How does partisan type influence affective polarization?*

A comparative study of 25 European democracies

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Space for an abstract.

We term identifiers, non-identifiers, and non-partisans.

1 Roadmap

This study examines variation in affective polarization (AP) along **three analytically distinct dimensions**:

1. **Operationalization of partisanship**

   Ingroup defined via **explicit partisan attachment** (identity-based) versus **vote intention/choice** (behavioral anchoring)

2. **Measurement of polarization**

   Attitudinal polarization (thermometer-based measures) versus **behavioral polarization** (conjoint outcomes)

3. **External validity and scope conditions**

   Cross-national variation in the prevalence and distribution of partisan types across European democracies

*Space for acknowledgements. Wordcount: .

2 Empirical strategy

2.1 1. Aggregate (European-level) patterns

First, we establish **European-level benchmarks** of affective polarization, conditioning on **partisan status** and **measurement strategy**.

- Outcome: Affective polarization

- X-axis: Magnitude of AP

- Y-axis: Measurement type (API, Wagner MD, CJ-based AP)

- Shape / color: Partisan type (explicit partisan, implicit partisan, nonpartisan)

Measurement logic:

- **API and CJ-based AP** rely on *identity-based ingroup–outgroup definitions* and allow direct comparison between **attitudinal** and **behavioral** polarization.
- **Wagner's measures** capture *perceived system-level affective differentiation* and uniquely allow inclusion of **nonpartisans**, providing a non-partisan baseline against which partisan polarization can be evaluated.

This step clarifies whether differences across partisan types reflect: - ingroup bias, - behavioral discrimination, - or broader differences in perceived affective structure.

2.2 2. Comparative analysis: cross-national variation

Second, we examine how these patterns **vary across countries**.

- Compare the magnitude and dispersion of AP by partisan type within countries

- Assess whether identity-based and system-level polarization align or diverge cross-nationally

- Evaluate how the **distribution of partisan types** conditions observed levels of affective polarization

This step establishes the **external validity** of the individual-level findings and identifies contextual heterogeneity across European party systems.

