

Social inequalities, migration and the rise of populist parties

This project seeks to examine the combined roles that socioeconomic inequality, migration, and populist-party rhetoric play in the rise of European populist protest. The hypothesis is that extremist parties – in order to mobilize voters – have exploited (perceived) inequalities and recent migration trends in their campaign strategies by a) strategically appealing to nationhood as the boundary of an imagined in-group and b) depicting immigrants as an economically and culturally harmful out-group.

The project is conducted in three phases:

1. How have socioeconomic inequalities evolved over the last several decades as well as the worries and fears among the 'winners' and 'losers' of such changes?

Researchers investigate these evolutions along with the underlying mechanisms that drive them.

2. How does migration impact preferences for reallocation in receiving countries?

Researchers use a combination of cross-national as well as longitudinal data from countries of immigration over past two decades to determine the connection between immigration and support of the liberal script.

3. How do (perceived) socioeconomic inequalities and migration in populist-party rhetoric affect the increasing electoral support of populist parties across Europe?

Researchers use quantitative text analysis of parties' press releases and then conduct a survey to test expectations about the key topics of populist-party rhetoric and their electoral support.