Electoral Studies 50 (2017) 103–115

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Electoral Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud

# Exit to the right? Comparing far right voters and abstainers in Western Europe

Trevor J. Allen

*Central Connecticut State University, Department of Political Science, United States*

ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*
Received 7 October 2016
Received in revised form
6 July 2017
Accepted 20 September 2017
Available online 21 September 2017

ABSTRACT

This article compares far right voters in Western Europe with citizens who abstain from electoral participation. Political dissatisfaction is thought to motivate both forms of political behavior. Low levels of formal education are also significantly predictive of both abstention and far right support. This study implements a multilevel multinomial logistic regression comparing nonvoters, far right voters, and voters for other parties from 2002 to 2012. The results suggest that common predictors distinguishing far right voters, such as education and political distrust, do not distinguish far right voters from abstainers. However, measures of social integration, including union membership, self-reported social activity, and trust in other people, are positively predictive of far right over abstention. Conversely, far right party voters and voters for other parties display similar levels of political interest and social integration. Other issues, such as Euroskepticism and anti-immigrant attitudes are more common among far right voters, and distinguish them from both other voters and those who just stay home.



One of the most impactful developments in Western European party politics in the last quarter century has been the emergence and persistence of 'new' far right parties. Since their ascendance in the mid-1980s, these parties and their supporters have attracted considerable political and scholarly attention. The research on far right voters consistently finds certain attitudinal and sociodemographic characteristics to be predictive of far right support and generally overrepresented in far right electorates. That is, much of the research concerned with far right electorates compares far right voters to voters for other parties, and finds anti-immigrant, Euroskeptic, and anti-political establishment attitudes predictive of far right support. However, to the extent that far right parties mobilize against 'politics as usual' (Ennser, 2012), potential far right voters seemingly have another option: abstain from voting altogether.

Previous scholarship has considered voters *vis a vis* nonvoters extensively (Franklin, 2004; Gallego, 2014; Aarts and Wessels, 2005), and literature comparing far right voters to other parties' voters is similarly voluminous (Arzheimer, 2009; Betz, 1994; Ivarsflaten, 2008). However, little research considers similarities and differences between far right party voters and abstainers, and nonvoters are often either dropped from analyses of far right electorates or lumped in with other parties' voters (Allen, 2017; Arzheimer, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2008). However, there are important empirical and theoretical reasons to consider nonvoters alongside far right party supporters.

Significant systemic changes to West European politics and societies in recent decades anticipated the availability of some segments of the population for far right parties, as well as a decline in electoral participation (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Thomassen, 2005). Increased education, declining partisanship, and waning associational ties are all associated with decreased turnout and the 'thawing' of the cleavages that historically structured party competition in advanced industrial states (Norris, 2002). Attenuated social bases of partisanship incentivized mainstream party convergence, which also opened the door for far right parties (Ignazi, 2003), as issues like immigration and European integration became salient for potential far right voters, but mainstream parties held similar positions on these issues or did not address them. At the same time, declining membership of political parties and intermediary organizations raised the costs of political participation for those reliant on social cues, while simultaneously lowering the stakes of elections as parties converged, disincentivizing participation (Thomassen, 2005). Thus, because declining voter turnout and the rise of the far right occurred at around the same historical time, and because there is significant overlap in the sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes associated with both behaviors, it is worth considering them together. That is, my

*E-mail address:* allentj@ccsu.edu.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.09.012
0261-3794/

research asks why some disaffected citizens choose 'exit' and abstain from electoral politics, while others 'voice' their dissatisfaction with mainstream parties and politicians by voting for the far right.[1]

In what follows, I examine various factors that have distinguished far right voters and abstainers from mainstream party voters in prior analyses, and the historical trends responsible for those factors. I then fit a multinomial logistic regression model to compare three outcomes: far right vote, vote for another party, and abstention. I use data from four waves of the European Social Survey (2004–2012), which contains many variables relevant to political participation and social trust. The results suggest that common attitudinal predictors distinguishing far right voters from other voters, such as education and dissatisfaction with government, do not distinguish far right voters from abstainers. However, far right voters are just as socially integrated and interested in politics as voters for other parties, and significantly more so than abstainers. Other attitudes, such as Euroskepticism and anti-immigrant sentiments are also more common among far right voters, and distinguish them from those who just stay home.

## 1. Historical trends and (non)voter characteristics

Perhaps the most profound change to Western European societies in recent decades is increased levels of formal education (Dassonneville et al., 2014. 2012; Dalton, 2014, 1984). Education undergirds several interrelated phenomena contributing to both the rise of new parties and secular decline in turnout. Increasingly educated—'cognitively mobilized'—post-war generations were less reliant on political cues from mainstream parties, facilitating partisan dealignment in many Western democracies (e.g. Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Dalton, 1984). Educated citizens were also less likely to live and work in the communities in which they were born and raised, and therefore less connected to closely knit social and religious networks of those communities. Postindustrial economies and education levels also impacted the size and composition of unions and churches, effecting both mobilization and partisanship (Best, 2011; Gallego, 2009). Thus, membership in many secondary associations declined, and 'party-group' linkages correspondingly weakened (Norris, 2002). Although for some, increased levels of formal education compensated for decreased party-group linkages by providing educated citizens with the cognitive resources to digest information from campaigns and elections based on issues or candidates (Dalton, 2013), this resource was unavailable to less educated citizens, who have been shown to be overrepresented both among abstainers and in far right electorates (respectively Dassonneville et al., 2014; Mudde, 2007).[2]

More educated and geographically mobile citizens meant greater differentiation of interests within the electorate, meaning many voters were less likely to be faithfully represented by traditional political parties, or linked to them through intermediary associations like unions or churches. Greater differentiation of interests fostered the development of catchall parties from parties of mass integration (Williams, 2009; Kirchheimer, 1966), typified by social democrats 'third way' trajectory as citizens became more affluent and unions changed in size and composition (Kitschelt, 2004). Postindustrial economies and educational structure eroded the size of the blue-collar electorate and increased the number of skilled, white-collar workers, incentivizing Social Democratic parties to move rightward economically and toward the 'New Left' socially. Center right parties also pivoted to the center on issues like immigration and European integration after a period of polarization (Ignazi, 2003; see Mudde, 2007, p. 239). Less educated, blue-collar voters found themselves open to the authoritarian appeals of the 'new radical right', as they were no longer inoculated against far right support, or necessarily compelled to support the center left, by intermediate union ties. Mainstream convergence and perhaps vestigial partisan leanings meant the center right was not an alternative to the centripetal center left (Mudde, 2007).

The electoral appeal of mainstream parties is maximized by their courtship of the median voter (Downs, 1957; Arnold et al., 2012). After the education revolution, the so-called 'new middle class' became the largest voting bloc in postindustrial polities (Kitschelt, 1994; Kriesi, 1998; Stubager, 2010). Thus, centripetalism was eminently rational for the vote maximizing party. The post-industrial distribution of voters benefited parties in the ideological center, and center parties are advantaged in coalition formation (Ezrow, 2005). This meant that center left and center right adopted positions on immigration and European integration were largely similar, and anathema many voters with certain sociodemographic and attitudinal traits (Hooghe et al., 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Kitschelt and McGann, 1995). Similarly, as mainstream parties converge, they also lose appeal to peripheral voters (Spoon and Klüver, 2016), as incentives for marginal voters to participate electorally are positively correlated with the ideological distance between parties (Thomassen, 2005, p. 19). The decline of unions also raised the costs of voting, especially among less educated peripheral voters (Gray and Caul, 2000), and a decline in the integrative function of trade unions and proliferation of new parties contributed to lower turnout by and far right support among Old Left voters (Gallego, 2010). The same argument can be extended to the decline of intermediary organizations generally (Norris, 2002). [3] This has implications for electoral participation due to both a decline in party-group linkages, and also when explanations to do with something like social capital or social pressure are operative (Powell, 1986; Putnam, 2000a; Rydgren, 2009).

Mainstream party convergence is associated with widespread political dissatisfaction. Presented with unpalatable (or indistinguishable) mainstream alternatives, citizens' propensity to vote for the perennially oppositional populist far right, or abstain from voting altogether increased. This has far reaching implications if a group of less-educated, dissatisfied voters—many of whom have legitimate grievances or fears associated with the transition to advanced capitalism (Rydgren 2013)—find their only plausible outlet for political 'voice' to be a party family that remains uncoalitionable in many settings.[4]

### 1.1. Sociodemographics and attitudes

These societal changes produced areas of considerable sociodemographic and attitudinal overlap between abstainers and far right voters. At the individual level, these trends included declining trust in parties and politicians (Hooghe et al., 2011), as well as declining membership in secondary associations (Norris, 2002).

[1] I use Hirschman's (1970) dichotomy between 'exit' and 'voice' as economic and political tools available to dissatisfied consumers as a point of departure, observing how political dissatisfaction seemingly motivates both behaviors.

[2] Moreover, increased higher education has not been evenly distributed in Europe since the 1980s, but has disproportionately benefited historically privileged groups, not the occupational profiles most overrepresented in far right electorates (Blanden et al., 2005).

[3] For instance, Christian church attendance has been shown to inoculate right-of-center voters against far right support due to the association between church attendance and center-right party allegiance (Arzheimer and Carter, 2009).

[4] The Republican front in France and Rutte's unwillingness to coalesce with Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom are two recent examples. See also Dassonneville et al., 2014 on abstention and alienation.

