left and 10 the extreme right. Opinion polls steadily show only a small minority (8 per cent) choosing the right-hand 8, 9 and 10 scale positions, while 27 per cent place themselves in the three leftmost positions, and 48 per cent identify with the central posts (4 to 7).<sup>39</sup> Those who choose the extreme-right posts used to vote Alianza Popular and have from 1989 on voted for its heir, the Partido Popular. Within the Partido Popular, there are different ideological currents, from fiscal and social conservatism to economic liberalism and Christian democracy. The Partido Popular does not indulge in Francoist nostalgia, but the non-existence of a party on the fringe makes the Partido Popular the party of choice for the extreme right nonetheless.

The particular history of the right wing in Spain has driven extreme right-wing voters to the Partido Popular. Despite its dependence on this right-wing support, the Partido Popular's immigration stances have been fairly benevolent. Although it has historically been more vocal about immigration than the Partido Socialista, in practice their policies are similar. The influence of the Catholic Church in the Partido Popular is strong, and as a result notions of

compassion are central in its integration policies. When Partido Popular leaders did attempt to take severe measures against irregular migrants, they found significant resistance even within their own party. For instance, the decision of the Partido Popular government in 2012 to restrict irregular immigrants' access to public health services, allowing them access only to emergency, maternity and child services, was reversed by the Autonomous Communities, including by those ruled by the Partido Popular itself, until finally the central government was forced to make a U-turn.

### **The electoral system**

The electoral system has also played a significant role in the lack of radical right-wing success, as Spain's political system disadvantages nationwide small parties.<sup>40</sup> The electoral constituency is the province (each province having between 2 and 32 seats), where seats are allocated proportionally. But the electoral formula used to assign seats at the Parliament, the so-called D'Hondt formula, favours big parties. In fact, the D'Hondt formula, combined with a very large number of electoral districts of differing sizes, creates a kind of majoritarian rule in each province which tends to keep small national parties out of Parliament. In an imaginary electoral system of a single common district, Fuerza Nueva would have reached seven seats in the parliamentary election of 1979, gaining then public presence and public funds (which are distributed according to electoral results).

### **Internal and party political factors**

Several parties have tried to address concerns over immigration, an issue which the two big parties had largely neglected. In 2003, a new party, Plataforma per Catalunya, with a single-issue message of controlling immigration and improving public safety (which they also related to immigrants), won a local councillor in four middle-sized towns in Catalonia. In the next local elections, in 2007, Plataforma per Catalunya obtained 17 councillors in nine

towns, although none of them won the right to appoint a mayor. Its biggest success was winning 75,000 votes in the Catalanian regional election of 2011 (2.4 per cent of all votes), followed that same year by winning 66,000 votes and 67 seats in the local elections of Catalonia. From then on, internal divisions put an end to the advancement of the party, whose results in the local elections of 2015 were much smaller (27,000 votes). Although the party took part in the national parliamentary elections, it never reached the minimum electoral threshold of 3 per cent of votes in any of the provinces where it participated.

The founder of *Plataforma per Catalunya*, Josep Anglada, was a former member of *Fuerza Nueva*, hence he is linked with the old extreme-right groups, heirs of Francoism and *Falange Española*. In Catalonia there is a very powerful pro-independence movement to which the Spanish extreme right has been the most belligerent enemy. In this framework, *Plataforma per Catalunya* was expressing simultaneously the protest against the political hegemony of Catalanism and the claims of right-wing voters who felt annoyed by the presence, labour competition and customs of immigrants.

In 2000, a similar party was formed in Madrid, *España 2000*, a union of four small groups. Like *Plataforma per Catalunya*, *España 2000* aimed to reduce immigration, associated with the old extreme-right groups and received the blessing of the French National Front. *España 2000* won seven councillors in four towns near Madrid in 2000, plus one in a small locality in the province of Valencia. *Plataforma per Catalunya* and *España 2000* have signed an agreement to present shared candidates in the next general parliamentary elections, but this has not improved their chances of electoral success.<sup>41</sup>

The new party *Vox* emerged in 2013, led by former *Partido Popular* leader Aleix Vidal Quadras. He had been the president of the *Partido Popular* in Catalonia (1991–96) and vice president of the European Parliament (2004–14). The new party's priorities were defending the unity of Spain (it opposed the centrifugal tendencies of several Autonomous Communities, especially Catalonia, and proposed to

recentralise the semi-federal Spanish system), taking back power from Brussels, limiting Muslim migration to Spain and Europe, and protecting conservative values (including reinstating an abortion ban). They tried to attract right-wing voters disappointed with the Partido Popular policies and they were almost successful in the European elections of 2014, obtaining 247,000 votes (1.6 per cent), only 15,000 votes short of a seat.

It must be taken into account that in Spain (as in many other European countries) European elections are to some extent second-order elections, where voters are more interested in casting a protest vote to punish domestic governments than in influencing the European Parliament. Because of the completely proportional results (as the seats are allocated per country and not per district) obtaining a good result as a small party is far easier in these elections than in the Spanish elections. Hence, the results of Vox were seen as disappointing and caused a grave internal crisis: Vidal Quadras and several other leaders quit the party that summer. The party has lost steam and media attention since and only got 57,000 votes (0.23 per cent) in the parliamentary elections of 2015. Its electoral base in 2014 was concentrated in Melilla, a Spanish African town with a large Muslim population of Moroccan origin. Its other bases of support were the richest and most right-leaning areas of Madrid (Majadahonda, Las Rozas, Pozuelo and the district of Salamanca), but its nationwide electoral prospects are very poor.<sup>42</sup>

Vox could be described as the first attempt to form a modern right-wing populist party in Spain, with no echoes of the Francoist period. Rather than bank on Francoist nostalgia, the party aimed to attract right-wing voters dissatisfied with Partido Popular policies. Like *Plataforma per Catalunya*, Vox was initiated in Catalonia, where the main political cleavage is the division between those pushing towards independence from the Spanish state and those wishing to remain part of Spain. Not only in Catalonia, but in the whole of Spain, the Catalanian challenge to the Spanish territorial integrity is a divisive political issue. Right and left have opted for different approaches to this tension, with the right typically

emphasising unity and the left more willing to yield. On the other hand, both the Partido Socialista and the Partido Popular have frequently given in to peripheral nationalist demands in exchange for political support for the formation of regional or national governments.

Vox was trying to represent Spaniards who are dissatisfied with the fragmentation of the country into 18 Autonomous Communities, many of which are always pleading for more competences and powers. In many ways, it seems, the territorial distribution of power is a double-edged sword for the populist right: on the one hand, the weakness of the single Spanish identity makes it difficult to draw in large numbers with a nationalist appeal, while on the other hand it makes it possible to appeal to frustration over separatist demands.

# Conclusions

Looking at the severe impact of the economic crisis, the high unemployment and poverty rates, and the rapid pace of immigration in Spain, it becomes all the more surprising that Spain has not seen a successful anti-European, anti-globalisation, xenophobic or extreme right-wing movement. This chapter has sought to explain the Spanish exception through three complementary aspects of political and electoral spheres: the political demand (what do citizens want to hear from politicians?), the political offer (what do political parties offer to voters?), and the institutional and political framework (electoral norms and the political conflicts that dominate the agenda).

## The political demand

Research consistently demonstrates that only a very small part of the Spanish electorate identifies with the extreme-right positions on the ideological scale. Furthermore, Spaniards stand out for their support for the EU and globalisation. Despite a rise in dissatisfaction with immigration, anti-immigration sentiment in the country is still well below the European average. Moreover, immigration does not occupy a high position among the most important problems Spaniards think the country faces.

One potential explanatory factor is the relative weakness of Spanish national identity. The abuse of national symbols and national identity during Francoism caused a counter-movement during the transition which still persists. Also the strong peripheral nationalist movements in different regions, mostly in Catalonia and the Basque Country, have further contributed to the lack of a strong Spanish identity with a wide appeal.

Other European countries, like Spain, experienced authoritarian regimes during the 20th century but are now

cradles of successful nationalist–xenophobic movements. The key to Spanish peculiarity, which it shares with Portugal, is that the authoritarian past is more recent than in Germany or Italy, with around half of the population who lived during that period still alive. Contrary to what happened in communist countries, nationalism was the main ideological tool used to legitimise the regime, while internationalism was used in communist European countries to justify their alliance or submission to the Soviet Union. This communist past now allows and favours the blossoming of nationalist parties, but prevents it in Spain and Portugal.<sup>43</sup>

In sum, relatively favourable attitudes to immigration and globalisation, compounded by the lack of a strong, common Spanish identity to appeal to, make Spain inhospitable terrain for the populist extreme right.

### **The political offer**

Since the birth of Spanish democracy in 1977 the extreme right has been associated with Falange Española, the fascist movement born during the 1930s, which inspired the legitimisation of the Francoist regime during its first decades. The Falange discourse is obsolete and of little resonance to the Spanish population, which tends to see its followers as nostalgic for the Francoist past. Its anti-capitalism, nationalism and traditionalism does not appeal to a modernised society.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the Falange movement has been unable to present a common front and has divided into many small groups. As a consequence, its electoral results have been negligible during the whole democratic period.

Tensions between locals and immigrants have inspired the formation of right-wing populist parties, namely Plataforma per Catalunya and España 2000, but those parties keep close relations with the old extreme right (Fuerza Nueva, Falange), which de-legitimises them for most citizens. These parties have achieved only limited success in several municipalities in Catalonia and in the provinces of Madrid and Valencia.

Only recently, in 2013, has a right-wing populist party with no echoes of the Francoist period almost been able to



obtain some success in Spain. This new party, Vox, could be described as the first attempt to form a modern right-wing populist party in Spain, aimed at disgruntled Partido Popular voters. Political dissatisfaction created by the economic crisis has mostly been channelled through Podemos, a populist leftist party, born from the street protests of the so-called 15-M movement. This group is still defining itself, balancing between a traditional leftist profile and a more catch-all approach. It could be labelled as populist but it is neither rightist nor anti-European nor anti-globalisation and most certainly not xenophobic or anti-immigration.<sup>45</sup> Podemos has experienced a very remarkable and surprising success (winning 21 per cent of the votes in the 2016 parliamentary elections), and its support equals that of the Partido Socialista in the most recent opinion polls.<sup>46</sup>

### **The political framework**

The electoral system in Spain, though technically proportional, has highly disproportional effects, which has further disadvantaged right-wing populist parties. It is much easier to gain a foothold as a concentrated local party than as a small nationwide party. However, had the electoral system been the main obstacle for right-wing populist parties, we would have expected to see a stronger showing in the (proportional) European elections.

A second important aspect of the political framework is the dominance of the centre–periphery divide as a political factor throughout the history of Spanish democracy. This has left little space for populist parties to put their own issues on the agenda. Criticisms of the EU or of globalisation have been relatively neglected in the public sphere. Immigration was the subject of public debate only briefly in the early years of the new millennium and even then it was not a central theme. The conflicts between Basque and Catalan nationalist parties on the one hand and the central government and the rest of the Autonomous Communities on the other have been the permanent ideological battlegrounds of Spanish political life. Public opinion is deeply divided on this issue, with a quarter

of the population supporting the centrifugal tendencies and a third opting for the recentralisation of power.<sup>47</sup> More recently, corruption has become a major political issue, with politicians, rather than migrants, becoming something of a scapegoat for the economic crisis.

In summary, despite the hardships suffered by a good part of the Spanish population since 2008, and despite the broad loss of confidence in institutions and old political parties, it is difficult to imagine an extreme right-wing, xenophobic, anti-globalisation and/or anti-EU party gaining a foothold in Spain in the foreseeable future.

The hypothesis that an authoritarian, rightist and nationalist recent past acts as a vaccination against extreme-right parties in the present is given further weight by the similarities between Spain and Portugal: both shared a similar experience of four decades of nationalist, Catholic and corporatist authoritarianism, and both countries have until now been immune to this wave of right-wing populist parties, despite the grave economic and political crisis they have suffered.

# Appendix 1: Attendants at the meeting on 27 September 2016

- Beatriz Acha, Public University of Navarra
- Fernando Arias Canga, Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation, Ministry of Justice
- Marina del Corral Téllez, General Secretary on Immigration and Emigration, Ministry of Employment and Social Security
- Gonzalo Escribano, Senior Researcher, Real Instituto Elcano
- Karoline Fernández de la Hoz, Director of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE)
- Mercedes Fernández García, Director of the University Institute for the Study of Migrations (IUEM), Universidad Pontificia Comillas
- Margarita Gómez-Reino, Professor of Political Science, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia
- Jose Pablo Martínez, Research Assistant, Real Instituto Elcano
- Jose Ramón Montero, Full Professor of Political Science, Autonomous University of Madrid
- Elena Soto, Research Assistant, Real Instituto Elcano
- Federico Steinberg, Senior Researcher, Real Instituto Elcano
- Consuelo Valbuena, University Francisco de Vitoria

## Appendix 2: Results of the Demos-YouGov opinion poll in Spain, September 2016<sup>48</sup>

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>If there were a general election held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?</b>					
Partido Popular	25	85	1	1	4
Partido Socialista	17	1	70	11	3
Podemos/Marea	17	3	3	78	6
Ciudadanos	10	4	2	1	59
Partido Nacionalist Vasco	1	0	0	0	2
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	0	0	0	0	0
Convergencia	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	0	6	3	1
Would not vote	13	4	11	1	10
Don't know	11	3	6	4	13

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Do you think Spain's long-term policy should be...</b>					
To leave the EU	10	2	11	17	10
To stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers	31	34	26	43	33
To leave things as they are	11	13	11	8	12
To stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers	23	29	23	17	29
To work for the formation of a single European government	12	14	13	9	11
Don't know	14	9	17	7	5

**Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected. There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries. Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect on...**

<b>Europe as a whole</b>					
Very positive	27	36	19	26	36
Fairly positive	48	54	50	47	53
Fairly negative	11	5	19	12	8
Very negative	5	1	2	11	2
Don't know	8	3	9	5	0

## 4 Spain

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Spain as a whole</b>					
Very positive	21	26	21	13	30
Fairly positive	42	57	35	41	51
Fairly negative	19	9	28	24	15
Very negative	9	2	7	18	4
Don't know	9	6	9	4	0
<b>Your local area</b>					
Very positive	16	23	15	11	24
Fairly positive	44	52	43	45	48
Fairly negative	20	13	26	23	19
Very negative	10	5	3	15	6
Don't know	10	6	13	7	3
<b>Your own life</b>					
Very positive	18	24	18	13	22
Fairly positive	46	53	43	50	41
Fairly negative	15	11	17	18	18
Very negative	8	3	8	8	7
Don't know	13	9	15	11	12

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Generally speaking, do you think things will get better or worse for the following over the next 12 months?</b>					
<b>Europe as a whole</b>					
Much better	9	18	4	3	11
A little better	27	34	22	23	29
Neither better nor worse	38	37	48	34	35
A little worse	15	7	15	26	22
Much worse	5	1	4	12	2
Don't know	6	4	6	3	1
<b>Spain as a whole</b>					
Much better	6	12	4	4	9
A little better	26	37	20	16	30
Neither better nor worse	31	31	41	27	23
A little worse	22	13	22	30	32
Much worse	9	2	7	20	6
Don't know	6	5	5	3	1

## 4 Spain

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Your local area</b>					
Much better	6	12	4	4	5
A little better	23	28	21	17	28
Neither better nor worse	40	39	48	37	39
A little worse	19	16	15	26	21
Much worse	7	2	5	12	6
Don't know	6	4	8	4	2
<b>You and your family</b>					
Much better	7	14	3	4	7
A little better	23	27	21	18	26
Neither better nor worse	45	46	52	44	39
A little worse	12	8	13	17	18
Much worse	6	2	5	7	6
Don't know	7	3	6	10	4



	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Which of the following best reflects your view?</b>					
The best leaders have strong principles and carry them out without worrying what other people think, even if that means losing support	58	68	60	59	64
The best leaders listen to other people and try to win the backing of as many people as possible, even if that means making some compromises	15	22	10	16	11
Neither	19	7	21	21	21
Don't know	7	3	9	4	4

## 4 Spain

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
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Below are some ways that society has changed over recent decades. In each case, please say whether you think this has changed society for the better, or for the worse?

### A greater acceptance of same-sex relationships

Has changed society for the better	74	72	78	85	83
Has changed society for the worse	9	10	10	6	12
Neither	10	12	8	6	4
Don't know	7	6	5	3	1

### A larger proportion of women going to work

Has changed society for the better	80	81	83	85	84
Has changed society for the worse	9	8	11	5	11
Neither	5	5	1	7	2
Don't know	7	7	4	2	2

### Our society becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse

Has changed society for the better	50	43	56	59	46
Has changed society for the worse	23	32	21	18	25
Neither	16	15	15	17	22
Don't know	11	10	8	6	6

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
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The next question is about how much trust you have in certain institutions. On a scale from 0 ('No trust at all') to 10 ('Completely trust'), how much, if at all, do you trust each of the following institutions?

The Spanish Government					
0 - No trust at all	32	9	34	57	32
1	6	3	9	6	5
2	7	3	8	11	6
3	8	6	8	7	10
4	7	4	10	5	14
5	11	13	20	6	7
6	8	17	2	4	9
7	7	16	2	1	12
8	5	11	2	1	5
9	2	5	0	1	1
10 - Completely trust	4	10	2	0	1
Don't know	4	3	3	1	0

## 4 Spain

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>The Spanish Parliament</b>					
0 - No trust at all	29	6	31	48	28
1	6	4	8	8	4
2	8	6	9	8	8
3	8	6	10	9	12
4	9	6	11	6	15
5	12	20	17	4	11
6	8	17	3	7	8
7	7	16	2	3	9
8	4	6	3	2	5
9	1	4	2	0	0
10 - Completely trust	3	7	1	1	1
Don't know	5	3	4	1	0

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>The European Parliament</b>					
0 - No trust at all	18	4	21	36	14
1	6	2	8	11	11
2	8	1	12	9	8
3	7	5	7	8	9
4	9	9	10	10	10
5	17	22	20	14	15
6	8	16	4	4	11
7	8	14	5	3	8
8	6	11	5	2	10
9	2	4	0	2	1
10 - Completely trust	3	7	2	1	1
Don't know	6	3	6	2	1

## 4 Spain

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>The European Commission</b>					
0 - No trust at all	18	4	21	35	13
1	7	2	10	10	9
2	7	1	8	11	7
3	8	4	11	10	12
4	10	8	11	9	10
5	16	22	17	11	15
6	8	13	6	5	10
7	9	15	4	3	10
8	5	9	3	1	10
9	2	6	1	1	1
10 - Completely trust	4	10	2	1	1
Don't know	7	4	6	2	1

	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Thinking about immigration, do you think that the current level of immigration into Spain is...</b>					
Much too high	34	37	44	21	29
A little too high	40	42	33	38	52
About right	22	19	19	33	13
A little too low	3	2	3	6	1
Much too low	1	1	1	2	5

**Thinking about hiring workers in Spain... to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: If there are two equally qualified workers, one Spanish and one from another country, the employer should hire the Spanish worker**

Strongly agree	37	43	41	27	37
Tend to agree	40	40	38	34	44
Tend to disagree	17	10	16	29	16
Strongly disagree	6	7	4	10	2

## 4 Spain

Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
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**Imagine there was a political party at the next election whose main aim was to reduce immigration to Spain**

How well or badly do you think they would do at the election?

Very well	14	19	16	10	7
Fairly well	47	49	49	40	54
Fairly badly	32	26	29	39	33
Very badly	7	6	6	11	5

**And how likely would you personally be to vote for this party?**

Very likely	15	21	23	6	11
Fairly likely	26	31	24	20	29
Fairly unlikely	31	29	36	28	29
Very unlikely	29	19	18	45	30



	Total (%)	Partido Popular (%)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (%)	Unidos Podemos (%)	Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (%)
<b>Thinking about the last six months, in which, if any, of the following places have you heard or seen negative comments about immigrants? Please tick all that apply</b>					
Among friends	39	44	47	32	42
Among relatives/family	29	34	23	28	34
In public places (eg metro, bus)	45	42	52	48	44
Radio or television	28	20	37	36	29
In the newspapers	18	17	19	22	20
Internet	42	44	42	43	44
At work	28	26	32	29	35
Other	24	28	22	23	23
I have not heard negative comments about immigrants	15	9	12	13	15

## Notes

- 1 Jose Pablo Martínez, Research Assistant at Real Instituto Elcano, has gathered a good part of the information on which this report is based. Also Elena Sotos, from the Real Instituto Elcano, has been very helpful in the data collection process. I'm especially grateful to Xavier Casals Messeguer, who generously travelled to Madrid to offer us his insight on the extreme right in Spain. The chapter of this report dealing with these kinds of parties benefits greatly from his work. Finally, I thank the experts who attended the meeting in Madrid on 27 September 2016, where some of the hypotheses of this report were discussed, and whose names are included in appendix 1.
- 2 YouGov surveyed adults (aged 18+) in six countries online between 23 August and 7 September 2016. The sample sizes were as follows: France – 1,001; Germany – 2,125; Poland – 1,011; Spain – 1,000; Sweden – 1,007; UK – 1,661 (only adults from Great Britain were surveyed in UK polling). The figures have been weighted and are representative of adults aged 18+ on age, gender and region. Four YouGov panels (GB, France, Germany and Sweden) also took account of other factors such as last political vote, education and political affiliation. Two non-YouGov panels (Poland and Spain) were sampled by age, gender and region and weighted by these variables in addition to last political vote and education post-fieldwork. All respondents were asked a set of common questions. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.
- 3 See, for instance, E Iversflaten and F Gudbrandsen, 'The populist radical right in Western Europe' in *Europa Regional Surveys of the World*, London, Routledge, 2014, <https://scholar.uib.no/sites/default/files/iversflaten/files/>

- manuscript\_the\_populist\_radical\_right\_in\_western\_europe\_ivarsflaten.pdf (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
- 4 Eurostat, 'Your key to European statistics', nd, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/migration-and-citizenship-data/database> (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 5 INE, 'Padrón municipal', Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1 Jan 2016, [www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2F245&file=inebase&L=0](http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2F245&file=inebase&L=0) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 6 LG Medina and MM Busto, 'Dinámica laboral de la inmigración en España durante el principio del siglo XXI', *Panorama Social* 8, Jan 2009.
  - 7 INE, 'Encuesta de Población Activa', Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Mar 2016, [www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica\\_C&cid=1254736176918&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976595](http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176918&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976595) (accessed 21 Jan 2017); INE, 'Padrón: población por municipios', 1 Jan 2016, [www.ine.es/prensa/np1010.pdf](http://www.ine.es/prensa/np1010.pdf) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 8 See J Carabaña, *Ricos y pobres*, Los libros de la Catarata, 2016.
  - 9 Eurostat, 'Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income – EU-SILC survey', Dec 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/ilc\\_dii2](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/ilc_dii2) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 10 Eurostat defines the risk of poverty as follows: 'This indicator corresponds to the sum of persons who are: at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are only counted once even if they are present in several sub-indicators. At risk-of-poverty are persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers).

