

# Issue trade-offs and the politics of representation: Experimental evidence from four European democracies

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Accepted in the *European Journal of Political Research*

## Abstract

The politics of representation has become increasingly complex in recent years. Amid weakening traditional political cleavages, the emergence of new political divides and mounting anti-elitism that have helped the rise of radical populist parties, voters face significant cross-pressures when casting their ballots. Despite a wealth of studies on the role of issue preferences in voting behavior, there are still many unknowns when it comes to understanding how voters trade off competing issue preferences against each other. Studying issue trade-offs is also important against the backdrop of the well-documented preference of radical left and right voters for redistribution and restrictive immigration policies, respectively. To investigate the strength of issue preferences among radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters and the willingness to compromise on their most important issues, we conducted a conjoint survey experiment with 2,000 participants in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The voting scenario in the experiment featured proposals on salient political issues and different (non)populist stances on political representation. The results from the cross-country study as well as a large replication study with a sample of 4,000 German respondents show that voters of radical right parties are willing to accept large trade offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for restrictive immigration policies is fulfilled. Differently, radical left, Green and mainstream party voters have a more variegated range of issue preferences, some of them so strong that they are not traded off for their preferred redistribution and EU integration positions, respectively. The findings shed light on trade-offs related to emerging issues such as climate change and the distinct logics behind support for radical parties. They also have implications for the electoral prospects of mainstream and radical parties when trying to reposition themselves in the diversifying issue space of contemporary democracies. As such, understanding how voters navigate issue cross-pressures helps to explain the broader dynamics that are (re)configuring political conflict and voting behavior in Europe.

# 1 Introduction

Individuals vote for political parties that represent them. This is at least what one can expect assuming that voting decisions are straightforward. However, the politics of representation is becoming more complex, at least in European multiparty systems where the diversity of party options and the variety of issue interests makes individuals' voting choices increasingly difficult. The historical decline of party identification (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002; Mair, 1989), together with the reconfiguration of the Rokkanian political cleavages and the emergence of radical populist parties (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012) contribute to make voting choices progressively less structured along the classic lines of political conflict (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019), putting traditional models of voting behavior under strain. In this post-Rokkanian context, a voter who holds policy preferences across various issues can be pushed in different political directions because she can value some issues more than others when casting her ballot (Chou, Dancygier, Egami, & Jamal, 2018). At times in which European party systems are undergoing major transformations, how do cross-pressured voters weigh different, at times conflicting, issue preferences? What are the issues on which voters are likely to compromise? And are there differences between voters of radical and mainstream parties in terms of the issue trade-offs they are willing to make?

The relevance of issue-cross pressures in voting decisions has been acknowledged before (He, 2016; Lefkofridi, Wagner, & Willmann, 2014) but empirical findings on how citizens navigate competing issue preferences remain sparse. In fact, despite a wealth of single-country or comparative studies on electoral behavior (Arzheimer, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018; Steiner & Hillen, 2021), the primarily survey-based evidence makes it hard to study issue-cross pressures, for at least two reasons. First, while available survey batteries offer insights on preferences concerning multiple issues independently, we cannot infer how respondents trade off their issue preferences *against each other* to satisfy their most important one. And second, surveys do not allow for drawing causal inferences about which issue preferences ultimately drive vote choices.

This paper employs an issue-centered research design that allows us to identify the conditions under which voters are (un)willing to trade off some preferences for others. We compare the behavior of radical left and radical right voters who are known to have peculiar preferences on the issues of redistribution and immigration, respectively, with voters of mainstream parties. Specifically, we conducted conjoint experiments in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, where different types of radical parties have broken through. Participants were asked to choose between two hypothetical candidates in the next national parliamentary election who present diverging proposals on salient political issues and different stances on political representation. Randomizing the candidates' proposals on issues allowed us to identify the causal effect of each issue position on candidate choice. We avoided the confounding influence of party cues on issue trade-offs by not assigning party labels to candidates and taking information on party attachment from surveys run months before the experiment. As a validation of

the results, we again implemented the same experimental setup almost two years later using a large German sample sampled according to population margins.

The findings from both samples consistently show that voters of radical right parties are less likely to compromise on their most important issue. As a consequence, radical right voters are willing to accept even large trade offs regarding undesirable proposals on climate change and EU integration in order to achieve restrictive immigration policies. Differently, radical left voters have less skewed issue orientations: they have strong preferences on redistributive policies but are still less likely to accept candidates that additionally propose undesirable issue proposals, e.g., climate denialist stances. Taken together, the study contributes to understanding long-term prospects for vote choices and the reconfiguration of politics in Europe, revealing complex patterns of issue (de)alignment of voters in contemporary democracies.

## 2 Political cleavages, issue-cross pressures and individuals' vote choices

The politics of representation is becoming increasingly multidimensional, at least in political systems where a variety of issue interests and political parties make individual vote choices more difficult. In this regard, an impressive body of research has examined the factors determining voting choices. Yet, despite recent advances (He, 2016; Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Steiner & Hillen, 2021), only scarce attention has been paid to measuring and examining the consequences of issue-cross pressures that relate to “inconsistencies among individuals’ attitudes towards various political objects” (He, 2016, p. 364). Our goal is to address this gap, shedding light on the impact of issue-cross pressures on vote choices and to examine the mechanisms of how voters of different party families trade off various issue preferences against each other.

The relevance of different kinds of cross pressures in voting decisions has been the focus of three major research schools. To begin with, the sociological model of voting behavior proposed by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) and colleagues at Columbia University contended that individuals’ vote choices were heavily influenced by demographic characteristics, and that belonging to a social group would be the predominant factor in determining voting decisions. In follow-up studies, they acknowledged the possibility of issue-cross pressures as they found some inconsistencies between policy preferences related to demographic indicators and those emerging from the characteristics associated with the groups to which individuals belong (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954). In their interpretation, these tensions would make individual voting decisions more difficult as they need to trade off some concerns over others.

A second major contribution to the study of vote choices came from the socio-psychological model of voting behaviour, initiated at the University of Michigan (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). These scholars assumed that party identification was central in informing voting decisions. Still,

Campbell and colleagues also provided the theoretical tools to account for issue-cross pressures as they clarified that partisanship is not a factor that determines unambiguously how individuals will cast their ballots. Rather, it has to be understood as a “filter” through which voters appreciate what is favorable to the orientation of the party and ignore (or value less) what is considered unfavorable. In other words, partisanship functions as an instrument to “decipher” electoral campaigns and candidates’ proposals.

Further theoretical elaboration came from the macro-sociological approach that understood Western European party systems as reflecting historical divisions originating in national revolutions (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Starting from the 1970s, the “defreezing” of traditional political cleavages (Inglehart, 1971) contributed to the decreasing role of party identification in voting decisions (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). At the same time, these transformations of the political space have accompanied the emergence of novel parties in European party systems, notably Greens and radical populist parties, increasing the diversity of available options and making voting choices even more complex (Ignazi, 1992). Scholars suggest that in this post-Rokkanian political space, voting choices are increasingly determined by two main socio-political divides: an economic and a cultural one, that may also create contradictory policy preferences (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Kriesi et al., 2012; Rovny & Polk, 2020).

While the specific issues of economic competition may vary from election to election, at a more abstract level, political competition on the economy tends to include debates about pro-state and pro-market positions (Castles, Mair, & Pedersen, 1997; Traber, Giger, & Häusermann, 2018). Specifically, this emergent economic divide opposes the advocates of a more interventionist state in regulating the economy and promoting social policies and setting taxation levels to those who call for a more limited role of governments (Dalton, 2018; Kitschelt, 1994). Another core political divide in contemporary European societies involves issues underlying a cultural cleavage. Central in these debates are newer issues associated with globalization, notably EU integration, immigration and, more recently, climate change (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2012; Treib, 2021). The transformation of the political space provides critical opportunities for both mainstream and radical parties that try to take up evolving preferences and values, (re)positioning themselves along these conflict lines. So far, cultural issues appear to be most central in explaining the vote for populist radical right parties but not for radical left or mainstream parties (Arzheimer, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018).

The literature on the drivers of voting behavior helps understanding that voting decisions are far from being straightforward. They are mediated by multiple, at times conflictual, individual issue preferences that cut across established and newer political cleavages. Still, available knowledge tends to overlook that as a response to partisan dealignment and changing lines of political conflict, cross-pressured individuals must and do trade off issues in formulating voting decisions. In line with the notions of “cross-cutting cleavages” (Rokkan, 1967), “cross-cutting pressures” (Berelson et al., 1954) or “issue cross-pressures” (He, 2016), a voter’s congruence with a candidate’s proposals on redistribution can

be counteracted by a candidate’s incongruent positions on immigration. Therefore, in most voting scenarios, the same voter has to trade off several more or less important preferences against each other to see her favorite one fulfilled.

More recently, researchers have started to use experimental designs to study the causal effects of voters’ issue preferences on vote choice (Chou et al., 2018; Graham & Svolik, 2020; Hanretty, Lauderdale, & Vivyan, 2020; Neuner & Wratil, 2020). Most closely related to our work are several conjoint studies with related, yet distinct research questions. Chou et al. (2018) designed candidate profiles with German party labels to investigate vote switching of radical right party supporters conditional on their issue preferences. The study found that *AfD* voters are willing to vote for mainstream parties that propose a complete stop of immigration. However, they also show that such an accommodation strategy alienates the core voters of mainstream parties. Another study of the Germany context investigated the electoral effects of “thin” populist stances of candidates versus “thicker” populist issue bundles. The authors identify differences in voters’ issue priorities depending on individual levels of populist attitudes, but that anti-immigrant and pro-redistribution positions increase the appeal of German candidates, on average (Neuner & Wratil, 2020). Finally, Franchino and Zucchini (2015) used student samples to study the importance of valence issues in vote choices.

In sum, to the best of our knowledge, no existing study has experimentally compared the willingness to trade off different issue preferences among radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters across multiple countries. To address this gap, we designed a candidate conjoint experiment with respondents from France, Germany, Italy and Spain, including the most salient contemporary issues as well as an attribute capturing populist stances of candidates. In the next section, we formulate expectations about the drivers of issue trade-offs in vote choices for different groups of voters.

### 3 Hypotheses: how issue trade-offs shape vote choice

In our understanding, issue preferences cross-cut a bundle of distinct issues that may generate conflict in voting decisions. To resolve these conflicts, voters have to make issue trade-offs depending on the intensity of their specific preferences. In other words, when a candidate proposes the most desirable solution, voters will have to also accept less desirable proposals – at least to some extent. For example, voters who attach a high value to redistribution may be willing to compromise on EU integration and immigration as long as their redistribution preference is fulfilled. This theoretical framework has a high external validity, as a perfect party-voter congruence can only rarely be observed empirically (Costello, Toshkov, Bos, & Krouwel, 2020; Steiner & Hillen, 2021; Traber et al., 2018). The literature on political parties helps identifying relevant overlapping or contrasting issue preferences, informing how voters of different party families

approach issue trade-offs.

Differently from voters of mainstream parties, which we understand as non-radical “traditional” party families ranging from Green parties to conservatives, radical electorates have been shown to share dissatisfaction with the functioning of government, and express lower trust in political institutions. This more adversarial approach to conventional politics can be expected to yield major differences in issue trade-offs between voters of mainstream and radical parties (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). Radical voters, in fact, may have stronger preferences on specific questions they regard as underrepresented in mainstream party politics and may be less ready than their non-radical counterparts to trade off these. Accordingly, we expect that:

**H1:** Voters of mainstream parties are willing to accept larger trade offs regarding their most important issue preference than voters of radical left and radical right parties.

Beyond preferences about conventional politics, more specific campaigns associated with radical right and radical left parties can be expected to inform issue trade-offs. Various studies show that vote choices for radical right parties are primarily motivated by preferences on immigration (Arzheimer, 2018; Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2020; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). This does not mean that a prototypical voter of the radical right is only concerned about immigration, but it means that this voter has stronger political preferences for the anti-immigrant claims that feature prominently in the campaigns of these parties (Halikiopoulou, 2019; Mudde, 2007). We expect that radical right voters’ resolute preferences over immigration might thus make them regard other issue preferences as less desirable or important.

**H2:** Voters of radical right parties are willing to accept large trade offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for restrictive immigration policies is fulfilled.

It has also been shown that radical left electorates hold peculiar preferences over specific issues. While differences between mainstream left and right parties have become more blurred over time, radical left parties continue to campaign and appeal to voters who are primarily concerned about the skewed socioeconomic structure of contemporary capitalism (March, 2012) and to call for a reduction of inequalities through redistribution, state subsidies and other major changes in economic and power structures (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017; Rooduijn, 2018). In sum, one may expect that voters of radical left parties hold stronger preferences for redistribution and are ready to trade off other issues considered as less important.

**H3:** Voters of radical left parties are willing to accept large trade offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for redistributive policies is fulfilled.

Assuming that radical left or right voters have rather peculiar tendencies when it comes to accepting trade offs in their issue preferences, it is an intriguing

question whether they differ in their desire to have their strongest preference fulfilled. While there is evidence that radical left and radical right electorates have different preferences about pluralism in society (Rooduijn, Burgoon, Van Elsas, & Van de Werfhorst, 2017), such as minorities’ rights, other studies show that both groups tend to have strong preferences for opposition to globalization and EU integration (Visser, Lubbers, Kraaykamp, & Jaspers, 2014), even if scholars identify different types of nationalism that inform these positions (Halkiopoulou, Nanou, & Vasilopoulou, 2012). Another issue where there may be more common ground than assumed in the previous hypotheses is redistribution. While radical right parties display and appeal to voters who hold more blurred positions on redistribution (Rovny & Polk, 2020), they still promise consumptive social policies while deemphasizing social investment policies (Enggist & Pinggera, 2021). A substantial share of so-called “left authoritarians” without proper party representation (Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Steiner & Hillen, 2021) also speaks for similarities, or at least smaller issue trade-offs that radical left and radical right voters might be willing to accept for one specific issue. The group of radical left voters should have become even more cross-pressured with the advent of post-materialist issues such as climate change that are salient in the platforms of left parties (Farstad, 2018).

In sum, previous literature has identified contradictory trends when it comes to the relative weight of different issues in the preference order of radical left and right voters. After all, it might be that these voter groups feel more cross-pressured beyond their primary orientation towards redistribution and immigration, respectively. To accommodate for unresolved puzzles in the literature, we formulate additional open questions for the analysis: what are the issues important to radical left and right voters besides redistribution and immigration, respectively? Are there differences between radical left and radical right voters in their willingness to compromise on their most important issue preference?

## 4 Data and Methods

### 4.1 Sample

To test our hypotheses on issue trade-offs and the differential reactions of voters of radical and mainstream parties, we needed to collect information about study participants’ party attachment. While our survey experiment investigates candidate choice in national parliamentary elections, we identified supporters of different party families based on original surveys conducted during the 2019 European Parliament (EP) election, several months before the experiments took place. This two-step sampling frame allowed us to avoid asking participants about their party identification or previous voting behavior in the immediate context of the experiment. Enquiring about party affiliation in such a setting might result in biases, either in the survey responses when asked post treatment or experimental behavior when asked pre treatment.

In the first recruitment stage, we conducted online surveys as part of a

bigger project in France, Germany, Italy and Spain one month before and immediately after the 2019 EP election that took place from 23 to 26 May 2019.<sup>1</sup> These countries have been selected because they host both radical right (*AfD*, *FN/RN*, *Lega*, *Vox*) and radical left parties (*Die Linke*, *La France Insoumise*, *Podemos*, *Potere al Popolo*). We selected 6,374 respondents as quota samples in each country from online access panels maintained by the market research firm *Netquest*. While the demographic composition came close to general population margins, the recruitment into the online access panel was not probability-based. Additionally, our study contained a module including an incentivized tracking of web browsing behavior. Therefore, the set of study participants has to be regarded as a convenience sample. However, the sample serves our purposes well, as we used the larger pool of respondents to identify a relevant subset of participants for our survey experiments.

In the second recruitment stage, we aimed to maximize participation of voters of radical right parties in the experiment and invited a set of radical left and mainstream party voters as the control group of equal size, with party classifications taken from PopuList and ParlGov (Döring & Manow, 2019; Rooduijn et al., 2019) (a flowchart of the sampling process can be found in Online Appendix Section A1). To determine the party attachment of participants, we used the following criteria: (1) party identification (pre-election survey), (2) intention to vote for a party in the 2019 EP election (pre-election survey), (3) voted for a party in the 2019 EP election (post-election survey), (4) voted for a party in the previous national parliamentary election (in France, presidential election), or (5) party identification (post-treatment question in the experimental survey). While the final set of respondents did not necessarily vote for a given party in recent elections, they at least considered doing so and/or identified with one. Voters of Christian democratic, Conservative, Green/Ecologist, Liberal and Social democratic parties (Döring & Manow, 2019) were grouped together as the comparison group of mainstream voters (e.g., voters of *La République En Marche!*, *Les Républicains* in France, *CDU/CSU*, *SPD*, *Grüne* in Germany, *+Europa/Radicali*, *Partito Democratico (PD)* in Italy, *PP*, *PSOE* in Spain, along with smaller parties (see Table A5 in the Online Appendix). In cases where the party differed across an individual’s survey responses, we prioritized the party identification response, which is the strongest signal of a partisan identity. Online Appendix Sections A6.3 contains robustness tests for respondents with consistent and inconsistent party preferences.

