A blurred crowd of people at a political event, with a microphone in the foreground. The background is out of focus, showing many people in various colors, suggesting a large gathering. The microphone is a silver, spherical, mesh-covered model, positioned in the lower right foreground.

A Populist Moment?

Populist Attitudes of Voters
and Non-Voters before the
German Federal Election 2017

Robert Vehrkamp and Christopher Wratil

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About the study

This study is based on an online panel survey. Respondents are a representative sample of the German electorate as of the 2013 federal election. The survey was carried out by infratest dimap on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung in three survey waves between July 2015 and March 2017. For the first survey in July 2015, a total of 2,101 respondents were interviewed. This included 1,049 voters and 1,052 non-voters, who were identified as voters and non-voters on the basis of a post-election survey carried out following the 2013 federal election. Participants were drawn from a representative pool of about 20,000 post-election survey respondents. The second survey, in April 2016, included a total of 1,684 of the 2,101 panel respondents. The third survey in March 2017 comprised 1,464 panel respondents as well as a further 907 new respondents, who were identified as party supporters on the basis of a vote intention question included as part of a master-data questionnaire carried out by the panel operator in 2016. The sample of 2,371 respondents in the third survey reflected the proportions of voters and non-voters within the German population eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election. At the same time, supporters of the AfD and Die Linke (the Left Party) were over-represented in the sample (each with more than 330 respondents in the third survey) to allow us to make more precise inferences about these groups. For all results of this study, respondents' answers were weighted on the basis of microcensus data and representative data from the 2013 federal election, so as to correct for differences between the sample and the overall German voting-eligible population with regard to residence (federal state), age, education and gender. Thus, the results are representative for the German voting-eligible population as of the 2013 federal elections. In addition, the weighting design compensates for the deliberate over-sampling of Die Linke and AfD voters in the sample. The statistical uncertainty of the results varies across the analyses, and in parts of the study we draw attention to this by displaying confidence intervals.

Contents

Foreword	7
Executive summary – The 2017 federal election: a populist moment?	8
1. How populist are the Germans?	
The extent and profile of populist attitudes in the German electorate before the 2017 federal election	13
2. Populism in the election campaign	
Themes and positions driving populist and non-populist voter mobilization in the 2017 federal election	31
3. Populism at the ballot box	
Party preferences and voting intentions of eligible voters with populist and non-populist attitudes before the 2017 federal election	51
Methodological appendix	65
List of figures	70
References	72
Publication details	77

Foreword

Since Donald Trump's election as president of the United States, many observers have spoken of a new "era of populism." In Europe too, populist politicians and parties are growing stronger, challenging the established political parties and winning their first elections and referendums. Prominent examples of this include populist and anti-establishment movements such as *Ciudadanos* in Spain and *Movimento 5 Stelle* in Italy, which see themselves as neither ideologically left nor right, as well as left-wing populist parties such as *Podemos* in Spain and *Syriza* in Greece, and right-wing populist parties such as the *Front National* in France and the *UK Independence Party* in the United Kingdom or *Partij voor de Vrijheid* in the Netherlands. With the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), newly formed in 2013, a right-wing populist party has emerged in Germany too, competing in the 2017 federal election and challenging the established parties.

In the 2017 federal election year, has the "populist moment" arrived in Germany? How populist are the Germans? And how do voters' populist attitudes affect their vote choice in the federal election? How can and should the established parties react to the challenges of populism during the election campaign?

Our study addresses these questions. To this end, it analyzes the results of a panel-based survey representative of the German electorate, which was carried out jointly by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and infratest dimap between 2015 and 2017.

The results show that populist attitudes are quite widespread in Germany too, but remain comparatively moderate politically. The political climate in this federal election year is thus quite far from being a "populist moment." Nevertheless, the dilemma currently facing many Western democracies is also evident in Germany: On the one hand, populism fulfills an important function for democracies, exposing citizens' political dissatisfaction and democratic deficits early on. On the other hand, it can endanger the stability and core values of our liberal democracies. In any case, it is a challenge to the established democratic forces and institutions. The aim of this study is to shed light on this topic, and to reveal ways of meeting the populist challenge in an important election year.



Aart De Geus

Chairman and CEO Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board

Executive summary

The 2017 federal election:
a populist moment?

In public discourse, populism is a capricious and ambiguous term. Politicians, parties and voters are frequently referred to as populists, right-wing populists or left-wing populists. Since the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, some commentators have spoken of a new “age of populism.” A populist future is predicted even for the liberal representative democracies of the West. Populism seems to have become the defining trait of democracy in the 21st century.

But what is populism? How can it be defined and empirically measured? How populist are the Germans? And what role does populism play in the election campaign and for vote choice in the 2017 federal election year?

What is populism?

Populism has three essential dimensions: “anti-establishment,” “anti-pluralism,” and “pro-popular-sovereignty.” Criticism of the institutions and the individuals that form the societal establishment is thus characteristic of populists. In this regard, populists direct their focus toward established parties, parliaments and politicians as typical representatives of the political establishment. Critical attitudes toward the media, the European Union (EU), and the constitutional state also fall into this anti-establishment dimension. The second dimension of populism is characterized by anti-pluralistic aspects. Starting from the assumption of an alleged general popular will, the institutions and procedures of pluralistic consensus formation and decision-making are rejected. Instead, following from its third dimension, populism demands that politics should be a direct expression of the will of the people.

Thus, populism is neither primarily “left” nor “right.” It conceives of societal disputes as conflicts between the “one” people and the “corrupt” political elite. Radical populists can be recognized by their calls for the overthrow of the prevail-

ing political order, so as to strengthen the influence of the popular will. In addition, they call for radical reforms to the political system, and claim that they alone represent the true will of the public. In its moderate variant, populism grapples critically with established democratic institutions, and desires more direct citizen participation as well as greater consideration of citizen interests in the course of political decision-making.

Radical populism questions the established institutions of liberal democracy, and can become a threat to democracy itself. Moderate populism serves as a constant companion of democracy, potentially increasing its responsiveness and improving its functioning.

How populist are the Germans according to these criteria? How radical or moderate is their populism, and how left- or right-wing is it?

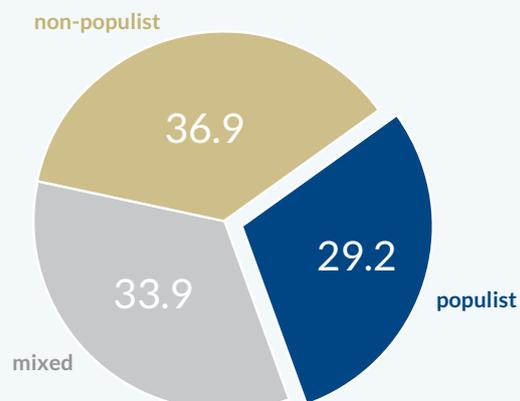
How populist are the Germans?

Populist attitudes are widespread in Germany, but are not associated with radical criticism of the system. Moreover, they tend to be overstated in surveys. A total of nearly three out of 10 (29.2%) eligible voters fundamentally agree with populist statements, and are thus inclined toward populism. As is true of electoral participation, the distribution of populist attitudes in the German electorate is socially divided; among those with a lower level of formal education and a lower income, the proportion of populists is greater. As a result, non-voters (of whom 36.4 percent hold populist views) are also more likely to be populist-inclined than voters (of whom 26.3 percent are populist).

Populist attitudes are to be found across the entire left-right ideological spectrum. More than one-third of all populist voters in Germany (11.2 percent of all eligible voters) locate themselves in the political center. Proportionately, however, people with right-wing political attitudes more often hold populist views than do people from the left side of the spectrum or the political center. In Germany, as in other countries, populist voters advocate the “pro-popular-sovereignty,” “anti-establishment” and “anti-pluralism” positions typical of populism. However, the great majority of them do not reject either democracy as a form of government or the EU; instead, they offer criticisms of the way these systems currently function. Most populists in Germany are not enemies of democracy, but are rather disappointed democrats.

How populist are the Germans?

As percentages



Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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In addition, many people exaggerate their own populism. People with high levels of education in particular represent themselves in surveys as being more populist than their true attitudes would indicate. In this regard, “true” populism appears in the run-up to the 2017 federal election to be less pronounced than the “expressive” populism measured in surveys.

Populism in the election campaign

Averaged across all eligible voters, the positions of “more Europe,” “more redistribution” and “fewer refugees” currently have the greatest potential to convince voters to support political candidates. Other issues which are often popular in election campaigns such as environmental protection or economic growth are clearly lagging behind. Globalization, too, seems not to be a mobilizing topic for voters in Germany in this election year. Similarly, typical generic populist priorities such as “combating corruption” and “more direct democracy” are not decisive for most voters.

In Germany, the typically populist call to “overthrow the political elites” even has a clearly negative impact on political candidates’ electoral prospects among voters. Thus, the political climate in the run-up to the federal election is quite far from being a “populist moment.”

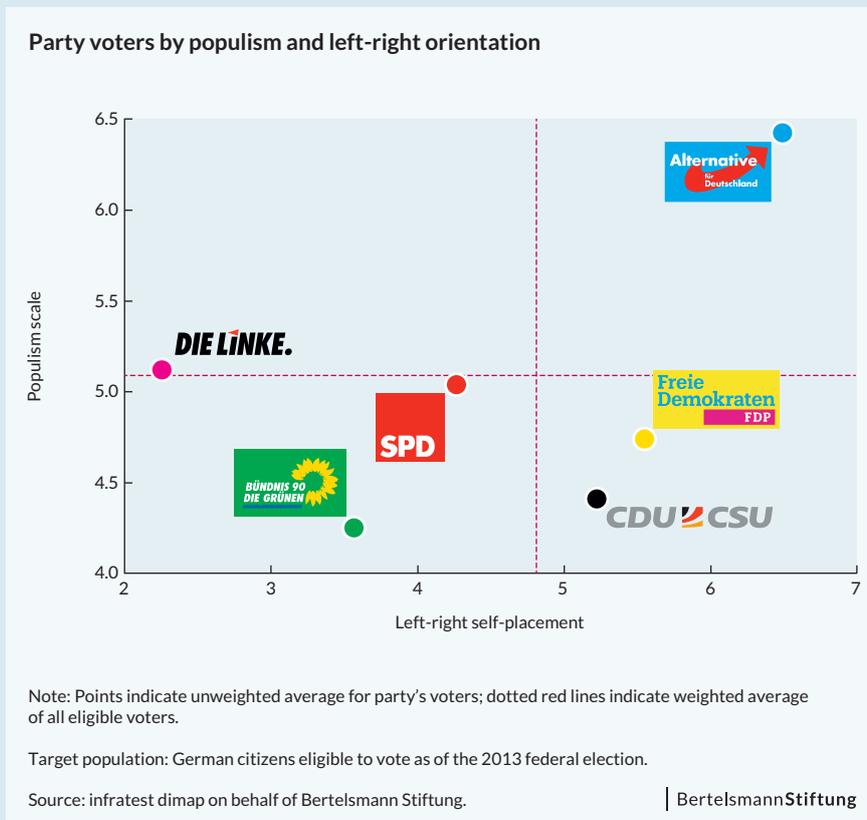
In the 2017 election year, refugee policy remains a key electoral factor for all voters. The two major parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, as well the Greens, Die Linke and the FDP, all show a similar pattern. While their voters are against the admission of a “great many” refugees, the demand for further curtailment of the currently moderate immigration flows does not lead them to show greater support. The voters of both major parties react to the admission of only “some” new refugees nearly as positively as to the call for deportations. For the CDU/CSU, adopting right-wing populist demands for deportations would thus do as little to solidify support among the party’s own voters as it would for the SPD.

This is quite different for AfD voters. Their mobilization profile is more onesidedly focused than that of any other party’s voters. In the 2017 election year, an anti-refugee right-wing populism is the formula for AfD voter mobilization.

Populism at the ballot box

Populist attitudes are also associated with Germans’ voting behavior in the 2017 election year. Populist and non-populist voters sympathize and identify with the parties in very different ways. And they also vote differently.

The party with the most non-populist voters is the CDU, even in their electoral coalition with the CSU. Among wholly non-populist voters, the Union (as the two parties are collectively known) achieves a vote share of up to 60 percent. Among right-of-center non-populist voters, the Union even attains a two-thirds majority.



In contrast to the CDU/CSU, the SPD is roughly equally strong among populists and non-populists. It achieves its best results, at about 50 percent, among left-of-center populists and non-populists alike. Die Linke, too, is about as strong among populists as among non-populists; however, it attracts almost exclusively voters from the left of center. On the basis of its voters, Die Linke is thus a typical left-wing party, but is not unambiguously populist.

By contrast, the AfD is clearly a right-wing populist party. In the extreme right-wing populist segment, it attracts around 60 percent of voters. This is its unique feature, and accords with its electoral program and candidates. It also garners a share of around 10 percent to 20 percent among extreme right-wing non-populists, but in the political center and the left virtually nobody votes for the AfD.

The Green Party represents a clear antithesis to this pattern. It is strongest among left-of-center non-populist voters. In this segment, it attracts around 15 percent of all voters, while drawing less support from among populists. The FDP wins votes disproportionately often from non-populist voters right of the political center, but less so from right-leaning populists.

1. How populist are the Germans?

The extent and profile of populist attitudes in the German electorate before the 2017 federal election

Populist attitudes are widespread in Germany, but are not associated with radical criticism of the system, and tend to be overstated in surveys. Among those eligible to vote, almost three in 10 (29.2%) fundamentally agree with populist statements, and are thus inclined toward populism. As is true of electoral participation, the distribution of populist attitudes in the German electorate is also socially divided; among those with a lower level of formal education and a lower income, the proportion of populists is greater. Thus, 36.4% of non-voters hold populist views, in comparison with 26.3% of voters. Populist attitudes can be found across the entire left-right ideological spectrum. More than one-third of all populist-minded voters in Germany (11.2% of all those eligible to vote) locate themselves in the political center. Proportionately, however, people with right-wing political attitudes more often

hold populist views than do people from the left side of the spectrum or from the political center. As is typical of populism in other countries, populist voters in Germany call for the “sovereignty of the people,” and take up “anti-establishment” and “anti-pluralist” positions. However, the great majority of them do not reject either democracy as a system or the European Union (EU), but rather criticize how they currently function.

Moreover, many people overstate their own populism. People with higher levels of education, in particular, present themselves in surveys as being more populist than their true attitudes would indicate. In this regard, the level of “true” populism before the 2017 federal election appears to be less pronounced than the level of “expressive” populism captured in surveys.

What is populism?

In public discourse, populism is a capricious term, ambiguous and overlaid with multiple meanings. Politicians, parties and voters are frequently referred to as “populists,” “right-wing populists” or “left-wing populists.” Since the election of Donald Trump, commentators have spoken of a new “age of populism.” A populist future is projected even for the liberal representative democracies of the West. Populism seems to have become the defining trait of democracy in the 21st century.

But what is populism in the first place? How can it be defined? And (how) can populism be empirically measured? How can surveys be used to ascertain the degree of populism in the German population?

Populism researcher Cas Mudde defines populism as an “*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*” (Mudde 2004: 543). At the center of this definition is “the people,” and the demand for their direct and unmediated rule, or so-called popular sovereignty (Mair 2002, Meny and Surel 2002). This is the core idea of populism. A second aspect is criticism of political elites, the “establishment,” exemplified by the established parties and politicians, as the typical political elite which populism regards as corrupt (see, for example, Müller 2016).

A third aspect is the notion of homogeneity, both within the political elite and within the people, each of which are seen as homogeneous units, with no differentiation of groups or individuals (see e.g., Müller 2016; Mudde 2007). Populism conceives of social disputes as conflicts between “the” good people and “the” corrupt establishment.

Agreement with these three aspects can also be measured in surveys in order to determine the populist attitudes of respondents. The more voters support statements and positions that are “pro-popular sovereignty,” “anti-establishment” and “anti-pluralism,” the more populist they are. Radical populists demand that power be taken from the ruling politicians in order to strengthen the influence of the popular will. They advocate far-reaching reforms of the political system, and as politicians, assert that they alone represent the true will of the people. In its moderate variant, populism grapples critically with the established democratic institutions, and desires more direct citizen participation as well as greater consideration of citizens’ interests in the course of political decision-making.

Populism thus concerns itself above all with the political system and its restructuring, and not primarily with “traditional” policies, or “left-wing” or “right-wing” policy programs. Instead, as a “thin ideology,” populism can be associated with a variety of different political programs (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Stanley 2008).

How populist are the Germans according to these criteria? How radical or moderate is their populism, and do they associate it with left-wing or right-wing policy preferences?

The degree of populist attitudes is measured in this study on the basis of agreement with the following eight typically populist opinions:

FIGURE 1 **What is populism?**

Below are various statements on politics and society. For each statement, please indicate the degree to which you agree:

The people are often in agreement but the politicians pursue quite different goals.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
Political parties only want peoples' votes but do not care about their opinion.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
The political differences between the elite and the people are much greater than the differences among the people.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
Important questions should not be decided by parliament but by popular referendums.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
The politicians in the German parliament need to follow the will of the people.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
The people in Germany agree, on principle, about what should happen politically.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree
What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.		strongly agree	mostly agree	mostly disagree	strongly disagree

Note: Own items as well as items drawn from Hawkins et al. (2012) and Akkerman et al. (2013).

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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These and similar items have been developed in a series of studies, and have previously been used to measure populist attitudes in various countries (see e.g., Akkerman et al. 2013; Hawkins et al. 2012). The first four statements stand for the antagonism between political elites and citizens. They express the "anti-establishment" aspect of populist ideology. By contrast, the last four statements reflect the idea of the public as a homogeneous unit. They express the "anti-pluralism" aspect of populism. Statements 2, 5 and 6 additionally emphasize the desire for direct popular rule through referendums or representation by "ordinary people." They relate to the "pro-popular sovereignty" aspect of populism.

In this study, respondents who responded with “strongly agree” or “mostly agree” to all eight statements are designated as *populist*. Respondents who responded to at least one statement with “strongly disagree,” or alternatively responded to half of the eight statements with “mostly disagree,” are by contrast designated as *non-populist*. All other respondents are neither populist nor non-populist, and fall into the category of “mixed attitude.” This definition refers to only those respondents as “populists” who tend to agree with all aspects of populism.

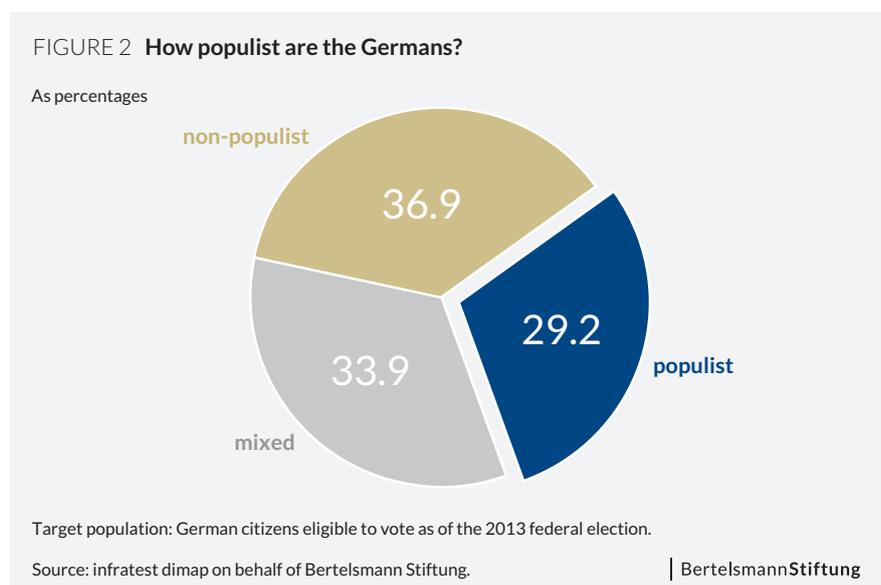
In addition, we measure survey respondents’ ideological left-right orientations. Specifically, we draw on respondents’ own self-assessments, using an ideological left-right scale on which they can locate their own personal position from 0 to 10, in which 0 means “left” and 10 “right.”