Material deprivation covers indicators relating to economic strain and durables. Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they experience at least 4 out of 9 following deprivations items: cannot afford to pay rent or utility bills, keep home adequately warm, face unexpected expenses, eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, a week holiday away from home, a car, a washing machine, a colour TV, or a telephone. People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0–59 living in households where the adults (aged 18–59) work 20 per cent or less of their total work potential during the past year.’

- 11 INE, ‘Encuesta de Polbacion Activa’, ‘Encuesta de presupuestos familiares’, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007–2015, [www.ine.es/prensa/epf\\_prensa.htm](http://www.ine.es/prensa/epf_prensa.htm) (accessed 23 Jan 2017).
- 12 European Commission, ‘L’opinion publique dans l’Union Européenne’, *Standard Eurobarometer*, 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81\\_publ\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_fr.pdf) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
- 13 Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano (Brie)*, 35 Oleada, resultados de Abril de 2014, 2014, [www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/07d7dfo04416ebadba5fff80bc5a2e3e/35BRIE\\_Informe\\_Mayo2014.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=07d7dfo04416ebadba5fff80bc5a2e3e](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/07d7dfo04416ebadba5fff80bc5a2e3e/35BRIE_Informe_Mayo2014.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=07d7dfo04416ebadba5fff80bc5a2e3e) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
- 14 European Commission, ‘Public opinion in the European Union’, *Standard Eurobarometer* 84, autumn 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/70297> (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
- 15 Real Instituto Elcano, *La reputación de España en el mundo: Country RepTrak*, 2012–2016, [www.realinstitutoelcano.org/](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/)

- wps/portal/rielcano\_es/observatorio-imagen-espana/estudios/ (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
- 16 For a broad description of the historical formation and weaknesses of the Spanish national identity see P Jaúregui and AM Ruiz-Jiménez, 'A European Spain: the recovery of Spanish self-esteem and international prestige' in A Ichijo and W Spohn (eds), *Entangled Identities*, Ashgate, 2005, pp 72–87; and JP Fusi, *España: La evolución de la identidad nacional*, Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 2000.
  - 17 B Pollack and G Hunter, *The Paradox of Spanish Foreign Policy: Spain's relations from Franco to democracy*, London, Pinter, 1987.
  - 18 XM Núñez Seixas, 'La nación en la España del siglo XXI: un debate inacabable', *Pasado y Memoria: Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 9, 2010, pp 129–48.
  - 19 A.M. Ruiz Jiménez et al (2017). "Country-level variables and imagined national communities within EU-15 countries". *Política y Sociedad* (working paper).
  - 20 C González-Enrriquez, 'El declive de la identidad nacional española', Real Instituto Elcano, 2016, [www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_es/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/demografia+y+poblacion/ari50-2016-gonzalez-enriquez-declive-identidad-nacional-espanola](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/demografia+y+poblacion/ari50-2016-gonzalez-enriquez-declive-identidad-nacional-espanola) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 21 European Commission, *Eurobarometer* 57, no 2, 2002, and Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano (Brie)*, 36 Oleada, resultados Abril–Mayo de 2015, 2015, [www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/73037a0048b71bdd9f479fc2d8a74536/36BRIE\\_Informe\\_Junio2015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/73037a0048b71bdd9f479fc2d8a74536/36BRIE_Informe_Junio2015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES) (accessed 21 Jan 2017).
  - 22 Ibid.

- 23 European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer* 85, 2016.
- 24 B Stokes, 'Euroscepticisms beyond Brexit: significant opposition in key EU countries to an ever closer union', Pew Research Center, 7 Jun 2016, [www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/07/euroskepticism-beyond-brexite](http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/07/euroskepticism-beyond-brexite) (accessed 24 Jan 2017).
- 25 European Commission, 'Public opinion in the European Union'.
- 26 González-Enríquez, 'El declive de la identidad nacional española'.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 European Commission, *Eurobarometer* 57, and Real Instituto Elcano, *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano (Brie)*, 36 *Oleada*; see also González-Enríquez, 'El declive de la identidad nacional española'.
- 29 I Diamanti, 'Immigration et citoyenneté en Europe: une enquête', *Critique Internationale* 8, no 1, 2000, [www.persee.fr/doc/criti\\_1290-7839\\_2000\\_num\\_8\\_1\\_1443](http://www.persee.fr/doc/criti_1290-7839_2000_num_8_1_1443) (accessed 23 Jan 2017).
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# 5 **Poland –** **When fear wins: causes** **and consequences of** **Poland’s populist turn** **but fear itself?**

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## Summary

Poland has often been proclaimed the poster child of democratic transitions and European Union (EU) enlargement. In a remarkably short time, Poland became a fully fledged democracy with a thriving market economy. Yet despite a large and sustained economic boom, highly Europhile attitudes and comparatively low levels of immigration, authoritarian populists (the Law and Justice party) gained a majority in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

How can their success be explained? This case study examines not only the causes of their electoral success but also the actions and policies undertaken by the populist-dominated government and parliament. It sketches an overview of the political developments of 2015 and 2016 and considers three potential explanations for the surge in support for the authoritarian populist Law and Justice party from academic literature, centred on economics, globalisation and sovereignty, and identity politics and cultural anxieties.

The results of this study fully support our initial research hypothesis on the dynamics of the politics of fear in Poland, which states that socioeconomic factors, especially income inequality, do not fully explain the electoral success of authoritarian populism in Poland. Therefore political rhetoric and communication, for instance in the discourse on identity, should be recognised as crucial in generating support for the Law and Justice party by amplifying fears triggered by the vast economic and sociocultural changes in Poland over the last quarter of a century. This study draws on a recent survey conducted for the purpose of this project by YouGov for Demos.<sup>1</sup>

# Introduction – what happened to the ‘poster child’ of democratic transitions?

In 2015, Poland’s populist Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) returned to power after eight years of government by a centrist coalition consisting of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) and the Polish Peasants’ party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe). The previous stint of the Law and Justice party in government (2005–2007) ended after just two years, triggered by a crisis in the three-party ruling coalition led by the Law and Justice party. In the subsequent early elections, fears related to the autocratic tendencies of Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński’s government led to a spectacular defeat of the Law and Justice party, mainly due to young urban voters, who turned out to vote in relatively large numbers.

In 2007 the newly formed government under Prime Minister Donald Tusk promised to return Poland to the European political mainstream, and it has been widely seen as successful in making good on this promise. Working in tandem with charismatic foreign minister Radosław Sikorski, Tusk forged strong links with Germany, which became Poland’s key international partner, and allowed Poland to punch above its weight in European politics. The Tusk–Sikorski tandem pushed for the EU to deepen its relations with the countries of former Soviet Union, especially Ukraine, by proposing (together with Sweden) the so-called Eastern Partnership policy. At the same time, Tusk’s government launched its own version of the ‘reset’ with Russia, which ended abruptly when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2013. In

recognition of his (and Poland's) contribution to European integration, Donald Tusk was elected in 2014 as the president of the European Council, the highest position in the EU.

Poland was the only EU member state not to fall into recession following the 2008 global financial crisis, which strengthened the Civic Platform government's reputation for good economic governance in Poland and abroad. In 2011, Tusk managed to get his party re-elected for the second term in office, a feat unseen since the first democratic elections in 1989. All in all, between 2006 and 2014, the Civic Platform defeated the Law and Justice party eight times in a row, in local, national, presidential and European elections. Many analysts believed that the Law and Justice party under Kaczyński had become unelectable because of its mixture of authoritarian longings and extremely conservative social ideology, out of touch with the aspirations and views of quickly modernising and increasingly affluent Polish society. Kaczyński's successive defeats were attributed to an electoral 'glass ceiling', which limited his party's appeal to older, less educated and poorer sections of the society.<sup>2</sup>

However, Kaczyński had demonstrated unusual resilience as a political leader, able to stay at the helm of his party despite repeated electoral defeats and defections. He held on to both his leadership and his party's core constituencies and never seemed to lose his belief in an ultimate victory, his very own 'Budapest in Warsaw' (referring to the reign of the authoritarian Fidesz party in Hungary), which he promised his supporters in his concession speech<sup>3</sup> following the 2011 parliamentary elections. Four years later, in 2015, his patience was rewarded when voters handed him and his party control over the lower and upper chamber of the parliament (Sejm and Senat) as well as the presidential office, which had been won earlier that year by a relatively unknown Law and Justice party politician called Andrzej Duda, a protégé of the late President Lech Kaczyński (Jarosław Kaczyński's twin brother, who tragically died in the Smolensk plane crash in 2010).

While many of Kaczyński's supporters and critics like to compare his victory to Viktor Orbán's conquest of

the Hungarian political scene, the circumstances of the Polish elections seem different in many respects to those in which Orbán won his first landslide elections in Hungary in 2010. While Hungary in 2010 suffered from a deep economic recession and the ruling socialists were rocked by a string of corruption scandals, Poland enjoyed strong economic growth for more than a decade and falling unemployment (which in 2015 hit the lowest level since the democratic transition) and steadily improved its position in Transparency International and other international corruption surveys.<sup>4</sup> Last but not least, the support by Poles for European integration had remained around 80 per cent, one of the highest in the EU.<sup>5</sup>

Explaining the electoral success of Poland's populists is far from simple or straightforward, despite their affinities with Orbán's Fidesz party and other populists in Europe and beyond. No single-sentence answer, such as the split between 'winners and losers of the democratic transformation' or any other simple appeal to socioeconomic divisions, seems to provide us with a satisfactory explanation. Instead, we must analyse the interplay of factors that led to such an outcome.

## **2015 and beyond**

The next section will sketch the Polish political climate leading up to and since the 2015 presidential elections. By 2015, the mere fact of being in power for eight consecutive years – an unprecedented feat in Polish politics – had undoubtedly ensured more time for blunders and contributed to the public's fatigue with the Civic Platform. During the eight years of rule, balancing between opposite public policy poles in an attempt to satisfy very different voting blocs, the Civic Platform ultimately managed to alienate broad parts of the electorate. For socially conservative voters, whom the party was desperately trying to keep, the political establishment was too liberal, for instance regarding public funding of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment, which had been strongly condemned by the Polish Catholic Church. For progressives, it was too conservative, because of its failure to deliver on same-sex civic partnership legislation, among other

things.<sup>6</sup> Statistics showed that economic growth in Poland led to increased wealth for a vast majority of individual households, while the number of people in poverty and unemployment rates were systematically declining. Nonetheless, expectations were growing faster than incomes. The popular perception was that salaries were not keeping up with growth.<sup>7</sup>

This mismatch between the rhetoric of Poland's 'golden age' and popular perceptions of stagnation and decay was behind the first defeat of the Civic Platform in the presidential elections in May 2015. The then-incumbent Bronisław Komorowski, who at the onset of his campaign was a clear favourite in the presidential race against relatively young and unknown Andrzej Duda, based his strategy on the narrative of Poland's successful transition with little or no room for voters' particular discontents. Komorowski's narrative proved to be especially disconnected from the feelings of the younger generation. There are perhaps parallels here with many European mainstream politicians during the euro-crisis – a failure to respond adequately to voters' sentiments.

As a result, Komorowski lost the crucial support of younger voters to the anti-establishment candidate Paweł Kukiz, who based his bid for presidency on a mix of anti-European, nationalist and xenophobic slogans without much of a substantive political programme, except for a reform of the electoral system, which he believed would bring about the end of the party system in Poland. Kukiz scored 20 per cent and came third in the first round of elections. In the second round of the presidential elections, Kukiz supporters largely favoured the younger and politically less 'tainted' Mr Duda. As a result, Komorowski, with 48.5 per cent of the vote, lost the race to Duda, who received 51.5 per cent of the vote.

### **The 'Poland in ruin' campaign**

Duda's unexpected success was largely due to the miscalculated campaign of the then-incumbent President Komorowski. Nonetheless his victory threw the ruling Civic Platform into disarray, broke the glass ceiling holding back

the Law and Justice party, and paved the way for the party's successful parliamentary campaign.

The weaknesses of the Civic Platform were skilfully exploited by the Law and Justice party, which managed to integrate the (often contradictory) discontents of different social groups into a counter-narrative, dubbed by its critics as the 'Poland in ruin' campaign, depicting Poland as a country where few benefited from growth and the masses were increasingly impoverished. The success of such a campaign is perhaps difficult to understand by looking at various social and economic indicators. It may read as a triumph of fear over reason and gut feeling over expert knowledge, akin to the success of the Leave campaign in the UK's referendum on EU membership.

### **Poland's 'alt-right' or hipster right-wing radicalism**

The Law and Justice campaign managed to soften the party's radical image, with the authoritarian elements so prominent in earlier Law and Justice party politics tucked away, and people representing this radical face of the Law and Justice party (including Kaczyński himself) carefully placed out of public view. The official campaign slogan – 'Good Change' –helped to woo undecided voters looking for an alternative to the 'boring' Civic Platform. Kaczyński tapped into this feeling by presenting his party as 'compassionate conservatives'. A good illustration of the effectiveness of this step is the support for Andrzej Duda by some prominent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights activists, claiming that Civic Platform is as conservative as the Law and Justice party anyway.<sup>8</sup>

The right-wing conservatives' rebranding was assisted by the increased prominence of young and hip right-wing public intellectuals as well as by the social media and social networking platforms, which helped make the Law and Justice and other anti-establishment right-wing parties attractive to young voters. Nationalist, xenophobic messages stopped being associated exclusively with muscular track-suit-wearing, close-shaven youngsters and old ladies in mohair hats,

but gained a new, elegant and even glamorous wrapping.<sup>9</sup> Research on electoral behaviour of different social groups demonstrates that the Law and Justice party's electoral victories are much attributed to the mobilisation of young, well-educated committed supporters of the right-wing political forces and active users of the internet.<sup>10</sup> Social networking sites and online media have fanned the flames of frustration with the current anti-elite sentiments, xenophobia and a craving for 'good change'.

Nominating Beata Szydło as Law and Justice party candidate for prime minister (instead of the controversial Jarosław Kaczyński) as the friendly face of Law and Justice was a key part of the party's strategy to rebrand itself by shifting the debate to more social issues. Szydło presented a number of very well-targeted proposals that addressed many of the aforementioned discontents people had with the otherwise successful Civic Platform track record in government, including a generous, for Polish standards, child benefit, a minimum wage and rolling back the recent retirement age reform.<sup>11</sup>

This successful Law and Justice campaign led to that party's parliamentary victory in November 2015. The five parties that entered the parliament included the Law and Justice party with the largest share of votes (38 per cent), Civic Platform with 24 per cent of votes, anti-establishment Kukiz' 15 with 9 per cent, the Modern Poland party (8 per cent) and the Polish Peasants' party (5 per cent). The newly founded Modern Poland party is liberal in social and economic terms, and it attracted some votes from more progressive voters disappointed with the Civic Platform. Importantly, none of the left-wing parties managed to pass the 5 per cent electoral threshold.<sup>12</sup> With a turnout of around 50 per cent, only 18.6 per cent of eligible voters cast their votes for the Law and Justice party, which gained a similar number of individual votes as the Civic Platform had four years earlier. However, the electoral failure of the divided left wing and some other parties<sup>13</sup> translated into many more parliamentary seats left for sharing between the electoral winners, most of which went to the Law and Justice party,

giving the winner an absolute majority in parliament (51 per cent of seats).<sup>14</sup>

### **Majoritarian ‘demokratura’**

Thus, while the actual electoral result of the Law and Justice party far from justifies their claims to have the mandate to make radical changes ‘in the name of the people’, the majority in parliament enables them to rule with disregard for the views of the opposition, especially since the Kukiz’15 party also supports the government on many policy issues. The Law and Justice party applied its doctrine of majoritarianism to the Constitutional Tribunal, the prosecutor’s office, public media and the civil service, using their majority to dismantle the existing checks and balances within the Polish democratic architecture, while severely limiting the role of the opposition or opportunities for public consultations.<sup>15</sup>

During the Law and Justice party’s first stint in government, some of the most controversial acts of Jarosław Kaczyński’s government, most notably the radical ‘lustration law’, which broadened its scope to include not only public office holders, but also journalists and academics, were constrained by rulings of the Constitutional Tribunal.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, having won control of the lower and upper chambers of the parliament as well as the presidency, Kaczyński decided to wage a frontal attack against the tribunal as the only remaining bulwark against his plans to radically remodel Poland according to his party’s nationalistic and conservative ideology. It should be noted that, unlike Orbán in Hungary, the Polish voters did not deliver Kaczyński enough MPs to change the constitution, even if we include sympathetic deputies from the Kukiz’15 faction. Hence the control of the Constitutional Tribunal became a focal point of the struggle between the Law and Justice party government and the opposition.

The excuse for the assault was provided by the recklessness of the previous ruling party, the Civic Platform. Three weeks before the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2015, the Civic Platform–Polish Peasants’ party majority



elected five judges to be sworn in by the president. While three of them were to take seats vacated before the elections, two others were to take seats during the mandate of the incoming legislature starting on 12 November. The president refused to take the oath of all the five elected judges, while the new government introduced a bill to annul the previous judicial nominations by amending the law on the Constitutional Tribunal, adopted via an accelerated procedure. On 2 December 2015 five new judges were nominated.

Rulings of the Constitutional Tribunal from 3 December and 9 December 2015 confirmed that the previous legislature had the right to nominate three judges, but not the two judges due to take seats after the end of the outgoing legislature's term of office, under the new government's mandate. A shortening of the terms of office of the incumbent president and vice president of the tribunal, also envisaged by the government bill, were ruled unconstitutional as well.

However, the Law and Justice government decided to ignore the Constitutional Tribunal rulings by refusing to publish them, so that they would not come into force. In the meantime the president took the oath of the five judges nominated by the new, Law and Justice party-dominated legislature, making the composition of the tribunal a matter of dispute. Crucially, further amendments adopted on 28 December 2015 made the capacity of the tribunal to review the constitutionality of the adopted legislation more difficult, if not impossible, by increasing the majorities needed to pass judgments and increasing the number of judges on cases.

Even more controversial was the requirement that the tribunal should consider the cases as they come, without the ability to set its own agenda. The new law was ruled as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Tribunal but the government refused to recognise the ruling, arguing the tribunal should have applied the procedures stipulated under the new legislation. The struggle for the control of the constitutional court has continued so that during its first year in office, the ruling majority passed no fewer than eight different acts of parliament referring to the Constitutional Tribunal, in the attempt to assume control over the tribunal

and to tire out the domestic and international criticism of its actions.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar fashion, disregarding standard parliamentary procedures of debate and consultations, the so-called ‘small media law’ was adopted on 31 December 2015. The new law made provision for the immediate dismissal of the existing supervisory and management boards of the public service broadcasters. Moreover, the newly appointed management and supervisory boards were put under the control of the Treasury Ministry, which compromised their independence. The new law side-lined the constitutional body, the National Board for Radio and Television, which is charged with the regulation and guarding of media independence. The government appointed a Law and Justice party spin doctor as president of public television and promptly conducted a purge of journalists and media workers suspected of lack of enthusiasm for its political agenda.<sup>18</sup>

### **Domestic reactions – the KOD and others**

The imminent rise of a broad social protest movement against the authorities’ handling of the Constitutional Tribunal as well other democratic infringements came as a huge surprise to both supporters and opponents of the Law and Justice government. The key force behind the protests is the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji; KOD), a grassroots initiative, which has united people of different political persuasions.<sup>19</sup> The presence of former prominent representatives of the Solidarity movement (Solidarność), including Henryka Wujec and Władysław Frasyniuk, made it difficult for Law and Justice party politicians to dismiss the KOD as a top-down group mobilised by the post-communist elites. In fact, parallels with the anti-communist Solidarity and Committee for the Defence of Workers (Komitet Obrony Robotników; KOR) movements are emphasised by KOD sympathisers – the campaign against authoritarian governments, in defence of democratic values, attracting wide support from ordinary citizens. KOD supporters often draw parallels between the Law and Justice

party government and former communist rulers of Poland, which is rather embarrassing to a party claiming a monopoly on anti-communist opposition. Since its beginnings in 2006, the KOD has been organising rallies and marches regularly in support of the Constitutional Court, and against the new media laws, drawing tens if not hundreds of thousands of protesters.