And indeed, dissatisfaction with (mainstream) political parties and national parliaments separately predicts both abstention from voting and far right support (in Belgium: Hooghe et al., 2011; Lubbers et al., 2002). Political dissatisfaction is also correlated with education level (Dassonneville et al., 2012). Because it reduces the costs of electoral participation and partially compensates for lack of associational ties, level of education is both a key variable in turnout inequality (Gallego, 2014; Verba et al., 1978), and an important predictor of far right support (Mudde, 2007). Relatedly, younger citizens are overrepresented among both nonvoters and voters for far right parties (respectively, Franklin, 2004; Arzheimer and Carter 2009), even controlling for their superior levels of education (Gallego, 2014), indicating the importance of diminished ties to parties and intermediary organizations. Apart from the effects of party mobilization through intermediary associations (Norris, 2002; Powell, 1986), more abstract measures of social capital related to group membership have also been used to predict both abstention and far right support, although the results for the latter behavior are mixed (Oesch, 2008; Rydgren, 2009).

To be sure, there are likely to be differences between far right party voters and abstainers too. Anti-immigrant attitudes are also hugely predictive of far right support in Western Europe (Ivarsflaten, 2008), and these parties are regularly referred to as 'anti-immigrant parties' (e.g. Van der Brug et al., 2000). It is unclear if anti-immigrant attitudes should be so predictive of abstention from voting, especially independent of low education or occupation sketched above, although anti-immigrant sentiment may be present in nonvoters by way of those mechanisms.[5] Because far right parties have seemingly consolidated around a dimension of party competition largely defined by their anti-immigrant politics (Bornschier, 2010), one might expect disaffected citizens who harbor anti-immigrant attitudes to support the far right rather than abstain, if immigration is a salient issue or social desirability is not inhibiting (self-declared) far right support (Oesch, 2008).

There are also potential differences with respect to the economic preferences of far right voters and abstainers. Nonvoters tend to be economically to the left of voters generally (Gallego, 2014), which is consistent with the sketch of center left parties rightward economic tack above. However, evidence on far right voters economic preferences is decidedly mixed (De Lange, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2005). Even so, there is some evidence to suggest conservative economic preferences for far right voters (Allen, 2017; Derks, 2006). Likewise, far right parties also generally support center right economic platforms when in or supporting of government (Bale, 2003).

Another important attitudinal predictor of far right support that might distinguish far right voters from non-voters is Euroskepticism (Arzheimer, 2009; Mudde, 2007). In some respects the far right's Euroskepticism is derived from the same place as their anti-immigrant politics, which also emphasizes national identity and country-level jurisdiction over immigration and asylum policy (Hooghe et al., 2002). In this, the same logic applies: far right voters should be more Euroskeptic than nonvoters in that Euroskepticism is a central plank in many far right platforms (Mudde, 2007). However, given the importance of various political dissatisfaction measures in predicting abstention (e.g. Hadjar and Beck, 2010), the widely perceived failure of European representative institutions to actually represent (e.g. Farrell and Scully, 2007), and the persistent 'second-order' nature of EP elections in Western Europe (Schmitt, 2005), nonvoters may be less supportive of European political institutions than voters for other parties not on the far right. As such, although dissatisfaction with and distrust of national governments are thought to be similar among nonvoters and far right supporters, Euroskepticism is more likely the purview of the far right.

## 2. Hypotheses

The foregoing discussion yields several conceptually interrelated hypothesized similarities and differences between far right voters, voters for other parties, and nonvoters. That is, with respect to turnout versus abstention, variables like age, education, membership in trade unions or other associations, and attitudes like political dissatisfaction are likely correlated for a variety of reasons alluded to above. However, each is hypothesized to exert an independent effect.

Age can be important with respect to far right voting and abstention (respectively, Lubbers et al., 2002; Gallego, 2014). Younger citizens are less likely to identify with a political party, which opens them to appeals from new parties such as the far right. In addition, they are less likely to turn out on election day, if they engage in politics at all. Moreover, this age gap has increased in recent decades (Wattenberg, 2011).[6] Therefore, it is reasonable to nonvoters will be younger than mainstream party voters.

However, age may have a more varied effect on far right voting. Because of the far right's courtship of Old Left voters, and the fact that the far right has been around long enough to potentially establish a loyal base (Arzheimer, 2009), it is likely that far right voters will be older than nonvoters on average. At the same time, younger citizens are typically more available to new parties consistent with their values because of their generally weaker party identification. Thus, there may be a U-Shaped age distribution to far right electorates.

**H1**. *Young citizens are more likely to be nonvoters and far right voters. Nonvoters are likely to be younger than far right voter.*

Lower levels of formal education are similarly associated with both far right support and abstention from voting in the cases selected for this project (respectively, Mudde, 2007; Gallego, 2014).[7] Education may also be part of the mechanism by which people come to support far right parties or fail to reliably cast ballots. Higher levels of education raise levels of subjective self-efficacy and decrease reliance on partisan cues (Dalton, 2014). To the extent that uneducated voters lack the cognitive resources to fully evaluate the circumstances of a given election they may be less inclined than their more educated compatriots to cast ballots without prompting from friends and groups. Thus, as mobilization efforts by parties in the electorate changed and membership in secondary associations declined, lack of education became powerful predictor of abstention (Dassonneville et al., 2012; Gallego, 2014).

There is also no shortage of plausible theoretical linkages relating educational attainment with a voter's propensity to

[5] Hirschmann (1970) cites the paradoxical advantages of a somewhat disengaged citizenry, who can use their normally dormant political resources when confronted with a decline in parties' representativeness (also, Dahl, 1961). Because there is evidence to suggest that when immigration is salient, policy is more restrictive by way of public opinion (Howard, 2009; Goodman, 2014), it is possible that nonvoters may be slightly to the 'right' of non-far right voters on the issue. However, in the cases under consideration in this project, which feature far right parties, those potential 'nonvoters' may be voting for the far right. Thus there is some ambivalence.

[6] Perceptions of mainstream party convergence in the 1990s likely disincentivized participation during young voters' formative years (Esser and De Vreese, 2007; Franklin, 2004).

[7] Education does not seem to predict turnout inequality in states with compulsory voting, for instance, which I do not consider here (Gallego, 2014; also, Verbe et al., 1978).

support the far right. Voters with lower levels of educational attainment may be more likely to perceive themselves to be in direct economic competition with immigrants and harbor anti-immigrant attitudes for that reason (Arzheimer, 2009). Higher education may also promote liberal, 'universal,' values anathema to the far right's moral traditionalism and deference to established patterns of authority (Bornschier, 2010).[8] Furthermore, citizens with lower levels of education may also be less socially integrated (Gallego, 2014), which may have implications for their propensity to support the far right due to lower levels of social capital or familiarizing interactions with 'the other' (Rydgren, 2009). As such, there is ample reason to suggest that far right voters and nonvoters will likely be less educated than voters for other parties. However, because education so thoroughly undergirds the story for both far right support and abstention, it is unclear if differences should emerge between these groups *ceteris paribus*.

**H2**. *Education will negatively predict far right support and abstention as compared with voters for other parties. There will be no significant difference between level of education of far right voters and nonvoters.*

Membership in intermediary associations is also thought to stimulate electoral participation. Both primary associations, such as family or close-knit groups, and secondary associations, like unions or churches, are thought to be important predictors with respect to both far right support and abstention (Rydgren, 2009). Part of the integrative function of these groups has already been discussed. Mobilization of or by secondary associations may reduce the costs of voting for members, or increase the costs of nonvoting due to pressure from other members (Gallego, 2014; Uhlaner, 1989). Two important associations in this regard are unions and churches, membership in which is thought to promote allegiance to center left or center right, respectively (Arzheimer and Carter, 2009; Gray and Caul, 2000; Radcliff and Davis, 2000), although the effect of unions in this regard has recently been challenged (Gallego, 2009). In addition to unions and churches, other more proximate social relationships including family may be important, especially when comparing nonvoters to far right supporters. The logic being that voters who are unattached to historically more politicized organizations may support nontraditional parties, but those who are unmoored entirely will not derive any intangible benefits from association, or face pressure from their associational peers, and therefore will not participate politically at all (Rydgren, 2009).

**H3**. *Far right voters and nonvoters are less likely than other voters to be members of unions or churches. Far right voters are more likely than nonvoters to be otherwise socially active.*

Social integration may also have more intangible benefits like greater subjective self-efficacy or social capital that might promote political participation of various forms (Rydgren, 2009; Oesch, 2008). The fourth hypothesis is meant to assess the extent to which these other intangible qualities of civic engagement may be operative, independent from the mechanical effects of group membership. I consider a measurement of trust in other people separately to gauge psychological antecedents of far right support or abstention (Rahn et al., 1999), rather than the potential political mobilization that comes with group membership, either through political parties targeting particular groups for mobilization, associations' endorsement of parties, or social pressures to affiliate with one party over the other. Previous research has reached ambiguous conclusions regarding social capital and far right support (Rydgren, 2009), but some notion of 'in-group' versus 'out-group' is a puissant and elemental component of far right populism and the populist attitudes of far right party supporters (Akkerman et al., 2014).

Through the mechanisms of social isolation referenced above, it is hypothesized that nonvoters will exhibit less trust in others than voters for parties not on the far right. This is part and parcel to explanations for abstention associated with subjective self-efficacy and also relies on trust in others being at least in part generated from frequent interactions with others (e.g. Putnam, 2000a). Indeed, because far right voters are likely to maintain some idea of an in-group, even if that in-group is abstracted to some nostalgic, chimeric, nation (Rydgren, 2009; Buruma, 2007), nonvoters may trust others even less than far right supporters do.

**H4**. *Far right voters and nonvoters will trust others less than voters for other parties.*

Nonvoters will trust others less than far right party voters.