In total, we invited 2,867 persons to take part in a conjoint survey experiment (Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2014), in which 1,951 respondents participated (see Online Appendix Section 1 for a description of the sample).<sup>2</sup> The experiment was in the field from 16 to 27 March 2020.<sup>3</sup> After the experiment, we also asked respondents about their party identification again. Comparing

<sup>1</sup>The study was approved by the [anonymized] ethics committee (reference number [anonymized]).

<sup>2</sup>Non-response rates were higher than in usual re-contact surveys since our experimental survey was in the field almost 10 months after the first contact survey.

<sup>3</sup>The overwhelming majority of responses took place during the first couple of days.



party identification responses in May 2019 and their responses post-treatment in the experimental survey in March 2020 reveals considerable stability: the party family remained unchanged for 82% of respondents who reported having a party identification in both surveys.

To assess the robustness of our results, we reran the exact same experiment with another sample almost two years later in January 2022. We drew a sample of 4,016 German participants from the online access panel of *respondi* based on German population margins (see the sample composition in Online Appendix Section A8). A power analysis using the *R* package *cjpowR* (Schuessler & Freitag, 2020) demonstrates that the sample size provides sufficient statistical power for all subgroups (Online Appendix Section A9), including radical left voters that are underrepresented in the cross-country sample.

## 4.2 Survey experiment design

This study uses choice-based conjoint experiments that allow to identify voters’ issue preferences in a multidimensional setting (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The survey experiment consisted of eight tasks (or screens), where participants were asked to choose between two hypothetical candidates who are running in the next national parliamentary election. Every candidate had five attributes with three randomized levels that each represent a different issue proposal. The attribute order was randomized for every respondent once at the beginning of the survey experiment.

By asking voters to choose their preferred candidate among the two we can assess the causal effects of each issue proposal on vote choices. Importantly, unlike traditional surveys, “forced” choice-based survey experiments immerse a voter into a multidimensional issue environment where she is cross-pressured and has to trade-off her issue preferences and eventually choose only one candidate, thereby revealing the relative preference for each issue proposal. Every candidate profile had a neutral label “Candidate 1” or “Candidate 2”. We avoided gender sensitive variants of “candidate” (e.g., “Kandidat\*in” in German) as radical right voters might regard such labels as “gender mainstreaming” which might affect response behavior. We also avoided party labels that affect voters’ choices. We acknowledge that hypothesis driven choices in survey experiments pose challenges to external validity of our experiment. Specifically, scenario, where voters will participate in elections with unlabeled candidate profiles are unrealistic. Nevertheless, we decided to trade plausibility of candidate profiles for our theory. The literature shows that party labels can affect voters’ choices (Franchino & Zucchini, 2015; Hainmueller et al., 2014; Kirkland & Coppock, 2018; Neuner & Wratil, 2020) due to partisanship. As we pointed out in the paper, in our study we aimed to isolate voters’ issue preferences from party cues as much as possible and not using party labels is one solution for it. In fact, strong issue preferences are confounded by party preferences (Campbell et al., 1960; Franchino & Zucchini, 2015, p. 224; Kirkland & Coppock, 2018, p. 573) and voting for parties who “own” these issues. Therefore, removing party labels is paying off more than brings advantage for our study, specifically. The setup

Table 1: Attributes and levels (proposals) in the conjoint survey experiment.

| Attributes         | Levels for Candidate 1 and Candidate 2  | Theoretical concept       |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Immigration        | Introduce controls at [country’s] border to prevent illegal immigration       | Closed state              |
|                    | Keep current immigration policy   | Status quo (SQ)           |
|                    | Remove restrictions on immigration  | Open state                |
| Redistribution     | Individuals instead of the state should provide for their staples and housing | Non-interventionist state |
|                    | Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing                          | SQ                        |
|                    | The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing                    | Interventionist state     |
| European Union     | Leave the common currency Euro  | Oppose EU integration     |
|                    | Keep the EU institutions like they are  | SQ                        |
|                    | Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU                  | Support EU integration    |
| Climate change     | There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                      | Climate change denial     |
|                    | Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations  | SQ/impersonal measure     |
|                    | Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations and citizens                             | Universal measure         |
| Reason for running | Because corrupt elites don’t represent the real people                        | Populist                  |
|                    | To participate in policy making   | SQ/neutral                |
|                    | To continue to serve the government   | Mainstream                |

of the conjoint survey experiment including screenshots is described in Online Appendix Section A3.

### 4.3 Attributes and levels

The substantive goal of the experiment was to provide a realistic representation of the most salient contemporary issues across all party families that are reconfiguring political conflict in Europe (Kriesi et al., 2012). To create a list of relevant issues (or *attributes*) on which candidates present a specific proposal (*levels*), we did extensive research incorporating information from the demand side (voters) and supply side (political parties). As the point of departure, we analyzed the most important problem perceptions (“MIP”, using the standard Eurobarometer issue battery) of radical right and radical left voters in our own surveys. We studied in detail the party manifestos for the 2019 EP election and recent national elections to empirically identify the most important issues and associated issue positions (Online Appendix Section A4.2). We also downloaded 121,108 Facebook posts posted by the biggest national parties in 2019 to verify that the chosen issues were also salient in party communication (Online Appendix Section 4.3). Finally, we consulted with 11 experts on populism and party politics at various stages of the design of the experiment to create levels (issue proposals) that were applicable across countries.

Of the surveyed issue categories, living costs, unemployment and the economy were salient in our sample and also in parallel Eurobarometer surveys of the general population (Online Appendix Section A4.1). *Immigration* was by far the most important perceived problem for radical right voters, whereas social security and the environment (“The environment, climate and energy issues”) stood out more clearly among radical left voters. In the survey, we also asked for free-text descriptions describing the chosen most important problem briefly so that we better understand how respondents interpret political issues. The issue descriptions provided by respondents indicate that their concerns boiled down to personal economic fears and not being able to cover the costs of daily life (see word clouds in Figure A6). Therefore, as a construct capturing preferences re-

garding *redistribution*, we tapped into a traditional survey question on the role of the state in the economy (interventionist vs. non-interventionist) but tailored it towards subsidies on staples and housing that would directly reduce living costs. Accordingly, the item should not just capture radical left voters’ well-documented preference for state intervention in social policies but also radical right voters’ consumption-oriented demands towards the welfare state (Enggist & Pinggera, 2021). In addition, we included positions on the *European Union* that has become entangled in an “emerging centre–periphery cleavage” (Treib, 2021, p. 175) driven by Eurosceptic populist parties, and *Climate change*, an increasingly salient issue in European democracies (Farstad, 2018), most notably after the emergence of the movement Fridays for Future.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in order to capture preferences for a populist stance towards political representation, we included a *Reason for running* item, adjusted from the conjoint study of Chou et al. (2018).<sup>5</sup>

The final list of attributes and levels can be found in Table 1. Although we focus on radical right and radical left voters, we still wanted to compare their voting behavior to voters of mainstream parties. Thus, we drew policy proposals from across the ideological spectrum (Online Appendix Section A4.2). We constructed attribute levels as follows: the first level is a right/authoritarian/nationalist policy proposal, the middle category is the status quo, and the third level is a left/liberal proposal, either in terms of economic or GAL-TAN issues. Choosing a similar number of levels for each attribute makes it possible to compare the relative importance of issue proposals across and within attributes.

## 5 Results

For reporting the key findings of the conjoint analysis, we used Marginal Means (MMs) as our estimand (Leeper, Hobolt, & Tilley, 2020), which has a straightforward interpretation as probabilities with binary outcome variables such as ours – the choice of a candidate. A MM of 0 means that respondents chose a particular profile feature with zero probability, a MM of 1 means the candidate profile with that feature was always chosen, ignoring all other features. Instead of a reference category, we chose a 0.5 probability to indicate that the feature was not significant for respondents in their choice of a candidate profile. We obtained MMs from simple ordinary least squares regression models. Because the features (levels) of candidate profiles were randomized, the effect of every feature on candidate choice in the conjoint experiment can be causally interpreted. We designed the levels in the conjoint experiment in a way that allowed for a complete randomization, meaning that a candidate profile could take any

<sup>4</sup>In the survey, only a small share of radical right voters chose the environment as the most important issue. Yet the survey results might be a byproduct of the design of the most important problem question (Wlezien, 2005). Specifically, what we observe might be radical right voters’ unwillingness to openly state the importance or existence of climate change.

<sup>5</sup>Note that no party classified as radical right or radical left according to Rooduijn et al. (2019) was in government in the four countries at the time of our study.

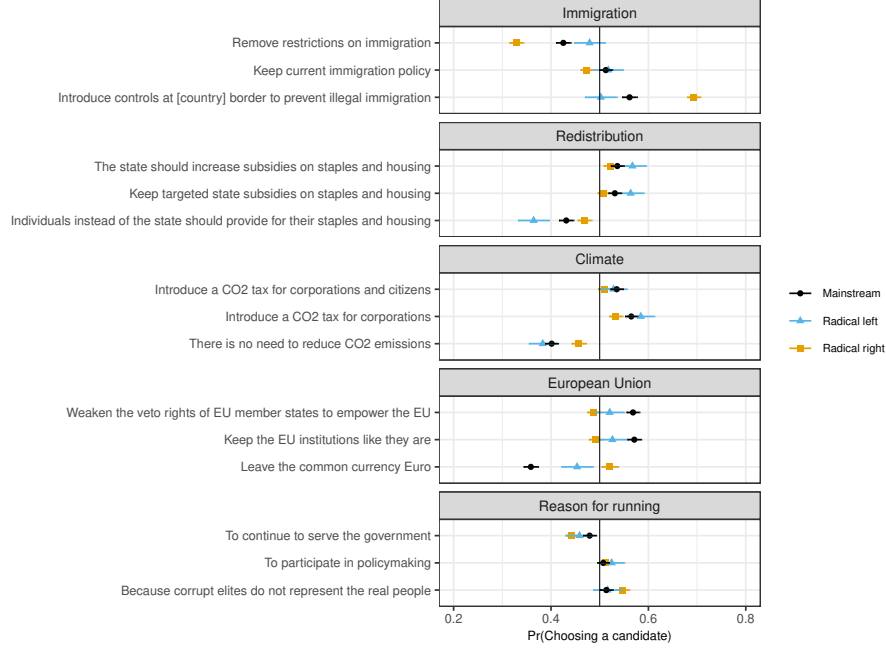


Figure 1: The effect of candidates’ issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

attribute combination and every feature had the same probability to appear in a profile. All analyses were performed in *R*, version 4.1.1.<sup>6</sup>

## 5.1 Identifying issue preferences among different groups of voters

To test our hypotheses, we first needed to examine if radical right, radical left and mainstream voters have a dominant issue preference. We plotted the results in Figure 1 and also included the numerical outputs from the regressions in the Online Appendix, Tables A7-A9. Consistent with the literature, our experimental evidence shows that radical right voters respond strongly to the immigration issue, radical left voters to the redistribution issue. Meanwhile, the unifying issue for the diverse group of mainstream voters is the EU.

Three patterns stand out in Figure 1. First, in contrast to radical right voters who respond to the introduction of border controls (positively) and removing restrictions (negatively) with the same strength, the preferences of radical left

<sup>6</sup>Replication materials [anonymized for peer review] can be accessed on OSF: [https://osf.io/8p54d/?view\\_only=1d6343b2123c40a1a516ce1ad56e7b44](https://osf.io/8p54d/?view_only=1d6343b2123c40a1a516ce1ad56e7b44)

and mainstream voters are more lopsided. They are more likely to *reject* proposals than to enthusiastically support proposals on their most important issue. Specifically, radical left voters only moderately supported candidates proposing to increase subsidies on staples and housing or keep the status quo but strongly oppose candidates who promote economic self-sufficiency. Similarly, mainstream voters moderately supported empowering the EU through weakening the veto rights of EU member states (a proposal found in party programs of many mainstream parties, see Online Appendix Section A4.2) but strongly opposed candidates proposing to leave the Eurozone.

Second, there is barely a candidate for the second most important issue of radical right voters, while radical left and mainstream voters were also concerned about climate change besides income redistribution or the EU, respectively. Both groups were firmly against ignoring the problem of rising CO2 emissions, a proposal even radical right voters rejected.<sup>7</sup> There were few similarities between the two radical poles in the electorate and no evidence for left authoritarians who might appreciate redistribute policies and anti-immigration rhetoric at the same time (Lefkofridi et al., 2014).

Third, with “Reason for running”, we were aiming to signal to respondents a candidates’ stances on political representation. All three groups of voters punished candidates running for a seat to continue to serve the government and ignored the neutral reason to participate in policy making. If a candidate was running for a seat to combat the corrupt elite and represent the real people, radical right voters’ response to this anti-elitist candidate was more positive than the response of radical left or mainstream party voters. Taken together, the findings are only partially consistent with the literature (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018), where radical right and left voters prefer anti-elitist candidates. This suggests that on average, voters of all three party families were not satisfied with the current government but that only radical right voters endorsed anti-elitist stances. Overall, however, our multidimensional survey experiment demonstrates that in the presence of salient issues like immigration or redistribution, radical left and radical right voters did not put much weight on candidates’ populist features.

## 5.2 Cross-pressured voters and issue trade-offs

We use the results of Figure 1 to test our hypotheses on issue trade-offs among radical left, radical right and mainstream voters. We specifically zoom in on the choices of each group under the condition that they were offered their most preferred issue proposal – restricting immigration for radical right voters, increasing subsidies for radical left voters and empowering the EU for mainstream party

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<sup>7</sup>On climate policy, the clearest cross-country differences among radical right voters emerged. While *AfD* voters were the staunchest climate change deniers, their counterparts in other countries saw a need to tackle rising CO emissions, mostly by taxing corporations (see Figure A8). However, a bigger sample is needed to more thoroughly investigate differences between individual parties.

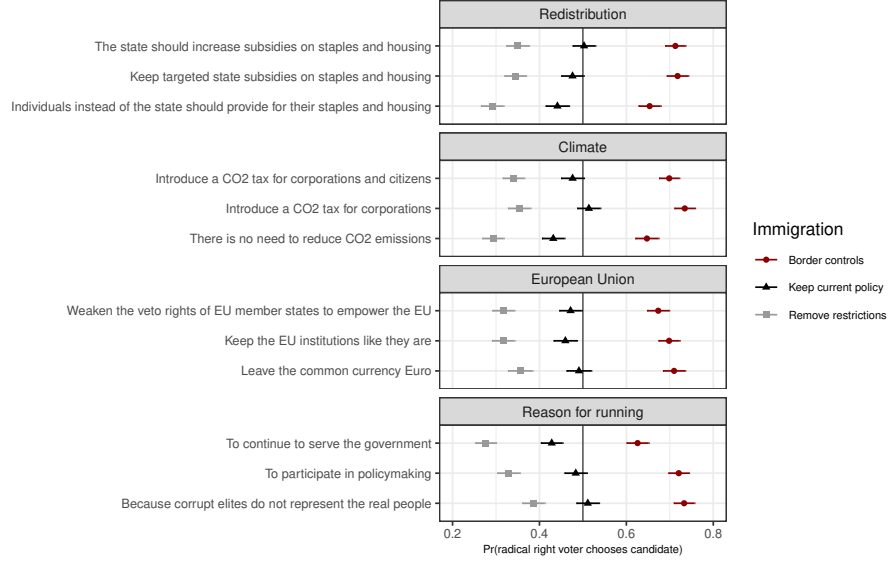


Figure 2: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical right voters holding **candidates' proposals on immigration constant**: border controls, status quo or removing restrictions. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

voters.<sup>8</sup> This empirical strategy allows us to observe how much voters with strong issue preferences are willing to compromise (trade off) to have their most (or least) desirable issue proposal fulfilled.

**Radical right voters.** Since the results of the pooled conjoint analysis showed that a restrictive immigration policy was most preferred by radical right voters (Figure 1), we reran the analysis for each issue position on immigration individually. In other words, we obtained the effects of issue proposals on respondents' vote choices holding immigration policy constant. Figure 2 shows that radical right voters were consistent in their behavior. As all coefficients are clearly on the right hand side of the 0.5 probability threshold, the approval of candidates with restrictive immigration policies increased regardless of their at times undesirable proposals on other issues such as climate change or the EU. Conversely, radical right voters punished candidates who wanted to remove restrictions on immigration despite the presence of other issue proposals that radical right voters embraced in the pooled analysis.

**Radical left voters.** Figure 3 reports the results for radical left voters

<sup>8</sup>Introducing a CO2 tax for corporations was even slightly more popular among radical left voters than increasing subsidies. We chose redistribution as the issue that more clearly distinguishes them from mainstream party voters for this analysis but show in Online Appendix Section A6.5 that radical right voters are still unique independent of the chosen reference issue.

