Political Representation Gaps and Populism[*]

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Abstract

Research on the rise of populism has largely neglected the explanation populists themselves provide: they allegedly fill "political representation gaps" —differences between the policy-making by established parties and the "popular will." I study whether representation gaps exist and their relationship with populism. To this end, I analyze the responses of citizens and parliamentarians from 27 European countries to identical survey policy questions, which I compile and verify to be indicative of voting in referendums. I find that policymaking represents the economic attitudes of citizens well. However, nearly all established parties are more culturally liberal than the mean voter. For instance, the decisions of the average parliamentarian are nearly one standard deviation more liberal than the mean voter prefers. The largest gaps arise on topics related to immigration. I then show that these representation gaps are associated with political dissatisfaction and that right-wing populists fill cultural representation gaps. In turn, citizens who are less well represented are especially likely to vote for right-wing populists and cultural representation gaps predict their electoral success. Moreover, the recent rise of populism coincided with an increase in representation gaps, driven by an increase in the perceived importance of immigration.

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JEL Classification: D72, D78, N44, P16

1   Introduction

Populists are often defined as politicians who claim that "corrupt" established parties do not represent the policy attitudes of the "pure and homogeneous" people (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). I refer to such a lack of representation as a "political representation gap." Populists explain their own increasing electoral success through their alleged ability to close these representation gaps (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017).

Partly because of the unparalleled electoral rise of populists in recent decades (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022), partly because populist parties in office exert negative effects on the economy and democratic institutions (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023; Bellodi, Morelli, and Vannoni, 2024), a vast literature investigates the causes for the rise of populism. However, the literature has largely neglected the reason populists themselves put forward as an explanation for their rise: the existence of political representation gaps. For instance, a recent and comprehensive survey (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022) does not even include the term "representation." This paper is dedicated to the questions of whether 1) representation gaps indeed exist and 2) whether they are related to the rise of populism.

To examine these questions I compare responses to identical policy statements by voters and politicians from anonymous surveys. This type of data has been rarely used by researchers, although survey responses of politicians are highly predictive of their behavior (Saiegh, 2009; Fisher and Herrick, 2013). By compiling various surveys, I obtain two datasets suited for each of my research questions. 1) I compile an EU-wide dataset that contains responses regarding a wide range of political issues of 27,069 citizens (24,827 of which are voters) and 994 parliamentarians around 2009. The samples are representative of the underlying universes of citizens and voters of 27 European countries as well as 15 national European parliaments and the European parliament, respectively. I use this data to estimate representation gaps just before the rise of populism intensified (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). 2) I compile German data from 2009 to 2021, including the responses of 792 parliamentarians and 61,907 citizens, to study the co-evolution of representation gaps and populism over time.

I validate the parliamentarian data with the two most established datasources for party positions, the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Polk et al., 2017; Jolly et al., 2022) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al., Manifesto Project Dataset). Relative to these sources, the key advantage of my data is that responses of citizens and parliamentarians were elicited on the same scale, which enables me to estimate representation gaps. I show that political representation gaps —differences between *decisions* of parliamentarians and attitudes of voters— can be reliably measured by comparing the survey-elicited attitudes of parliamentarians and voters. First, most parliamentarians state to base their decisions on their own attitudes rather than of those of their voters and this tendency is stronger among more senior parliamentarians. Second, I use a hand-collected dataset on politicians' and ordinary citizens' voting behavior in Swiss referendums. Differences in voting behavior between Swiss MPs and voters closely resemble representation gaps as estimated from survey data. Third, I use the fact that a subset of surveys elicited parliamentarians' and voters'

perceived policy positions of parties and voters. As I show, the perceptions of both sides of the political market coincide with my estimates.

I estimate large, significant, and systematic representation gaps in nearly all European countries. Representation gaps are largest on cultural topics, where parliamentarians are much more liberal than the electoral center, and even most Christian democratic parties are more liberal than the mean voter. In the average country, these cultural representation gaps amount to nearly one standard deviation of citizen attitudes and are even larger regarding some cultural sub-issues, particularly immigration. In contrast, representation gaps on economic topics are much smaller and differ strongly by country. The existence of cultural representation gaps is robust to many alternative specifications. For example, they are larger when comparing citizens instead of voters to MPs and on issues that both voters and parliamentarians find more important.

I use rich information on the demographic characteristics of parliamentarians and voters to show that demographic differences can account for about a third of the cultural representation gap. However, the remaining gap stays large and significant. Moreover, I show that parliamentarians are even much more culturally liberal than voters who have similar demographic characteristics and achieved a full score on a political knowledge quiz embedded in the voter survey. Hence, representation gaps are not just the result of superior education of parliamentarians as often assumed (Kane and Patapan, 2012; Guriev, 2024).

Finally, I relate representation gaps to populism by studying the political supply and demand side. On the demand side, I show that citizens whose policy attitudes are less well-represented by their national parliaments are less likely to believe that their parliament considers their concerns and are less satisfied with the way democracy works, even after controlling for many demographic characteristics. Regarding the supply side, I show that right-wing populists fill cultural representation gaps, even though they are economically more market-oriented than the electorate. Other groups of populists do not fill representation gaps. Since 2009, the year these estimates refer to, the populist vote share in Europe reached unprecedented heights, but only right-wing populists succeeded while other populists declined (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023). Moreover, I find that countries with larger representation gaps in 2009 subsequently faced stronger increases in populist vote shares and this is solely driven by right-wing populists.

To assess the temporal evolution of representation gaps I employ the German data. I find that overall representation gaps increased during that period which coincides with the rise of right-wing populism. However, this increase was not driven by changes in policymaking or the attitudes of voters. Rather, the immigration issue, where the representation gap is particularly large, became more important in the eyes of voters while issues with small representation gaps became perceived as less important. Hence, the large immigration representation gap was "activated," notably during the refugee crisis of 2015. This raises the question of whether representation gaps themselves matter or whether it is just the perceived importance of immigration or immigration attitudes that predict populist voting. To find out, I regress populist voting on i) how well the citizen's immigration attitude is represented by right-wing populists relative to other parties, ii) the attitude itself, and iii) the

perceived importance of immigration. I find that being represented by populists robustly predicts voting for them better than and above and beyond the attitude itself or the perceived importance of immigration, controlling for many demographic characteristics. Moreover, interacting the extent of being represented by mainstream parties with perceived importance renders all main effects insignificant which suggests that an interaction of representation gaps and perceived issue importance is key for predicting populist voting. Any of these pieces of evidence is descriptive. Still, taken together, they paint a consistent picture according to which right-wing populists rose because issues became relevant on which they proposed conservative policies that many citizens demanded but no other party group supplied.

A key contribution of this paper is to jointly analyze the demand and supply of policies while most of the literature focuses on only one side, often the demand side (Guriev, 2024). Relatively few studies employ a more comprehensive approach. Among those, Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini (2021) find that increased relevance of cultural topics makes cultural attitudes stronger drivers of policy views while Danieli et al. (2022) show that changes in voters' issue priorities are the main driver behind the rise of the populist right. Relative to this work, I introduce representation gaps and document its relevance. My results suggest that changes in voters' issue priorities played into the hands of populists only because they filled representation gaps there that mainstream parties had created. Thus, if and how changing priorities affect populism might critically depend on how parties are located in policy space. Consequently, populism results from an interaction between demand and supply which speaks for analyzing them jointly. Bellodi et al. (2023) argue that increasing political distrust created a demand for populists who commit to policies before elections. This raises the question of where political distrust originates from. My findings bolster the idea that representation gaps, hence the policy decisions of mainstream parties, are an important source of such distrust.

In contrast to these studies, most papers study empirically whether factors like trade exposure (Colantone and Stanig, 2018a, 2018b; Autor et al., 2020), economic insecurity Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch (2016), Algan et al. (2017), Fetzer (2019), and Gabriel, Klein, and Pessoa (2023) and immigration (Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller, 2017; Harmon, 2018; Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Piil Damm, 2019; Hangartner et al., 2019; Tabellini, 2020) increase the vote shares of populist parties. It is less well understood why these events increase the populist vote share (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). There is no conclusive evidence that crises generally lead to populist voting. For instance, popular government support usually increases temporarily during international crises (Mueller, 1970) and the Covid pandemic increased government support and trust in political institutions (Esaiasson et al., 2021; Kritzinger et al., 2021).

Why do only certain events strengthen challenger parties, and not other established parties? Why do these challenger parties see the "pure people" in a struggle with the "corrupt elite," hold right-wing cultural positions, and have anti-media and anti-expert attitudes (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017)? Representation gaps offer an explanation. Suppose that voters vote for parties close to them in policy space on issues that are relevant at the moment (Bakker, Jolly, and Polk, 2018). If representation gaps exist, challenger parties can

fill empty policy space and will ultimately rise. Because established parties are more culturally left-wing than voters, challenger parties need to be more culturally conservative than established parties to profit from representation gaps. More specifically, this line of reasoning suggests that restrictive immigration policies and stricter sentencing decrease the vote share of populist parties. Indeed, recent studies find that (large) increases in immigration strengthen populists (Barone et al., 2016; Becker and Fetzer, 2016; Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller, 2017; Dinas et al., 2019; Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Piil Damm, 2019; Edo et al., 2019; Hangartner et al., 2019; Ajzenman, Aksoy, and Guriev, 2022; Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022), and being soft on crime leads to more right-wing voting (Drago, Galbiati, and Sobbrio, 2020).

Moreover, representation gaps help to explain why many citizens vote for populist parties, even though it has been shown that having populists in power reduces economic growth (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023) and damages democratic institutions (Morelli, Nicolò, and Roberti, 2021; Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023; Bellodi, Morelli, and Vannoni, 2024). My results indicate that many voters are faced with two similarly unattractive options because they must choose between established parties that create representation gaps and populists who threaten democratic institutions. Some voters, particularly those more distant from the culturally left-wing established parties, might consider populists the lesser evil.

The fact that policymaking is generally incongruent with mass attitudes also helps to explain why populist parties can be strong in countries not affected by crises. Hence, just sitting out or preventing crises might not eliminate populism. The current paper highlights another policy alternative: established parties could close representation gaps. They could do so either by changing the attitudes of voters or by adjusting policymaking. Which alternative is preferable from a welfare perspective depends on whether representation gaps result from information- or value differences between voters and MPs. As I show, the cultural representation gap between MPs and highly educated and politically informed voters is about half as large as the unconditional gap, suggesting that it is partly due to voters being uninformed. However, the remaining gap is still large and highly significant, indicating that another part of the gap results from voter-MP differences other than information asymmetries. One possibility is that MPs have different "deep" preferences. For instance, politicians are much more risk-loving than "ordinary" citizens (Heß et al., 2018). This possibility raises important normative questions. If there is no optimal value for these preferences like there is no optimal risk-preference, the resulting representation gaps decrease the national welfare.

Finally, this paper contributes to the literature on representation. Economists have focused on the numerical over- or under-representation of demographic groups in positions of power.[1] In contrast, I focus on the representation of policy attitudes. My results show that

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1. Studies have primarily focused on women (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Beaman et al., 2009; Duflo, 2012; Besley et al., 2017) and ethnic minorities (Pande, 2003; Banerjee and Pande, 2007; Munshi and Rosenzweig, 2015), often in developing countries. Recent papers have examined representation regarding socioeconomic background in Europe (Bó et al., 2017, 2023).

numerical over-representation in parliament does not necessarily lead to a high representation of policy attitudes. For instance, even though relatively conservative groups like men, natives, and the old are over-represented in most European parliaments, policymaking is more liberal than voters prefer.

Other papers have argued that the rise of populism is partly due to mainstream parties failing to represent voters' policy attitudes (Berger, 2017; Grzymala-Busse, 2019; Lindner et al., 2020; Berman and Kundnani, 2021; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty, 2021; Bó et al., 2023). However, these papers have not estimated representation gaps and therefore do not examine this idea empirically.

Outside of economics, political scientists have done insightful research on representation that I build on.[2] At the same time, I approach representation from a different perspective, motivated by the economic literature on populism, and building on methodological insights from economics. First, I start from the observation that the most successful European populists are culturally right-wing (Guriev, 2024). To examine whether representation gaps are related to the rise of populism it is therefore crucial to check whether representation gaps exist in culturally conservative locations too. Moreover, it is key to consider the policy space, including the policy positions of all major parties, and the political decisions made by the parliament overall from the perspective of voters to understand political distrust and populist voting. Most political science studies approach representation from a different angle. For instance, they examine whether policymaking rather resembles the attitudes of the rich or the poor (Gilens and Page, 2014; Elsässer, Hense, and Schäfer, 2017) or focus exclusively on how parties represent the attitudes of their *own* voters (Dalton, 2017; Costello et al., 2021). While well-suited to provide other important insights, these approaches are much less useful to answer my research questions.[3] Consequently, I relate representation gaps to political distrust and populism, differently from the otherwise most similar studies in political science (Dalton, 2017; Evans and Hall, 2019; Costello et al., 2021).

Methodologically, I wrote my paper against the backdrop of justified skepticism in economics toward survey data. Comparing survey responses of politicians and voters has the crucial advantage that positions are elicited on the same scale.[4] However, the use of survey data raises the concern that the attitudes of politicians are not related to their decisions. The paper at hand takes this concern particularly serious. Among others, it integrates information that relates attitudes to decisions and performs extensive validity checks that test the association between estimates of representation gaps from surveys and real-world decisions. Finally, the paper at hand is much more extensive than most studies in political science, both

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2. See Kertzer (2022) for a recent discussion and meta-analysis.

3. For instance, most papers estimate representation gaps in absolute values, which means that they cannot identify whether parties are more liberal or conservative than voters, or estimate gaps on an all-encompassing abstract left-right scale, which makes it hard to relate these studies to the economic literature on populism that stresses the multi-dimensional nature of the European policy space (Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini, 2021; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty, 2021; Danieli et al., 2022).

4. Most political science papers estimate the positions of voters and parties from different types of data, like surveys and manifestos (Evans and Hall, 2019). This prohibits the analyses performed by this paper.

in terms of robustness exercises and scope. For instance, the parliamentarian dataset I use is much larger than those used by political science papers with comparable objectives, who often study individual countries and/or one point in time (Bühlmann, Widmer, and Schädel, 2010; Andeweg, 2012; Holmberg, 2012; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017; Schakel and Hakhverdian, 2018; Costello et al., 2021; Hakhverdian and Schakel, 2022; Jaime-Castillo and Coller, 2022; Kübler and Schäfer, 2022; Lesschaeve, 2022).

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the data. Section 3 explains how I measure representation gaps and provides the corresponding estimates. Section 4 relates them to populism and Section 5 concludes the paper.

2 Data

The main analysis builds on comparable surveys among parliamentarians (MPs) and voters that contain identical policy statements. Such surveys are seen as a valid but underutilized measure of policy positions by political scientists (Laver, 2014).

2.1 Where Do the Surveys Come From?

Parliamentarian survey data come from i) the European Candidate Study 2009 (Weßels, 2013) and wave one of the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS, 2016) and ii) the German Longitudinal Election Study candidate studies (GLES, Candidate Study 2009; Candidate Study 2013; Candidate Study 2017; Candidate Study 2021). These datasets contain many sub-surveys that were conducted by experienced local institutions. The European Candidate Study 2009 was fielded to nearly all candidates for the 2009 *European* Parliament, while the Comparative Candidate Survey was fielded to nearly all candidates to *national* parliaments for all elections between 2005 and 2013 in 19 European countries. This data enables comparable cross-country analyses around 2009. The German Longitudinal Election Study candidate studies were fielded to nearly all candidates to the German federal parliament in 2009, 2013, 2017 and 2021 which enables temporal analyses. All responses were elicited anonymously several months after the election and the data include information on whether candidates were elected.

Data on voter attitudes come from i) the European Voter Study 2009 (Egmond et al., 2017) which was conducted alongside the European Candidate Study 2009 and designed to match it as closely as possible and ii) the German Longitudinal Election Study voter studies (GLES, Post-election Voter Study 2009; Post-election Voter Study 2013; Post-election Voter Study 2017; Cumulation 2009-2023; Post-election Voter Study 2021). The authors of the European Voter Study 2009 sampled from the general adult population of each EU member state in 2009 using random dialing techniques. This resulted in a sample of roughly 1,000 citizens for each of the 27 EU countries. I match this data to the European Candidate Study 2009 and the Comparative Candidate Survey to generate a "cross-country" dataset of parliamentarians and voters that covers 26 European countries around 2009.

The German Longitudinal Election Study voter studies (2009-2021) were conducted alongside the corresponding candidate studies and include responses of between 1,900 and 3,400 citizens, representative of the adult German population. In addition, GLES (Cumulation 2009-2023) contains responses from 52,341 German citizens from 48 surveys based on representative samples between 2009 and 2023. I match these German voter and candidate studies to generate a second "temporal" dataset that contains comparable responses of voters and MPs from 2009 to 2021.

2.2   How Comparable Are the Items across Surveys?

Regarding the cross-country dataset, the European Candidate Study 2009 and the European Voter Study 2009 have 14 policy attitude items in common. Subjects were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements like "Immigration to [Country] should be reduced significantly." Items refer to a diverse set of policy issues such as redistribution, state-intervention or gender relations. Table E.1 provides details. Of these 14 items, seven overlap precisely with items given to national MPs, six of the 14 items are not included in the national MP survey and there is one borderline case: voters and members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days.

National MPs responded to a slightly different assertion:

People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.

In the analysis, I include both items and treat them as identical, because, as I show, the difference in formulation creates a bias that works against my finding. Hence, the responses of citizens and MEPs can be compared using 14 items while comparisons with national MPs are limited to eight items.

Regarding the temporal dataset, all survey items I use to compare voters and MPs are identical. I use three items that were asked in more than one candidate and voter survey. As for the cross-country dataset, policy items refer to specific issues —social services, immigration, and climate change. Table E.2 provides details.

2.3   Exclusion Criteria

I exclude observations from my analyses because of missing responses and failed quality checks. As recommended by the authors of the European Candidate Study, I exclude respondents who fail a reliability criterion (Weßels, 2013). Regarding missing observations, the two most important cases are a lack of information on which candidates were elected and a lack of data on some variables when calculating indexes. I exclude data on all sub-surveys where information on which parliamentary candidates were elected is missing. When calculating indexes based on individual policy items, I exclude all observations that do not include responses to each item contained in the corresponding index.

2.4 The Final Datasets

The final cross-country dataset includes information on 24,827 voters and 994 elected parliamentarians. The comparison between these two groups is at the center of this paper. Moreover, the dataset includes information on over 2,000 non-voting citizens and nearly 7,000 non-elected candidates for parliament, which I use in some exercises.

As Table E.3 in the appendix shows, the data includes responses of MEPs and voters for 26 countries but the numbers of elected MEPs are often low. In addition, the dataset includes data on national MPs for eight countries. While MEP and voter responses were elicited at the same time, some MP responses were elicited earlier or later. However, most temporal differences are small and not systematic. Hence, the cross-country dataset provides a snapshot of European policy spaces around 2009 before the rise of populism intensified (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022).

The final temporal dataset includes responses from 198 (2009), 232 (2013), 186 (2017), and 176 (2021) national MPs and 2,115 (2009), 1,908 (2013), 2,112 (2017), and 3,431 (2021) citizens, elicited after the corresponding national election. In addition, it includes responses from 52,341 citizens in between these points in time and up to 2023. Hence, it provides information on the temporal evolution of representation gaps during the rise of right-wing populism in Germany.

2.5 Survey Data Validity

Surveys are a valid source of information only if they are well-designed (Stantcheva, 2023). This subsection addresses corresponding concerns.

2.5.1 Representativeness of the Parliamentarian Sample.
The response rates of the parliamentarian surveys vary between 16% and 48%, which raises justified doubts about the samples' representativeness. In contrast to this fear, numerous studies find no representational bias, for instance regarding political ideology, in surveys with often even lower response rates (Smith, Herrera, and Herrera, 1990; Saiegh, 2009; Fisher and Herrick, 2013; Byrne and Theakston, 2016; Lupu and Warner, 2022). In addition, Section B.1 checks the representativeness of the MEP sample, where the response rate is relatively low (about 18%), and finds that the sample is representative regarding many dimensions, in particular, party-group affiliation. Moreover, Section B.3 shows that inferred behavior based on survey samples is highly predictive of real-world behavior of the corresponding universe.

2.5.2 Survey-specific Concerns.
Three other reasonable concerns are that parliamentarians strategically misreport their attitudes, that they report their party's position and that their responses are not related to their decisions. First, parliamentarians have no incentive to misreport because responses are anonymous. Second, they were asked explicitly for their personal attitudes, which was sometimes contrasted in the surveys with questions about their party's positions. Third, previous research has found that responses in parliamentarian surveys are strongly related to roll-call-voting (Saiegh, 2009).

In addition, I perform two corresponding validation exercises. First, I validate the parliamentarian data with the two most established datasources for party positions, the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Polk et al., 2017; Jolly et al., 2022) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al., Manifesto Project Dataset). Neither of these datasources estimates party positions on the same scale as citizen surveys, making it difficult to measure representation gaps. However, it is possible to compare party-level estimates based on these datsources to party-level estimates based on MP survey data. Section B.2 shows that measures for party positions based on MP survey data correlate highly and significantly with both other measures. This indicates that survey responses of MPs are related to the *behavior* of their parties.

Second, I add a dataset on the initiation- and voting decisions in referendums by parliamentarians, parties, the government, the media, and voters. Because Switzerland is the only European country with a sufficiently large number of referendums, I build the dataset based on Swissvotes (Swissvotes, 2024). Swissvotes is the primary data source for referendums in Switzerland and contains information on all referendums since 1884, including the vote shares by the general population and parliamentarians as well as official recommendations by parties and the government and a measure for media tone.

Referendums are ideal for estimating representation gaps because i) voters and MPs are confronted with the same well-defined issue, which enables comparability, and ii) decisions in referendums have real consequences. However, to estimate representation gaps in a way that mirrors the survey-based estimates, referendums have to be matched to the issues contained in the surveys and it must be clear whether a yes vote indicates a right-wing or left-wing decision. Because Swissvotes does not provide this information I classify referendums by hand and add a left-right indicator.

The resulting referendum dataset contains information on 82 referendums between 1970 and 2024. Section B.3 compares estimates of representation gaps based on this dataset to survey-based estimates using data on Swiss national MPs from the Comparative Candidate Study and a representative sample of 4,392 Swiss voters from the Swiss Electoral Studies 2007 (Selects, 2009). Reassuringly, Section B.3 finds that survey-based estimates of representation gaps are very similar to those based on referendums. Moreover, voters are more likely to initiate referendums on a right-wing policy change than MPs on exactly the topics where they are more likely to hold right-wing attitudes, according to the survey data.

Furthermore, Section B.3 shows that gaps between voters and parliamentarians closely resemble gaps between voters and parties while representation gaps between voters and the government are larger. This suggests that the survey-based estimates in the main part of the paper are indicative of representation gaps between voters and the political elite in general.

2.6 Auxiliary Data

I use two other datasources: First, I rely on the frequently used PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2023a) to classify parties as populist or mainstream. Finally, I use the 2014 version of the

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European Parliament Election Voter Study (Schmitt et al., 2016) to estimate the EU-wide growth of representation gaps.

3   Estimates of Political Representation Gaps

3.1   Attitude Differences between Voters and Parliamentarians

3.1.1   Attitude Differences by Issue.   Figure 1 depicts attitude distributions of European voters and parliamentarians by policy issue. Values on the horizontal axis correspond to answer options asked in the surveys. All attitudes are scaled such that higher values are more right-wing/conservative/anti-EU. For instance, the highest value in the "Immigration" subplot refers to strong agreement with the statement that immigration should be decreased. Regarding the variable EU referendums, high values indicate a preference for EU referendums. Observations are weighted to adjust for population size differences between countries and I pool data on all elected parliamentarians.

Figure 1 shows that attitude differences strongly depends on the policy issue. For instance, voters and parliamentarians have almost identical attitudes regarding the role of private enterprise in the economy but hold opposing views on immigration, where most voters agree with the statement that immigration should be reduced while a majority of parliamentarians disagrees. Distributions differ most regarding immigration, sentences for criminals, assimilation, teaching authority in schools and gender relations.