In addition to hypotheses about voter characteristics, there are relevant attitudinal traits associated with far right support, abstention, and support for other parties. One of the most important attitudes under consideration in this project—and indeed part of this project's *raison d'être*—is political dissatisfaction. Declining trust in parties and institutions is well documented in advanced industrial democracies (e.g. Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002), and the period of declining trust corresponds to the decline in voter turnout and rise of the far right. However, given that political dissatisfaction is likely a driver of both behaviors, there is little reason to hypothesize that political dissatisfaction should be greater among nonvoters than far right supporters, even though far right parties are political entities, because they are seemingly perennially oppositional and deftly maneuver the party space to capitalize on mainstream party failure (Ignazi, 2003; Williams, 2010). Indeed, similarity on this score would empirically justify the 'exit' versus 'voice' framework described above.

**H5**. *Far right voters and nonvoters will be less satisfied with parties and politicians than voters for other parties. Far right voters and nonvoters will exhibit similar levels of dissatisfaction.*

Related to, but conceptually distinct from, dissatisfaction with parties and politicians are attitudes toward European integration. It is questionable that there would be any additional impact of negative EU attitudes predicting abstention beyond what is already accounted for in distrust of national politicians and parties. As such, differences between nonvoters and voters for parties other than far right parties are expected to be minimal. Conversely, because Euroskepticism is central to far right platforms in Western Europe (Mudde, 2007), it is expected that far right voters will exhibit significantly greater hostility toward the European Project than both nonvoters and other parties' voters.

**H6**. *Far right voters will be more hostile toward European integration than both voters for traditional parties and nonvoters.*

There are also a variety of other factors relevant for the political behaviors under consideration. The analyses below also address attitudes toward wealth redistribution, immigration, and urban-rural domicile. These variables represent durable cleavages in Western Europe relevant to far right politics. Urban-rural is worth including given its relationship to the variables reflecting social cohesion above (Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011). Attitudes toward redistribution and immigration reflect stakes in Old and New politics, respectively. I also include a measure of political interest, to help parse the independent effects of education (Dassonneville et al., 2012), and control for gender. There are also important features of party systems that facilitating the emergence and

[8] Although it might be pointed out that that deference apparently does not imply allegiance to traditional political parties (see Kitschelt and McGann, 1995).

persistence of far right parties, as well as citizens' propensity to abstain from elections. Although these are important predictors, they assume the humbler status of control variables in the analyses below, as they are somewhat ancillary to the story of political dissatisfaction via mainstream convergence, education revolution, and declining associations sketched in this and the previous section. Moreover, the association between these predictors and the outcomes of interest are broadly known so they do not require more specific hypotheses. I revisit these variables in the discussion.

### 2.1. Data and methods

For this analysis I use data from the second, third, fourth, and sixth rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS), covering elections from 2002 to 2012. [9] The ESS is a widely used dataset on for research on far right support, which facilitates comparison with existing findings (e.g. Oesch, 2008; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Bohman and Hjerm, 2016). For the purposes of this study, ESS also includes a variety of characteristics and attitudes that are appropriate to test for the foregoing hypotheses about both voting and social integration. Finally, because I am using combining multiple waves of the dataset in this analysis, it is necessary for data to be commensurable across waves. ESS satisfies this requirement to a great extent.

For this analysis, I include only countries and elections that have featured at least one far right party. This approach is simpler and more transparent than attempting to estimate 'potential' far right support in elections no far right party is contesting, or in countries where no far right party exists. Indeed, such estimates would also be inappropriate for this study precisely because some of these potential far right voters either abstain or vote for other parties. Thus, the universe of cases is 31 elections contested by far right parties in 11 European states.[10] These cases are presented in Table 1.

The outcomes of interest are self-declared far right voting, abstention, or vote for another party. Each of the outcomes is based on respondents' self-declared behavior in the last national election.[11] Because a far right vote is a relatively rare outcome compared to nonvoting or voting for any other party, I opt to fit the model on pooled data rather than run analyses separately, so as to avoid problems associated with rare outcomes logistic regressions (Allison, 2012). The pooled model is less susceptible to small sample bias and can reveal effects that might otherwise be underestimated if models were specified for each country in the sample separately (see King and Zeng, 2001). In each wave, right party voters make up approximately 6% of the sample; self-declared nonvoters make up about 16%.

Important independent variables for this analysis include the age, education, and domicile of respondents, as well as union and church membership, household composition, and social activity. The last three hypotheses necessitate the inclusion of attitudinal variables, including trust in parties, politicians, and other people. I also consider a question asking respondents' views of continued European integration, political interest, gender, and attitudinal controls.

Age and years of education are provided by ESS in a straightforward manner, as continuous variables measured in years. A control variable often presented alongside age and education, gender is coded dichotomously with male coded as '1'.[12] Union membership (or family of union member) is recoded to be a dichotomous variable. The variable measuring church attendance was created from two other variables, the first asking a respondent's denomination, and the second how frequently she or he attends religious services. Those who attended any Christian service more than once a month are considered 'members', with all others making up the reference group.[13] Given the far right's undisguised Islamophobia and historical anti-Semitism it is difficult to imagine adherents of minority religions supporting far right parties (see Williams, 2010).[14]

Respondents in the ESS were asked to describe their domicile. I recoded this information as a three-point scale, as there is no obvious reason to assume a linear relationship. Urban dwellers are coded as a '1', those living in suburbs or small towns are scored a '2', and rural voters '3'. The scale for household composition simply reflects the number of people in a household. Also related to social integration, but less obviously associated with historically dominant cleavages (like urban-rural living, or church or union membership), is the measure of social activity. This is included as a seven-point scale asking how often respondents meet with people socially, where low numbers indicate less interaction. I also include an 11-point scale on how well respondents trust other people. Unlike the variables above related to social situation and association, these variables are also associated with more intangible elements of civic engagement like social capital.

For trust in parties and politicians two variables asking respondents' trust in parties and trust in politicians are averaged ($r = 0.85$; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$). These variables access the anti-elite attitudes characteristic of far right electorates (Akkerman et al., 2014). This also approximates the protest quality of far right parties, and their association with social movement politics (Hutter and Kriesi, 2013). Respondents are also asked to judge whether European integration has already gone too far, or not far enough. This captures the independent effects of Euroskeptic attitudes in predicting far right votes as compared to the more general political dissatisfaction or distrust associated with nonvoters. That is, nonvoters' lack of trust in political institutions versus far right voters particular hostility to European integration will still show up when far right party voters are compared to nonvoters below, despite the moderate correlation ($r = 0.25$). [15]

Another important attitudinal variable is anti-immigrant attitudes. This is constructed by averaging three highly correlated 11-

[9] I use this subset of rounds because not all questions used in the analyses below were asked in each round. Similar analyses excluding those questions—and thereby including rounds one and five—were also performed, and differed little in terms of substantive or statistical significance.

[10] Belgium is, perhaps conspicuously, omitted from analysis because of compulsory voting, which has obvious impacts as regards abstention (Gallego, 2014; Hooghe et al., 2011).

[11] Survey data are likely to underrepresent both far right voting and abstention due to social desirability and selection bias (undercoverage). As such, it is important to note that this study is comparing self-declared voters with self-declared nonvoters.

[12] Gender is included as a control because there is pretty strong consensus that men are more likely to support far right parties (e.g. Arzheimer and Carter 2009), and thus a prolonged analysis of gender here is redundant.

[13] The dichotomous measure of union membership is a simplified version of what is given in the ESS—I combine member of a union household with union membership to form the '1' category. There is reason to believe that there will be some spillover effect within households for union members (Gallego, 2014), and no differences emerged in preliminary analyses.

[14] Moreover, Christians and the non-religious make up more than 95% of the sample, so the interaction is as much for peace-of-mind as anything else.

[15] This variable has a few advantages over the 'trust in the EP' variable also included in ESS. First, the EP trust variable is included right after the other trust in institutions variables. Adamson and Johns (2008) suggest that this color the impressions of Europe among far right electorates. The European integration variable also potentially taps a more holistic impression of the European project, rather than just one representative institution. This is relevant insofar as the EU makes particular noneconomic incursions into social and political realms (see Gould and Messina, 2014; Risse, 2010).

**Table 1**
Far right parties in Western Europe 2002–2012.

| Country | Party(-ies) | Elections Considered |
|---|---|---|
| Austria | Austrian Freedom Party, Alliance for the Future of Austria (FPÖ, BZÖ) | 2006, 2002 |
| Switzerland | Swiss People's Party (SVP) | 2010, 2007,2003 |
| Denmark | Danish People's Party (DF) | 2011, 2007, 2005 |
| Finland | True Finns (PS) | 2011, 2007, 2003 |
| France | National Front (FN) | 2012, 2007, 2002 |
| Germany | National Democratic Party, Republicans (NDP, REP) | 2009, 2005, 2002 |
| Netherlands | List Pim Fortuyn, Party for Freedom (LPF, PVV) | 2012, 2010, 2006, 2003, 2002 |
| Norway | Progress Party (FrP) | 2009, 2005 |
| Sweden | Sweden Democrats (SD) | 2010, 2006 |

point variables asking respondents' impressions of the cultural impacts of immigration, the economic impacts, and if immigration generally makes the country better or worse (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$). I also include a 5-point scale asking respondents' attitudes toward wealth redistribution, where low values indicate favorable attitudes. Lastly, I consider political interest, which is almost trivially associated with electoral participation, and therefore clearly separates nonvoters from the voters considered in this study. Political interest is a four-point scale where four indicates 'not at all interested'.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for each of these variables for far right party voters, abstainers, and voters for other parties. The scales and means for continuous and interval variables are included. For dichotomous variables, the mean is interpreted as the proportion of respondents coded as '1's.