These measures of populism and left-right orientation allow us to depict the extent and the profile of populist attitudes in the run-up to the 2017 federal election.

Populist attitudes are widespread

Many German voters are inclined toward populism. Nearly three out of 10 (29.2%) of all those eligible to vote respond to all of the populist statements with either “strongly agree” or “mostly agree.” A relative majority of the electorate (36.9%), by contrast, is non-populist according to our definition. Another third of eligible voters can be assigned to neither of the two groups on the basis of their populist attitudes, and thus are neither explicitly populist nor explicitly non-populist (“mixed”).

This shows that although populist attitudes are widespread among the electorate, more than two-thirds of all those eligible to vote are either not populist, or only partly populist. The majority of eligible voters in Germany are thus, in the sense of our definition, to be described as holding non-populist or at least not explicitly populist views. Nevertheless, nearly 30 percent of all those eligible to vote in the 2013 federal election agree with the general populist criticism of the established



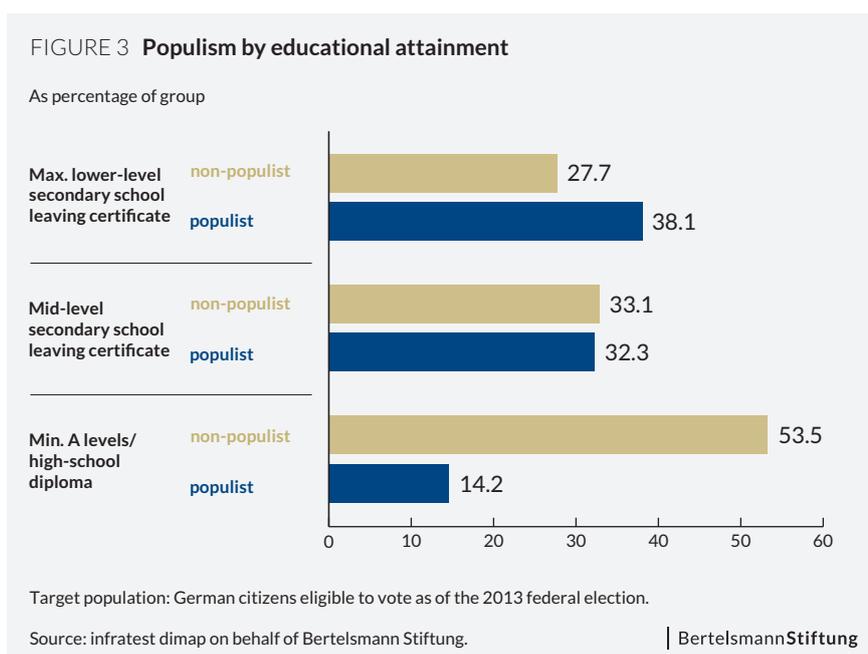
parties and politicians, and indicate substantial support for the idea of “the” popular will and unmediated popular power.

Note that this says nothing about the positioning of populist voters on the scale of left-right ideological orientation. Our general populist statements do not measure either right-wing or left-wing populism. Moreover, they do not by themselves assess the moderate or radical character of populist attitudes. They primarily show merely that just under one-third of the electorate in Germany advocate generally formulated populist positions with respect to the established political system, assert a tendency toward antagonism between the public and the parties and politicians, regard politics in Germany as being insufficiently responsive, and desire more direct political influence and decision-making power for the public.

Socially divided populism

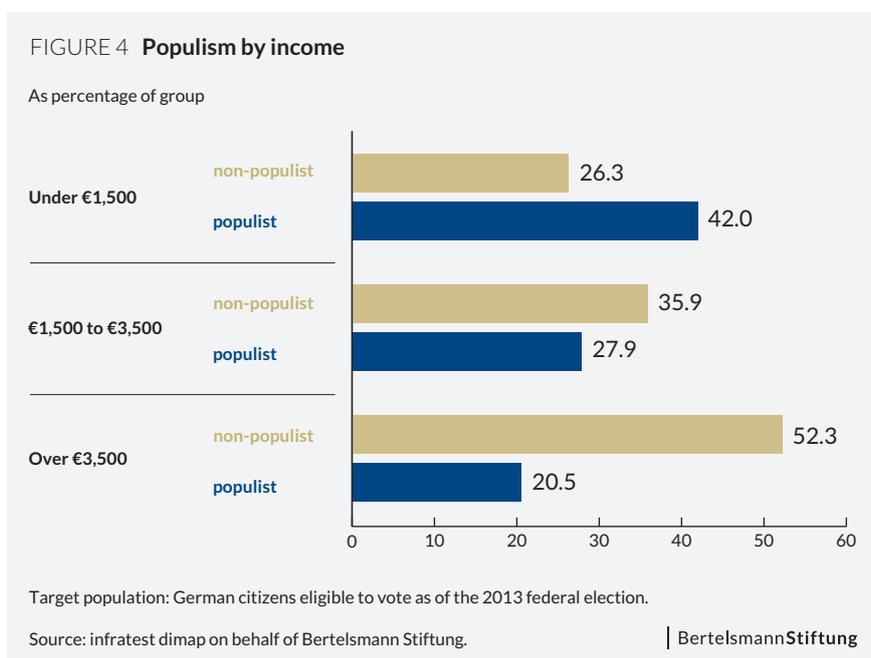
How are populist attitudes distributed across various social groups defined by education, income, age and gender? In summary, it appears that the frequency of populist attitudes decreases among the highly educated and high income respondents, while differences in age and gender have minimal significance at most.

The most significant differences are those associated with respondents' formal educational attainment. While only a very small share of voters (14.2%) with a school-leaving certificate qualifying them to apply for higher education (such as “Abitur” or “FH-Reife”) hold populist views, this share is significantly greater among those with a lower educational attainment. Even among those with middle-level educational qualifications, the share of populist respondents is 32.3 percent, which is slightly above the average in the electorate (29.2%). Among members of the electorate with the lowest levels of formal education, nearly four in 10 people (38.1%) are inclined toward populism.



Conversely, the following relationship emerges between non-populist attitudes and the three groups of educational attainment: while more than five out of 10 (53.5%) of those with high levels of formal education are non-populists, the proportion of non-populist people in the group of those with middle-level educational degrees is slightly below average at just 33.1 percent, and in the group with the lowest formal educational attainment it is only a little more than a quarter (27.7%).

A similar, socially divided picture appears when we compare different income groups. While the percentage of populists significantly declines with rising incomes, the reverse relationship appears with regard to the share of those that reject populism: the higher the income, the higher the proportion of non-populists.



While in the top group of post-tax household incomes above €3,500, more than half (52.3%) of the respondents are non-populists, the share of populists in this income group is a third lower than among all eligible voters (29.2%) at just 20.5 percent. In the middle-income group, with net household incomes of between €1,500 and €3,500 per month, the percentage of non-populists falls to just over one-third (35.9%), while the proportion of populists at 27.9 percent is only slightly less than the overall average.

Social divisions in populist attitudes become most apparent when considering the group of low earners, with net household incomes of less than €1,500. In this group, the proportion of non-populist people, at just over one-quarter (26.3%), is only half as large as in the top income group. At the same time, more than four out of 10 low earners (42%) appear to be populist, in contrast to just half that amount in the highest income group.

In contrast to education and income levels, respondents' age and gender were not associated with any significant differences with regard to the distribution of

populist attitudes. Women (31.2%) are slightly more populist than men (27.1%), and conversely men are somewhat more frequently non-populist (39.8%) than women (34.2%). By age group, individuals 65 years old or more (28.2%) as well as younger people up to the age of 39 (26.6%) are slightly less populist than are 40- to 64-year-olds (31.2%). Conversely, the younger group (40.5%) appears to be slightly more non-populist than the middle-aged group (36.8%) or the older group (34.6%). However, these differences according to age and gender are not statistically significant and could also have emerged randomly in the survey results.

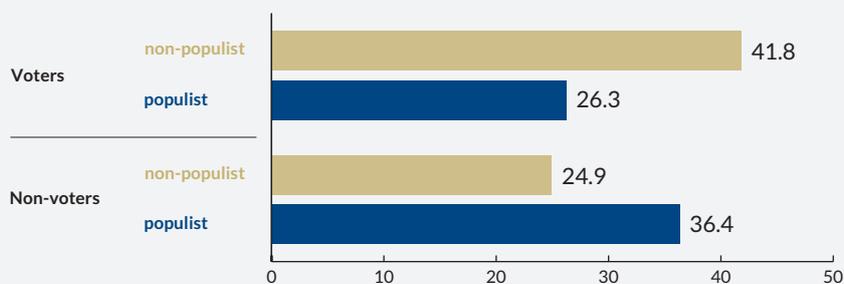
The overall picture is one of a socially divided distribution of populist attitudes in Germany; the lower the highest educational attainment and the lower the income, the greater the proportion of populists. Similarly, the higher the level of formal education attained and the higher the income, the larger the share of non-populists. Just as previous studies by the Bertelsmann Stiftung have shown for voter participation (see e.g. “Divided Democracy” and “Precarious Polls”), the distribution of populist attitudes in Germany is likewise socially stratified.

Non-voters are more populist than voters

This pattern of socially divided electoral participation and socially divided populism is also confirmed in the distribution of populist attitudes among voters and non-voters. Even independently of their social status, voters are less populist than non-voters. Moreover, the socially divided nature of electoral participation contributes to an even clearer difference in the distribution of populist attitudes: voters hold non-populist views considerably more often than non-voters. These figures are particularly significant because a majority of our respondents were interviewed regarding their electoral participation directly after the 2013 federal election, and substantially more non-voters were polled than is normally the case in comparable surveys. Therefore, it is highly likely that the numerous non-voters surveyed are eligible voters who, in fact, did not participate in the 2013 federal election, and thus represent a sufficient number of genuine non-voters.

FIGURE 5 Populism among voters and non-voters

As percentage of group



Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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While more than four out of 10 voters (41.8%) are non-populist, the proportion among non-voters is only one-quarter (24.9%). Conversely, 36.4 percent of non-voters are populist, compared with just over one-quarter (26.3%) of voters. Populist attitudes are therefore associated with electoral behavior, although it cannot be said whether populist attitudes make people less likely to vote, or whether the refusal to vote encourages the formation of populist views. Both directions of influence are conceivable and plausible. However, our figures show clearly that there is an association, and that non-voters in Germany are significantly more populist than voters.

How populist is the political center?

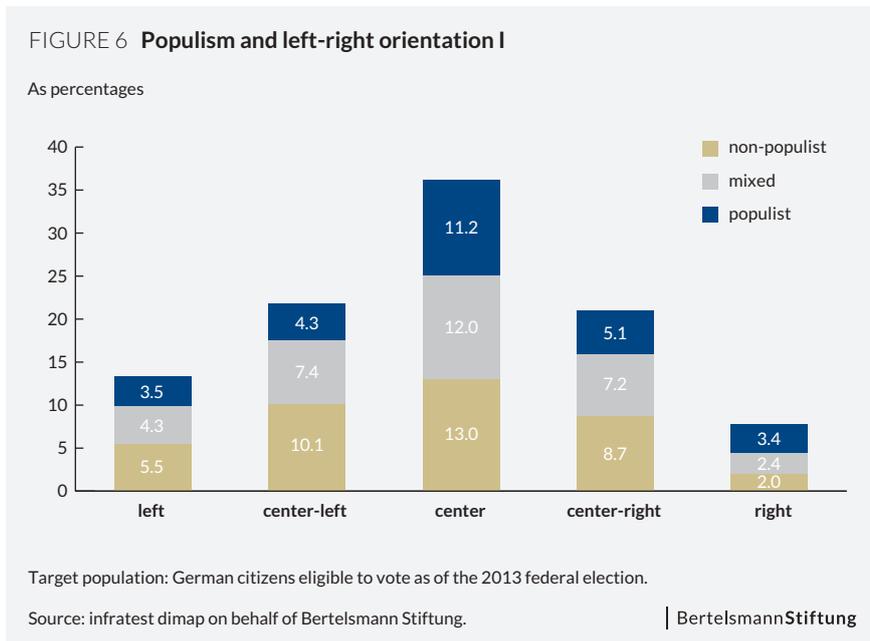
Although in the research literature, populism as a concept is primarily discussed independently of left-right ideological orientations (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Stanley 2008), in public discourse, one often hears of “right-wing populism,” “left-wing populism” and a “populism of the political center.” But how do we distinguish between populist attitudes according to ideological left-right orientation? And what is the situation within the German electorate? Are members of the electorate who hold populist attitudes more often to be found on the left, the right or in the political center?

To answer these questions in this study, we use respondents’ self-placement on a left-right ideological scale. Specifically, we asked all participants: *“In politics, one speaks of left and right. What is your position? Please indicate your personal standpoint on a scale of 0 to 10. ‘0’ refers to ‘left,’ and ‘10’ indicates ‘right.’ What number best reflects your standpoint?”* To enable easy consideration of the relationships between this self-placement and populist attitudes, we subdivided the left-right scale into five groups: respondents with 0, 1 or 2 as a self-placement we refer to as “left,” those with 3 or 4 as “center-left,” those with 5 as “center,” those with 6 or 7 as “center-right,” and respondents with 8, 9 or 10 as “right.” Now we can analyze how many respondents in each of the various categories are inclined toward populism. The figure (Figure 6) shows the left-right distribution for all eligible voters.

Here, it emerges that people with populist attitudes can be found across the entire left-right ideological spectrum. Populist attitudes within the electorate are not exclusively “left,” “right” or “centrist;” but rather fall across all five ideological categories, from the far left through the political center all the way to the far right position. The numerically largest group of populist eligible voters see themselves as positioned in the political center: more than one-tenth (11.2%) of eligible voters are populist and situate themselves in the political center.

If each of the sets of two groups to the left and right of center are combined, nearly identical proportions of center-left and left-oriented populists (7.8%) and center-right and right-oriented populists (8.5%) emerge. Furthermore, the shares of decidedly left-wing populists (3.5%) and decidedly right-wing populists (3.4%) are also of nearly identical size.

Not only are the largest number of populists to be found in the political center, but also the numerically largest group of non-populists: 13 percent of all eligible voters hold non-populist views, and an additional 12 percent fall at least into the



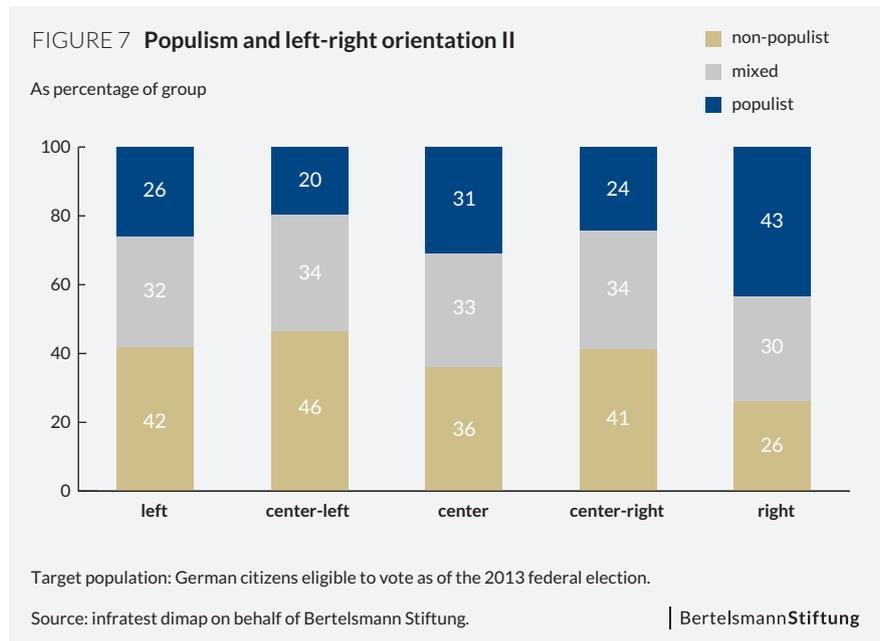
“mixed opinion” category. Thus, almost a quarter of the entire electorate is both at least not explicitly populist and situated in the political center.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the numerically largest group of populists see themselves as being positioned in the political center. Therefore, even in Germany’s political center, generally populist attitudes are widespread. However, in interpreting these figures, it should also be remembered that respondents place themselves on the ideological spectrum, and their understanding of what the individual scale points actually mean is likely to vary.

In addition, there may be a negative public image of the “right” or of “right-wing extremists” in Germany, which means that respondents might be hesitant to position themselves at the far right, and instead prefer to categorize themselves in surveys as falling into the political center. An additional important point in interpreting the numerically high share of populist centrists is therefore the comparison between the absolute sizes of the five ideological groups. A little more than one-third of all eligible voters position themselves politically as centrists. The groups on the far left (13.3%) and the far right (7.8%) are by contrast comparatively small. If one considers not the absolute figures and shares of the entire electorate, but the relative proportions of populists within each ideological group, a different picture emerges.

How populist are “left” and “right?”

It then becomes evident that the proportion of populist voters at the far-right end of the spectrum is significantly higher than on the left side of the spectrum or in the political center. While only three out of ten eligible voters (31%) in the center are populist, this is true of only one-quarter (26%) of eligible voters on the far left. However, on the far-right side of the spectrum, the proportion of populists is



considerably higher, at more than four out of ten (43%) of all people in this group. At the same time, the proportion of non-populist people on the right side of the spectrum is just over a quarter (26%) and therefore significantly smaller than the share of non-populists in the center (36%) and on the left side of the spectrum (42%).

This shows that there is a disproportionate clustering of populist attitudes among people with a right-leaning ideological orientation. This intensified association between right-leaning ideological orientations and populist attitudes also shows itself in a slightly higher statistical mean on the self-placement left-right scale for populist members of the electorate (5.0) than for their non-populist counterparts (4.6). While this is a small difference, it proves to be statistically significant. The tendency for populist attitudes to be associated with a more right-wing ideological orientation in Germany is thus not particularly pronounced, but is statistically supported.

“Moderate” populism predominates

However, the left-right orientations associated with German populist attitudes do not yet allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the moderate or radical character of populism in Germany. Important indicators here include the degree of approval or rejection of democracy as a political system on the one hand, and of its functioning in reality on the other.

Radical populism expands its criticism of the functioning of democracy into a fundamental criticism of democracy as a system of government. Moderate populism distinguishes more strongly between specific criticism of democracy’s current functioning and support for democracy as a system independent of this criticism. Due to populism’s focus on the sovereignty of the people, it also fundamen-

tally supports an important promise of democracy, namely the idea of direct and spontaneous self-government by the people (“*demos*”), unmediated and free of restrictions (Canovan 1999, 2002).