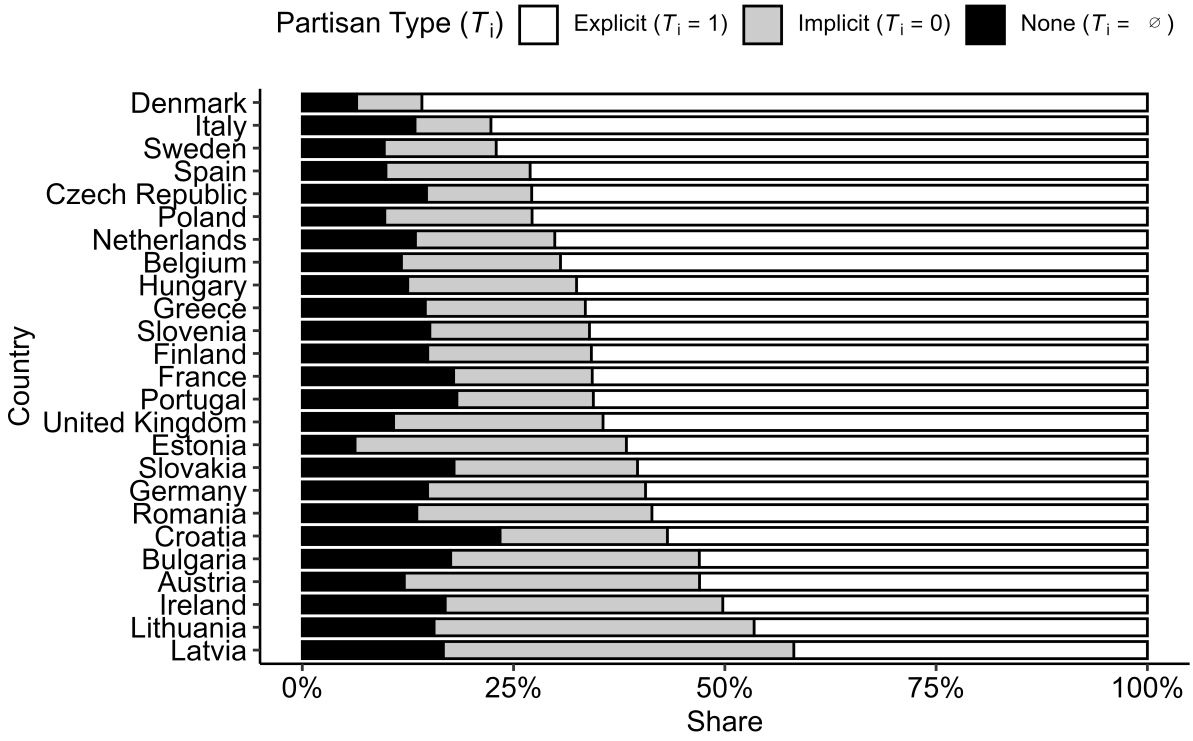

Figure 1: Distribution of partisan types, by country. Stacked horizontal bars show the within-country share (%) of three partisan types: explicit partisans (respondents who reported a subjective attachement to a party, $T_i = 1$), implicit partisans (respondents who reported no attachement but did report a vote preference or intention, $T_i = 0$), and respondents who reported neither (none, $T_i = \emptyset$). Percentages sum to 100% within each country, with country samples containing about $1,100$ respondents each (detailed numbers are reported in appendix section X).

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

3 Data

We use data from Hahm, Hilpert, and König (2024).

4 Measurement

We compare several measurement strategies frequently employed in the context of multi-party systems.