Attitude differences on individual issues might cancel out if they go in opposite directions on similar issues. To examine how systematic attitude differences are, I classify individual issues into broader policy dimensions. It is well established that political parties package their positions on multiple issues together and that knowing the political attitudes of citizens on a few issues enables one to predict their attitudes on most issues well (Hinich and Munger, 1994; Kitschelt, 1994; Aldrich, 1995; Bakker, Jolly, and Polk, 2012; Enke, 2020; Enke, Rodríguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann, 2022). Hence, reducing the dimensionality of policy spaces does not reduce explanatory power strongly while simplifying the analysis (Laver, 2014). Most studies find that policy spaces in Europe are best described as either two- or three-dimensional, (Kriesi et al., 2006; Henjak, 2010; Stoll, 2010; Bakker, Jolly, and Polk, 2012; Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Jackson and Jolly, 2021; Bakker, Jolly, and Polk, 2022). The two main dimensions, also distinguished recently by economists (Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini, 2021; Danieli et al., 2022), are the classical economic left-right dimension and a cultural dimension which contrasts liberal cultural positions, like multiculturalism with conservative ones, like strict sentences for criminals (Inglehart, 2015). It is more contested whether one should consider a separate pro-anti EU dimension or not (Hix and Lord, 1997; Hooghe and Marks, 1999; Kreppel and Tsebelis, 1999; Tsebelis and Garrett, 2000; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Bakker, Jolly, and Polk, 2012; Whitefield and Rohrschneider, 2019).
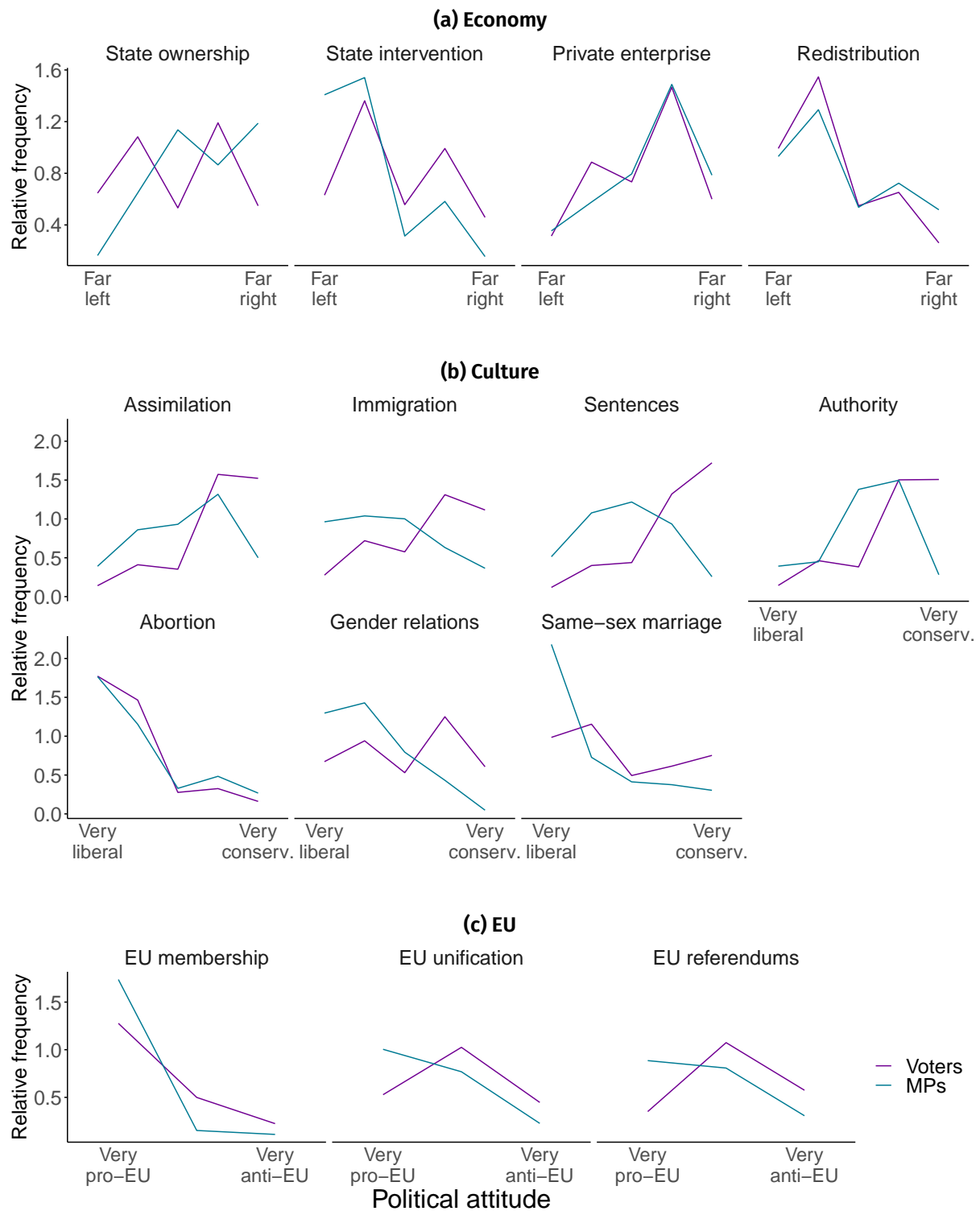
Figure 1. Attitude Differences between Voters and Parliamentarians

Note: Individual sub-plots show the attitude distributions of parliamentarians and citizens who either voted in the most recent national or EU parliament election before the survey. Data includes responses from 141 MEPs, 1,805 MPs, and 26,500 voters, but the number of respondents varies by issue. Respondents are weighted according to the population size of their country. Responses of national parliamentarians are not available for "private enterprise," "state ownership," "authority," "gender relations," "immigration," and "EU referendums."

Because all attitude variables used here are easy to classify into these three dimensions, I do so manually, as displayed by the different panels of Figure 1. Appendix A examines the validity of this theory-based categorization empirically. Reassuringly, attitudes correlate higher within than across dimensions and nearly all correlations within dimension are positive and significant. Cultural and EU attitudes correlate positively and significantly with each other, while they are less strongly and systematically related to economic attitudes. Moreover, Appendix A shows that the main results, to be discussed, change little if I aggregate issues through a principal component analysis.

Distinguishing between economic, cultural, and EU issues reveals a pattern. As Figure 1 shows, attitude differences between voters and MPs are small and not systematic regarding economic issues. On some issues, voters tend to be more right-wing while they are more left-wing on others and these differences are rather small.

In contrast, voters are more conservative/anti-EU than MPs regarding all cultural or EU issues with the exception of abortion. Hence, attitude differences on non-economic topics are systematic. Furthermore, the largest attitude differences, on immigration and sentences, arise on cultural topics. Notably, the survey items regarding these two issues refer to the direction of policymaking — whether immigration should be reduced and whether criminals should be punished more harshly. Figure 1 reveals that most voters favor a reduction in immigration and harsher punishments while a majority of MPs oppose these policies. Thus, voters and MPs disagree about the direction of policymaking.

3.1.2 Aggregating Issues into Policy Dimensions.

Appendix A suggests that EU attitudes can be subsumed into the cultural dimension due to their high correlations with cultural issues. Moreover, Appendix C shows that cultural and economic topics are seen as much more important by voters and parliamentarians than EU topics, which speaks against treating EU issues as a policy dimension on par with the other two. Hence, I pool EU and cultural issues and calculate two indexes for cultural/EU, labeled "cultural," and economic issues respectively to simplify the analysis. Formally, I calculate the attitude $a_{i,d}$ of any survey participant i on dimension $d \in \{economy, culture\}$ as

$$a_{i,d} = \sum_{t \in d} a_{i,t} \cdot importance_t. \tag{1}$$

$importance_t$ is an index that measures the perceived importance of issue/topic t by voters. Aggregating individual issues in dimensions makes it necessary to consider how they are weighted and the perceived importance is a natural candidate (Laver, 2014). In the surveys, all participants were asked to name the three issues that are most important to them. I calculate $importance_t$ from this data, as discussed in Appendix C. As shown there, voters and MPs rank the importance of issues similarly. Moreover, attitude differences are, if anything, larger on issues that voters or MPs find more important. Because the surveys among national MPs did not include the items "private enterprise," "state ownership," "authority," "gender relations," "immigration," and "EU referendums," I restrict my analysis to the remaining two
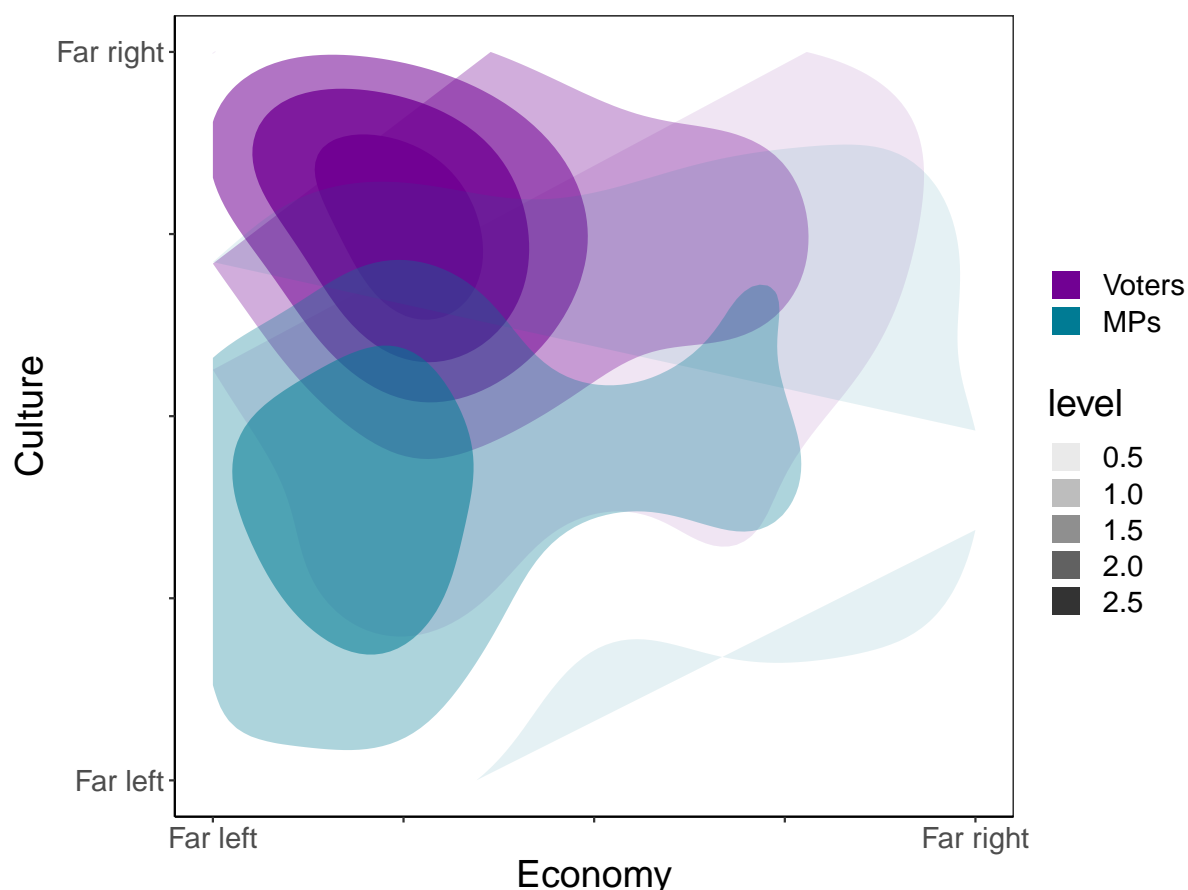
Figure 2. Two-Dimensional Attitude Distributions of Voters and Parliamentarians

Note: The Economy axis measures an attitude index for economic issues. The Culture axis measures an index for non-economics issues as calculated in Equation 1. The density is higher in less transparent areas. Data is pooled across Europe and includes attitudes of 127 MEPs, 738 national MPs and 19,813 voters.

economic (redistribution and state intervention) and six non-economic issues, unless noted otherwise.

Figure 2 depicts attitude densities of voters and MPs in the two-dimensional economy-culture policy space. Higher values on either dimension indicate attitudes that are more right-wing/conservative.[5] The distribution of voter attitudes is unimodal and most voters hold attitudes close to the mode. This simple structure makes it easy for parties to determine the vote-maximizing policy positions and a convergent equilibrium more likely in many models (Plott, 1967; McKelvey and Wendell, 1976; McKelvey, 1979; McKelvey and Schofield, 1987; Schofield, 2007). The distribution of MPs has a similar shape. It is also unimodal and most attitudes form a cluster around this mode. However, the key difference between the two distributions is not their shape but their position. The distribution of voter attitudes is located much higher than the one for MPs, illustrating that voters are much more cultur-

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5. Figure 2 does not measure whether voters or MPs are right-wing or left-wing in absolute values because the attitudes, measured through survey responses, depend on the formulation of the question. In contrast, the figure is used to illustrate attitude *differences* between voters and MPs.

ally conservative than parliamentarians. In contrast, their horizontal positions are similar, indicating that voters and MPs hold similar economic attitudes. These results reinforce the impression of a systematic and large representation gap on non-economic issues, but not on economic topics. Figure A.2 shows that similar results are obtained when aggregating issues using a principal component analysis.

3.1.3 Quantitative Estimates of Attitude Differences.

To make the magnitudes of attitude differences easier to interpret, I calculate z-scores of all attitude variables by using the standard deviation of EU-wide citizen attitudes. I then estimate regressions of the following form by OLS:

$$z(a)_{i,t} = \alpha_t + \beta_t \cdot \mathbb{1}[\text{Parl.}]_{i,t} + c_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}. \tag{2}$$

$z(a)_{i,t}$ is the z-score of individual i on topic t, $\mathbb{1}[\text{Parl.}]_{i,t}$ equals one if i is an elected parliamentarian and zero if i is a voter and c_i indicates a set of country-fixed effects. Consequently, β_t descriptively measures within-country attitude differences on topic t between voters and MPs, expressed in standard deviations of attitudes.

Figure 3 shows β_t's and 95% confidence intervals. Higher values indicate that parliamentarians are more right-wing than voters. I also display results for various indexes. MEP indexes use attitudes on all variables but do not include responses from national MPs. The main indexes used in this paper are the weighted cultural MP index and the weighted economic MP index.

The mean MP is significantly more liberal than the mean voter on all cultural issues but abortion. Attitude differences regarding cultural indexes are even larger, partly because standard deviations of indexes are smaller than those of individual issues. Reassuringly, estimates for all cultural indexes are highly significant and quantitatively similar. Differences on weighted indexes tend to be larger than those on unweighted ones because attitude differences are larger on issues that voters consider more important (Appendix C). Attitude differences on economic issues are smaller and less systematic.

3.2 From Attitude Differences to Representation Gaps

By representation gaps refer to the congruence between the *decisions* of parliamentarians and the policy attitudes of voters. In contrast, the previous analysis, as well as most previous studies, compare *attitudes* of parliamentarians to attitudes of voters. A key concern is that MPs decide not based on their own attitudes but on the attitudes of voters. If this was the case, representation gaps could be small despite large attitude differences.

3.2.1 Parliamentarians Decide Based on Their Own Attitudes.

To examine this possibility I exploit the fact MEPs were directly asked the following question:

> *How should, in your opinion, a member of the European Parliament vote if his/her own opinion does not correspond with the opinion of her/his voters?*
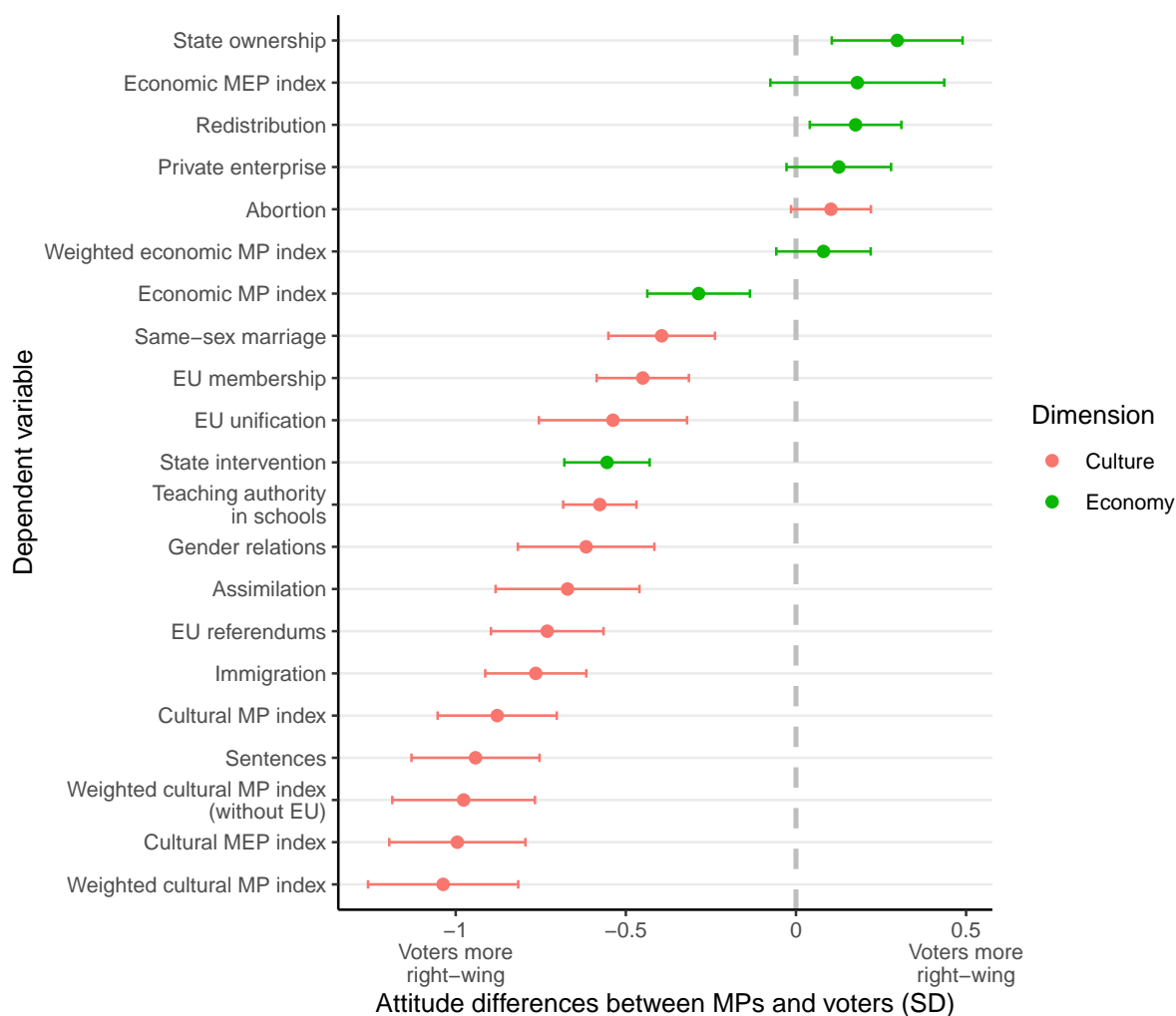
Figure 3. Attitude Differences between Voters and MPs by Issue

Note: The horizontal axis shows OLS estimates for β_t's from Equation 2. All variables have a standard deviation (in terms of citizen attitudes) of one. 95% confidence intervals are based on standard errors clustered at the country level.

Possible answers included "Should vote according to her/his own opinion" and "Should vote according to her/his voters' opinion." Similarly, national MPs were asked:

An MP in a conflict between [his/her] own opinion and the constituency voters should follow:

Possible answers included "own opinion" and "voter opinion." I refer to parliamentarians who respond with "voter opinion" as being "representation motivated" and to those who respond with "own opinion" as being "policy motivated." Notably, the anonymity of the surveys mitigates concerns that responses are biased by, for instance, social desirability bias.

Only about 16% of the MEP respondents stated that the MEP should follow the opinions of his voters and this share is only slightly higher among national MPs (about 19%). Figure D.6 in the appendix distinguishes between MP subgroups. More experienced and more senior MPs are particularly likely to prioritize their own attitudes. Assuming that these parliamentarians have a stronger impact on policy decisions, the unweighted proportions even underestimate the extent to which parliamentarians prioritize their own attitudes. Overall,

this evidence suggests that the attitudes of MPs translate into decisions, which suggests that attitude differences translate into representation gaps.

3.2.2 Representation Gap Measures.

I use three measures for representation gaps. They are meant to measure differences in the *behaviors* of the politicians and the attitudes of voters. To this end, the measures do not just compare attitudes but include information on whether a parliamentarian decides based on his own attitudes or whether he tries to implement the attitudes of his voters. Formally, let $\overline{a}_{d,p}$ be the mean attitude of the voters of party p on dimension d and $r_i \in \{\text{Policy motivated}, \text{Representation motivated}\}$ indicate whether MP i bases his behavior on his own attitudes or on the attitudes of his voters. I define his behavior $b_{i,d}$ as

$$
b_{i,d} = \begin{cases} a_{i,d} & \text{if } r_i = \text{Policy motivated} \\ \overline{a}_{d,p|i\in p} & \text{if } r_i = \text{Representation motivated.} \end{cases} \tag{3}
$$

I measure the attitudes of citizens (and voters) on each dimension $d \in \{economy, culture\}$ using the attitude indexes ($a_{i,d}$) defined in Equation 1.

Building on the attitudes of voters and the behaviors of MPs ($b_{i,d}$), I calculate three types of representation gap measures. First, to estimate representation gaps between parliaments and voters overall, I calculate variables labeled $index_{i,d}$, which equal the attitude of i if i is a voter and his estimated behavior ($b_{i,d}$) if he is an MP. Then, I estimate the following equations by OLS:

$$
z(index)_{i,d} = \alpha_d + \beta_d \cdot \mathbb{1}[\text{Parl.}]_i + \varepsilon_{i,d}. \tag{4}
$$

My estimate for representation gaps on dimension d is β_d. Using regressions has the advantage that I can control for additional variables, like demographic characteristics, as I do in Section 3.4.

Unless noted otherwise, regressions are unconditional or only include country indicators. In this case, representation gaps estimate descriptively how the behavior of actual parliamentarians differs from the attitudes of their voters, reflecting the degree of representation actually occurring. This implies that representation gaps are not necessarily problematic, as they might reflect misinformation of voters. Section 3.4 examines this possibility empirically.

To analyze differences between political parties, I calculate a party-level measure of representation gaps that compares the position of parties to those of the national mean voter. Let c indicate countries, p parties and v voters. I calculate the representation gap of p on dimension d as

$$
RG^P_{p,d} = \overline{index}_{p,d} - \overline{index}_{v\in c,d}, \tag{5}
$$

where $\overline{index}_{p,d}$ is the average over all MPs belonging to p.[6]

---

6. I also show versions where I use data on all candidates and where I compare parties to their own voters only.

To compare voters whose attitudes are more or less well represented, I also calculate a representation gap measure at the voter-level. Since voting for populist parties is one of the outcomes of interest, I calculate the absolute difference to the closest non-populist party in voter *v*'s country:

$$RG^{\text{V}}_{v,d} = \min_{p \in c \,\&\, p \notin populist} \{|index_{v,d} - \overline{index}_{p,d}|\}. \tag{6}$$

Strictly speaking, I always measure the distance between voters' attitudes and the policy position of the average parliamentarian of either their country or a specific party. However, the idea is that these differences are indicative of the distance between voters' attitudes and policy decisions. It is reasonable to question whether this is the case. Concerns include that MPs lie despite anonymity and that they neglect party discipline in personal survey items. To mitigate these concerns, Section B.3 validates survey-based estimates with differences in real-world referendum voting and initiation decisions between voters, parliamentarians, and parties. Differences regarding behavior in real-world referendums do not suffer from the shortcomings of surveys, yet they yield very similar conclusions, suggesting that the survey-based measures work as intended. Moreover, Section B.3 finds that estimates of representation gaps do not depend on whether one compares voters to the parliament or to parties. Finally, Figure D.4 and Figure D.5 show that voters and MPs both *perceive* similar representation gaps as I document when comparing parties to voters. This suggests that parties are just as biased relative to voters as the MPs they comprise. On second thought, this finding might not be surprising as one could have expected the party line to be close to the mean of its parliamentarians.

3.3 Estimates of Representation Gaps

3.3.1 Representation Gaps by Country. Figure 4 displays representation gap estimates based on Equation 4 for all countries for which data is available and the EU as a whole. I pool elected national MPs and MEPs to increase the sample size and because MEPs and national MPs have similar policy attitudes compared to voters as shown in Figure D.1. In the case of the EU as a whole, I exclude national MPs. There, I also weigh to adjust for population sizes in order to compare representative samples of MEPs with a representative sample of voters from the EU.

Cultural representation gaps are negative in all countries except Poland and Bulgaria, indicating that policymaking is more left-wing than voters prefer in nearly all European countries and the EU as a whole. In the average country, policymaking is about 87% of a standard deviation more liberal than voters prefer.

On economic topics, policymaking is about 21% of a standard deviation more right-wing than voters prefer in the average country. However, economic representation gaps differ strongly by country. They are negative in 10 countries, positive in 13 countries, and slightly positive in the EU as a whole. Moreover, economic representation gaps tend to be smaller than cultural ones in absolute values, even though they are still sizable. They are largest
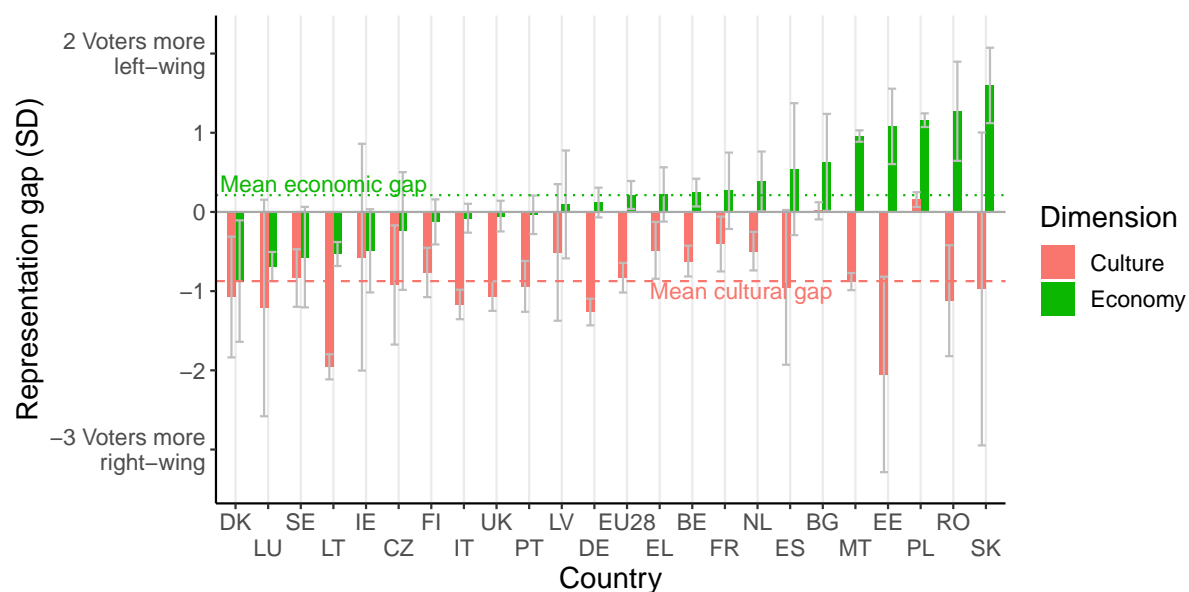
Figure 4. Representation Gaps by Country and Policy Dimension

Note: Bars show representation gaps between voters and parliamentarians (MPs and MEPs) from the same country. Estimates and 95% confidence intervals come from regressions resembling Equation 4 but for each country individually. Representation gaps are expressed in standard deviations of EU-wide citizen attitudes.

in eastern European countries, where policymaking is significantly more right-wing than voters prefer.