This promise stands in strong tension with the “pragmatic” face of democracy as a system of institutions and practices that – despite enabling peaceful conflict-solving – separates citizens from political decision-making processes through its institutions (Canovan 1999: 10). Moderate populism therefore welcomes democracy as a form of government or state in which the power derives from the people, but criticizes the deficient functioning of democracy when its institutions (apparently) restrict popular sovereignty.

In order to learn more about the manifestations of populism in Germany, we consider the attitudes toward democracy of populist and non-populist voters. Here we distinguish between “satisfaction with the functioning of democracy” in Germany and support for democracy as a political system (“democracy as the best political system”). Both orientations are forms of system support (Easton 1975; Norris 2011), and should as such contribute to the legitimation of the political system; a high degree of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and support for democracy as a political system lead to a situation in which citizens accept the exercise of power through the political system, regarding it as rightful and legitimate.

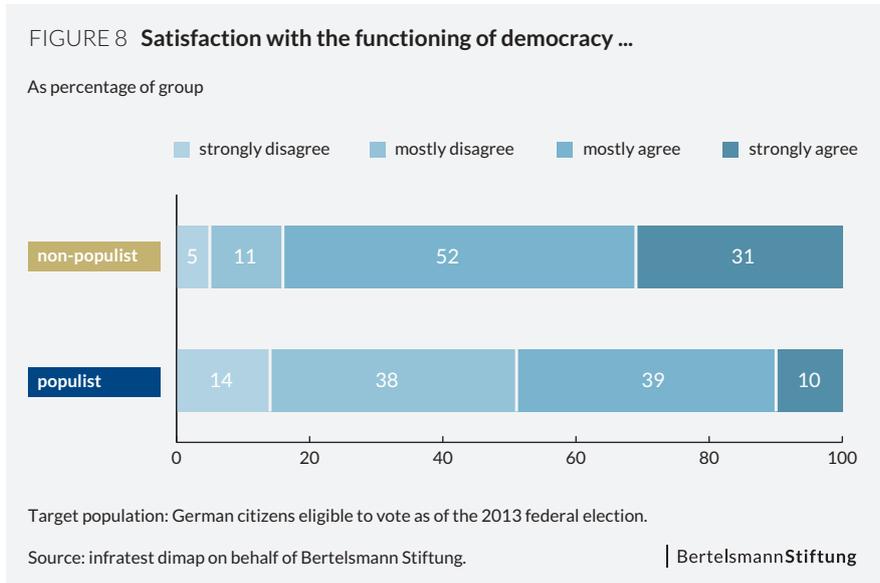
Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is often seen as the more “specific” form of system support, which is to a large extent driven by assessment of the system’s current performance. By contrast, support for democracy as a system is a more “diffuse” form of system support, which does not change in the short-term, but if established, is more durable and stable over time – that is, it is less dependent on current performance and more strongly determined, for instance, by socialization in childhood (Easton 1975; Norris 2011).

Populists are disappointed democrats, but not enemies of democracy

Do populists support democracy as a political system less than non-populists? How strong is their criticism of the functioning of democracy, and of the system itself?

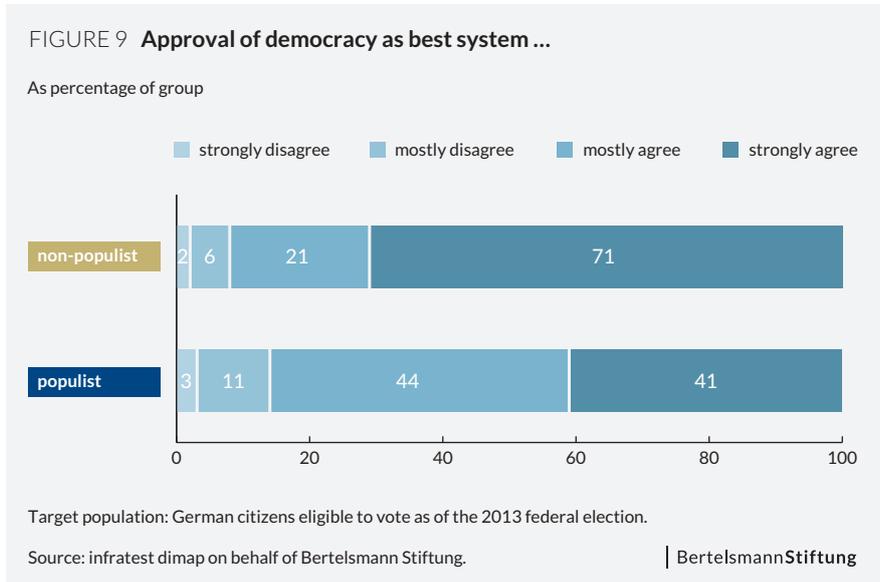
To answer these questions, we initially consider the degree of satisfaction with the current functioning of democracy in Germany. In this regard, how do the opinions of eligible voters with and without populist attitudes differ?

Here, it is clear that populist members of the electorate are considerably more dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy than non-populists. While more than eight out of 10 (83%) of all non-populist members of the electorate say they “mostly agree” or even “strongly agree” that they are satisfied, this is true of only half (49%) of all populists. A near-majority of populists say they “mostly disagree” or “strongly disagree” when asked whether they are satisfied with the current functioning of democracy.



However, support for democracy as the “best political system” shows a wholly different picture. To be sure, populists here show a lower level of system support than non-populists. However, the differences between people with and without populist attitudes are significantly smaller than for satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, and are not statistically significant.

Overall, both groups show a very high level of support for democracy as the best political system, regardless of populist attitudes. A little more than nine out of ten (92%) non-populist eligible voters, and considerably more than eight out of ten (85%) populist eligible voters agree that democracy is the best political system. Significant differences appear only in the degree of agreement; while among the non-populist people, 71 percent “strongly agree” and 21 percent “mostly agree”



that democracy is the best system, only 41 percent of populists “mostly agree” and 44 percent “mostly agree.”

Yet despite this difference in detail, a significantly different picture emerges with regard to system satisfaction than with respect to current functional deficits. It is also noteworthy that only a vanishingly small minority of 2 percent of all non-populist and 3 percent of all populist eligible voters say they “strongly disagree” with the statement that democracy is the best political system.

In summary, it can be said that most populists in Germany are not enemies of democracy, but are rather disappointed democrats. The populist criticism of democracy is by no means a radical criticism of the system itself. Instead, it is a rather moderate criticism aimed at the perceived functional deficits of the democracy which actually exists in Germany. Populists in Germany are certainly much more dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy, but they have not – or at least not yet – turned their backs on democracy as a political system.

This is less surprising when one considers that populism and democracy share the core idea of popular sovereignty, even if this is not always clearly defined. A moderate populism thus need not necessarily be dangerous or damaging for a healthy democracy. As a critical companion of democracy, populism can also serve as an early-warning mechanism pointing to problems and functional deficiencies in a democracy (e.g., corruption, lack of responsiveness), and lead to corresponding adjustments (Canovan 1999: 14-16).

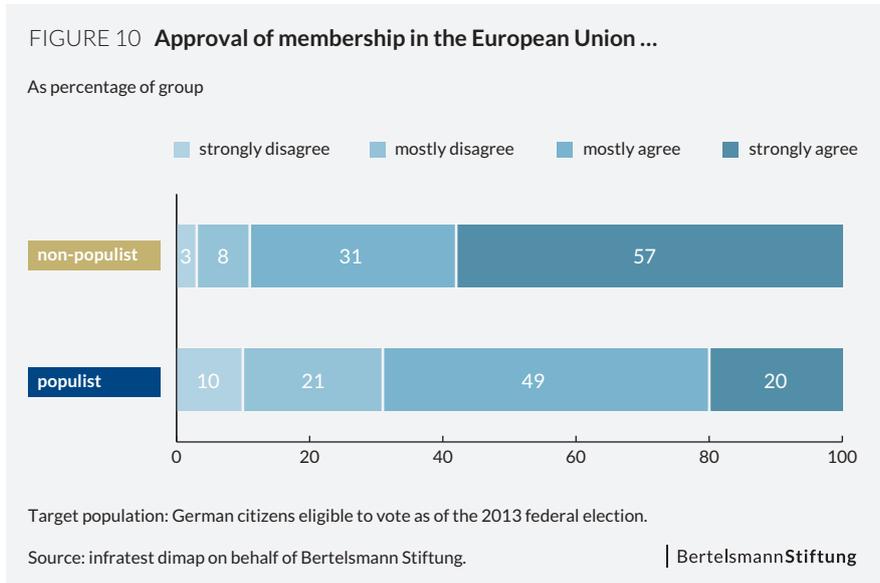
Populists want less Europe, but not an exit from the EU

A similar picture also emerges when it comes to approval of the European Union (EU) and satisfaction with its functioning. Here too, the view is very widespread that populists are per se opposed to European integration, and would prefer to leave the EU. For some of the radical populist movements in other European countries, such as the Front National in France and the UK Independence Party in the United Kingdom, this may in fact be true.

But is this also true of populism in Germany? Do populists here reject the EU as a system? Or do we find further confirmation of the impression that populism in Germany is associated with more moderate attitudes, which focus more on the current functioning of the EU and the level of European integration?

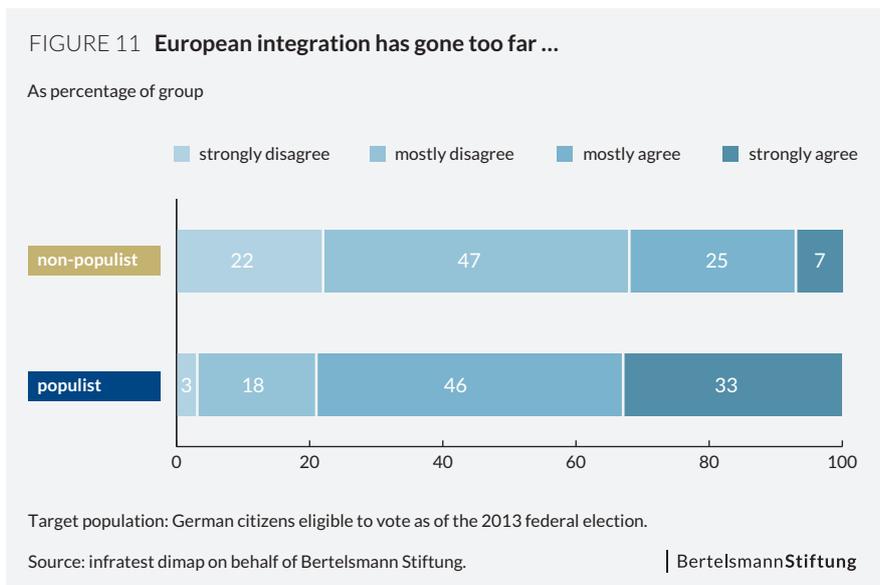
To resolve these questions, we consider support for EU membership on the one hand, and the opinion of respondents on deepened integration on the other. Both approaches clearly show that populists in Germany are indeed significantly more skeptical of European integration than are non-populists. Nonetheless, German populists' criticisms of Europe do not represent a fundamental criticism of the EU as such. A considerable majority of populists see Germany's EU membership as a good thing.

While nearly nine out of 10 (88%) non-populist eligible voters say they “strongly agree” or at least “mostly agree” that Germany's EU membership is a good thing, nearly seven out of 10 (69%) populists agree. Less than one-third of all popu-



list members of the electorate say they “strongly disagree” or “mostly disagree” with the statement that Germany’s EU membership is a good thing. The chief differences again lie in the degree of agreement: among the non-populists, 57 percent “strongly agree” with the statement, and 31 percent only “mostly agree.” Among the populists, only 20 percent “strongly agree,” while 49 percent only “mostly agree.” But this does not change the fact that even among populists, a large majority are in favor of Germany’s EU membership.

However, another picture emerges when we ask about the extent of European integration. Here, most populists in Germany believe that European integration has gone too far, while the non-populists do not see it in this way.



While only just under a third (32%) of non-populists “strongly agree” or “mostly agree” that European unification has gone too far, and that they would prefer “less” rather than “more” Europe in the future, the populists see this entirely differently. Here, nearly eight out of ten (79%) share this assessment. The populist criticism of European integration thus clearly opposes the degree of integration, but not (yet) the EU as such. German populists’ criticism of Europe, like their criticism of democracy, currently remains rather moderate. The populists do not demand that Germany withdraw from the EU, but simply criticize the degree and intensity of integration, and thus want somewhat less rather than more communitarization in Europe, but without calling the EU as such into question.

How socially (un)desirable are populist attitudes?

Our results thus far show that populist attitudes are widespread even in Germany – and not simply on the right and left margins of the ideological spectrum, but also squarely in the political center. Upon closer examination, this broad support for populism is not surprising; populism is linked to many “popular” demands and ideas, such as the strengthening of popular sovereignty and citizens’ influence on policy, the fight against corrupt elites, and the appealing idea of belonging to a greater whole in the form of the “people.”

None of this is in any way condemned by society at large. On the contrary, is it socially acceptable to admit one would rather be represented by professional politicians than by ordinary citizens, or that one opposes popular referendums? Can one openly confess that one thinks politicians should not follow the will of the people? The popularity of populism could lead to a situation in which survey respondents support populist statements in the belief that this is “socially desirable” and makes them “look good” (see e.g., Krumpal 2013). In order to meet supposed expectations, respondents could overstate their expressed (“expressive”) populism relative to their “true” populist convictions.

Survey research is familiar with such effects of social desirability, which have been reported, for example, on questions of electoral participation (Bernstein 2001; Holbrook and Krosnick 2010; Silver et al. 1986) or with regard to attitudes toward migrants (Janus 2010). Non-voting and hostility toward migrants are regarded by many of us as socially undesirable. Well-educated people in particular recognize such expectations and answer surveys strategically, while people with lower levels of education reveal their true attitudes and behaviors more honestly (Bernstein 2001; Janus 2010; Silver et al. 1986). Are such effects of social desirability also to be found for populist attitudes? Are there groups that may represent themselves as more or less populist in surveys, because they feel this to be socially appropriate?

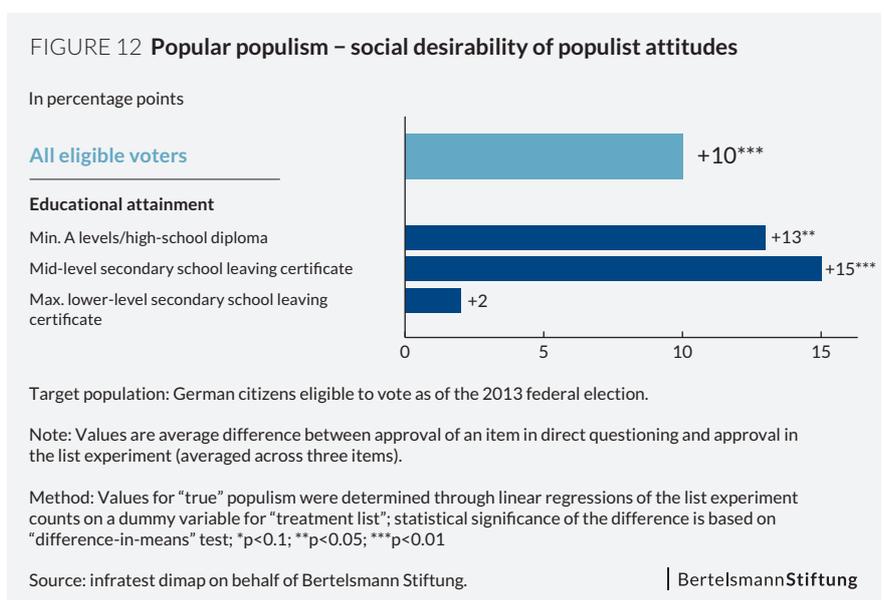
In this study, we investigate these questions using list experiments (Blair and Imai 2012; Corstange 2009; Glynn 2013). A list experiment enables a better approximation of “true” preferences and attitudes, as respondents do not openly express their support for a populist statement, as in a normal survey. Instead, along with the populist statement, we present the respondents with a series of additional statements, and simply ask them *how many* of the statements they agree with.

Thus, the respondents in a list experiment do not have to openly approve a populist statement, but do so only in a covert manner, in the form of abstract and generalized agreement to an entire bundle of statements that contains the populist statement alongside statements on other issues. Nevertheless, we can statistically compute the degree of approval for the populist statement, because we ask a second group of respondents to assess only the statements on other issues, without the populist statement, and thus know what share of approval is due to the bundle of statements on other issues.

This form of indirect, covert approval is significantly better suited to revealing and avoiding the effects of social desirability.

Populism is overreported in surveys

The results of our list experiments show that populist attitudes are overreported in surveys (Neuner and Wrátil 2017). This is particularly true for well-educated people. Their “true” level of populism is significantly lower than their “expressive” populism as voiced openly in surveys. However, this effect decreases with the level of formal education. In the group of people with the least formal education, this overreporting effect disappears almost completely. In the group of the less educated, therefore, the “expressive” populism corresponds to the “true” populism, while this is not the case among those with higher levels of formal education.



Among all eligible voters, the degree of overreporting indicates an exaggeration effect of 10 percentage points. About one-tenth of eligible voters agree in surveys with a populist statement that they would not agree with covertly. Differentiating along the three education groups, it appears that almost no respondents (2 percent, not statistically significant) in the group with the lowest level of formal educational attainment overstate their “true” populism in surveys, while 15 per-

cent of those in the middle education group do so, along with 13 percent of all respondents in the group with the highest educational attainment.

Due to different survey and question designs, these results cannot be cross-referenced with or offset against our above-presented figures on the extent of populist attitudes. However, the effect and its direction are clear and statistically significant: the higher the level of formal education, the stronger the overstatement of one's own populist attitudes in surveys. This also indicates that because the highly educated tend to exaggerate their populism in surveys, the social divisions in "true" populism may be even stronger than those shown in "expressive" populism that we documented at the beginning of this chapter. Without a doubt, populist attitudes are found considerably less frequently among people with higher levels of education than among those with lower education levels.

Is this a populist moment?

How can these results be interpreted? Populist attitudes are widespread in Germany, and are regarded as more socially desirable than undesirable. This could be superficially interpreted as a sign of the high importance of populist attitudes and themes for Germans' electoral decisions, arousing recollections of the presidential election in the United States or the Brexit referendum. But is this an appropriate interpretation? Has the "populist moment" arrived in Germany, too? Will these widespread populist attitudes influence voting decisions in the 2017 election year?

We examine these questions in the second chapter of this study, which explicitly addresses the impact of various populist positions and issues on the electoral behavior of Germans in the run-up to the 2017 federal election.

2. Populism in the election campaign

Themes and positions driving populist and non-populist voter mobilization in the 2017 federal election

Averaged across all eligible voters, the positions of “more Europe,” “more redistribution” and “fewer refugees” currently have the greatest potential to convince voters to support political candidates. In terms of specific issue priorities, themes often popular in election campaigns such as environmental protection or economic growth are clearly lagging behind this year. Globalization also does not seem to be a mobilizing topic for voters in Germany in this election year. Similarly, typical generic populist priorities such as “combating corruption” and “more direct democracy” are not decisive for most voters.

In Germany, the typically populist call to “overthrow the political elites” even has a clearly negative impact on political candidates’ electoral prospects among voters. Thus, the political climate in the run-up to the federal election is far from being a “populist moment.”

Refugee policy remains a decisive campaign issue in the 2017 election year for all voters. Here, a similarity can be seen between the major parties – the CDU/CSU and the SPD – as well as the Greens, Die Linke and the FDP: their voters are certainly against the admission of “a great many” refugees, but are not moved to greater support for political candidates who demand further restrictions on the currently moderate immigration flows. The voters of both major parties respond to the admission of only “some” refugees nearly as positively as to the demand for deportations. For the CDU/CSU, adopting right-wing populist demands for deportations would thus do as little to solidify support among their own voters as it would for the SPD.