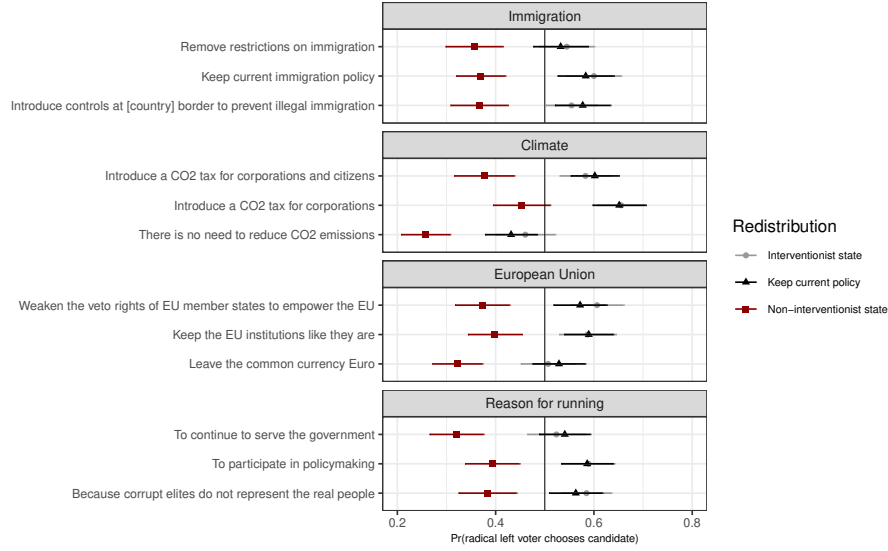


Figure 3: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical left voters holding **candidates' proposals on redistribution constant**. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

grouped by candidate proposals on redistribution. When candidates proposed an interventionist approach to subsidies, radical left voters mostly continued rewarding them. Yet the relative effect sizes were only moderate and almost identical to the coefficients of keeping the status quo. Some effects were even insignificant, meaning that some alternative issue proposals were of similar importance for radical left voters. More consistently, candidates who proposed non-redistributive policies were punished: all effects of other issues are on the left hand (negative) side of the 0.5 probability threshold, with the sole exception being taxes on corporations for their CO2 emissions. Overall, (dis)like of different redistribution policies played a less central role in vote choices of radical left voters compared to the consistently strong orientation of radical right voters towards immigration.

**Mainstream party voters.** Similar to radical left voters' balanced preferences over redistribution but unlike radical right voters skewed preferences, mainstream voters did not reward issue proposals for deeper European integration significantly more than keeping the status quo (Figure 4). However, mainstream voters consistently punished candidates proposing the anti-EU policy of leaving the Eurozone.

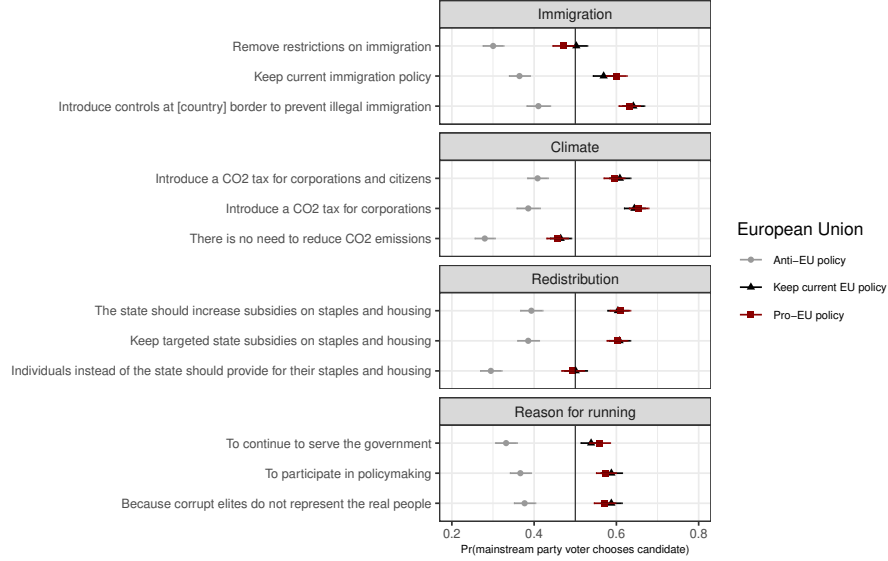


Figure 4: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among mainstream voters holding **candidates' proposals on the EU constant**. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

### 5.3 Comparing differences in issue trade-offs

To more systematically test our hypotheses, we subtracted the effect sizes for every issue position in the pooled regression model (Figure 1) from the effects in Figures 2, 3 and 4. As in the previous analysis, we again focus on the most preferred issue proposal for each group. Figure 5 presents a formal comparison of results, with the dashed vertical line representing the mean difference for radical right voters.

Overall, the bars demonstrate that in the scenarios when the most preferred issue position was fulfilled by a candidate, respondents were also willing to accept other issue positions. For instance, mainstream party voters were much more likely to choose the status quo for redistribution under the condition that the EU issue is addressed in line with their preference. However, the most striking finding pertains to radical right voters: their strong preference for restricting immigration made them bear even positions that fundamentally ran counter to their overall preferences (Figure 1). Importantly, in contrast to mainstream party and radical left voters, there is no noteworthy variation between issues, meaning that the preference order of radical right voters is much more lopsided towards a single-issue preference.

But what about the *least preferred* instead of the most preferred issue proposal? After all, Figure 1 revealed an asymmetric reaction of radical left and mainstream party voters: *ceteris paribus*, they tended to reject certain issue



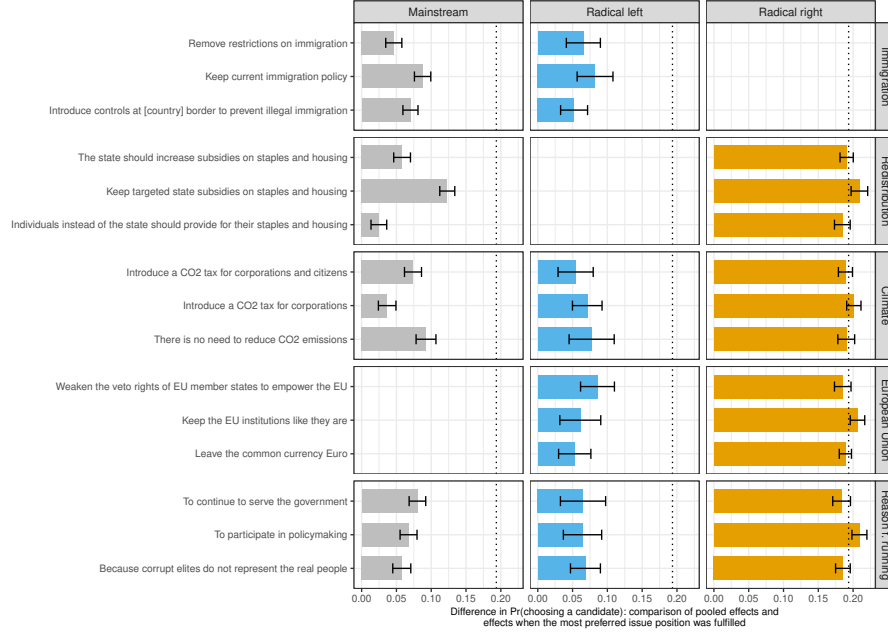


Figure 5: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and mainstream voters was shown. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters.

positions (e.g., the climate denialist proposal) more strongly than to enthusiastically support one of the available positions per issue. To account for these scenarios, Figure A19 replicates the analysis for the least preferred issue proposal per group. While the differences were less stark, radical right voters still stand out in terms of the overall strength of issue preferences and their unwillingness to differentiate further between their lesser preferred issue positions. An analysis of the average duration respondents needed for a conjoint task sheds more light on these patterns: radical right voters were significantly quicker in rejecting their least preferred and selecting their most preferred issue proposal than radical left and mainstream party voters (Figure A24).

Overall, there is mixed evidence regarding our hypotheses. As hypothesized, radical right voters were very much willing to accept issue trade-offs in order to fulfill their preference for restrictive immigration policies ( $H2$ ). In fact, despite many different angles to look at the results, no clear second most important issue besides immigration emerged. Their radical left counterparts indeed had a preference for redistributive policies and an even more pronounced dislike of economic self-sufficiency. However, in contrast to the expectation in  $H3$ , radical left voters had a more variegated range of issue preferences, some of them so strong that they were not traded off for their redistribution preferences. Finally,  $H1$  is

only partially supported, since in contrast to radical right voters’ preference for restrictive immigration policies, both, radical left voters and mainstream party voters were equally unlikely to accept large trade offs in other issues (most importantly, climate change) to have their most preferred issues fulfilled.

## 5.4 Robustness tests and replication study

We conducted various robustness tests. First, a heterogeneity test across countries shows that study participants from France, Italy, Spain, and Germany had rather similar issue preferences (Figure A8). There are some noteworthy deviations among radical right voters, though. *AfD* voters were leaning most strongly towards anti-climate policies, whereas voters of *Vox* were more pro-EU compared to their radical right counterparts in the other countries. We also found only marginal and generally plausible divergences in issue preferences by respondents’ age, gender, education, and income (Figures A9-A12). We also reran the main models using post-stratification weights that correct for deviations of our sample from population margins, with similar results (Tables A7-A9).

We further assessed the robustness of effects by how consistent respondents were in their party identification and previous voting behavior, which they reported in several survey waves. Figures A13 to A17 generally reveal minor differences between consistent and inconsistent voter groups. The most noteworthy difference is that consistent radical right voters had more pronounced anti-EU preferences than their counterparts who were less loyal to a radical right party. We also included a robustness test based on (non-)voting in the 2019 EP election to distinguish non-voters – who potentially feel underrepresented in party politics – from radical left and right voters. Figure A18 reveals some commonalities of non-voters and radical left voters, e.g., in their dampened enthusiasm for EU integration. Yet in the dimensions immigration and redistribution, non-voters are more similar to mainstream party voters.

As Green parties are niche parties with a strong orientation towards one issue – environmental protection – the preferences of their voters might be skewed as well. In additional analyses (Online Appendix Section A6.6), we show that Green party voters have an equal disdain for climate denialist stances as radical right voters despise open borders (Figure A20). Nonetheless, there is greater variety in their revealed preferences when taking the multidimensionality of choices Green party voters were facing into account (Figure A22 and Figure A23). While radical right voters were indifferent to other issue proposals when their most preferred or most disliked position was shown, Green party voters also strongly disliked leaving the EU and were less likely to vote for a candidate with a stated populist reason to run.

Finally, the chosen cross-country research design has four downsides: 1) the study was not pre-registered; 2) the sampling strategy was especially targeting radical right voters; 3) there were only 170 radical left respondents in our sample resulting in underpowered findings for this group; and 4) the research period covered only isolated time period in European politics before a period

of dramatic political changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. We turn to the German replication sample to probe the generalizability of the main results. Despite being conducted almost two years later with a different government coalition including the social democratic, green and liberal parties, the results in the replication study are remarkably similar to the cross-country findings (Online Appendix Section A8).

## 6 Conclusion

Voting behavior is becoming increasingly complex in the post-Rokkanian political space that is so characteristic of contemporary European democracies. One of the reasons is that voters' issue preferences can cut across established and emerging political cleavages, pressuring them to prioritize and trade off their concerns against each other. Accordingly, researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of issue cross-pressures in vote choices (He, 2016). Our goal was to examine the relative strength of issue preferences and to what extent voters of radical and mainstream parties are willing to make issue trade-offs.

Our study innovated by conducting a conjoint experiment featuring salient contemporary issues across four major European democracies. Setting a similar number of levels (proposals) per issue and avoiding party labels allowed us to causally identify the strength of issue preferences of different groups of voters. The results show that radical right voters were willing to make large issue trade-offs as long as their most important issue preference of restricting immigration is fulfilled. In contrast, radical left and mainstream party voters were more willing to compromise on their most important issue position in favor of issues ranked lower in their order of preference.

Our experimental findings have implications for several streams of research. The striking absence of a pronounced second most important issue preference among radical right voters adds to ongoing debates about the broader shifts in party systems due to the advent of radical right parties. Much of this research has centered on the (re)positioning of conservative and mainstream left parties on the issue of immigration and the (lack of) success of such accommodation strategies (Chou et al., 2018; Spoon & Klüver, 2020). Our research adds another perspective to these debates. If their voters are barely considering any issue proposals other than restrictive immigration policies, attempts of radical right parties to broaden their platform (e.g., Marine Le Pen's flirtations with ecological issues) seem futile. In many electoral scenarios, the chances of radical right parties will therefore hinge on the salience of the immigration issue.

While bundles of cultural explanations were identified as the core drivers of the radical right vote, voting behavior of radical left voters most often tends to be reduced to economic concerns and traditional political cleavage structures. Yet in our study, radical left voters were not willing to accept climate denialist stances as a trade off for their preferences over redistribution. These results were confirmed in the well-powered replication study where respondents were sampled systematically according to German population margins. Taken to-

gether with more EU-friendly preferences than found in previous studies, these results tentatively point towards an increased sorting of radical left voters along a new post-materialist cultural axis. However, further issue-specific research is needed. More action-oriented proposals, for instance, to “tax the rich” might trigger stronger reactions among left voters (Neuner & Wratil, 2020).

The unifying issue preference among the heterogeneous group of mainstream voters was in the field of EU politics. While they were equally likely to choose candidates who proposed to keep the status quo or who wanted to institutionally strengthen the EU, they despised leaving the common currency Euro. Voters of mainstream parties also clearly preferred climate policies aiming to curb CO2 emissions while rejecting climate denialist positions. These experimental insights contribute to emerging research on the role of climate politics in European party systems (Farstad, 2018).

Beyond the need for additional replication studies with bigger samples for all four countries, our study design comes with additional limitations. The survey experiment took place while the COVID-19 pandemic was intensifying in spring 2020. Accordingly, the ongoing discussions about closing borders to curb the spread of the pandemic might have increased the appeal of border controls to restrict immigration. Reassuringly, there is first evidence that the pandemic did not drastically influence behavior in experiments (Peyton, Huber, & Coppock, 2020). The replication study that we conducted in early 2022 also confirmed the results. We further acknowledge that the operationalization of populist stances might suffer from a limited external validity. While in line with other experimental studies (Chou et al., 2018; Neuner & Wratil, 2020), one possible explanation for why the anti-elitist appeal of candidates did not have large effects might be that such strategies only appeal to radical electorates in combination with specific party cues. While being a necessary design choice to separate issue preferences from partisan identity, one specificity of the research design is the lack of party labels of candidates. Similarly, forced-choice conjoint experiments reveal preferences of participants but do not allow for abstention, a viable option when voters are feeling cross-pressured. Finally, while our process of identifying issues was informed by survey responses, party manifestos, parties’ social media communication and consultations with experts, the issues and associated positions were chosen in a way that they are applicable across the four democracies under study during one specific research period. As a consequence, country experts will certainly disagree with some of the featured issue proposals.

Despite these caveats, the paper has offered an important step towards uncovering the similar and distinct issue considerations underlying vote choices of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters. Revealing these mechanisms holds implications not only for specialists of populism and political behavior, but also for scholars interested in how issue dynamics are re-configuring political conflict in Europe.