The fact that parliaments are more culturally liberal than voters in nearly all countries suggests that factors common to all countries are important drivers of these gaps. In contrast, economic representation gaps, which differ strongly between countries, might be better explained by factors that differ between countries.

3.3.2 Representation Gaps by Party. Figure 5 compares the policy-positions of European parties relative to the overall national mean voter (Equation 5). Consequently, a position below the horizontal zero line indicates that the party is more culturally liberal than the mean voter of its country and a position to the right of the vertical zero line reveals that the party is economically more right-wing than the national mean voter.

Looking at the classical economic left-right dimension reveals that most communists/socialists, green, and social democratic parties are positioned to the left of the mean voter. Opposed to them are Christian democratic/conservative and liberal parties who are more economically right-wing than the national mean voter. Overall, a similar number of parties is located to the economic left and the economic right of the mean voter, and parties are spread out similarly wide to the left and the right. Consequently, the average position of all European parties is located very closely to the mean voter.

In contrast, the vast majority of parties are culturally more liberal than the overall mean voter in their country. Even most Christian democratic and conservative parties, which are seen as the main traditional center-right parties in most European countries, are center-left when focusing on the cultural dimension. Moreover, parties are spread out much further in
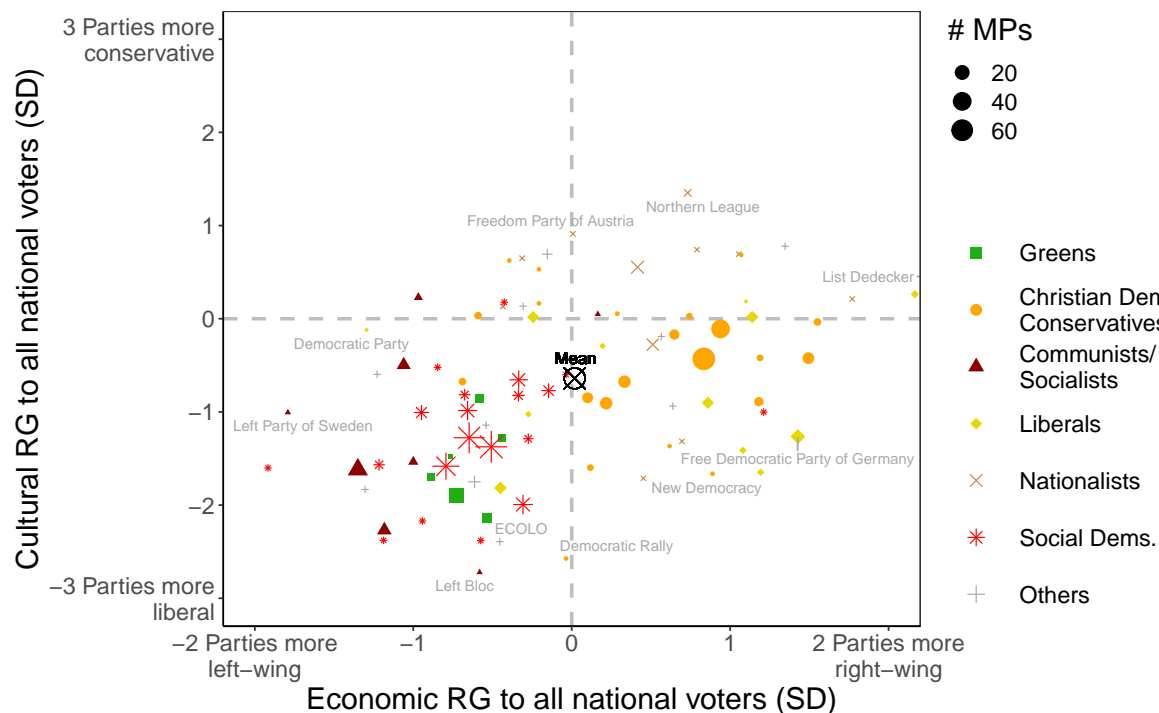
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Figure 5. Representation Gaps Relative to National Voters by Party

Note: This plot compares the position of European parties relative to the position of the national mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. Different symbols refer to different party families. The size of the symbol measures the number of MPs used to calculate the policy position. For clarity, I omit a few parties whose cultural index is smaller than -3. All of them rely on few observations and are therefore measured imprecisely.

the direction of extremely liberal positions than in the direction of extreme conservatism. The only party family that tends to be more culturally conservative than national voters are nationalists, who, however, tend to be closer to the national mean voter in this dimension than social democratic, green, or socialist parties. Consequently, the mean party is much more culturally liberal than the overall mean voter of its country.

These results show that most uncovered policy space is located in culturally conservative positions. While about half of the electorate demands such policies, only very few parties supply them. Hence, one might have predicted in 2009 that culturally conservative parties have a particularly high potential to attract new voters. If voters would start voting mainly based on their cultural congruence with party positions, these results suggest that in many countries about half of the electorate might vote for nationalists.

3.3.3 Robustness of the Representation Gap Pattern.

The main stylized fact presented here is that nearly all parties from established party groups are culturally more liberal than the mean voter in their country. Consequently, there are large differences between the cultural policymaking of parliaments and voters' attitudes while smaller differences exist regarding economic issues.

These stylized facts are robust to many specifications. First, they are not an artifact of how I calculate representation gaps. As Figure 1 shows, MPs are more culturally liberal than voters regarding all issues except abortion which few voters and few MPs consider important

(Figure C.1). Consequently, aggregating issues differently, for instance through a principal component analysis yields similar results (Figure A.2). Moreover, I consider representation gaps regarding means to keep cross-country and cross-party results concise. The symmetric shape of voter and MP distributions apparent from Figure 2 (which also obtains for most countries individually) suggests that a measure of central location is suitable to compare the two distributions. I use the mean to follow the political science literature, not because representation gaps are particularly large if one uses this metric. In fact, Figure D.2 shows that, if anything, representation gaps are larger if one considers the median and experimentation with other measures always recovered the main stylized facts, often quantitatively stronger.

Second, I estimate representation gaps by comparing only elected parliamentarians to voters, which allows me to compare the parliament (the main representative organ in parliamentary democracies) to voters (Pitkin, 1967). Including unelected candidates does not change the results notably (Figure D.7) since elected and unelected MP candidates take similar policy positions. Furthermore, most (mainstream) parties are not only more left-wing than the mean voter of their country but also the mean voter of their party (Figure D.8).

Third, I compare parliamentarians to voters instead of all citizens because I reasoned that parliaments representing voters is more likely to occur and more relevant from a normative perspective. If anything, including non-voting citizens, leads to even larger representation gaps as indicated by Figure D.1.

Fourth, representation gaps do not arise because voters find some issues unimportant. As shown in Appendix C, attitude differences (representation gaps are similarly large) are, if anything, *larger* on issues that voters and parliamentarians find more important.

Finally, the main stylized fact is not only born out by my analyses but also perceived by voters and MPs. Voters and MPs in the German longitudinal dataset were not only asked about their own attitudes but also about their *perceptions* about the policy positions of other political actors. In particular, parliamentarians placed the policy positions of their own voters and their parties on the same scale regarding the same policy items on which they stated their own attitudes. Similarly, voters placed all major political parties on the same scale they used to state their own attitudes. Figure D.3, Figure D.4, Figure D.5 display *perceived* representation gaps. As shown by Figure D.3, the average MP (including populist MPs) thinks that his policy position is 37% to 60% of a standard deviation of citizen attitudes more liberal on immigration than his own voters prefer. This perceived representation gap is much more even regarding the economic issue of taxes vs. social benefits. Figure D.4 reveals that the mean MP of each party in each year, except for the right-wing populist AfD also perceive their party to be more left-wing on immigration than their own voters. Finally, Figure D.5 show that voters have similar perceptions as MPs. Regarding immigration, the German mean voter in 2009, 2013, 2017, and 2021 perceived all established parties to be either close to his position or much more liberal than him. The fact that a large variety of analyses document a specific representation gap pattern which is simultaneously agreed on by all main actors involved seems to be most consistent with the idea that this pattern is real.

3.4 On the "Paradox of the Democratic Leader"

According to the "paradox of the democratic leader" (Kane and Patapan, 2012) politicians are confronted with the difficulty of being highly educated and at the same time representative of "ordinary people." This idea raises the question of whether differences regarding demographic characteristics and political knowledge can account for representation gaps. This question is relevant from a normative perspective because it sheds light on whether representation gaps are problematic or desirable. On the one hand, representation gaps might reflect that politicians enforce their personal preferences at the expense of, the larger population. For instance, politicians are more risk-loving than ordinary citizens (Heß et al., 2018). At the same time, there is no optimal risk preference and more willingness to take risks is not always better. Hence, representation gaps resulting from differences in risk preferences mean that policymaking does not maximize the utility of voters.

On the other hand, representation gaps might result from politicians possessing superior political knowledge (Levy, Razin, and Young, 2022). Superior knowledge usually enables one to design policies that (weakly) improve the utility of everyone. Following this line of reasoning, representation gaps might indicate policymaking that is in the interest of ordinary citizens, who just don't understand this.

To make the first steps in distinguishing between these alternatives, I estimate representation gaps between parliamentarians and voters who have similar demographic characteristics and possess high political knowledge. To this end, I estimate OLS regressions which, in contrast to Equation 4, include demographic controls:

$$z(index)_{i,d} \ = \ \alpha_d + \beta_d \cdot \mathbb{1}[\text{Parl.}]_i + \boldsymbol{\theta} \cdot \mathbf{X}_i + \varepsilon_{i,d}, \tag{7}$$

where $\mathbb{1}[\text{Parl.}]_i$ indicates parliamentarians and $\mathbf{X}_i$ includes demographic control variables. Consequently, β_d measures the representation gap on dimension d conditionally on $\mathbf{X}_i$.

Of all demographic differences between parliamentarians and voters education seems most important since higher education is strongly associated with culturally liberal attitudes and parliamentarians are usually much more educated than their voters (Kane and Patapan, 2012; Bovens et al., 2017). I measure the education of subjects through identical education categories used by the European Candidate and Voter Study. Categories differ between countries. For instance, there are 15 categories for subjects from the UK, ranging from "No qualifications, and left school before the age of 11" to "Doctorate: PhD or DPhil." Since education categories for the national MP survey are broader and difficult to harmonize, I focus on the comparison between voters and MEPs.

To investigate the role of political knowledge I use the fact that the European Voter Study 2009 asked seven political knowledge questions, listed in Table E.4. Since parliamentarians were not asked comparable questions, I compare parliamentarians to the 7% most knowledgeable voters who achieved a full score in the knowledge quiz.

Table 1 shows the results. For reference, columns (1) and (6) do not control for demographic differences, except for country indicators, and pool MEPs and national MPs. Consistent with my other results, the average parliamentarian is nearly a standard deviation

Table 1. Representation Gaps after Accounting for Demographic Differences and Informedness

	Cultural index (SD)					Economic index (SD)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
$\mathbb{1}$[Parl.]	−0.940***	−0.847***	−0.600***	−0.576***	−0.401**	0.076	0.162	−0.036	−0.171**	−0.299*
	(0.110)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.125)	(0.195)	(0.050)	(0.099)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.155)
Constant	2.794***	2.793***	3.153***	3.075***	2.340***	1.725***	1.725***	1.885***	1.356**	1.688***
	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.176)	(0.300)	(0.238)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.571)	(0.613)	(0.222)
Parl. sample	All	MEPs	MEPs	MEPs	MEPs	All	MEPs	MEPs	MEPs	MEPs
Voter sample	All	All	All	All	Informed	All	All	All	All	Informed
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Other demo.				✓	✓				✓	✓
Observations	21,700	21,034	21,034	19,265	1,636	23,483	22,796	22,796	20,732	1,695
R^2	0.120	0.096	0.163	0.188	0.397	0.099	0.099	0.139	0.159	0.358

Note: This table shows results from OLS regressions based on Equation 7. Higher values of the dependent variable indicate that the respondent is more culturally conservative or economically right-wing respectively. $\mathbb{1}$[Parl.] equals one if the subject is a parliamentarian in the parliamentarian sample and 0 if he voted in either the most recent European or national election. Regressions are weighted to obtain representative samples within each country. Education indicates controls for education categories. Other demographics indicate controls for age, gender, categories for marital status, occupation, highest education degree, size of the town of residence, immigration background, religiosity, and perceived living standard. The informed voter sample includes those who obtained a full score on a political knowledge quiz. Standard errors (in parenthesis) are clustered at the country level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

of citizen attitudes more culturally liberal than the mean voter of his country but holds a similar economic position. Columns (2) and (7) reveal that these results change little if one excludes national MPs. In columns (3) and (8) I control for education categories but no other demographic variables. As expected, both β_d drop, indicating that different education levels can account for part of the representation gaps. However, $\beta_{culture}$ drops by only about 29%, and the remaining gap is highly significant. Hence, educational differences cannot explain the lion's share of the cultural representation gap. Finally, columns (4) and (9) control for all other demographics on top of education. This decreases $\beta_{culture}$ a bit further but not much. Notably, column (8) shows that voters with similar demographic characteristics as MEPs are economically more right-wing than MEPs.

Finally, columns (5) and (10) compare parliamentarians with voters who have similar demographic characteristics and achieved a full score in the knowledge quiz. $\beta_{culture}$ decreases further, revealing that political knowledge matters above and beyond educational attainment. Still, $\beta_{culture}$ stays significant and about 47% of the unconditional cultural gap remains. Interestingly, the economic representation gap *increases* after accounting for political informedness.

Overall, my results support the "paradox of the democratic leader," at least when focusing on the cultural dimension. However, a large share of the representation gaps documented here seems to have different causes. In particular, education alone explains a rather small share of representation gaps, suggesting that we can learn a lot by examining other characteristics regarding which politicians differ from ordinary citizens. Moreover, even though one should be very cautious in taking the quantitative estimates literally, they sug-

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gest that the "problematic" and "desirable" shares of the cultural representation gap are both large.

On the economic dimension, accounting for demographic differences and political knowledge *increases* the representation gap. Hence, while there is no large unconditional economic representation gap (when pooling across Europe) one might argue that there should be one. If so, one would argue that policymaking should be more market-oriented than it currently is.

4   The Relationship between Representation Gaps and Populism

4.1   Representation Gaps and the Demand for Populism

Many citizens perceive representation gaps. When asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement "the [National] parliament takes into consideration the concerns of [National] citizens." only about 11% agreed strongly and about 39% agreed, while nearly 22% disagreed, and about 13% even disagreed strongly.[7] Hence, over a third of Europeans think that their national parliament does not even *consider* their concerns. To examine who perceives representation gaps, I estimate the following equations by OLS:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta_{culture} \cdot \text{cultural index}_i + \beta_{economy} \cdot \text{economic index}_i + \theta \cdot \mathbf{X}_i + \varepsilon_i, \qquad (8)$$

where y_i either measures the perception of representation gaps based on the item just presented or subject i's stated dissatisfaction with how democracy works in their country and $\mathbf{X}_i$ includes the same set of demographic control variables used above. Because I study the demand for representation gaps here, I do not exclude non-voters.

Columns (1) and (5) of table Table 2 reveal that within country, citizens who are more culturally right-wing are significantly more likely to state that they are dissatisfied with how democracy works in their country and to think that their national parliament does not consider the concerns of the citizens. In contrast, citizens who are more economically right-wing are significantly less likely to be dissatisfied with democracy in their country while there is no significant association with the perception of representation gaps. These perceptions are consistent with the fact that culturally conservative voters and citizens actually are relatively less well-represented by their parliaments, as shown by this paper. Columns (2) and (6) show that these relationships are not altered notably if demographic controls are included in the regressions. Hence, culturally conservative individuals are not dissatisfied because they have specific demographic characteristics.

If representation gaps were responsible for dissatisfaction with politics, one would expect representation gaps to predict dissatisfaction above and beyond political attitudes.

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7. The remaining respondents answered with "Neither nor." I pool all citizen responses across Europe and weigh them by population size.

Table 2. Association between Representation and Political Attitudes

	Dependent variable:							
	Dissatisfied with how democracy works in [country] (SD)				Thinks [country]'s parliament doesn't consider citizens concerns (SD)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Cultural index (SD)	0.071***	0.075***		0.044**	0.099***	0.109***		0.089***
	(0.018)	(0.016)		(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.017)		(0.021)
Economic index (SD)	−0.071***	−0.061***		−0.060***	0.009	0.013		0.013
	(0.016)	(0.015)		(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)		(0.015)
$RG^{voter}_{culture}$ (SD)			0.085***	0.060***			0.077***	0.038**
			(0.015)	(0.017)			(0.011)	(0.015)
$RG^{voter}_{economy}$ (SD)			−0.0004	0.009			0.014	0.010
			(0.016)	(0.012)			(0.014)	(0.014)
Constant	1.580***	1.704***	1.577***	1.456***	0.962***	0.946***	0.934***	0.711***
	(0.035)	(0.068)	(0.109)	(0.118)	(0.038)	(0.071)	(0.118)	(0.127)
Country indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demographic controls		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,177	18,155	18,155	18,155	21,022	18,010	18,010	18,010
R^2	0.201	0.235	0.233	0.238	0.150	0.170	0.166	0.171

Note: This table shows results from OLS regressions based on Equation 8. I use data on all citizens. Demographic controls include include country indicators, age, gender, degree of religiosity, categories of marital status, city size, living standard, occupation categories, age at which their education ended, and immigration background. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the country level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Therefore, columns (3), (4) (7), and (8) include the voter-level representation gap, as defined in Equation 6 —the distance between the closest established party and the attitude of the voter.

Indeed, and even after controlling for attitudes as revealed by columns (4) and (8), the cultural bias is positively and significantly related to both outcome variables. On the economic dimension, the bias is never significant while the economic index is significant in one specification. Overall, this evidence suggests that culturally right-wing people are primarily dissatisfied because their attitudes are really not represented, not because they are right-wing.

While this analysis cannot establish a causal channel, it is consistent with the idea that most citizens who are dissatisfied with policymaking are culturally right-wing and that these people are dissatisfied because their attitudes are not represented. Hence, parties that supply culturally right-wing policies might tap into unsatisfied demand.

4.2 Representation Gaps and the Supply of Populism

The idea of an unsatisfied demand for culturally conservative policy positions lines up well with the political development in Europe after 2009. Since then, a new group of challenger parties had unprecedented electoral successes in nearly all European countries. These parties are often referred to as populists and most of them, particularly the most successful ones, focus on cultural issues and are culturally right-wing (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). The remainder of this paper examines whether the policy supply of populists fills representation gaps and entertains the idea that the rise of populism is a symptom of representation gaps.

4.2.1 Defining Populism.
To classify parties as populist, I follow the frequently used PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2023a; Rooduijn et al., 2023b)[8] The PopuList employs the most frequently used definition of populism by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017). According to this definition, populism is not a full ideology like liberalism or conservatism, which are tied to policy objectives. Instead, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define populists as those who make several specific claims about the political reality. In particular, populists claim that

(1) society is divided into two antagonistic groups: the "corrupt elite" and the "pure people,"

(2) these two groups are homogeneous,

(3) the populists will save the people from the elite.

4.2.2 Testing the Claims of Populists.
These claims are concerned with political representation. Hence, my data allows me to examine their validity. To this end, however, the claims must be made more precise and measurable. First, measures for the vague terms "elite" and "the people" are needed. I use high-ranking politicians, and in particular, parliamentarians as a substitute for "the elite." Similarly, I use national citizens as a substitute for "the people." Sometimes populists seem to exclude ethnic minorities from "the people." However, including them would not alter the considerations presented below.

Consequently, claim (1) posits "antagonism" between citizens and the parliament while claim (2) says that the parliament and citizens are both homogeneous. Since the main purpose of a parliament is to represent the interests of its citizens, a plausible interpretation of claim (1) is that the policymaking of the parliament is opposed to the popular will. Following this line of reasoning, I interpret claim (2) as the parliament and citizens having homogeneous policy attitudes. It then follows naturally that according to claim (3) the policy positions of populists are congruent with the popular will.

According to this interpretation, representation gaps are a central feature of the definition of populism and the claims populists make themselves. This focus on representation is consistent with populism as a thin ideology because substantive ideologies are less suitable for filling representation gaps, which can vary across countries and over time.

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8. I also classify parties as populists that are labeled "borderline" cases in the PopuList database.

It is difficult to specify precise formal tests for the claims of populists since, in my view, these claims should not be interpreted as what populists literally believe or claim. Taken literally, the homogeneity claim posits that every single citizen has the exact same attitude regarding any policy issue imaginable. This is obviously incorrect, as must be apparent to populists too who often face criticism for their positions. Rather, I see these claims as the end-point of a populism spectrum that one can place any politician on. Therefore, I do not test the literal interpretation of the claims but examine qualitatively whether they contain a kernel of truth. Such a qualitative test for claim (1) is whether policymaking is opposed to the attitude of the majority of citizens.[9] As Section 3.1.1 shows (Section 4.3.3 provides more evidence), most voters desire lower immigration rates and much harsher sentences for criminals while the majority of parliamentarians are opposed to these policies.[10] A the same time, these are two particularly important issues for voters and parliamentarians (Figure C.1). On most other issues, however, disagreements between voters and parliamentarians are rather a matter of degree. Hence, claim (1) is largely correct when focusing on important cultural topics and hence arguably when focusing on the cultural dimension as a whole, but not when thinking about economic policymaking.

The second claim of populists would be completely correct if all citizens were located at the same point in policy space and all parliamentarians from non-populist (mainstream) parties were located at another point. The claim would be completely incorrect if the positions of voters and parliamentarians were distributed widely and identically in the policy space. Figure 2 shows that the claim contains much truth when looking at the cultural dimension, while it is largely incorrect regarding the economic dimension. Similarly, Figure 6 shows that nearly all mainstream parties are culturally more liberal than the mean voter, while the average mainstream party is close to the mean voter on the economic dimension.[11]

Finally, the third claim is concerned with the policies populists supply. It would be completely correct if all populists were located at the position of the mean voter. To examine that claim, Figure 6 depicts the policy positions of mainstream parties and different groups of populists. I distinguish between different groups of populists because, consistent with populism being a thin ideology, the policy positions of these groups are very different.

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9. This step implicitly equates the interest of citizens with their will. While the two concepts differ in general, part of the representation gaps reflect policymaking that goes against the people's interest, as discussed in Section 3.4. Hence, the argument still applies in a mitigated form after taking into account the difference between interest and will.

10. Section 3.1.1 just compares policy attitudes but Section 3.2.1 shows that most parliamentarians are policy-motivated which implies that attitude differences are very similar to representation gaps. Section 3.1.1 pools populists and mainstream politicians but this creates a bias that works against the argument.