In response to the perceived growing Euroscepticism of the government, a Freedom, Equality, Democracy Coalition formed under the auspices of KOD, uniting different political actors under one banner of shared European values. Apart from the Civic Platform, the biggest among the opposition parties, and a newly formed left-wing Together party, all centre and centre-left political parties, left-of-the-centre associations and individual members of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) European Parliament group joined the Coalition. The rally organised by the Coalition on 7 May 2016 ostensibly focused on Poland's membership of the EU and Poland's 'European choice', and was probably the biggest political demonstration in post-1989 Poland.

The reaction from the government and pro-government media was to suggest that KOD is a movement of people who unjustly benefited from the previous years of liberal rule and are now afraid to be brought to justice. Some of the insults poured out by Jarosław Kaczyński and others have become instant classics. For example, his depiction of KOD demonstrators as 'Poles of the worst sort' was reappropriated and printed on t-shirts and badges worn by participants in successive demonstrations, in a way reminiscent of communist propaganda depictions of Solidarity activists as 'anti-socialist elements', which they embraced with pride. The Law and Justice party strategy was to present their opponents as a relatively small minority, whereas the government claimed to speak for 'the people' or all 'true Poles'. As we already noted, neither the results of the elections nor the subsequent opinion polls validate such a claim.

# 1 Social cohesion and economic fears

Dominik Owczarek

The pendulum in Poland has swung decisively from the liberal, globally oriented Civic Platform to the authoritarian nationalists of the Law and Justice party. Three sets of explanations are often provided to make sense of such political shifts: some explain the rise of populist parties in terms of economic factors such as unemployment and a changing labour market, others in terms of the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of globalisation, or in terms of pervasive cultural anxieties.<sup>20</sup>

The economy-based thesis posits that right-wing populist parties are sustained by economic hardship and inequality, causing the ‘left behinds’ to vote for any alternative to the status quo. As far as macroeconomic indices are concerned, however, Poland is one of the best-performing countries in Europe since the collapse of Iron Curtain. Reports by international organisations like the World Bank consistently show there has been a remarkable economic expansion in Poland over the past 27 years. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased by over 10 per cent in real terms (corrected for changes in purchasing power).<sup>21</sup> This is the best result among all post-Soviet and post-socialist countries. Since 1989, there has not been a single year of economic contraction in Poland, not even during the 2008 economic crisis or the subsequent Eurozone crisis. Because of this outstanding performance, Poland has been labelled a ‘green island’ of economic growth contrasted with the rest of Europe.<sup>22</sup> Economic acceleration has been mirrored also in a significant change in the Human Development Index, which rose from 0.713 in 1990 to 0.843 in 2014.<sup>23</sup> One of the effects of the

transformation, however, was an increase in the Gini coefficient, reflecting increased income inequality. During the 1990s, the coefficient rose from 0.27 in 1990 to 0.33 in 2000. The figure stabilised around 2005 and remains around the level of 0.34–0.35 since then.<sup>24</sup> Another negative effect of the transformation was a massive increase in unemployment throughout the 1990s, reaching a peak of 20 per cent in 2003 and 2004.

Table 1 **Macroeconomic indices for Poland: GDP growth rate, minimum monthly wage, average yearly earnings, 2004–2015**

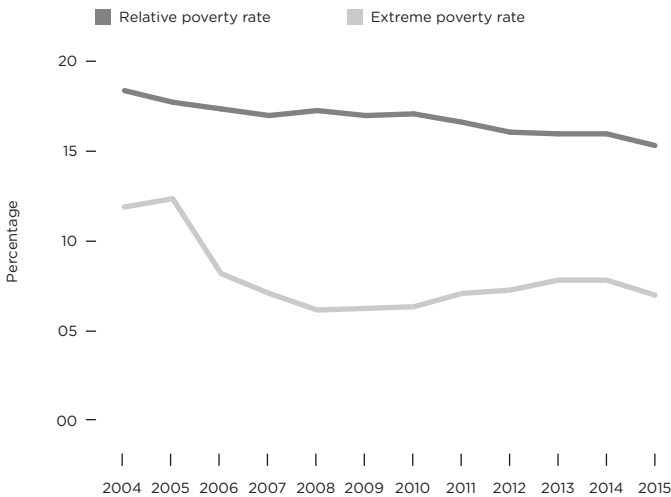
	2004	2006	2008	2010	2011
GDP growth rate	5.1%	6.2%	4.2%	3.6%	5.0%
Minimum monthly wage	€182.16	€221.72	€35.99	€337.58	€347.34
Average yearly earnings	€5,964.26	€7,513.28	€9,598.53	€9,042.23	€9,357.12
	2012	2013	2014	2015	
GDP growth rate	1.6%	1.3%	3.3%	3.6%	
Minimum monthly wage	€353.04	€368.87	€404.16	€417.55	
Average yearly earnings	€9,298.24	€9,873.12	€10,123.56	€11,787.78	

Source: Eurostat.<sup>25</sup>

The turning point was almost certainly the accession to the EU, when the Gini coefficient stabilised and unemployment rates started to decline. The pre-crisis period from May 2004 to mid-2008 was very favourable to society and the economy due to opening of the EU labour market to Polish employees,

and an inflow of European structural funds and foreign investment. This resulted in strong GDP growth and increases in wages and the employment rate coupled with a decrease in unemployment and poverty rates. The economic crisis and the post-crisis period brought economic slowdown (but not recession) and a rise in unemployment (especially among young people) and in extreme poverty rates, as well as a decrease in average yearly earnings. It must be noted, however, that despite economic slowdown, some positive pre-crisis trends continued: the decrease of relative poverty and the consistent increase in the minimum wage. Since 2013/2014, most major macroeconomic indices have been improving and by the end of 2015 the economy was in a better shape than before the crisis by most measures (table 1).

Figure 1 **Poverty indicators in Poland, 2004-2015**

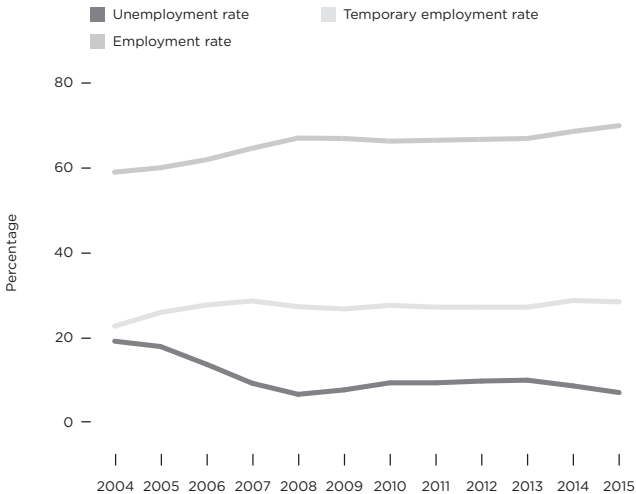


Data labels are given every second year for clarity. Source: Central Statistical Office.

Taking into account the whole period since accession to the EU (2004–2015), Poland performed relatively well despite the crisis: nominal average yearly earnings nearly doubled,<sup>26</sup> minimum wage increased more than twice,<sup>27</sup> unemployment decreased by 11.6 percentage points,<sup>28</sup> relative poverty dropped by 3.3 percentage points and extreme poverty dropped by 5.3 percentage points (figure 1).<sup>29</sup>

However, this bright picture is overshadowed by at least two factors. The first is a massive emigration that started in 2004. Current estimates suggest there are over 2.3 million Poles (or about 6 per cent of the total population) temporarily living abroad.<sup>30</sup> Post-accession migration is mostly caused by economic factors and to some extent should be assessed as a rational choice when the level of wage divergence between EU countries is taken into account. In 2014, average earnings in Poland were more than three times smaller than average earnings in the EU and just over a fifth of the average wage in the UK – the preferred destination for Polish migrants.

Figure 2 **Labour market indicators in Poland, 2004–2015**



Data labels are given every second year for clarity. Source: Eurostat.

The second factor is the poor quality of employment. It is expressed in relatively low wages compared with other EU countries and a lack of job stability. Poland has the highest share of temporary employment in the EU (figure 2). In 2015, those on temporary contracts formed 28 per cent of all employees, whereas the EU average was 14.1 per cent. Among those aged 15–24 this share was as high as 72.7 per cent (higher only in Slovenia – 75.5 per cent), whereas the EU average was 43.3 per cent for this age group. The temporary employment rate also includes those employed under civil-law contracts, which are not subject to protection under the Labour Code. Social security contributions are usually not paid on these contracts either. Furthermore, Polish employees work some of the longest hours in the EU, raising questions about the work–life balance of Poles. Some of those employed under temporary contracts should be thought of as precarious employees. In short, economic indicators paint a mixed picture. On the one hand, the impressive economic performance expressed in GDP growth is not to be dismissed. On the other, not all groups benefited equally from this economic growth. A significant rise in income inequality coupled with notoriously high rates of unemployment in the 1990s, mass emigration after 2004 and the highest levels of temporary employment in Europe are the main sources of this ambivalence.

However, contrary to most Western European countries, it is not the post-2008 recession that is providing fertile ground for populist movements. The social impact of the crisis was much smaller than the impact of the transformation process of the 1990s and in fact never led to a recession in Poland. Therefore it is hard to argue that the success of populist movements and parties in 2015 is purely the result of a deterioration of social and economic conditions, because the populist electoral successes are much larger than the economic climate seems to warrant.

There is another discrepancy, between Polish people's subjective assessment of satisfaction with their personal life on the one hand and their assessment of politics and the economic conditions on the other. Since 1989, majorities



of Poles have assessed the political situation and economic conditions in the country as being bad year after year. There were only three periods when they formed a different political assessment: in 1989–1990, just after the fall of the Soviet Union; in 1997 when the government gained stability for the first time since 1989 (equal positive and negative ratings); and between late 2007 and early 2008, when the Civic Platform government won parliamentary elections and the economic situation was improving. There were only two periods when they formed a different economic assessment: in 2007–2008, when economic indicators were exceptionally high; and in 2016, when indices showed the situation to be the best it has ever been historically.<sup>31</sup> At these times respondents' positive assessment of their personal life – their living conditions, their household's economic situation and their general situation in the workplace – started to overshadow their negative assessment of these dimensions in the period 2003–2006 and this pattern persists in 2017. Currently over 50 per cent of respondents assess their living conditions positively (8 per cent negatively), 46 per cent view their economic situation positively (9 per cent negatively) and 59 per cent view the general situation at their workplace positively (11 per cent negatively). The discrepancy between the positive assessment of respondents' personal situation and the negative assessment of the political and economic shape of the country appears to be constant. Populist groups in Poland have often relied on this subjective sense of deprivation rather than hard data.

### **From 'green island' to 'Poland in ruin'**

The Polish case seems to illustrate that growing prosperity per se is not necessarily an antidote to populist authoritarian rhetoric. Where the ruling Civic Platform built its rhetoric around the positive trends shown by economic indicators, the Law and Justice party relied on the subjective sense of deprivation discussed in the previous paragraph. Where one spoke of Poland as a 'green island' of economic growth the other presented an image of 'Poland in ruin'. In retrospect, it

seems economic indicators were not as electorally compelling as the Civic Platform assumed.

As others have pointed out, economic explanations of populism attribute almost no part of populist electoral success to political actors.<sup>32</sup> Yet it was precisely clever political leadership and fine-tuned rhetoric that appeared to be decisive in the Law and Justice party's victory. The rhetoric of the Civic Platform – the ruling party between 2007 and 2015 – revolved around successful economic development, the emergence of a middle class and the growing importance of the country in Central Eastern Europe and in the EU.

In the first term of office of the government formed by the coalition of Civic Platform and the Polish Peasants' party (2007–2011) one of the main symbolic points of reference was the above-mentioned positive GDP growth, contrasted with economic recession in other European countries. In 2009, Poland was the only country in the EU with positive GDP growth, and was often seen as a green spot on a red map of countries with negative growth, giving the country its nickname of 'green island'. This symbol loosely referred also to the economic success of Ireland, identified as an effect of liberal reforms in a Catholic country, which was also one of the main migration destinations for Poles after accession to the EU in 2004. Moreover, the image of the 'green island' was used to argue the effectiveness of Poland's use of structural funds, which were spent mostly on infrastructure development (roads, highways).

In the electoral campaign of 2011, when the Civic Platform was re-elected for the second term, the main rhetorical figure of the 'green island' was supplemented with the slogan 'Poland under construction', emphasising that there was still much to be done. This narrative was well supported by statistical data and presented by politicians and experts – economists and sociologists. Despite the crisis, the message was that the economy is growing, there are more investments, general economic conditions are improving, and Poland has fulfilled its dream of becoming part of the democratic Western world just after accession to the EU.

From 2013 onwards the ruling coalition seemed to be more alienated from the issues important to many social groups. Moreover, it overestimated the impact of the ‘green island’ rhetoric. Heightened levels of social discontent and frustration were surprising and incomprehensible when compared with growing economic indicators. This seeming paradox can be explained by Polish people’s mixed social perceptions and cumulated fears far beyond macroeconomic indices, which has been deftly captured and irrationally blown up by opposition populist parties in their emotional rhetoric. Once the great goals from the transformation period – accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and EU structures – that challenged society and motivated sacrifice for the sake of these goals were achieved, Poles sensed they were facing an uncertain future. The sense of hope that unified social aspirations was replaced by fear of external threats: the economic crisis that came from the USA and Eurozone, war between Russia and neighbouring Ukraine, later on the refugee crisis, then Brexit and the possibility that some entitlements for migrants (including Polish migrants) would be limited in several Western European countries.

Meanwhile, the emerging middle class – the main social group supporting Civic Platform – started to see limits in its growth. The fragility of the emerging middle class has been revealed most of all by an increase in the value of the Swiss Franc (Confederazione Helvetica Franc; CHF), which hit thousands of holders of mortgages denominated in that currency. The fragility of the middle classes is expressed also in their lack of sense of affluence and stability in the longer run. This bastion of the Civic Platform begun to sink in frustration and lose respect for rational rhetoric despite GDP growth and incremental improvements in the situation of their households.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, frustration and fear among the young generation is a result of their unsustainable success. The Millennials in Poland were the first generation with college attendance rates at the level of Western European countries (some 50 per cent among those below 30 years of age) – the highest ever. Half of this generation has acquired high

occupational qualifications, learnt foreign languages and visited foreign universities during scholarships, which obviously created high expectations about their future career and lifestyle. Young Poles believe that they have equal economic status and perspectives with their Erasmus friends from Germany, the UK or France. Graduates collided with reality in at least two different ways: they tried to enter the poor labour market with high competencies and expectations, and they have taken the hardest hit of the crisis. They have been forced to take prolonged, mostly unpaid, internships, or temporary employment under civil-law or fixed-term contracts; had interrupted employment; had to live with parents as there are very limited chances to rent (lack of rental housing) or buy a flat; and altogether faced severe difficulties with being self-sufficient and able to start a family. Some young people had to move back to their home towns from bigger academic cities or sought jobs for which they were over-qualified, which they experienced as a failure.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, in both the presidential and parliamentary electoral campaigns in 2015 Civic Platform continued its rhetoric of claiming success despite growing social discontent. A symbolic example of the incomprehension of social moods was an answer Bronisław Komorowski gave to a young person who asked him for advice for his sister, who after graduating from university could only find a job that paid 2,000 PLN (less than £400) a month, emphasising the situation of many university graduates who can be classified as ‘working poor’. The president advised her ‘to change her job, to take a loan’ and reminded her that unemployment in Poland was falling, unlike in the UK. This incident was filmed and amplified through opposition media, especially social media.<sup>35</sup>

The Law and Justice party countered the slogan of the ‘green island’ with their own catchphrase, ‘Poland in ruin’. To build Poland back up, the party promised to lower the retirement age, to vastly expand family benefits under the so-called Family 500+ (Rodzina 500+) programme, and to build many new apartments on state-owned land. The funding for these programmes remains a point of contention. The government estimated that Family 500+ would cost

approximately 16 billion PLN (roughly equivalent to £3 billion) in 2016 and 21 billion PLN in 2017. It will be one of the causes of public debt and increased public deficit, likely in contravention of European budget rules. Public spending related to the social programmes was supposed to be covered by better collection of VAT, a new sales tax and a new bank tax. None of these programmes has yet been successfully implemented.

Yet despite severe criticism from experts and opposition leaders, the social programmes, especially Family 500+, still seem to have bolstered the support for the Law and Justice government. Large majorities of Law and Justice party supporters feel their party has done well or very well at improving the quality of life, keeping its promises, and maintaining democracy and the rule of law. Above all, the figures show a divided Poland: 50 per cent think the government is performing badly in implementing its electoral promises, while some 56 per cent of those surveyed are critical of its approach to democracy and rule of law. Among the liberal and left-wing opposition – Civic Platform, Modern Poland party (Nowoczesna) and United Left – this figure shoots up: some 70 per cent of them think that the Law and Justice party government has performed very badly in safeguarding democracy (table 2).<sup>36</sup>

Table 2 **Respondents' answers to the question 'How well or badly do you think the Law and Justice government, which came to power following the 2015 elections, are doing at the following...'**

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)	Kukiz'15 supporters (%)	Nowoczesna supporters (%)	United Left supporters (%)
<i>Improving the quality of life of the majority of Poles?</i>						
Very well	8	20	3	4	4	3
Fairly well	36	59	21	44	21	16
Fairly badly	24	10	35	24	32	35
Very badly	21	5	34	21	37	38
Don't know	10	6	7	6	7	7
<i>Implementing the promises they made before the election?</i>						
Very well	7	19	2	4	2	0
Fairly well	35	59	19	39	26	11
Fairly badly	26	14	31	31	28	40
Very badly	24	4	45	22	40	41
Don't know	8	4	4	5	4	7
<i>Maintaining democracy and the rule of law?</i>						
Very well	9	23	2	5	3	3
Fairly well	25	47	7	18	14	7
Fairly badly	20	13	18	32	14	17
Very badly	36	6	70	37	69	70
Don't know	11	11	2	8	1	3

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.

## 2 Globalisation and European integration

Aleksander Fuksiewicz

A second prominent theory on populism focuses on the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of globalisation. The populist right wing is said to mobilise ‘the cultural anxieties of the losers of globalisation’.<sup>37</sup> Yet our polling shows that the Polish do not consider themselves to be losers of globalisation at all. Both Law and Justice party supporters and Civic Platform supporters are overwhelmingly positive about the effect of globalisation on their country, local area and personal lives. Poland is more content with globalisation than any other country in our sample (table 3).

Moreover, this positive attitude towards globalisation goes hand in hand with consistent support for European integration and Poland’s EU membership. In comparative Eurobarometer surveys Poles usually express the most positive opinions about the EU and the most positive assessment of the benefits of membership of all EU countries. For instance, in the last poll before the 2015 elections, the number of positive responses to the question ‘does the EU conjure up for you a positive, neutral or negative image’ in Poland was the fifth highest in the EU. In the first poll after the elections it was the second highest (after Croatia).<sup>38</sup> According to Polish surveys, the number of those in favour of EU membership has not dropped below 70 per cent over the last decade, reaching a peak of 89 per cent in 2014.<sup>39</sup> According to Polish polls, in 2015 some 84 per cent of Poles were in favour of EU membership, 10 per cent were against and 6 per cent undecided.<sup>40</sup>

Table 3

**Respondents' views on the statement 'Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected. There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries. Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect on...'**

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)
<i>Europe as a whole</i>			
Positive	79	76	90
Negative	12	16	6
Don't know	9	9	4
<i>Poland as a whole</i>			
Positive	80	79	91
Negative	13	14	7
Don't know	7	6	3
<i>Your local area</i>			
Positive	77	76	88
Negative	11	14	5
Don't know	12	10	6
<i>Your own life</i>			
Positive	72	72	82
Negative	11	13	7
Don't know	17	15	11

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.



These general pro-European attitudes have been grounded in the perception of many that Poland has benefited from membership in the EU on numerous levels. According to a survey conducted on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Polish membership in the EU, these benefits include freedom of movement (especially free flow of labour) and the transfer of EU funds to Poland. According to the same poll, most Poles believe that accession to the EU has strengthened the international security of the country (72 per cent) and Poland's position in Europe (74 per cent).<sup>41</sup>

How is it possible a Eurosceptic party such as the Law and Justice party can manage to win parliamentary elections in one of the most pro-globalisation and Euro-enthusiastic countries in the EU? The possibility of leaving the EU remains taboo in the mainstream public debate and even Eurosceptic Law and Justice party politicians do not mention it as an option, arguing instead for a repatriation of EU powers back to member states, for example by giving national parliaments the power to veto legislation coming from Brussels.

Table 4 Respondents' answers to the question 'Do you think Poland's long-term policy should be...'

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)
To leave the EU	8	13	1
To stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers	32	46	23
To leave things as they are	21	12	40
To stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers	14	10	17
To work for the formation of a single European government	10	6	10
Don't know	15	12	8

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.

Despite the generally positive appraisal of the EU and globalisation, the ‘sovereignty instead of cooperation’ approach of the Law and Justice party appears to resonate with large parts of the Polish electorate. Our original polling shows that while only 8 per cent of Poles would support leaving the EU, another 32 per cent support staying in the EU and trying to reduce the EU’s powers, which is the pronounced policy of the Law and Justice party government (table 4).