The picture for AfD (Alternative für Deutschland; Alternative for Germany) voters is entirely different. Their mobilization profile is more onesided than that of any other party’s voters: deporting “a great many” refugees from Germany is a position that mobilizes AfD voters to support political candidates in the 2017 election year.

Which issues determine vote choice?

In Germany, as in other countries, populist attitudes are widespread. But do they also drive voting decisions? Thus far, this study has determined only whether and how frequently populist attitudes are present in the German electorate, what socioeconomic and sociodemographic profile they have, and how they are distributed among all eligible voters (Chapter 1). However, this says nothing about whether and how such attitudes determine vote choice. Expressing a position for or against certain political attitudes and positions in surveys does not necessarily mean that one's own voting decisions will be driven by these attitudes. For example, someone could be in favor of environmental protection, but consider other issues to be more important. This voter would thus not base her concrete vote choice on her position on environmental protection, but rather on those issues and positions that she regards as being most important and electorally decisive. Thus, she will vote for a party or candidate that may be against more environmental protection but for withdrawal from the EU, for example, if she considers EU withdrawal to be more important and more decisive for her own vote choice than environmental protection.

What party or candidate priorities or positions thus make the difference? What resonates with voters particularly strongly in 2017? What is likely to guide their vote choice in the federal election? How dominant are populism and populist issues within this mix, and what non-populist themes and positions can the established parties use to counter populist mobilization?

To answer these questions, voters are often directly asked in surveys about the themes and preferences that are “most important” to them when choosing whom to vote for. But how biased are the answers to such direct questions regarding the “real” reasons behind vote choice? How socially desirable do answers become if respondents are expected to reveal the “true” motivations for their personal voting decisions in response to direct questions? And are respondents actually able to perceive correctly their own weighting of various competing topics and positions?

In order to minimize the possible biases produced by such direct questions, and approximate the “true” motives behind voting decisions as closely as possible, a “conjoint analysis” was carried out for this study (Hainmueller et al. 2014, 2015). In the context of research on electoral behavior, conjoint analyses do not investigate the motives behind individuals' voting decisions using direct questions about vote motivations, but rather through a series of concrete voting simulations. Thus, the respondents do not directly identify the “true” reasons behind their voting decision; rather, they primarily decide only between various programmatic bundles or packages in which, for example, various combinations of political positions relating to various issues are summarized.

Specifically, respondents are typically presented with several pairs of political candidates associated with different positions or characteristics, and asked to decide which of the candidates they would rather vote for (see, e.g., Carnes and Lupu 2016; Franchino and Zucchini 2015; Vivyan and Wagner 2016). Since the composition of the combinations of positions and characteristics is randomly determined, we can then statistically identify which positions have what kind of effect on vote choice.

Which issues influence voters in the 2017 election year?

In order to determine what is influencing voters' vote choice in the run-up to the 2017 federal election, we showed each of the respondents five pairs of possible candidates running in their constituency, and asked for each pair: *"If you had to decide between these two candidates in the September federal election, who would you vote for?"* Each candidate represented a combination of four different political positions and two key political priorities.

The positions appeared as concrete political statements on the topics of "Europe," "redistribution," "refugees" and "globalization." These four issues were then supplemented by two further statements on the key political priorities of the candidates (see Figure 13)¹, which also cover various populist priorities, ranging from support for direct democracy to overthrowing the political elite (see, e.g., Rooduijn 2014a). Thus, while the analysis does not include all possible political topics and priorities, it does at least offer an up-to-date and substantial selection.

The extent to which an individual political statement influences vote choice can be seen in the percentage changes in the support for a candidate in comparison to a candidate who represents a certain "basis position" or "basis priority." On the issue of "Europe," for example, the basis was defined as a candidate that supported Germany's withdrawal from the EU. Our results then show by how many percentage points a candidate could on average improve her results if she – instead of supporting Germany's withdrawal from the EU – supported weaker cooperation within the EU, stronger cooperation in the EU or even the development of the EU into a common state.

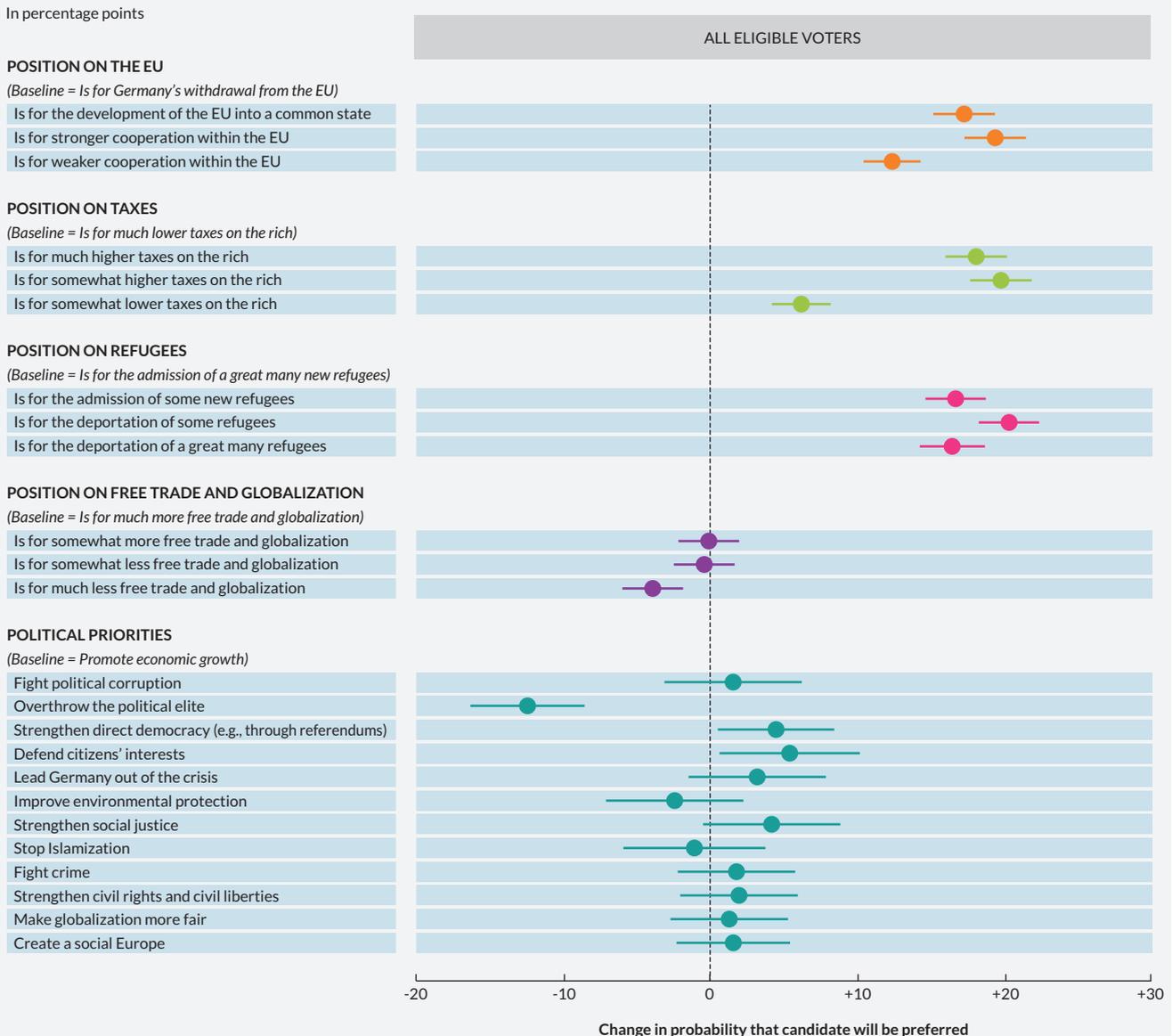
When interpreting the percentage points, however, it must be remembered that there are always only two candidates to choose from. The values thus do not refer to a competition between a larger number of candidates, as would be typical within most German constituencies; rather, they are only a comparison to a single "basis candidate" holding a "basis position" on the topic being considered, along with other random characteristics. Additionally, we provide no indication of the candidate's party affiliation, and thus do not know the influence of this factor on the choice.

On our graphs, the positive or negative effects of individual political positions on vote choice can be read from the points' deviation from the dotted baseline. The further the value of a particular political position falls from the baseline of the respective basis position, the more the vote share of a candidate changes as a result of this political position.

Figure 13, for example, shows that among all eligible voters, a candidate can improve her probability of being preferred to a basis candidate by 19 percentage points if she supports stronger cooperation within the EU instead of an exit from the EU. If the candidate instead supported only weaker cooperation within the EU, this would improve her results relative to a pro-withdrawal candidate by only a bit more than 12 percentage points.

¹ However, in this chapter we show only the results for the first of the two priorities.

FIGURE 13 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among all eligible voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

BertelsmannStiftung

In order to assist in interpreting the analysis results, the figures show so-called "confidence intervals" as horizontal lines in addition to the point values of the individual political positions. Every survey-based measurement is associated with uncertainties and errors and this is expressed by confidence intervals. If we collected our survey many times and calculated confidence intervals each time, 95 percent of these confidence intervals would contain the true effect of a position. Therefore, wide confidence intervals show that we are less certain about the size of the effect,

while narrow intervals indicate a precise measurement.

If the confidence interval does not intersect with the baseline, it can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that a positive or negative effect in comparison to the basis position in fact exists. If the confidence interval intersects with the zero line, on the other hand, there is a relatively high probability that the effects could have been randomly produced. The same is also true for the comparison of individual positions with each other: the more the confidence intervals overlap, the more likely it is that the differences are random.

The small difference between the positions of stronger cooperation and expansion of the EU into a common state is thus much more likely to have been randomly produced than the difference between these two positions and the position for only weaker cooperation in the EU, where there is no overlap of the confidence intervals. Here, in a contest with a candidate who supports withdrawal from the EU, the more moderate position of weaker cooperation within the EU would lead to significantly smaller vote gains than would the more aggressive position in favor of stronger cooperation within the EU or even the development of the EU into a common state.

So, which issues and positions are driving voters in the 2017 election year? Which positions would particularly enable the parties' candidates to mobilize voters? What role do populist attitudes and issues play, and how could the established parties counter populist mobilization?

“Europe,” “redistribution” and “refugees” as mobilizing issues

Across all eligible voters, our analysis results primarily show that positions on the issues of “Europe,” “redistribution” and “refugees” currently have the strongest influence on vote choice. In contrast, other topics which are often popular in election campaigns, such as “environmental protection” and “economic growth,” clearly trail behind. Similarly, typical generic populist priorities such as “fighting corruption” or “more direct democracy” are not decisive issues for most voters. In Germany, the populist call to “overthrow the political elites” even has a clearly negative effect on voters' inclination to cast a vote for a candidate. However, the most prominent finding in our results for all eligible voters remains the strong mobilizing power of the three issues of “Europe,” “redistribution” and “refugees.”

“More Europe” as a response to populist criticism of the EU

With regard to EU integration, it emerges very clearly that elections in Germany are currently not to be won with a call for Germany's withdrawal from the EU. Candidates who advocate a withdrawal from the EU lose significant support against candidates with more pro-European positions. The more strongly a candidate supports European cooperation within the EU, the higher are his or her support figures averaged across all eligible voters. The strongest support from the German electorate can be obtained by advocating stronger cooperation within the EU. By taking this position, a candidate can increase his or her support figures by about 19 percentage points.

Averaged across all eligible voters, “more Europe” is thus significantly more popular than “less Europe.” A simple recipe thus emerges for the established parties in combatting the populist critique of Europe in the 2017 election campaign: on average, an open and unstinting pro-European position is a significantly more successful strategy than the adoption of anti-European populism. In the 2017 election year in Germany, “more Europe” increases the average share of support across all eligible voters.

“Redistribution” as an important mobilizing issue

On average, the desire for more economic redistribution has a mobilizing power on vote choice similar to the position of “more Europe.” Candidates calling for significantly lower taxes for the rich receive the lowest levels of support. Thus, on balance, no election in Germany will be won in 2017 with calls for inverse redistribution from the bottom to the top. The highest levels of support go to candidates in favor of somewhat higher taxes for the rich. Their support figures increase by about 20 percentage points in comparison to candidates advocating inverse redistribution. The mobilizing force of “more redistribution” is therefore as strong and as significant as that of “more Europe.”

At the same time, however, it appears that an additional twist of the redistribution screw does not necessarily further increase support figures. That is, on average, support does not rise further when candidates call for much higher taxes on the rich as compared to the moderate preference for redistribution, i.e. somewhat higher taxes for the rich. This indicates that there is a clear preference among German voters in favor of “more redistribution” from top to bottom. However, averaged across all eligible voters, a radical redistribution demand does not lead to higher support figures. Nevertheless, this should not distract from the fact that for many people, positions on redistribution are a decisive issue for their vote choice.

Both positions – “more Europe” and “more redistribution” – thus prove to be similarly influential for vote choice. The strong influence of these two positions is also confirmed in direct comparison with refugee policy, a topic which is often perceived as dominant.

“Control of refugee flows” as a recipe against right-wing populists

Refugee policy does indeed emerge as a topic of high and often decisive relevance for many eligible voters in Germany. However, on average, the topic is no more relevant than Europe policy or the redistribution debate. The effect on decisions when choosing between different candidates is similarly strong for all three issues. Thus, on average across all eligible voters, it cannot be said that refugee policy plays a uniquely dominant role in vote choice. Refugee policy does motivate voters in Germany, and remains one of several salient topics. However, Europe policy and redistribution issues are similarly urgent and important for most voters.

Regarding refugee policy, Germans show a clear preference for candidates who oppose the further admission of “a great many” new refugees; this effect is similarly strong to that of positions for “more Europe” and “more redistribution.” Candidates with a position advocating controlling and placing limits on the admission of new refugees can draw at least some support from most eligible voters. Candidates who advocate the admission of “only some” rather than “many” new refugees can improve their probability of being selected by about 17 percentage points.

Thus, we find an effect of similar strength to that of Europe policy and redistribution: averaged across the entire electorate, German voters prefer stronger controls and limitations on the number of newly arriving refugees admitted. However, this cannot be interpreted as a fundamental rejection of or even a hostile attitude toward refugees and asylum seekers among the German electorate. Indeed, the opposite may be true: stronger positions calling for the deportation of “some” or “a great many” refugees only minimally increase support levels relative to the significantly more moderate position, or even show no increase at all. For most voters, the impact of refugee policy on their electoral behavior is already achieved with the political call to admit only “some” new refugees instead of “a great many.”

In this regard, a populist campaign strategy focused onesidedly on resentment against refugees proves not to be particularly promising on average. An election campaign dominated by right-wing populist agitation against refugees may have an electoral impact in certain niches of the electorate. However, for most eligible voters, refugee policy is mainly about establishing more control. This means that as established parties grapple with radical right-wing populist demands such as the deportation of large numbers of refugees, there is no need to try to outdo the other side; instead, providing moderate and credible assurance against the uncontrolled admission of ever more refugees is sufficient to meet most voters' expectations regarding refugee policy.

Globalization is not a decisive topic

Compared to the three topics of “Europe,” “redistribution” and “refugees,” the topics of free trade and globalization emerge as less decisive for vote choice. Whether candidates support “much more” free trade and globalization or “some-what more” makes no difference in terms of their support figures. This indicates that the issues of free trade and globalization do not currently play a very important role in Germans' vote choice. Only a candidate who explicitly supports “much less” free trade and globalization would have to expect small declines in her support figures. The position advocating “much less” free trade and globalization undermines a candidate's results relative to a more pro-free-trade and pro-globalization candidate by about four percentage points.

In summary, this means that the electoral campaign issue of free trade and globalization currently plays only a secondary role for Germans' electoral behavior. Europe policy and the refugee issue have a much more decisive influence on vote choice. Nevertheless, the electoral results of candidates that explicitly support much less free trade and globalization do deteriorate. It thus appears that an

anti-globalization campaign would be as unlikely to succeed in Germany as an anti-EU or anti-refugee campaign. As in the case of Europe, redistribution as well as refugee policy, radical populist demands remain niche strategies for persuading certain groups of the electorate. In contrast, they have little power to persuade the electorate as a whole.

Clear rejection of radical-populist priorities

This aversion to radical populist demands is evident even beyond the positions on “Europe,” “redistribution,” “refugees” and “globalization.” Our analysis results for typical populist priorities also show that the German electorate very clearly rejects radical populism. Admittedly, moderately populist positions do pay off for candidates, increasing their support. For example, those who advocate for more direct democracy in Germany, or who can give voters the feeling that they will effectively defend citizens’ interests, increase their support figures by a few percentage points with such priorities. Nevertheless, the size of this effect remains moderate, and its direction is reversed if the populist priorities are more radical and exaggerated.

This is clearly illustrated by the typical radical-populist demand for an “overthrow of the political elite.” This kind of extreme populist criticism of elites does not sit well with the German electorate. It reduces support for a candidate by about 12 percentage points. Radical populist criticism of elites would in this sense threaten a candidate’s electoral fortunes in Germany.

Thus, in current political conditions, a populist revolution is hardly imminent. In other countries, even if the demand for established political elites to be overthrown was not necessarily the cause of their success, candidates expressing this goal have attained electoral results as high as 20 percent to 30 percent (France), or even a near majority (United States) (see e.g., Oliver and Rahn 2016). Yet in Germany the opposite is true; radical anti-establishment statements are more likely to be a recipe for disaster in the forthcoming 2017 federal election. In Germany, despite all the criticism of the established parties and politicians, voters do not want to overthrow the political elites.

Refugee policy and redistribution as populist mobilization issues

If one compares eligible voters holding populist views with the non-populist group, some clear differences emerge, particularly with regard to Europe and the refugee issue (Figure 14).

Regarding Europe, the preferences of the non-populist voters follow the pattern shown by all voters: the more strongly a candidate advocates European cooperation within the EU, the more support she gains. The strength of the effect here is even more significant than in the electorate as a whole. For non-populists, a candidate who supports stronger cooperation within the EU instead of withdrawal from the EU can increase her support figures by almost 32 percentage points, as compared to 19 percentage points across all respondents.

FIGURE 14 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among non-populist and populist eligible voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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For populists, by contrast, it is clear at first glance that positions on Europe will on average do little either to win or lose voters from this group in the 2017 election year. That is, the group's average support figures for candidates with very different positions on Europe vary comparatively little. Averaged across all populists, it makes little difference whether a candidate calls for withdrawal from the EU or wants to develop the EU into a common state. Only by taking a position in favor of somewhat weaker cooperation within the EU can a candidate marginally increase

her support among populist voters as compared to a pro-withdrawal candidate. This hardly makes the EU an electoral silver bullet for populists.

Refugee policy looks very different, however. Here, populists differ in two senses from non-populists. First, their rejection of the admission of “a great many” new refugees is significantly stronger. With more restrictive positions, candidates can improve their support figures among populist eligible voters from 21 to 29 percentage points depending on the specific position, as opposed to just six to 13 percentage points among non-populist voters.