11. Figure 6 is identical to Figure 5 except for the coloring of points. As before, I calculate the bias of a party relative to the national mean voters as the mean bias of its parliamentarians based on Equation 5. Figure D.9 shows the results when party positions are estimated from the positions of all candidates.
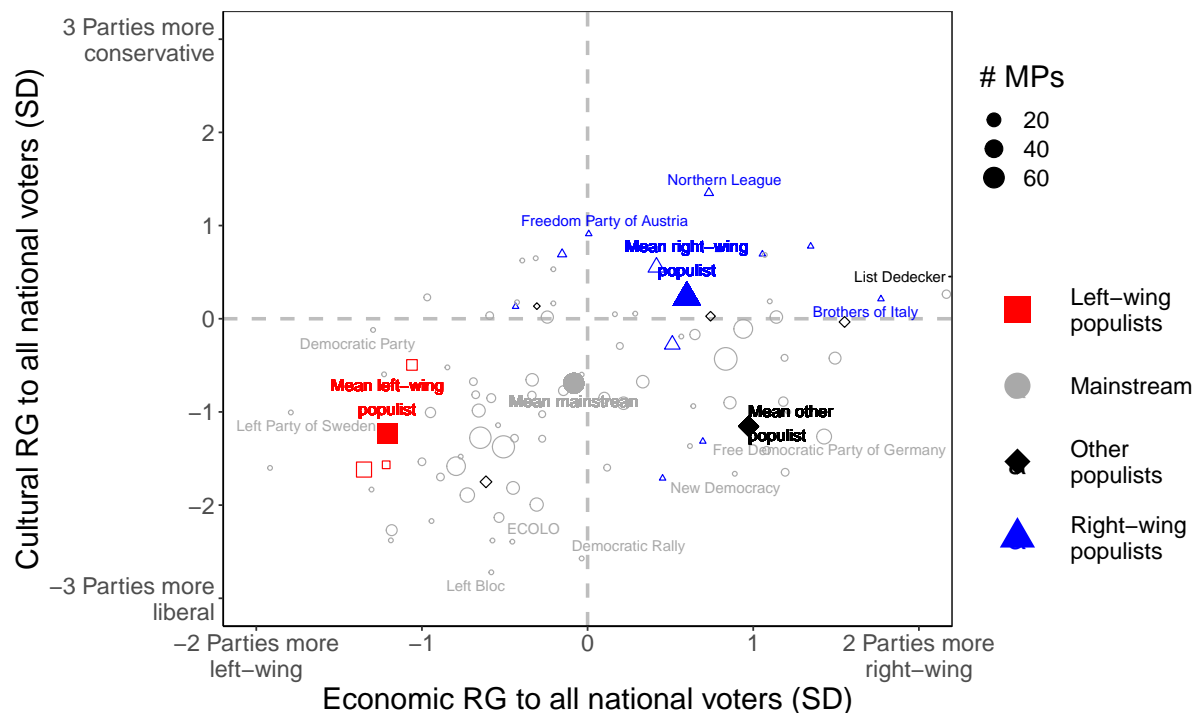
Figure 6. Representation Gaps Relative to National Voters by Populist and Non-populist Parties

Note: This figure compares the policy positions of European parties relative to the position of the national mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. Estimates of policy positions are based on the mean index of elected members of parliament belonging to the corresponding party. A few parties are positioned outside the boundaries of this figure, but all of them rely on a few observations and are, therefore, measured imprecisely. I omit them for clearness.

As can be seen, most populist parties are not located close to the mean voter. However, right-wing populists fill the cultural representation gap while left-wing populists and "other populists" do not fill any representation gap.[12]

This does not imply that right-wing populists are closer to the mean voter than any other party group or that populists in general are closer to the mean voter than mainstream parties. Rather, the point of Figure 6 is that (only) right-wing populists fill representation gaps that other party groups have left open. Hence, neither group of populists (nor the overall average populist party) represents the policy attitudes of the mean voter. However, right-wing populists are the only party group that represents the cultural attitudes of the more conservative half of the population. Hence, strong right-wing populists are needed for parliaments to represent the cultural attitudes of voters.

Since the estimates in figure Figure 6 combine information on the attitudes of parliamentarians and their representation intention, one might wonder which of these factors causes right-wing populists to fill the cultural representation gap. The proportion of representation-motivated parliamentarians is higher among populists than among mainstream politicians. Among national MPs about 83% of mainstream MPs are policy-motivated while the share

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12. I distinguish between left-wing populists, right-wing populists, and all other populist parties as defined in the PopuList. I do not display "anti-EU populists" as an independent category because I do not use an independent EU dimension.

is 60% for populists and this difference is highly significant according to Fisher's exact test ($p < 0.0001$). Among MEPs, the shares are 87% and 65% respectively ($p \approx 0.022$). However, while populists are more willing to prioritize the attitudes of their voters, the majority of populists are still policy-motivated. Moreover, Figure D.10 reveals that simple attitude differences between voters and average parliamentarians from parties strongly resemble the representation gaps depicted in Figure 6. Hence, it is mostly the distinct attitudes of right-wing populists that make them fill representation gaps.

In sum, much of what populists claim is true when focusing on the cultural dimension, even though they might often exaggerate or oversimplify. In particular, right-wing populists correctly identified the cultural representation gap and filled it, just like a rational politician in many simple spatial election models would (Downs, 1957; Schofield, 2007).

4.3 Combining Demand and Supply — the Rise of Populism

The data used here is descriptive and cannot be used to estimate the causal effect of representation gaps on populism. Still, it can be used to gauge the plausibility of such a connection. If representation gaps contributed to the rise of populism one would expect representation gaps to have grown recently, to predict the rise of populist parties and citizens whose attitudes are located in representation gaps to vote for populists.

4.3.1 Representation Gaps Increased Recently.
The vote share of populist parties *increased* sharply since 2009 (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). If representation gaps contributed to this rise, one would expect a corresponding general increase in representation gaps. Such an increase might happen for three reasons. 1) parties might change their policy positions further away from the attitudes of voters, 2) voters might change their attitudes further away from parties and 3) policy issues where representation gaps are relatively larger might become more important to citizens, meaning that the weights on issues with larger gaps increase.

Danieli et al. (2022) find that neither the policy positions of European parties nor the policy attitudes of European citizens changed strongly between 2005 and 2020 and conclude that changes in parties' or citizens' policy positions cannot explain the rise of populism. In contrast, they find that the importance citizens put on cultural issues increased strongly, which, as they show, can account for the lion's share of the populist rise. A potential explanation is that representation gaps on cultural issues are much larger than on economic ones. Consequently, greater perceived importance of cultural issues makes the comparative advantage of right-wing populists —the fact that they are close to the electoral center on cultural issues— more relevant, thereby making them a more attractive voting option.

To test this prediction I examine how the perceived importance of policy issues changed over time. To this end, I calculate, for several policy issues, the share of European citizens who found it to be the most important issue for their country in 2009 and 2014. The data

for 2009 is based on the main survey dataset, while I use the next iteration of the EU 2009 voter survey to gather comparable estimates for 2014.[13]

Figure 7 compares the perceived importance of policy issues in 2009 and 2014. Consistent with the results of Danieli et al. (2022), cultural issues became more important in the eyes of Europeans overall, but Figure 7 reveals that this can be nearly entirely attributed to one issue —immigration. Immigration was already considered the most important issue in 2009, but other issues followed closely. Between 2009 and 2014, the share of Europeans who consider immigration most important more than doubled to nearly 9%, which made it considered the most important issue by far.
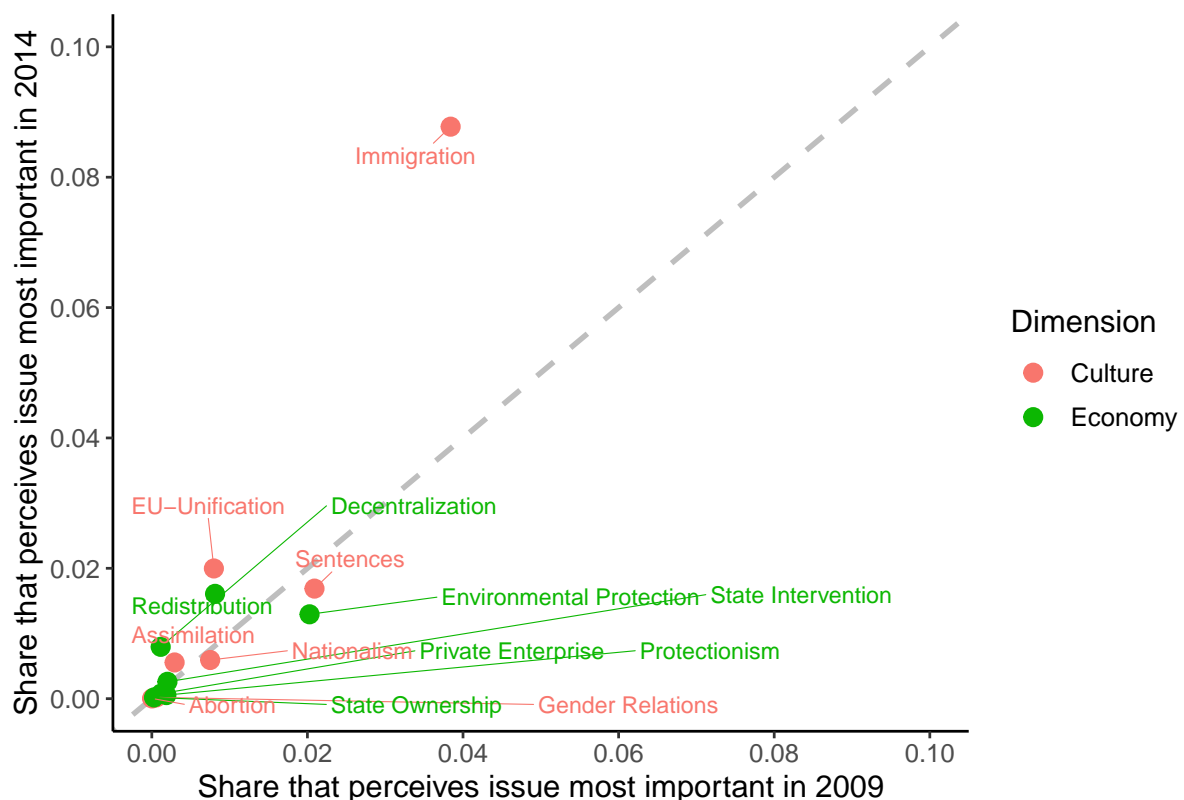

Figure 7. Most important issues according to European citizens in 2009 and 2014
Note: Shares are calculated based on open-ended responses to the survey item "What do you think is the first most important issue or problem facing [country] at the moment?" For each issue depicted in the plot, I calculate the share of Europeans who think this issue is most important. I use data on all EU citizens and weigh them to generate a representative sample of the adult EU population. Importance shares do not sum to 1 because many responses could not be classified to one of the topics and are therefore not depicted here.

This shift in priorities likely increased the cultural representation gap because immigration is the issue where attitude differences between voters and parliamentarians are the largest. To examine this empirically I calculate new index variables as in Section 3.2.2 but

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13. The most recent iteration provides data for 2019. However, data on the question I am analyzing has not yet been harmonized with the two earlier iterations. Including data for 2019 would likely strengthen the results obtained in this section because the perceived importance of immigration likely increased strongly due to the refugee crisis.

weighting issues with the importance voters attributed to the issues in *2014*. Based on these 2014 indexes, I estimate representation gaps between voters and parliamentarians in 2009 given the issue priorities of citizens in 2014. Under the assumption that policy positions of voters and parties did not change notably, as found empirically by Danieli et al. (2022), this enables me to estimate the representation gap in 2014. Because only MEPs and citizens were asked the immigration question, I restrict my sample to these groups. Moreover, I use the MEP indexes because only the cultural MEP index includes immigration.

Table 3. Representation gap estimates for 2009 and 2014

	Dependent variable:			
	Cultural index		Economic index	
	2009	2014	2009	2014
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}$[MEP]	−0.785***	−1.404***	0.122	0.278
	(0.104)	(0.181)	(0.105)	(0.195)
Constant	2.744***	5.079***	2.113***	3.523***
	(0.0003)	(0.001)	(0.0003)	(0.001)
Country indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	15,250	15,250	16,500	16,500
R^2	0.163	0.155	0.102	0.106

Note: This table shows results from OLS regressions based on Equation 4. Higher values of the dependent variables indicate that the respondent is culturally more right-wing/conservative. $\mathbb{1}$[MEP] equals one for those elected in the 2009 European Parliament election and 0 for "ordinary" EU citizens who voted in this election. Regressions are weighted to obtain representative samples within each country. Standard errors (in parenthesis) are clustered at the country level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Columns (1) and (3) in Table 3 show that in 2009, MEPs were 0.785 standard deviations of citizen attitudes more culturally liberal than voters, while the economic representation gap is insignificant. Columns (2) and (4) show results for the 2014 indexes. As expected, the cultural representation gap nearly doubled due to the increased perceived importance of immigration. In contrast, the economic representation gap did not change notably.

Even though most voters already desired reduced immigration rates, immigration strongly *increased* after 2014, notably during the refugee crisis in 2015/2016. This likely made immigration even more important in the eyes of citizens. Hence, representation gaps likely continued to increase after 2014 which might help to explain the increase in the populist vote share after 2014.

4.3.2 Representation Gaps Predict the Rise of Populism. One might expect parties who fill representation gaps to rise if those gaps become more salient or relevant over time. Following this line of reasoning, one would expect representation gaps to predict the rise of populist parties. Because only right-wing populists fill representation gaps and only cultural ones, one would predict that only the rise of right-wing populists is predicted by representation

gaps, and only by cultural ones. To test this prediction I estimate the following specification by OLS:

$$(\text{Pop. vote share}_{c,2009+t} - \text{Pop. vote share}_{c,2009}) \cdot 100 = \alpha_t + \beta_t \cdot \text{Cul. RG}_c + \varepsilon_c, \quad (9)$$

where c indexes countries. The cultural representation gap is calculated based on Equation 4. Because I estimate representation gaps around the 2009 EP election and to foster comparability between countries, I predict the vote share of the 2014 and 2019 EP elections. Hence, $t \in \{5, 10\}$. Moreover, I pool data of all candidates for the 2009 EP and national elections to gain precision. For the same reason, I exclude all countries from the analysis with fewer than 20 candidates in my sample.

Table 4. Association between cultural representation gaps in 2009 and subsequent populist vote gains

	Dependent variable: Percentage gain of populists in EP election (%)							
	EP election 2014				EP election 2019			
	All	Right-wing	Left-wing	Other	All	Right-wing	Left-wing	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Cultural RG (SD)	9.876	7.714*	−1.985	−3.491	28.788***	25.825***	−3.473	−1.201
	(7.366)	(4.287)	(2.487)	(17.353)	(7.366)	(4.287)	(2.487)	(17.353)
Constant	−1.070	−0.907	2.390	9.351	−10.193**	−7.245**	2.931	6.025
	(4.673)	(2.801)	(2.108)	(8.899)	(4.673)	(2.801)	(2.108)	(8.899)
Observations	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
R^2	0.049	0.073	0.009	0.003	0.241	0.350	0.025	0.001

Note: This table shows results from OLS regressions based on Equation 9. The cultural representation gap (RG) is calculated based on Equation 4. Columns (1) and (5) use the percentage gain of all populists as the dependent variable. In columns (2) and (6) it is right-wing populists only, in columns (3) and (7) left-wing populists and in columns (4) and (8) other populists. Standard errors (in parenthesis) are clustered at the country level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4 shows the results. Columns (1) and (5) reveal positive associations between the cultural representation gaps in 2009 and the vote share increase of populist parties in general. Both estimates are economically very large, considering that the vote shares of populist parties in 2014 and 2019 were about 23% and 31% respectively. However, only the gain until 2019 is statistically significant. Columns (2) and (6) show that, as expected, the predicted rise of populism is driven nearly exclusively by right-wing populists and this relationship is significant for both years. Still, the coefficient and the R^2 for 2019 are three to four times as large as the ones for 2014 which might partly be explained by populists being much stronger overall in 2019 than in 2014. Still, the results should be interpreted with caution because the analysis relies on a sample of only 23 countries.

These results suggest that parties can exploit representation gaps to increase their vote share. Notably, this finding not fit well with an explanation based on probabilistic voting models with office-motivated candidates, where it is vote-share maximizing to create representation gaps (Persson and Tabellini, 2002).

4.3.3 The Case of Germany. From here on the paper employs the temporal dataset to investigate the co-evolution of representation gaps and populism more rigorously. Since temporal data is particularly rich in Germany, I restrict my analysis to this country. At the same time, Germany is the most populated country and largest economy in Europe which means that a powerful populist party there would be comparatively impactful. Regarding the rise of populism, it follows the same trajectory as many other Western democracies, which suggests rather high external validity.

Historically, Germany has been dominated by a social democratic party and a conservative party. Until 2015, the German parliament did not contain a party to the right of the conservative party. During the refugee crisis, the recently founded AfD turned into a typical right-wing populist party and has maintained a strong and growing electoral presence since then.

Figure 8 depicts the mean attitudes of citizens and the policy positions of national MPs regarding three policy items.[14] They all contrast policy changes in two opposite directions. I scale issues such that a position at 5 indicates that subjects prefer a balanced option/the status quo. As before, higher positions indicate positions that are more right-wing/pro-growth/anti-immigration. Table E.2 provides details.

Panel (a) reveals a small representation gap regarding taxes. Throughout the last 14 years the average voter held positions close to the "status quo position" at 5. Voters tend to prefer slightly lower taxes, even if that means fewer social services. MPs have always been more in favor of increasing taxes. Over time, the policy positions of either group are quite constant.

Panel (b) finds no notable representation gap regarding climate change. Voters and MPs prioritize climate protection over economic growth and do so equally strongly. This sheds light on whether representation gaps are due to citizens holding naive attitudes that are against their (long-term) interests (Levy, Razin, and Young, 2022). Following this line of reasoning, one might expect a particularly large representation gap regarding climate protection because current protection efforts have benefits that are delayed, dispersed, and comparatively hard to picture. While panel (b) does not reveal whether citizens hold naive attitudes it speaks against MPs protecting voters from their own naivety.

Panel (c) shows that by far the largest representation gap exists regarding immigration. It amounts to more than 3 points on the 11-point scale, or a bit more than one standard deviation of citizen attitudes. Moreover, the average voter and the average MP prefer changes in policymaking that go in opposite directions. The mean voter desires a more restrictive immigration policy while the average MP wants to facilitate immigration opportunities. These opposing positions are rather stable over time. While there is notable quantitative variation within the two groups of up to about 1 point on the scale, there is no observation in which the mean voter does not desire a more restrictive immigration policy or where the mean

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14. I analyze citizens instead of voters for comparability because information on voting intention is not available for all citizen surveys used here. However, using voters only does not change the results notably for the surveys that do contain a voting indicator.
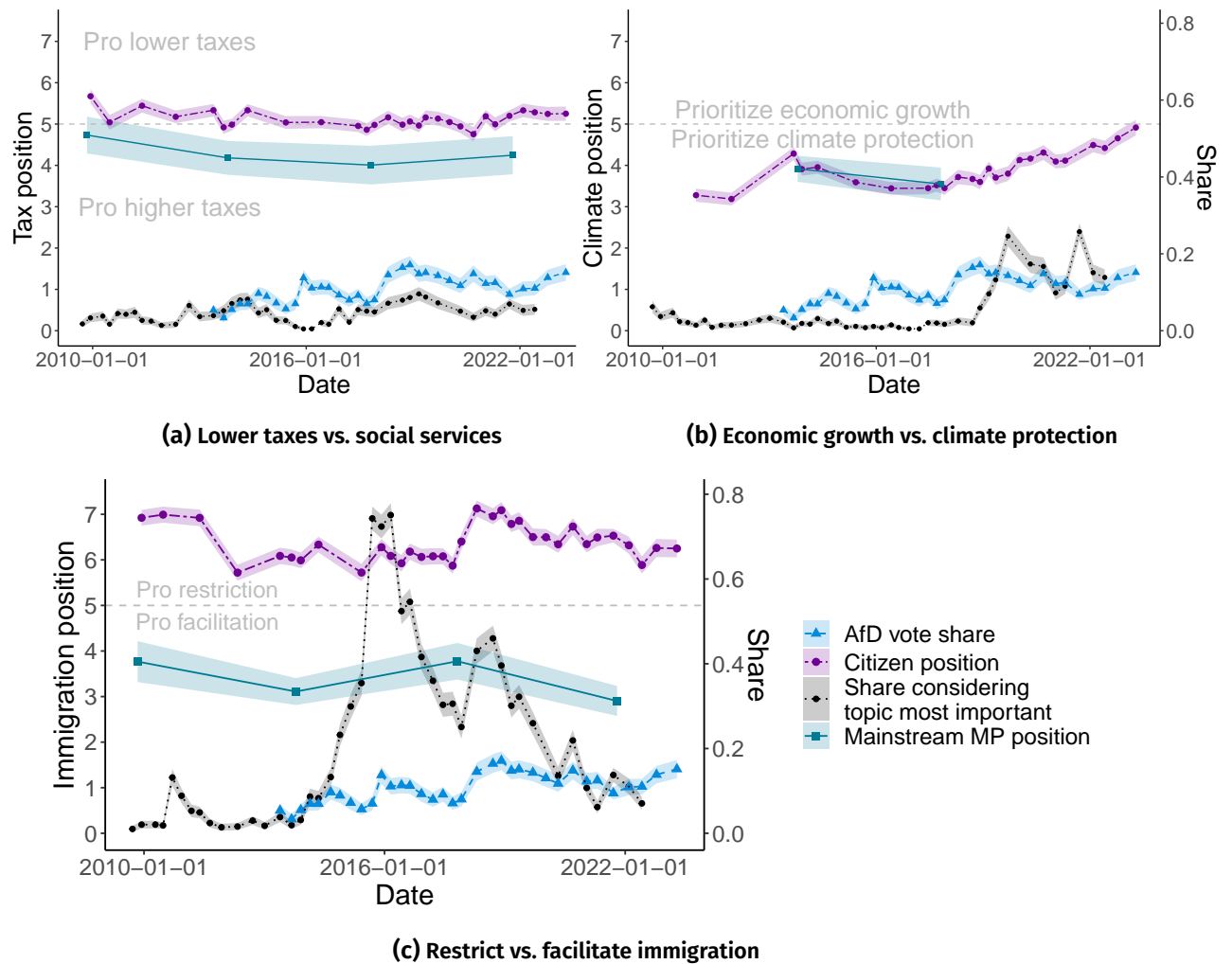
(a) Lower taxes vs. social services

(b) Economic growth vs. climate protection

(c) Restrict vs. facilitate immigration

Figure 8. Representation Gaps in Germany over Time by Policy Issue

Note: For all panels, the positions of citizens and mainstream MPs are measured on the left vertical axis while the other two lines are measured on the right vertical axis. Mainstream MP position includes data on all MPs who do not belong to the AfD. Bands visualize 95% confidence intervals.

MP does not want to facilitate immigration.[15] Consequently, the representation gap stayed roughly constant over the last 14 years.

As conjectured in Section 4.3.1, given the issue, representation gaps did not increase much during the rise of populism. However, Figure 8 shows that the perceived importance of policy issues did change strongly. To visualize this, the figure depicts the share of voters who consider the issue at hand most important. Voters find the tax issue relatively unimportant throughout the period under consideration. Similarly, few voters considered climate change important until around 2018, after much of the recent rise of the populist AfD. In contrast, while few Germany considered immigration important during the early years under consideration, this share skyrockets during the refugee crisis where about three quarters of Germans considered immigration the most important issue. It was exactly during this time that the AfD tilted its program toward anti-immigration and and rose in the polls as shown in the figure.

Overall, this evidence is consistent with the idea that an increase in perceived importance made a political issue relevant for voting decisions where the representation gap is particularly large. While it is less surprising that increased perceived relevance of immigration translates into more AfD voting, my line of reasoning suggests that it does so only because of the representation gap there. To further test this idea, I run OLS regressions of the following form:

$$\mathbb{1}[\text{AfD vote}]_v = \alpha_t + \beta_{1,t} \cdot \text{RG}_{v,t} + \beta_{2,t} \cdot \text{Attitude}_{v,t} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{Importance}_{v,t} + \boldsymbol{\theta} \cdot \mathbf{X}_v + \varepsilon_v. \quad (10)$$

v indexes voters and t indexes/topics the three issues "taxes," "climate" and "immigration." $\mathbf{X}_v$ includes a large number of controls detailed in Table 5. Representation gaps are defined as the absolute distance to the closest non-AfD party (Equation 6). Crucially, Equation 10 controls for i) the perceived importance of issue t, measured as a factor variable with 5 values from "very important" to "not important at all" and ii) for the policy attitude itself (linearly). Hence, $\beta_{1,t}$ is not driven by cross-subject differences in the perceived importance or a linear association between the attitude and AfD voting. To make estimates comparable I only use data for 2017, where the AfD was right-wing populist and all three attitudes were elicited.[16]

I expect the representation gap regarding immigration to be most strongly associated with AfD voting because the representation gap is largest there and the AfD fills it, as shown in Figure D.11. Figure D.11 also reveals that, in contrast to established parties, the AfD represents the few citizens who prioritize economic growth over climate protection. Regarding taxes, the AfD is located close to the mean citizen but offers nearly the same position as the conservatives, therefore not filling a representation gap. Hence, I expect a smaller association between the climate representation gap and AfD voting but no notable association with the tax representation gap.

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15. Kustov, Laaker, and Reller (2021) also find very stable immigration attitudes. I add the observation that the positions of MPs show a similar degree of stability. This is notable because allegedly greater instability of voter preferences is a common criticism of direct democracy.