According to these figures, 40 per cent of Polish citizens (the 8 per cent who want to leave the EU and the 32 per cent who want EU powers to be reduced) are at least to some degree Eurosceptic.<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that this issue is strongly correlated with party preferences. Eurosceptics make up the majority of the Law and Justice party electorate (59 per cent), but only 22 per cent of the pro-European Civic Platform electorate. In another poll from October 2015, the Institute of Public Affairs obtained similar results: one-third felt that the EU’s competences should be reduced (51 per cent of Law and Justice party supporters and 26 per cent of Civic Platform voters).<sup>43</sup> Looking at these results, one can assume that the Law and Justice party’s sovereignty narrative has been accepted by the majority of the party’s supporters.

However, the Law and Justice party has received significant pushback from the opposition and civil society organisations on its EU stance. This has been expressed in KOD protests against the government, where EU flags were always an important symbol. A very large KOD demonstration in Warsaw in May 2016, which brought together all mainstream parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties and politicians opposing the Law and Justice party, had as its motto ‘We are and will be in Europe’.

### **Refugees – successful use of fear (and xenophobia) in the election campaign**

Insofar as globalisation was a (latent) theme in the election campaign, it was primarily through the fierce debate on immigration. One of the keys to the Law and Justice party

victory in the 2015 elections was the refugee crisis. The Law and Justice party warned that Poland was in grave danger of a massive inflow of Muslim immigrants – and only they could prevent this. The refugee issue might have been decisive in breaking the party's electoral 'glass ceiling' (its lack of support among more educated, urban, middle-class voters, as discussed above) which was believed to exist for Kaczyński's party. Many different groups of society shared an aversion to accepting refugees, not only the traditional Law and Justice party voting blocs of less educated and less wealthy citizens.

The refugee crisis started at the worst possible moment in the Polish public debate – just before the electoral campaign. Poles were already suspicious of immigrants, but the refugee crisis combined with the political campaign caused an unprecedented outburst of xenophobia publicly and on social media. This debate was characterised by emotional narratives, stirring up fears of Muslim refugees, and a systemic disregard for facts and data.<sup>44</sup>

Emotional messages found fertile soil in Poland. Knowledge about immigration is limited in Polish society and stereotypes are widespread. For instance, one-fourth of Poles believe that foreigners account for 10 per cent of the population, while the real number is less than 1 per cent.<sup>45</sup> According to the Pew Research Center almost all Poles want immigration to be limited or kept at the current level (but not increased). Half of the citizenry thinks that immigrants are a burden for Poland and only one-fourth that they strengthen the country (compared with some 70 per cent who believe this in countries like Germany or the UK).<sup>46</sup>

During the refugee crisis there was a dramatic increase of negative opinions about immigration. In May 2015 (before the campaign started), 21 per cent of Poles said that Poland should not accept any refugees. By December 2015 (just after the elections) this ratio had grown to an absolute majority, 53 per cent.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, polls show that the fear of an inflow of refugees was prevalent across social groups. The views of less-educated, rural respondents (the traditional Law and Justice party support base) were exactly the same as those among well-educated people from large cities (traditionally

not the Law and Justice party electorate).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, young people were generally even more opposed than older people to accepting immigrants. Everything was favoured the Law and Justice party in this regard.

The refugee crisis was critical for the ruling party, as it had to negotiate accepting refugees at the EU level (and obligatory quotas proposed by the European Commission), which it knew would be difficult to accept at home. The Civic Platform government criticised the Juncker plan of taking in obligatory quotas, but agreed to accept 7,000 refugees. Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz said publicly, 'We want to accept refugees, those who cannot feel safe in their home countries... this is a decency test for Poland.'<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, mainstream Polish politicians (including those from the left) were lacklustre in their defence of the decision to accept refugees in Poland. Only some in civil society tried (with limited success) to influence the debate with some positive message.<sup>50</sup>

The 'crisis' created a great opportunity for the Law and Justice party to build support using fear and xenophobia. It accused the government of betraying the country and its Central European allies (such as Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, also opposed to quotas). Law and Justice party politicians argued that the problem was not Poland's, but the Germans', who let refugees in; Poland lacked money to finance the life of refugees in the country; and the crisis was a consequence of the colonial past of the Western EU members. Law and Justice party leader Jarosław Kaczyński directly encouraged Poles to fear refugees by arguing that refugees might bring to Europe 'various kinds of parasites, protozoa, which are harmless in organisms for those people [refugees], but can be the dangerous here [in Poland]'.<sup>51</sup> In another widely discussed statement (expressed during parliamentary debate) Kaczyński had no qualms about using tabloid-style stereotypes of Muslim refugees – he claimed that there are 54 no-go zones of Sharia law in Sweden, that they use churches as toilets in Italy, and in France there are Muslim patrols enforcing Sharia law.<sup>52</sup>

Table 5

**Respondents' answers to the question 'Which, if any, of the following do you think are the biggest problems facing Poland at the moment? Please tick up to three'**

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)
Economic instability	27	17	35
The gap between the rich and poor	27	27	22
The low birth rate and how Poland will fund our ageing population	22	27	21
Islamic terrorism	42	53	30
Russian aggression and expansionism	27	40	25
Immigration	27	37	19
Political parties undermining democracy and the rule of law	33	20	51
Growing social liberalism, such as gay rights, feminism and abortion	9	11	3
Growing social conservatism, such as restrictions on abortion and gay rights	22	12	35
The security forces being given too many powers and freedoms	16	5	27
None of these	1	0	1
Don't know	7	8	2

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.

The Law and Justice party benefited from this approach, but it seemed to have greatly increased feelings of insecurity among Polish people. Although in Poland there are very few refugees

or immigrants from Arab countries, and although the country has not had any terrorist attacks, our polling indicates that Polish people feel the biggest problem currently facing Poland is Islamic terrorism. This is especially true for, but not limited to, Law and Justice supporters. According to Law and Justice party supporters, the three biggest problems facing Poland are Islamic terrorism, followed by Russian resurgence (40 per cent) and – again – immigration (37 per cent). In contrast, supporters of the oppositional centre-right Civic Platform perceive the undermining of democracy and the rule of law as being the biggest of Poland's problems (51 per cent), followed by economic instability and growing social conservatism (35 per cent each) (table 5). One may conclude that while opposition to refugees from Muslim countries is certainly not confined to the Law and Justice constituency, the political priorities of the supporters and opponents of the Law and Justice party government are very different.

Public debate during the crisis focused on the much-maligned obligatory quotas. There is a widely accepted narrative that Germany made a mistake in accepting refugees and Berlin was trying to shirk its responsibilities by forcing quotas, supported by the European Commission.

Table 6 **Respondents' views on whether Polish society becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse has changed society for the better or for the worse**

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)
Has changed society for the better	23	22	32
Has changed society for the worse	40	46	37
Neither	13	11	11
Don't know	24	21	19

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.

According to the Demos survey, 4 in 10 Poles think that the fact that society is becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse is a change for the worse. Similar percentages believe in the conspiracy theory, promoted by right-wing websites and social media, that ‘supporters of migration from Muslim countries want to destroy traditional Polish and Christian values’ (table 6).

Table 7 **The extent to which respondents agreed with the statement ‘Supporters of migration from Muslim countries want to destroy traditional Polish and Christian values’**

	Total (%)	Law and Justice party supporters (%)	Civic Platform supporters (%)
Strongly agree	23	34	12
Tend to agree	19	24	16
Neither agree nor disagree	23	24	23
Tend to disagree	15	6	23
Strongly disagree	14	3	24
Don't know	8	9	3
Agree	42	58	28
Neither agree nor disagree	23	24	23
Disagree	29	9	47

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.

## Post-election developments: the clash of authoritarian populism with international institutions and its reflection in the society

The Law and Justice party government's attack on the judicial branch of government during its first months was criticised by international organisations, the Venice Commission (a legal body within the Council of Europe) and the European Commission. The situation in Poland was also a subject of debate in the European Parliament. Polish society is very much divided in its response to the criticism of the Law and Justice party government by international institutions. According to polling by the Public Opinion Research Center, the percentage of respondents who oppose the decision of the European Commission to start rule-of-law procedure against Poland more or less equals the number of those who assess it positively and the results are clearly correlated with political preference.<sup>53</sup>

So far there is scarce evidence that criticism from EU institutions has significantly changed Poles' attitudes to EU membership or trust in EU institutions. Public trust in the European Commission, which is Poland's main international critic, remains unchanged from before the elections.<sup>54</sup>

Table 8 **Public trust in public institutions (average score on a 0-10 scale)**

The Polish Government	3.31 (low trust)
The Polish Parliament	2.98 (low trust)
The European Parliament	4.45 (medium trust)
The European Commission	4.51 (medium trust)

Source: YouGov polling for Demos.



Our polling demonstrates that the sovereignty narrative of the Law and Justice party is supported by a minority of Poles only. Although trust in EU institutions is not very high, it nonetheless remains higher than trust in Polish national institutions: 60 per cent of Poles have medium or high trust in the European Commission and 59 per cent in the European Parliament, whereas just 42 per cent and 38 per cent respectively have medium or high trust in the Polish government and the Polish parliament. The deficit of trust in both national and EU institutions is even more pronounced when we look at the average ratings (table 8).

These figures make two things abundantly clear:

- Polish citizens have disconcertingly low levels of social and political trust. No institution averages above 5 out of 10 in trustworthiness.
- It is difficult for the Law and Justice party government to exploit the fairly low level of trust the public has in European institutions, which it has repeatedly clashed with, since Polish institutions are mistrusted even more.

### 3 Social conservatism and the cultural backlash in Poland

Małgorzata Dručiarek

#### **Mainstreaming the culture war: the anti-gender campaign**

A third and final thesis focuses on cultural backlash, not just against migrants and cultural outsiders, but against a liberal, global orientation in general. As Inglehart and Norris write: ‘Xenophobia is only one part of a much broader cultural backlash among the older generation, rejecting many other liberal and cosmopolitan values diffusing throughout post-industrial societies.’<sup>55</sup> The divide between social conservatives and social progressives is always an important cleavage in Polish society, sustained by the active engagement of the Catholic Church in public and political life. In times when political affiliation becomes especially important – during electoral campaigns, or when government is drafting important legislation – the role of the Catholic Church turns out to be crucial in shaping narratives. Its unique position in the Polish public sphere dates back to the 1980s, when the country was transitioning to a democratic system. At that time the Catholic Church was the only institution treated seriously as a real political power by the communist regime, which has cemented its central and stable position in Polish political life.<sup>56</sup> No other institution in Poland gained so much with the democratic transition. The mixing of religion and state is widely accepted by Polish politicians and a matter of ‘political common sense’.<sup>57</sup> However, an opinion poll carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2013 showed that a considerable

majority of Poles (70 per cent) opposed members of the clergy offering official statements and comments on political affairs.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, almost half of the respondents claimed that the political influence of the Catholic Church was too strong in Poland.

From election to election, the political presence of the Church becomes more or less visible, depending on the current political situation. It was directly involved in the presidential elections in 2010, just after the Smolensk aircraft disaster, but such direct Church involvement received a lot of criticism from the general public and, unintentionally, helped the anti-clerical Palikot Movement to succeed in the 2011 parliamentary elections, where the party came third with 10 per cent of the votes. Palikot's victory, which was a consequence of the flourishing of liberal values that had started after 2007,<sup>59</sup> has resulted in the launch of what one could call 'the counter-reformation programme', aimed at stopping the advances of secularisation already visible in Polish society.<sup>60</sup> The crucial moment for this culture war was the public debate on whether the Polish government should sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), initiated in 2011. At that time, the Polish Episcopal conference noted that the Istanbul Convention was the first official document to offer a definition of 'gender' as being socially constructed. The bishops noted, 'The convention redefines gender as a social construct rather than as a distinction grounded in biology, and suggests violence towards women is systemic, with roots in religion and culture.'<sup>61</sup>

And so the 'anti-gender ideology' campaign was born. Gender was not understood and explained in public discussion as a social construct of characteristics pertaining, in a given society, to femininity and masculinity. It was presented by Church hierarchy and conservative politicians as an ideological concept designed to ruin the traditional Polish family.<sup>62</sup> 'Gender ideology' became a catchphrase for everything that the Church disliked and feared in modern Western societies: not only general secularisation, but also

women's empowerment, LGBT rights, reproductive rights and even such medical procedures as IVF. Right-wing media used the expression to smear all activities and actions aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting gender equality in Poland. This specifically Polish definition of the term even became associated with alleged sexualisation of children.<sup>63</sup> Educational projects carried out in kindergartens in different parts of the country were suddenly banned because various media outlets presented gender equality initiatives as mixing up children's sexes, making boys wear skirts and teaching children about sexuality. The 'anti-gender campaign' did not succeed over the Istanbul Convention – the Polish government eventually signed it in 2012 – but it did succeed in making Poles afraid of 'gender', especially when it came to teaching young people about gender equality.

Church support for Jarosław Kaczyński played a crucial role in getting the Law and Justice party elected. However, having learnt its lessons after 2010, the Church refrained from being too visibly active in the 2015 electoral campaign. Nonetheless, Church backing secured the loyalty of Kaczyński's more religiously conservative voters. Both the Catholic Church and Law and Justice's traditional electorate knew that with the Law and Justice party back in power, moral issues would return to the political agenda.

### **Payback time – legislative process after the 2015 parliamentary elections**

Just after winning the 2015 parliamentary elections, the Law and Justice party's balancing act between its hard-core voters and the new, more moderate ones came to an end. The Law and Justice party found itself under pressure from the Catholic Church and Church-based civil society groups, who felt it was payback time for their electoral support. Since the party gained an absolute majority in the legislature and did not need any coalition to form the government, the process of transforming the country – the so-called 'good change' – could be officially launched and moral issues returned.

In order to understand the process that had begun in 2016, we shall explain the so-called ‘abortion compromise’ that existed in the country since 1993. Access to legal abortion had been seriously restricted in Poland after the political transformation of 1989. Before the adoption of the 1993 Family Planning Act, in line with standard practice across Europe, women in Poland had been legally entitled to access abortion services on request. Restriction of abortion law was proposed by the Catholic Church and supported by politicians from the former democratic opposition. The Church was successful as many of those opposed to abortion were Catholic, and also – even mainly – because the Catholic Church had an important role in the democratic transition.<sup>64</sup> Further, women’s position just after the democratic transition was weak, even though they had actively participated in the opposition movement.

Solidarity’s female activists did not present their interests from a gender perspective, which contributed significantly to the deterioration of women’s position in society after 1989 in various aspects (eg reproductive rights, political presence, labour market participation). The 1993 Family Planning Act was without doubt a symptom of a cultural backlash regarding women’s rights and constituted the so-called ‘abortion compromise’, which has been shaping the discourse on reproductive rights in Poland for decades. The Act permits termination of pregnancy in three cases only,<sup>65</sup> so even before the Law and Justice party came to power, Poland – alongside Ireland and Malta – had the most strict abortion law in Europe.

In practice, even women who do meet the requirements for legal termination of pregnancy are generally not able to access abortion services in the public health care system.<sup>66</sup> The highly restrictive nature of the law regulating abortion, and the punitive and stigmatising environment around abortion, undermine effective implementation of Poland’s abortion law, and there is no effective regulation of conscience-based refusals of care by doctors. All the above-mentioned factors, accompanied by the absence of any semblance of guidelines and procedures that would facilitate

women's access to legal abortion services, leave women who want to terminate pregnancy but do not fall into the exceptional circumstances mentioned with three choices: undergo clandestine, and potentially unsafe, abortion in Poland; source safe and legal abortion services in another country at their own expense; carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.

According to various estimates, up to 100,000 Polish women each year undergo abortion in private clinics, using pills imported from abroad or by travelling to countries where abortion is legal and safe. The high cost of obtaining a safe abortion divides society into those who can afford to have a choice over their reproductive rights and those who are deprived of it.

The 'abortion compromise' was clearly not a real compromise. It was a solution dictated by an influential minority to all Polish women, the majority of whom had more liberal views at the time.<sup>67</sup> However, it was also clear at the beginning of the 1990s that the Church's hierarchy would not stop there. Looking at opinion polls, one would conclude that over the last two decades many in Polish society got used to that 'compromise'. According to a survey carried out in April 2016 by the Public Opinion Research Center, the majority of Poles support upholding the current 'abortion compromise'.<sup>68</sup> They consider it should be permitted to terminate pregnancy in the three cases that are currently legal: when the pregnancy poses a threat to the life (84 per cent) or health (76 per cent) of a mother, when it is a result of rape (74 per cent) and when the foetus is seriously damaged (60 per cent). About 80 per cent are against legalising abortion on demand, or if a woman has a difficult economic or personal situation; 11 per cent of Poles think it should be legal to terminate pregnancy for socioeconomic reasons. Respondents' religious practices are the greatest influence on their opinion about abortion law.

In July 2016 the citizen's bill entitled 'Stop Abortion', prepared by the ultra-conservative organisation *Ordo Iuris*, was introduced into parliament. This success of the anti-abortion organisations and the Catholic Church was preceded by collecting signatures, which eventually amounted

to almost half a million.<sup>69</sup> This draft law was aimed at introducing a total ban on abortion in Poland. It prohibits termination of pregnancy that occurs as a result of rape or a pregnancy that poses a threat to the life of the pregnant woman, and also termination of seriously ill, deformed foetuses. The proposed legal changes criminalise the intentional termination of pregnancy and miscarriage by putting such cases under investigation by the public prosecutor.<sup>70</sup>

Parallel to the 'Stop Abortion' draft law, and probably inspired to a certain extent by this ultra-conservative move, the collection of signatures supporting another citizen's bill was initiated. The counter-proposal of the Legislative Initiative Committee 'Save Women' was aimed at liberalising abortion law in Poland and included proposals to provide access to legal and safe abortion, provide high-quality health care at all stages of pregnancy, give access to modern contraceptive methods, and teach sex education in public schools. The introduction of this draft would bring Poland more in line with the stance of other European countries on abortion. Although the government had promised to discuss all citizens' bills at a first reading, even those it opposed on moral grounds, only the 'Stop Abortion' project was passed on to be processed further by the Justice and Human Rights Committee in the Sejm on 23 September. The counter-proposal 'Save Women' was rejected at the first reading. Not only did the Law and Justice party show it didn't treat citizens' legal initiatives equally, but it also confirmed that its members were ready to undo the so-called 'compromise'. It was too much to accept for Polish women.

### **Mainstreaming feminism? Women's resistance to the conservative backlash**

Many women objected to the radicalisation of the already restrictive anti-abortion law, and on 3 October 2016 ('Black Monday') there was the first mass mobilisation of Polish women in defence of their rights. The National Women's Strike was initially a social media phenomenon, and political

commentators did not expect it to turn into such a success. The number of participants and their geographical spread surpassed the expectations of the organisers themselves.<sup>71</sup> The Black Monday protests gathered around 100,000 participants not only in urban agglomerations but also in smaller towns.<sup>72</sup> The support for the women's strike could probably have been even greater had it not been almost impossible to protest openly in smaller towns on a working day.<sup>73</sup> It is also noteworthy that on Black Monday Polish streets were filled with women (as well as men and children) of different ages and levels of education, from different parts of the country, representing various backgrounds and moral beliefs. The protest was followed by a debate at the European Parliament and solidarity actions in many locations across the globe.

The key to the success of the Black Monday protest was the radicalism of the proposed law, which mobilised those women who in other circumstances would not have left their homes to protest on the streets. However, the organisers of the strike emphasised that they were not fighting for the liberalisation of the law, nor in favour of the status quo. What brought all those women together was the threat of radicalisation of the anti-abortion law.

The Black Monday protest affected opinion polls on reproductive rights. In the middle of preparations for the massive mobilisation, OKO Press commissioned a survey on Poles' approach to existing legal regulations of abortion.<sup>74</sup> It found there was a growing number of Poles who declared themselves in favour of liberalising existing abortion laws. Polish society appeared to have become increasingly liberal in the months since the survey carried out by the Public Opinion Research Center.<sup>75</sup> The poll found that 39 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men considered it should be legal to terminate pregnancy because of a woman's difficult life situation. Support for radicalising existing abortion laws remained at about 10–12 per cent. Future surveys will demonstrate whether Polish people's views on abortion are really becoming more liberal. It is clear, though, that the women's protest was widely supported in Poland. According to an Ipsos opinion poll, around 50 per cent of respondents



supported the protest against a total ban on abortion. Only 14 per cent of Poles declared themselves against Black Monday.<sup>76</sup>

Just three days after the women's protests, the Justice and Human Rights Committee of the Polish Sejm, dominated by Law and Justice MPs, reacted negatively to the 'Stop Abortion' draft law, rejecting the citizen's bill in a night-time session of parliament on 6 October. The Polish and international media announced the victory of the women's movement.<sup>77</sup> The massive mobilisation of Polish women proved that the feminist movement in Poland is not as weak as many tend to think. It also showed that values, and not only economic factors, can play a crucial role in shaping politics. The impact of the mobilisation on the women's movement in Poland much depends on the future decisions of the government. Just after Black Monday, Prime Minister Beata Szydło announced Law and Justice's project for the 'protection of life' and for support of those pregnant women who decide to give birth to a severely disabled child. At the beginning of November 2016 the president signed a new law, whereby mothers who give birth to severely disabled children will receive a one-time benefit of 4,000 PLN (around €900). Two days later she declared that the current abortion law was not protecting children with disabilities enough, so the 'abortion compromise' was not sufficient. It seems clear that the government will now aim to introduce new restrictions on reproductive rights and other women's rights. The populist backlash against women and the culture war will continue, because they lie at the heart of Law and Justice ideology.