However, when it comes to the specific position in favor of a deportation of “a great many” refugees, the difference is even more significant. While a candidate can improve his or her support figures among populists through such a demand by a maximum of 29 percentage points, the position leads to the lowest support gain of just six percentage points among non-populists. In contrast to the group of all eligible voters, and particularly to non-populist voters, a radicalization of the demand for the deportation of refugees leads to slight gains in support among populist voters.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that the primary gain in support among populists occurs between the positions of admitting “a great many” or only “some” new refugees. Candidates can attain more than two-thirds of the maximum gain in support of 29 percentage points simply by advocating the admission of only “some” new refugees (21 percentage points) instead of “a great many.” For populists too, the primary concern regarding refugee policy lies with the aspect of state control of incoming refugee flows. By contrast, the radicalization of this position through the call for “a great many” deportations yields only slight further gains.

Moderate populists: Even populist voters do not want to overthrow the political elites

Furthermore, it is striking that the pattern of political preferences for redistribution and for globalization show little difference between populist and non-populist eligible voters. Only in the case of redistribution, for the “more redistribution” positions, is the level of support gain minimally higher among populists than among non-populists. Anyone wishing to mobilize populist voters, therefore, can gain slight benefits by ratcheting up redistribution positions, without having to worry about losing non-populist voters.

It is also noticeable that even for populist voters, most typical populist priorities have rather low priority for their vote choice, and thus only marginal mobilizing capacity. More direct democracy and the fight against corruption do increase candidates’ support figures to a small extent among populist voters, while non-populist voters appear essentially unmoved by these topics. Nevertheless, not even the populists in Germany want to overthrow the political elites. Such a demand would lower support even among the populist segment of the electorate, if not to the same degree as among non-populist voters. The blanket demand to overthrow political elites is thus unsuitable for electoral mobilization in Germany even within the group of populist voters. Indeed, even the roughly 30% of the electorate that are populists according to our definition tend to be put off by such a demand.

CDU/CSU voters: Pro-European and non-populist

In cross-party comparison, CDU/CSU voters are persuaded most strongly by political candidates with pro-European positions. The voters of the SPD, Greens and the FDP also prefer pro-European positions when making their vote choice, but

FIGURE 15 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and CDU/CSU voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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no other German party electorate reacts as strongly to the demand for stronger cooperation within the EU, even to the point of development of the EU into a common state.

Thus, for the federal election campaign, the topic of deepening European integration has a strongly mobilizing effect for CDU/CSU voters. A credible and clear pro-European position also offers potential regarding electoral competition with the SPD, the Greens and the FDP, because the voters of these parties also place great emphasis on pro-European positions in making their voting decisions.

Even the large group of populist voters (29.2 percent of all eligible voters) are at least not put off by a pro-European position held by the CDU/CSU. Nevertheless, the CDU/CSU electorate shows a significantly more pronounced level of agreement with non-populist voters. Indeed, no supporters of any other German party, with the exception of the Greens, so clearly match the profile of the non-populist voters as does the CDU/CSU voter base. This means that a majority of the CDU/CSU voters are non-populist and pro-European in their choice of political candidates.

In addition, CDU/CSU voters also support more redistribution. The pattern of rising support figures in response to positions for more redistribution corresponds to similar patterns for SPD voters, although at a slightly lower level. The support figures of a candidate rise among CDU/CSU voters just as they do for voters of all other parties if she advocates higher taxes on the rich. However, the strength of the effect is somewhat lower among CDU/CSU voters than is the case for voters from the SPD and the Greens, and significantly lower than for Die Linke voters, but stronger than for the FDP. Thus, on the issue of redistribution, the CDU/CSU voters occupy a middle position in the party spectrum.

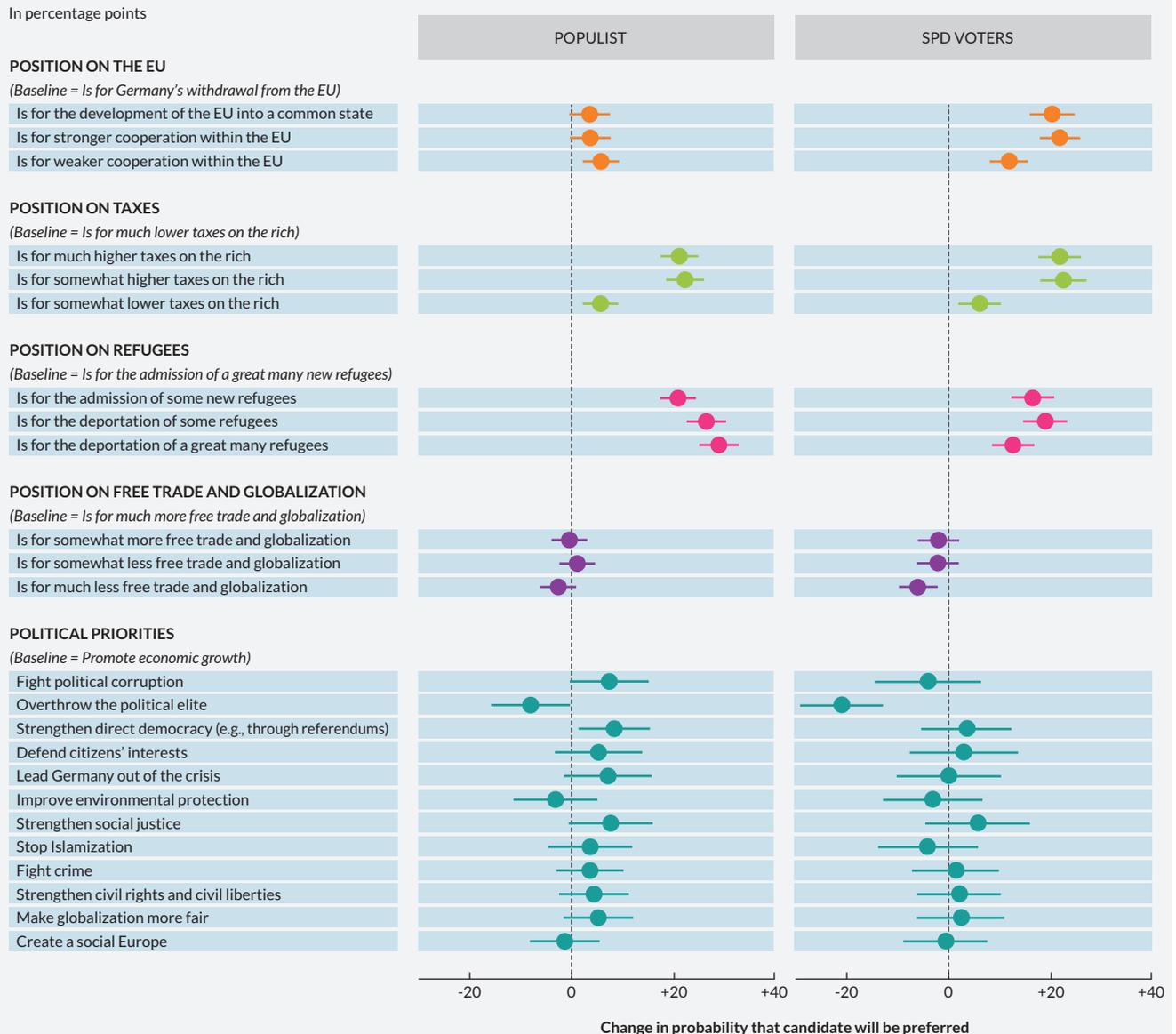
On refugee policy, CDU/CSU voters once again show a pattern which is very like that of SPD voters. The voters of both major parties are against the further admission of “a great many” refugees, but candidates cannot improve their support figures with these voters by further toughening their stance on refugees. The voters of both major parties responded almost as positively to a reduced admissions rate of only “some” refugees as to the demand for deportations. Adopting right-wing populist deportation demands would thus not improve support among the voters of the CDU/CSU. Only populist voters might be positively influenced in favor of the CDU/CSU by such a stance.

However, it is important to note that the current CDU/CSU position already includes a limitation on refugee immigration, and is thus to be characterized as a position between admitting “some” refugees and deporting “some” refugees. According to our analysis, these are indeed the most popular positions among CDU/CSU voters. Trying to compete with the right-wing populists of the AfD on the refugee issue could therefore cost the CDU/CSU support among their core voter base.

SPD voters: Pro-European and for social justice

The two major parties, the SPD and the CDU/CSU, are very much alike in terms of their voters' patterns of support. Both are primarily pro-European and support

FIGURE 16 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and SPD voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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more redistribution, but differ on the importance of these issues. While CDU/CSU voters respond most strongly to pro-European positions, SPD voters are influenced slightly more strongly by the issues of redistribution and social justice. Among SPD voters support increases by up to 22 percentage points for a candidate who advocates "somewhat" or "much" higher taxes on the rich in comparison to a candidate that calls for "much lower" taxes.

The mobilizing effect of redistribution issues for SPD voters is therefore at the same level as the effect of pro-European positions. Among CDU/CSU voters, both topics also have clearly positive connotations, but redistribution has a smaller effect than does deepening European integration. This picture also fits with the somewhat stronger weighting of social justice as a political priority for SPD voters. The patterns of candidate support for the voters of the two parties are also very similar on the refugee issue and on positions regarding free trade and globalization. SPD voters do not support further toughening of refugee policy. The desire to admit only “some” instead of “a great many” new refugees in the future increases support among these voters nearly as strongly (about 16 percentage points) as the call for some or a great many deportations (respectively about 19 and 13 percentage points).

Interestingly, even among SPD voters, the demand for “much less” free trade and globalization exerts a slightly negative influence on a candidate’s support figures. Also for SPD voters, the issue of free trade and globalization plays only a comparatively subordinate role. However, the SPD’s voting base generally rejects protectionist positions.

It is striking that among SPD voters too, the three issues of “Europe,” “redistribution” and “refugees” wield the strongest influence over their vote choice. By contrast, the globalization issue, economic growth, environmental protection and the promotion of direct democracy all trail significantly behind. The similarity of these patterns of support highlights the challenge which the SPD faces in distinguishing itself from the CDU/CSU with a thematic profile that is clearly distinct in voters’ minds.

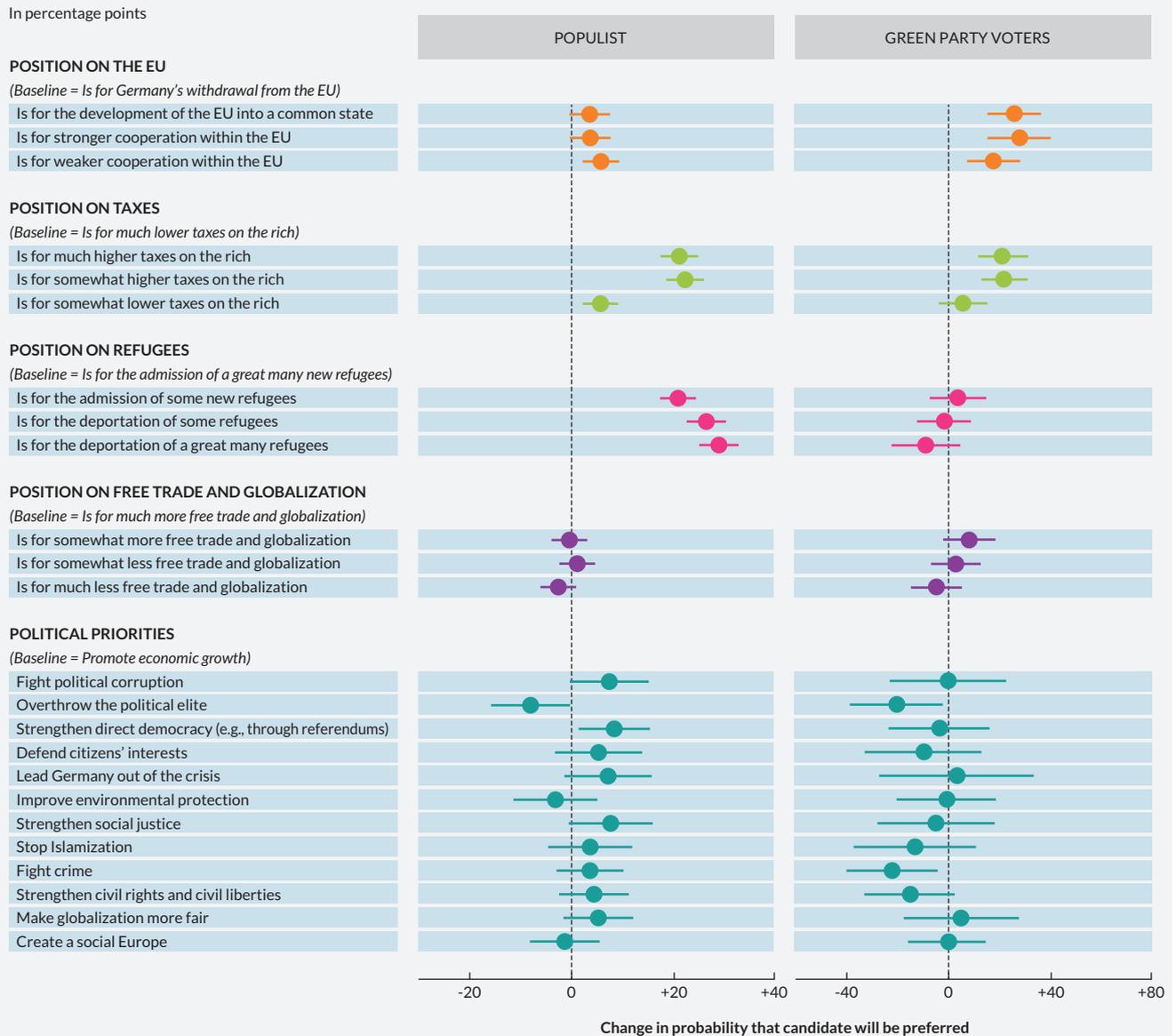
In addition, the SPD must confront the challenge of combining its electorate’s two core topics, “Europe” and “more social justice through more redistribution.” Our analysis does not allow us to investigate which possible concepts the SPD voters support or reject regarding this question. However, it is clear that the political priority of creating a “social Europe” is not particularly captivating for either SPD voters or the voters of other parties. At least, it does not additionally increase support for candidates beyond the effects of the redistribution and European integration positions.

The voter populations for the four smaller parties are significantly smaller than for the CDU/CSU and SPD; thus, the samples of voters surveyed for these parties are also smaller. This means the results for the smaller parties are associated with greater uncertainty, a fact reflected in wider confidence intervals. However, for the purpose of this study, we have overrepresented AfD and Die Linke voters in the sample; thus, inferences regarding the voters of these parties can be made with a degree of accuracy as they can for the SPD and the CDU/CSU. In any case, interesting details emerge for each of the smaller parties.

Green Party voters: Pro-European and pro-refugee

For the Greens, one finding stands out particularly: their traditional core issue of “environmental protection” does not even appear to exert a mobilizing effect on

FIGURE 17 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and Green Party voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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the party's own supporters in the 2017 election year. In contrast, the positions "for more Europe" and "for more redistribution" significantly increase support among Green Party voters. In a comparison of the two topics, Green Party voters – like those of the CDU/CSU – give deepened European integration more weight than redistribution.

On the refugee question, Green Party voters differ from those of all other parties in their substantial support for candidates that advocate the admission of “a great many” refugees. They do not support a more restrictive formulation of refugee policy; however, nor do they punish such a position, on average. No other German party supporters appear so immune to demands for a significantly more restrictive refugee policy.

Green Party voters also show deviation from other parties on the issue of fighting crime. Green voters are the only ones to react significantly more negatively to the political priority of “fighting crime” than to the baseline priority of “promoting economic growth.” However, this difference is only marginally statistically significant. Possibly, the dangers of a “security state” appear more acute to Green Party voters than to the voters of other parties.

Die Linke voters: Moderately populist and for more redistribution

For Die Linke voters, social justice in the form of more redistribution is the most important issue. They orient their vote choice more strongly around this subject than the voters of any other party. Among Die Linke voters, support for a candidate who advocates “much” higher taxes on the rich rises by almost 33 percentage points. In addition, strengthening social justice is significantly more important for Die Linke voters than for SPD voters, producing a 21 percentage point gain in comparison to a candidate who focuses on economic growth. Also striking is Die Linke voters’ strongly pronounced profile of support for populist issue priorities, such as the call for more direct democracy or the demand to lead “Germany out of the crisis.” These populist focal areas, along with “strengthening social justice,” top the ranking of priorities for Die Linke voters.

However, the radical populist demand to “overthrow the political elite” draws as little support from Die Linke voters as from the voters of other Bundestag parties. For Die Linke voters too, this is far down in the ranking of priorities, only a bit ahead of “promoting economic growth” and “stopping Islamization,” which are even more unpopular. Moderate left-wing populist positions in support of bringing decision-making to the level of citizens, greater participation, as well as redistribution and social justice – these are the most important positions and topics for Die Linke voters in the 2017 election year.

FDP voters: Pro-European and indifferent to redistribution

FDP voters are characterized in our analysis by their pro-European stance and skepticism toward redistribution. They also desire greater cooperation within the EU, all the way to the notion of a common European state. FDP voters also clearly reject an anti-European course.

It is noticeable that FDP voters have a comparatively weak inclination toward more economic redistribution. No other party’s supporters are similarly indifferent to redistribution.

FIGURE 18 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and Die Linke voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

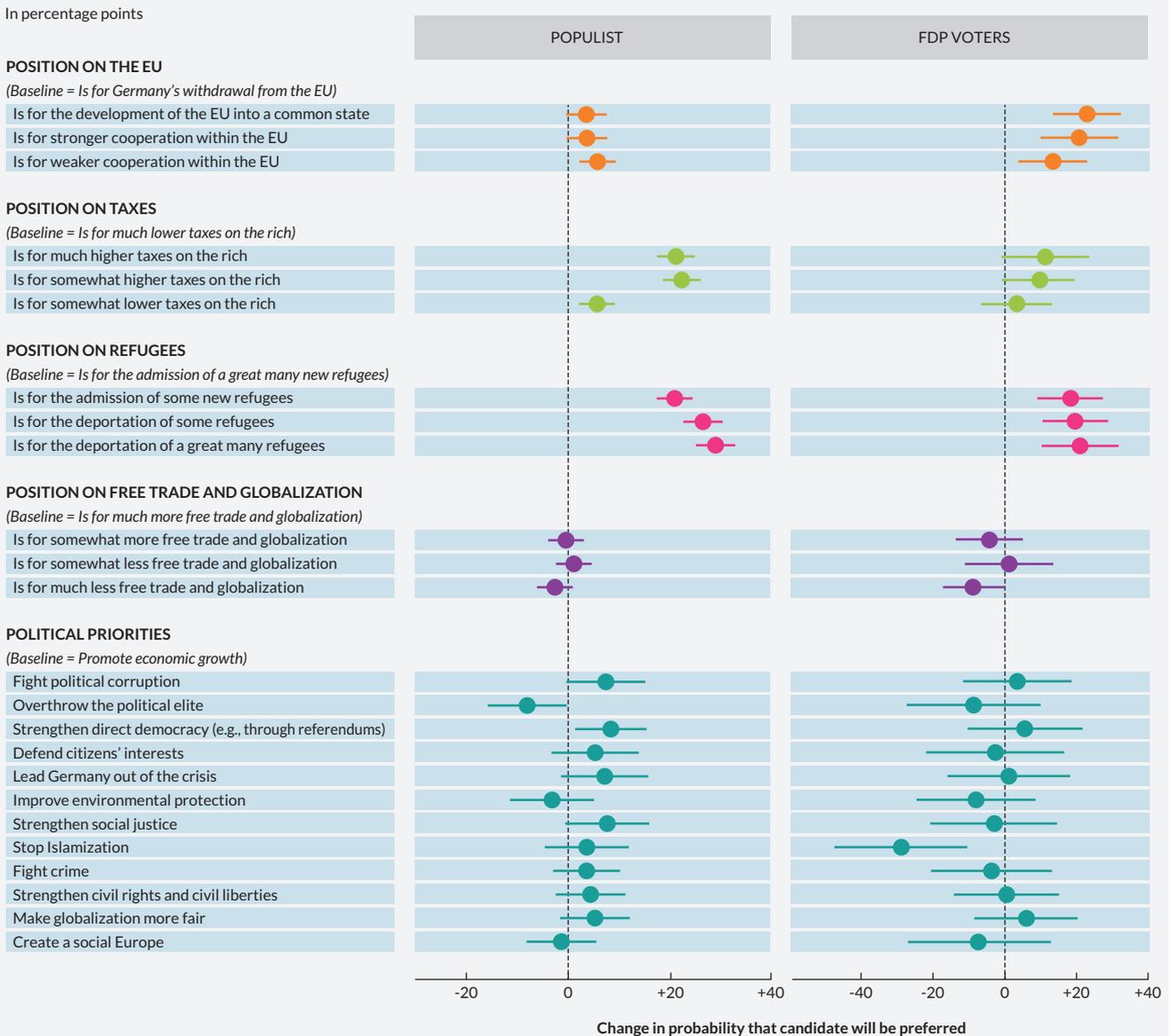
Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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However, even FDP voters show no preference for easing redistribution with lower taxes on the rich. For them, the core issue of other parties – to create more social justice through redistribution – is not a matter of concern. The lack of focus on positions regarding redistribution distinguishes FDP voters from all other parties. In terms of political priorities, it is particularly interesting that populist demands regarding the fight against corruption and for more direct democracy jointly head FDP voters' priority rankings. However, the sample of FDP voters is too small to

assume that such priorities have a decisive impact on FDP supporters' vote choice. In addition, the FDP voters' support profile stands out due to the fact that the demand to "stop Islamization" has a rather negative effect on candidates' electoral prospects. In this respect, the FDP voters serve as the opposite pole to the clearly anti-Islam and right-wing populist AfD supporters.

