

# Responsive or Responsible? The Reputational Cost of Political Compromises

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## Abstract

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## Introduction

### Ethnic or Civic Conception of *the People*

**Ethnic Conception hypothesis (*H1*):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is lower for an ethnic conception of the ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*).e.

**Exclusive National Identity hypothesis (*H2a*):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is higher for an ethnic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*) when the respondent adheres to an exclusive national identity.

**Far Right Party ID hypothesis (*H2b*):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is higher for an ethnic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*) when the respondent votes for a far right party.

## Data, Measurement & Method

### Data

The survey experiment is conducted in Germany between the 13th of October 2021 and the 11th of November 2021. The sample, recruited through [Respondi](#), consists of 8,000 participants (based on the power analysis presented in Figure ??) of 18 years and older. Respondi works with opt-in respondents, so we have implemented quota on age, gender, and education. Moreover, we measure some more demographic background variables (see the [Measurement Section](#)). Balance checks are conducted to demonstrate whether certain categories are over represented in a certain experimental group (see [the Methods Section](#), Figure 1). The study has been approved by the [Research Ethics Review Committee](#) of the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (see the approval [here](#)). To ensure good quality of our data, two attention checks are included. Each respondent failing the attention check will be excluded and replaced with another ‘good’ response.

### Measurement

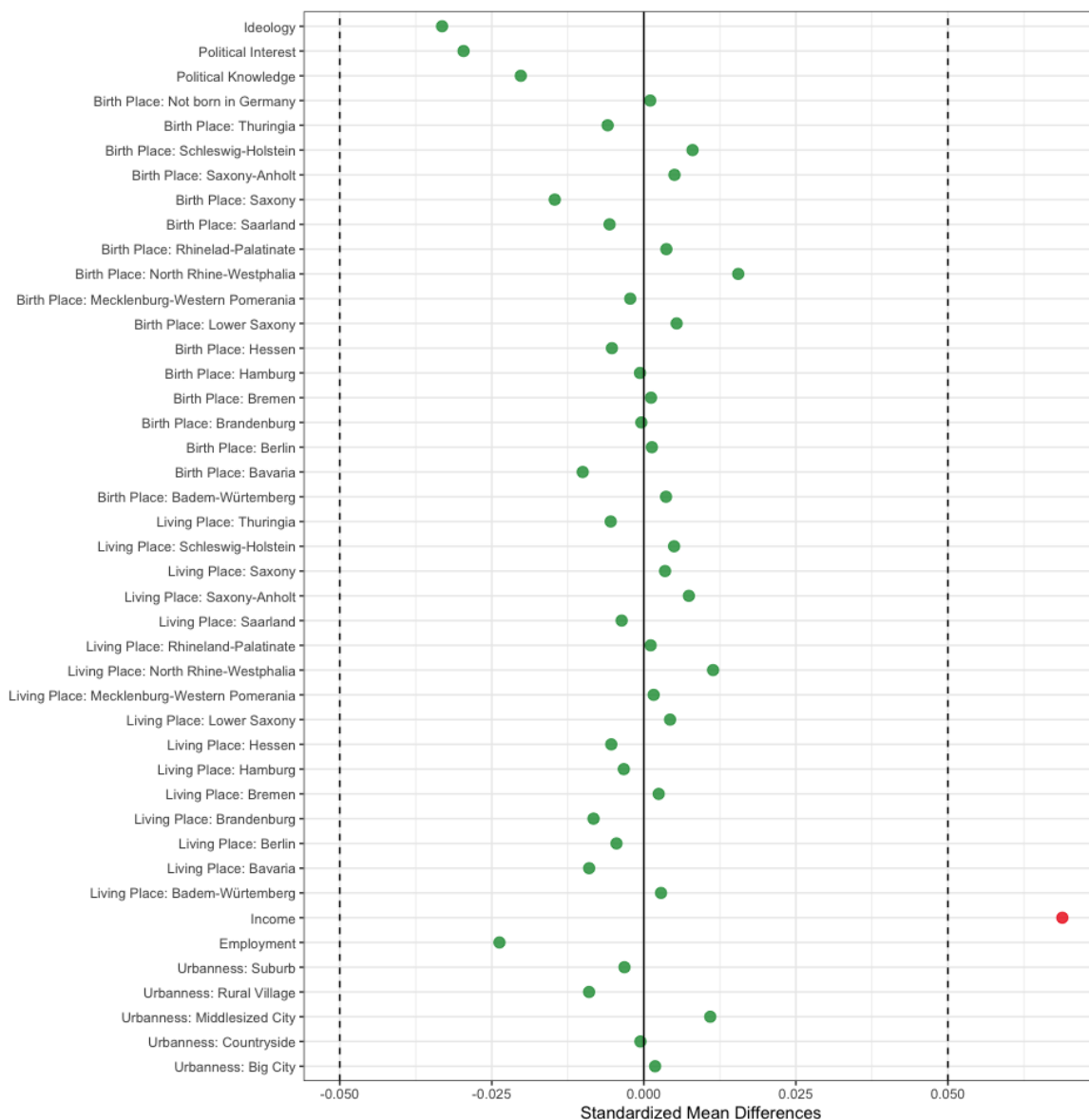
**Dependent Variables** Measuring populist attitudes, three of the six items mention *the people*. We rely on those three items in the populism scale. See Table 1 in the [Appendix](#) for the exact phrasing of the question. Each item is used on a 5-point likert scale: from **very much disagree** (value of 0) till **very much agree**