16. Results are similar for 2021, the only other year where the AfD was right-wing populist.

Table 5. Association between Representation and Political Attitudes

	Dependent variable: AfD-voting indicator					
	Taxes		Climate		Immigration	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Representation gap (SD)	0.030*	0.037	0.047*	−0.092*	0.130***	0.034
	(0.015)	(0.064)	(0.025)	(0.047)	(0.027)	(0.051)
Attitude (SD)	0.058***	0.058***	0.031	0.022	0.016	0.010
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Perceived importance (SD)	0.012	0.014	−0.008	−0.014	0.046***	0.006
	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Repr. gap x Perceived imp.		−0.002		0.039***		0.034**
		(0.016)		(0.013)		(0.015)
Constant	−2.625	−2.653	−3.367	−3.630	−4.549**	−4.611**
	(2.473)	(2.501)	(2.531)	(2.530)	(2.280)	(2.276)
Demographic controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	720	720	719	719	721	721
R^2	0.222	0.222	0.241	0.254	0.351	0.362

Note: This table shows results from weighted OLS regressions. All data is from the GLES 2017 post-election surveys. Columns (1), (3), and (5) are based on Equation 10 while columns (2), (4), and (6) are based on Equation 11. The dependent variable equals one if the subject stated an intention to vote for the AfD and zero else. Demographic controls include age, gender, number of years unemployed during the last 10 years, indicators for own immigration background and East/West Germany, categories of marital status, city size, perceived current economic situation, perceived future economic situation, occupation education, self-reported main information source, fear of job loss, household income, parents immigration backgrounds, religion and urbanization of the residence area. Robust standard errors (in parentheses). * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Columns (1), (3), and (5) in Table 5 show the results. To ease interpretation I divide all variables by their standard deviations. For all three issues, being not represented by a mainstream party is positively and significantly associated with voting for the AfD, even after controlling for perceived importance. As expected, the point estimate is smallest regarding taxes and largest regarding immigration. Moreover, there is no linear association between AfD voting and climate or immigration attitudes even though these associations are very strong in regressions that do not include the representation gap. This suggests that it matters more whether citizens are represented by established parties than whether they are right-wing. Similarly, these results show that representation gaps matter above and beyond the influence of perceived importance.

Following my line of reasoning, one would expect that an increase in the perceived importance amplifies a positive effect of the representation gap on AfD voting —perceived importance and representation gaps interact. To test this hypothesis I run OLS regressions of the following form:

$$\mathbb{1}[\text{AfD vote}]_s = \alpha_t + \delta_t \cdot \text{RG}_{s,t} \cdot \text{Importance}_{s,t} + \qquad (11)$$
$$\beta_{1,t} \cdot \text{RG}_{s,t} + \beta_{2,t} \cdot \text{Attitude}_{s,t} + \beta_{3,t} \cdot \text{Importance}_{s,t} + \theta_t \cdot \mathbf{X}_s + \varepsilon_{s,t}.$$

Relative to Equation 10 I only add the interaction between perceived importance and representation gaps. The results are depicted in columns (2), (4) and (6) of Table 5. As expected, the interaction is significantly positive regarding immigration and climate change while it is insignificant for taxes. Moreover, the main effects for perceived importance and the representation gap regarding immigration sharply decrease in magnitude and turn insignificant after adding the interaction term. Hence, the perceived importance of immigration only predicts AfD voting for citizens who are not represented by mainstream parties. Equivalently, among the citizens who are not represented by mainstream parties, only those vote for the AfD who consider immigration important. Hence, it appears that representation gaps and a high degree of perceived importance are both needed to predict AfD voting. This is consistent with the idea that increased perceived importance of topics where representation gaps are large, partly driven by shocks, were the catalyst for the rise of right-wing populism. Importantly, however, these results suggest that increased perceived importance only had this effect because of the existence of political representation gaps and the fact that right-wing populists fill them.

5 Conclusion

Methodologically, the paper at hand uses data rarely employed by economists —a combination of MP and voter surveys. As I show, this type of data is of high quality. It correlates strongly with established measures and real-world behavior. In contrast to established measures, it allows researchers to estimate the representation of political attitudes. Because economists have made little use of this type of data (Laver, 2014) many interesting questions remain unexplored. For instance, the data could be used to test whether demographic groups who are numerically underrepresented in parliaments are also underrepresented in terms of attitudes. Similarly, while previous studies have shown that only a minority of detached citizens are not represented by established parties in terms of demographic characteristics (Bó et al., 2023), my results suggest that in terms of policy attitudes, the share of unrepresented citizens is much larger.

Furthermore, the paper guides us in modeling electoral competition. Many established models cannot explain all the results documented here, in particular, that it seems possible for parties to exploit representation gaps. This might partly be because these models assume office-motivated candidates, who would not leave exploitable representation gaps open. I provide evidence that most politicians are not office- but policy-motivated. At the same time, models with policy-motivated politicians are not necessarily more complex than those with office-motivated ones. These two facts make a strong case for the increased use of models with policy-motivated candidates.

Moreover, the tendency to be culturally left-wing might not only apply to politicians. I provide evidence that the media is biased relative to voters in the same direction politicians are, but even more strongly in magnitude. Similar media biases are found by Puglisi and Snyder (2015) in the USA while Haidt and Lukianoff (2018) shows that experts tend to be more socially left-wing than the population. Examining the interplay between political representation gaps, media bias, and a potential "expert bias" might be another promising starting point for future research.

My results raise the question of whether scholars have focused too much on populism itself as opposed to substantive policy positions. The rise of populism in Europe is largely driven by right-wing populists (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). As shown here, the reason might be that right-wing populists fill more empty policy space than others. Hence, the rise of populism might be due to their substantive policy proposals rather than populist rhetoric.

The paper also helps to organize the increasingly multitudinous set of reduced-form studies that examine the effects of various shocks on the strength of populists (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). Studies have revealed a very complex pattern of shocks that can affect the populist vote share differently, partly for unknown reasons (Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2016; Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). Representation gaps might help to explain these heterogeneities. Possibly, shocks only lead voters to switch from mainstream to populist parties if they are not satisfied with the way mainstream parties are dealing with the shock. This line of reasoning suggests that the rise of populism is not entirely due to exogenous shocks and is outside of the control of mainstream politicians. Rather, populism might be seen as a symptom of representation gaps which implies that mainstream politicians can mitigate or even reverse the rise of populism by filling representation gaps themselves.

Focusing on substantive policies also suggests that populists might be a normal democratic "corrective" for representation gaps (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). This raises the question of whether the rise of populism is a problem. While populist rule tends to exert negative effects in terms of lower quality bureaucrats and reduced economic growth (Bellodi, Morelli, and Vannoni, 2021; Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023), the paper at hand suggests that they might also increase substantive representation which is arguably positive (Andeweg, 2012). Hix, Kaufmann, and Leeper (2021) find that Brits are willing so sacrifice huge proportions of the GDP to bring immigration toward their desired level. If voters decide that the implementation of their policy attitudes is worth sacrificing economic growth, it is hard to argue that the rise of populism is a problem. Still, a valid case against this line of reasoning is that populists often damage democratic institutions (Bellodi, Morelli, and Vannoni, 2021; Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023) which might ultimately lead into a dictatorship where representation gaps are even larger than now.

Similarly, one might argue that representation gaps should not be closed by adjusting the policy positions of parties but by changing the attitudes of citizens. As shown here, representation gaps toward politically informed citizens are smaller which means that they could partly be explained by biased beliefs. Indeed, recent studies have shown that Europeans have biased beliefs about immigrants (Barrera et al., 2020; Grigorieff, Roth, and Ubfal, 2020; Alesina, Miano, and Stantcheva, 2023). This is consistent with representation gaps arising

due to a lack of information by voters. However, Kustov, Laaker, and Reller (2021) note that immigration attitudes are very stable over time and robust to major shocks, making it unlikely that they are easily susceptible to information. Consistent with this observation, many experimental studies find that providing subjects with information about immigrants does not strongly affect their immigration attitudes (Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin, 2019; Alesina, Miano, and Stantcheva, 2023) or even backfires (Barrera et al., 2020). This suggests that even if part of representation gaps is driven by misinformation, closing the gap through information campaigns is difficult to achieve in practice. Moreover, even the representation gaps between well-informed citizens and parliamentarians are large. This suggests that at least part of the gaps are driven by differences in hardly mutable preferences or values. In my view, this implies that much work on populism misses the forest for the trees. Scholars who work on populism frequently justify the relevance of their work with the idea that, once in power, populists will turn democracies into dictatorships (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012; Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch, 2023; Bellodi, Morelli, and Vannoni, 2024). Even though this is rarely spelled out, a main argument against dictatorships is likely that dictators will not act in the interest of their subjects. Fighting populism (as many scholars do, e.g., Galasso et al. (2022)) is therefore a means to an end — making sure policymaking is in the peoples' interest. My results suggest that even in democracies without populist rule, policymaking might already differ systematically and strongly from what would be in the people's interest. Clearly, dictatorships would generate much larger and harmful representation gaps and I am not arguing that the fears of scientists are unjustified. Rather, I urge scholars to consider populism also as a warming light telling us that current policymaking on cultural issues might be far from welfare-optimal. Thus, identifying what part of representation gaps go against the interest of voters and proposing welfare-improving policies seems to be understudied and of primary importance.

In case one tries to reduce representation gaps through institutional reforms, this paper suggests that many institutional reforms will be ineffective. For instance, giving the European Parliament more power relative to the European Commission or giving member states more power relative to the European Parliament is unlikely to reduce representation gaps because nearly all parties and parliaments are biased relative to voters in the same way. To reduce representation gaps it is key to circumvent any group of high-ranking politicians and to make democracy more direct, for instance through increased use of binding referendums.

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ONLINE APPENDIX

Appendix A   The Dimensionality of the European Policy Space

Figure A.1 depicts a correlation matrix of all 14 attitude variables, based on all citizens of 27 EU countries and weighted to adjust for population size differences. Colored boxes contain the correlation coefficients of variables belonging to the same policy dimension. Insignificant correlations are not shown. All variables are scaled such that higher values indicate attitudes that are more economically right-wing, culturally conservative or anti-EU. The only variable that is not straightforward to classify is the attitude regarding EU referendums. I classify a preference in favor of binding EU referendums as anti-EU, because referendums create an additional hurdle for EU integration.

All significant correlation coefficients between cultural variables are positive, and most are in the range of 0.2-0.4. All but one cultural variables correlate (positively) significantly with all other cultural variables. The only exception is the rejection of abortion rights for women, which is (positively) significantly related to a preference for traditional gender roles and opposition to same-sex marriage but not significantly correlated with any other cultural attitude. Correlations of cultural variables with non-cultural variables tend to be weaker in magnitude, and some are negative. Similarly, all EU attitudes are positively and significantly correlated with each other. In particular, a preference for EU referendums correlates positively with opposition to EU unification and EU membership. Anti-EU attitudes correlate positively, but less strongly, with conservative attitudes regarding all cultural variables, except for abortion. Correlations with economic attitudes are weaker in magnitude and less systematic. Out of the six correlation coefficients between the four economic variables, four are significantly positive, one is significantly positive but small in magnitude, and one is insignificant. Correlations with non-economic variables tend to be smaller and less systematic. Overall, this evidence is consistent with the previous literature and suggests that economic attitudes should be distinguished from cultural ones. The evidence speaks less clearly for a distinction between cultural and EU attitudes. While they correlate stronger with each other, most Europeans opposed to the EU are also generally culturally conservative.

Alternatively to sorting issues directly in dimensions, one could perform an empirically driven approach, using a principal component analysis. To mirror the analysis in Section 3.1.2, I focus on the eight issues that voters, members of the European parliament and national MPs were asked about. The principal component analysis reveals the first policy dimension to explain about 26% of attitude variance. As sown in table, Table A.1 this dimension correlates strongly and positively with non-economic variables. It correlates strongest with a desire for more severe sentences and a preference for assimilation of immigrants. Hence, I interpret it as cultural conservatism. The second dimension extracted by the principal component analysis explains about 15% of attitude variation and is most strongly correlated with pro EU and anti-abortion attitudes. However, it also correlates with economically right-wing attitudes. Overall, I interpret this dimension as pro-market and pro-EU.

Figure A.2 depicts the resulting two-dimensional attitude density distributions of voters and MPs. Results resemble those of teh theory-based classification of issues into dimension
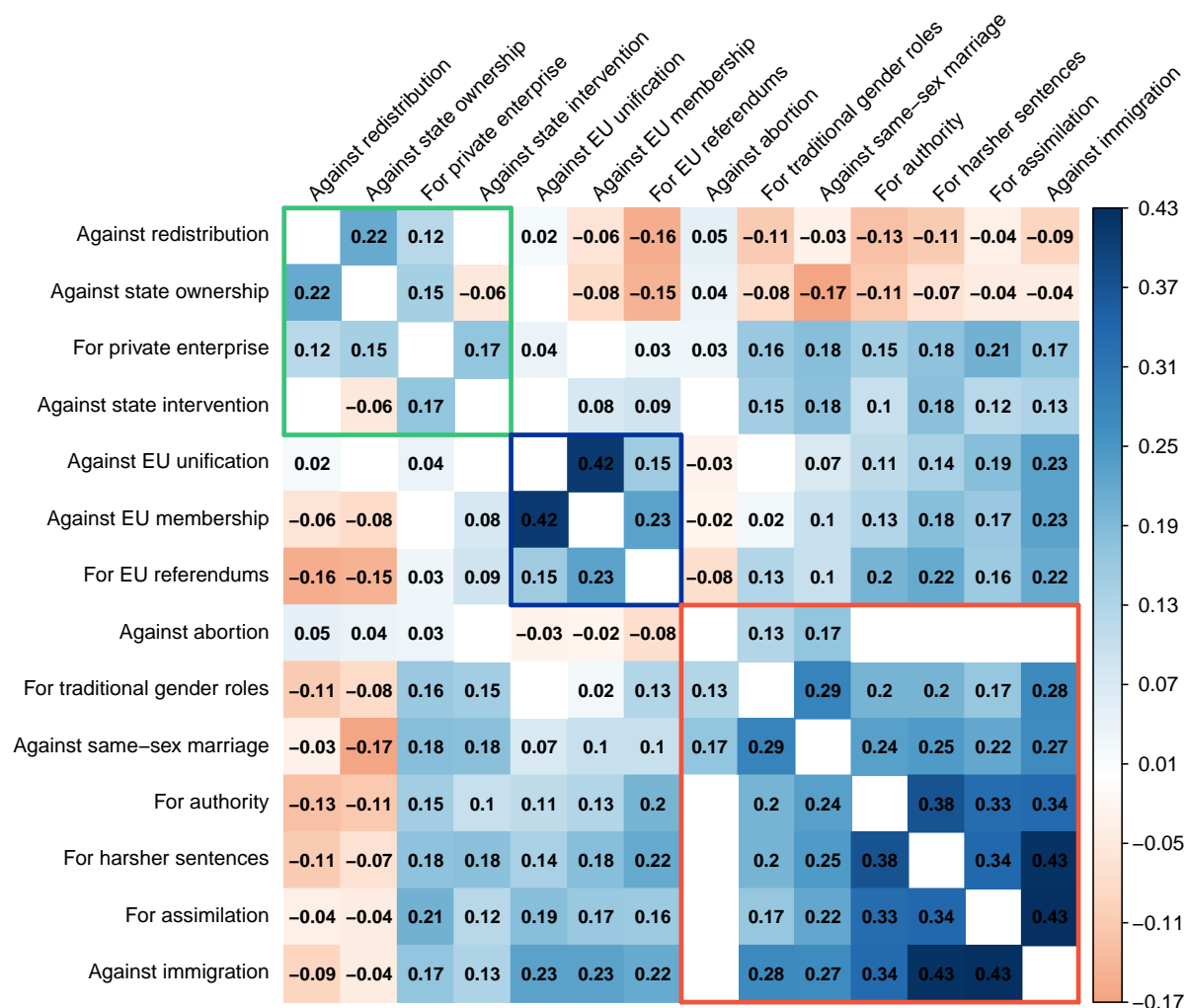
Figure A.1. Correlation Matrix of Policy Attitudes

Note: Numbers indicate correlation coefficients between the corresponding policy attitudes on the vertical and horizontal axis. Correlations of a variable with itself and correlations that are not significant at the 1% level are not shown. The sample includes citizens of 27 European countries who either voted at the 2009 Europen election or the most recent national election. Estimates are weighted to adjust for population differences between countries. Colored squares comprise variables classified as economic (green), cultural (red) and EU-related (blue).

presented in Section 3.1.2. The most striking result is that the density of MP attitudes is located much lower than the distribution of voter attitudes. This indicates that MPs are more culturally liberal than their voters. In contrast, attitude distributions are similar regarding the economic/EU dimension.

Table A.1. Correlations of attitude variables with the first 5 principal components of the European policy space

	Dim.1	Dim.2	Dim.3	Dim.4	Dim.5
State Intervention	0.429	0.327	-0.112	0.560	0.587
Redistribution	-0.121	0.110	0.743	0.552	-0.286
Assimilation	0.663	0.089	-0.125	0.096	-0.488
Sentences	0.680	0.134	-0.262	0.055	-0.246
Abortion	0.079	0.570	0.513	-0.488	0.134
Same-sex marriage	0.547	0.479	0.038	-0.199	0.008
EU membership	0.581	-0.497	0.243	-0.139	0.289
EU unification	0.554	-0.534	0.355	-0.083	0.038
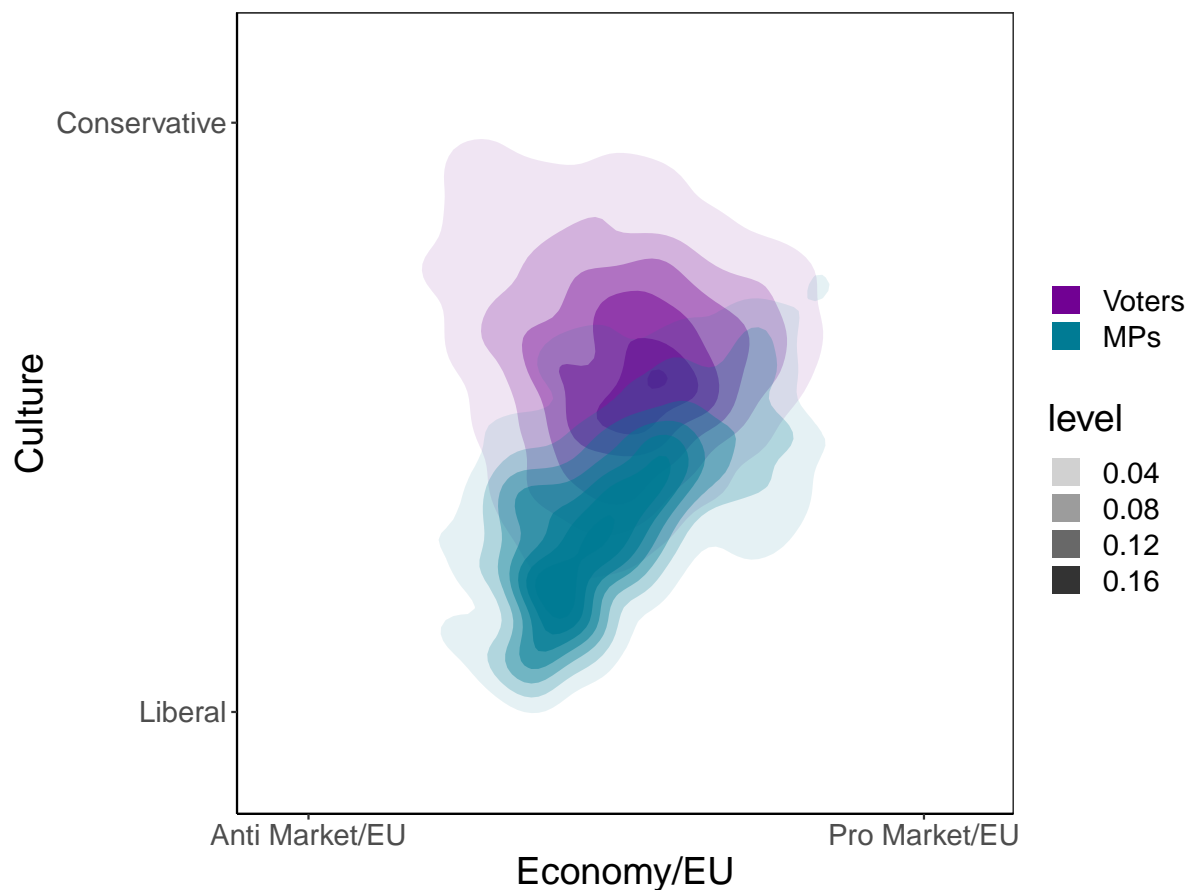
Figure A.2. Two-Dimensional Attitude Distributions of Voters and Parliamentarians Based on Principal Component Analysis
Note: The two attitude dimensions result from a principal component analysis of individual policy attitudes. The density is higher in less transparent areas. Data is pooled across Europe and includes attitudes of 127 MEPs, 738 national MPs and 19.813 voters.

Appendix B   Data Quality

B.1   Representativeness of the MEP Survey Data

Figure B.1 to Figure B.3 compare the sample MEPs to the universe of MEPs —all MEPs who were elected in 2009— regarding several demographic variables. Data is taken from Beauvallet, Lepaux, and Michon (2013) and the website of the European Parliament[17]

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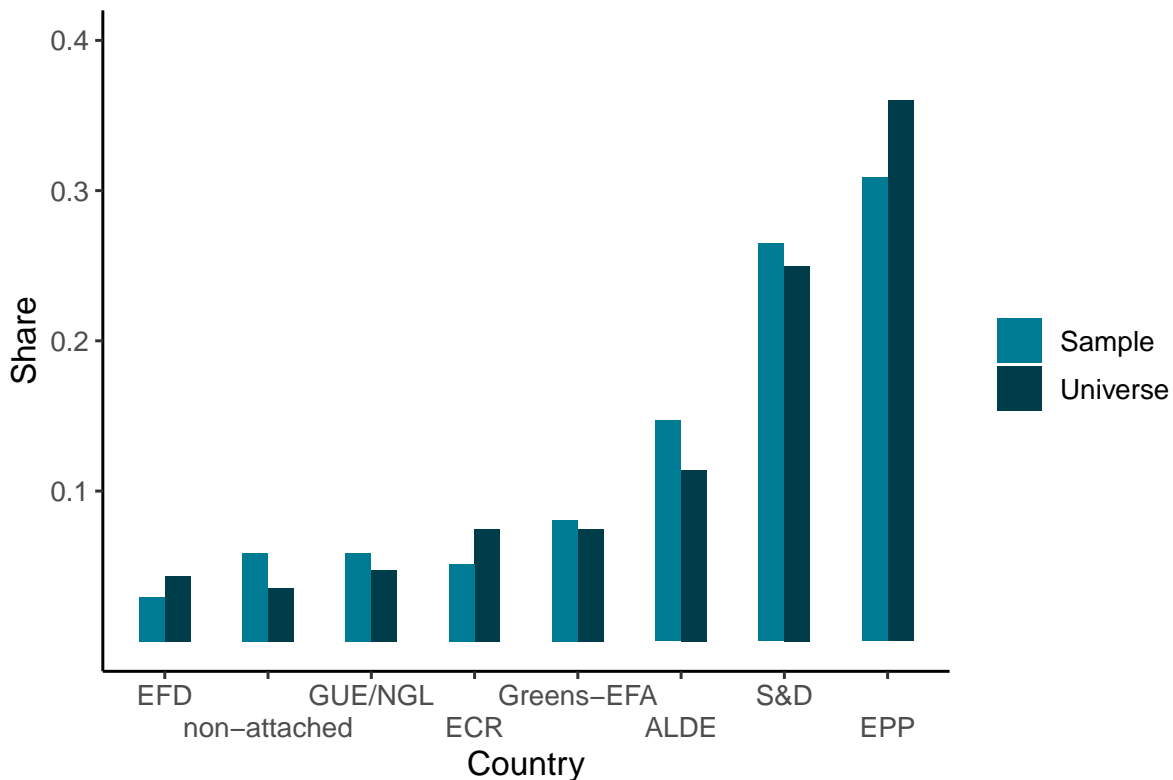
Figure B.1. MEP-Sample Representativeness Regarding Party Group

Note: This figure compares the party group distribution of the MEP universe to the party group distribution of sample MEPs used in the paper.

Perhaps most importantly, estimates of representation gaps might be biased due to self-selection of MEPs based on their political stance into the survey. To examine this possibility Figure B.1 compares the seat shares of all European Parliament party groups based on the 136 sample MEPs to the universe seat share distribution of the 2009 European Parliament. As can be seen, the sample is representative for the full parliament, which mitigates concerns about selection into the sample based on political attitudes. Moreover, the differences between the sample and the universe are not systematic. The two largest differences concern the Christian democratic/Conservative EPP and the Liberal/Centrist ALDE who offer similar policy positions. While the EPP is underrepresented in the sample, ALDE is over-represented.

Representativeness of the sample is even higher among other demographic variables. In 2009 66% of all newly elected MEPs were maleIn the sample, the corresponding share is about 66.42%. Similarly, for about 12.22% of all MEPs a high school degree is their highest educational attainment, while for about 62.22% this is a Bachelor or Master and about 24.44% a Ph.D. In the sample, the proportions are about 12.6%, 64.57% and 22.83% respectively.

Figure B.2 compares the distributions of occupations previously held by the sample MEPs to the distribution of occupations held to be the universe of MEPs prior to becoming MEPs. The vast majority of MEPs have worked in two out of the 12 occupation categories prior to becoming MEP: "higher administrative jobs," which include senior executive or political aide,

and "professional and technical jobs," which incorporate scientists, journalists, and teachers. Figure B.2 reveals that the sample distribution of the previous occupation is representative.