For our behavioral experiment, we conceptually follow Reiljan's API

5 Results

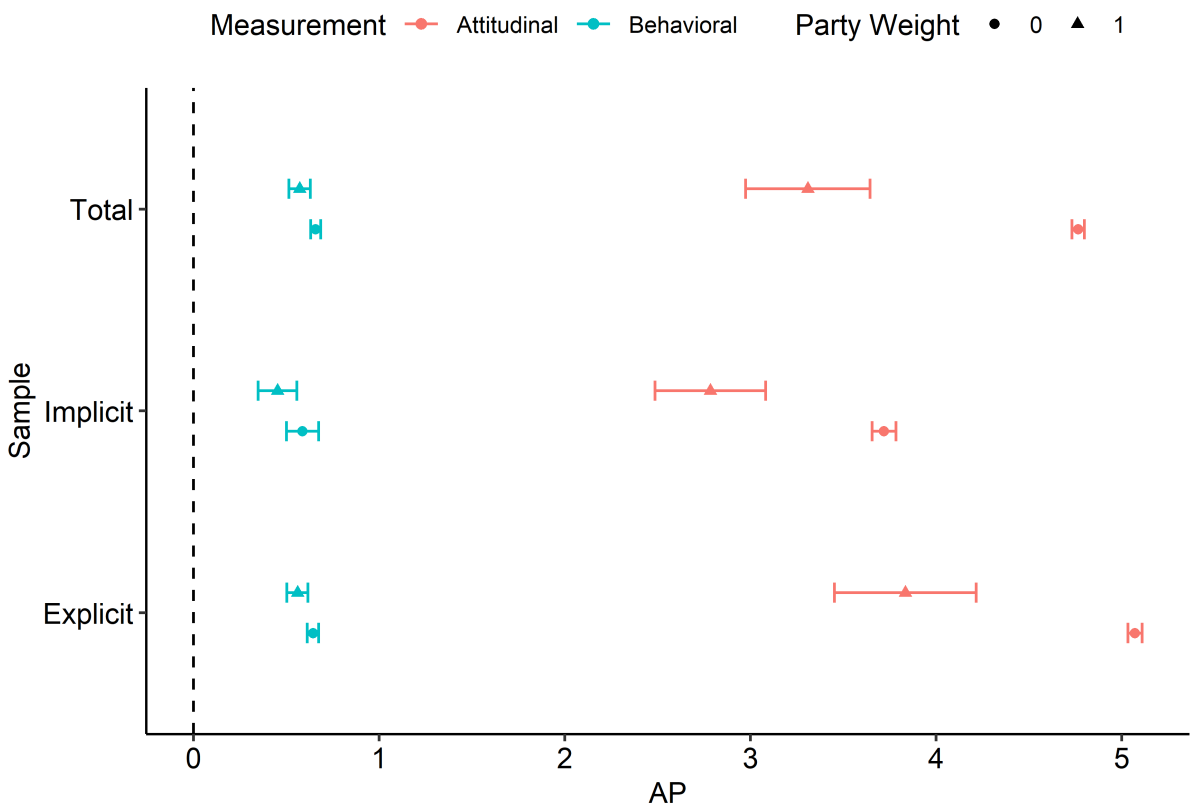

Figure 2: Affective Polarization in EU25 (2019). Note: 1) Explicit: Reported Attachement; Implicit: Denied Attachement but Reported Vote; Total: All Partisans (Expl. and Impl.). 2) Errorbars represent 95% CI. 3) Weighted estimates and errorbars are based on empirical distribution of reported votes in our data. 4) Behavioral Scale (Token): -10 (10 Token allocated to Out-Party and none to Co-Party) to +10 (10 Token allocated to Co-party and 0 to Out-Party); Attitudinal Scale (Thermo): -10 (Thermoscore 10 for Out-Party and 0 for Co-Party) to +10 (Thermoscore 10 for Co-Party and 0 for Out-Party).

Source: Code Notebook 3.2

6 Limitations

Our findings remain limited due to the cross-national nature of our data.

When weighting affective polarization by party size to estimate country — or Europe-level scores, this procedure implicitly assumes that the probability of any individual encountering and correctly identifying another partisan is proportional to the size of parties' electorates. In practice, structural factors may violate this assumption: for example, partisans of smaller or more radical challenger parties may be more salient or more easily recognized, such that their social visibility exceeds their electoral share. Consequently, weighted estimates may over- or understate true horizontal affective polarization in contexts where partisan recognition is systematically biased.

7 References

Hahm, Hyeonho, David Hilpert, and Thomas König. 2024. "Divided We Unite: The Nature of Partyism and the Role of Coalition Partnership in Europe." *American Political Science Review* 118 (1): 69–87. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000266.

8 Appendix

8.1 Sample descriptives

Table 1: Sample composition by country. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	N	Percent
Austria	1277	0.04
Belgium	1305	0.04
Bulgaria	982	0.03
Croatia	1240	0.04

Table 1: Sample composition by country. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	N	Percent
Czech Republic	1135	0.04
Denmark	1200	0.04
Estonia	944	0.03
Finland	1160	0.04
France	1156	0.04
Germany	1188	0.04
Greece	1161	0.04
Hungary	986	0.03
Ireland	1061	0.04
Italy	1172	0.04
Latvia	1148	0.04
Lithuania	1265	0.04
Netherlands	1221	0.04
Poland	1198	0.04
Portugal	1187	0.04
Romania	1480	0.05
Slovakia	1297	0.04
Slovenia	1135	0.04
Spain	1396	0.05
Sweden	1254	0.04
United Kingdom	1279	0.04
Total	29827	0.99

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

Table 2: Sample composition by country and gender. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	Male	Female	Other
Austria	645	630	2
Belgium	729	574	2
Bulgaria	463	518	1
Croatia	545	694	1
Czech Republic	515	618	2
Denmark	690	508	2
Estonia	331	611	2
Finland	586	567	7
France	562	594	0
Germany	587	597	4
Greece	588	572	1
Hungary	493	492	1
Ireland	481	577	3
Italy	603	569	0
Latvia	415	733	0
Lithuania	462	803	0
Netherlands	642	577	2
Poland	540	658	0
Portugal	593	593	1
Romania	837	641	2
Slovakia	550	746	1
Slovenia	569	566	0