## Conclusions – resilience and resistance to populism in power

One of the received theories on the rise of authoritarian populism across the Western world is that populism is a response to growing social inequality, a product of a neoliberal ‘Washington consensus’ predominant after 1989 and resulting in the financial and economic crisis of 2008. What makes this theory plausible is that populism draws its support from the less affluent and less educated sections of society, especially men, whose economic position has become precarious in the globalised post-industrial economy. However, this theory of the ‘mobilisation of the dispossessed’ has limited explanatory power. As Pippa Norris pointed out:

*Populist authoritarian leaders have arisen in several affluent post-industrial ‘knowledge’ societies, in cradle-to-grave welfare states with some of the best-educated and most secure populations in the world, like Sweden and Denmark – where you’d expect social tolerance and liberal attitudes instead of xenophobic appeals.<sup>78</sup>*

As we argue in this case study, the rise of authoritarian populism in Poland can serve as an argument that the ‘inequality’ theory has limited explanatory value. The Law and Justice victory in Poland came about during a period of stable economic development, falling unemployment and a reduction in poverty rates. The level of inequality, as measured by the standard Gini coefficient, puts Poland close to the EU average, worse than the egalitarian Nordic countries but better than the UK and crisis-stricken southern members such as Greece. We can only conclude that inequality and socioeconomic deprivation, while definitely creating fertile

grounds for the rise of authoritarian populism, nevertheless fail to explain its political success in particular countries, such as Poland.

The rise of authoritarian populism in Poland cannot be explained by reference to the ‘fear of globalisation’. According to the Demos survey, Poles are among the most enthusiastic supporters of globalisation of any group in the sample. Interestingly, in this case both the supporters of the populist Law and Justice party and those of the conservative–liberal Civic Platform tend to see more benefits than threats resulting from globalisation. The same can be said about European integration, where the Polish public has been firmly supporting Polish EU membership since the country joined the EU in May 2004. As we demonstrated, support for the Law and Justice party’s ‘soft Euroscepticism’, largely fuelled by opposition to a refugee quota system, is mainly a post-election phenomenon, driven by the successful exercise of the politics of fear by the government.

All in all, the analysis of the Polish case prompts us to agree with Pippa Norris, who argues that ‘authoritarianism can best be explained as a cultural backlash in Western societies against long-term, ongoing social change’.<sup>79</sup> Poland has undergone very intensive social and cultural change since the breakup of the communist regime in 1989 and especially since it joined the EU in 2004. Integration with the Western political and economic structures as well as the opening up of the borders (visas to most West European countries were abolished in 1991/92) has resulted in a quarter of a century of sustained economic development and vast investment in infrastructure (fuelled by EU structural funds) but also diffusion of liberal social norms and modes. After 2007, under the central-right government, many ideas and policies once promoted by relatively marginal groups of feminist and LGBT activists have become mainstreamed even if they have not always managed to influence legislation. Although most Poles formally remained members of the Roman Catholic Church, studies show a growing social and political divide along moral–cultural rather than socioeconomic issues.<sup>80</sup>

The rise of authoritarian populism should be seen as a reaction to these liberal tendencies. Although the Law and Justice party was elected on the ticket of generous socioeconomic promises, its dominant position on the right wing of the political spectrum and resilience after years in opposition came from its strong adherence to identity and sovereignty issues and a mutually exclusive alliance with the Polish Catholic Church. The refugee crisis, and especially the controversial policy of the European Commission for mandatory quotas of Syrian refugees for each member state, in a matter of months brought about an upsurge of xenophobia, which in turn made the Polish brand of populism rather similar to its West European counterparts. More troubling for Law and Justice propagandists are the ideological parallels between their conservative agenda and the Kremlin's promotion of anti-liberal and anti-European counter-norms that emphasise 'state security, civilisational diversity and traditional values'.<sup>81</sup>

The victory of Kaczyński's party would not have been possible without the creation of a highly effective 'anger industry', which fed on the many discontents of different social groups. Traditional and internet-based right-wing media contributed to the creation of a 'parallel reality' of 'Poland in ruin', where indignation at alleged economic downturn, social injustices and political malpractices allowed the dismissal and side-lining of experts and moderate political voices as agents of the purportedly intolerable status quo.<sup>82</sup> The Polish populist victory can thus be seen as an exemplification of what was aptly termed post-truth politics, mastered by Putin's propaganda machine, for domestic and international purposes, but also present in Donald Trump's successful bid for the US presidency and the UK's 'Leave' campaign during the Brexit referendum. After the elections and the assault on public media, the politics of parallel reality has gained access to public resources, reminding many older Poles of the 'unreality' of state media, especially television, under the communist regime.

At the same time, Kaczyński's brutal attack against the Constitutional Tribunal and his inflammatory rhetoric

has generated an unprecedented response from civil society as well as general support for democracy as the best form of government. The government takes advantage of the good state of the economy by implementing expensive social programmes to prop up its popularity, and by using public resources to fund sympathetic media and non-governmental organisations. The opposition has mobilised government critics by organising successful street protests and building up presence on social media. International criticism, either from Europe or the USA – although dismissed by government propagandists – has also contributed to maintaining the opposition’s resilience and determination.

At the time of finalising this report (in January 2017) the political conflict in Poland has entered a new, more radical phase. The Constitutional Tribunal has finally been brought under the control of the ruling party. At the same time members of the two main opposition parties launched an unprecedented sit-in in the main debating chamber to protest against restricting media access to parliament and the arbitrary exclusion of members of the opposition during key debates and breaches of parliamentary procedures by the speaker. Outside parliament protests continued throughout the Christmas 2016 recess, with occasional interventions from the police against the protesters. Kaczyński, who controls the key institutions of government, including the president, has declared that his opponents attempted a ‘putsch’ against the legally elected government and threatened the protesters with criminal proceedings. The spectre of autocracy, which has been hanging over Poland since the 2015 election, seems to have materialised rapidly.<sup>83</sup>

## Notes

- 1 YouGov surveyed adults (aged 18+) in six countries online between 23 August and 7 September 2016. The sample sizes were as follows: France – 1,001; Germany – 2,125; Poland – 1,011; Spain – 1,000; Sweden – 1,007; UK – 1,661 (only adults from Great Britain were surveyed in UK polling). The figures have been weighted and are representative of adults aged 18+ on age, gender and region. Four YouGov panels (GB, France, Germany and Sweden) also took account of other factors such as last political vote, education and political affiliation. Two non-YouGov panels (Poland and Spain) were sampled by age, gender and region and weighted by these variables in addition to last political vote and education post-fieldwork. All respondents were asked a set of common questions. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.
- 2 B Roguska, 'Charakterystyka poglądów potencjalnych elektoratów partyjnych', Komunikat z badań 85, Centre for Public Opinion Research, 2015.
- 3 TVN24, 'Przyjdzie dzień, że w Warszawie będzie Budapeszt', 9 Oct 2011, [www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/przyjdzie-dzien-ze-w-warszawie-bedzie-budapeszt,186922.html](http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/przyjdzie-dzien-ze-w-warszawie-bedzie-budapeszt,186922.html) (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
- 4 Results of difference corruption indexes available at 'Rankingi korupcji', [antykorupcja.gov.pl](http://antykorupcja.gov.pl), 2016, [www.antykorupcja.gov.pl/ak/analizy-i-raporty/rankingi-korupcji](http://www.antykorupcja.gov.pl/ak/analizy-i-raporty/rankingi-korupcji) (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
- 5 B Roguska, 'Polska w Unii Europejskiej', Komunikat z badań 31, Centre for Public Opinion Research, 2016,

- [www.Cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K\\_o31\\_16.PDF](http://www.Cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_o31_16.PDF)  
(accessed 20 Jan 2017).
- 6 J Fomina and J Kucharczyk, 'The specter haunting Europe: populism and protest in Poland', *Journal of Democracy* 27, no 4, Oct 2016.
  - 7 A number of articles appeared in the media in 2014 and 2015 promulgating this claim, eg Ł Piechowiak, 'Zarobki w Unii coraz wyższe – w Polsce stoją w miejscu', 1 Apr 2014, [www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Zarobki-w-Unii-coraz-wyzsze-w-Polsce-stoja-w-miejscu-3093386.html](http://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Zarobki-w-Unii-coraz-wyzsze-w-Polsce-stoja-w-miejscu-3093386.html) (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
  - 8 Ł Woźnicki, 'Dlaczego geje głosowali na Dudę? Związków partnerskich i tak nie będzie, a każdy oczekuje zmiany', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 May 2015, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,17907415,Dlaczego\\_geje\\_glosowali\\_na\\_Dude\\_\\_\\_Zwiazkow\\_partnerskich.html#ixzz4UQKbgitA](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,17907415,Dlaczego_geje_glosowali_na_Dude___Zwiazkow_partnerskich.html#ixzz4UQKbgitA) (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
  - 9 J Fomina, 'The unlikely Eurosceptics: the role of the domestic context in shaping anti-European attitudes among the young Poles', *Polish Sociological Review*, (forthcoming) 2017.
  - 10 W Kazanecki, 'Zainteresowanie Polityką i Poglądy Polityczne w Latach 1989–2015: Deklaracje ludzi młodych na tle ogółu badanych', Komunikat z badań 135, Centre for Public Opinion Research, 2015, [www.Cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K\\_135\\_15.PDF](http://www.Cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_135_15.PDF) (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
  - 11 See the Law and Justice party's official webpage, <http://wybierzpis.org.pl/materialy-programowe> (accessed 20 Jan 2017).
  - 12 The decline of the Polish political left started in 2003, with the so-called 'Rywin Affair', a major corruption scandal.

Since then, the near absence of the left has become a structural element of the instability of Polish democracy. See introduction to J Kucharczyk and J Zbieranek (eds), *Democracy in Poland 1989–2009: Challenges for the future*, Warsaw, IPA, 2010.

- 13 Although the left wing cumulatively received 11 per cent, no left-wing party entered parliament as the United Left bloc did not pass the 8 per cent threshold, nor did the new Together party pass the 5 per cent threshold, while the radical right-wing KORWiN party gained 4.76 per cent of votes, also failing to pass the threshold.
- 14 Election results are available at the website of the National Electoral Commission (Poland), [http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/351\\_wyniki\\_senat](http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/351_wyniki_senat) (accessed 23 Jan 2017).
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# 6 Sweden – Sweden: the immigration country in the North

**Fores**

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# Introduction

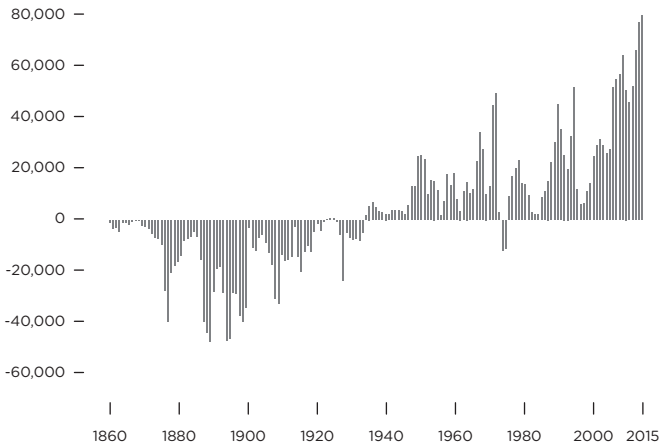
In Swedish migration and asylum politics 2015 and 2016 were turbulent years, with a rapid move from mass demonstrations welcoming refugees, including speeches by the prime minister, to the largest asylum seeker inflow in history, to border closure. Support for the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna), an anti-immigration party, has fluctuated since 2015, as asylum policies have moved towards their position. Yet it has been constantly above the party's 2014 general election result, which was an all-time high. Public debate also appears to have taken a nationalist turn. Previous research shows that exclusive forms of national identity are strong explanatory factors of attitudes to immigration. In this study we are interested in whether narratives on national identity in Sweden have been exclusionary during this turbulent time.

We begin with a short historic overview of Sweden as an immigration country, giving key statistics and useful background knowledge about recent changes in party politics and policies. In order to investigate recent narratives on national identity and how they relate to public opinion, we then undertake a mixed method design, where we combine a qualitative analysis of speeches by political party leaders with a quantitative analysis of new public opinion survey data.<sup>1</sup> The combination of methods enables us to examine the elite discourses on national identity by political party, and public understanding of national identity by party preferences, and the consequences of such understanding. The chapter ends with a short summary of our findings. Themes to be explored in this case study are party politics, policy, narrative, rhetoric and identity.

## Key statistics for Sweden

During the last 150 years Sweden has gone from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration. After the Second World War net immigration to Sweden started to increase, although as a percentage of the population it was still fairly low. However, in 2015, 1.6 million of Sweden's population were born abroad, which was a little over 16 per cent of the population.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 **Net immigration to Sweden, 1860-2000**



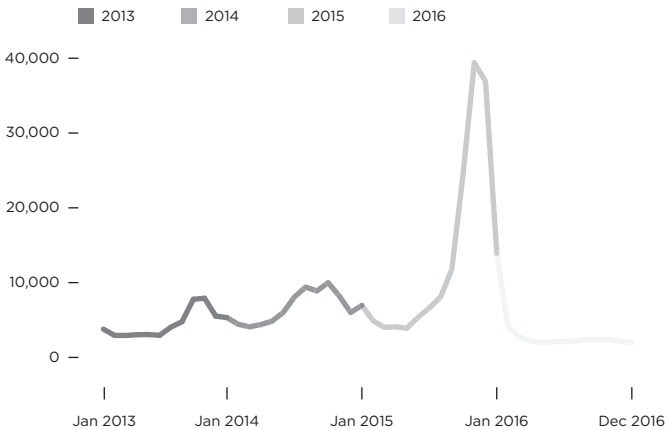
Source: Migrationsinfo.se.

The Second World War led to an increase in refugees to Sweden, mainly from the Baltic and Nordic countries, Germany and Poland.<sup>3</sup> After the Second World War there was a labour shortage in Swedish industry, which had not been damaged by the war, and this contributed to an influx of labour migrants in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1960s regulation of labour migration tightened and in the mid-1970s the Swedish labour market transitioned, as industry made way for a rapidly growing service sector. This meant that new



migrants came mainly as family members of settled migrants or as refugees.<sup>4</sup> This is still the case today: family reunification and people seeking international protection are the most common categories to seek resident permits. (Nordic and EU citizens are not included, since they do not need a permit to come to Sweden.)<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 shows the net immigration to Sweden between 1860 and 2000.

Figure 2 **Asylum applications to Sweden, 2013–2016**



Source: Migrationsinfo.se.

Since 2000, the number of asylum seekers to Sweden has increased from 16,000 to 50,000 a year (with some variations over time).<sup>6</sup> The number of people applying for asylum in Sweden reached historically high levels in 2014 and 2015, mainly due to the war in Syria and the difficult situation in refugee camps in nearby countries. The high numbers were also related to the increased repression in Somalia, and instability in Afghanistan, Iraq and neighbouring countries in the Middle East. The lack of an adequate European burden-sharing response to the refugee

crises also contributed to the number of people coming to Sweden.<sup>7</sup> Over 160,000 persons applied for asylum in Sweden in 2015, of which about 50,000 were from Syria, about 40,000 from Afghanistan and 20,000 from Iraq. Some 35,000 were unaccompanied minors, of whom 23,000 were from Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, the number of asylum applications to Sweden dropped dramatically, primarily an effect of the EU–Turkey agreement, increased border controls in many EU countries and far-reaching changes to Swedish asylum policies. In 2016, only 28,930 persons applied for asylum in Sweden (figure 2).<sup>9</sup>

### Recent policy changes

In recent years Sweden has introduced several policy changes as a way of limiting the number of people seeking asylum. The current government introduced ID checks on most forms of transport, temporary border controls and new temporary asylum and family reunification legislation.

As a part of EU regulations, Sweden for many years had so-called ‘transporter’s liability’ for airline companies with flight routes to Sweden, whereby airline companies had a duty to verify the identity of any customers travelling with them. However, in January 2016 ID checks (transporter’s liability) were introduced on trains, buses and ferries. All transport companies have to check the identification papers of all passengers travelling with their specific transportation, and failure to do so results in a considerable fine. These checks take place before passengers reach the Swedish border, and they have recently been extended until at least the beginning of 2017.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, in the fall of 2015, temporary border controls were introduced. The official reason for this given by the government was that it was necessary for internal security and public order.<sup>11</sup> The border controls take place on Swedish territory and are conducted by the police at selected locations around Sweden, in the south and on the west coast (train stations and ports). Every person passing through these checks needs to be able to prove their identity.

Citizens from outside the EU are also required to show a valid residence permit.<sup>12</sup>

If approved by the European Council and the European Commission, the government has the option to extend the temporary border controls for three months at a time. On 11 November 2016, a new three-month period was initiated. The government argued that the threat to internal security still remained, and so long as other EU countries were not able to agree on a burden-sharing solution and securing the external EU border, Sweden was forced to extend national border controls.<sup>13</sup> Another reason given for extending the border controls was to limit secondary movement of refugees who are already in the EU.

The three most substantial changes in the new temporary asylum and family reunification legislation are explained below. First, there are now only three categories of protection in Sweden (instead of five):

- protection according to the Geneva Convention on refugees subsidiary protection according to international and EU legislation
- quota refugees via the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The two categories ('otherwise in need of protection' and 'particularly distressing circumstances') which related specifically to Swedish legislation, are not a part of or have been restricted in the new temporary asylum legislation. The new temporary legislation is designed to provide the lowest level of protection possible without violating international and EU law.

Second, temporary permits are now the standard permit granted to refugees, except quota refugees, who are still granted permanent resident permits.<sup>14</sup> Until October 2015, permanent permits were standard for most refugees in Sweden. With the new temporary legislation, refugees, both adults and minors, are granted either a three-year permit (under the Geneva Convention) or 13-month permit (under subsidiary protection).

Third, restrictions on family reunification have been put in place with the new asylum policy. Refugees with a subsidiary protection permit are only allowed to bring family members to live in Sweden in exceptional cases. This affects a large number of people, since the majority of the Syrian refugees are included in this protection category. The government has also introduced a more extensive liability to be able to provide for a family member of an existing refugee who wants to come to live in Sweden (Geneva Convention refugees are exempted if they apply for family reunification within three months of receiving their own permit).

The main criticism of the new legislation has been that it was prepared hastily. As a result, it lacks an impact assessment of the legal difficulties that could arise and consideration of how the new changes will affect people's opportunities to integrate into society. The fact that many residence permits will only be awarded one year at a time will complicate the situation for housing, employment and education. The introduction of ID checks has been heavily criticised because the long-term effects for the greater Copenhagen region (Copenhagen and the south of Sweden) have not been assessed.<sup>15</sup> A recent report by the Swedish National Audit Office concluded that the evaluation of the effects of the border controls was not adequate. By extension, the basis for the decision to prolong the border controls was also not sufficient.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the recent changes, such as making temporary permits standard, were a part of an agreement made by all the political parties in the parliament (except the Sweden Democrats and the Left party) in the fall of 2015, although the more extensive changes made by the government since then (eg more restrictive family reunification regulations and fewer exemptions to temporary permits) have been criticised by some of the parties who were a part of the initial agreement. Even though it is temporary legislation, which will only apply for three years, the legislation could become permanent. The Moderate party (Moderaterna), the second biggest party in the parliament, have supported the idea and have already announced that they will continue to do so if they win the

2018 elections. The Sweden Democrats and the Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna) have also supported a proposal that the temporary legislation should become permanent.<sup>17</sup>

### **Party politics - an overview**

Sweden has long been seen as the exception to other countries in Europe, where there is growing support for populist anti-immigration parties. This changed with the 2010 elections, when the anti-immigrant party Sweden Democrats gained enough electoral support to enter the Swedish parliament. This was much later than in neighbouring countries, such as Denmark and Norway, and many other European countries, where anti-immigrant parties have influenced national politics for much longer. So why was Sweden the exception for so long?

Jens Rydgren has argued that four key factors serve to explain why Sweden held out against populist anti-immigration parties for so long, and significant changes to these factors can consequently explain why this is no longer the case:

- Sweden used to be characterised by strong class-based voting.
- Socioeconomic issues used to dominate the political debate and agenda.
- The left–right divide between the political parties was perceived clearly by voters.
- The Sweden Democrats were considered too extreme.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the decline in class-based voting, increasing salience of sociocultural political issues, party convergence towards the centre and the distancing of Sweden Democrats from their neo-Nazi past have all contributed to the success of the Sweden Democrats.

The 2014 election produced a hung parliament, where the now sizeable Sweden Democrats (13 per cent) held the swing vote. In order to avoid a re-election and a parliamentary situation in which the government had to rely on support from

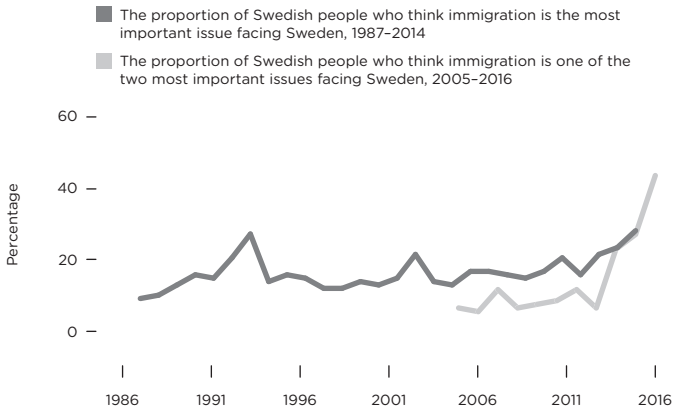
the Sweden Democrats, a cross-party agreement was made between all parties apart from the Left party and Sweden Democrats. This agreement allowed the minority government, a coalition between the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterna) and the Green party (Miljöpartiet de gröna), to get its budget passed in parliament. The agreement was formally abandoned in October 2015.