Figure B.3 assesses representativenes regarding the country of origin of MEPs. Differences between sample and universe are larger than for other demographic variables, which might partly be explained by the fact that the number of different demographic categories is higher regarding countries.
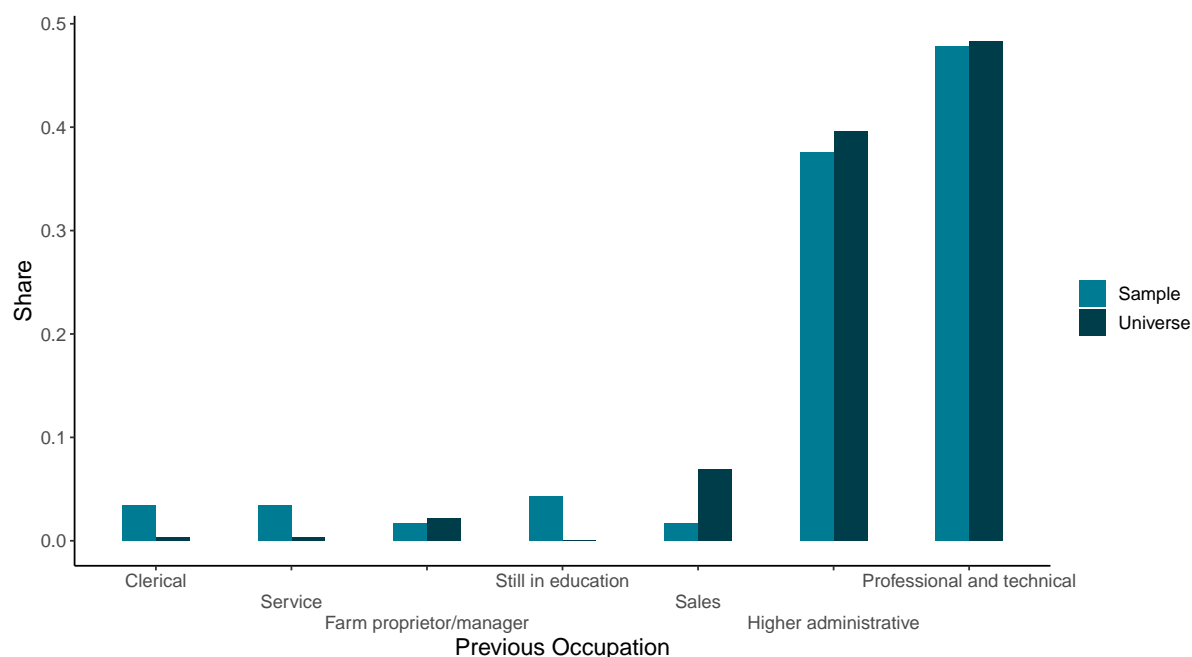

Figure B.2. MEP-Sample Representativeness Regarding Occupation
Note: This figure compares the previous occupation distribution of the MEP universe to the previous occupation distribution on of the sample MEPs used in the paper.

Overall, these results suggest that the sample is broadly representative of the MEP universe. The largest sample biases exist regarding country of origin, which means that within-country comparisons provide important robustness checks.

B.2   Association of MP Survey Data with Established Datasets

Another way to assess the validity of parliamentarian survey data is to examine its correlation with established and validated data sources. The two most commonly used datasets for party positions are the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES, Jolly et al. (2022)) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP, Lehmann et al. (Manifesto Project Dataset)).

To this end, I calculate the policy positions of parties for various issues based on the combined parliamentarian survey data by taking for each party and issue means with equal weights of the positions of all of its elected parliamentarians. CHES and CMP directly provide party-level data. For both datasets and each party, I use the values closest to 2010 (MP surveys were administered at the end of 2009 to 2010) but exclude observations from the analysis that lie outside the time window from 2006 to 2014. I then match the resulting party-level estimates of all datasets. Table B.1 shows how I match variables. I am able to generate 19 matches in total, including 15 matches between the MP survey data and one of
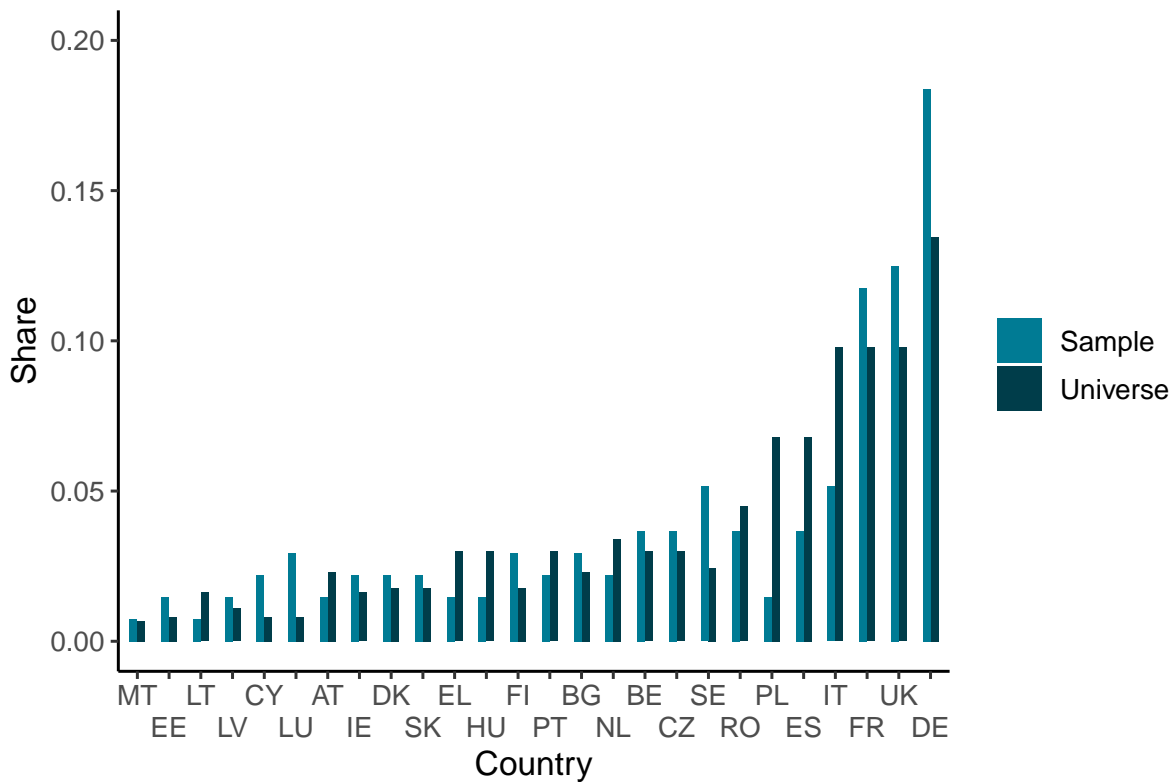
Figure B.3. MEP-Sample Representativeness Regarding Country of Election

Note: This figure compares the country of election distribution of the MEP universe to the country of election distribution of the sample MEPs used in the paper.

the other datasets for 72 parties. Importantly, I am able to match dimension-level measures for the cultural and economic dimensions of all three datasets. I scale all variables such that higher values indicate a position that is more right-wing/conservative/anti-EU.

The quality of matches varies by variable. For some variables, the measures of different datasets refer to very similar concepts. The CHES measure for redistribution asked experts to assess the "position on redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor," while in the MP surveys, MPs were asked whether income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people. In contrast, the CMP measure for sentences (degree of penalty) calculates the share of quasi-sentences that contain "favourable mentions of strict law enforcement, and tougher actions against domestic crime," while the MP survey data measure asked MPs whether "people who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days." These concepts are related but less similar because, in contrast to the MP survey, the CMP measure also refers to tougher actions against domestic crime, which might include more than just harsher sentences. Similarly, the economic index based on the MP survey data includes the redistribution issue (which receives a large weight), while the corresponding CMP measure does not include the issue of redistribution. In general, none of the matches between any pair of measures is perfect, as no pair refers to identical concepts. Hence, it is unreasonable to expect correlations of 1. However, if the datasets provide valid estimates, it is reasonable to expect a positive correlation because all measures within variables are related.

Table B.1. Variables Matches between MP surveys, CHES and CMP

Variable name	MP surveys	CHES	CMP
Private enterprise	Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY]'s economic problems. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	NA	Favourable mentions of the free market and free market capitalism as an economic model. [per401]
State ownership	Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	NA	Privatisation: Positive [per4011] - Privatisation: Negative [per4132] - Nationalisation [per413]- Publicly-Owned Industry: Positive [per4123][1]
State intervention	Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	NA	NA
Redistribution	Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	Position on redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. [redistribution]	NA
Assimilation	Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [COUNTRY]. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism vs. assimilation). [multiculturalism]	Multiculturalism: Negative [per608]- Multiculturalism: Positive [per608][2]
Same-sex marriage	Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	Position on social lifestyle (e.g. rights for homosexuals, gender equality). [sociallifestyle].	NA
Abortion	Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	NA	NA
Sentences	People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	NA	Favourable mentions of strict law enforcement, and tougher actions against domestic crime. [per605]
Immigration	Immigration to [COUNTRY] should be decreased significantly. (Strongly agree – strongly disagree)	Position on immigration policy. [immigrate_policy]	NA
EU unification	Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? (Pushed further – gone too far)	NA	NA
EU membership	Generally speaking, do you think that [COUNTRY]'s membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad? ("Good thing," "bad thing," "Neither")	NA	NA
Deregulation	Mean of State intervention, State ownership, and Private enterprise (equal weights)	Position on deregulation of markets [deregulation]	NA
Economic index	Mean of State intervention and Redistribution (weighted with perceived importance)	Position in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues [lrecon]	Economy (State <-> Market)[3]
Cultural index	Mean of Assimilation, Abortion, Sentences, EU unification, and EU membership (weighted with perceived importance)	Position in terms of its views on social and cultural values [galtan]	Society (Progressive <-> Conservative)[3]
EU index	Mean of EU unification and EU membership (equal weights)	Overall orientation towards European integration [eu_position]	European Integration (Position)[3]

Note: MP surveys refers to the survey items MPs were given (see Table E.1 for details). CHES refers to the item descriptions of the CHES—Trend File codebook (version 1.3). CMP refers to the measure description from codebook version 2020b. Variable names in square brackets.

[1]According to the manual, Privatisation: Positive measures "Favourable references to privatisation." Privatisation: Negative measures "Negative references to the privatisation system; need to change the privatisation system." Nationalisation measures "Favourable mentions of government ownership of industries, either partial or complete" and Publicly-Owned Industry: Positive measured "Positive references to the concept of publicly-owned industries."

[2]According to the manual, Multiculturalism: Negative measures "The enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration. Appeals for cultural homogeneity in society" and Multiculturalism: Positive measures "Favourable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality within domestic societies."

[3]Definitions are taken from the CMP website.

Figure B.4 depicts correlation coefficients between measures of different datasets referring to similar variables. All correlation coefficients are positive and highly significant and the mean correlation is about 0.58. Correlations between MP survey and CHES measures are higher than those between MP survey and CMP measures, which might be because the MP surveys and the CHES are both surveys while the CMP codes sentences in manifestos. All but one correlation regarding the dimension indexes are above 0.6. The single exception is the correlation between the MP survey and CMP measure for the economic index, which might be due to the fact the the CMP measure does not include redistribution while the MP survey measure does. Finally, Figure B.4 reveals that MP survey measures correlate as strong with CHES or CMP measures as CHES and CMP measures correlate with each other. In interpret this as evidence that MP survey data provides valid estimates of policy positions.
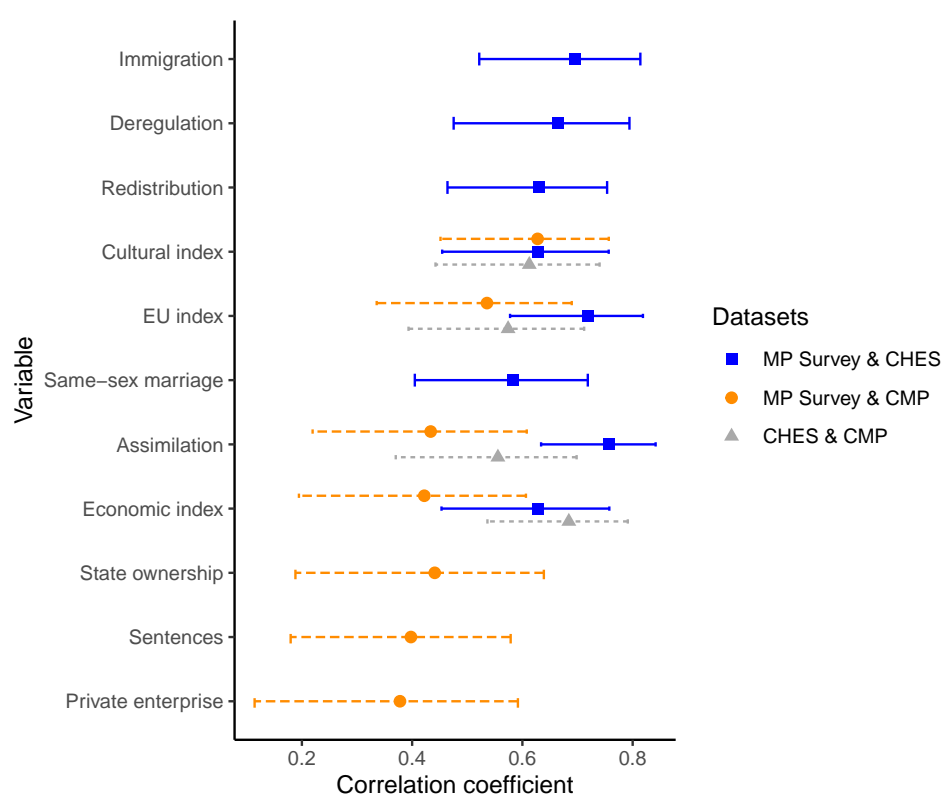
Figure B.4. Correlations between Measures of MP Surveys, the CHES and the CMP
Note: This plot shows correlation coefficients of party position measures based on different datasets. I also depict 95% confidence intervals. The MP survey estimates for Deregulation are based on MEPs only due to data availability. For all other measures I pool national MPs and MEPs. In general, I only use data on elected parliamentarians for the MP survey data.

A general concern with the MP survey data is that the MP survey data does not contain enough policy items to enable estimates of positions on broad political dimensions. Comparing indexes based on the three datasets mitigates this concern. The CHES asked experts to estimate the "overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration," the "position of the party in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues," and the "position in terms of their views on social and cultural values." Similarly, the CMP indexes are based on many policy issues and, therefore, provide credible measures for policy dimensions. Fig-

ure B.4 reveals that correlations between any pair of indexes are high, which suggests that the indexes used in this paper capture overall policy dimensions well.

B.3 Validation of Survey Data with Referendum Data

B.3.1 Voting on Referendums.
Estimates based on survey data might lead to biased results for several reasons (Heckman, Jagelka, and Kautz, 2021). Hence, it is essential to validate survey-based data with behavioral data. Consequently, this section validates survey estimates for representation gaps by comparing survey responses of voters and politicians with their behavior in referendums. To this end, I restrict the analysis to Switzerland because it is the only European country with a sufficiently large number of referendums.

As described in Section 2 I use two datasets. First, I use a dataset containing information on the behavior of politicians and voters regarding 82 referendums between 1970 and 2024. While many more referendums have been held in that time interval, the referendums I use have two special properties. First, they were held on a specific issue, matching one of the categories I use in the paper. Second, all referendums are clearly classifiable as left-wing or right-wing in the sense that a passing of the referendum would unambiguously push legislation to the left or right on the issue at hand.

For each referendum I have data on the shares of the voting-age Swiss population and national parliamentarians who voted with yes or no, the shares of parties, weighted with their vote share, who officially positioned themselves in favor of a yes-vote and whether the government officially positioned itself in favor of a yes vote, opposed it or was neutral. From the 2010s onward I also have a measure of media tone, calculated as the share of media articles that take a favorable positions on the referendum proposal Swissvotes (2024). To calculate the representation gap between voters and institution X for a referendum r I first calculate the difference in voting behavior between voters and X — $Diff_r^X$ as follows.

$$Diff_r^{MP} = \left\{ \text{share of "yes"-voting voters} - \text{share of "yes"-voting MPs.} \right.$$

$$Diff_r^{Me} = \left\{ \text{share of "yes"-voting voters} - \text{Media tone measure.} \right.$$

To calculate representation gaps between voters and parties, let r be a referendum with two options $\in \{yes, no\}$. Let the vote of voter k be denoted by $v(k)$. $v(k)=$"yes" indicates that k is in favor of the referendum initiative and $v(k)=$"no" indicates that he is opposed to it. Let V be the set of those who vote on referendum r. Let $rec(j)$ be the alternative that party j officially recommends to voters. Finally, let there be set of parties P and let $s(p)$ be the vote share in the last national election that party p got.

$$Diff_r^{Pa} = \left\{ \frac{\sum_{i \in V} \mathbb{1}[v(i) = yes]}{||V||} - \sum_{p \in P} \mathbb{1}[rec(p) = yes] \cdot s(p) - 0.5 \cdot \sum_{p \in P} \mathbb{1}[rec(p) = neutral] \right.$$

For the government, I have data on whether it supported or opposed the yes-vote, or whether it took a neutral position but not on the share of members of the government who supported the initiative. Hence, I interpret support of a yes-vote as if the government supported it with unanimity and support of a no-vote as if the government opposed it with

unanimity. Consequently, I calculate representation gaps between voters and the government as

$$
Diff_r^{Go} = \begin{cases} \text{share of "yes"-voting voters} - 100, & \text{if government recommended "yes"} \\ \text{share of "yes"-voting voters} - 50, & \text{if government was neutral} \\ \text{share of "yes"-voting voters} - 0, & \text{if government recommended "no".} \end{cases}
$$

To calculate representation gaps from the $Diff_r$ measures I use the fact that I know whether referendum r was right-wing or left-wing:

$$
RG_r^X = \begin{cases} Diff_r^X, & \text{if r is left-wing} \\ -1 \cdot Diff_r^X, & \text{if r is right-wing.} \end{cases}
$$

Due to this scaling $RG_r > 0$ means that voters voted more left-wing n referendum r than the comparison group while $RG_r < 0$ indicates that voters voted more right-wing. Finally, I calculate the average representation gaps for the cultural and economic dimension respectively by taking the average with equal weights of all RG_r who belong to an economic or cultural issue.

Second, I use survey data that contains the responses of a representative sample of 3.025 Swiss voters and 145 elected Swiss national parliamentarians. Both types of subjects responded in 2007 to the same items regarding State intervention, Redistribution, Assimilation, Abortion, Same-sex marriage and Sentences which are described in Table E.1. In addition, they were asked to what extent they agree/disagree with the statement

Immigrants are good for the the Swiss economy.

Referendum data only contains information on yes-no decisions. To make the Likert-scale data from the surveys comparable to it, I use the share of those holding a right-wing stance on an issue as a measure for the position of a group. For instance, I calculate attitude differences regarding the punishment of criminals as the share of Swiss voters who agree or strongly agree that punishment for criminals should be more severe minus the share of Swiss MPs who agree or strongly agree with that statement. Then, I calculate the average economic and cultural representation gaps, weighting for the relative perceived issue importance as in the main part of the paper.

Figure B.5 depicts average representation gaps for all decades since the 1970s. Economic RGs have undergone a major transformation. In the 1970s political actors were more left-wing than voters and this representation gap was similarly large as the one on cultural issues. But since the 1980s, the economic representation gap switched signs and from then on all political actors, and later the media, continued to be more market-oriented than voters until the present. In contrast, all estimates for cultural representation gaps are negative. This shows that the parliament, parties, and the government have all been more culturally liberal than voters for the last 54 years, while the media has been more liberal for at least the last 24 years.

Importantly, Figure B.5 is not directly comparable to Figure 8. Figure B.5 includes survey-responses and referendum votes of national right-wing populist MPs, while Figure 8 excludes such responses. I do not exclude populists here because Figure B.5 is meant to illustrate how similar estimates of representation gaps are to each other, not to examine representation gaps as a cause of populism. To study representation gaps as a cause of populism, it is key to exclude populists when calculating representation gaps. Otherwise, one would calculate the hypothesized cause as a mix of the hypothesized cause and effect, thereby introducing endogeneity. Thus, Figure 8 excludes right-wing populists. Notably, the right-wing populist Swiss People's Party rose in the polls chiefly since the 1990s when the parliamentary representation gap was relatively large. Thereafter, possibly due to the strengthening of this party, representation gaps decreased.
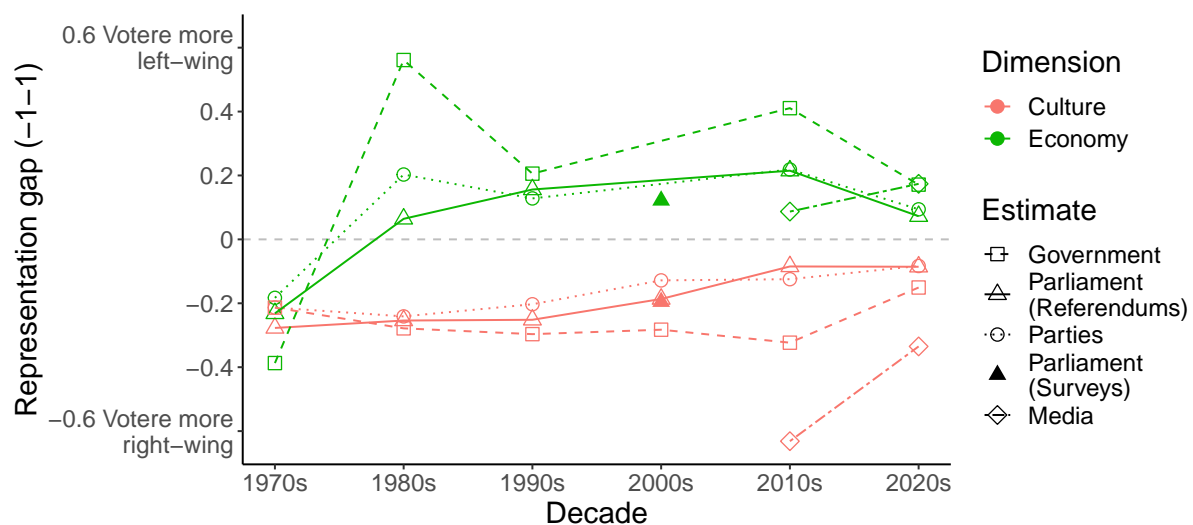
Figure B.5. Representation Gaps Over Time
Note: The horizontal axis shows the decade. Positive values indicate that the institution is more right-wing than voters. Negative values indicate that it is more left-wing. The dependent variable ranges from -1 to 1. Some estimates are missing due to missing data.

However, the point Figure B.5 is supposed to make is that estimates for representation gaps are similar, whether one compares voters to the parliament, or parties and whether one compares survey-responses or real voting on referendums. Moreover, Figure B.5 shows that gaps between the government and voters tend to be even larger than those between the parliament and voters, which is consistent with the fact that right-wing populists are often excluded from governments.[18] These findings have two implications. First, it does not matter much which group of politicians one compares voters to —one always finds the same pattern of representation gaps. If anything, the estimates provided in the main text, comparing voters to parliaments or parties, underestimate representation gaps because they ignore the fact that right-wing populists are often excluded from governments even if their parliamentary representation is strong.

18. In Switzerland, the right-wing populist Swiss Peoples Party has held with (often more than) one-fifth of the total the plurality of parliamentary seats since 1999 while it only held one or zero out of the six seats in the government until recently.

Second, Figure B.5 provides evidence for the validity of survey-based estimates for representation gaps. Focusing on the 2000s, the time window I analyze in the main part of the paper enables me to compare real votes in referendums with survey-based estimates of the parliament representation gap. Figure B.5 shows that the two estimates are very close regarding the cultural dimension. In the economic dimension, my dataset does not contain referendums that took place in the 2000s which prohibits me from calculating a referendum-based estimate. However, comparing the survey-based estimate for the 2000s with the referendum-based estimates for the 1990s and 2010s suggests that the survey-based estimate is close to where the behavioral one would be.

Finally, the data also enables comparable estimates for the Swiss media. While this paper is concerned with the gap between voters and politicians, I find it notable that in the cultural dimension, only the media is more biased than the government. This media bias might help to explain political representation gaps. In the economic dimension, the media is similarly biased as political actors.

B.3.2 Initiation of Referendums. A potential problem of using referendum voting as a measure for representation gaps is that the idea behind referendums is to let voters decide. Hence, MPs might vote based on their personal policy attitudes in referendums but follow voters' attitudes in other decisions. That would imply that the estimates provided by this section are estimates for the attitude differences, not for the representation gaps between voters and MPs. Under this interpretation, the results should be interpreted as a revealed preference approach to the policy attitudes of MPs. It mitigates biases specific to surveys like lying or politically correct responses and, therefore, still illustrates the robustness of representation gaps. However, it would not include the representation intention.

A measure that mitigates this concern is initiation behavior. Referendums can be initiated by different actors. In some cases, the government or the parliament can call for a referendum. Examples include changes in the constitutions or accession to supranational organizations in Switzerland, in which case a referendum is obligatory. In other cases, referendums are initiated by ordinary citizens. For instance, referendums have to be held when an initiative for a referendum has collected a certain number of signatures. There are also mix-versions. For example, citizens may call for a referendum after the parliament makes a decision with which they disagree. Similarly, the parliament may offer counter-proposals to referendum initiatives put forward by the people. If an actor initiates a referendum on an initiative that would push policymaking to the right, this is evidence of a right-wing move of this actor. Moreover, deciding on which initiatives to hold a referendum on is not purely left to voters. Hence, MPs are more likely to incorporate the representation intention when deciding whether to propose left-wing or right-wing initiatives.

Figure B.6 shows the share of initiatives with a right direction by originator of the initiative and dimension. The height of the bars indicates the share of right-wing initiatives in the group of referendums. The horizontal axis shows three types of originators; the elite (in most cases, the parliament, otherwise the government) and (ordinary) citizens.