The descriptives provide a few insights consistent with the hypotheses above. For instance, it appears that nonvoters are about six years younger than the two groups of voters considered. Nonvoters are also less likely to belong to a union, and are generally below the average for voters in terms of social activity and trust in others. Far right voters in the sample are considerably more male, more hostile to immigrants, and Euroskeptic. A greater proportion of far right party voters report living in rural municipalities. In general, there is nothing about Table 2 that might caution against proceeding with more complex analyses, or necessitate rejecting any of the six foregoing hypotheses.

### 2.2. Regression analysis

As above, the mechanisms linking far right support or abstention to the broad sociopolitical trends I have described are theoretically interrelated. [16] As such, regression analysis is appropriate to examine independent effects. Because there are three outcomes of interest and no natural order among them, I fit a multinomial logistic model, using vote for a non-far right party as the base outcome. Thus, the effects explanatory variables on the likelihood of far right vote or abstention can be compared directly to the base outcome of other party vote.

The independent variables in the model are the same as listed in Table 2. All continuous variables are standardized and mean centered for ease of interpretability, given the several different scales present in the survey. However, unlike Table 2 above, age, along with domicile and household size, is treated as a categorical variable.[17] Each contains three categories in the models below. I allow for different intercepts for urban or rural voters, separate from voters who live in small towns and suburbs, and consider households of one, two, or three or more people. Age is also rendered as three categories: under 35, 35–64, and 65 and older. This is meant to assess the potential U-shape to far right electorates discussed above (H1). Respondents younger than 18 were removed from the analysis, so that the nonvoters considered below are nonvoters by choice.[18]

Although this study is primarily concerned with characteristics and attitudes of voters, there is considerable evidence that contextual factors are important in predicting voter behavior (e.g. Arzheimer, 2009; Golder, 2003; Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011). In part, case selection controls for these institutional variables. For instance, states with compulsory voting are not considered (see Gallego, 2014), nor are states with a communist legacy (see Allen, 2017). However, to account for party system traits, I also include a measure of effective number of electoral parties (ENEP; Laasko and Taagepera, 1979), retrieved from the Quality of Governance institute (Dahlberg et al., 2017). Effective number of parties is associated with a variety of party systemic features germane to research on both far right party support and voter turnout.[19] Multipartyism correlates with decreased turnout by reducing elections' decisiveness (Jackman, 1987), and less educated citizens vote at greater rates when there are fewer political parties (Gallego, 2010).

The relationship between ENEP and far right support is somewhat more ambiguous (Golder, 2003; cf. Jackman and Volpert, 1996). Unsurprisingly, far right parties are more likely to be found in larger party systems (Wagner, 2012a), but fragmentation does not consistently incentivize parties to stake out extreme positions (Wagner, 2012b; see also Dalton, 2008). Moreover, a large number effective number of electoral parties necessarily means a smaller vote share for some individual parties. However, bombastic far right rhetoric and criticism of the political mainstream may advantage the party family in fragmented systems, to the extent that far right parties are easily juxtaposed with the broad, nonideological coalitions promoted by fragmentation (Kriesi, 1998), or identifiable as distinct alternatives to incumbents (Anderson, 2000).

I also specify a random intercept for country*year to account for heterogeneity across time and space (see Bohman and Hjerm, 2016). There are a few benefits to this specification. Cross-classifying by country year approximates cross-classification by elections. The literature suggests that the circumstances of a

[16] For instance, education likely predicts political interest, but also should exert its own effects (Arzheimer, 2009; Dassonneville et al., 2012), as well as potentially compensating for lack of group membership (Verba et al., 1978).

[17] There is no *a priori* reason to assume linearity, so this reflects potentially qualitatively distinct experiences corresponding to domicile, household size, or age group.

[18] Where the voting age is 18. Noncitizens were removed from the analysis for the same reason, as I am only interested in voters and potential voters.

[19] I use number of 'electoral' instead of 'parliamentary' parties because some impactful far right parties—the French *FN*, for one—lack a parliamentary presence commensurate with their influence. Other metrics for describing party systems, like polarization (Dalton, 2008), are influenced too greatly by the presence of successful far right parties.

**Table 2**
Descriptive statistics of for independent variables by recalled voting behavior.

| Independent Variables | Voters | | | Nonvoters | | | Far right voters | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | N | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Age (years) | 38,400 | 51.63 | 16.64 | 7859 | 44.51 | 17.71 | 2897 | 49.59 | 16.61 |
| Years of Education | 38,400 | 13.12 | 3.90 | 7859 | 11.93 | 3.32 | 2897 | 11.19 | 3.40 |
| Male (0 = female) | 38,400 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 7859 | 0.47 | 0.50 | 2897 | 0.59 | 0.49 |
| Union Member (0 = nonmember) | 38,400 | 0.17 | 0.38 | 7859 | 0.09 | 0.28 | 2897 | 0.17 | 0.38 |
| Church Member (0 = nonmember) | 38,400 | 0.16 | 0.37 | 7859 | 0.08 | 0.27 | 2897 | 0.09 | 0.28 |
| Social Meetings (7-point scale, 1 = never meet) | 38,400 | 4.97 | 1.37 | 7859 | 4.90 | 1.59 | 2897 | 5.14 | 1.41 |
| Household size (1–5+) | 38,400 | 2.54 | 1.18 | 7859 | 2.57 | 1.27 | 2897 | 2.66 | 1.21 |
| Trust in other people (10-point scale, 1 = distrust) | 38,400 | 5.19 | 2.27 | 7859 | 4.38 | 2.32 | 2897 | 4.74 | 2.21 |
| Trust in politics (10-point scale, 1 = distrust) | 38,400 | 3.87 | 2.02 | 7859 | 3.07 | 2.09 | 2897 | 3.19 | 2.12 |
| Attitudes about EU integration (10-point scale, 1 = negative) | 38,400 | 5.17 | 2.60 | 7859 | 4.52 | 2.64 | 2897 | 3.70 | 2.61 |
| Interest in Politics (4-point scale, 1 = very interested) | 38,400 | 2.25 | 0.82 | 7859 | 2.87 | 0.84 | 2897 | 2.50 | 0.87 |
| Urban Municipality | 38,400 | 0.17 | 0.37 | 7859 | 0.16 | 0.37 | 2897 | 0.12 | 0.32 |
| Suburban/Small Town Municipality | 38,400 | 0.48 | 0.50 | 7859 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 2897 | 0.40 | 0.49 |
| Rural/Country Municipality | 38,400 | 0.35 | 0.48 | 7859 | 0.35 | 0.48 | 2897 | 0.49 | 0.50 |
| Attitudes about immigrants (10-point scale, 1 = negative) | 38,400 | 5.34 | 1.99 | 7859 | 4.59 | 2.08 | 2897 | 3.45 | 2.12 |
| Attitudes about redistribution (5-point scale, 1 = in favor) | 38,400 | 2.30 | 1.10 | 7859 | 2.09 | 1.06 | 2897 | 2.25 | 1.22 |

Data European Social Survey 2002–2012.

particular election matter a great deal in the climate of dealignment if voters vote instrumentally when elections are in some way salient (Franklin, 2004; Thomassen, 2005). This is especially likely for voters with lower levels of formal education, who are hypothesized to be overrepresented among both far right voters and abstainers (Dassonneville et al., 2014). Thus, this specification acknowledges the host of stochastic campaign effects that cannot reasonably be included in the model.[20] Also, random intercepts for election rather than country or year increases the number of clusters fivefold, thereby increasing the reliability of the MLM, if the initial specification is trustworthy, as I have argued.[21] I build three models. The first model reflects only the intercepts and controls for attitudes for redistribution, immigration, and domicile.[22] The second model introduces the sociodemographic variables and controls, and the third includes the attitudinal variables.

## 3. Results

The estimates for the multinomial models are shown in Table 3. The first two columns of each model present logged relative risk ratios and standard errors comparing voters for other parties with nonvoters.[23] The second two columns compare far right voters to voters for other parties. The results in Table 3 are largely consistent with the hypotheses enumerated above. Model 1 contains microlevel variables related to historical cleavages, and yields few surprises. Relative to voters for other parties, nonvoters have more favorable attitudes toward income redistribution (consistent with Gallego, 2014). Nonvoters also hold more negative views about immigrants than voters for other parties, but this is likely the effect of variables like education not being in the reduced model—indeed, this effect diminishes and is absent in the full Model 3. Domicile does not seem to be an important *ceteris paribus* predictor of abstention. The results for far right party voters are also largely unsurprising. In these data, far right parties are more hostile toward immigrants than other voters, but indistinct from other voters on their attitudes toward redistribution (consistent with Ivarsflaten, 2008). They are more likely to be country dwellers, absent the other predictors measuring social integration (also, Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011). Contrary to the literature above, Model 1 suggests that increasing the effective number of parties reduces abstention, but this effect disappears in later models.[24] On the other hand, fragmented party systems do have a negative impact on rates of far right support in these cases. That is, the microlevel factors included here seemingly describe the same relationship that relates more parties to reduced turnout. However, fragmentation draws votes away from far right parties irrespective of microlevel predictors, presumably because there are a larger number of non-far right parties for which voters can cast ballots.

Model 2 provides insight on the first three hypotheses and sociodemographic predictors introduced in Model 2 generate results largely consistent with expectations. Nonvoters are younger than other voters, and by every measure less socially integrated (including not only union and church membership, but also social activity and household size). They are also less educated, as are far right voters, supporting the H2. Far right voters are also younger than other parties' voters, more likely to be male, and less likely to be church members. Union membership has no effect—contrary to H3—perhaps reflecting the changing composition of unions referenced above. The second clause of H3 finds support here, however, as far right party voters attend social events more regularly than nonvoters, at rates statistically indistinguishable from voters for other parties.