(value of 5). The average for each of the items lies between 3 and 4 (with a standard deviation around 1), meaning that people are neutral till positive about these statements.

**Experimental Condition** Given the historical context of Germany, we randomize whether *the people* is translated into German using either the civic conception (i.e. *Bürger*) or the ethnic conception (i.e. *Volk*). 50.2% of the respondents (3347 in total) got the civic conception treatment, and 49.8% of the respondents (3317 in total) was randomized into the ethnics conception treatment.

**Covariates** Because Respondi works with an opt-in sample, we have background information on age, gender, educational level, geographical region, vote recall, employment, and income. In our [online compendium](#), we demonstrate all the descriptive information. As detailed in our pre-analysis plan, we only include variables as covariates that are unbalanced. As Figure ?? shows, only the income covariate is unbalanced accross the experimental groups. We therefore add this covariate to the regression analyses (H2a and H2b).

Figure 1: Balance Checks



## Method

To test the *Ethnic Conception hypothesis* (H1), we conducted a difference in means for the group who received the ethnic and the civic question wording, for all populist items containing a reference to *the people*. To test whether H1 is conditional upon having an exclusive national identity (*H2a*) and/or voting for a far right party (*H2b*) we use linear multivariate regressions, with an interaction between the treatment conditions and the variable of interest in the heterogeneous treatment (i.e. respectively having an exclusive national identity and voting for a far right party).