Figure B.6 confirms the expectations. Nearly 90% of referendums initiated by Swiss citizens since 1980 aimed at pushing cultural policymaking further to the right. In contrast, no single referendum initiated by the political elite would have enabled a cultural right
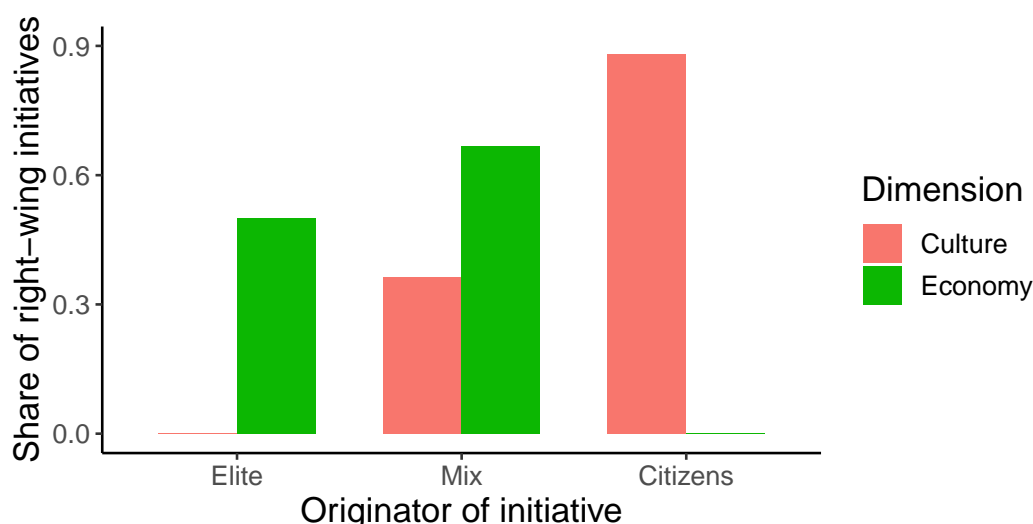
Figure B.6. Share of Right-Wing Initiatives by Originator

Note: This figure shows the share of referendums with a right direction by originator. It is based on all referendums in the dataset on a cultural or economic topic. Results pool all referendums since 1980.

shift. Referendums that resulted from an interplay of these actors lie in between, at about 30%. In the economic dimension, half of the referendums initiated by the elites aimed for a right-wing shift. In contrast, none of the referendums initiated by citizens did so. However, the share is highest among those resulting from an interaction of the elite and citizens. This evidence suggests that ordinary citizens and the elite disagree on which direction their country should be heading regarding both policy dimensions.

Appendix C   Perceived Importance of Political Issues

I measure perceived importance of a policy issue through the following survey item which was given to MEPs and citizens:

> *What do you think is the most important problem facing [COUNTRY] today?*

Similar questions were also asked concerning the second and third most important problems. Answers were open-ended and recorded verbatim. They were then allocated into 146 categories. Hence, I have data on each subject's first, second, and third most important issues. This section focuses on the comparison between MEPs and voters because responses of national MPs were coded differently or are missing.

To compare issue priorities of voters and MEPs quantitatively, I construct an importance index ($II_{g,i}$) which measures how important a group g considers an issue i to be. Let "share most important$_{g,i}$" denote the weighted share of respondents who consider topic i most important and suppose similar definitions for the second and third most important topic. All three shares are weighted to adjust for differences in population between countries.

$$II_{g,i} = \frac{3 \cdot \text{share most imp.}_{g,i} + 2 \cdot \text{share 2nd most imp.}_{g,i} + \text{share 3rd most imp.}_{g,i}}{6}. \quad \text{(C.1)}$$

$II_{g,i}$ is distributed between zero and one, where one means that all subjects of group $g \in \{voters, MEPs\}$ indicate that issue i is the first, second, and third most important problem. It equals zero if no subject in group g considers issue i as belonging to the three most important problems. To make the issue importance index and representation gaps comparable, I manually match issues relating to the two variables. I am able to do this for 10 out of the 14 issues that I can calculate representation gaps for. I calculate representation gaps as in the main text by using Equation 4. However, here I focus on individual policy issues in contrast to dimension indexes. Regressions are weighted to adjust for population differences between countries.
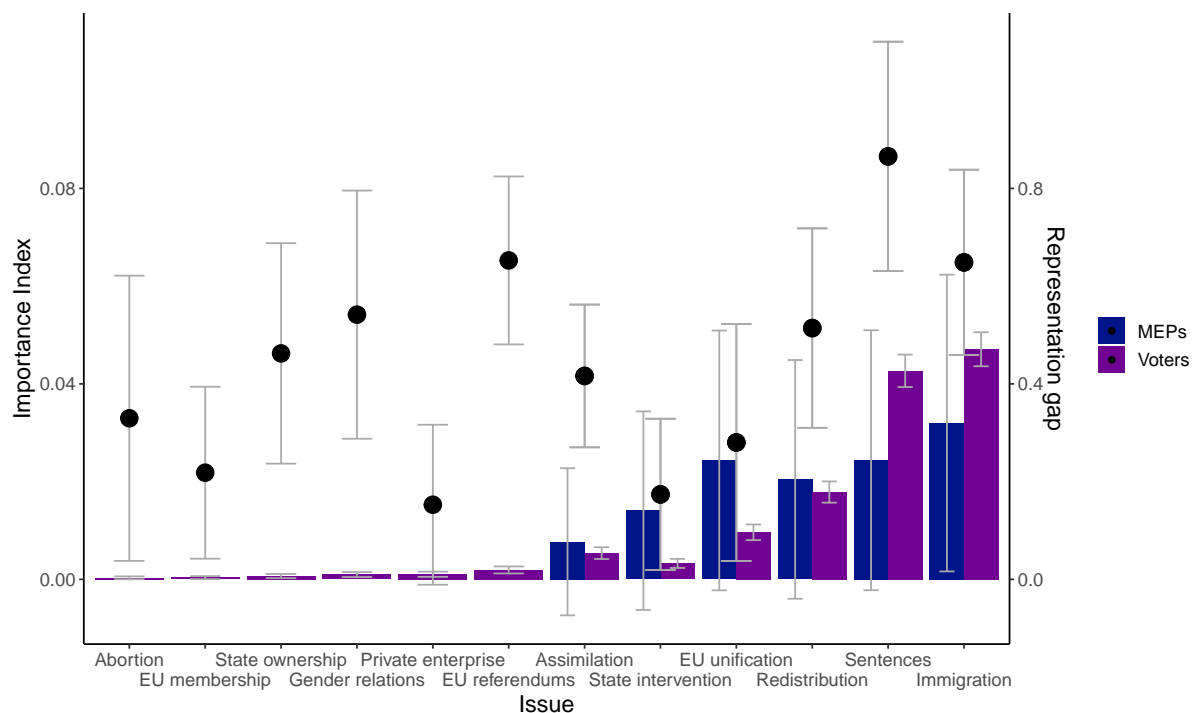
Figure C.1. Perceived Importance of Policy Issues by Voters and MEPs and Representation Gaps
Note: Bars indicate an index of perceived importance of issues ($II_{g,i}$), defined in Equation C.1. Black dots represent the absolute value of the representation gaps. I also depict 95% confidence intervals.

Figure C.1 shows the important indexes (bars) and absolute values of representation gaps (points). Due to the weighting, the figure compares a representative sample of those who voted in the 2009 European Parliament election with a representative sample of MEPs. It reveals that MEPs and voters tend to find the same topics important. Both groups agree that immigration is the most important issue. However, voters prioritize immigration and sentences more than MEPs, while MEPs prioritize EU unification and state intervention more than voters. There is no strong association between the absolute size of representation gaps and the perceived importance of issues. If anything, representation gaps seem to be larger on issues that are considered more important by either group.

How important are the three political dimensions relative to each other in the eyes of voters and MEPs? To answer this question, I manually classify each of the 146 categories
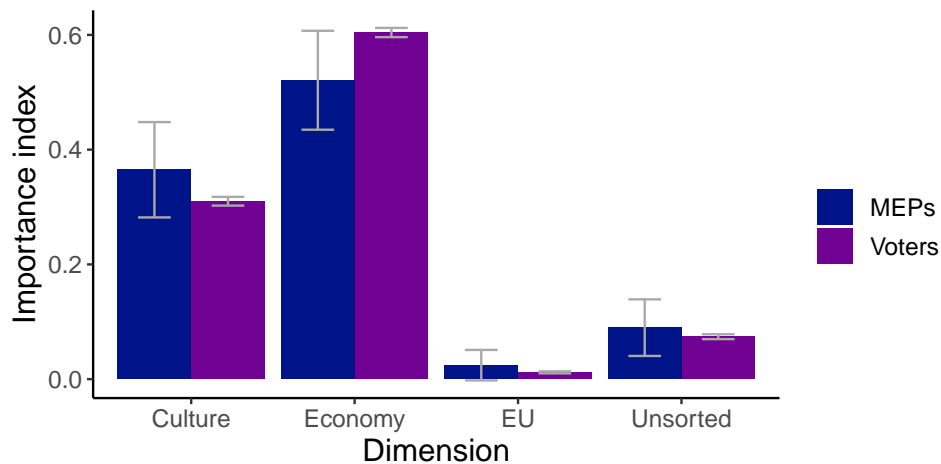
Figure C.2. Perceived Importance of Policy Dimensions by Voters and MEPs

Note: Bars indicate an index of perceived importance of political dimensions ($II_{g,i}$), defined in Equation C.1. I depict 95% confidence intervals around all values.

as either cultural, economic, or EU-related.[19] For most issues like unemployment or gender relations, this is straightforward. Some issues could be classified into several dimensions, like globalization. If a topic could be classified just as well in either dimension, I label it as "Unsorted."

Figure C.2 shows the importance index for the four categories. Again, results for voters and MEPs are similar. Unsorted issues are relatively unimportant to voters and MEPs. Although economic topics are more important to both groups, cultural topics are of great importance to both groups too. MEPs find topics related to the EU more important than voters, but both groups find them much less important than cultural or economic topics. This suggests that reducing the policy space in European countries to a two-dimensional economy-culture space captures most issues that are important to voters and MEPs. It also indicates that the large cultural representation gaps might matter to voters.

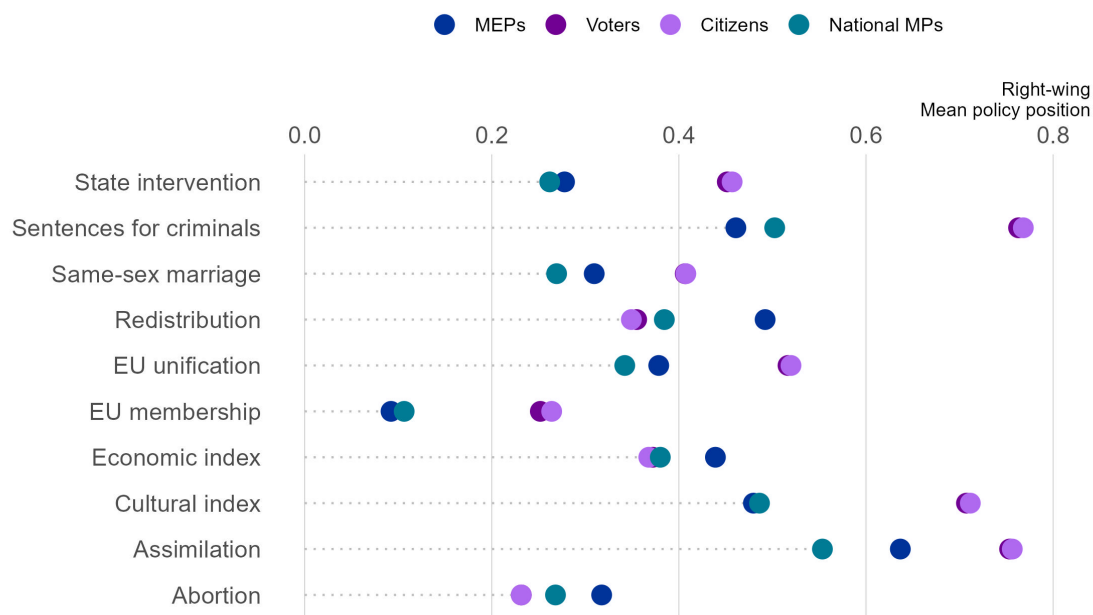19. Hence, here I divide the broader cultural dimension used in the main text.

Figure D.1. Attitudes of MEPs, MPs, Voters and Citizens by Policy Issue

Note: This dumbbell plot shows mean policy attitudes. Higher values correspond to attitudes that are more right-wing. I pool data for the following countries: Germany, Belgium, Italy, Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, and Greece because data on all groups is available only for these countries. Means are weighted to adjust for population size differences. I only show results for issues where data is available for all groups. Voters are those who voted either at the 2009 European Parliament election or the last national election. The indexes refer to the "MP" indexes used in the main text.
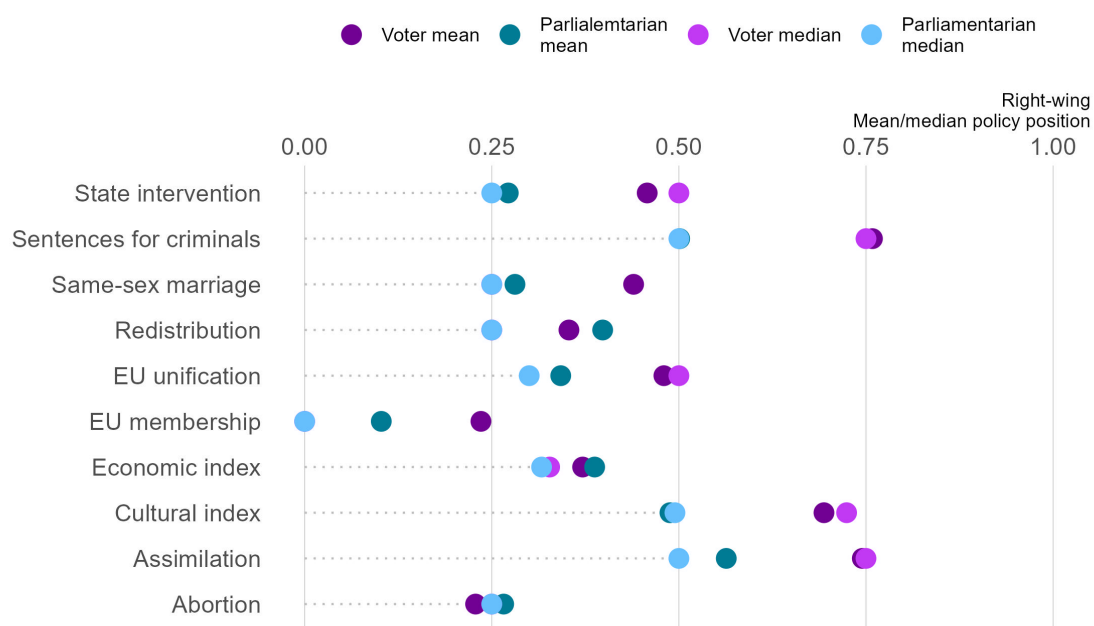
Figure D.2. Attitude Differences Regarding Means and Medians

Note: This dumbbell plot shows mean and median policy attitudes. Higher values correspond to attitudes that are more right-wing. I pool data for the following countries: Germany, Belgium, Italy, Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, and Greece because data on all groups is available only for these countries. Means and medians are weighted to adjust for population size differences. I only show results for issues where data is available for all groups. Voters are those who voted either at the 2009 European Parliament election or the last national election. The indexes refer to the "MP" indexes used in the main text.
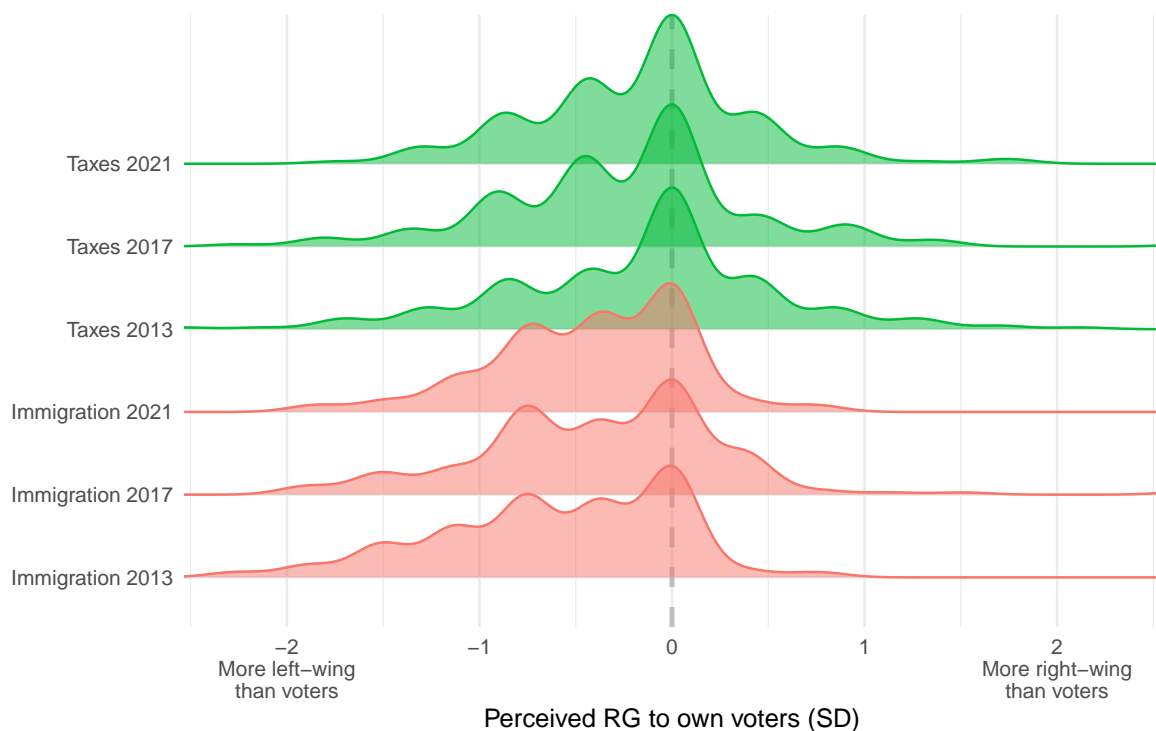
Figure D.3. Representation Gap to Own Voters as Perceived by MPs

Note: Based on responses of German national MPs. MPs stated their own attitudes, whether an MP should act based on his own attitudes or those of the voters, and their guess about the attitudes of their parties' voters. I calculate the position of MPs based on the first two items as described in Section 3.2.2. Histograms show the difference between the MP position and their guess about their voters' attitudes. These perceived representation gaps are expressed in standard deviations of citizen attitudes. I pool data of MPs from all parties.
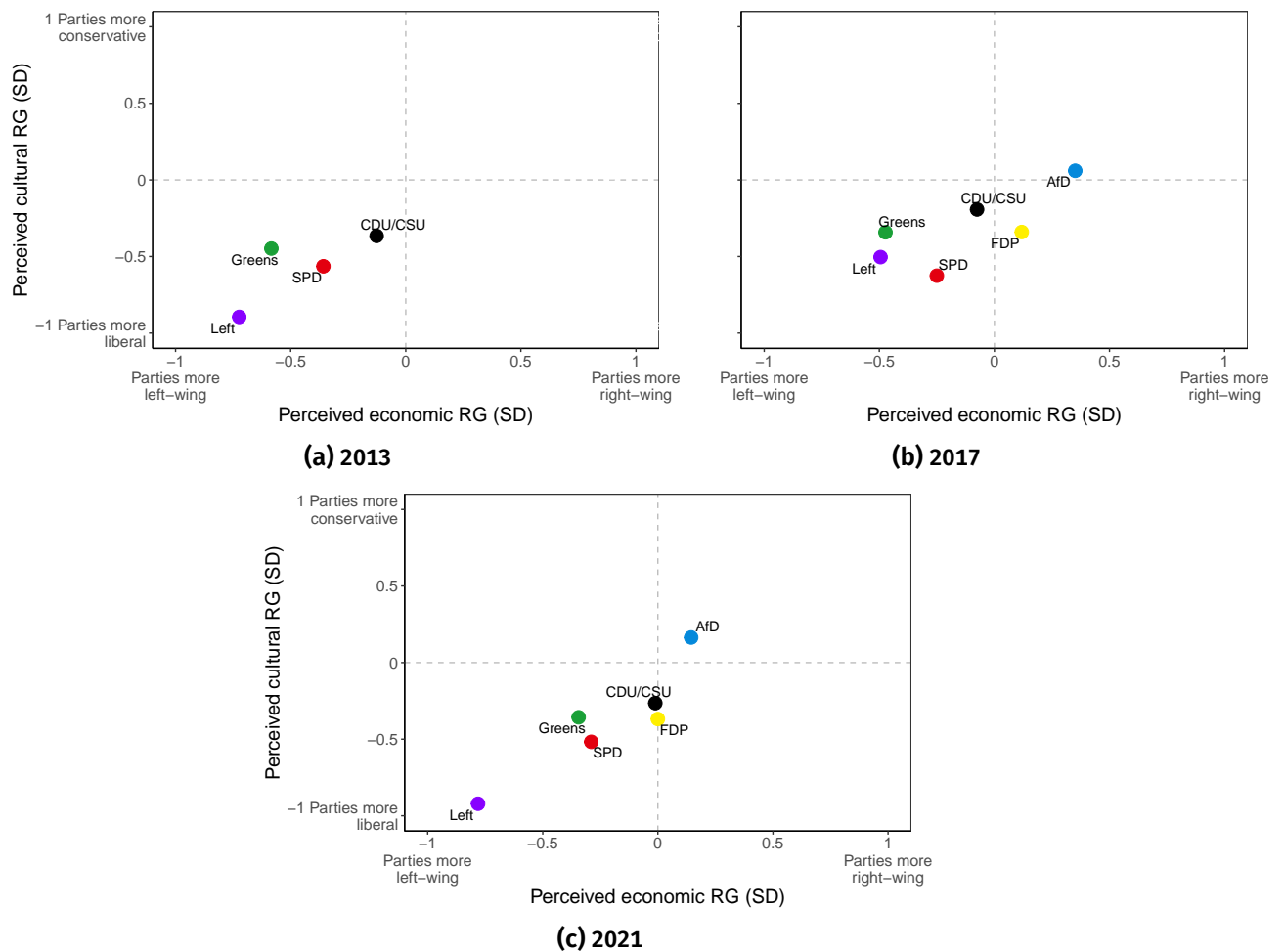
Figure D.4. Representation Gaps Perceived by German MPs

Note: The figure compares representation gaps between parties and voters of that party as perceived by MPs of that party. The vertical axis measures cultural conservatism through the German immigration item and the horizontal axis measures economic attitudes through the German taxes vs. social benefits item as described in Section 2. Representation gaps are expressed in standard deviations of citizen attitudes.
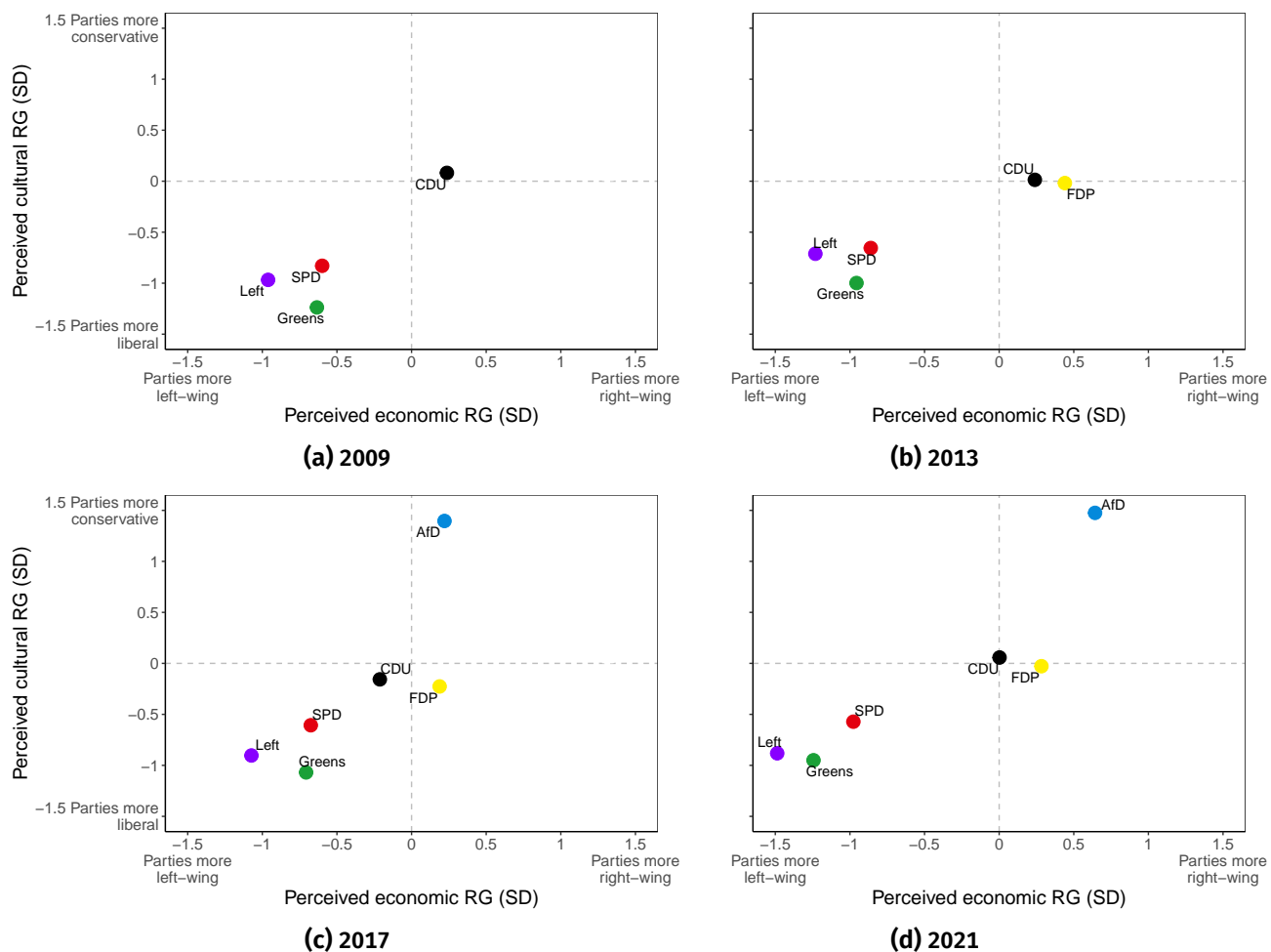
Figure D.5. Representation Gaps Perceived by German Voters