[20] Cross-classifying by country and year for the primary sampling unit is also effectively tantamount to cross-classifying based on ESS country level datasets. This is appealing because each election has its own survey weight, whereas a given country may have several across waves.

[21] Similar results are obtained by clustering standard errors around each country-year in a multinomial logistic regression, as voters within an election are not truly independent observations. The results presented do not change the interpretation of hypotheses if a clustered error model or a fixed effects model is used in lieu of the random intercepts model (See online appendix). I have opted for the latter specification because it is both more efficient and so as to also present separate random effects for each outcome in the multinomial logit and the covariance between those effects.

[22] In a sense, these three variables represent three historically dominant political cleavages in Western Europe.

[23] I have opted for logged relative risk ratios rather than presenting exponentiated coefficients because I find coefficients' relationships to their standard errors, and thus significance levels, to be more interpretable in this form. Although I have added significance stars at conventional levels, readers are obviously free to interpret their own standards of statistical significance by comparing standard errors to coefficients. Relative risk ratios can be easily obtained by raising *e* to the power of a given coefficient.

[24] A word of caution is warranted when interpreting significance at the five percent level, given the sample size.

**Table 3**
Results from multinomial logistic regression comparing voters for non-far right parties with far right party voters and nonvoters.

| Base: vote for non-far right party | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | | Model 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | nonvoter | | far right party | | nonvoter | | far right party | | nonvoter | | far right party | |
| | b | se | b | se | b | se | b | se | b | se | b | se |
| Age <35 (Ref: 35–64) | | | | | 1.03*** | (0.09) | 0.35** | (0.11) | 1.03*** | (0.09) | 0.37*** | (0.11) |
| Age 65+ | | | | | −0.48*** | (0.08) | −0.42*** | (0.08) | −0.48*** | (0.08) | −0.37*** | (0.09) |
| Years Education | | | | | −0.41*** | (0.05) | −0.28*** | (0.05) | −0.27*** | (0.03) | −0.27*** | (0.05) |
| Male | | | | | −0.02 | (0.03) | 0.48*** | (0.08) | 0.13*** | (0.03) | 0.48*** | (0.08) |
| Union Member | | | | | −0.53*** | (0.06) | −0.1 | (0.13) | −0.47*** | (0.06) | −0.11 | (0.13) |
| Church Member | | | | | −0.63*** | (0.12) | −0.46* | (0.23) | −0.28*** | (0.06) | −0.42 | (0.23) |
| Social Activity | | | | | −0.12*** | (0.04) | 0.03 | (0.04) | −0.1** | (0.04) | 0.04 | (0.04) |
| Two Member Household (Ref: One) | | | | | −0.52*** | (0.05) | −0.02 | (0.08) | −0.47*** | (0.04) | −0.02 | (0.07) |
| Three + Member Household | | | | | −0.30*** | (0.06) | 0.07 | (0.09) | −0.28*** | (0.06) | 0.07 | (0.09) |
| Trust in other people | | | | | | | | | −0.15*** | (0.02) | 0.04 | (0.04) |
| Trust in parties and politicians | | | | | | | | | −0.19*** | (0.03) | −0.25*** | (0.04) |
| Attitudes on EU integration | | | | | | | | | −0.06 | (0.03) | −0.22*** | (0.04) |
| Interest in politics | | | | | | | | | 0.58*** | (0.05) | −0.002 | (0.03) |
| Urban (Ref: Suburb) | 0.03 | (0.09) | 0.01 | (0.07) | −0.01 | (0.08) | 0.02 | (0.07) | 0.02 | (0.06) | 0.06 | (0.06) |
| Countryside | −0.11 | (0.07) | 0.22* | (0.10) | −0.10 | (0.07) | 0.21* | (0.11) | −0.12 | (0.08) | 0.2* | (0.10) |
| Attitudes toward redistribution | −0.14** | (0.04) | 0.04 | (0.03) | −0.11*** | (0.03) | 0.04 | (0.03) | −0.07* | (0.03) | 0.06* | (0.03) |
| Attitudes about immigrants | −0.34*** | (0.06) | −0.95*** | (0.06) | −0.28*** | (0.05) | −0.92*** | (0.05) | −0.07 | (0.04) | −0.78*** | (0.04) |
| Effective Number of Electoral Parties | −0.16*** | (0.03) | −1.30*** | (0.20) | −0.04 | (0.04) | −1.17*** | (0.23) | 0.05 | (0.06) | −1.22*** | (0.22) |
| Intercept (constant) | −0.67*** | (0.19) | 2.19* | (1.07) | −1.07*** | (0.21) | 1.35 | (1.17) | −1.59*** | (0.06) | 1.52 | (1.15) |
| var([election]) | 0.46*** | (0.12) | 8.33*** | (1.67) | 0.36*** | (0.10) | 7.49*** | (1.62) | 0.35** | (0.12) | 8.68** | (1.82) |
| cov[election] | 0.54 | (0.51) | | | 0.36 | (0.45) | | | 0.77 | (0.52) | | |
| AIC | 56771 | | | | 53918 | | | | 51448 | | | |
| N | 49156 | | | | 49156 | | | | 49156 | | | |
| LR test with next model | 3075*** | | | | 2422*** | | | | – | | | |

Data from ESS. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Logits presented Independence of irrelevant alternatives supported by Small Hsaio test.

Model 3 contains the remaining predictors discussed in the previous section. Many of the findings from Models 1 and 2 are repeated here, adjusted for the inclusion of other variables.[25] With respect to the added attitudinal predictors, nonvoters are less trusting of parties and politicians than (non-far right) voters are, while there is no additional impact for Euroskepticism. By contrast, far right party voters are skeptical of continued European integration independent of their distrust of political elites. These findings are consistent H5 and H6. It is also noteworthy that the effect size of political dissatisfaction similar, and the effect of education level is almost identical for abstainers and far right voters *vis a vis* voters for other parties. This is an important empirical finding that undergirds the theoretical framework of this project.

While nonvoters exhibit distrust in other people relative to voters for other parties, far right party voters are indistinct from other voters on that score. Likewise, far right voters are no more or less interested in politics than other parties' voters, which stands in contrast to those who abstain. Political interest and social integration (including interpersonal trust) do not differentiate far right voters from voters for any other party, whereas evidence is uncovered for nonvoters' relative alienation (see Dassonneville et al., 2012, 2014). Fig. 1 presents the results from Model 3 as a coefficient plot to facilitate comparison between far right voters and abstainers. The visualization with confidence intervals clarifies that the difference between nonvoters and far right voters with respect to education level and political dissatisfaction are not statistically significant.

Figs. 2 and 3 present marginal effects for education and political dissatisfaction, where everything else is held at its mean. When the x-axis is at zero, the lines cross the proportion of nonvoters, far right voters, and other voters in the sample. Moving one or two standard deviations below average levels of education or political trust indicates the importance of these marginal effects. The effect of education is particularly striking. The least educated in the sample have approximately a 60% predicted probability of voting for a non-far right party, a 25–35% probability of abstaining, and 10–15% chance of voting for a far right party. This are strikingly different than the approximately 78%, 16%, and 6% present in the overall sample. These last two values approach zero as the sample gets more educated, as educated citizens cast votes for non-far right parties fairly reliably. Fig. 3 shows a similar but smaller impact of political distrust.

At the bottom of Table 3, the variance at the contextual level is indicated. The country*year intercepts control for election heterogeneity and allows observations within groups to correlate. The random effect is not constrained to be the same for the two outcomes. There is unsurprisingly a practically and statistically significant impact of context corresponding to each election in the sample; however, final row of Table 3 indicates no significant covariance between random effects. That is, there is no latent variable covarying with each outcome's random intercept exogenous to the model. It also appears that the included effect operates independently of the microlevel predictors included in these analyses, as the random effect remains of similar magnitude. Thus, while clearly context matters for far right support (Arzheimer, 2009; Coffé et al., 2007; Golder, 2003; Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011), the predictors here paint a fairly reliable picture.

Comparing coefficients for far right voters and nonvoters can be difficult in the multinomial model. Fig. 1 partially compensates for this. However, I also present an alternative logistic model comparing only far right parties with nonvoters in Table 4. Because nothing in Table 3 indicates age, household, or domicile need be

[25] Church membership dips below conventional significance levels with the inclusion of attitudes at (p < 0.073).