## Framing Effects of Ethnic or Civic Conception of *the People*

### Pre-Registered Hypotheses

Figure 2: Results: H1

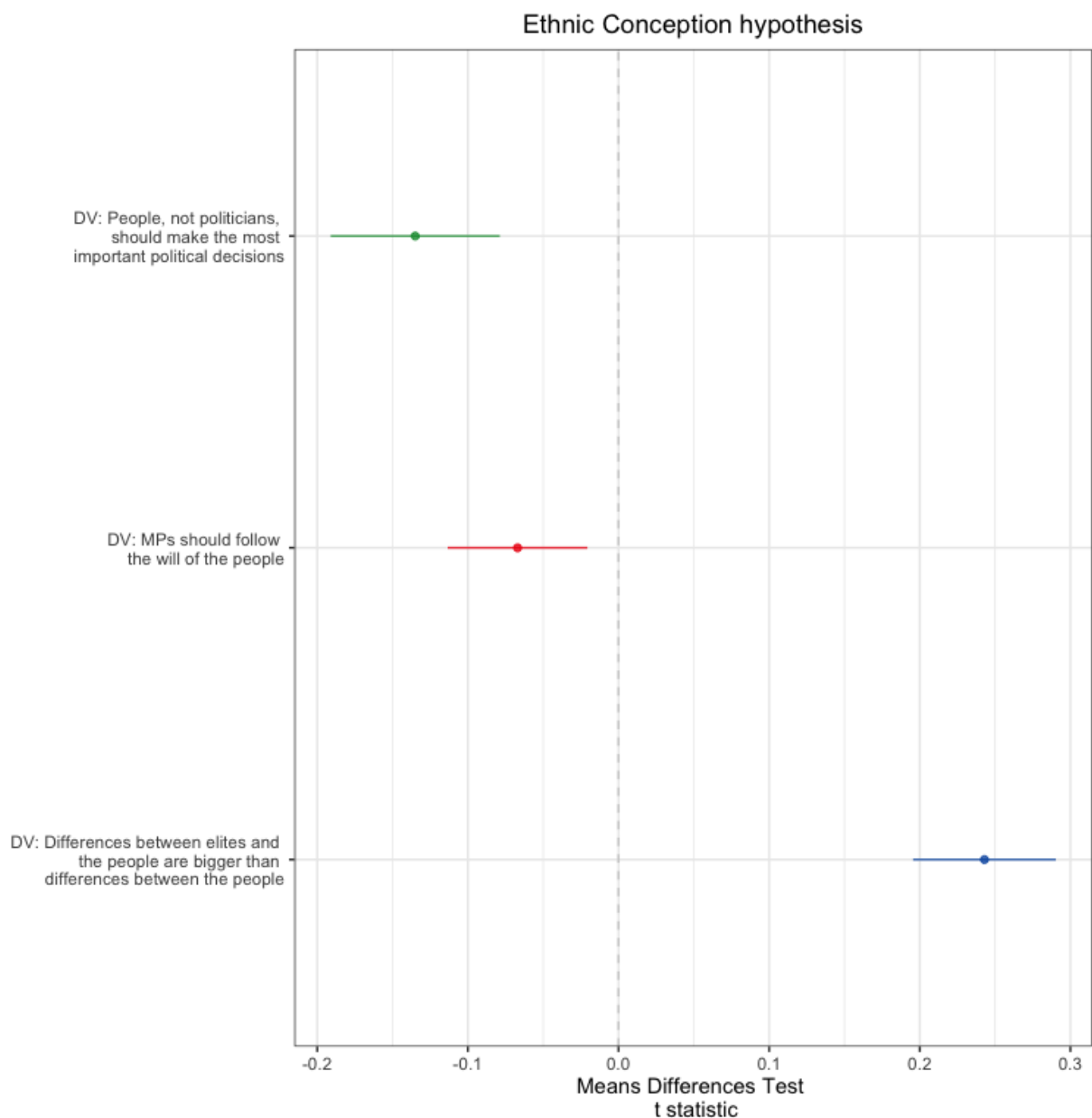
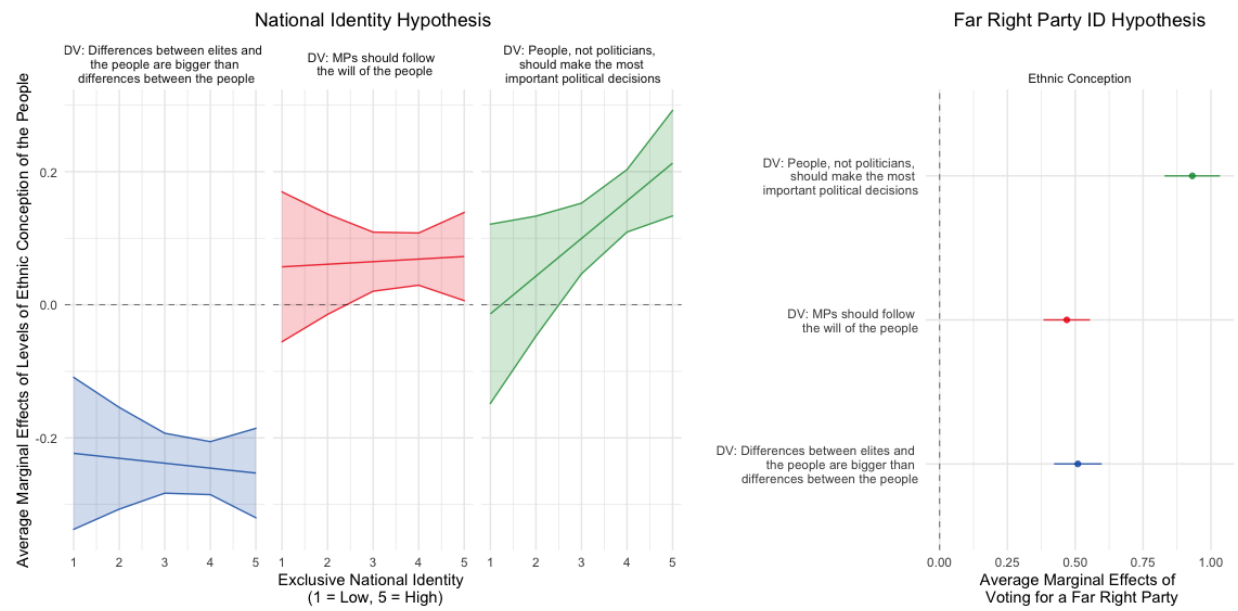


Figure 3: Results: H2



Explorations

Discussion

## References

## Appendix A. Wording of the questionnaire

Table 1: Survey Questions - DV

Variable	Wording ENG	Wording DE
Item 2 (DV1)	The people, not politicians, should make the most important political decisions	[Die Bürger/Das Volk], und nicht die Politiker, sollte(n) die wichtigsten politischen Entscheidungen treffen
Item 3 (DV2)	he politicians in the German Bundestag need to follow the will of the people	Die Abgeordneten des Deutschen Bundestags müssen dem Willen [der Bürger/des Volkes] Folge leisten
Item 4 (DV3)	The political differences between elites and the people are greater than the differences among citizens	Die politischen Unterschiede zwischen den Eliten und [den Bürgern/dem Volk] sind größer als die Unterschiede (zwischen Bürgern)