Table 2: Sample composition by country and gender. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	Male	Female	Other
Spain	677	718	1
Sweden	648	602	4
United Kingdom	635	641	3
Total	14386	15399	42

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

Table 3: Sample composition by country and age group. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	18 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	> 75
Austria	144	177	249	263	286	142	0
Belgium	197	132	160	235	333	239	3
Bulgaria	57	195	231	250	212	33	0
Croatia	119	251	272	331	205	47	0
Czech Republic	88	187	227	219	281	126	0
Denmark	132	134	139	208	321	249	4
Estonia	56	168	164	283	265	7	0
Finland	125	178	210	242	259	137	1
France	123	176	242	267	279	51	0
Germany	125	184	200	240	313	117	0
Greece	77	202	376	318	136	34	0
Hungary	51	175	196	166	273	117	1
Ireland	128	216	223	187	169	120	0

Table 3: Sample composition by country and age group. Numbers denote respondents.

Country	18 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	> 75
Italy	104	196	264	195	294	98	2
Latvia	78	251	231	338	239	6	0
Lithuania	223	311	257	250	212	2	0
Netherlands	149	126	161	234	340	194	3
Poland	200	342	222	187	196	42	0
Portugal	112	260	289	231	218	67	1
Romania	128	339	373	347	202	65	0
Slovakia	139	223	282	290	250	108	1
Slovenia	97	186	246	284	234	72	0
Spain	125	293	355	305	228	66	1
Sweden	124	165	156	234	297	261	3
United Kingdom	121	184	196	234	268	250	1
Total	3022	5251	5921	6338	6310	2650	21

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

8.2 Experimental setup

Before the behavioral games, Hahm, Hilpert, and König (2024) presented respondents a short background information overview and instructions. For the dictator game, these were: *This game is played by pairs of individuals. Each pair is made up of a Player 1 and a Player 2. Each player will have some information about the other player, but you*

will not be told who the other players are during or after the experiment. The game is conducted as follows: A sum of 10 tokens will be provisionally allocated to Player 1 at the start of each round. Player 1 will then decide how much of the 10 tokens to offer to Player 2. Player 1 could give some, all, or none of the 10 tokens. Player 1 keeps all tokens not given to Player 2. Player 2 gets to keep all the tokens Player 1 offers. You will play this game three times with three different people. In the trust game, the provided information and instruction were: *This game is played by pairs of individuals. Each pair is made up of a Player 1 and a Player 2. Each player will have some information about the other player, but you will not be told who the other players are during or after the experiment. Each player will receive 10 tokens. Player 1 then has the opportunity to give a portion of his or her 10 tokens to Player 2. Player 1 could give some, all, or none of the 10 tokens. Whatever amount Player 1 decides to give to Player 2 will be tripled before it is passed on to Player 2. Player 2 then has the option of returning any portion of this tripled amount to Player 1. Then, the game is over. Player 1 receives whatever he or she keeps from the original 10 tokens, plus anything returned to him or her by Player 2. Player 2 receives their original 10 tokens, plus whatever he or she keeps after returning any portion of the tripled amount to Player 1. You will play this game three times, with three different people. The more tokens you obtain, the more successful you will be.*

In both games respondents were shown a tabular overview of Player 2 after the instructions. Figure 3 shows an example of such a profile along with the interface respondents were provided to assign the 10 tokens. Each round, a new profile was displayed to respondents.

	Player 2
Nationality	United Kingdom
Age	18
Party Affiliation	Labour Party (Labour)
Gender	Female
Religion	Muslim
Social Class	Middle Class

So put the number of tokens you wish to keep in the box labeled "Player 1." Put the tokens you wish to go to Player 2 in the box labeled "Player 2."

Player 1 (You)	0 Token(s)
Player 2	0 Token(s)
Total	0 Token(s)

Figure 3: Example of potential co-player profile.