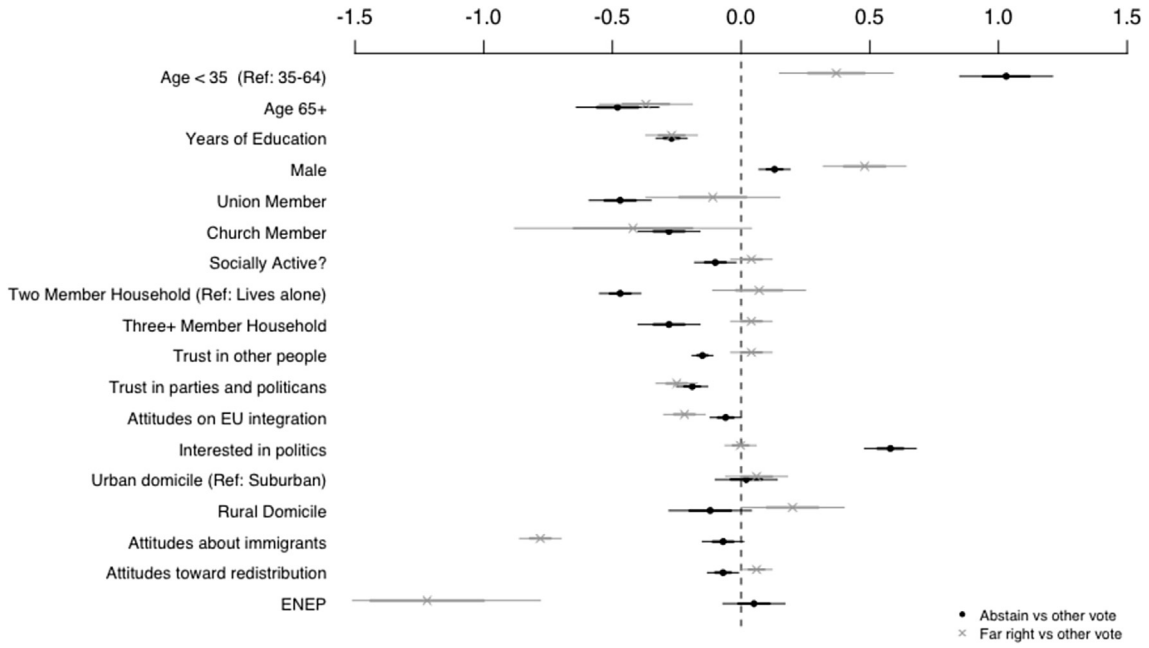


**Fig. 1.** Coefficient plot from Table 3, excludes random effect and intercept.

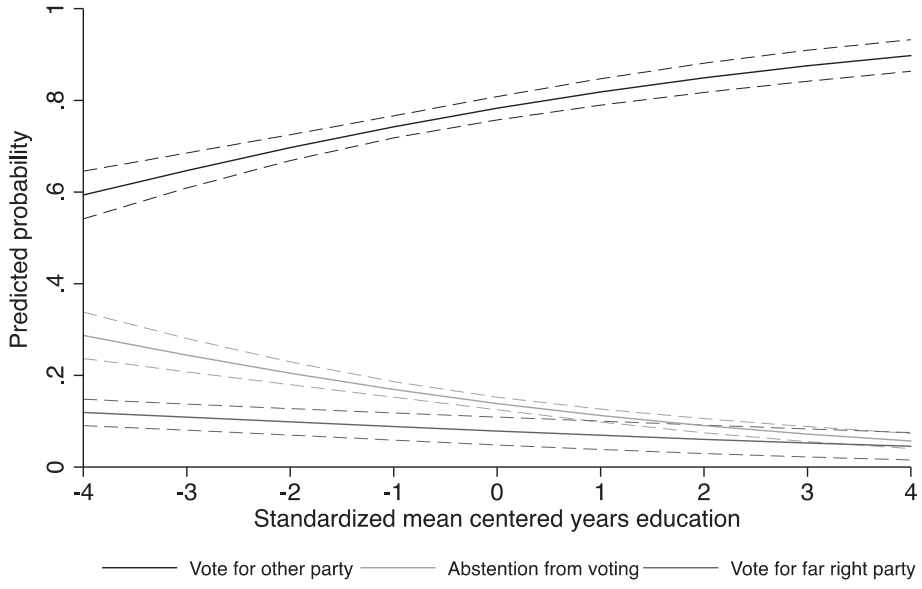


**Fig. 2.** Marginal effect of education level.

treated as categorical variables, they are included in this table as continuous variables. This model confirms the impressions from Table 3.[26] The comparison reveals that far right supporters are both older than nonvoters, further supporting H1.[27] Again, all measures of social integration, trust in other people, and political interest are positively predictive of far right support over abstention. The political positions that predict far right support over a vote for another party also predict far right voting over abstention. That is, far right voters are more anti-immigrant, whereas there is no statistically significant difference between nonvoters and other voters with respect to attitudes toward immigrants (in Model 3). This reaffirms the sturdy linkage between anti-immigrant politics and the far right in Western Europe (Allen, 2017; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Meguid, 2005). Far right voters are also more male, and have less favorable attitudes toward wealth redistribution than nonvoters. Moreover, despite their similar distrust in national parties and

[26] This logistic model is also presented as a random effects model, but as above substantive interpretations of hypotheses do not change if fixed-effects or a model with clustered standard errors is used. A correct classification test indicates this model correctly distinguishes nonvoters from voters 84% of the time, where the intercept only model classifies correctly 75% of the time (not shown). In this test, 80% is considered evidence of 'good' fit, and 90% is excellent (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2000). 50% correct classification indicates chance (no predictors).

[27] No substantive change results from including these as factors as in Table 3, but this model is ultimately simpler and provides something of an alternate specification as a robustness check.

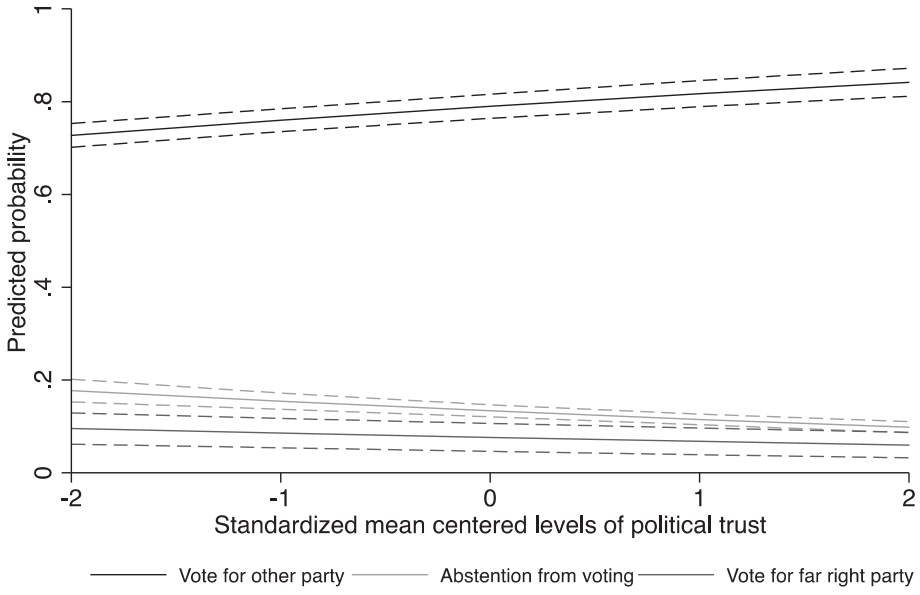


**Fig. 3.** Marginal effect of political distrust.

**Table 4**
Predictors of far right vote versus abstention from voting. Results from mixed effects logistic regressionl.

| DV: far right vote | b | se |
|---|---|---|
| Age (yrs) | 0.32*** | (0.07) |
| Years of Ed. | −0.07 | (0.05) |
| Male | 0.42*** | (0.10) |
| Union Member | 0.41* | (0.19) |
| Church Member | 0.25 | (0.32) |
| Domicile | 0.14* | (0.06) |
| Socially Active? | 0.16** | (0.05) |
| Household size? | 0.20*** | (0.04) |
| People can be trusted? | 0.16** | (0.05) |
| Attitudes on EU integration | −0.17*** | (0.04) |
| Trust in parties and politicians | 0.001 | (0.03) |
| Interested in politics | −0.54*** | (0.03) |
| Attitudes about immigrants | −0.71*** | (0.04) |
| Attitudes toward redistribution | 0.10** | (0.04) |
| Effective Number of Parties | −0.13 | (0.16) |
| Constant | 0.93 | (0.95) |
| var(election) | 1.20 | (0.26) |
| N | 10616 | |
| C-Statistic | 0.834 (0.749 intercept model) | |
| LR Test vs logistic regression | 102.81 | |
| ICC | 0.27 | |

Data from ESS. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Logits presented.

politicians, far right voters are more likely to express dissatisfaction with European integration than nonvoters. These findings testify to the apparently durable situation of far right parties in West European party systems around these key issues (Bornschier, 2010; Hooghe et al., 2002).

To summarize the findings with respect to the hypotheses, H1 is largely supported, although there is no evidence of a 'U-shape' distribution to far right voters' age relative to voters for other parties. Far right voters and nonvoters are younger than voters in the middle age group, whereas belonging to the oldest age group strongly and consistently predicted support for a non-far right party. H2 is supported as it is specified, as both far right party voters and nonvoters are less educated than other parties' voters, but there is no obvious difference between nonvoters and far right voters (Table 4). The results corresponding to H3 are mixed with respect to union membership, but otherwise interesting supported. First, consistent with H3 and H4, nonvoters are less integrated and trusting of other people than voters. Far right party voters are largely indistinguishable from other parties' voters on all measures of social trust and integration, except for church membership. Union membership does not distinguish far right voters from other voters, contrary to H3. Where far right parties stand out, it is because they attend more social meetings than other voters. H5 and H6 are supported in their entirety, as both nonvoters and far right party voters are distrusting of mainstream parties, but far right voters are Euroskeptic in addition.

## 4. Discussion

The similarities and differences between far right voters and abstainers have largely been ignored in the scholarship, but have numerous implications for party politics and post-industrial democratic governance generally. Journalistic accounts of recent far right successes support this claim. The German *Alternative für Deutschland* drew considerable support from previous abstainers in 2016 regional elections (Schwartz, 2016). The 'Brexit' referendum similarly produced unusually high turnout among marginal voters (Singh, 2016). Finally, Donald Trump's 2016 campaign similarly focused a great deal of energy on 'unlikely voters' (Malone, 2016).[28] The findings in the previous section suggest that because far right voters and abstainers are alike on at least two fundamental scores, education level and political dissatisfaction, far right parties are not wrong to pursue this strategy.[29] There are however differences between far right voters and abstainers in terms of both their social integration (including interpersonal trust) and the issue positions correlated with far right support. In this section, I explore implications related to these three central findings.