While the opposition is still allowing the Social Democrats–Green Party government to govern, much of the political debate in Sweden is devoted to the question of how a majority government may be formed after the 2018 election. The most controversial issue is whether any of the mainstream parties are to break the taboo and seek some form of cooperation with the Sweden Democrats in order to govern. While most parties are still fiercely against this, statements by leaders and representatives of the Moderate party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal party (Liberalerna, previously Folkpartiet) have suggested that they may be willing to negotiate with Sweden Democrats in the future.<sup>19</sup> A recent poll also suggests that the voters for these parties are the most positive about having some form of cooperation with Sweden Democrats.<sup>20</sup> In recent polls, support for the Sweden Democrats stands at 18 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

In short, Swedish immigration politics has changed substantially and rhetorically in the past few years, with asylum policies taking a restrictive turn following a large influx of asylum seekers, support for the Sweden Democrats rocketing and immigration taking an uncharacteristically but seemingly unmovable central position on the political agenda.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of Swedish people who think immigration is one of the two most important issues facing Sweden between 2005 and 2016, and the proportion who thought it was the single most important issue the country faced between 1987 and 2014.

Figure 3 **The proportion of Swedish people who think immigration is one of the two most important issues facing Sweden, 1987-2014 and 2005-2016**



Source: SOM, 2015; Eurobarometer interactive database, Jan 2017.<sup>22</sup>

We now look at some of the political rhetoric and public opinion that is part of this shift.

# 1 Identity and political narratives – a theoretical background

One of the noticeable changes in the political debate on immigration in Sweden is the increasing focus on national identity. In order to understand and explain attitudes to immigration, much of the research literature has focused on the ways in which native citizens perceive immigration as a ‘threat’. For example, citizens may worry that immigration threatens the country’s economy. Yet one of the key drivers of attitudes to immigration has been shown to be of a symbolic nature, with perceived threats to one’s culture and national identity often lying at the heart of negative attitudes to immigration.<sup>23</sup> However, the relationship between national identity and attitudes to immigration is complicated by the kind of national identity citizens have.

The main theoretical distinction in forms of national identity is between on the one hand ‘thick’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘cultural’ forms, and on the other more ‘thin’ or ‘civic’ forms of national identity.<sup>24</sup> The ethnic aspect is characterised by ascribed or objective features, such as country of birth, and the dominant religious faith. The civic or voluntaristic aspect includes a community of laws and institutions and a minimum of common values, traditions or sentiments that binds people together.

National identity is both a property of groups as well as an individual sentiment, or affiliation with the nation. On a societal level national identity is the shared belief in having something in common with others who live in the same society. National identity is an independent force that binds people together. The understanding of national identity as a collective property is widely shared in historical and political



science: national identity is typically seen as a collective cultural identity,<sup>25</sup> which serves as a focal point for the definition of the in group and out group, and as a precondition of state formation.

National identity is also an individual sentiment that people develop towards the nation, where it is an important part of individual identity formation.<sup>26</sup> It is a way for individuals to understand who they are, in relation to others. On the individual level, national identity derives its power from providing a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. This relationship exists irrespective of whether those 'others' are situated within or outside the state borders. National identity in this regard is the individual's alliance with a specific community or nation. This alliance with the nation can vary across nations as well as between individuals of the same nation and can comprise ethnic and civic aspects. The quantitative part of the chapter will hence focus on national identity as a sentiment and the consequences of such sentiments.

There is no clear-cut division, or mutual exclusion, between ethnic or civic national identity on the societal level or individual level. As research has repeatedly shown, these two aspects of collective national identity are two different dimensions of attachment that are realised at the same time rather than mutually exclusive categories. Given the divergent connotations each of these forms of national identity has, corroborated in previous research,<sup>27</sup> we know that ethnic national identity tends to go together with more opposition towards immigration, as the ethnic version of identity is more exclusive than a civic national identity. However, it is possible that the relationship between national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes differs across different groups, for example, those dependent on the salience of these issues within different groups of people.

As many have observed, contemporary political rhetoric on national identity and immigration in Western Europe tends to use civic components in exclusionary ways.<sup>28</sup> Liberal, universal values have not only become part of the exclusionary rhetoric of the populist radical right,<sup>29</sup> but also increasingly

among mainstream politicians. When such values are ‘nationalised’, described as an essential part of the inherited culture of the majority, immigrants may be perceived as a threat to such values by not sharing the national, majority culture. Immigrants, in particular Muslims, are portrayed as incapable of adopting liberal ‘Western’ values owing to their cultural differences in a way that turns civicness into a tool of exclusion.<sup>30</sup>

This trend of blurring civic and ethnic components in exclusionist narratives about immigration has been observed to some extent at the elite level as well as in public opinion. The relationship between these two levels of constructing national identity is hotly debated: whether national identity is a ‘top-down’ or a ‘bottom-up’ construction, or a combination of both. Studies on the extent to which elite rhetoric overlaps with and/or drives public opinion on national identity have had somewhat mixed results.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, at a time of turbulence when narratives on national identity and immigration in public discourse are both changing and becoming increasingly politicised, we believe it is fruitful to study elite narratives and public opinion in conjunction. Sweden, we suggest, is in the midst of such turbulence.

### **Swedish national identity**

Sweden has been described as a country where nationalistic sentiments are generally low, where national belonging rests on civic criteria and where, possibly as a consequence, attitudes towards immigrants are comparatively positive and citizenship legislation is mainly liberal.<sup>32</sup> Political and social institutions, or ‘the system’ as they are commonly referred to, are cornerstones of Swedes’ national self-understanding, which may also have led to them having comparatively favourable views on immigration, as, for example, failed integration is blamed on welfare institutions rather than on immigrants themselves.<sup>33</sup> But Swedish nationalism has also been centred on the concept of *Folkhemmet* (the People’s Home), through which the universal welfare state and national solidarity are seen as mutually reinforcing.

During the refugee crisis of 2015, public institutions came under strain, with many commentators speaking of a 'system collapse' and a threat to the welfare state. It is easy to see how this may have been perceived as a threat to the nation.

Since at least 2002, when the Liberal party proposed a Swedish language test as a precondition for citizenship, issues of Swedishness and national belonging have become an increasingly prominent part of public discourse and symbolism. For example, the Swedish National Day was made a public holiday in 2005 and has gone from being an awkward non-celebration to an increasingly popular public festivity. Discussions of national identity became much more prominent from 2015 onwards in relation to the refugee crisis. The issues were varied. For example, much debate erupted after a performance of the Swedish national anthem during the Eurovision Song Contest 2016, during which the singers had added Swedish folk songs translated into Arabic and Hebrew. Other controversial issues included a row around a Muslim politician who declined to shake a female journalist's hand, multiple sexual assaults at music festivals, possibly by refugees and asylum seekers, and the decision by the management of several public swimming pools to offer designated female-only hours in response to requests from some Muslims. Many of these issues were ultimately linked to the supposed differences in culture and values between native Swedes and refugees.<sup>34</sup>

Thus Swedish political discourse has shifted towards questions of national identity and how immigrants need to assimilate into Swedish culture and adopt Swedish values. Some of this discourse has also been linked to the welfare state. Immigration has been portrayed as a potential threat to the social contract allegedly underpinning the Swedish welfare state. A simple search at the media archive Retriever reveals that 'Swedish values' was mentioned over 1,600 times in Swedish media during 2016. In comparison, the highest number of mentions of the phrase in previous years was in 2012, when it was used 286 times. Similarly, in 2015 and 2016 there was a large increase in mentions of words such as 'social contract', 'integration', 'Swedish culture'<sup>35</sup> and 'immigration'.<sup>36</sup>

What are the consequences of this change in the public debate? At first glance, Sweden appears to have moved closer to the discourse of its Danish neighbour, where liberalism is embedded within a national culture, in a potentially exclusionary way.<sup>37</sup> As discussed earlier, even within the parameters of a civic national identity, questions of values and culture can be discussed and intertwined in such a way as to construct an exclusionary discourse. It has been suggested that it is not the content or the symbolic resources of national identity that are exclusionary or inclusionary, but rather the way in which political actors use such content or symbolic resources as boundary mechanisms.<sup>38</sup> In discussing the inclusionary or exclusionary tendencies of national identity, the content of that identity is certainly important, but it may be equally important to understand *how* it is used as a mechanism for exclusion or inclusion.

For example, comparing political debates in Norway and Denmark, Jensen shows how in both countries national identity at the individual level is seen as deterministic, 'deeply rooted' in the individual and therefore difficult to change.<sup>39</sup> This renders national identity as a whole exclusive, as it is made difficult for an immigrant to become fully Danish or Norwegian. However, whereas in Denmark national identity at the collective level is also seen as deterministic, 'fixed, stable and closed for change', in Norway national identity is seen as something open for democratic debate.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the Norwegian understanding of national identity becomes potentially less exclusionary, as national identity can be re-imagined as the country and its demographics change. In a similar vein, Rostbøll argues in a discussion of the Danish cartoon controversy that liberal principles became exclusionary in that debate because they were 'presented as so entangled in Danish culture that in order to understand and accept them, one must understand Danish history and assimilate into Danish culture'.<sup>41</sup> Muslims, in this case, were seen at times as so culturally different that they would not be able to adhere to these values.<sup>42</sup>

The example of the Danish cartoons further highlights the role of culture in constructing difference between natives

and immigrants even when supposedly universal liberal values are at stake. When certain shared values are seen as entrenched in a national culture, national identity functions in an exclusionary way, in particular when immigrants are perceived as culturally distant. This is because the supposedly voluntaristic aspects of national identity – values – are turned into deterministic aspects – cultural traits deeply entrenched in someone’s identity.

Have narratives of Swedishness, too, taken such an exclusive turn? To answer that question, we will analyse political rhetoric on national identity and immigration in the summer of 2016. That summer was a particularly turbulent time, with national identity at the fore of the political debate, following the introduction of a set of restrictive asylum policies in the winter of 2015. We will also analyse a new survey from Sweden that includes data on understandings of national identity as well as attitudes towards immigration and refugees. By analysing both elite discourses and public opinion we are able to examine the level and type of nationalism and national identity prevalent in elite discourses, as represented by political parties and public attitudes.

We undertake a mixed method design, where we combine a qualitative analysis of speeches by political party leaders with a quantitative analysis of new public opinion survey data. This combination of elite and non-elite narratives of national identity allows us to provide a rich description of the role national identity plays in Sweden at a time when migration policies have taken a restrictive turn.

### **Elite narratives on national identity and immigration**

For the qualitative analysis of elite narratives of national identity, we use speeches by all the party leaders of parliamentary parties from the politics week in Almedalen on 2–9 July 2016. The politics week in Almedalen is a kind of ‘festival of politics’ taking place every year on the island of Gotland. It is attended by an incredibly large number of lobbyists, politicians, civil servants and journalists, who all intermingle in a uniquely open way. The festival is open to and

attended by the public as well. In addition to thousands of seminars, each day of the week is focused on a speech by one of the party leaders. These speeches often set out the general tone of the party's political agenda and are aimed at mobilising voters rather than party members. The speeches are therefore useful indicators of the narratives party leaders wish to communicate to the public; while often not focused specifically on policies, they signal what narratives will guide their policy agenda. The Almedalen speeches are also a good data source for comparison, as all party leaders give their speeches during the same event, aimed at the same audience and under the same parameters.

In addition to these speeches, we also analyse speeches held one month earlier during the Swedish National Day on 6 June. These speeches are similarly held at around the same time and under the same parameters, and they also focus on celebrating the nation. Only two speeches were available for this day, but since these were the speeches by the leaders of the two main parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderate party, they represent important parts of political narratives during this turbulent time.

The speeches were coded in NVivo, a software program for analysing whether qualitative data demonstrated Swedishness in inclusive or exclusive terms. Attention was paid to whether Swedish values were presented as culturally determined and immigrants as incapable of adhering to, or a threat to, such values because of their cultural difference. The main focus was on ways in which the nation, national identity and the national culture were used as an exclusive boundary mechanism or not. Linking values and culture, for example, and stressing the difference between natives and immigrants in this regard, points towards exclusive forms of narratives on national identity.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, those politicians who talk about universal values as important for their own sake avoid exclusivity.<sup>44</sup> In the next section we describe the results of the qualitative speech analysis.

## 2 Analysis and results

The main aim of the qualitative analysis of the narratives of national identity and immigration expressed by party leaders was to enquire whether these narratives demonstrate inclusive or exclusive notions of national identity. As pointed out above, claiming that certain values are inherently Swedish, painting immigrants as incapable of adopting these values and portraying the nation as threatened by diversity are all ways to construct exclusionary narratives. Such narratives were found to be prevalent in some of the party leaders' speeches, in particular that of Jimmie Åkesson, leader of the Sweden Democrats, but also those of Anna Kinberg-Batra, leader of the Moderate party, and Ebba Busch Thor, leader of the Christian Democrats.

### **Nationalising values and cultural difference**

Unsurprisingly, exclusionary narratives were most evident and explicit in the speech of the Sweden Democrats leader. Throughout his speech, which was almost entirely dedicated to alleged threats to the Swedish nation brought about by immigration, he constructed a strong link between Swedish values and Swedish culture. This link is clearly deterministic, in that immigrants' cultural difference is portrayed as an inherent threat to Swedish values and Swedish society. Bringing up several problems relating to sexual assault and other forms of crime, he connected these issues to 'foreign structures and values' and emphasised that the remedy was to promote Swedish culture: 'To strengthen Swedish culture and Swedish values will be crucial for how we will manage to reduce fragmentation and segregation in the long run.'

The constant connection of culture, values and behaviour, coupled with the emphasis that the remedy is more Swedish culture, rather than a change in values and behaviour

among immigrants, constructs an essentialised and, to a large extent, deterministic understanding of culture. Since our moral values and behaviour become intrinsically linked with our cultural background, the only way for immigrants not to constitute a threat is to surrender their cultural identity and become part of the cultural Swedish national identity.

The leaders of the Moderate party and Christian Democrats did not express the link between culture and values in such explicitly exclusive terms. Perhaps predictably, their speeches were much subtler in this regard. Nonetheless, the narrative of national identity and immigration that their speeches constructed made this link in an exclusive way, primarily by emphasising certain values as national values and, in the case of the Christian Democrats, making an explicit link between such values and Swedish culture, suggesting that immigrants do not share these values. For example, when discussing the value of gender equality, the leader of the Moderates said:

*To marry off your own daughter against her will is sometimes defended through freedom of religion. However, this is a misuse of the word freedom. To take the future away from your daughter – that is not freedom.*

*The word honour is also misused at times. Subjugation of the youth is sometimes justified with claims that they belong to an honour culture. But it has nothing to do with honour to restrict the members of your own family and take away their rights to their life and their own life choices. On the contrary, it is dishonest and it goes against Swedish values.*

The final remark, that the subordination is not just morally wrong but un-Swedish, serves to emphasise that the problem with certain immigrant groups is not just their values, but their lack of Swedishness. Because a national or cultural identity is often perceived as ‘stickier’ than moral values, when someone’s failure to adhere to certain moral values also becomes their failure to embrace the national culture they may be perceived as not susceptible to change. A similar link was made by the leader of the Christian Democrats when



she suggested that the ‘migration crisis’ was not over yet, because Sweden faces ‘a gigantic challenge of integration’. To overcome this crisis, immigrants need to learn about Swedish culture, which she linked to values:

*Integration – it is about jobs of course, but also about language, culture and values. All parts are necessary. If one part is missing, exclusion will grow and we risk increasing the fragmentation of society.*

*Learning the language and civic orientation should be mandatory for the newly arrived from the beginning. SFI [Swedish For Immigrants] should start straight away. Civic orientation should provide information on what rights, duties and responsibilities you have as a newcomer in our country. But also on our traditions, values and customs.*

The leaders of the Moderate party and Christian Democrats make a far subtler link between values and culture, and the suggestion that immigrants are causing a demise of Swedish values, than does the Sweden Democrats leader. The Christian Democrats leader coupled the nationalisation of values with expressions of universalism. Yet the suggestion that the way to remedy a lack of certain values is to strengthen Swedish culture contributes to an essentialist understanding of cultural difference that portrays immigrants as difficult to integrate because of their cultural heritage.

This nationalisation of values, making values part of a Swedish culture and national identity in relation to perceived problems brought about by immigration, constructs an increasingly exclusive narrative of national identity. In the speeches this was often coupled with the suggestion that the nation is threatened to some extent by immigration. This was expressed most explicitly by the Sweden Democrats leader. In fact, the threat of immigration to Sweden was the main theme of his speech. He said that immigration, in particular asylum immigration, has affected the country negatively and listed several issues and problems that he claimed are caused by immigration. At the end of the speech, he spoke directly about the damage immigration has caused the nation and referred

to the ‘People’s Home’, a symbol of the Swedish nation, as being ‘torn apart’.

Though far less strongly or explicitly, the leaders of the Moderate party and Christian Democrats nonetheless pointed to problems that immigration has caused or may cause for ‘Swedish values’ and the nation as a whole. At times, the party leaders further specified the values concerned, such as gender equality and a work ethic. For example, in her speech on National Day, the Moderate party leader talked about the importance of common Swedish values and suggested that such values may be challenged by different cultures:

*Everyone has the right to believe what they want here and to worship any god they prefer. We also cherish democracy, equality and the respect for each other. In a changing society there will be some cultural clashes, but we will never compromise on our shared values.*

In the same speech, the Moderate party leader also spoke about a range of universal values as national values, and then pointed out that these may be threatened:

*We know that a strong Sweden requires both stable state finances and stable values. It is important to have clear understandings of right and wrong and what unites a country and a society, not least when these understandings are challenged, from within or from the outside.*

The leader of the Christian Democrats spoke throughout her speech about a ‘crisis of values’:

*We have much to be proud of, but there is also much that needs to be improved or changed. Sweden is in the midst of a crisis of values. Values that made our home strong, like trust, freedom and equality of all humans, are threatened.*

Since values were linked to Swedish culture, and the need for immigrants to learn about Swedish culture and values was

emphasised, this crisis came across as being caused by immigration.

This 'nationalisation of values' implies a form of cultural relativism, where the problem is not simply that some individuals fail to comply with universal (liberal) values but rather that they fail to comply with a set of national values. This was clearly the case when the Moderate party leader spoke about gender equality. Moreover, the nationalisation of values and the emphasis on immigrants as culturally different also implies that the failure of some to comply with universal (liberal) values is mainly due to their cultural difference, which contributes to an essentialist, deterministic understanding of cultural difference. Such rhetoric produces an exclusionary narrative of national identity, as it is difficult to overcome one's essential and predetermined cultural identity.

Lastly, the three party leaders of Sweden Democrats, the Moderate party and Christian Democrats were the only ones to emphasise the historical and ancestral nature of national identity. This is a common feature of nationalism, where the nation is seen as a family-like union extending back into history and forward to future generations. This renders the nation a unique kind of political community, as it encompasses a national community that includes not only current citizens, but also their ancestors. While this does not necessarily signal ethnic nationalism, coupled with a cultural notion of the nation it certainly brings the national community closer to having a more exclusive form of national identity. It contributes to a narrative of there being a linear development from ancestors to current citizens, who carry within them a culture grounded in its ancestral roots, which is potentially disturbed by immigration.

Again, this was emphasised most strongly and explicitly by the Sweden Democrats leader, who even put forward the illiberal notion that the nation is morally greater than its individual members:

*Our vision is built upon respect for past generations, for those that built this country.*

*Our vision is built on the insight that our country, our nation, is greater than any individual – greater than what we are today.*

*Our nation, it is made up of we who are living now – but also – and in equal measure – of those who lived and worked here before us and those who will live and work after us.*

*We have a responsibility to take care of what we have inherited, to preserve and improve it, to hand it over in good condition to future generations.*

The Christian Democrats leader suggested that the values of Swedish society have been honed through generations, and in saying that ‘we’ have achieved these values she tied current generations to the idea of an ancestral nation:

*We who live here shape our existence based on the foundations that we have inherited both from our parents and from those who lived here before us. Freedoms and rights that others can only dream about, we take for granted in our country. This is something we have achieved through hard and persistent work for a better society.*

The Moderate party leader also suggested the achievements of the Swedish people and Sweden’s national values ought to be the remedy for contemporary challenges:

*When Sweden is challenged, new questions face us. Then we need to remind ourselves of what has made us – and what will continue to make Sweden strong. Old Swedish values for new times.*

Of course, these were not the only party leaders to speak about the problems facing Sweden, but our sample includes only those speeches and statements that dealt directly with national identity, for example threats to nationalised values or a national culture. The leader of the Centre party talked extensively about issues of segregation and the lack of equality of opportunity in relation to immigration, but this was not framed in a way that framed the problems or threats as

directed towards Swedishness in any form. She mainly emphasised unemployment as a source of problems relating to a lack of social cohesion. Like the leader of the Moderate party, the leader of the Centre party also spoke about gender inequality and the problem of female genital mutilation, yet she only condemned it from the perspective of universal moral values:

*There are clear, universal values. That persists over time, space and national borders. And there are values that should not be accepted in society. It is about what is right. And what is wrong.*

The leader of Christian Democrats made a similar point:

*We should stand up for the right to be a Christian in Damascus, a woman in Husby,<sup>45</sup> Jewish in Malmö and homosexual in Orlando. The human rights and freedoms have to apply to everyone. Always.*

Most of the party leaders, apart from the leader of the Moderate party, to some extent emphasised the importance of universal values in themselves. For example, the leader of the Liberal party pointed out that liberal values in Europe may be threatened by xenophobic parties. Some of the party leaders made universal values a source of national pride. The prime minister to some extent nationalised the value of equality by emphasising that social and economic equality is the foundation of the ‘Swedish model’ and ‘the country that we love’, but he made no references to Swedish culture or any suggestions that immigration would damage support for these values. Similarly, the leader of the Green party emphasised Sweden’s international reputation as a champion of human rights. However, national pride is not necessarily exclusive towards immigrants. Whether or not it is depends on the content of national identity.<sup>46</sup> There is a difference between nationalising values and expressing national pride because of the way one’s country safeguards or promotes universal values to which one has a prior commitment.<sup>47</sup>

### 3 Public opinion on national identity and immigration in Sweden

In this section we will focus specifically on political parties and ask if the type and consequences of national identity vary across voters of different political parties.