8.3 Distribution of Y

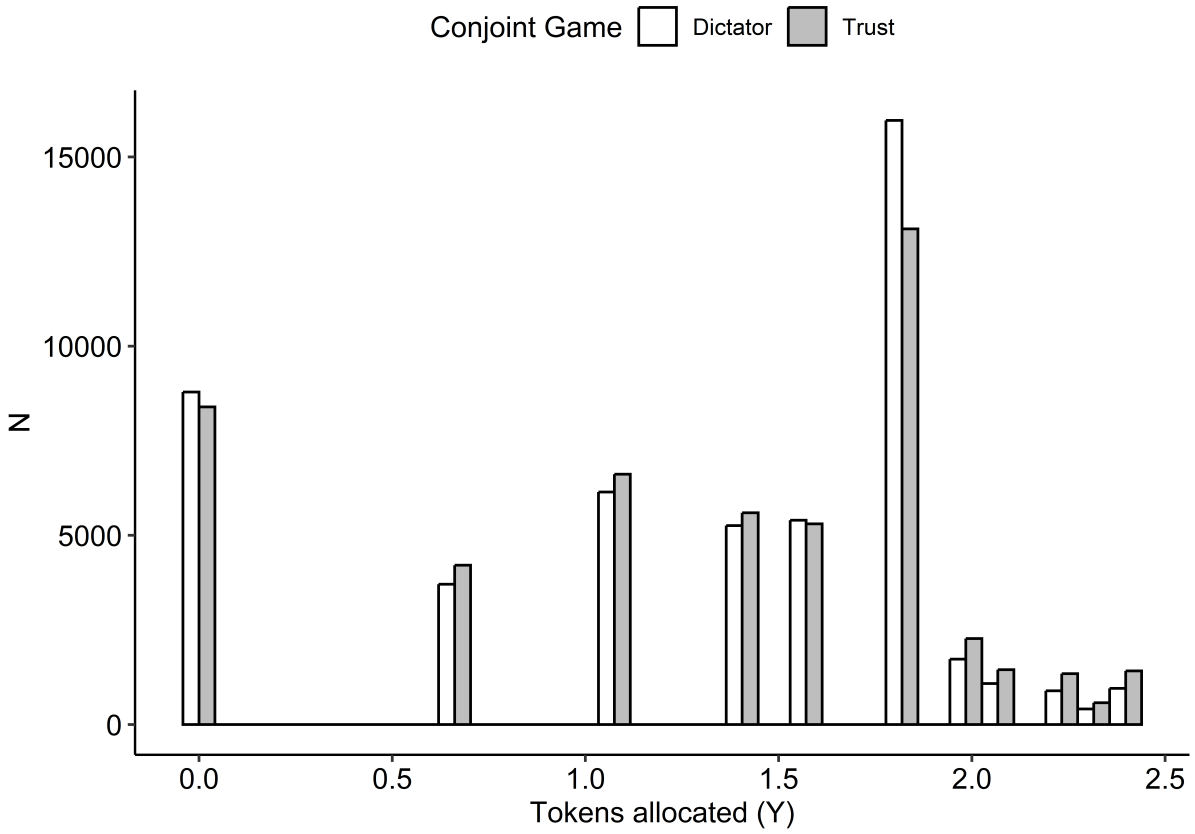

Figure 4: Distribution of token allocation (Y) by game. Dictator game: $Mean = 3.41$, $median = 4$, $SD = 2.35$. Trust game: $Mean = 3.48$, $median = 4$, $SD = 2.49$