Far right voters and nonvoters are statistically indistinguishable

[28] A simple crosstabulation also reveals that those who report 'feeling closest' to one of the far right parties in Table 1 are statistically overrepresented among self-declared abstainers.

[29] Obviously the Trump campaign is outside the scope of this project, but it is briefly worth mentioning that Pew data suggest an historically large education gap between Trump and Clinton voters (Suls, 2016).

in the above analyses with respect to years of education and levels of political trust. Much of the scholarship on the so-called 'education revolution' (Bornschier, 2010), focuses on normatively positive aspects of a more informed and cognitively capable citizenry (e.g. Dalton, 2014). And surely, critical and efficacious citizens bringing unresponsive political parties to heel seems a worthwhile democratic enterprise. That said, western democracies have seen political parties respond to the values of their increasingly educated constituents, typified by social democrats' 'third way' trajectory and adoption of New Left issues. One side effect, however, is a group of citizens 'left behind' by the education revolution, who are also, quite literally, left behind in the competitive party space by mainstream party centripetalism. Thus, lacking both the educational and associational resources to negotiate problematic political realities, it is not unreasonable to expect distrust and dissatisfaction with 'politics as usual' in high quantities (Rydgren, 2013).[30]

This is an important contribution to scholarship suggesting the combined effect of low education and declined group or party membership is political alienation (Dassonneville et al., 2012, 2014). My results support this assessment: Political dissatisfaction and low education are unambiguously correlated with abstention from voting. I add that these same characteristics are also overrepresented in far right electorates in similar dosages. However, the panacea offered by the far right actors seem unlikely to resolve the precariousness felt by their voters because far right parties rarely sit in government and their Manichean worldview is seemingly maladapted to negotiation within coalitions (see Akkerman et al., 2014). It is therefore potentially of great consequence that dissatisfied citizens disadvantaged by their lower formal education seemingly have two options for registering dissatisfaction with the political mainstream: withdraw from electoral politics or support a party family with tentative commitments to fundamental democratic precepts like tolerance of diversity. It is worth considering the consequences of incorporating dissatisfied voters into the party systems by way of uncompromising far right party populism.

And indeed, my results suggest that far right party voters are socially and politically integrated in a manner that abstainers are not. With the exception of church membership, every other measure predicts far right vote over abstention. Even when controlling for type of municipality and household size, far right voters attend more social functions and are more trusting of other people than nonvoters.[31] Moreover, by most measures of civic integration—including social capital operationalized as interpersonal trust (Rahn et al., 1999)—and political interest, far right voters are not unlike voters for other parties. Thus perhaps far right parties do serve a function in staving off alienation among the less educated described by Dassonneville and her colleagues (2012; 2014). Thus, there is a correlation between social integration and far right support over abstention, even if the causal arrow cannot be neatly drawn with cross-sectional data.[32] Either way, there is evidence that far right party voters are more engaged than noncitizens. What that means is engagement *simpliciter* does not dissuade far right populism, and abstainers' relative disintegration might even inhibit far right party inroads into this potentially amenable electorate. Hence, although I suspect the causal arrow flows more strongly from disintegration and distrust to far right 'protest' vote (see Hutter and Kriesi, 2013), the reverse might imply even more fertile ground for the far right, given the findings on education and political trust presented here. Notwithstanding, the mobilization of the socially integrated but politically dissatisfied suggests a mechanism through which far right parties attract voters and affect mainstream party positions. Such a finding also has implications for research on 'bad' civil society (Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Berman, 1997; Howard, 2003).

So why do some disaffected citizens choose abstention, and others far right support? Part of the reason may be the sense of self-efficacy and political motivation that comes with group membership and frequent social interactions. If the 'capital' component of 'social capital' is taken seriously and regarded as a resource, that those richer in social capital are more likely to use Hirschman's comparatively costly political tool is not especially surprising. Moreover, group membership likely lowers the cost of political action through a variety of mechanisms, including direct mobilization or peer pressure. The findings above also suggest that what differentiates far right voters from other voters are issue positions, especially hostility to immigrants and Euroskepticism. However, it is not as though attitudes inhospitable to immigrants come fully formed. Rather, these attitudes are likely encouraged by parties on the far right among populations susceptible to far right messaging. Far right success also motivates renegotiation of the political space by other parties in response, potentially legitimating some far right positions (Williams 2009, 2010)—and there is some tentative evidence of nascent anti-immigrant attitudes among nonvoters in Models 2 and 3 above. That is to say, certain similarities between far right voters and abstainers may pave the way for some abstainers to support far right parties at the polls. This is a project that requires panel data unlike those used in this analysis, but one worth pursuing.

## 5. Concluding summary

Hirschmann (1970) considered 'exit' and 'voice' to be the economic and political tools available to dissatisfied consumers, respectively. Because political dissatisfaction stimulates support for the far right and abstention from voting, this project considers them also to be the tools of disaffected citizens. As such, there were theoretical reasons to consider far right voters alongside nonvoters. The expectation was that far right voters and nonvoters would both exhibit lower levels of formal education and higher levels of political dissatisfaction, as education and political dissatisfaction have predicted both abstention and far right support in recent decades. These expectations were born out empirically in the analysis presented above. Nonvoters and far right voters are statistically alike on those two undergirding measures, although dissimilar attitudinal measures and measures of civic integration. Far right voters seem more politically and socially engaged than one might expect, indicating another benefit of importing Hirschman's vocabulary (as 'voice' is a quintessentially political tool). Conversely, the relative social isolation of nonvoters is clarified.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.09.012.

[30] Note that although far right party voters seem to have higher levels of trust in others and more regular social interactions, church members are underrepresented in far right rolls, and the effects of union membership are somewhat ambiguous when Tables 2–4 are considered together.

[31] A more granular measurement would likely indicate distrust of a given outgroup (Akkerman et al., 2014; Williams, 2010). However there is apparent evidence for the presence of 'bonding' social capital among far right party supporters (Putnam, 2000b; see also Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011).

[32] Although there may a bit of an issue with reverse causality, it is not as problematic as it might first appear, as things like union membership, church membership, and household size logically antedate far right party support. That said, trust in others and attendance at social events might increase as citizens become more politically involved, or trust and social engagement might stimulate political participation. It is likely a bit of both (Rahn et al., 1999).

## References


Aarts, C.W., Wessels, B., 2005. Electoral turnout. In: Thomassen, J.J. (Ed.), The European Voter: a Comparative Study of Modern Democracies. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Adamson, K., Johns, R., 2008. The Vlaams Blok, its electorate, and the ideological articulation of 'Europe'. J. Political Ideol. 13 (2), 133–156.

Akkerman, A., Mudde, C., Zaslove, A., 2014. How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. Comp. Polit. Stud. 47 (9), 1324–1353.

Allen, T.J., 2017. All in the party family? Comparing far right voters in Western and Post-Communist Europe. Party Polit. 23 (3), 274–285.

Allison, P., 2012. Logistic Regression for Rare Events. Statistical Horizons. Available at: http://statisticalhorizons.com/logistic- regression-for-rare-events. (Accessed 24 July 2016).

Anderson, C.J., 2000. Economic voting and political context: a comparative perspective. Elect. Stud. 19 (2), 151–170.

Arnold, C., Sapir, E.V., de Vries, C., 2012. Parties' positions on European integration: issue congruence, ideology or context? West Eur. Polit. 35 (6), 1341–1362.

Arzheimer, K., 2009. Contextual factors and the extreme right vote in Western Europe, 1980–2002. Am. J. Political Sci. 53 (2), 259–275.

Arzheimer, K., Carter, E., 2009. Christian religiosity and voting for West European radical right parties. West Eur. Polit. 32 (5), 985–1011.

Bale, T., 2003. Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems. West Eur. Polit. 26 (3), 67–90.

Berman, S., 1997. Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic. World Polit. 49 (03), 401–429.

Best, R.E., 2011. The declining electoral relevance of traditional cleavage groups. Eur. Political Sci. Rev. 3 (2), 279–300.

Betz, H.G., 1994. Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe. Springer.

Blanden, J., Gregg, P., Machin, S., 2005. Intergenerational Mobility in Europe and North America. Report supported by the Sutton Trust, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

Bohman, A., Hjerm, M., 2016. In the wake of radical right electoral success: a cross-country comparative study of anti-immigration attitudes over time. J. Ethn. Migr. Stud. 42 (11), 1729–1747.

Bornschier, S., 2010. Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: the New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe. Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Buruma, I., 2007. Murder in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam and the Limits of Tolerance (Penguin).

Chambers, S., Kopstein, J., 2001. Bad civil society. Polit. Theory 29 (6), 837–865.

Coffé, H., Heyndels, B., Vermeir, J., 2007. Fertile grounds for extreme right-wing parties: Explaining the Vlaams Blok's electoral success. Elect. Stud. 26 (1), 142–155.

Dahl, R.A., 1961. Who governs. Democracy and Power in an American City. Yale University Press, New Haven 8c London.

Dahlberg, Stefan, Holmberg, Sören, Rothstein, Bo, Khomenko, Anna, Svensson, Richard, 2017. The Quality of Government Basic Dataset, version Jan17. University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute. http://www.qog.pol.gu.se. https://doi.org/10.18157/QoGBasJan17.

Dalton, R.J., 1984. Cognitive mobilization and partisan dealignment in advanced industrial democracies. J. Polit. 46 (01), 264–284.