The so-called right-wing populists have become increasingly nationalistic. Eger and Valdez demonstrate that those European parties have in recent years become more conservative, authoritarian and nationalistic.<sup>48</sup> More importantly, they also show that those who oppose immigration and favour welfare chauvinism are more likely to vote for the right-wing populist parties, which is in line with other research showing that people who vote for those parties are more averse to immigration and immigrants.<sup>49</sup> There is a clear correspondence between party affiliation and voter preference. Given the increased emphasis on nationalist ideas we would expect that the supporters of right-wing populist parties, the Sweden Democrats in this case, would emphasise ethnic identity more strongly than other voters. This is because nationalism, or the idea of ‘one nation one people’, always contains an ethnic component.

Not only do we expect Sweden Democrat voters to display a stronger ethnic identity than other voters in Sweden, we would also expect such an identity to have a different meaning and significance for them than it has for supporters of other parties. Political frameworks may influence how people think about a specific issue as well as adding salience and legitimacy to the issues at stake.<sup>50</sup> So, if the Sweden Democrats combine their nationalist discourse with anti-immigrant rhetoric, as shown above, they provide a framework, an exclusive conceptualisation of the nation,

which leads voters to connect Swedishness with anti-immigration sentiments. Moreover, in strongly co-articulating national identity and immigration, the party has likely increased the salience of those issues, which may further strengthen the relationship between conceptions of the nation and anti-immigrant attitudes. Thus, we expect national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes to be more strongly correlated among Sweden Democrats voters than other voters. We hypothesise that ethnic identity and even civic identity are more exclusive for Sweden Democrats voters.

### Variables

In this section we first examine the difference in national identity between Sweden Democrats voters and voters for other political parties, then whether there is a difference in the relationship between national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes between Sweden Democrats voters and other voters.

National identity is measured by respondents' answers to the following two questions:

*Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Swedish. Others say they are not important. How important or unimportant do you think each of the following is?*

*1 To have Swedish ancestry*

*2 To respect the political institutions of Sweden*

The response scale varies from 'very important' to 'not important at all' on a four-point scale. Both items have been recoded to vary between 0 and 1, where 1 indicates a stronger national identity. The items used here are adopted from the International Social Survey Programme, where they are included in a longer scale (more items), but it has been shown that these two items capture the two dimensions in focus.<sup>51</sup>

Anti-immigrant attitudes are measured by an additive index of two variables:

*On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means very bad and 10 means very good, would you say that people coming to live here from other countries has been good or bad for Sweden's economy and Sweden's cultural life?*

Both items are measured on a 0–10 scale. The index was rescaled to vary between 0 and 10, where 10 indicates more negative attitudes towards immigrants. Both items come from the European Social Survey and are common measures of anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>52</sup>

A party preference is the party the respondents voted for in the last national election (2014). The parties included the four right-wing parties: the Moderates, the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats; the three left-wing parties: Social Democrats, the Left party and the Green party; plus the Sweden Democrats. Non-voters were excluded from the analyses.

## Results

Table 1 demonstrates that Sweden Democrats voters clearly attach more value than other voters to the ethnic dimension of national identity, scoring more than twice as highly as other voters on the 0–1 scale. Given the emphasis on the nation and the people among European right-wing populist parties this is perhaps unsurprising. All voters, regardless of party preferences, display a very strong sense of civic national identity. There are other differences across parties, with the voters for the Liberal and the Left parties displaying lower levels of ethnic identity, but those deviations are substantially lower than for Sweden Democrats voters.

As pointed out above, ethnic and civic identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, given the very high prevalence of civic identity, it seems to be very rare in practice to have an ethnic national identity without a civic one. So instead of looking at the two types of identity separately we can combine them. We do so by classifying all people who agree with both items as having a multiple identity. In our sample, the group without a multiple identity consists almost



exclusively of people with a civic identity only, as there are no people who attach importance to the ethnic but not to the civic dimension of nationalism (table 2).

Table 1 **Average national identity of Swedish people, by party preference**

	Moderate party	Centre party	Liberal party	Christian Democrats
Ethnic identity	0.25	0.24	0.17	0.25
Civic identity	0.95	0.97	0.96	0.90
	Green party	Social Democrats	Left party	Sweden Democrats
Ethnic identity	0.21	0.23	0.16	0.47
Civic identity	0.91	0.94	0.88	0.97

n=809

Table 2 **The proportion of Swedish people with a multiple identity, by party preference**

	Moderate party	Centre party	Liberal party	Christian Democrats
Multiple identity	17%	17.5%	8.9%	18.5%
	Green party	Social Democrats	Left party	Sweden Democrats
Multiple identity	12.1%	16.4%	8.3%	39.3%

n=809

As in the previous analyses, we see some differences across parties in that Liberal and Left voters have the lowest proportion of people with a multiple identity. However,

it is the Sweden Democrats voters who really stand out. We have seen that Sweden Democrats voters have a stronger ethnic identity and also that a multiple identity is more common among those voters. This leads to the conclusion that Sweden Democrats voters have a more exclusive sense of national identity than other voters. The latter is expected given the traditional higher emphasis on nationalism among right-wing populist parties in Europe and the increased prevalence of such articulation.

To ensure that the correlations between party preference and national identity are not spurious and in practice dependent on variations in group dispositions, we also control for other variables (table 3).

Table 3 **Ordinary Least Square Regression on characteristics of respondents, ethnic identity dependent variable (0-1)**

Men	.06**
Age	-.001
Income	-.005
Education elementary school	-.003
High school (university ref category)	.04
<i>Region</i>	
Stockholm	.03
North Sweden	.03
North mid-Sweden	-.004
South mid-Sweden (South Sweden ref category)	.03
<i>Party preference</i>	
Right	-.22**
Left	-.25**
Other (Sweden Democrats ref category)	-.20**

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01; n=964

Table 3 confirms the findings in tables 1 and 2. It demonstrates that the effect of voting for the Sweden Democrats on having an ethnic identity is significantly larger than the effect of voting for any other party. We also see that neither education nor income or age significantly influence the chances of having an ethnic conception of national identity. Men are on average somewhat more likely than women to support ethnic nationalism.

We also wanted to explore the extent to which those identities influence anti-immigrant attitudes. Does this influence vary according to party preference? We have collapsed the parties into three groups: right-wing parties (Moderates, the Centre party, Liberals, Christian Democrats); left-wing parties (Social Democrats, the Left party, Greens); and Sweden Democrats.

Table 4 **Correlations between national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes in Sweden, by party preference**

	Right-wing parties	Left-wing parties	Sweden Democrats	Other (parties or non-voters)
Ethnic identity	.32**	.49**	.34**	.50**
Civic identity	.04	-.01	.04	.13
Multiple identity	.30**	.33**	.32**	.35**
Civic identity only	-.30**	-.33**	-.30**	-.29**

\*\* p<.01; n=1,007

Table 4 shows that having an ethnic or multiple national identity is clearly positively related to anti-immigrant attitudes, regardless of party preference. A civic national identity is on the other hand not correlated with anti-immigrant attitudes, because ethnic identity is not nested into it, in a case where civic and ethnic identity does not coincide. Looking at the last row, where we have excluded ethnic identity from the civic version, we see there is a fairly

strong negative correlation between civic identity and anti-immigrant attitudes, but still no difference by party preference. This implies that having a more exclusive identity, ethnic or a combination of ethnic and civic, has the same meaning across parties. So, even though Sweden Democrats voters display substantially higher levels of exclusive identities than voters from other parties, those identities do not have different consequences when predicting anti-immigrant attitudes.

## Summary and discussion

During 2015 and 2016, the political discourse on refugee migration and refugee policy changed dramatically in Sweden. In September 2015, thousands of people gathered in Stockholm and elsewhere under the banner 'Refugees Welcome'. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven spoke in support of the right to asylum: 'In my Europe, we don't build walls. We offer our help when need is great.'

In October 2016, only a year later, his government decided to continue the new and temporary border controls to stem the inflow of asylum seekers. In an interview, he explained his reason for keeping them:

*There may actually be a new massive refugee flow from Iraq. We need to be prepared for that. And the government has decided that we are not going back to the situation that we had last autumn.*

This U-turn in refugee policy and rhetoric on refugee admission was accompanied by an increased focus on questions of national identity and civic integration. 'Swedish values' became one of the key terms in the immigration debate, in a country where nationalism used to be a political taboo. Our study set out to investigate the role of identity in constructing exclusionary rhetoric at the elite and non-elite level.

Through analysing speeches by party leaders during the summer of 2016, we can find exclusionary nationalist rhetoric. For instance, the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats made a speech tying values to Swedish national culture and heritage, and portraying immigration as a threat to the nation. While less articulated and much less explicit, we also found exclusionary rhetoric in the speeches of the leaders of the

Moderate party and the Christian Democrats. We find the language of civic integration and civic nationalism, with its emphasis on universal values, is in fact tied to particular cultural identities and traditions. Civic nationalism, often seen as more inclusionary, often masked a thicker cultural identity.

Consistent with previous research, our quantitative study shows that such identities are clearly associated with more exclusionary attitudes towards immigration. Those voting for the Sweden Democrats were much more likely to have a thicker, exclusionary conception of national identity than voters for other parties. Interestingly, however, the effect of national identity on attitudes towards immigration was not stronger for Sweden Democrats voters. This implies that intensified political rhetoric on national identity and belonging may not make those with a thicker national identity even more negative towards immigration.

The study also finds that a purely civic identity, void of cultural or ethnic features, is associated with more positive attitudes to immigration. These findings suggest that talking about national identity *per se* may not increase hostility. Instead, it matters hugely *how* we talk about national identity and who belongs to the nation. This may nonetheless be a somewhat daunting conclusion for those mainstream politicians who prefer to shun questions of identity altogether.

Discussion of how to create a harmonious society amid deep pluralism, in part driven by immigration, was once dominated by advocates and critics of multiculturalism. Multiculturalists argued that recognition of cultural difference is necessary in order to guarantee equality. However, multiculturalism has fallen from grace in practical politics. It has been replaced by increasing emphasis on civic integrationism, contrasted with an ethnic nationalist, assimilationist approach.

The civic integrationist approach, adopted by most countries in Europe, is inclusive on the surface. It only demands of immigrants that they accept political institutions, the constitution and some shared liberal and universal values. But in practice civic integrationism often ties values to an exclusionary group identity. The latter is exemplified in the

rhetoric of the Christian Democrats and the Moderates in the Almedalen speeches, which emphasised liberal ideas, yet also demanded a thick cultural understanding of who 'we' are.

While multiculturalism may have failed to promote solidarity and inclusion, the current alternatives, too, have weaknesses. Civic integrationism is too often a thick form of identity in a liberal guise, which may ultimately strengthen ethnic nationalisms. This is disconcerting, as our analysis has shown ethnic conceptions of Swedishness go hand in hand with anti-immigrant sentiment.

The emphasis in Europe on thick forms of identity is an awkward fit with a liberal understanding of who 'we' are. What an alternative liberal understanding ought to consist of is an open question, however, and one that liberal politicians cannot afford to ignore, as nationalist accounts based on narrowly bounded and defined political communities continue to gain traction.

## Notes

- 1 YouGov surveyed adults (aged 18+) in six countries online between 23 August and 7 September 2016. The sample sizes were as follows: France – 1,001; Germany – 2,125; Poland – 1,011; Spain – 1,000; Sweden – 1,007; UK – 1,661 (only adults from Great Britain were surveyed in UK polling). The figures have been weighted and are representative of adults aged 18+ on age, gender and region. Four YouGov panels (GB, France, Germany and Sweden) also took account of other factors such as last political vote, education and political affiliation. Two non-YouGov panels (Poland and Spain) were sampled by age, gender and region and weighted by these variables in addition to last political vote and education post-fieldwork. All respondents were asked a set of common questions. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.
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7 **Responding to the politics of fear: principles for good leadership, government and policy-making**

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# Introduction

This project has identified a wide range of fears and insecurities plaguing European member states and the continent as a whole – some of which are rooted in specific, practical circumstances and others which more reflect a particular mood, whether a sense of personal precariousness or national malaise. To restore the solidarity, optimism and support for liberalism essential to underpinning peace, security and openness in Europe, it is clear that citizens' fears, whether based in economic 'realities' or social and cultural 'feelings', must be taken seriously by political representatives at all levels – but responding to them, and rebuilding trust, will necessitate effective public policy initiatives and strong political leadership.

Below we set out some of the core principles of leadership, governance and public policy-making that could support such renewal at EU and national levels, with the support of civil society and other non-governmental institutions (NGOs).

# 1 Promote safety and security

Citizens across Europe are pessimistic and anxious about the future, and a significant minority of people feel ‘left behind’ by the current system. National and EU-level governments need to promote policies and political discourses that seek to allay fears, address concrete concerns and more proactively foster social cohesion. This requires moral and principled leadership on the part of political leaders, and targeted policy interventions to address the economic, social and cultural factors driving insecurity and dislocation.

Our cross-national polling confirmed there is a widespread sense of pessimism, precariousness and anxiety across our case study countries. Some of these concerns relate to the economy and national security, which have continued to simmer or gain force since the financial crisis and the recent escalation of terror incidents, but others pertain more to feelings of social and cultural loss. It is clear that these two dimensions are becoming increasingly intertwined, together fuelling personal anxieties and a feeling that political leaders and institutions are no longer able to offer control and security to citizens.

Within each nation, our findings show that while feelings of insecurity and instability may be widespread, they are felt more strongly by certain groups – those with more conservative social values, and with lower income and education levels. Our research has therefore provided empirical evidence to support the concept of the ‘left behinds’, both economically and culturally defined. It seems that across most of our case study countries there is a significant minority of the population (10–20 per cent) who are deeply pessimistic about the future and feel out of step with contemporary societal values.



In responding to the current febrile atmosphere political leaders should consider the approaches discussed below.

### **Provide genuine moral leadership, to act as a stabilising and guiding hand in response to public anxiety and fear**

The Realpolitik motivations for referendums in the UK and Italy have spectacularly backfired on their proponents, and only served to heighten civic anxiety and division. Furthermore, governments' 'adoptive' strategy in responding to populist rhetoric has led mainstream parties, particularly in the UK and France, to foster a negative and divisive political discourse around issues such as immigration and EU integration.<sup>1</sup> This tendency was most starkly reflected in our French polling, which found that twice as many people expected their vote to be driven by negative motivations (to prevent a candidate they disapprove of winning) than positive ones (choosing the best candidate) in the upcoming national elections.

Angela Merkel's chancellorship presents an alternative approach, marked by a steadfast commitment to her refugee policy and an assertion that 'fear cannot be a counsel for political action'.<sup>2</sup> While Merkel's approval ratings have fluctuated, they still remain far ahead of her European counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the 2016 Christmas terror attack in Berlin represents a significant challenge to Merkel's policies and approach, but again she has remained unwavering in her calls for national unity, based around values of openness, freedom and humanity.<sup>4</sup>

While politicians must recognise that the recent populist uprisings reflect genuine concerns about the direction of travel in their country and the broader world that must be addressed, this should not come at the expense of principled, stable leadership that seeks to build long-term social and economic growth and enrichment. Politicians may feel they are representing the views of their people by bowing to populist rhetoric in the short term, but the fact remains that citizens also fundamentally expect higher moral leadership

from their politicians than from almost any other profession.<sup>5</sup> Political leaders should therefore seek to promote more positive and hopeful visions of the future, which can act as a cohesive force to build national unity.

### **Deliver targeted policy interventions**

These policy interventions should address the concerns of ‘left behind’ or vulnerable groups, and more proactively promote social and community cohesion. The policy response to the politics of fear must include initiatives that attempt to tackle economic insecurity and inequality directly – through inclusive growth strategies, education and skills investment, and regulatory interventions to reduce the precariousness of low-skilled work. However, there is also a need for a more proactive approach to address some of the cultural drivers of the politics of fear – especially, as reflected in our polling, the perception that immigration has not been matched by social integration, and that cultural pluralism is threatening long-established, deep-rooted aspects of national identity.

For example, the recent Casey Review in the UK has shone light on the UK government’s piecemeal approach to promoting social cohesion, and has called for greater government investment in English language support, social mixing initiatives, and the emancipation of women in conservative religious communities.<sup>6</sup> Without addressing areas of clear failure in integration policy, the positive arguments for immigration, whether based on moral values or interests, will remain subordinate to feelings of cultural infringement among large minorities of citizens.

Examples of more proactive approaches to promoting cohesion in our case study countries often come from civil society initiatives. This includes Sweden’s ÖppnaDörren, which aims to help and encourage newcomers and more established Swedes to build connections and friendships, through dinners, monthly meetings and opportunities to build professional networks. Another approach, pioneered in the German city of Mannheim, is community dialogue – a forum for different sections of a diverse community to come together

in facilitated discussion to establish common concerns and priorities for the city.

National and local governments can play a role in supporting and scaling effective civil society programmes, as well as facilitating better cross-sector working. This is the approach taken in the Polish city of Bialystok, which in response to a spike in hate crime launched a multi-agency initiative to tackle racism and xenophobia in the city, including special training for municipal police officers, and developed an online platform run by civil society groups to report racist or xenophobic graffiti.

### **Support a more focused EU**

There should be support for a more focused EU, which can achieve tangible successes in areas crucial to underpinning the sense of economic and physical security that encourages citizens to favour openness over nationalism. There was widespread consensus in our consultations with national and civil society practitioners that the EU should concentrate on a stronger, more core remit of responsibilities – enabling it to deliver more comprehensively on a reduced number of areas, and avoiding the ‘over-reach’ that contributes to a sense of disenfranchisement among citizens. Ultimately, the more the EU can be seen to achieve successes in ‘big ticket’ policy areas outside social and cultural frameworks – which our research shows is viewed as the preserve of national governments by most of the public – the more it will help foster the sense of security essential to promoting togetherness over division.

These responsibilities will include levers that emphasise cooperation and solidarity – but to productive and tangible ends, such as on security, counter-terror and immigration policy. The most recent Eurobarometer (86) lends support to this view, finding substantial majorities in favour of current EU policy priorities around freedom of movement, common defence and security policy, and common energy policy.<sup>7</sup>

EU leaders can also play a role in promoting safety and security by re-orientating policy to position the EU not simply as an architect of globalisation, but as a protector against the

global economy's destabilising effects at local levels. Importantly, the EU has the opportunity to promote just, as well as free, trade. Major trade deals such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have been perceived to favour corporate interests at the expense of public scrutiny and protection, leading the EU's Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, to declare that the EU must 'do more to engage people at national level and to find a new European consensus on trade'.<sup>8</sup> This involves securing trade deals that explicitly protect workers' rights and enable national governments to hold big business to account.

## 2 Reconnect ‘political elites’ and citizens

Political leaders need to address a crisis in political trust through measures that reinforce and rejuvenate representative democracy and political accountability. The recent increase in the use of referendums across Europe demonstrates a failure of effective representation, with many serving only to inflame, rather than settle, divisive issues.<sup>9</sup> There is therefore a pressing need for new mechanisms which enable politicians to understand the concerns of citizens more constructively, and provide clear lines of accountability to political decision-making.

Our findings point to a crisis in political trust. For some countries, trust in national governments is higher than trust in the EU (particularly the UK), while for others the reverse is true (particularly Poland and Spain) – however, trust is chronically low throughout. The German case study, in particular, revealed a significant disconnect between public opinion – rooted in concrete concerns about the EU’s influence on national contexts – and the views of many German politicians – diagnosing the problem as a diffuse and nebulous sense of fear. There is therefore an urgent need to address this disconnect between politicians and citizens, and the low trust environment that is both its cause and symptom.

Participatory or deliberative forms of democracy can be seen as a possible silver bullet for tackling a lack of faith in the political system. And there are notable examples of well-structured deliberative approaches that have been successful at engaging citizens and generating informed debate and public contribution (eg, the Irish Convention on the Constitution and Iceland’s Constitutional Council).<sup>10</sup> However, attempts at deliberation at the EU level have largely been ineffective – with only three campaigns under

the EU's flagship European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) managing to fulfil requirements to be heard by the Commission (1 million signatures, from seven countries, relating to an issue within the EU's competencies).<sup>11</sup>

At the national level, calls for greater democratic participation have largely been met through a rise in the number of referendums, which have had destabilising effects on national democracies and have contributed to what Belgian author David Van Reybrouck calls 'democratic fatigue syndrome', with more intensive electoral politics actually serving to undermine trust and engagement.<sup>12</sup>

In restoring trust, while direct and participatory approaches can provide an important supplement to existing democratic processes, there is a need to get the fundamentals – of democratic accountability and representation – right first. This impetus can be supported in the following ways.