FIGURE 19 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist-inclined eligible voters and FDP voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

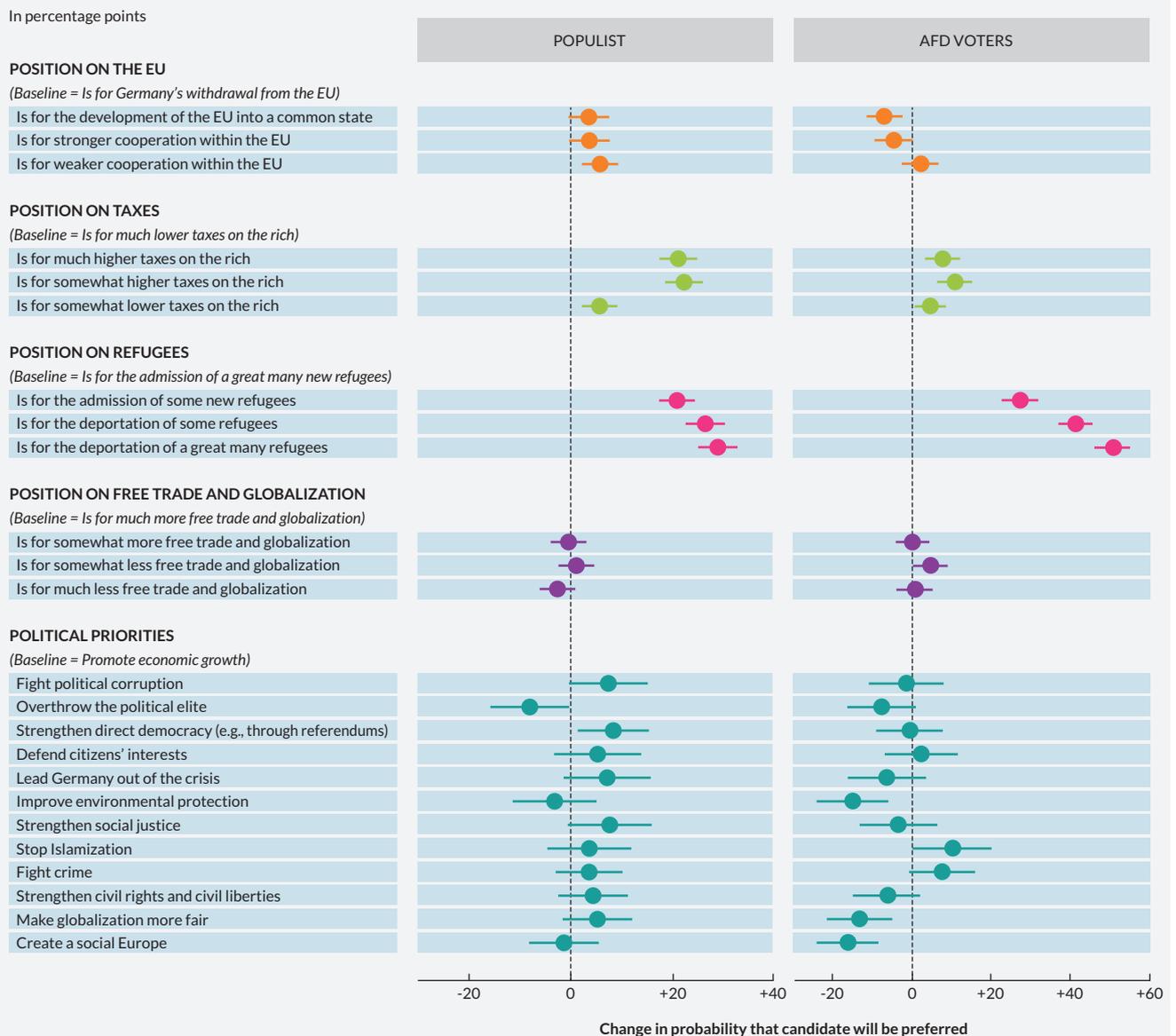
Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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AfD voters: Right-wing populist and against refugees

No other party supporters in Germany have such a onesided and monothematic support profile as the voters of the AfD. At first glance, it almost appears as if the refugee issue was the only electorally salient and mobilizing issue for them. Among AfD voters, support for a candidate who advocates the deportation of “a great many” refugees rises by 51 percentage

FIGURE 20 Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist-inclined eligible voters and AfD voters



Method: "Average marginal component effects" (Hainmueller et al. 2014) with confidence intervals (95%) based on standard errors clustered by respondents; probability changes refer to comparison with the baseline category.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung

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points in comparison to a candidate who wants to admit “a great many” new refugees. This is the strongest effect of two contrasting positions in our analysis.

In addition, the AfD voters are the only voters for whom the toughening of refugee policy up to the point of demanding that “a great many” refugees be deported leads to significantly better support figures than the moderate limitation of immigration to “some” instead of “a great many” new refugees. The strength of the effect of an anti-refugee position on AfD voters’ support for candidates even significantly outweighs the effect that such positions have among all populist voters. This is complemented by AfD voters’ equally clear support for the right-wing populist demand to “stop Islamization.”

Furthermore, AfD voters react negatively to issues such as “environmental protection,” “fairer globalization” and the creation of a “social Europe.” However, overall the AfD’s mobilization profile remains more focused on a single political demand than for any other party: deporting “a great many” refugees from Germany is a position that mobilizes AfD voters to support political candidates in the 2017 election year. For the AfD, this strategy may prove successful in mobilizing its own clearly right-wing populist voter base. However, the share of clearly right-wing populist voters within the entire electorate is low (see Chapter 1). The party could persuade and solidify the support of current AfD voters with explicit anti-refugee positions. But the impact of these positions on other parties’ voters is, as we have seen, questionable.

3. Populism at the ballot box

Party preferences and voting intentions of eligible voters with populist and non-populist attitudes before the 2017 federal election

Populist attitudes are related to the electoral behavior of Germans in the election year 2017. Populist and non-populist voters differ greatly in their sympathy and identification with the parties. And they also vote differently.

The party with the most non-populist voters is the CDU, along with its Bavarian sister party, the CSU. Among the entirely non-populist voters right of center, the Union (as the two parties are collectively known) enjoys 60 percent support.

In contrast to the Union, the SPD receives support from populist and non-populist voters in almost equal measure. It gets its best results (50 percent) among those left of the political center, whether populist or non-populist. Similarly, the left-wing party Die Linke is just as popular with populists as with non-populists, but attracts votes almost solely from left-of-center voters. The party reaches between 10 and 30 percent among left-wing voters, regardless of their populist or non-populist attitudes. Die Linke thus fits the profile of a typical leftist party in terms of its voters, but is by no means a purely populist left-wing party.

The AfD, on the other hand, is unequivocally a right-wing populist party. Among far right populists, it attracts around 60 percent of voters. This is the party's USP: right-wing populism is a defining feature of its platform and its candidates. Even so, the AfD does reach 10 to 20 percent among non-populists with extreme right-wing attitudes. However, in the political center and further left, practically no one votes AfD.

Precisely the opposite is true of the Greens. Their strongest support (15 percent) comes from the non-populist voters left of the center, whereas populists are less likely to vote for them. The FDP attracts an above-average level of support from non-populist right-of-center voters – more than it receives from populists on the right.

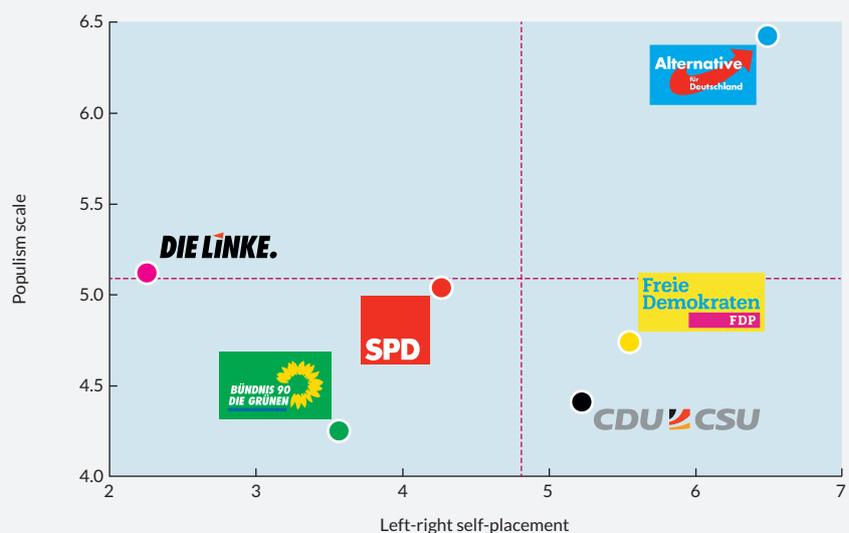
How populist are the voters of the parties?

Populism influences voters' stances on individual political issues. Populists think differently from non-populist voters about many political questions. But what is the relationship between populist attitudes and party preferences? Do populists prefer certain parties, and do they vote differently than do non-populist voters? In the following, we will answer these questions by analyzing the party identification, party support and voting intentions of the entire electorate in relation to the degree of their populism. We will also assess the electoral prospects of the individual parties according to voters' populist attitudes and left-right orientation. This results in a representative picture of voting intentions for the entire electorate in the run-up to the German federal election in 2017 in relation to levels of populism and left-right orientation.

Our sub-samples of voters of the CDU/CSU, SPD, Die Linke and AfD are large enough (more than 330 respondents per party) for us to make relatively accurate inferences about the voters of these parties, while smaller samples of Green and FDP voters mean our statements are subject to greater uncertainty. As in Chapter 2, this can be seen particularly in wider confidence intervals.

To give an initial overview, the voters of the parties will first be categorized according to their populist leanings and their self-identification along the right-left continuum. For this we will define their degree of populism by means of a simple populism scale from 0 (non-populist) to 8 (populist), and the ideological self-placement of voters on a left-right scale of 0 (left) to 10 (right).

FIGURE 21 Party voters by populism and left-right orientation



Note: Points indicate unweighted average for party's voters; dotted red lines indicate weighted average of all eligible voters.

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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We can then locate individual parties on the political spectrum while differentiating among them according to the level of populism and left-right orientation of their voters. This results in the following picture of the party political landscape in Germany ahead of the 2017 federal elections:

CDU/CSU and Greens least populist

Green and CDU/CSU voters have the least populist attitudes. Both parties are well below the average in terms of populist tendencies in Germany (dotted red line). However, they differ in their ideological left-right orientation. The Greens are a non-populist party positioned to the left of center, whilst the CDU/CSU is a non-populist party slightly to the right of center. The greatest affinity between any two parties – in terms of ideology and populism – is that between the CDU/CSU and the FDP. Both parties are in the non-populist voter segment and slightly to the right of the political center, although FDP voters are both more populist and somewhat further to the right.

Average levels of populism: the SPD and Die Linke

With the SPD and Die Linke, two parties are positioned on the left with slightly more populist voters. While both parties have more populist support than the Greens within the left-of-center voter segment, their voters are not more populist than the average of all voters. And while the voters of the SPD and Die Linke exhibit similar levels of populism, they differ ideologically. The SPD is slightly to the left of center, at a similar remove as the CDU/CSU is to its right, while in terms of its voters, Die Linke is far to the left of both the SPD and the Greens.

Right-wing populist AfD voters

The greatest outlier on both scales is the AfD. Its voters are the most populist by a considerable degree and, at the same time, the furthest right of the center. With its voters positioned to the right of the political spectrum, today's AfD is clearly a right-wing populist party in terms of its supporters. Other studies and data have already shown this in terms of its programmatic orientation and the attitudes expressed by its candidates (e.g., Lewandowsky et al. 2016; Franzmann 2017). Our data now confirms the right-wing populist attitudes of its voters (see also Schmitt-Beck 2016). Indeed, the distinctly populist attitudes of its voters are an even greater marker of what differentiates the AfD from other parties than its right-wing orientation. One thing is clear – on average, the AfD relies on a voter segment from which no other major party in Germany currently draws a majority of its supporters.

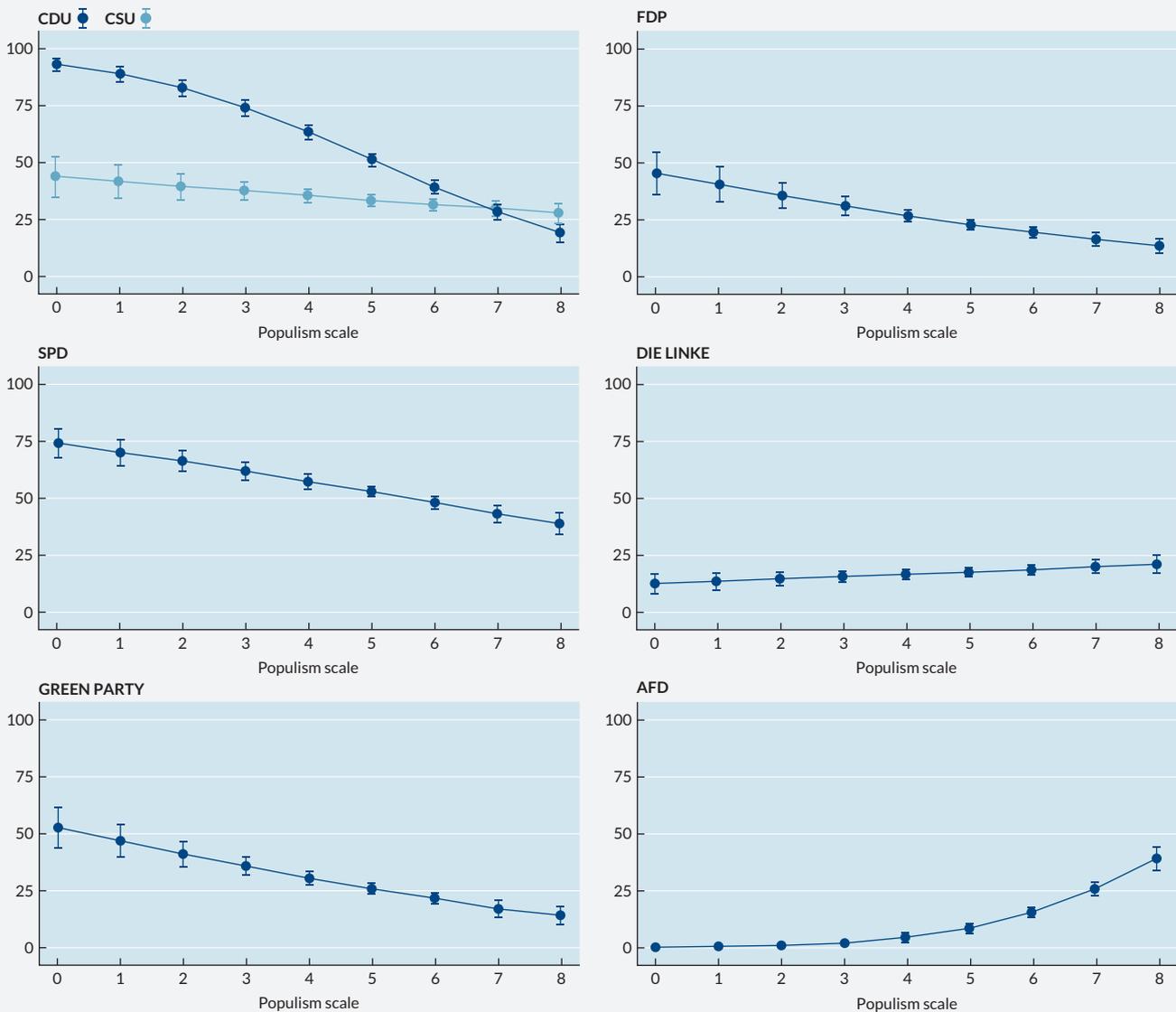
Which parties find approval among populists?

Party affinity is a somewhat more malleable indicator for measuring party leanings. Respondents are not asked about inner loyalties, ideological proximity or voting intentions. They are simply asked what they generally think about indi-

vidual parties, which means that multiple selections are possible. Respondents can specify whether they “strongly approve,” “somewhat approve,” “somewhat disapprove” or “strongly disapprove” of a party. Their responses then show the general acceptance and approval rates of the parties. This in turn allows us to estimate the probabilities that populist and non-populist voters will feel an affinity for each party (here we calculate the probability that respondents will “strongly approve” or “somewhat approve” of a party).

FIGURE 22 Populism and party approval

As percentages



Method: Predicted probability of “strongly” or “somewhat” approving of the party, based on logistic regression analyses with confidence intervals (95%).

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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How probable is it that a populist-minded voter will feel an affinity for the CDU/CSU or the SPD? Or how probable is it that a non-populist voter will feel an affinity for the FDP? How likeable do voters with populist and non-populist attitudes find the parties that will compete for their votes in the 2017 federal election?

Non-populist affinity for CDU, SPD, Greens, FDP and CSU

The highest approval rates among all parties in the segment of entirely non-populist voters are achieved by the CDU. A voter with a completely non-populist attitude is likely, indeed almost certain, to feel an affinity for the CDU. On the other hand, affinity for the CDU drops drastically the more populist a voter's attitude. As populist attitudes increase, the proportion of those who approve of the CDU drop from almost 100 to below 25 percent. Among strong populists, only around one in four voters find the CDU likeable.