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# Issue trade-offs and the politics of representation: Experimental evidence from four European democracies

ONLINE APPENDIX

Anonymous

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## A1 Description of the sample

Table A1: Number of observations by country.

| Country | Count | Percent |
|---------|-------|---------|
| France  | 531   | 27.22   |
| Germany | 305   | 15.63   |
| Italy   | 612   | 31.37   |
| Spain   | 503   | 25.78   |
| Total   | 1951  | 100.00  |

Table A2: Demographics by country (%).

| Country | Gender | Age      |       |       |       |         | Education |        |       | Income |        |       |
|---------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
|         | Female | 29/under | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60/over | Low       | Medium | High  | Low    | Medium | High  |
| France  | 53.48  | 7.34     | 15.63 | 22.60 | 24.86 | 29.19   | 5.84      | 55.74  | 38.04 | 47.08  | 35.22  | 17.14 |
| Germany | 47.87  | 6.56     | 16.39 | 20.33 | 32.79 | 23.93   | 22.30     | 50.16  | 27.21 | 43.93  | 35.08  | 20.66 |
| Italy   | 59.15  | 8.82     | 23.04 | 31.37 | 23.04 | 13.24   | 10.78     | 46.73  | 42.32 | 49.18  | 34.15  | 15.20 |
| Spain   | 47.51  | 16.30    | 8.95  | 16.70 | 24.25 | 33.80   | 22.86     | 31.61  | 45.53 | 36.38  | 33.60  | 26.84 |

*Note:* Education levels were harmonized according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

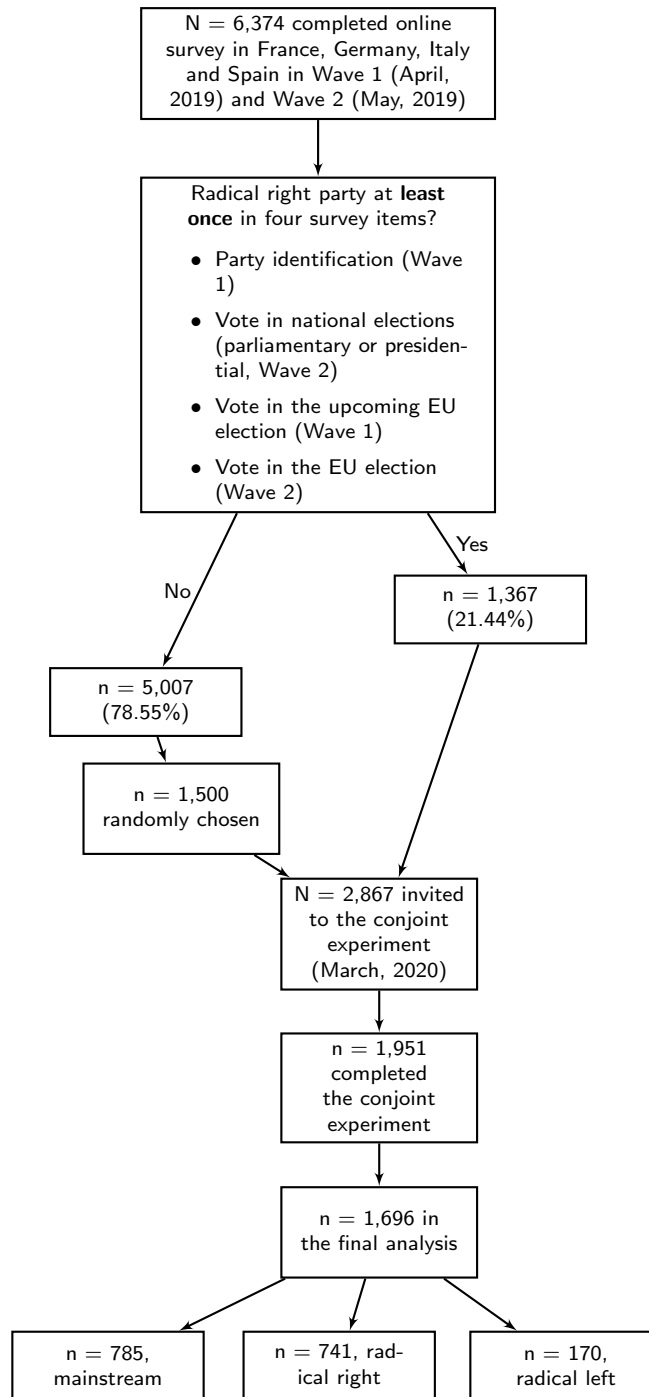


Figure A1: Flowchart of the sample for the conjoint experiment.

Table A3: Count and share of voters' party family by country.

| Country | Count | Percent | Party family        |
|---------|-------|---------|---------------------|
| France  | 1     | 0.19    | Communist/Socialist |
| France  | 56    | 10.55   | Conservative        |
| France  | 61    | 11.49   | Green/Ecologist     |
| France  | 69    | 12.99   | Liberal             |
| France  | 21    | 3.95    | Populist            |
| France  | 45    | 8.47    | Radical Left        |
| France  | 224   | 42.18   | Radical Right       |
| France  | 54    | 10.17   | Social Democracy    |
| Germany | 48    | 15.74   | Christian Democracy |
| Germany | 49    | 16.07   | Green/Ecologist     |
| Germany | 21    | 6.89    | Liberal             |
| Germany | 43    | 14.10   | Radical Left        |
| Germany | 101   | 33.11   | Radical Right       |
| Germany | 43    | 14.10   | Social Democracy    |
| Italy   | 7     | 1.14    | Communist/Socialist |
| Italy   | 2     | 0.33    | Conservative        |
| Italy   | 164   | 26.80   | Populist            |
| Italy   | 11    | 1.80    | Radical Left        |
| Italy   | 327   | 53.43   | Radical Right       |
| Italy   | 101   | 16.50   | Social Democracy    |
| Spain   | 4     | 0.80    | Christian Democracy |
| Spain   | 20    | 3.98    | Communist/Socialist |
| Spain   | 76    | 15.11   | Conservative        |
| Spain   | 71    | 14.12   | Liberal             |
| Spain   | 71    | 14.12   | Radical Left        |
| Spain   | 89    | 17.69   | Radical Right       |
| Spain   | 130   | 25.84   | Social Democracy    |
| Spain   | 42    | 8.35    | Special Issue       |

*Note:* See party classification in Table A5.

The party family was assigned based on the five survey questions on party identification or voting behavior explained in the main text. If responses were inconsistent across survey responses (i.e., party identification differs from voting behavior, or party identification and/or voting behavior have changed over time), the party family with the majority of responses was taken. If there was a tie (e.g., when a respondent has four valid responses and no majority party family), party identification (the strongest signal of a partisan identity) and as a second rule, the more recent survey responses were prioritized (e.g., voting in the 2019 EP election over the last national parliament election in 2017). Table A4 shows the share of voters by party family and country.

Table A4: Count and share of voters by party family.

| Party family        | Count | Percent |
|---------------------|-------|---------|
| Christian Democracy | 52    | 2.67    |
| Communist/Socialist | 28    | 1.44    |
| Conservative        | 134   | 6.87    |
| Green/Ecologist     | 110   | 5.64    |
| Liberal             | 161   | 8.25    |
| Populist            | 185   | 9.48    |
| Radical Left        | 170   | 8.71    |
| Radical Right       | 741   | 37.98   |
| Social Democracy    | 328   | 16.81   |
| Special Issue       | 42    | 2.15    |

*Note:* See party classification in Table A5.

## A2 Classification of political parties

Parties were classified according to data taken from ParlGov (Döring and Manow 2019) and PopuList (Rooduijn et al. 2020). The latter data source was prioritized so that all parties classified as populist got assigned to the party family **radical left**, **radical right** or just **populist** (e.g., the Five Star Movement in Italy).

Table A5: Included political parties and their party family.

| Country | Party                                      | Communist/<br>Socialist | Conservative | Green/<br>Ecologist | Liberal | Populist | Radical Left | Radical<br>Right | Social<br>Democracy | Christian<br>Democracy | Special Issue |
|---------|--|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------|----------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| France  | Mouvement radical                          | ✓                       |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Union des<br>démocrates et<br>indépendants |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Les Républicains                           |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Mouvement<br>démocrate                     |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Europe Écologie<br>Les Verts               |                         |              | ✓                   |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | La République En<br>Marche!                |                         |              |                     | ✓       |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Agir, la droite<br>constructive            |                         |              |                     | ✓       |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Gilets Jaunes                              |                         |              |                     |         | ✓        |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | La France<br>Insoumise                     |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Rassemblement<br>national                  |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | Debout la France                           |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | Parti socialiste                           |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
|         | Génération.s, le<br>mouvement              |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
|         | Place Publique                             |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
| Germany | CDU/CSU                                    |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     | ✓                      |               |
|         | Grüne                                      |                         |              | ✓                   |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | FDP  |                         |              |                     | ✓       |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Linke                                      |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | AfD  |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | SPD  |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |

Table A5: Included political parties and their party family. *(continued)*

| Country | Party                    | Communist/<br>Socialist | Conservative | Green/<br>Ecologist | Liberal | Populist | Radical Left | Radical<br>Right | Social<br>Democracy | Christian<br>Democracy | Special Issue |
|---------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------|----------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Italy   | Liberi e Uguali (LEU)    | ✓                       |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | La Destra                |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Movimento 5 Stelle       |                         |              |                     |         | ✓        |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Forza Italia             |                         |              |                     |         | ✓        |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Potere al Popolo         |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Liberi e Uguali          |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Lega                     |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | Fratelli d'Italia        |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | Partito Democratico (PD) |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
|         | +Europa / Radicali       |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
|         | EAJ-PNV                  |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     | ✓                      |               |
| Spain   | Compromís                | ✓                       |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | IU                       | ✓                       |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | PP                       |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | PDeCAT                   |                         | ✓            |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Ciudadanos               |                         |              |                     | ✓       |          |              |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | Podemos                  |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | En Comú Podem            |                         |              |                     |         |          | ✓            |                  |                     |                        |               |
|         | VOX                      |                         |              |                     |         |          |              | ✓                |                     |                        |               |
|         | PSOE                     |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  | ✓                   |                        |               |
|         | ERC                      |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        | ✓             |
|         | PACMA                    |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        | ✓             |
|         | EH Bildu                 |                         |              |                     |         |          |              |                  |                     |                        | ✓             |

## A3 Setup of the conjoint experiment

### INVITATION

Dear participant, [Anonymized institute] conducts a survey on political preferences and how they relate to voting. The survey lasts approximately 5 minutes. The data will only be used for scientific purposes. We thank you very much for your participation and for your time!

### INSTRUCTION

Now we would like to show you the profiles of potential candidates for entering the parliament in [country's] national parliamentary election. Please take your time when reading the descriptions of each candidate.

You will be shown eight screens with different candidates and their policy proposals. We would like to know, **based on your preferences**, which one of the two candidates you would vote for in the next [country's] national parliamentary election. People have different preferences on these issues, and there are no right or wrong answers.

### QUESTIONS

If you had to choose between them **based on your preferences**, which of the two candidates would you vote for?

- Candidate 1
- Candidate 2

Independent of your choice, how would you rate each of the candidates described above? Please rank each candidate overall on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that you strongly disapprove of the candidate and 7 that you strongly approve of the candidate.



|                           | Candidate 1   | Candidate 2   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Climate change</b>     | There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                | There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                |
| <b>Immigration</b>        | Introduce controls at [country's] border to prevent illegal immigration | Introduce controls at [country's] border to prevent illegal immigration |
| <b>Reason for running</b> | Because corrupt elites don't represent the real people                  | Because corrupt elites don't represent the real people                  |
| <b>European Union</b>     | Leave the common currency Euro  | Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU            |
| <b>Living costs</b>       | Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing                    | The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing              |

If you had to choose between them based on your preferences, which of the two candidates would you vote for?

☐ Candidate 1

☐ Candidate 2

Independent of your choice, how would you rate each of the candidates described above? Please rank each candidate overall on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that you strongly disapprove of the candidate and 7 that you strongly approve of the candidate.

|             | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Candidate 1 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Candidate 2 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Next

Figure A2: Screenshot of a conjoint task.

## A4 Selection of issues for the conjoint experiment

### A4.1 Most important issue perceptions

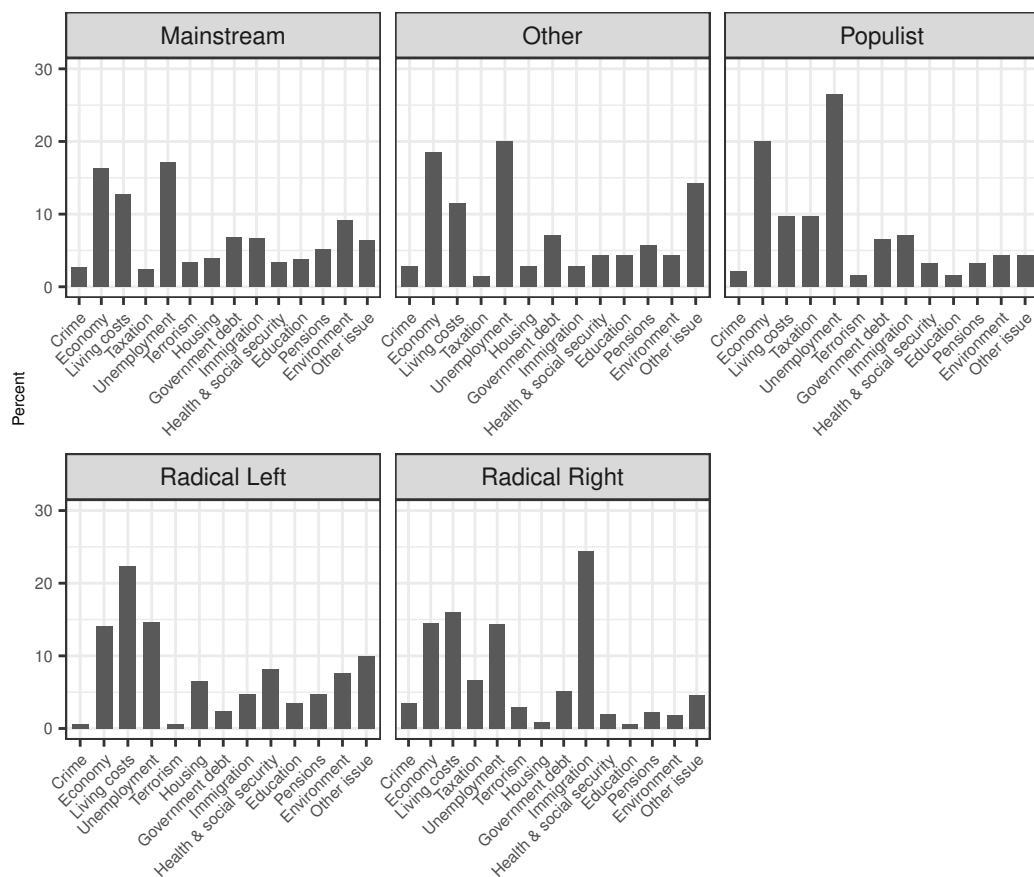


Figure A3: Most important issue perceptions by party family.

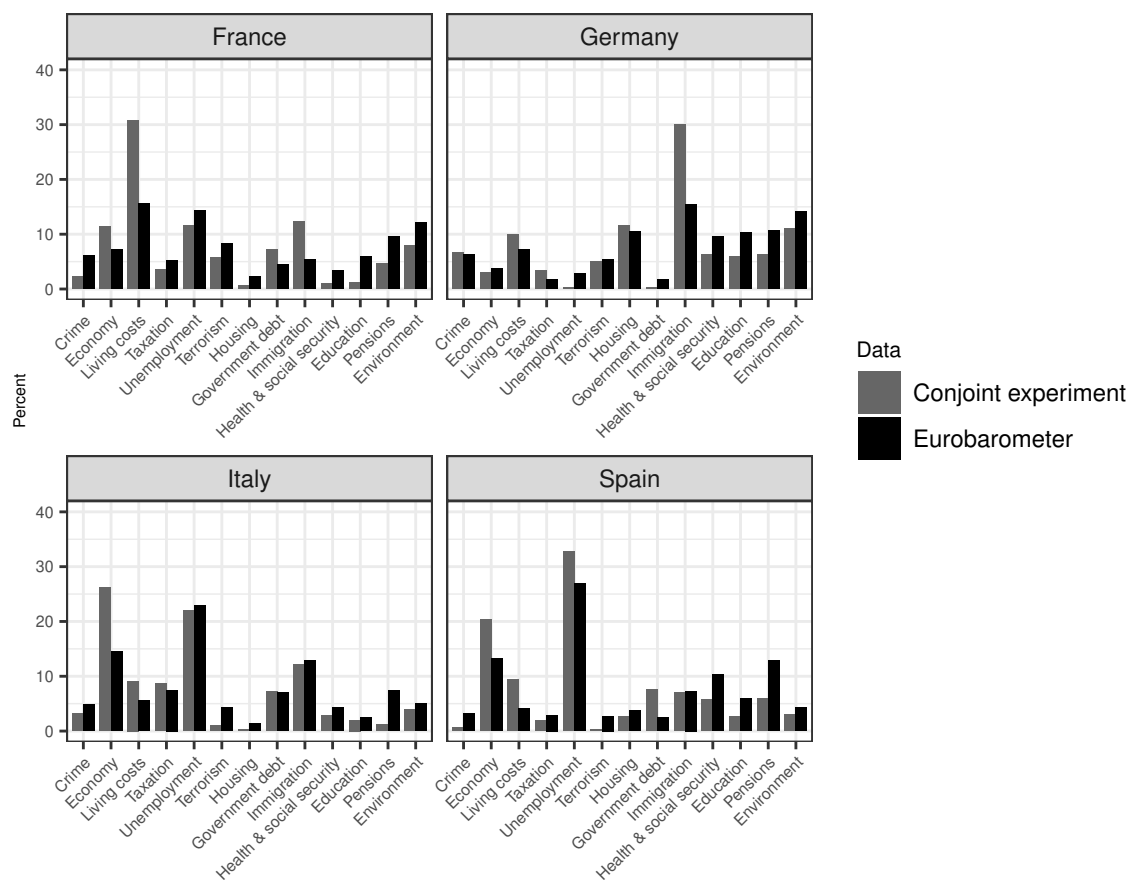


Figure A4: Most important issue perceptions by study participants compared to the same survey items in Eurobarometer, March 2019 (European Commission 2019).