Dalton, R.J., 2008. The quantity and the quality of party systems: Party system polarization, its measurement, and its consequences. Comp. Polit. Stud. 41 (7), 899–920.

Dalton, R.J., 2013. Citizen Politics: Public Ppinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Cq Press.

Dalton, R.J., Wattenberg, M.P., 2002. Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Dalton, R.J., 2014. Interpreting partisan dealignment in Germany. Ger. Polit. 23 (1–2), 134–144.

Dassonneville, R., Hooghe, M., Vanhoutte, B., 2012. Age, period and cohort effects in the decline of party identification in Germany: an analysis of a two decade panel study in Germany (1992–2009). Ger. Polit. 21 (2), 209–227.

Dassonneville, R., Hooghe, M., Vanhoutte, B., 2014. Partisan dealignment in Germany: a rejoinder to Russell Dalton. Ger. Polit. 23 (1–2), 145–155.

De Lange, S.L., 2007. A new winning formula? the programmatic appeal of the radical right. Party Polit. 13 (4), 411–435.

Derks, A., 2006. Populism and the ambivalence of egalitarianism. how do the underprivileged reconcile a right wing party preference with their socio-economic attitudes? World Political Sci. 2 (3).

Downs, A., 1957. An Economic Theory of Democracy, first ed. Harper and Row, Boston.

Ennser, L., 2012. The homogeneity of West European party families: the radical right in comparative perspective. Party Polit. 18 (2), 151–171.

Esser, F., De Vreese, C.H., 2007. Comparing young voters' political engagement in the United States and Europe. Am. Behav. Sci. 50 (9), 1195–1213.

Ezrow, L., 2005. Are moderate parties rewarded in multiparty systems? a pooled analysis of Western European elections, 1984–1998. Eur. J. Political Res. 44 (6), 881–898.

Farrell, D.M., Scully, R., 2007. Representing Europe's Citizens?: Electoral Institutions and the Failure of Parliamentary Representation. Oxford University Press.

Fitzgerald, J., Lawrence, D., 2011. Local cohesion and radical right support: the case of the Swiss people's party. Elect. Stud. 30 (4), 834–847.

Franklin, M., 2004. Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, UK.

Gallego, A., 2009. Where else does turnout decline come from? education, age, generation and period effects in three European countries. Scand. Polit. Stud. 32 (1), 23–44.

Gallego, A., 2010. Understanding unequal turnout: education and voting in comparative perspective. Elect. Stud. 29 (2), 239–248.

Gallego, A., 2014. Unequal Political Participation Worldwide. Cambridge University Press.

Golder, M., 2003. Electoral institutions, unemployment and extreme right parties: A correction. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 33 (3), 525–534.

Goodman, S.W., 2014. Immigration and Membership Politics in Western Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Gould, A.C., Messina, A.M., 2014. Europe's Contending Identities: Supranationalism, Ethnoregionalism, Religion, and New Nationalism. Cambridge University Press.

Gray, M., Caul, M., 2000. Declining voter turnout in advanced industrial democracies, 1950 to 1997 the effects of declining group mobilization. Comp. Polit. Stud. 33 (9), 1091–1122.

Hadjar, A., Beck, M., 2010. Who does not participate in elections in Europe and why is this? a multilevel analysis of social mechanisms behind non-voting. Eur. Soc. 12 (4), 521–542.

Hirschmann, A.O., 1970. Exit, Voice and Loyalty. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Cambridge.

Hooghe, M., Marien, S., Pauwels, T., 2011. Where do distrusting voters turn if there is no viable exit or voice option? the impact of political trust on electoral behaviour in the Belgian regional elections of June 2009 1. Gov. Oppos. 46 (2), 245–273.

Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Wilson, C.J., 2002. Does left/right structure party positions on European integration? Comp. Polit. Stud. 35 (8), 965–989.

Hosmer, D.W., Lemeshow, S., 2000. Applied Logistic Regression, second ed. John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY.

Howard, M.M., 2009. The Politics of Citizenship in Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Howard, M.M., 2003. The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-communist Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Hutter, Swen, Kriesi, Hanspeter, 2013. Movements of the left, movements of the right reconsidered. In: van Stekelenburg, Jacquelin, Roggeband, Conny, Klandermans, Bert (Eds.), The Future of Social Movement Research. Dynamics, Mechanisms, and Processes. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, pp. 281–298.

Ignazi, P., 2003. Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe. Oxford University Press.

Ivarsflaten, E., 2008. What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases. Comp. Polit. Stud. 41 (1), 3–23.

Ivarsflaten, E., 2005. The vulnerable populist right parties: no economic realignment fuelling their electoral success. Eur. J. Political Res. 44 (3), 465–492.

Jackman, R.W., 1987. Political institutions and voter turnout in the industrial democracies. Am. Polit. Sci. Rev. 81 (2), 405–423.

Jackman, R.W., Volpert, K., 1996. Conditions favouring parties of the extreme right in Western Europe. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 26 (4), 501–521.

King, G., Zeng, L., 2001. Logistic regression in rare events data. Polit. Anal. 9 (2), 137–163.

Kirchheimer, O., 1966. The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems. Political parties and political development.

Kitschelt, H., 2004. Diversification and Reconfiguration of Party Systems in Post-industrial Democracies. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn.

Kitschelt, H., 1994. The Transformation of European Social Democracy. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; New York.

Kitschelt, H., McGann, A.J., 1995. The Radical Right in Western Europe: a Comparative Analysis. University of Michigan Press.

Kriesi, H., 1998. The transformation of cleavage politics: the 1997 Stein Rokkan lecture. Eur. J. Political Res. 33 (2), 165–185.

Laakso, M., Taagepera, R., 1979. "Effective" number of parties: a measure with application to West Europe. Comp. Polit. Stud. 12 (1), 3–27.

Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M., Scheepers, P., 2002. Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe. Eur. J. Political Res. 41 (3), 345–378.

Malone, C., 2016, August 5. Trump's Campaign Focused on Attracting Unlikely Voters, a Memo Shows. Retrieved from. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-campaign-memo-unlikely-voters/.

Meguid, B.M., 2005. Competition between unequals: The role of mainstream party strategy in niche party success. Am. Polit. Sci. Rev. 99 (3), 347–359.

Mudde, C., 2007. Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe, vol 22. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. No. 8.

Norris, P., 2002. Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism. Cambridge University Press.

Oesch, D., 2008. Explaining workers' support for right-wing populist parties in western Europe: evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland. Int. Political Sci. Rev. 29 (3), 349–373.

Powell, G.B., 1986. American voter turnout in comparative perspective. Am. Polit. Sci. Rev. 80 (1), 17–43.

Putnam, R.D., 2000a. Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In: Culture and Politics. Palgrave Macmillan, US, pp. 223–234.

Putnam, R., 2000b. Bowling alone, the collapse and revival of civic America. New York.

Radcliff, B., Davis, P., 2000. Labor organization and electoral participation in industrial democracies. Am. J. Political Sci. 132–141.

Rahn, W.M., Brehm, J., Carlson, N., 1999. National elections as institutions for building social capital. In: Skocpol, T., Fiorina, M.P. (Eds.), Civic Engagement in American Democracy. Brookings Institution Press, pp. 111–160.
Risse, T., 2010. A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres. Cornell University Press.
Rydgren, J., 2013. Class Politics and the Radical Right. Routledge.
Rydgren, J., 2009. Social isolation? social capital and radical right-wing voting in Western Europe. J. Civ. Soc. 5 (2), 129–150.
Schmitt, H., 2005. The European Parliament elections of June 2004: still second-order? West Eur. Polit. 28 (3), 650–679.
Schwartz, Y., 2016. Germany's Far Right Rises Again. Retrieved from. http://politi.co/2hsKDO6.
Singh, M., 2016, July 4. The 2.8 Million Non-voters Who Delivered Brexit. Bloomberg View. Retrieved from. https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-04/the-2-8-million-non-voters-who-delivered-brexit.
Spoon, J.-J., Klüver, H., 2016. Does anybody notice? How policy positions of coalition parties are perceived by voters. Eur. J. Political Res. 56 (1), 115–132.
Stubager, R., 2010. The development of the education cleavage: Denmark as a critical case. West Eur. Polit. 33 (3), 505–533.
Suls, R., 2016, September 15. Educational Divide in Vote Preferences on Track to be Wider than in Recent Elections. Retrieved July 17, 2017, from. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/15/educational-divide-in-vote-preferences-on-track-to-be-wider-than-in-recent-elections/.
Thomassen, J.J., 2005. The European Voter: a Comparative Study of Modern Democracies. Oxford University Press on Demand.
Uhlaner, C.J., 1989. Rational turnout: the neglected role of groups. Am. J. Political Sci. 390–422.
Van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., Tillie, J., 2000. Anti-immigrant parties in Europe: ideological or protest vote? Eur. J. Political Res. 37 (1), 77–102.
Verba, S., Nie, N.H., Kim, J.O., 1978. Participation and Political Equality: a Seven-nation Comparison. University of Chicago Press.
Wagner, M., 2012a. Defining and measuring niche parties. Party Polit. 18 (6), 845–864.
Wagner, M., 2012b. When do parties emphasise extreme positions? How strategic incentives for policy differentiation influence issue importance. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 51 (1), 64–88.
Wattenberg, M.P., 2011. Is Voting for Young People?, 3 edition. Routledge, Boston.
Williams, M.H., 2009. Catch-all in the twenty-first century? revisiting kirchheimer's thesis 40 Years later an introduction. Party Polit. 15 (5), 539–541.
Williams, M.H., 2010. Can leopards change their spots? Between xenophobia and trans-ethnic populism among West European far right parties. Natl. Ethn. Polit. 16 (1), 111–134.