There are also some interesting differences with the CSU, for whom affinity is not only significantly lower in a cross-section of national voters, but also differently distributed in comparison with its sister party, the CDU. While the approval rates for the CDU drop to a quarter down the populism scale, for the CSU, the drop is only half, albeit from a lower starting level. The drop in their approval rates as populism increases is also less pronounced for the CSU, but only in the segment of strongly populist voters does the CSU achieve similar approval rates to the CDU.

On the other hand, there are far more pronounced similarities in the affinity profiles of the other parties in the Bundestag, with the exception of Die Linke. As with the CDU, the probability that a voter will feel an affinity for the SPD, the Greens or the FDP drops sharply with the degree of their populism. This shows that with the exception of Die Linke, for each of the parties represented in the Bundestag, the proportion of supporters among populist voters is significantly smaller than among non-populist voters.

Populist affinity for Die Linke and especially the AfD

This means that Die Linke has a populist USP among the parties represented in the Bundestag, although it is not particularly pronounced. The probability that a voter will feel affinity for Die Linke may increase with the individual's degree of populism, but the correlation is not nearly as strong as it is for the AfD.

While approval rates for the AfD among voters with non-populist attitudes are almost zero, the probability of affinity in the segment of voters with strongly populist attitudes increases to almost 40 percent. With this, the AfD achieves approval rates in this segment that are about as high as those of the SPD and significantly higher than those of any other party.

The AfD only meets with significant approval among respondents who are more populist than the average eligible voter. With its unmistakable populist affinity profile, the AfD represents a complete antithesis to the CDU in the German party political landscape ahead of the 2017 federal election. No other pair of parties differs so starkly in terms of their voters' support for populism. In comparison with

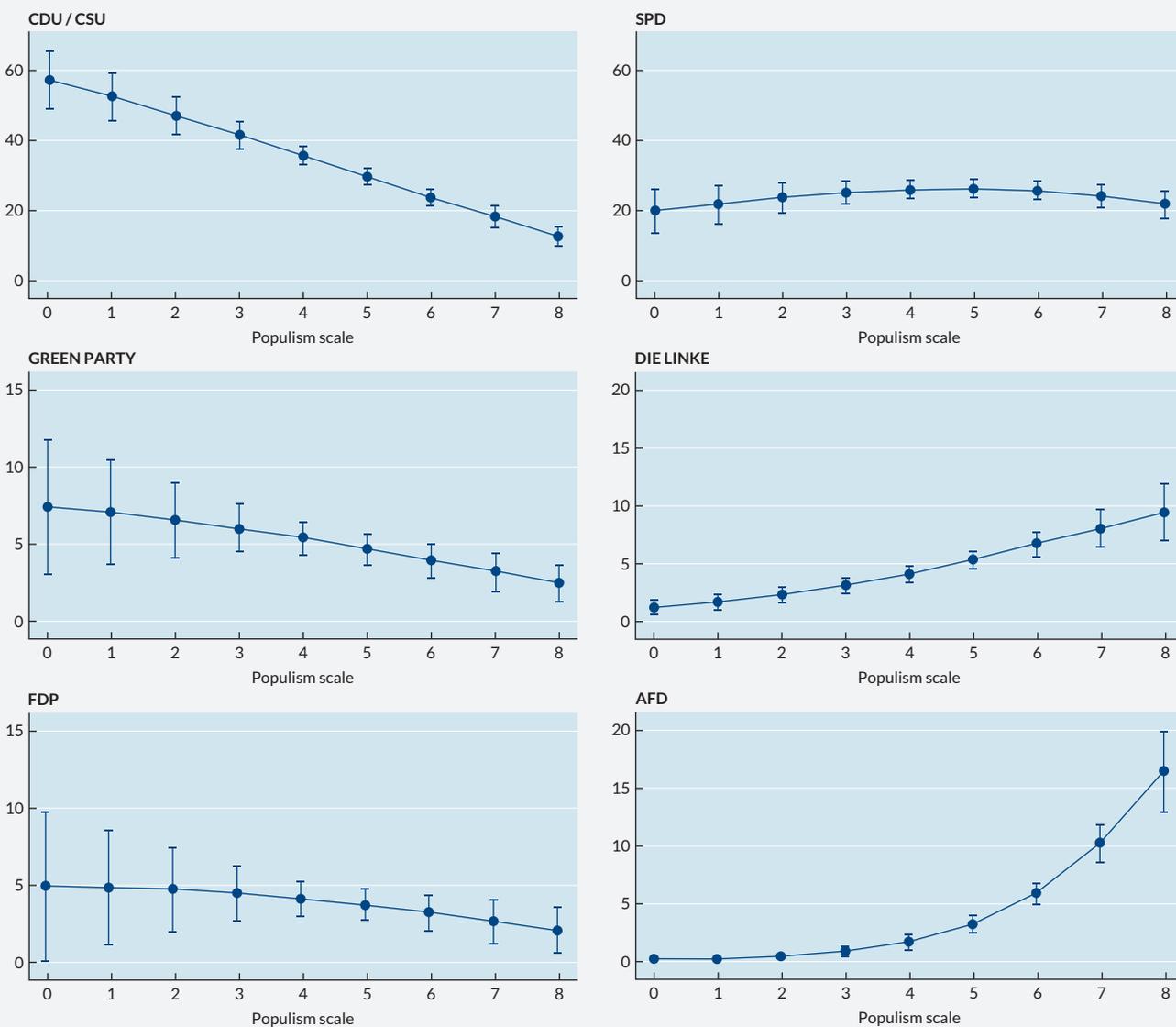
the CDU, the AfD has precisely the opposite correlation – the more populist a voter’s attitudes, the more probable it is that he or she will sympathize with the AfD.

Which parties do populists identify with?

In contrast with party affinity, party identification allows us to measure more firmly anchored and dependable voter loyalties. Respondents were asked about

FIGURE 23 Populism and party identification

As percentages



Method: Predicted probability of identifying with the party, based on multinomial logistic regression analysis with confidence intervals (95%).

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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long-term party inclinations, which go beyond passing moods to a closer association of voters with particular parties. Only a single choice is permitted, and not all voters have such close associations with a party.

In the average of all voters, levels of party identification have dropped somewhat over recent decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002). In our survey, almost 75 percent of all voters recorded a party identification and more than 95 percent of those chose either one of the four parties in the Bundestag, or the FDP, or the AfD.

Party identification reveals the same overall pattern seen in approval rates. In contrast to the other parties in the Bundestag, and the FDP, the probability of party identification only increases with higher levels of populism for Die Linke and the AfD – and it does so to a considerable degree, particularly for the AfD.

Non-populist CDU/CSU versus populist AfD

When we examine the parties individually, the CDU/CSU is revealed once again as the most non-populist party in terms of its voters. The probability of identifying with the CDU is around 60 percent for entirely non-populist voters; as the degree of populism increases, it falls to less than 20 percent in the segment of strongly populist voters. As with the approval rates, this means that the less populist voters' attitudes are, the more likely it is that they will identify with the CDU.

The same applies, albeit to a lesser degree and at a lower level, to the Greens and the FDP. Here, the probability of party identification also drops as the degree of populism rises, but these differences are only faint, or statistically insignificant. The SPD, on the other hand, is more or less equally present in each populism segment, finding around the same number of supporters among people with and without populist attitudes.

Once again, Die Linke and the AfD are significantly more populist. For both parties, the probability of party identification rises from almost zero in the segment of entirely non-populist voters, to almost 10 percent for Die Linke, and as high as 15 percent or more for the AfD in the segment of pronounced populists. For the AfD, the distribution of its supporters is even more clearly populist than for Die Linke. While there is a relatively slight increase for Die Linke, the proportion of voters who identify with the AfD shows a marked rise among voters with above-average populist attitudes. Thus, party identification is a further illustration of the populism of AfD supporters in contrast with the less populist attitudes of most CDU/CSU supporters.

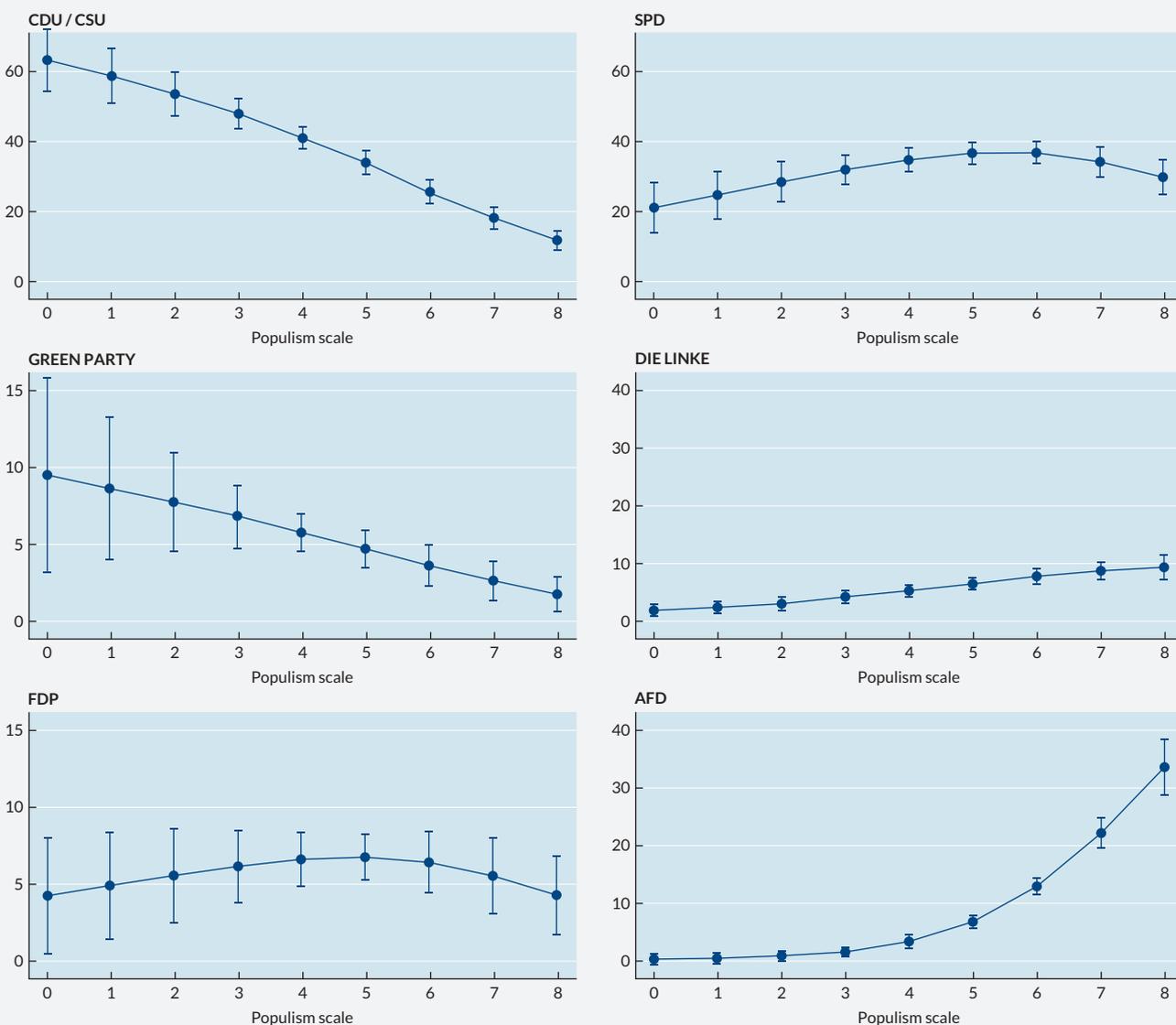
Which parties do populists vote for?

The "Sonntagsfrage" ("Sunday Question;" a regular survey of voting intentions in Germany) also allows us to estimate vote choice probabilities in relation to populist attitudes. Which parties are more often chosen by populist voters than non-populist voters? And how is the voting potential of the parties distributed among the voter segments of varying degrees of populism? This requires us to consider the distribution of voters along the scale of populism.

While only a little more than a quarter of voters are to be found in the segment of entirely or largely non-populist voters (0-4 points on the populism scale), that of voters with somewhat populist attitudes (4-6 points) encompasses around 42 percent of all voters and the strongly populist segment (6-8 points) around 32 percent. A share of voters of around 10 percent, for instance, gives a party in the populist segments more voters in absolute terms than in the segment of non-populists.

FIGURE 24 Populism and voting intention

As percentages



Method: Predicted probability of intending to vote for party, based on multinomial regression analysis with confidence intervals (95%).

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election with intentions to vote for a specific party (excluding non-voters and those intending to cast invalid votes).

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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What are the electoral prospects for parties in relation to the populism of their voters? Who will profit from populist attitudes in the 2017 federal election, and who will win support among voters with non-populist attitudes?

CDU/CSU and Greens win support among non-populist voters

When it comes to voting intentions, the CDU/CSU once again has a significant lead over all other parties in the non-populist voter segment. In the very small group of entirely non-populist voters, the CDU/CSU achieves a share of voters of around 60 percent. In the somewhat non-populist third of voters, the CDU consistently achieves more than 40 percent of votes. As populist attitudes increase, their voter proportion drops significantly, down to just 15 percent among voters with particularly strong populist attitudes.

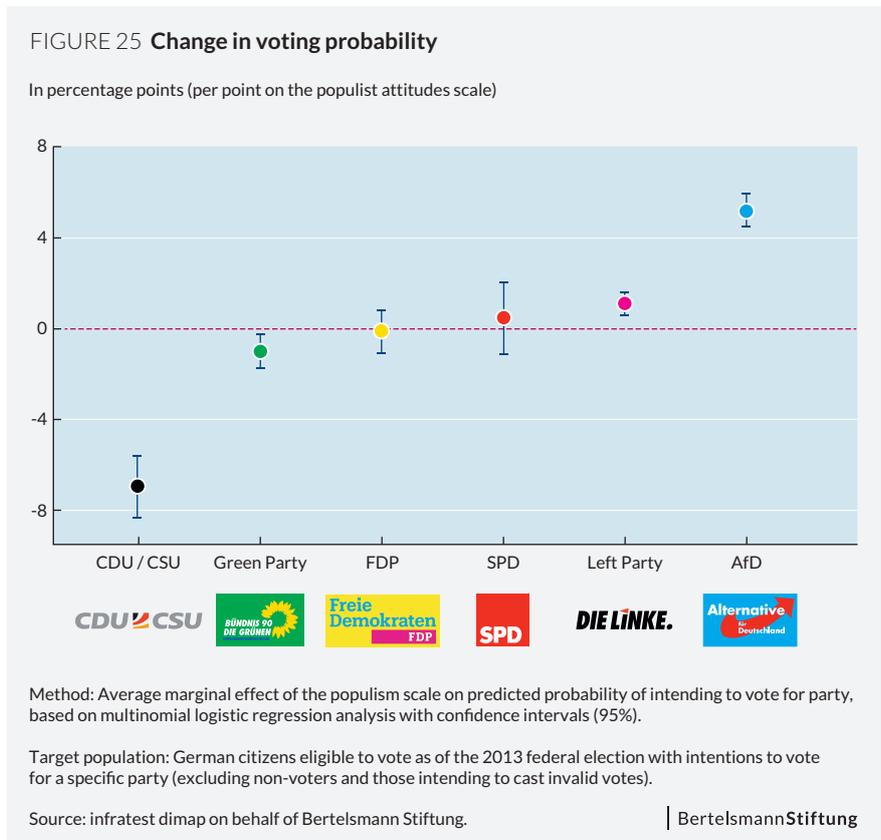
This shows that at the ballot box, too, the CDU/CSU is the least populist party in terms of their voters, followed by the Greens. Like the CDU/CSU, the Greens are much stronger in the non-populist voter segment than the populist segment. Their share of voters in the non-populist voter segments is between 5 and 10 percent. On the other hand, extreme populists vote for the Greens far less frequently, or not at all. The SPD is just as likely to win support from populists as from non-populists – as is the FDP, albeit on a much smaller scale, given its smaller support base. Both parties are just as strongly represented, proportionately, in the populist as in the non-populist voter segments. This means that the SPD is slightly more represented in the populist voter segments than the CDU/CSU. The less populist voters are, the greater the lead of the CDU/CSU over the SPD.

Die Linke and particularly the AfD win support among populist voters

The only parties for which the voter share increases with populist tendencies are, once again, Die Linke and the AfD. Whereas there is a moderate increase in vote share with increased populist tendencies for Die Linke, this is far more pronounced for the AfD. The AfD attracts almost no votes from non-populist voters. Only in the segment of voters who are more populist than the average does it easily clear the 5 percent hurdle.

The overwhelming majority of AfD voters are therefore found in the heavily populist segments of the electorate. In the segment of voters with highly populist attitudes the AfD wins around a third of all votes and thus around the same as the major parties: here it is neck and neck with the SPD and even pulling ahead of the CDU/CSU. This means that the AfD is a clearly populist party in terms of its voters. It almost exclusively mobilizes voters with populist attitudes which are either highly pronounced or at least above average.

The same correlations can be seen for the change in voting probabilities in relation to the degree of populism.



With each additional point on the populism scale from 0 to 8, the probability that a voter will choose the CDU/CSU drops by an average of 7 percentage points. The Greens lose around 1 percentage point per point on the populism scale. The SPD and FDP remain largely unaffected by this, as they are almost equally popular, proportionally speaking, among populists and non-populists. Die Linke, on the other hand, profits from increasing populism to the same degree that the Greens suffer from it. For Die Linke, the voting probability increases by around 1 percentage point for each point on the populism scale.

The effect is much stronger for the AfD. Its voting probability increases with increasingly populist attitudes of a voter five times more than for Die Linke – by about 5 percentage points. Thus, the likelihood that a voter will choose the AfD increases with greater degrees of populism almost as markedly as it decreases among the CDU/CSU. Once again the CDU/CSU and the AfD prove to be polar opposites in the Germany party system when it comes to the degree of populism among their voters. The more populist a voter’s attitudes, the more likely he or she is to vote AfD, and the less likely he or she is to vote CDU/CSU in the Bundestag election.