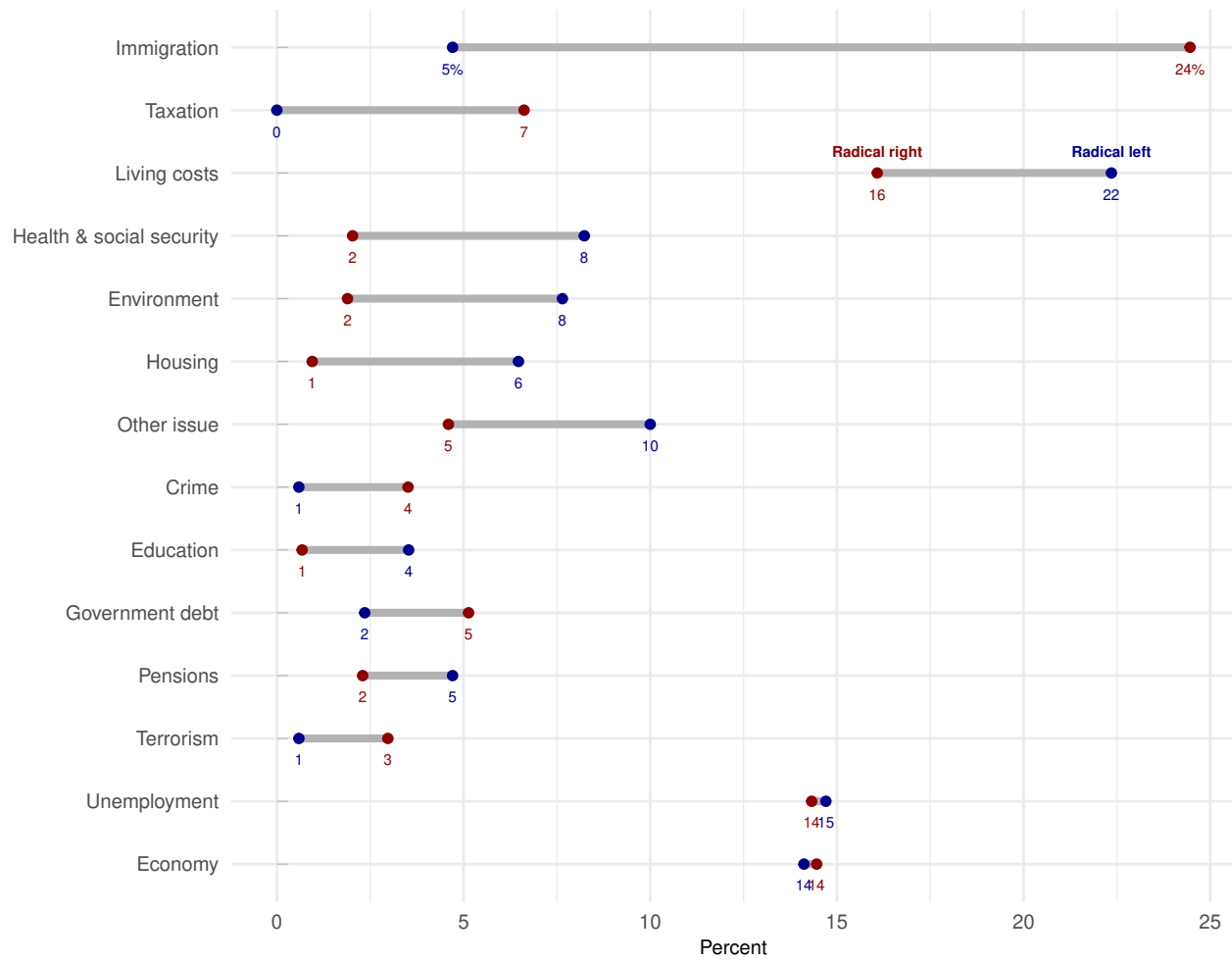


Figure A5: Gap in most important issue perceptions between radical left (blue) vs. radical right (red) voters. Sorted in decreasing order by the size of the gap between the groups.



Figure A6: Free text responses for 10 most important issues facing the country. Ordered by decreasing issue importance.

## A4.2 Issue positions in party programs

For identifying issue positions, the recent party programs either for national or European elections (depending on the availability per party and the level of detail of each program) were analyzed. Summaries of party positions related to the levels in the conjoint experiment are shown in Table A6. More detailed data including verbatim quotes from the party programs and English translations can be found on [OSF](#).

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs.

| Family       | Party   | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change   | EU   | Populism  |
|--------------|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Radical Left | La France In-soumise ( <a href="#">Source</a> ) | Give migrants the means for their integration and successful acculturation through a new policy for issuing residence permits and provide the recognition of their citizen participation by granting the right to vote in local elections. | Guarantee the effective right to housing. Prohibit rental evictions without rehousing. Build 200,000 public housing units per year for 5 years to ecological standards. Set up a universal rental guarantee. Impose large real estate transactions with a progressive tax. | Introduce a kilometer tax at the borders of France, eliminate polluting tax loopholes, favor short circuits in public procurement. | It is time to demand that states' sovereignty over their budgets and economic policies be restored and guaranteed. Requisition the Banque de France to transform the euro into a common currency and no longer a single one. | The collusion between private, financial or industrial interests, and the oligarchy that has taken over our institutions, is absolutely manifest under Emmanuel Macron. A privileged caste, linked to the richest, believes they can escape democratic rules and equality between citizens. |
| Radical Left | Die Linke ( <a href="#">Source</a> )            | The party stands for "open borders for all people", Europe should not seal itself off. "Integration is not the responsibility of the individual", says the program, and there should be a "right to different life plans".                 | Due to the rising cost of living, especially energy costs, the Rent and the cost of public transport, DIE LINKE increases from the next nationwide election program their demand for a sanction-free minimum income of 150 euros to 1200 euros.                            | Start the democratization of the energy industry, promote the participation of citizens and contribute to reducing CO2.            | We want a European Union with a strong European Parliament and transparent decision-making processes in all European institutions and more direct participation by citizens.   | We are and will not be like those parties that submissively submit to the wishes of the economically powerful. That is precisely why parties can hardly be distinguished from one another. The current agenda is directed against the interests of the majority of the people.              |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family       | Party  | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change   | EU  | Populism   |
|--------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Radical Left | Potere al Popolo<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> ) | We are moving to defend the rights of all challenged by the austerity processes, to defend the conditions of the rights and wages of the exploited, whether Italian or foreign.  | We propose a "no tax area" up to 15,000 euros and a reduction in taxes for those who earn up to 35,000 euros per year and for workers forced to open VAT numbers!  | With the money recovered, create 750,000 jobs to initiate an ecological transition, eliminate CO2 emissions, secure and reclaim territories, produce sustainable energy, enhance education, sport, research, culture and health. |   | The problem is that this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few rich people who fill their pockets more and more every year. If we divided it for each citizen and each citizen, including infants, each of us would have € 161,416! |
| Radical Left | Liberi e Uguali<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> )  |  | First the public, the common goods, the sociality, the collective interests; not the private sector, the market, individualism.  |  | It is necessary to review the institutional framework to strengthen the political powers of the Union and reduce those that have coagulated around the intergovernmental method.                      | By spiking classes, centralizing wealth and power as never before... it is in the attempt by the ruling classes to undermine representative democracy and the social achievements achieved.  |
| Radical Left | Podemos<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> )          | It is necessary to give priority to the concept of citizenship and to move towards a practice of European citizenship. Access to rights and duties should not be based on nationality, but on the condition of person and their right to migrate; that is, to freely determine their place of residence. | Regular distribution of basic supplies when it is not possible to have a grocery store, for which public aid lines will be established; at least one ATM within a 20 kilometer radius, financed through a canon to the banking sector for financial inclusion and managed by Bankia. | We cannot allow the benefits of a minority to endanger our planet.   | The institutions of the European Union with democratic legitimacy are the ones that should have the last word. That is why we have to strengthen Parliament vis-à-vis the Commission and the Council. | We have to turn the economy around and put it at the service of the interests of the social majority. Social protection for all, and fights for fiscal justice and against tax evasion by the rich.  |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family          | Party                                    | Immigration                                 | Redistribution   | Climate change  | EU   | Populism   |
|-----------------|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Radical<br>Left | En<br>Comú<br>Podem<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | Guarantee the right to<br>vote of migrants. | Benefit for<br>unemployment and<br>coverage of gaps in<br>contribution. Reform<br>the pension system by<br>guarantee decent<br>pensions for all. | Climate change can be<br>seen as an example<br>paradigm of distributive<br>ecological conflict, in<br>which a global minority<br>appropriates a few<br>common resources, in<br>this case reserves of<br>fossil fuels or the<br>atmosphere of the our<br>planet, benefiting<br>economically its<br>exploitation and leaving<br>for a majority the<br>environmental liabilities<br>generated in the<br>process. | Profoundly change the<br>architecture<br>institutional so that the<br>EU and EMU have a<br>non-subordinate<br>democratic governance<br>to intergovernmental<br>logics. However, we do<br>not understand by<br>democratic economic<br>government proposals<br>to reduce the margin of<br>maneuver (a neoliberal<br>corset) of EU member<br>states transferring<br>sovereignty a devices<br>not democratically<br>legitimized by to govern<br>the economy. | On the other hand,<br>business profits, which<br>they have not stopped<br>growing during the<br>years of crisis, are<br>occurring on a cut<br>unprecedented salary,<br>passing on the cost of<br>the crisis to people who<br>have not been the<br>responsible, making a<br>reversal necessary of<br>this process for reasons<br>of social justice. |



Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family        | Party  | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change  | EU  | Populism  |
|---------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| Radical Right | Rassemblement national<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> ) | Restore national borders and leave the Schengen area (a system especially for frontier workers will be set up to facilitate their border crossing) (point 24). Make it impossible to regularize or naturalize foreigners in a situation illegal. Simplify and automate their eviction. | Immediately reduce regulated gas and electricity prices by 5%. Ensure a fair tax contribution, by refusing any increase in VAT and the CSG and maintaining the ISF. Reduce household housing expenditure through a major plan to help build and rehabilitate housing, by lowering the housing tax for the poorest and freezing its increase, and by ensuring the sustainability of APLs. | Massively develop the French renewable energy sectors (solar, biogas, wood, etc.) thanks to intelligent protectionism and patriotism economy, public and private investment and at the helm of EDF. | The French have shown that they remain committed to the single currency. The absence of a national currency, the immediate control lever lies in monetary governance, which poses concretely the question of independence of the ECB. | The European elites have surrendered Europe to the forces of a fictitious world market, in which public or private powers, states or multinationals, use every means to make their power interests prevail, without adhering to any common principles, without sharing anything with peoples who are foreign to them. |
| Radical Right | Debout la France<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> )       | Restore border control (end of the Schengen system) and recruit 10,000 air and border police. Abolish regularization for private and family life: an illegal immigrant must no longer be regularized.  | Reduce the period allowing exemption from tax on capital gains and real estate contributions to 10 years. Today, the real estate capital gain is exempt after 22 years. Eliminate transfer taxes (5.8% reduction in purchase prices) for the first purchase of a home in order to encourage first-time home ownership.   | Create a regional counter on green taxation in order to guide the French people lost in the thick of subsidies and tax breaks.  | Replace the European Union by a Community of European States. Transform the Union or take back our freedom. Immediately stop all negotiations for the enlargement of the European Union.  | Eliminate the privileges and undue advantages of former presidents, prime ministers and ministers, and elected officials in general. Eliminate the accumulation of remuneration for elected officials.  |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family           | Party                    | Immigration   | Redistribution   | Climate change  | EU   | Populism  |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Radical<br>Right | AfD<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | Withdrawal from all immigration agreements, merciless deportation, remigration programs, EU external border controls and national border controls; life in Germany should also be made more difficult for EU nationals. | The party wants to reduce subsidies, limit taxes, inheritance and property taxes are to be abolished, and value added tax is to be lowered "by seven percent". State consumption is also expected to decrease. | We doubt, for good reasons, that humans have significantly influenced or could even control recent climate change, especially current warming. Climate protection policy is therefore a mistake. The world food harvests have increased significantly, not least due to the increasing proportion of CO2 in the atmosphere. | Abolish the EU Parliament and give member states more sovereignty, reintroduce national currencies. Should our fundamental reform approaches in the existing system of the EU not be realized in a reasonable time, we will consider Germany's exit or an orderly dissolution of the European Union and the establishment of a new European writs. | The secret sovereign in Germany is a small one powerful political oligarchy residing in the existing formed political parties. This oligarchy has the controls of the state power, political education and the informational and media influence on the population. The constant violation of the principles of the German Statehood culminate in the federal government's refugee policy from CDU/CSU and SPD. |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family        | Party                     | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change  | EU  | Populism |
|---------------|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|----------|
| Radical Right | Lega<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | Prepare a list of countries deemed safe as a limit to the acceptance of applications for international protection. Revoke the resolution of the former Minister Alfano which grants the right to issue the identity card to migrants, to allow them to access the assistance of individual municipalities. | Quick and transparent allocation of vacant housing (social housing) and agreements with police headquarters and prefectures for the control of assets. | It is necessary to strengthen the actions currently considered at the national level to combat change climate and for the transition to more sustainable models of economy and management of renewable resources. | We want to remain within the European Union only on the condition that we re-discuss all the Treaties that place constraints on the exercise of our full and legitimate sovereignty, effectively returning to the European Economic Community prior to the Maastrich Treaty. The euro is the main cause of our economic decline, a currency tailored to Germany and multinationals and contrary to the needs of Italy and small businesses. |          |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family           | Party  | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change | EU  | Populism   |
|------------------|--|--|--|----------------|---|--|
| Radical<br>Right | Fratelli<br>d'Italia<br>( <a href="#">Source</a> ) | Border control and<br>naval blockade with<br>immediate repatriation<br>following agreements<br>with the northern<br>states Africa.<br>Expulsion of illegal<br>immigrants and stop<br>the hospitality business. | Reform of the tax<br>dispute with<br>cancellation of the<br>aberration of the<br>reversal of the burden<br>of proof. Fight against<br>tax evasion starting<br>with that of large<br>companies and banks.<br>Flat tax immediately at<br>15% for families and<br>businesses on<br>incremental income<br>compared to the<br>previous year and<br>subsequently for the<br>entire income produced.<br>House plan to face the<br>housing emergency with<br>a social loan and rent<br>to own. |                | Defense of our national<br>sovereignty.<br>Re-discussion of all EU<br>treaties starting with<br>the fiscal compact and<br>the euro. More politics<br>and less bureaucracy in<br>Europe. Supremacy<br>clause in the<br>Constitution to block<br>agreements and<br>directives harmful to<br>Italy starting with the<br>Bolkestein and the<br>Dublin Regulation. | Presidential reform of<br>the Republic with<br>direct election of the<br>head of state or<br>government. Federalism<br>responsible; adaptation<br>of the powers, resources<br>and assets of Roma<br>Capitale to the<br>standards of main<br>European capitals;<br>strengthening and<br>enhancement of local<br>autonomies and the<br>powers of the Mayors.<br>Anti-turncoat and<br>anti-turnaround<br>mandate constraint.<br>Overcoming of perfect<br>bicameralism and<br>reduction the number<br>of parliamentarians. |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family        | Party                            | Immigration  | Redistribution  | Climate change   | EU   | Populism   |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Radical Right | Vox<br>( <i>Source</i> )         | Eliminate the institution of arraigo as a way to regulate illegal immigration.<br>Revocation of express gateways to acquire Spanish nationality.<br>Strengthen our borders.<br>Build an insurmountable wall in Ceuta and Melilla. Give the police and armed forces all the material and human resources so that they can take care of our borders with total efficiency, together with the corresponding legal protection. | Radical reduction of the Income Tax.<br>Significant increase in the minimum personal and family exemption to 12,000 euros.<br>Reduction of the general rate of Corporate Tax to 20% with a reduction of 5% in the event that profits are not distributed and are kept in the company as reserves. | Applying the environmental concept of “polluter pays” should be applied to all industrial, mining or energy installations.   | Reduction of European political spending, eliminating duplications and agencies that interfere with national sovereignty. Exclusivity of the State, in what refers to international relations.   | The citizens, overwhelmed by the political, economic, social and national crisis want to eliminate the unbearable party that ruins and debases us. They demand to have another healthy country and, in their indignation, they want to directly elect other politicians. |
| Main-stream   | CDU/<br>CSU<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | Whoever needs protection receives it.<br>Asylum procedures are to be bundled in the AnKER centers. In addition to the BAMF, the federal states be present with administrative judges and immigration offices. Expand the list of safe countries of origin. We bundle the various measures for integration in a strategy based on the principle “Demand and support”.   | We will gradually abolish the solidarity tax. We will reduce the contribution rate to unemployment insurance by 0.3 percentage points.<br>Low-income earners will be relieved of all social contributions.  | More money for combined heat and power (CHP). The promotion of the environmentally friendly CHP - which generates electricity and heat from gas - will amount to 1.5 billion euros doubled per year. This helps reduce CO2 emissions by 4 million tons annually. | We want to give the EU Parliament the opportunity to introduce its own laws. Regional, national and European interests must not be at odds with each other. We want to expand European cooperation in expand European cooperation in border regions. | Which values must guide us in the next ten years so that by 2030 we will live in a Germany in which the state is there for its citizens and the citizens are committed to their fellow human beings and the state.   |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family      | Party                      | Immigration   | Redistribution  | Climate change  | EU  | Populism   |
|-------------|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Main-stream | SPD<br>( <i>Source</i> )   | States that take in refugees should receive support, for example for the expansion of community facilities, schools or medical care. The external borders must be better protected against illegal border crossings.  | Improve rent controls, regularly adjust the amount of housing benefit, purchase of residential property for Families with low and middle incomes should be made easier by a socially graded family building allowance.                                      | An SPD-led federal government is the dialogue with companies, trade unions and the Employees in the affected sectors. Because we know that social, economic and ecological questions not individually, but only under consideration the mutual dependencies can be answered successfully. | Right of initiative of the European Parliament. Investigation and control right of the European Parliament. This paralyzes Europe's ability to act. In future, it should no longer be possible for individual member states to block important legislation. |  |
| Main-stream | Grüne<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | European immigration law that enables legal migration, strengthening the rights and interests of (labor) migrants and protecting them from exploitation, supporting a European integration fund for municipalities and regions, uniform European asylum system with a fair and solidarity distribution mechanism, organized and financed at European level civil sea rescue system. | We want to promote a broad social debate and focus on questions ranging from the introduction of an unconditional basic income that enables social participation to the question of a tax on added value and institutional reforms of the security systems. | The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our generation. It is high time that the EU finally geared its climate policy to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.  | Strengthening the European Parliament, the EP's own full right of initiative for European legislation, discussion of union models such as the United States of Europe, the federal state or the European Republic.  | Are politicians capitulating to the challenges of globalization and thus exacerbating the many crises? Or is the European Union powerfully re-establishing itself? We are sure that only Europe is capable of acting and solve the major challenges. |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family      | Party   | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change  | EU  | Populism   |
|-------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Main-stream | Europe<br>Écolo-<br>gie Les<br>Verts<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | Offer elderly immigrant workers and their spouses a specific accommodation, listening, improvement and monitoring system for pension rights. | We must facilitate access to long-term housing by building 12,000 new social housing units per year for young people and developing installation assistance. Faced with the shortage, we will build 500,000 housing units per year, including 160,000 social housing units. Priority will be given to the most social housing, with the construction of at least 30,000 family PLAI (assisted rental loans) and by limiting PLS (social rental loan) approvals to 10%. | Regulatory systems (reduction of speed limits and vehicle power, standards on polluting emissions) must be strengthened and accompanied by pricing incentives (bonus-malus, climate-energy taxation, etc.). | The Council of the European Union will be redefined as a true second chamber representing the States (or sub-national groups depending on the specific organization of the different regions of the Union), its members having to be persons identifiable by citizens, dedicated exclusively to this mission and sitting full time. Each State determines the mode of appointment of its members. | Citizen democracy at the center of democratic values instead of technocracy or populism. |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family      | Party   | Immigration   | Redistribution  | Climate change  | EU   | Populism |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|--|----------|
| Main-stream | La République En Marche!<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | We will propose to our partners to strengthen the European border police force, by giving it a capacity for lasting surveillance and protection of the external borders.  | We must free the French from tax by having much more efficient public spending". The mandatory reductions in levies will be distributed in a balanced manner between businesses and households, exemption from housing tax for 80% of French people, reinstatement of exemptions on overtime, option for individualization of the IR. | We will integrate the ecological cost into the carbon price, by ramping up the carbon tax to reach € 100 / tCO2 in 2030. In order to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to put an end to the tax advantage granted to diesel, ecological taxation will be increased by 12.5 billion euros (7.5 on the carbon component, 5 on diesel / petrol convergence). | We will propose to create a post of Minister of Economy and Finance of the euro zone, who will be responsible for the budget of the euro zone, under the control of a Parliament of the euro zone, bringing together the European parliamentarians of the member states. |          |
| Main-stream | Les Républicains<br>( <i>Source</i> )         | If you enter our territory illegally, you have no chance of obtaining a residence permit. Limit legal immigration according to our integration capacities. Expel illegal immigrants, delinquents and criminals. | Our proposals to reduce public spending by 20 billion euros per year. Lower the state's standard of living by rationalizing the public real estate stock. Reduce public funding for unions to reach the European average.   | A massive sign of environmental taxation is necessary.  | Some states members should finally be able to "go further" and no longer be "blocked" by others; especially in the context health and economic emergency and recovery. Oppose any enlargement of the EU.   |          |



Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family      | Party   | Immigration   | Redistribution  | Climate change   | EU   | Populism |
|-------------|---|---|---|--|--|----------|
| Main-stream | Partito Democratico (PD) ( <a href="#">Source</a> ) | An end to the Dublin regulation and automatic redistribution of people seeking asylum via quota to other European countries. Expand citizenship rights for children born and raised in Italy. | Part of the inclusion income (REI), the first national and universal measure to combat poverty set up by a government in our country. The amount of the REI reaches a maximum of 534 euros per month. | We need to accelerate the decarbonisation process and build renewable energy plants, speeding up authorization times and procedures; improve the energy efficiency of our public and private buildings also through the extension of the superbonus. | Should EU countries be allowed to reintroduce border controls within the Schengen area? No. Should there be a European authority empowered to enforce fiscal compliance? Yes. Should a majority of national parliaments get the power to veto EU legislation? Yes. |          |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family      | Party   | Immigration  | Redistribution  | Climate change   | EU   | Populism   |
|-------------|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Main-stream | Europa/<br>Radi-<br>cali<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | The EU should make migration agreements with safe countries in the Middle East and Africa. These agreements consist of three elements. First, the EU commits to financially support safe countries in hosting refugees. Second, the EU will work to facilitate the resettlement of refugees in a safe, humane, and legal way. Third, we must ensure the return to these safe countries of those migrants for whom, as quick as possible, an effective return decision following due judicial process has entered into force. | To create jobs, we need to work together. The time has come to imagine a truly European labor market and welfare, with common rules and protection tools but above all with a common goal: to break down cultural, linguistic and administrative barriers to reward commitment, preparation and the desire to do. | It is essential that the Union focuses on a range of new measures and requires all CO2 producing companies and activities to have constant availability of data on their emissions. European guidelines should be launched to encourage voluntary carbon markets at local level between companies producing emissions and companies capable of fixing biomass. | Political integration, or the building of a European federal union, must be pursued with a model that allows a redistribution of powers, a transition initiated by the member states and legitimized through a founding pact that establishes the constitutional structure of the European federal Union as a prerequisite for the modification of national constitutions in a process of federal unification. | Europe is the political force that aims to work to defend and improve the lives of citizens, a defense of their rights and freedoms. Be with us the political movement that defends the European Union of today and builds that of tomorrow! |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. *(continued)*

| Family      | Party                   | Immigration  | Redistribution   | Climate change   | EU  | Populism  |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| Main-stream | PP<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | We will promote a legal immigration policy, orderly and linked to the labor market. The struggle against illegal immigration mafias will be a priority based on cooperation with countries of origin and in the rejection at the border. We will expand the treaties international return and expulsion of immigrants irregular. We will promote the deployment of FRONTEX for border control. | We will promote the Universal Social Card, which will include all content features economic managed by bodies and agencies of the General State Administration, Communities Autonomous and Local Entities. | We defend an energy mix that allows us to the objectives of security of supply, climate change and energy price. This requires making the most of renewable options that are already competitive, but without giving up other technologies that are still useful to our country. To do this, we will promote the approval of a State Pact to establish an energy mix stable at 40 years that gives certainty to the sector and consumer. | We will strengthen the role of Spain and defend the interests of our country in the face of the challenges Union will have to cope in the coming years. | The political failures of the current government - the draft law on Budgets and the investiture of the President of the Government - have become two institutional blockades. During all these months the Popular Party has acted with responsibility and consistency. We have offered dialogue without exclusions to try unblock the political situation and solutions to ensure governance. |

Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs. (*continued*)

| Family      | Party                     | Immigration   | Redistribution  | Climate change  | EU  | Populism |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Main-stream | PSOE<br>( <i>Source</i> ) | We will promote positive actions in relation to immigrant women and refugees in situations of particular vulnerability, such as single women with family charges. We will improve administrative procedures to streamline concessions and renewals of authorizations, especially those of roots and family reunification. | We will move towards establishing a Minimum Living Income as basis of freedom and the rights of all people. The tax reform will allow Spain to overcome the anomaly of the low taxation of large corporations, as well as the sector financial and large technology companies, and insufficient and ineffective environmental taxation, to align ourselves with the measures already adopted. | It will be established the obligation to prepare every 5 years, Budgets of Carbon, broken down by sector, to make visible the contribution of each sector to reduce emissions. Mechanisms will be established monitoring to promote citizen participation and the involvement of all administrations. | We will promote the political dimension of the European project from the conviction that this project will only be strong from an authentic political integration among member countries. |          |

### A4.3 Issue salience in political parties' Facebook posts

To investigate the salience of the issues included in the conjoint among political parties, we used CrowdTangle<sup>1</sup> to collect the Facebook posts posted in 2019 from 66 accounts of the most important national parties and their leaders. We defined concise keyword lists for each of the topics used in the conjoint experiment in each language (e.g., Spanish keywords for immigration: *asil, migra, refug, fronter, extranj*). Figure A7 shows the share of posts from the major parties in each country that contained at least one of the search strings defined for each topic. In general, the figure provides solid evidence for issue ownership theory and reveals considerable overlaps with the issue priorities of each party's voters (Figure A3). The chosen issues also covered the overall universe of posts in France and Germany well, whereas a lower share of posts featured the relevant keywords in Italy and Spain.

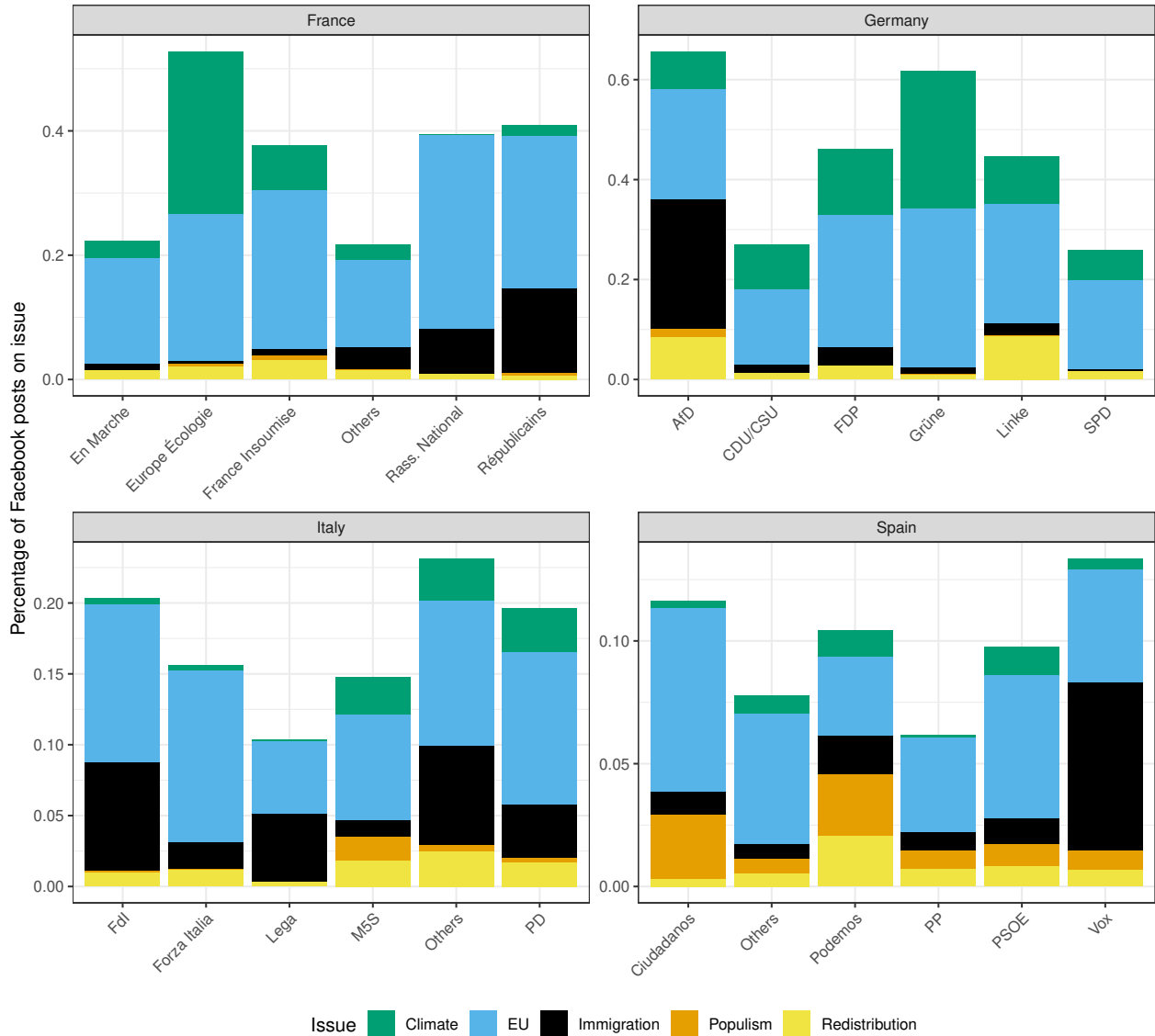


Figure A7: Salience of relevant issues in parties' Facebook posts.}

<sup>1</sup><https://www.crowdtangle.com>

## A5 Regression tables

Table A7: Estimates of a linear regression model for radical left voters.

| Issue proposal  | Unweighted |           |       | Weighted |           |       |
|---|------------|-----------|-------|----------|-----------|-------|
|   | Estimate   | Std.Error | z     | Estimate | Std.Error | z     |
| Introduce controls at [country] border to prevent illegal immigration         | 0.50       | 0.02      | 0.14  | 0.52     | 0.02      | 0.89  |
| Keep current immigration policy   | 0.52       | 0.02      | 1.16  | 0.50     | 0.02      | 0.26  |
| Remove restrictions on immigration  | 0.48       | 0.02      | -1.29 | 0.48     | 0.02      | -1.34 |
| Individuals instead of the state should provide for their staples and housing | 0.36       | 0.02      | -8.36 | 0.37     | 0.02      | -7.70 |
| Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing                          | 0.56       | 0.01      | 4.66  | 0.55     | 0.02      | 2.70  |
| The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing                    | 0.57       | 0.01      | 4.68  | 0.58     | 0.02      | 4.12  |
| There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                      | 0.38       | 0.01      | -8.05 | 0.39     | 0.01      | -7.95 |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations  | 0.58       | 0.01      | 5.92  | 0.58     | 0.02      | 5.06  |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations and citizens                             | 0.53       | 0.01      | 2.05  | 0.53     | 0.02      | 1.74  |
| Leave the common currency Euro  | 0.45       | 0.02      | -2.81 | 0.46     | 0.02      | -1.89 |
| Keep the EU institutions like they are  | 0.53       | 0.01      | 1.81  | 0.53     | 0.02      | 1.35  |
| Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU                  | 0.52       | 0.02      | 1.35  | 0.51     | 0.02      | 0.51  |
| Because corrupt elites do not represent the real people                       | 0.52       | 0.02      | 1.09  | 0.53     | 0.02      | 1.72  |
| To participate in policymaking  | 0.52       | 0.01      | 1.86  | 0.52     | 0.01      | 1.29  |
| To continue to serve the government   | 0.46       | 0.01      | -3.05 | 0.45     | 0.02      | -3.22 |

Table A8: Estimates of a linear regression model for radical right voters.

| Issue proposal  | Unweighted |           |        | Weighted |           |        |
|---|------------|-----------|--------|----------|-----------|--------|
|   | Estimate   | Std.Error | z      | Estimate | Std.Error | z      |
| Introduce controls at [country] border to prevent illegal immigration         | 0.69       | 0.01      | 28.25  | 0.70     | 0.01      | 22.17  |
| Keep current immigration policy   | 0.47       | 0.01      | -3.95  | 0.46     | 0.01      | -4.09  |
| Remove restrictions on immigration  | 0.33       | 0.01      | -23.50 | 0.33     | 0.01      | -16.43 |
| Individuals instead of the state should provide for their staples and housing | 0.47       | 0.01      | -4.29  | 0.46     | 0.01      | -3.68  |
| Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing                          | 0.51       | 0.01      | 1.33   | 0.51     | 0.01      | 1.33   |
| The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing                    | 0.52       | 0.01      | 3.10   | 0.52     | 0.01      | 2.58   |
| There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                      | 0.46       | 0.01      | -5.75  | 0.46     | 0.01      | -4.12  |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations  | 0.53       | 0.01      | 4.82   | 0.53     | 0.01      | 3.55   |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations and citizens                             | 0.51       | 0.01      | 1.43   | 0.51     | 0.01      | 1.17   |
| Leave the common currency Euro  | 0.52       | 0.01      | 2.42   | 0.52     | 0.01      | 1.69   |
| Keep the EU institutions like they are  | 0.49       | 0.01      | -1.12  | 0.49     | 0.01      | -0.87  |
| Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU                  | 0.49       | 0.01      | -1.71  | 0.49     | 0.01      | -1.09  |
| Because corrupt elites do not represent the real people                       | 0.55       | 0.01      | 7.04   | 0.55     | 0.01      | 6.29   |
| To participate in policymaking  | 0.51       | 0.01      | 1.73   | 0.50     | 0.01      | 0.08   |
| To continue to serve the government   | 0.44       | 0.01      | -8.95  | 0.45     | 0.01      | -5.97  |