Note: The figure compares representation gaps between voters and parties as perceived by voters. The vertical axis measures cultural conservatism through the German immigration item and the horizontal axis measures economic attitudes through the German taxes vs. social benefits item as described in Section 2. Voters are weighted to obtain a representative sample of Germans regarding demographic characteristics. Representation gaps are expressed in standard deviations of citizen attitudes.
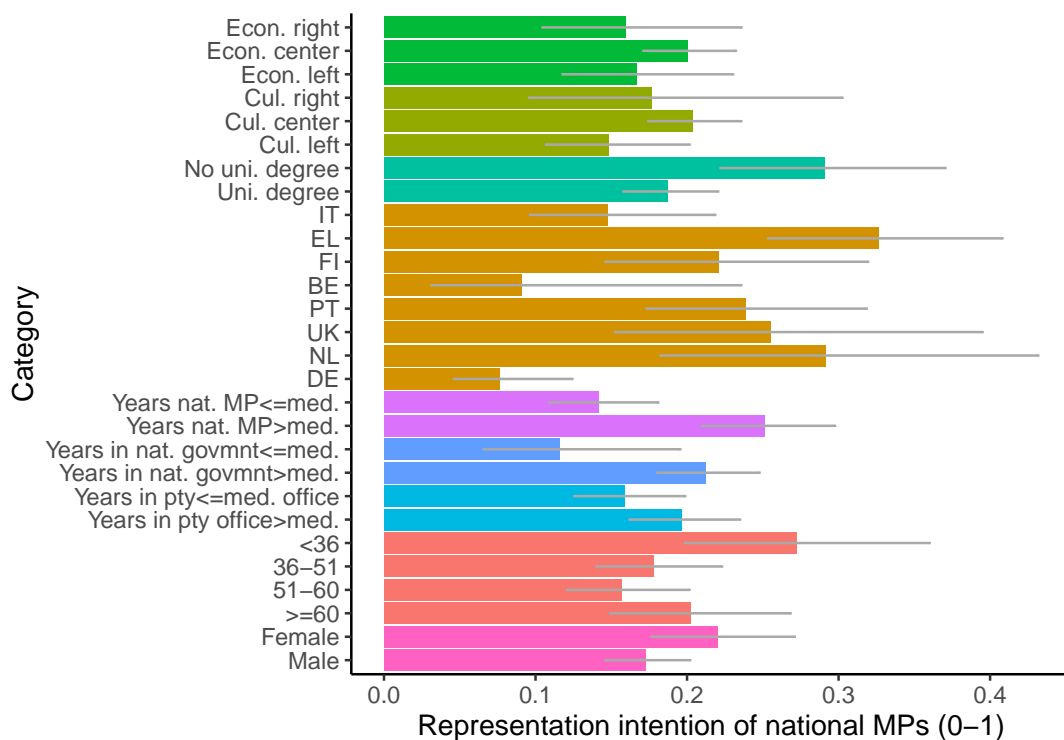
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Figure D.6. Representation Intention of National MPs by Demographic Group

Note: This bar-charts illustrate the responses of an MP-sample to the following question: "An MP in a conflict between own opinion and the constituency voters should follow:" Possible answers included "own opinion" and "voter opinion." Bars indicate the share that chose "voters opinion." The vertical axis shows different demographic groups of MPs. I also depict 95% confidence intervals.
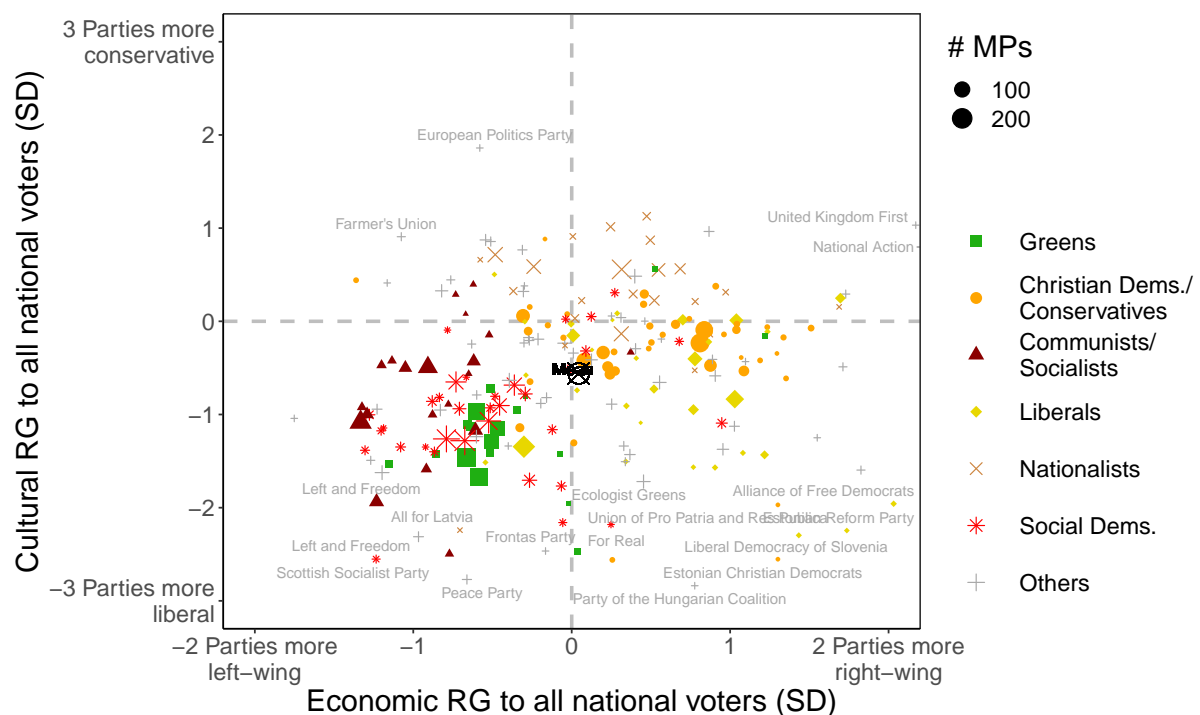
Figure D.7. Representation Gaps Relative to National Voters by Party

Note: This plot compares the position of European parties relative to the position of the national mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. I estimate party positions based on all candidates. Different symbols refer to different party families. The size of the symbol measures the number of MPs used to calculate the policy position. For clarity, I omit a few parties whose cultural index is smaller than -3. All of them rely on few observations and are therefore measured imprecisely.

Figure D.8. Representation Gaps Relative to Own Mean Voter by Party

Note: This plot compares the position of European parties relative to the position of their own mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. Different symbols refer to different party families. The size of the symbol measures the number of MPs used to calculate the policy position. For clarity, I omit a few parties whose cultural index is smaller than -3. All of them rely on few observations and are therefore measured imprecisely.
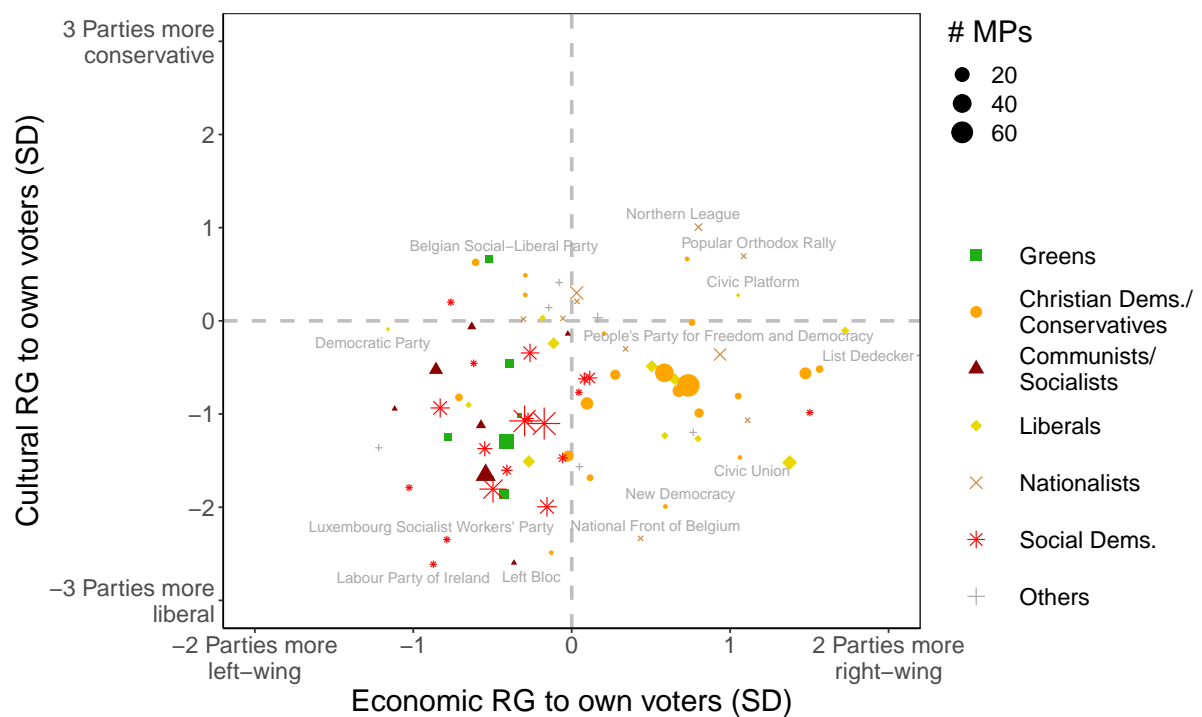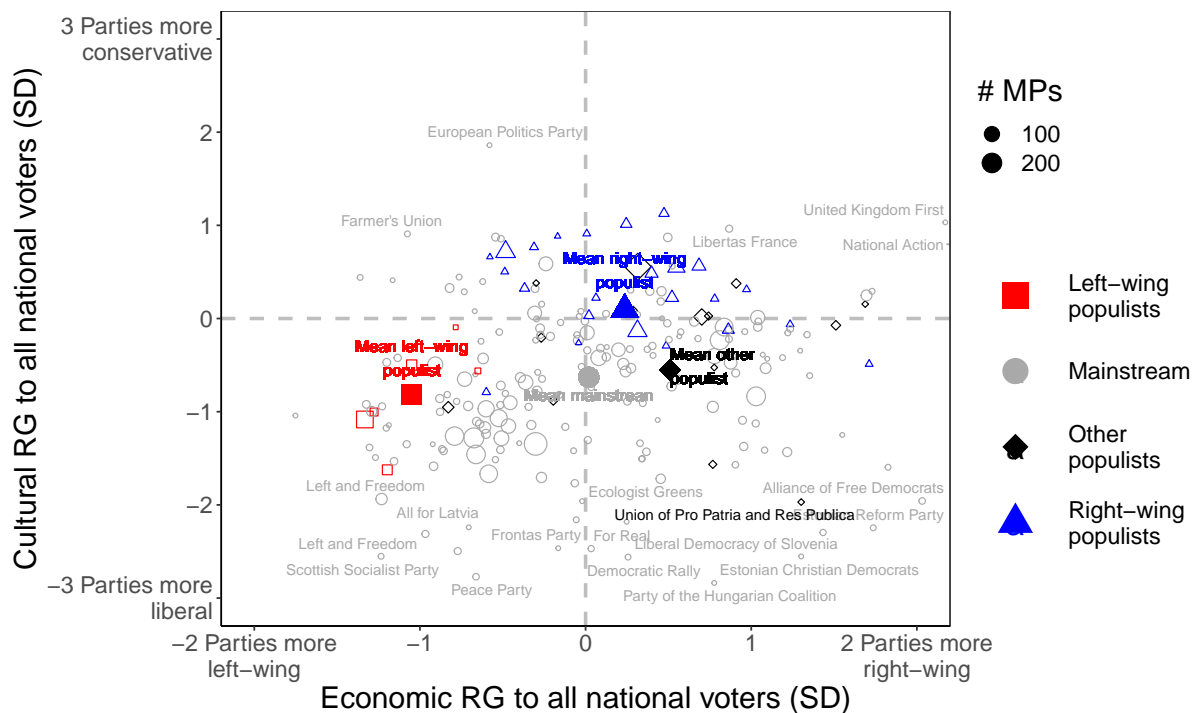
Figure D.9. Representation Gaps Relative to National Voters by Populist and Non-populist Parties
Note: This figure compares the policy positions of European parties relative to the position of the national mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. Estimates of policy positions are based on the mean index of all candidates for national parliaments or the European Parliament. A few parties are positioned outside the boundaries of this figure, but all of them rely on a few observations and are, therefore, measured imprecisely. I omit them for clearness.

Figure D.10. Attitude Differences Relative to National Voters by Populist and Non-populist Parties
Note: This figure compares the average attitudes of elected MPs of European parties relative to the attitude of the national mean voter in the 2D culture-economy space. A few parties are positioned outside the boundaries of this figure, but all of them rely on a few observations and are, therefore, measured imprecisely. I omit them for clearness.
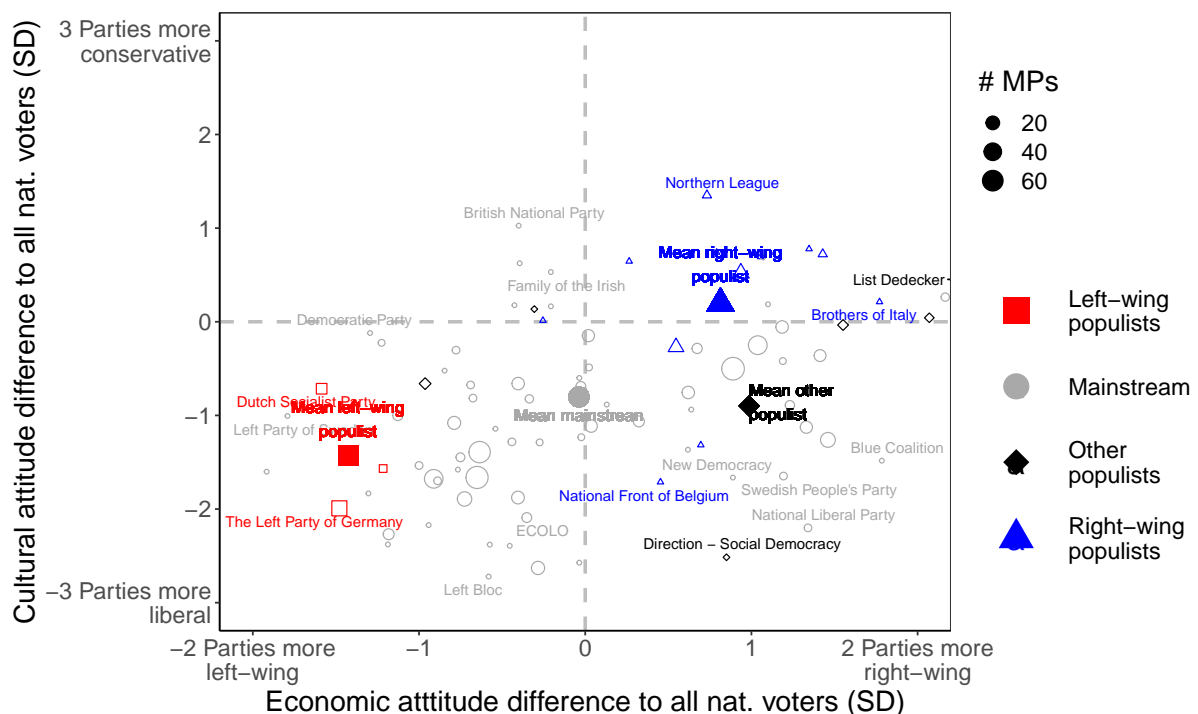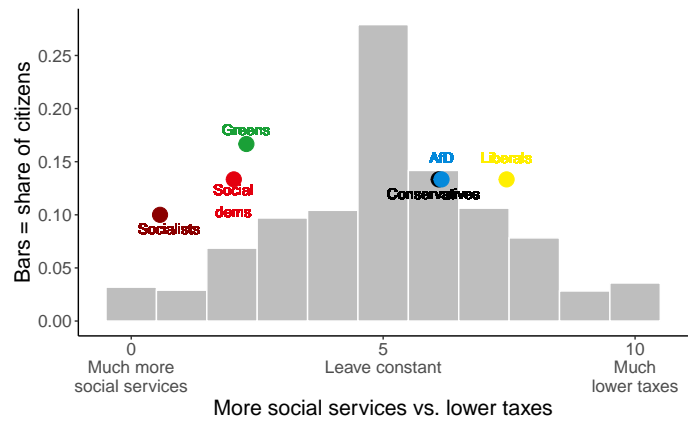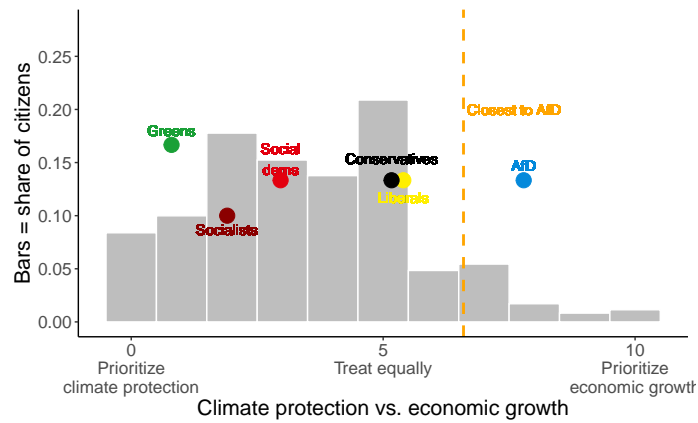
(a) Lower taxes vs. social services

(b) Economic growth vs. climate protection
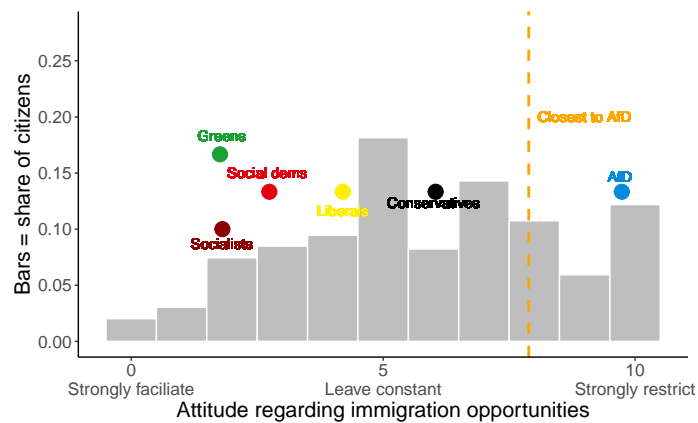
(c) Restrict vs. facilitate immigration

Figure D.11. Positions of German Citizens and Parties in 2017

Note: Histograms illustrate the attitude distributions of a broadly representative sample of German citizens. Party positions are estimated as mean positions of parliamentarians, using Equation 5. All data comes from 2017 post-election surveys.

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Appendix E   Additional Tables

Table E.1. Information on Policy Attitude Variables in the Cross-country Dataset

Variable name	Question wording	Question type	Included in
Private enterprise	Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY]'s economic problems.	5 point Likert	EES
State ownership	Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership.	5 point Likert	EES
State intervention	Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy.	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Redistribution	Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people.	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Assimilation	Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [COUNTRY].	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Same-sex marriage	Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law.	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Abortion	Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion.	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Sentences	People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days.	5 point Likert	EES/CCS
Teaching authority in schools	Schools must teach children to obey authority.	5 point Likert	EES
Gender relations	A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family.	5 point Likert	EES
Immigration	Immigration to [COUNTRY] should be decreased significantly.	5 point Likert	EES
EU referendums	EU treaty changes should be decided by referendum.	5 point Likert	EES
EU unification	Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?	11 point from "has gone too far" to "should be pushed further"	EES/CCS
EU membership	Generally speaking, do you think that [COUNTRY]'s membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?	3 Options: 1) "Good thing" 2) "Bad thing" 3) "Neither"	EES/CCS

Note: The question wording is taken from the English version of the study. Questions were translated into the national language for other versions. [COUNTRY] is an placeholder for the name of the country the version of the survey was administered in. Wording was identical in the EES and CCS surveys for all items with one exception. In the CCS the question for the "Punishment for Criminals" variable read as: "People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences." CCS refers to Wave 1 of the Comparative Candidate Study and EES refers to the European Election Study (Voter and Candidate survey).

Table E.2. Information on Policy Attitude Variables in the Temporal Dataset

Variable name	Question wording	Question type	Years
Lower taxes vs. social services	Some people prefer lower taxes, although this results in less social services. Others prefer more social services, although this results in raising taxes. ... what position do you take on taxes and social services?	11 point from "Lower taxes, although this results in less social services" to "should be pushed further"	2009 2013 2017 2021
Economic growth vs. climate protection	Some say that the fight against climate change should definitely take precedence, even if it impairs economic growth. Others say that the economic growth should definitely take precedence, even if it impairs the fight against climate change. ... what position do you take on the fight against climate change and economic growth?	11 point from "Fight against climate change should take precedence, even if it impairs economic growth" to "Economic growth should take precedence, even if it impairs the fight against climate change"	2013 2017
Restrict vs. facilitate immigration	And what about immigration? Should it be easier or more difficult for foreigners to immigrate? ... what position do you take on immigration for foreigners?	11 point from "Immigration for foreigners should be easier" to "Immigration for foreigners should be more difficult"	2009 2013 2017 2021

Note: The question wording is taken from the English version of the study. Questions were asked in German. The "Years" column indicates years where post-election surveys among voters and parliamentarians included the item. In addition, all three items were included in many voter surveys between elections, as can be seen from Figure 8.

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Table E.3. Overview of Survey Data

			Number of respondents in the data				
Country	Year	MEPs	MEP candidates	MPs	MP candidates	Citizens	Voters
AT	2009	2	39	0	0	1000	972
BE	2007	0	0	61	509	0	0
BE	2009	5	57	0	0	1002	983
BE	2010	0	0	79	558	0	0
BG	2009	4	6	0	0	1000	871
CY	2009	3	8	0	0	1000	957
CZ	2009	5	21	0	0	1020	834
DE	2009	25	143	198	789	1004	964
DK	2009	3	24	0	0	1000	989
EE	2009	2	23	0	0	1007	874
EL	2009	2	19	0	0	1000	946
EL	2012	0	0	50	337	0	0
ES	2009	5	57	0	0	1000	931
FI	2009	4	41	0	0	1000	933
FI	2011	0	0	49	911	0	0
FR	2009	16	117	0	0	1000	931
HU	2009	2	26	0	0	1005	876
IE	2009	3	8	0	0	1001	967
IT	2009	7	58	0	0	1000	967
IT	2013	0	0	141	672	0	0
LT	2009	1	30	0	0	1000	778
LU	2009	4	16	0	0	1001	938
LV	2009	2	39	0	0	1001	896
MT	2009	1	11	0	0	1000	984
NL	2006	0	0	38	170	0	0
NL	2009	3	73	0	0	1005	962
PL	2009	2	36	0	0	1002	801
PT	2009	3	17	0	0	1000	929
PT	2011	0	0	101	257	0	0
RO	2009	5	24	0	0	1003	842
SE	2009	7	162	0	0	1002	985
SI	2009	0	18	0	0	1000	939
SK	2009	3	29	0	0	1016	873
UK	2009	17	244	0	0	1000	905
UK	2010	0	0	141	1472	0	0
Sum		136	1346	858	5675	27069	24827

Table E.4. Information on the Knowledge Quiz

Question indicator	Question wording	Answer options
1	Switzerland is a member of the EU.	True/False
2	The European Union has 25 member states.	True/False
3	Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.	True/False
4	Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union.	True/False
5	[COUNTRY]'s Minister of Education is Dolores Cristina.	True/False
6	Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in Maltese general elections.	True/False
7	There are 105 members of the Maltese parliament.	True/False

Note: These questions were asked within the European Voter Study 2009 (Egmond et al., 2017). The wording is taken from the English version of the study. Questions were translated into the national language for other versions. [COUNTRY] is an placeholder for the name of the country the version of the survey was administered in.