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

8.4 Distribution of T and R

Table 4

der_partisan_type	None	Co	Out
0	5123	1948	18465
1	14898	30820	29366

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

8.5 Distribution of Covariates by T

Table 5

Variable	0 N = 25,536[1]	1 N = 75,084[1]
q_lrpos2_z	-0.08 (-0.45, 0.29)	-0.08 (-0.82, 0.66)
q_eupos2_z	0.08 (-0.68, 0.46)	0.08 (-0.68, 0.84)
q_econ_nativism_z	0.15 (-1.03, 0.74)	0.15 (-1.03, 0.74)
q_cult_nativism_z	0.07 (-1.03, 0.62)	0.07 (-1.03, 0.62)
q_satis_demo_country_z	0.30 (-0.81, 1.40)	0.30 (-0.81, 0.30)
q_understand_nat_pol_z	0.12 (-0.65, 0.12)	0.12 (-0.65, 0.90)
q_understand_eu_pol_z	0.22 (-0.50, 0.22)	0.22 (-0.50, 0.94)
q_parties_harm_z	0.25 (-0.38, 0.88)	0.25 (-0.38, 0.88)
q_officials_talk_action_z	0.41 (-0.33, 1.15)	0.41 (-0.33, 1.15)
q_politics_good_evil_z	-0.14 (-0.76, 0.48)	-0.14 (-0.76, 0.48)
q_people_unaware_z	0.40 (-0.81, 1.00)	-0.20 (-0.81, 1.00)
q_leaders_educated_z	0.39 (-0.32, 1.10)	0.39 (-1.03, 1.10)
q_expert_decisions_z	0.16 (-0.49, 0.80)	0.16 (-0.49, 0.80)
q_listen_other_groups_z	0.18 (-0.74, 1.10)	0.18 (-0.74, 1.10)
q_democracy_compromise_z	-0.29 (-0.29, 0.57)	-0.29 (-0.29, 0.57)
q_interest_pol_country_z	0.06 (-0.60, 0.72)	0.06 (-0.60, 0.72)
q_interest_pol_eu_z	-0.28 (-0.96, 0.39)	0.39 (-0.28, 1.06)
q_eval_finance_household_z	0.01 (-0.99, 1.00)	0.01 (-0.99, 1.00)
q_eval_job_z	0.11 (-0.80, 1.03)	0.11 (-0.80, 0.11)
q_eval_econ_country_z	-0.14 (-1.03, 0.76)	-0.14 (-1.03, 0.76)
q_eval_econ_eur_z	0.07 (-0.94, 1.09)	0.07 (-0.94, 1.09)

Table 5

Variable	**0** N = 25,536[1]	**1** N = 75,084[1]
q_risk_taking_z	0.11 (-0.56, 0.78)	0.11 (-0.56, 0.78)
q_future_discount_z	-0.17 (-0.84, 0.50)	-0.17 (-0.84, 0.50)
q_edu_z	-0.08 (-0.73, 0.57)	-0.08 (-0.73, 0.57)
q_age_z	-0.11 (-0.92, 0.64)	0.09 (-0.79, 0.91)
q_religion_en		
catholic	8,606 (34%)	27,379 (36%)
no religion	9,462 (37%)	25,678 (34%)
protstnt	1,881 (7.4%)	7,570 (10%)
other religion	5,470 (21%)	13,791 (18%)
muslim	114 (0.4%)	664 (0.9%)
q_perc_class		
Working class	5,307 (22%)	15,198 (21%)
Lower middle class	4,866 (20%)	13,924 (19%)
Middle class	12,060 (49%)	35,019 (48%)
Upper middle class	2,055 (8.4%)	7,622 (10%)
Upper class	191 (0.8%)	1,310 (1.8%)
q_rural_urban		
Rural area or village	5,819 (23%)	17,093 (23%)

Table 5

	0	**1**
Variable	N = 25,536[1]	N = 75,084[1]
Small or middle sized town	9,069 (36%)	28,418 (38%)
Large town	10,573 (42%)	29,298 (39%)
q_gender		
Male	10,939 (43%)	39,456 (53%)
Female	14,565 (57%)	35,514 (47%)
Other	32 (0.1%)	114 (0.2%)

[1] Median (Q1, Q3); n (%)

Source: Code Notebook 3.1

8.6 Robustness

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