Table A9: Estimates of a linear regression model for mainstream party voters.

| Issue proposal  | Unweighted |           |        | Weighted |           |        |
|---|------------|-----------|--------|----------|-----------|--------|
|   | Estimate   | Std.Error | z      | Estimate | Std.Error | z      |
| Introduce controls at [country] border to prevent illegal immigration         | 0.56       | 0.01      | 8.00   | 0.56     | 0.01      | 5.86   |
| Keep current immigration policy   | 0.51       | 0.01      | 1.81   | 0.51     | 0.01      | 1.06   |
| Remove restrictions on immigration  | 0.43       | 0.01      | -9.75  | 0.43     | 0.01      | -7.08  |
| Individuals instead of the state should provide for their staples and housing | 0.43       | 0.01      | -9.13  | 0.42     | 0.01      | -9.51  |
| Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing                          | 0.53       | 0.01      | 4.69   | 0.55     | 0.01      | 5.63   |
| The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing                    | 0.54       | 0.01      | 5.35   | 0.53     | 0.01      | 3.40   |
| There is no need to reduce CO2 emissions                                      | 0.40       | 0.01      | -14.68 | 0.40     | 0.01      | -10.58 |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations  | 0.56       | 0.01      | 10.17  | 0.56     | 0.01      | 7.23   |
| Introduce a CO2 tax for corporations and citizens                             | 0.54       | 0.01      | 5.34   | 0.54     | 0.01      | 4.28   |
| Leave the common currency Euro  | 0.36       | 0.01      | -18.76 | 0.36     | 0.01      | -14.30 |
| Keep the EU institutions like they are  | 0.57       | 0.01      | 9.86   | 0.57     | 0.01      | 7.06   |
| Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU                  | 0.57       | 0.01      | 10.20  | 0.57     | 0.01      | 8.13   |
| Because corrupt elites do not represent the real people                       | 0.51       | 0.01      | 2.03   | 0.52     | 0.01      | 1.98   |
| To participate in policymaking  | 0.51       | 0.01      | 1.17   | 0.52     | 0.01      | 2.08   |
| To continue to serve the government   | 0.48       | 0.01      | -3.06  | 0.47     | 0.01      | -3.57  |



## A6 Effect heterogeneity and additional results

### A6.1 Preferences by country

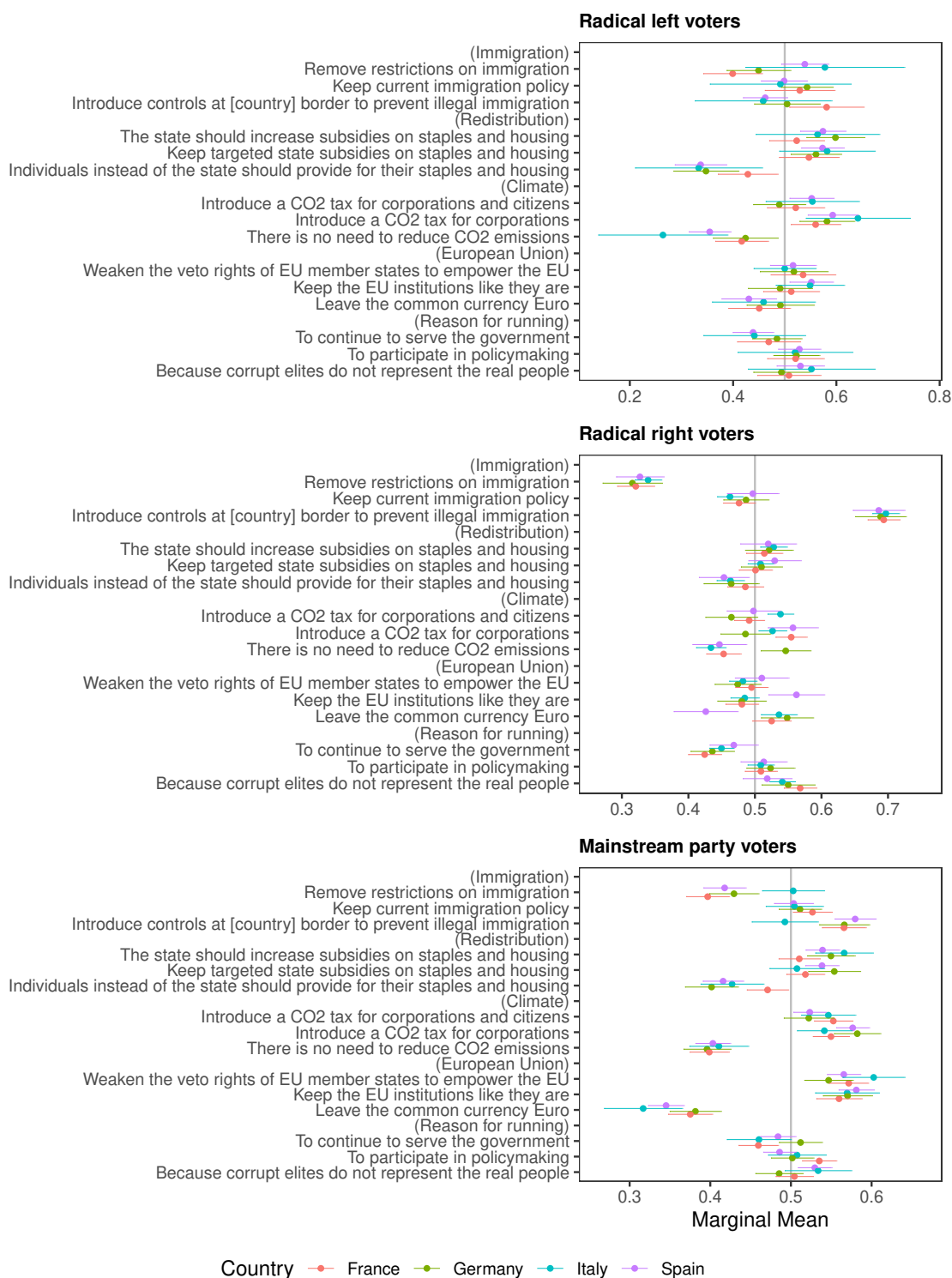


Figure A8: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by country.

## A6.2 Preferences by demographics

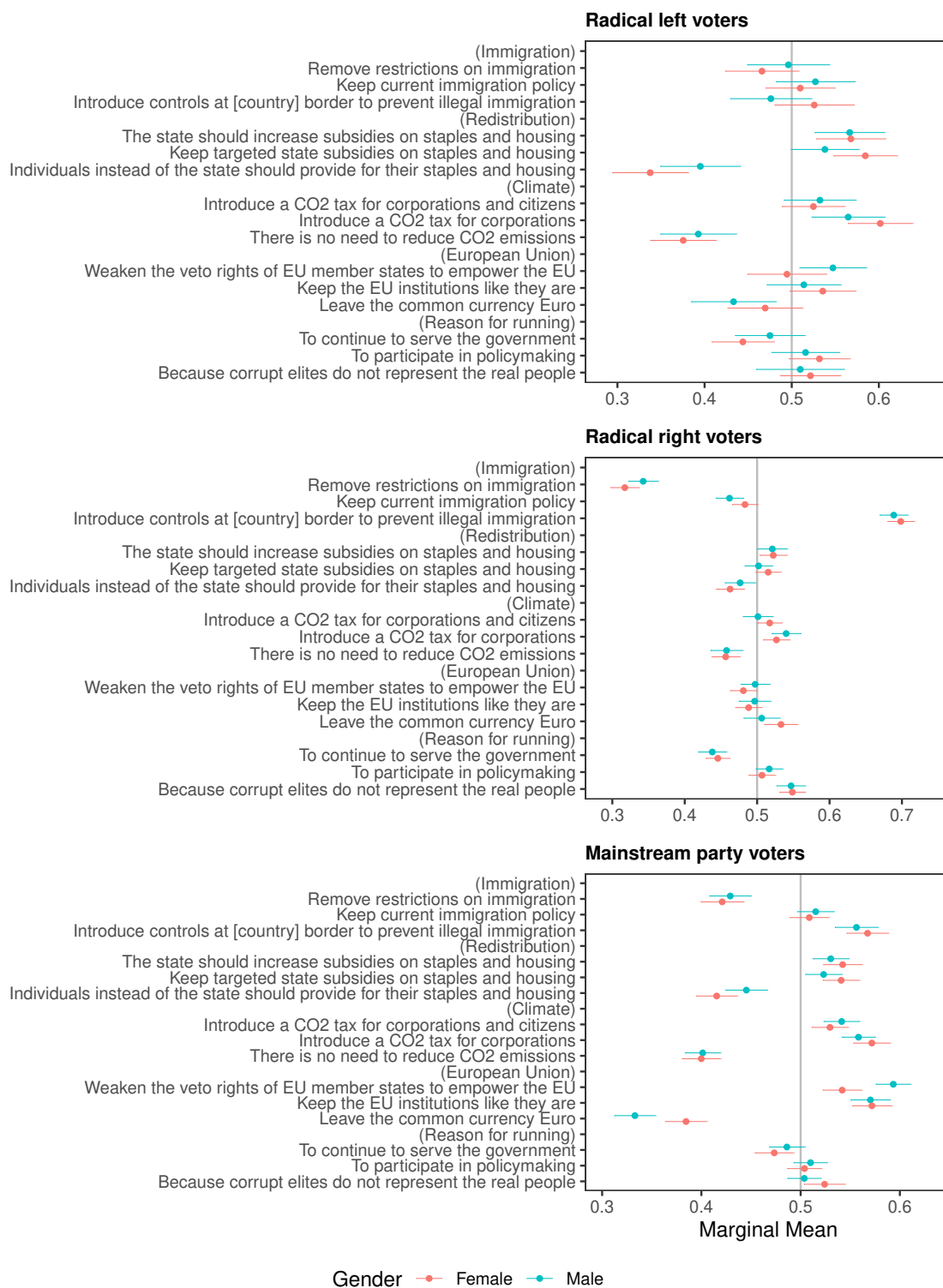


Figure A9: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by gender.

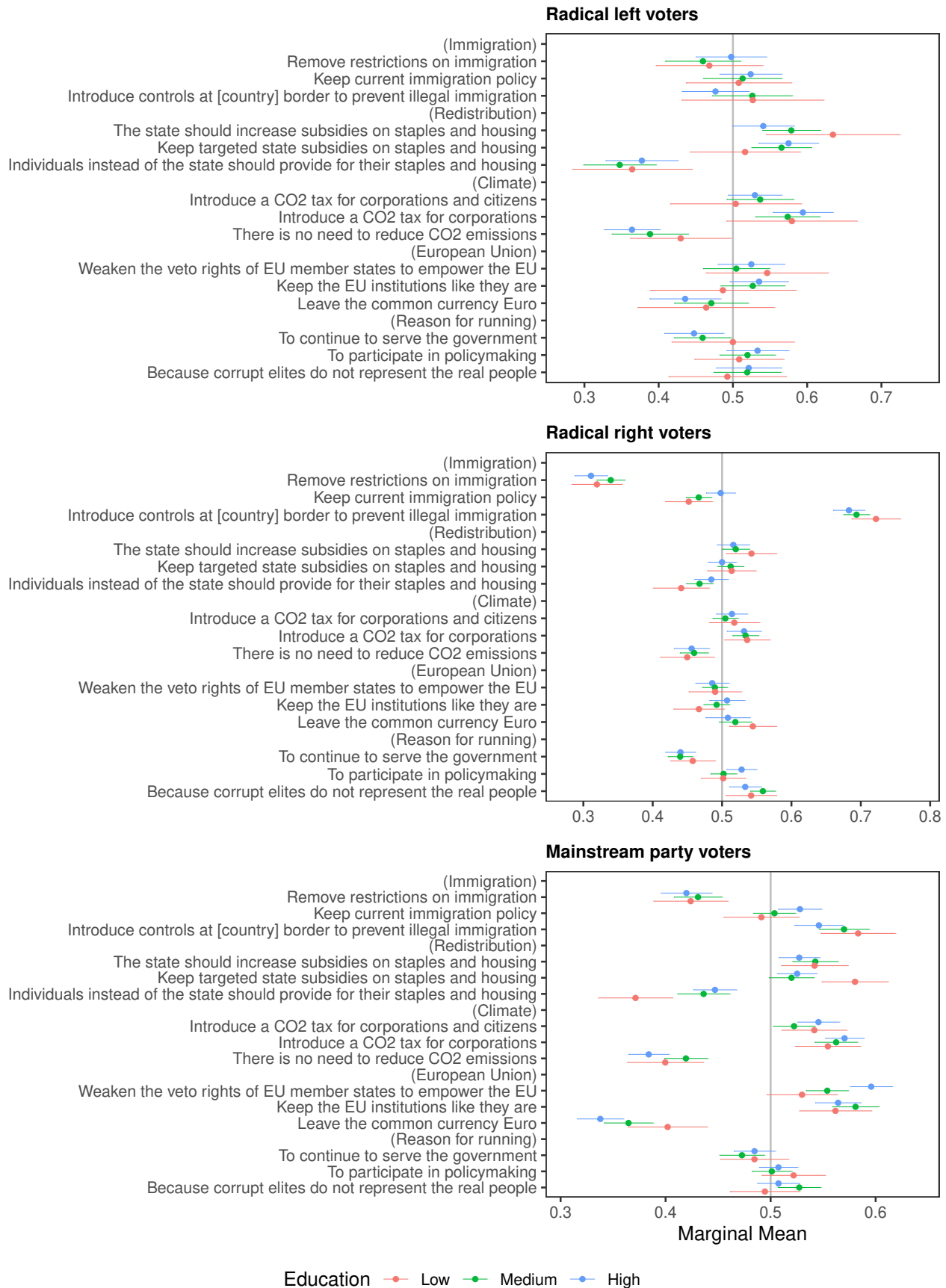


Figure A10: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by education.

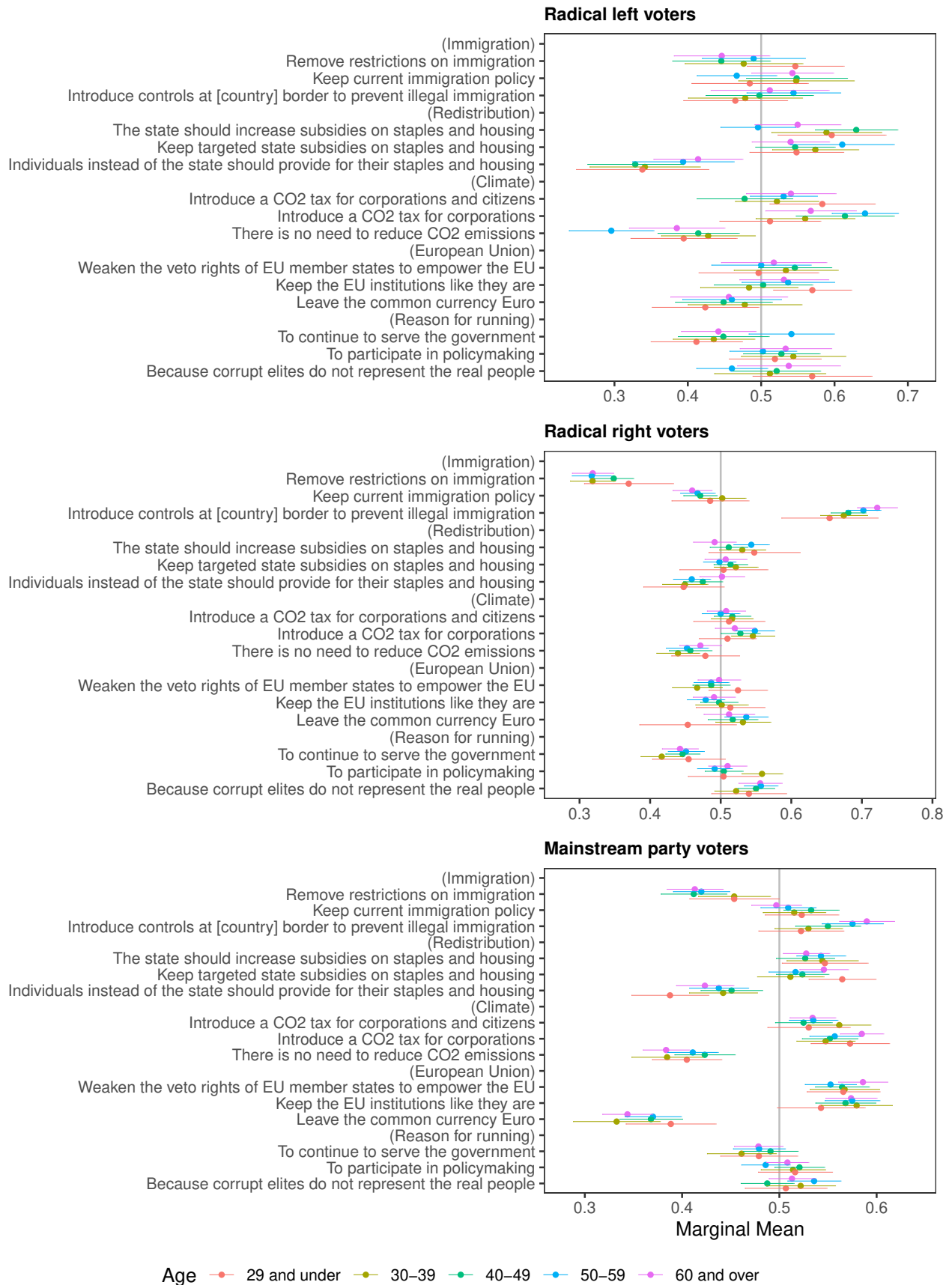


Figure A11: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by age.