Right-wing and left-wing populists at the ballot box

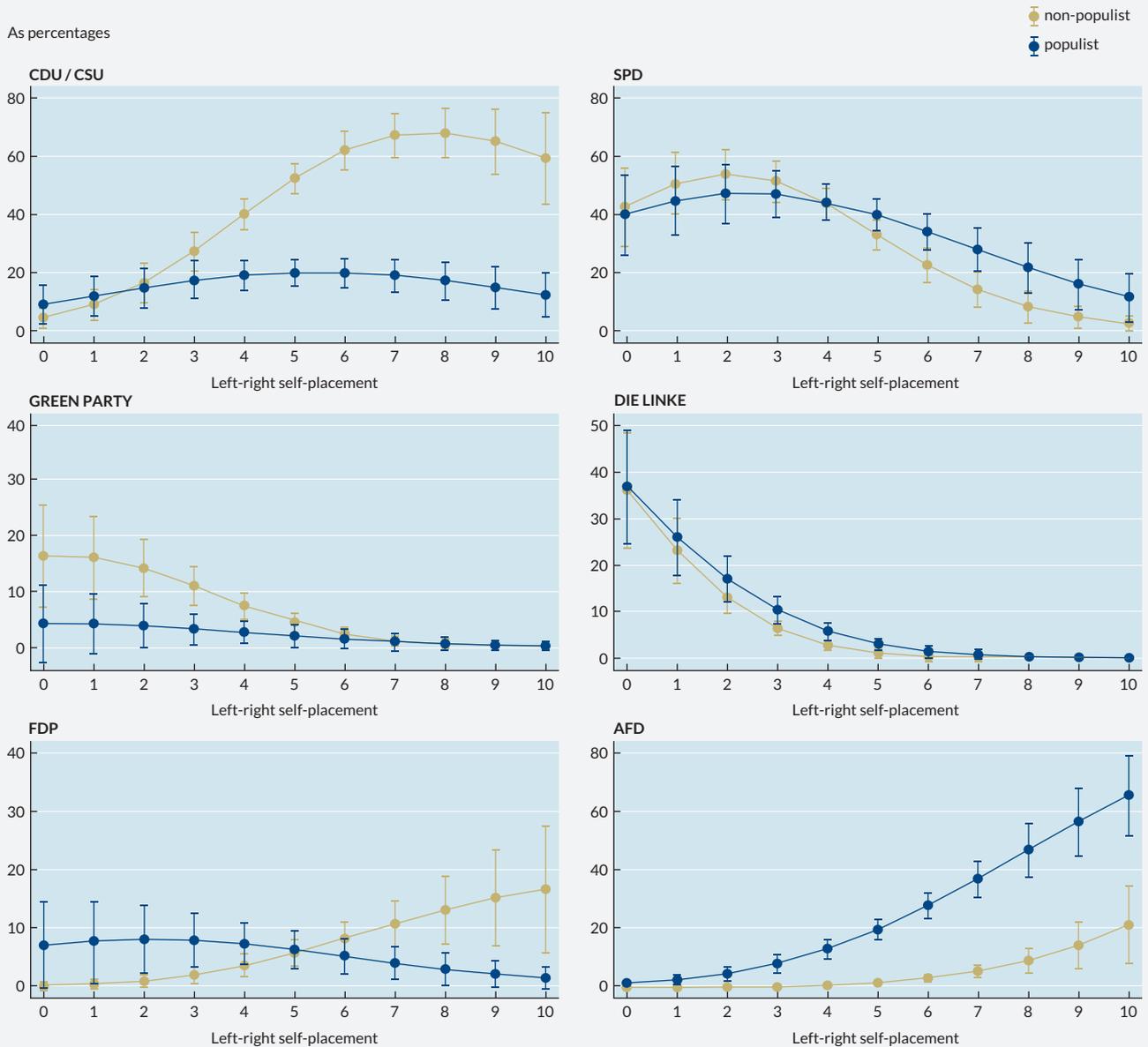
Finally, we look at voting probability for the six most important parties in relation to populism and left-right orientation of voters. Do left-wing populists vote

differently to right-wing populists? Which parties profit from left- or right-wing orientation among populist voters? And, which parties profit from left- and right-wing orientations when they are not combined with populist attitudes?

To answer these questions, the following will bring the left- and right-wing self-placement of voters together with their classification into the populist and non-populist groups (see Chapter 1). Rather than using the populism scale, we will now use these groups to differentiate between populist (25.6%) and non-popu-

FIGURE 26 Voting intention by populist attitude and left-right orientation

As percentages



Method: Predicted probability of intending to vote for party, based on multinomial logistic regression analysis with confidence intervals (95%).

Target population: German citizens eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election with intentions to vote for a specific party (excluding non-voters and those intending to cast invalid votes).

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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list voters (41%). From this, we can illustrate the relationships for all parties in two curves. One curve shows the voting probability of non-populist voters plotted against their left-right self-placement. The other curve does the same for the group of voters with populist attitudes.

How far to the left or right are the populist and non-populist voters of each party? And what patterns emerge?

The CDU/CSU as a party of non-populist, right-of-center voters

The CDU/CSU reach their highest proportion of votes among non-populist voters right of the political center. Here the voting probability, and with it the proportion of votes, is up to two-thirds of all voters. In the segment of right-of-center non-populist voters, the Union can therefore almost command a two-thirds majority. Left of the political center, this proportion then takes a relatively steep downward turn at around 40 percent, falling to almost zero among firmly left-ist-oriented voters. But even slightly left of the center, the Union can still manage above-average results among non-populist voters.

In contrast, the voting curve of the Union among the populist voters shows a relatively flat progression. Among populists, the Union reaches a maximum of 20 percent of voters in the political center, trending to fewer voters at the political extremes. The profile of Union voters is thus easy to describe – the Union records its best electoral results among non-populist voters at and to the right of the political center. Here it is the market leader over the other parties by some distance.

The SPD as a party of (non-)populist left-of-center voters

The voter profile of the SPD offers a markedly different pattern. It gains an above-average proportion of voters to the left of the political center primarily, and largely regardless of populist attitudes. Its share of votes among populists is just as large as among non-populists, and the small differences may be purely incidental. In the segments of left-wing voters, the SPD wins support from up to 50 percent and more of all voters. Right of the political center, it becomes apparent that the party's electoral prospects are a little higher among voters with populist attitudes than those with non-populist attitudes.

Again, the differences are only small and statistically insignificant, and may have come about in the survey purely by chance. But what is very much evident for the SPD is that in contrast to the Union, it enjoys more or less equal support among populists and non-populists. The profile of SPD voters is thus on average far more mixed and less markedly non-populist than that of Union voters.

Die Linke as a party of (non-)populist voters on the far left

The relatively populism-neutral pattern is even a little more pronounced among Die Linke voters. The share of votes for Die Linke is – as with the SPD – just as high among populists as non-populists. So the profile of its voters is not defined

by their degree of populism, but rather the very clear orientation of their left-right political ideology. Die Linke almost exclusively attracts left-of-center voters. And its share of votes climbs sharply at the far left of the spectrum.

At the outer edge they reach around one third of all voters, both from populist and non-populist groups. In this segment, it is the SPD that represents its greatest competition, and at the extreme left Die Linke attracts a similar share of votes as the SPD. Thus, die Linke fits the profile of a typical leftist party in terms of its voters, but is by no means a purely populist left-wing party. Nevertheless, like the SPD, it enjoys equal strength in the segment of left-wing populists as among left-wing voters with non-populist attitudes.

AfD as a party of populist voters on the far right

The picture is completely different with the AfD – it is not balanced between populist and non-populist voters at the extreme right of the ideological spectrum. The profile of its voters is entirely unambiguous. Based on its present voters, the AfD is a typical right-wing populist party. In the extreme right-wing populist segment it attracts around 60 percent of voters. That is its USP and corresponds with its program and its candidates (e.g., Lewandowsky et al. 2016; Franzmann 2017). Among extreme right-wing oriented non-populists it still achieves almost 20 percent. But once we reach the political center, its levels of support among non-populist voters are almost nil.

Overall, the AfD can only mobilize a few non-populist voters, and only at the far right of the political spectrum. The clear majority of the AfD's voters are both populist in attitude and politically right-wing. This makes the AfD's voter profile easier to describe than that of any other party; as a right-wing party whose voters can currently be mobilized primarily due to the refugee issue (see Chapter 2).

The Greens as a non-populist left-of-center party

Precisely the opposite is true of the Greens. They enjoy their strongest support among the non-populist voters left of center, while in the typical voter segment of the AfD they are unable to gain any votes at all. Most of the differences between the high proportions among non-populist voters and low proportions among populist voters are somewhat statistically significant, meaning that they are not determined by chance.

However, the low number of Green voters in the overall sample means the results for the Greens should be treated with greater caution than results for the CDU/CSU, SPD, Die Linke and the AfD. The same applies to the results for the FDP, whose voters we likewise did not oversample.

The FDP as a party of (non-)populist right-of-center voters

Despite due caution when interpreting the results for the FDP, they too present a clearly recognizable voter pattern, if only in broad terms. The FDP is particularly

likely to win support from non-populist right-of-center voters. At the same time it appears to attract a below-average proportion of right-wing populists, or none at all. While in purely graphical terms, the voter curves for the FDP left of center shows proportionally higher approval from populist than non-populist voters, these relationships may also be attributable to incidental factors in the sample of respondents.

Thus, all that can be said about the FDP – and that only with the greatest caution – is that its voters are more diverse overall in their populist attitudes than those of the Union, and that the FDP is mainly competing with the CDU/CSU for non-populist right-of-center voters.

Methodological appendix

Throughout the study, in all relevant analyses, we use survey weights to adjust the results to the population of German citizens who were eligible to vote as of the 2013 federal election.

Chapter 1

The eight populist items in Figure 1 originate in part from the academic literature (see, for example, Akkerman et al. 2013; Hawkins et al. 2012), and were in part developed independently for this study. Exploratory factor analyses confirm that all items load on a common factor. The existence of a second factor tends not to be confirmed (eigenvalue < 1). Cronbach's alpha for the eight items shows a high degree of internal consistency (alpha = 0.88). Apart from the results of the list experiments, all results are based on a sample of 2,371 people who were eligible to vote in the 2013 federal election.

For the analysis of the social desirability of populist attitudes, a total of three list experiments were carried out during the second panel survey in April 2016. These experiments' basic survey design is illustrated in Figure 27. Details on the design, theory and analysis of the list experiments can be found in Neuner and Wrátil (2017). The figures presented in this study are derived from a simplified and analysis of the list experiments can be found a "difference-in-means" estimator, while Neuner and Wrátil (2017) present results on the basis of the "maximum-likelihood" estimator developed by Imai (2011) and Blair and Imai (2012). Both methods of estimation support the results presented here.

Statements regarding the statistical significance of differences in this chapter are based on the results of regression analyses using education, income, gender, age and voter/non-voter status as control variables.

In the chapter, the survey results used are for the following questions and associated items, which are not described in full in the main text:

"Below are several statements about politics and society. For each statement, please indicate the degree to which you agree with it.

- a. *I am very satisfied with the functioning of democracy in Germany.*
- b. *All in all, democracy is the best political system.*
- c. *Membership in the European Union is a good thing for Germany.*
- d. *In the past, European integration has gone too far – in the future, I'd rather see "less" than "more" Europe.*

strongly agree

mostly agree

mostly disagree

strongly disagree"

FIGURE 27 Example list experiment design

Please indicate how many of the statements you agree with.
Please don't tell us which statements you agree with. Simply indicate how many.

GROUP A

- I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician.
- I wish that the phase-out of nuclear energy could be reversed.
- The state shouldn't take on any more debt, even if that means it can't spend as much.
- Environmental protection is a top priority, even if it hurts economic growth.



_____ Number of statements

GROUP B

- The state shouldn't take on any more debt, even if that means it can't spend as much.
- I wish that the phase-out of nuclear energy could be reversed.
- Environmental protection is a top priority, even if it hurts economic growth.



_____ Number of statements

Note:

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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Chapter 2

For the conjoint experiment, each respondent was presented with five pairs of political candidates. The analyses for all eligible voters are thus based on a total of 23,710 observations or evaluated candidate vignettes (19,140 for voter models). The findings are based on the “average marginal component effects” regression estimator (see, for example, Hainmüller et al. 2014), with standard errors clustered by respondent. All attribute characteristics were chosen entirely randomly. The only exception was that of the political priorities, in which case the first and second priorities were not allowed to be identical. The findings presented are corrected for the resulting differences in the probability of individual vignette profiles, and the results for the second priority are not reported in the chapter.

The basic survey design of the conjoint experiment is illustrated in Figure 28.

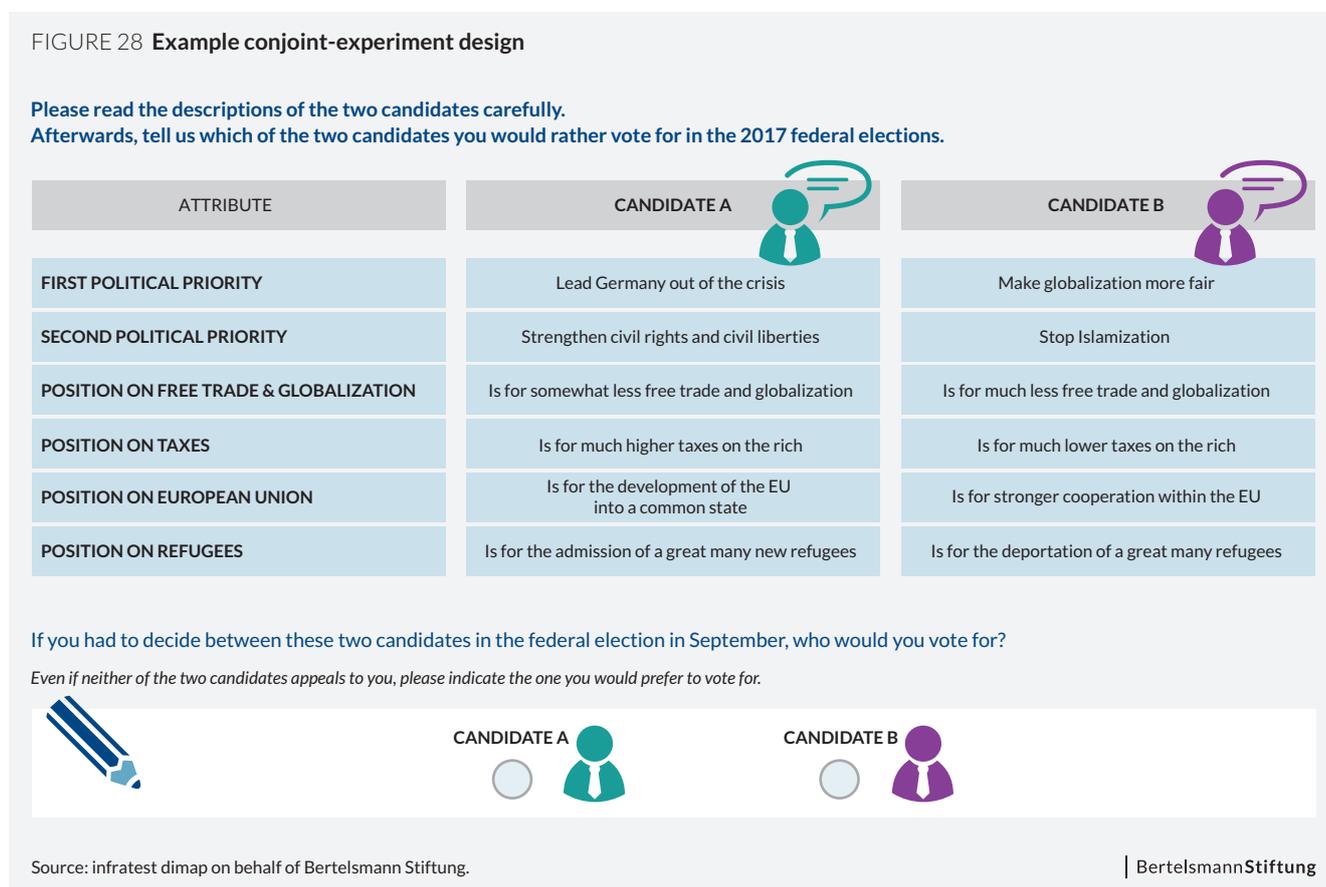


FIGURE 29 Attributes and levels in the conjoint analysis

ATTRIBUTES	CHARACTERISTICS
POLITICAL PRIORITIES (FIRST/SECOND)	<p><i>(Baseline = Promote economic growth)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fight political corruption Overthrow the political elite Strengthen direct democracy (e.g., through referendums) Defend citizens' interests Lead Germany out of the crisis Improve environmental protection Strengthen social justice Stop Islamization Fight crime Strengthen civil rights and civil liberties Make globalization more fair Create a social Europe
POSITION 1 TAXES	<p><i>(Baseline = Is for much lower taxes on the rich)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is for much higher taxes on the rich Is for somewhat higher taxes on the rich Is for somewhat lower taxes on the rich
POSITION 2 ADMISSION OF NEW REFUGEES	<p><i>(Baseline = Is for the admission of a great many new refugees)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is for the admission of some new refugees Is for the deportation of some refugees Is for the deportation of a great many refugees
POSITION 3 FREE TRADE	<p><i>(Baseline = Is for much more free trade and globalization)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is for somewhat more free trade and globalization Is for somewhat less free trade and globalization Is for much less free trade and globalization
POSITION 4 EUROPEAN UNION	<p><i>(Baseline = Is for Germany's withdrawal from the EU)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is for the development of the EU into a common state Is for stronger cooperation within the EU Is for weaker cooperation within the EU

Source: infratest dimap on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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Chapter 3

The findings in this chapter are based on various logistic and multinomial logistic regression analyses. The populism scale emerges as the sum of a respondent's agreements with the eight populist items, newly scaled per item from 0 ("strongly disagree") to 1 ("strongly agree"). In all models, we control for education, income, gender, age and left-right self-placement. For the calculation of all predicted probabilities in the chapter, covariates were fixed at their observed values ("observed value approach"). This enables these probabilities to be interpreted as an estimate of the share in the target population (see Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013).

Party approval: Logistic regression ($n = \text{ca. } 2,200$, depending on the party) for each party with the "strongly approve" and "somewhat approve" answers coded as 1, and "somewhat disapprove" and "strongly disapprove" coded as 0, and the populism scale as the main regressor.

"And when you think about the following parties: How much do you approve of the ...

CDU

CSU

SPD

...

strongly approve

somewhat approve

somewhat disapprove

strongly disapprove"

Party identification: Multinomial logistic regression ($n = 2,371$) with the various parties and no party identification as outcomes, and the populism scale as the main regressor.

"In Germany, many people have long leaned toward a certain political party, even if they occasionally vote for a different party. What about you: Do you lean – generally speaking – toward a certain party? And if so, which one?"

CDU / CSU

SPD

..."

Voting intentions: Multinomial logistic regression ($n = 1,914$) analysis with the various parties as outcomes and the populism scale and the populist attitude factor variable as main regressors.

"Which party would you vote for if the federal election were to be held this Sunday, or would you not participate in the election?"

CDU / CSU

SPD

..."

For further information about the methodology of the study, please contact the authors.

List of figures

Figure 1	What is populism?	15
Figure 2	How populist are the Germans?	16
Figure 3	Populism by educational attainment	17
Figure 4	Populism by income	18
Figure 5	Populism among voters and non-voters	19
Figure 6	Populism and left-right orientation I	21
Figure 7	Populism and left-right orientation II	22
Figure 8	Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy...	24
Figure 9	Approval of democracy as best system ...	24
Figure 10	Approval of membership in the European Union ...	26
Figure 11	European integration has gone too far ...	26
Figure 12	Popular populism – social desirability of populist attitudes	28
Figure 13	Influence of positions and priorities on probability of candidate selection among all eligible voters	34
Figure 14	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among non-populist and populist eligible voters	39
Figure 15	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and CDU/CSU voters	41
Figure 16	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and SPD voters	43
Figure 17	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and Green Party voters	45
Figure 18	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist eligible voters and Die Linke voters	47
Figure 19	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist-inclined eligible voters and FDP voters	48
Figure 20	Influence of positions and priorities on individual issues on the probability of candidate selection among populist-inclined eligible voters and AfD voters	49

Figure 21	Party voters by populism and left-right orientation	52
Figure 22	Populism and party support	54
Figure 23	Populism and party identification	56
Figure 24	Populism and voting intention	58
Figure 25	Change in voting probability	60
Figure 26	Voting intention by populist attitude and left-right orientation	61
Figure 27	Example list experiment design	66
Figure 28	Example conjoint-experiment design	67
Figure 29	Attributes and levels in the conjoint analysis	68

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