### **Reduce the remoteness of 'political elites'**

In order to make political elites less remote it is necessary to create more effective mechanisms for dialogue between politicians and citizens, and initiatives to make parliaments more reflective of the wider population. There is a pressing need to reduce the considerable (and seemingly rising) social and geographic gap between politicians and citizens. Part of the answer must involve bringing politics down to a local level. This could be done through developing forums and instruments to enable greater dialogue between national politicians and their local communities. There is a clear role for civil society organisations to act as a bridge between local communities and local, national and supranational politics. *Maison d'Europe* is an example of an initiative in France that works to connect local communities to EU-level politics through conferences, which provide a forum to connect people to EU institutions and politicians. The membership arms of political parties can also be influential in embedding politics, and even policy development, at a local level.

Making parliaments more reflective of the wider population in gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic

background is also central to reducing the remoteness of politics from people's lives. On gender, for example, despite some gains in recent elections women are still in a minority in lower or single parliamentary houses in all our case study countries, ranging from 43.6 per cent in Sweden to just 26.2 per cent in France.<sup>13</sup> More effort needs to be made on both the demand side (recruiting politicians from diverse backgrounds) and supply side (providing leadership opportunities for under-represented groups).

Civil society organisations can play a role here also. In the UK, for example, a programme called Reclaim (based in Manchester) aims to encourage community and political leaders from working-class backgrounds by supporting young people from deprived communities to deliver a social change project over two years in their community.<sup>14</sup>

### **Support democratic and policy-making processes that build rather than undermine trust**

Referendums should be used sparingly and implemented better when needed; the policy-making process should be more transparent and open to external input. They are an appropriate democratic instrument in specific circumstances – particularly, where there has been a significant shift in public opinion, which requires the public to ratify a related change in policy direction collectively (eg, the 2015 Irish referendum on same-sex marriage, which passed with 62 per cent of the vote). However, recently referendums have been more often used as a political tool to resolve internal political conflicts (within the Conservative party in the UK) or external political conflicts (between the Hungarian government and the EU over refugees).

This motivation undermines representative democracy, with governments abdicating decision-making to settle their own political disputes. If a referendum is required, there needs to be a fundamental reassessment of how they are structured and delivered – to ensure that people are better informed and engaged, and campaigns are seen to be factually sound.

There is scope for resolving specific political issues through well-thought-through deliberative mechanisms as an alternative to referendums, ranging from light-touch approaches that involve large numbers of people, to more intensive processes, including sortition-based citizens' councils. Digital technology has the potential to widen the reach of these initiatives dramatically. For example, since 2014 Paris has been experimenting with a crowd-sourcing approach to participatory budgeting, through which residents are provided with online and face-to-face forums to submit, and vote on, ideas for how to spend a budget of €426 million between 2014 and 2020 (5 per cent of the city's investment budget).<sup>15</sup> In the 2016 spending round nearly 160,000 Parisians voted on how to allocate that year's budget of €100 million, an increase in participation of 40 per cent on the previous year.<sup>16</sup> The Paris example demonstrates both the potential and the limitations of deliberative approaches – while it has been able to engage large numbers of people, those involved are still only a fraction of the 2.2 million population of Paris. Although deliberative initiatives can be deployed effectively to build trust and engagement on specific issues, or to foster more structured debate around the traditional electoral process, they still lack the representative legitimacy of electoral democracy.

Furthermore, policy-making itself needs to become a tool for engendering trust rather than an opaque or technocratic process conducted in conversations between politicians and civil servants behind closed doors. For example, the UK government has committed to making 'open policy-making' the norm under its Civil Service Reform Plan – though the results so far have been limited to small innovations applied to narrow areas of policy.<sup>17</sup>

True open policy-making requires far more transparency over the policy design process – setting out overall aims and the options for change, and encouraging a truly consultative process that gathers expertise and input more widely. This should apply across all levels of government – from local community and neighbourhood plans, to national policy conversations, to greater transparency and openness within the EU legislature.



## **Boost the accountability of EU institutions and policy-makers at EU level**

The accountability of EU institutions and policy-makers can be improved by making information on the legislative and decision-making process more readily available, making more active efforts to disseminate this information, supporting public engagement, and ensuring that the nuances of national debates are better represented at the supranational level. As a result of the actual and perceived distance between EU legislators and citizens, transparency is often seen as a panacea to problems of low public trust and legitimacy.<sup>18</sup> A particular area of concern in this regard is the consolidation of decision-making power within the Council of Ministers, which prioritises behind-closed-doors negotiations between representatives of national governments. The lack of transparency at the Council level threatens the EU's accountability – with limited indication of decision-making responsibilities, and its representativeness failing to reflect the diversity of voices and positions within national political discourses.

Increasing the transparency of Council negotiations is therefore a much-needed step to supporting broader improvements in accountability across EU institutions. The European ombudsman has recently made recommendations for greater transparency in EU triologue negotiations – where representatives of the Council and Parliament (with assistance from the Commission) meet to discuss legislative changes – which include proposals to publish meeting dates, summary agendas, positions statements and the names of decision-makers.<sup>19</sup> These recommendations could be applied more broadly to Council negotiations and would provide a means of significantly increasing publicly available information on decision-making within this forum.

However, this form of transparency – increasing the amount of publicly available information, which is the dominant understanding of transparency at the EU level – only goes so far in securing meaningful accountability. In a study of transparency within the Council since 1999,

academics Jørgen Bølstad and James Cross argue that while the amount of public information has increased:

*This does not necessarily translate into a broader public engagement with EU politics and increased understanding of how the EU makes decisions. For non-experts, the decision-making process remains byzantine, and the provision of access to legislative records has done little to ameliorate this fact.<sup>20</sup>*

Transparency therefore needs to be conceptualised in less of a corporate and more of a civic manner – beginning with the public provision of information, but followed by far more proactive attempts to disseminate this information in a way that draws clear lines of accountability and actively engages the public.

As well as increasing accountability, to address EU shortcomings in legitimacy and trust it is also necessary to make stronger efforts to boost the representativeness of EU institutions. Increasing transparency at the Council level would have no significant impact on this as it fails to deal with a more fundamental issue – put forward by constitutional academic Vernon Bogdanor – that European elections ‘do not determine or even substantially influence the development of the Union... they do not determine the political colour of the Union, how it is to be governed, for they do not affect the composition of the Commission, nor, of course, of the Council of Ministers’.<sup>21</sup>

Part of the answer lies in ensuring the full implementation of the so-called ‘Interinstitutional agreement on better law-making’ introduced in 2016, which sets out the principle of ‘equal footing’ of Parliament and the Council.<sup>22</sup> Beyond this citizens need to be given more confidence that their vote genuinely influences the EU’s policy-making agenda, through strengthening the powers and visibility of the European Parliament (and its MEPs) in developing policy and delivering outcomes at the EU level.

### 3 Make the case for openness and liberalism

With illiberal, nationalist political discourse ascendant, there is an urgent need to put forward a more persuasive case for liberalism – one that promotes liberal values of openness, international cooperation, pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, but in a way that is more meaningful for ordinary people.

Pro-liberal politicians and institutions must become far more proactive and adept at building coalitions around collective interests (which cut across traditional political divides), engaging in – and helping to shape – national debates around identity and immigration, and ensuring that the benefits of international openness are experienced more widely across society.

Our findings indicate that while Europe is not experiencing an absolute rejection of liberal values – with majorities in most countries holding liberal attitudes towards issues such as same-sex relationships and female participation in the labour market – there has been a slide towards more authoritarian and socially conservative views, particularly around ethnicity and immigration. In France, Germany and Poland, in particular, a higher proportion of people feel that greater ethnic and religious diversity has had a negative effect on their country rather than been a positive influence. And even traditionally liberal Spain and Sweden have seen a hardening of opinion on immigration. There is a sense, then, that anti-liberal rhetoric is cutting through to public opinion far more effectively and reopening debates previously thought settled.

So, why have liberal arguments failed to effectively speak to people?

First, and particularly, at the EU level, there has been an over-emphasis on explaining the functions and structures of the political process and institutions (so-called ‘input legitimacy’) at the expense of genuine citizen engagement. This has been ineffective at two levels – in genuinely informing people about the EU (public awareness about EU institutions and competencies remains low) and in promoting any kind of pro-EU, pro-cooperation consensus. The 2015 Eurobarometer (83), for example, found that there was no correlation between people’s level of knowledge about the EU and pro-EU sentiment.<sup>23</sup>

Second, where liberals at national and EU levels have focused more on promoting values, these have too often been discussed in an abstract form, or in ways that presuppose their universality and ubiquity. Both the content and source of these arguments are important. As American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has argued, the ‘new cosmopolitan elite... acts and talks in ways that insult, alienate, and energize many of their fellow citizens, particularly those who have a psychological predisposition to authoritarianism’.<sup>24</sup>

There is therefore a need to reframe and re-energise the case for liberalism and openness, and there are a number of clear steps that can be taken to achieve this, which are discussed below.

## **Develop pro-liberal arguments around collective interests**

It is necessary to develop pro-liberal arguments around collective interests – issues that matter to ordinary people and that cut across traditional party political lines – and demonstrate the concrete benefits of these positions. By focusing on *interests*, liberal arguments can move beyond the abstract and the technocratic, and begin to make a compelling case for the concrete benefits of international openness, pluralism and diversity to ordinary people’s lives (‘output legitimacy’). Crucially, they can reach out to people who may not be self-identifying ‘liberals’, but who ultimately share common concerns and hopes for their families,

communities and country's place in the world. This requires liberals to be proactive in reaching across traditional political divides, to create coalitions over shared interests – even if the motivation behind the interest or its policy manifestation may be complementary rather than matched.

Areas for possible coalition-building include immigration policy, where social liberals could feasibly reach out to business and free marketers to resist more nationalistic, protectionist reforms to immigration policy. Liberals could even attempt to capitalise on new political space created by populist insurgents where their interests or aims align. This is particularly the case with the social interventionist, big government elements of current populist discourse – so evident in both Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen's anti-free-trade protectionism – which liberals should engage with to develop a broad consensus in support of improved social protection and more humane welfare policy.

### **Practise values of openness and pluralism**

Pro-liberal politicians and institutions should put values of openness and pluralism into practice by supporting initiatives that enable positive, and ultimately consensus-building, debates on issues such as identity, nationalism and immigration. There has often been a temptation for liberals to actively dismiss or more passively avoid debates on potentially divisive issues linked to national identity, but this approach risks leaving the argument to be framed, uncontested, by the populist right. The narrowness of the Remain campaign's message during the UK Referendum, framed predominantly in economic terms, points to the potential consequences of failing to shape the wider debate.<sup>25</sup> There are warning signs that similar mistakes are being made in countries where there has not yet been a populist upsurge – particularly Spain, where our polling found that 40 per cent of people would vote for a party pledging to reduce immigration. This, more than any other issue, has also been 'under-discussed' in many Western nations, which can eventually fuel the rise of parties willing to challenge normative viewpoints.

Liberals therefore need to take an active role in shaping the boundaries and content of these discussions – which will require a careful balance to be struck between contesting discriminatory rhetoric and ensuring that a defence of identity politics does not stifle free and open debate.

Framing the public conversation is a crucial aspect of political leadership, and must be conducted in good faith and with legitimacy. In 2010, the French government under President Nicholas Sarkozy launched a national debate on French identity, involving over one hundred local town hall meetings across France. However, they were seen as a political tool to bolster support from the right in the run-up to regional elections. Rather than building consensus, the framing of the debates fanned the flames of nationalism and xenophobia – by emphasising divisive issues like the burqa. Despite initial public support for the initiative, by their conclusion, only 33 per cent of those polled considered them to be constructive and 61 per cent said the process had in no way defined what being French means.<sup>26</sup>

An alternative approach would be to frame debates more actively around points of commonality than points of difference, as argued by Karen Stenner, author of *The Authoritarian Dynamic*:

*It would seem that we can best limit intolerance of difference by parading, talking about, and applauding our sameness... Ultimately, nothing inspires greater tolerance from the intolerant than an abundance of common and unifying beliefs, practices, rituals, institutions, and processes.<sup>27</sup>*

There is also a need for greater inclusivity in debates around European values, providing space for more socially conservative voices: not watering down liberal positions, but preventing the exclusion of those who may be susceptible to right-wing populist rhetoric.

A potentially instructive example can be found in the Commission's rejection of the 'One of Us' campaign in 2014 – one of the few initiatives of the ECI actually to gain the required number of signatures. This initiative, which garnered

1.8 million signatures, predominantly from Italy and Germany (and backed by the Catholic Church), called on the EU to ‘ban and end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos’. While few liberals would question the Commission’s ultimate decision in this case, there was clearly a need to provide an outlet to continue the debate and better engage with those who felt strongly on this issue to explain in concrete (rather than abstract liberal) terms why the Commission rejected the initiative. The flat dismissal may simply have left those backing the campaign with the sense that the EU is not for them.

### **Ensure that the benefits of openness and diversity are experienced more widely**

The benefits of openness and diversity must be experienced more widely, particularly through supporting greater intra- and international mobility and engagement for socioeconomic groups unlikely to participate in existing initiatives. Our findings, particularly from the UK case study – which found that the size of people’s social networks significantly influences their attitudes towards liberalism, international cooperation and cultural diversity – point to the need to ensure that people from groups with low socioeconomic status, education levels and mobility and/or from rural areas are given the same opportunities to travel and mix with people from different backgrounds as has become the norm among more affluent, cosmopolitan groups.

At the EU level, while policies like the Erasmus programme and data roaming are popular initiatives, they often only serve a narrow tranche of the European population: those who are already mobile and internationalist in outlook. More needs to be done, then, to support mixing between communities that are not currently served by these kinds of policies. The current Erasmus programme (Erasmus+) was originally titled Erasmus for All, with the intention of opening up the programme to volunteering, vocational and work-related placements, as well as higher education and graduate schemes. The EU should invest more heavily in

widening this programme to be more inclusive to those outside the university system, and reach out to schools, vocational learning institutions and community organisations to help them to provide resources and support to facilitate the application process.

The UK case study's finding on social networks also demonstrates that mobility schemes *within nations* could be significant to fostering more liberal attitudes and potentially overcoming divisions wrought by hard-wired social perspectives and economic experiences. Currently, many governments only focus on integration policy from a racial perspective, but improving socioeconomic and rural–metropolitan integration will be just as important to building more cohesive societies.

Civil society organisations have a potential role to play here in facilitating mixing at a national and community level. For example, the Carnegie UK Trust has recently launched its Twin Towns programme, which will provide financial support and expertise to enable ten small- and medium-sized towns to trial bilateral 'twinning' arrangements over an 18-month period.<sup>28</sup> So too could education systems and local councils place a stronger emphasis on building partnerships between schools of differing circumstances – whether within communities or in different towns and cities – to expose children to a greater diversity of experience.

For adults, there is scope to consider schemes that encourage mixing for non-graduate working-age citizens – whether through paid voluntary international work placement schemes for individuals and their families in non-professional sectors, or by linking tax relief to community and civic participation. Government-administered community grants could also be structured to encourage support for projects that bring diverse groups together to share common experiences.



## 4 Counter post-truth narratives in politics and the media

Systematic manipulation of facts for political ends and the growing acceptance of conspiracy theories are emergent trends of particular concern, in part accelerated by new forms of social and alternative media.

According to Oxford Dictionaries, ‘post-truth’ was the word of 2016, fuelled by political campaigns in the USA and the UK that have had a notably loose relationship with the ‘facts’. Aided by social and alternative media, political misinformation has become a systematic tool used to bolster populist campaigns.

The Polish case study presents the starkest evidence of this, describing how the Law and Justice party successfully campaigned on a narrative of ‘Poland in ruin’, despite rising living standards and falling inequality over the last decade. Our polling also found that Islamic terrorism had risen to the top of Poles’ concerns for their country, although there have been no reported terrorist attacks in Poland and the country has only a small Muslim population – a clear indication of the impact of Islamophobic campaigning from the populist right.

Where there is a sense that information or activities are being obfuscated, or that politicians are not acting in citizens’ interests, people will necessarily reduce their trust in formal institutions; the danger now is that we have entered an information age, which privileges informal movements and provides the opportunity to construct echo chambers around preferred viewpoints.

Countering these false narratives and conspiracy theories will require decisive action from political representatives – addressing the issues that encourage

susceptibility to their messages and rebuilding trust in their expertise, and the systems that support stable, democratic government.

Citizens must also be supported to differentiate between credible and non-credible news sources, by promoting media literacy and digital citizenship – whether through national education systems or more informal methods.

Pilot schemes designed and trialled by Demos have demonstrated promising achievements in preventing the online radicalisation of school students, equipping young people with the critical-thinking skills and media awareness to be able to evaluate the arguments and content presented by extremists. These pilots found statistically significant impacts on young people's confidence in differentiating between truth and lies on social media,<sup>29</sup> and could readily be applied to wider digital media literacy training to improve the public's skills in critically assessing of day-to-day political information.

Government-led initiatives in challenging post-truth politics will necessarily also need to be complemented by those facilitated by civil society and grassroots organisations, whose position outside the establishment may help afford them greater legitimacy in the short term. We must be clear that not all civil society organisations represent a benevolent force when it comes to combating populist misinformation – with the populist movement in Poland, for instance, backed by a range of far-right or anti-liberal civic groups. Moreover, civil society organisations, particularly international NGOs, can be regarded as being part of 'the establishment' or serving 'foreign interests', and hence can lack widespread agency. However, certain civil society voices, enjoying high levels of trust among the public, may have greater scope in contesting false narratives than mainstream political institutions.

A number of civil society organisations have emerged in recent years with a mission to promote greater 'truthfulness' in public discourse. According to a report for the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford, some 60 per cent of fact-checking outlets in Europe are 'operating either as independent ventures or as projects of a civil society

organisation<sup>30</sup> – including FullFact in the UK and Demagog in Poland. As well as targeting and challenging misinformation a number of civil society initiatives have been established that foster more evidence-based public debates. Mediendienst-Integration, based in Germany, is one such organisation, aiming to support accurate reporting of immigration-related news in the mainstream media. By providing information, resources and expert contributors for journalists, the organisation seeks to shift coverage ‘from portraying “perceived truths” to [reporting] on empirical facts’.<sup>31</sup>

While these organisations can play an important role in shaping media and political narratives, they too can suffer from a lack of democratic accountability and popular legitimacy. Other initiatives are therefore attempting to take a more grassroots approach by building civil society’s resilience to ‘post-truth’ narratives and politics. One such organisation is the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD), which has been able to mobilise 1.5 million Poles (5 per cent of the population) in protests against the manipulation of state institutions by the Polish government.<sup>32</sup> As well as building a civic resistance to the current Polish government, KOD takes an overtly pro-European, pro-liberal stance, and is working to build a civic movement around these values and principles.

The EU has a potentially powerful role to play in supporting the incubation and scaling of these bottom-up organisations. As well as providing funding for these groups, the EU can provide capacity-building, coordination and networking support to ensure their longer-term sustainability. EU support clearly carries some risks in relation to grassroots authenticity and legitimacy. Ensuring transparency in funding and support criteria and allocation is therefore vital to refute claims of clandestine interference by the EU.

# Conclusions

This project has presented a snapshot of the ‘mood on the ground’ in six member states of Europe, during a period of increasing social and cultural crisis and political upheaval. Through a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods – including surveys, interviews, focus groups and workshops – it has drilled beneath the surface of Europe’s ‘hidden crisis’, as it has become increasingly laid bare for all to see. It has allowed us to explore the nuances of how fear manifests in particular national contexts, and how cultural identities, histories and economic conditions intersect to foster conditions that support the rise of authoritarian, nationalist, populist or illiberal forces. Importantly, it has also captured the hard-wired social attitudes and mindsets that are being increasingly activated by populist parties and campaigns, to react against a period of unprecedented global connectivity and digital transformation.

The picture painted by the research is certainly cause for concern for those who would like to see Europe, and a post-Brexit UK, remain both cohesive within and open to the world. Nonetheless, as we have outlined above, there are clear pathways forward for those leaders with ambitions to restore and enhance the stability and success of the EU, and to promote stable, liberal democracies. Each principle will strengthen the next, and they must be undertaken with a spirit of urgency, inclusivity and vigour.

Attention should focus on how elites can restore trust in the fundamental institutions of our democracies, better articulate the myriad, shared benefits and strength of open societies, and encourage more diverse, challenging and free public debate on issues important to people’s social and cultural identity. Fundamentally, however, political parties and institutions must consider what practical role they can play in helping more citizens to feel safe in their lives

– whether through public policy levers or simply through more inclusive, emotionally attuned and morally responsible leadership.

There is no doubt that we are living through a transition that feels cataclysmic in nature – disruptive, challenging and potentially dangerous. But the question as to whether this is the beginning or the end of something has not yet been decided. It is important that European governments, and the EU itself, do not succumb to reactive policy-making and short-term thinking to try to ‘stem the tide’ of populism, nationalism and authoritarianism. Liberals may feel in a position of disadvantage, but as this research shows, there is still a fundamental, majority baseline of support for many liberal ideas and policies, which can surely be reactivated in the future. The road ahead will be hard, but with humility, conviction, creative energy, collaboration and perseverance, new shoots will grow.

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There is a spectre haunting Europe: a culture and politics of fear, which asserts its growing influence in myriad ways. Most visibly, in the rise of far-right populist movements, the collapse of the social contract between citizens and political institutions, and in the proliferation of authoritarian and exclusionary rhetoric.

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