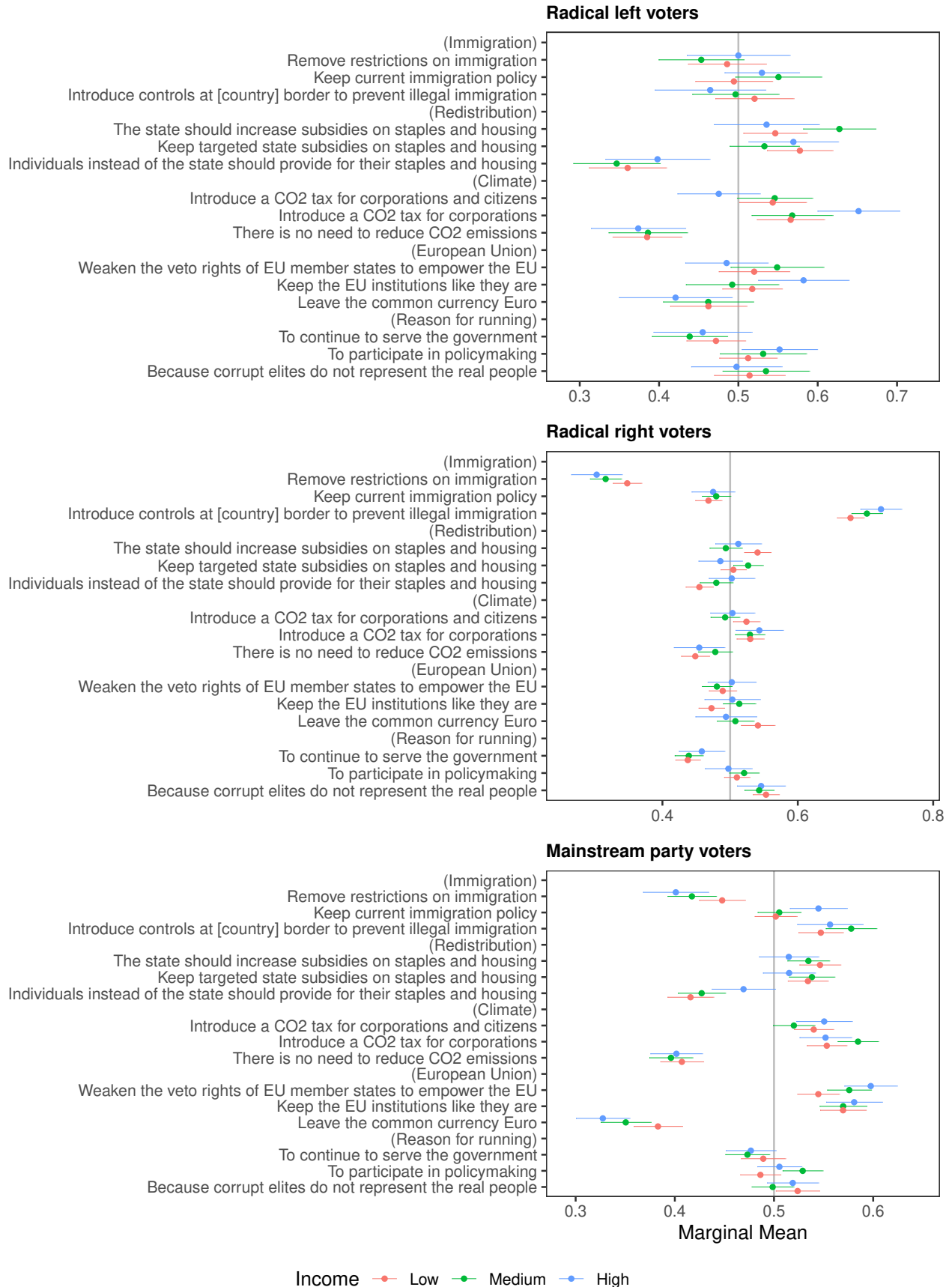


Figure A12: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by income.

### A6.3 Consistent vs. inconsistent voters

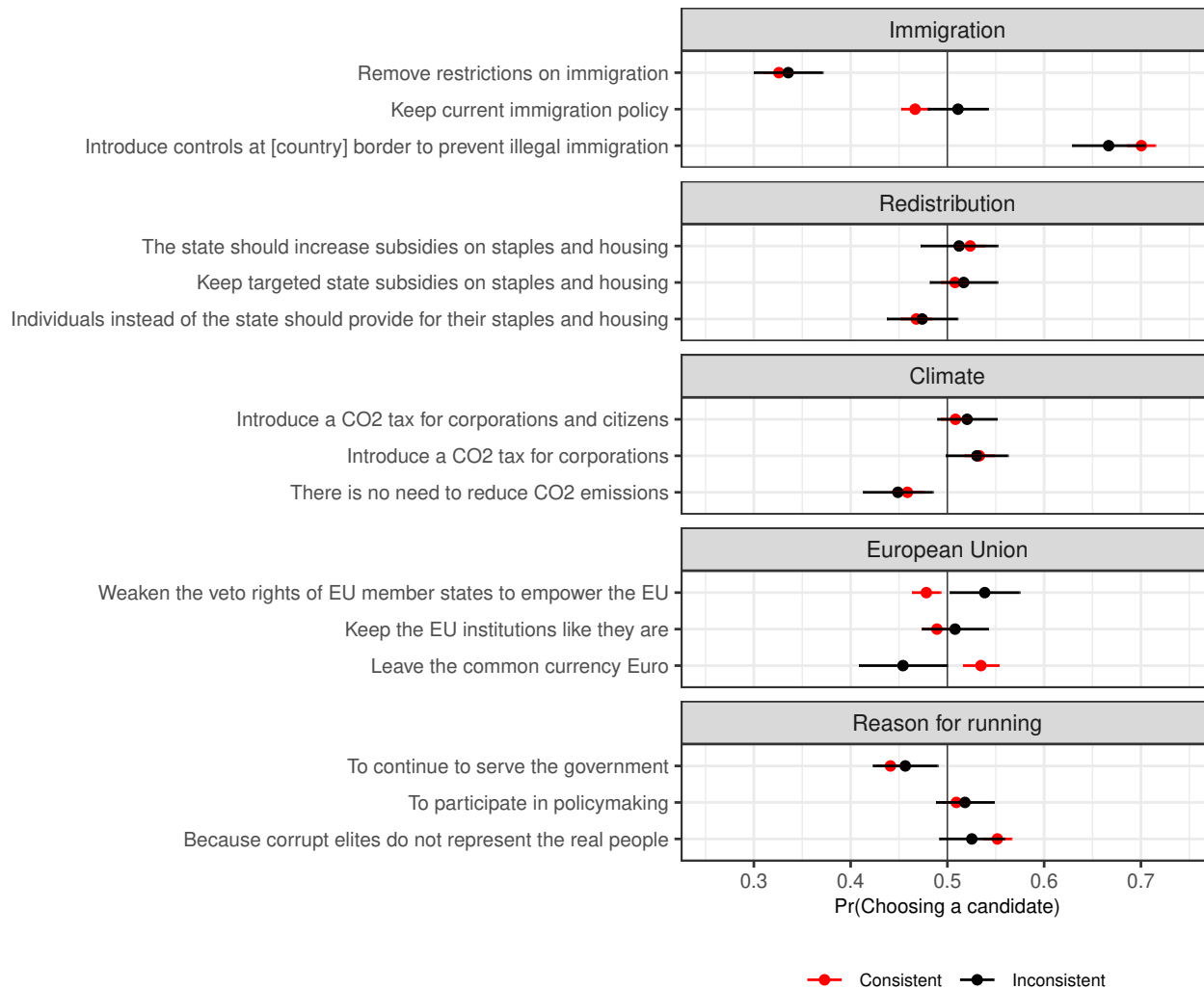


Figure A13: Consistent vs. inconsistent radical right voters.

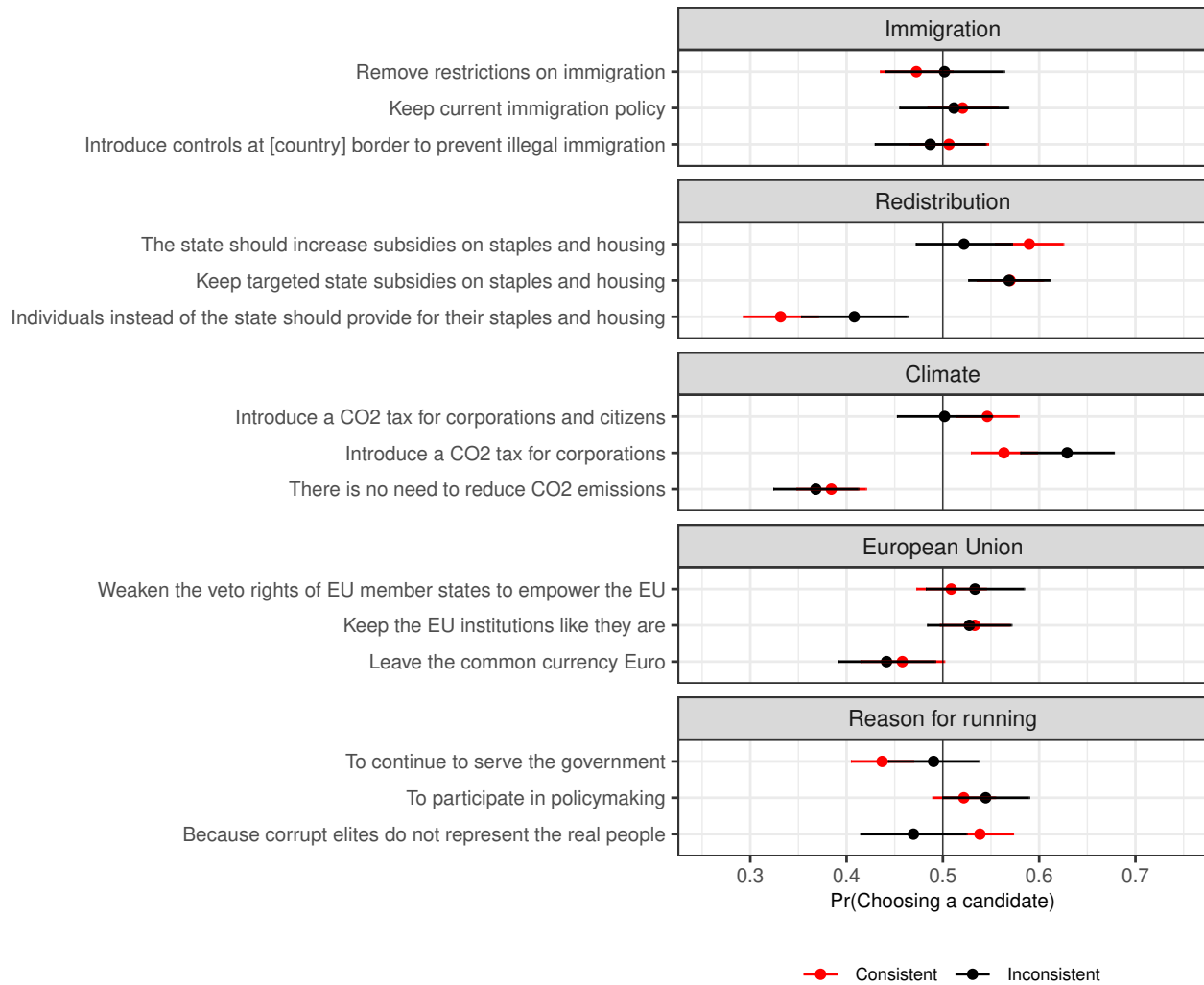


Figure A14: Consistent vs. inconsistent radical left voters.

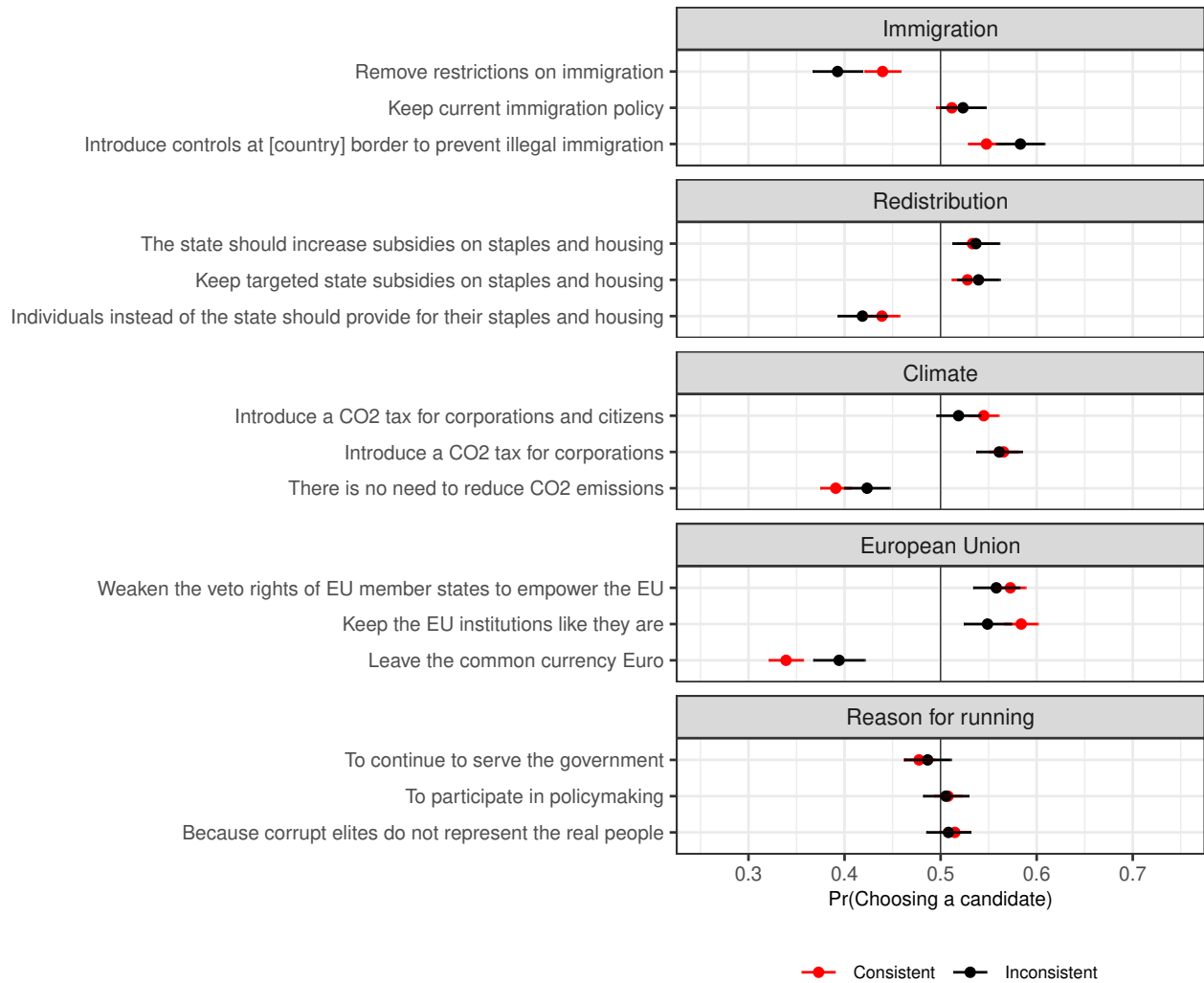


Figure A15: Consistent vs. inconsistent mainstream voters.



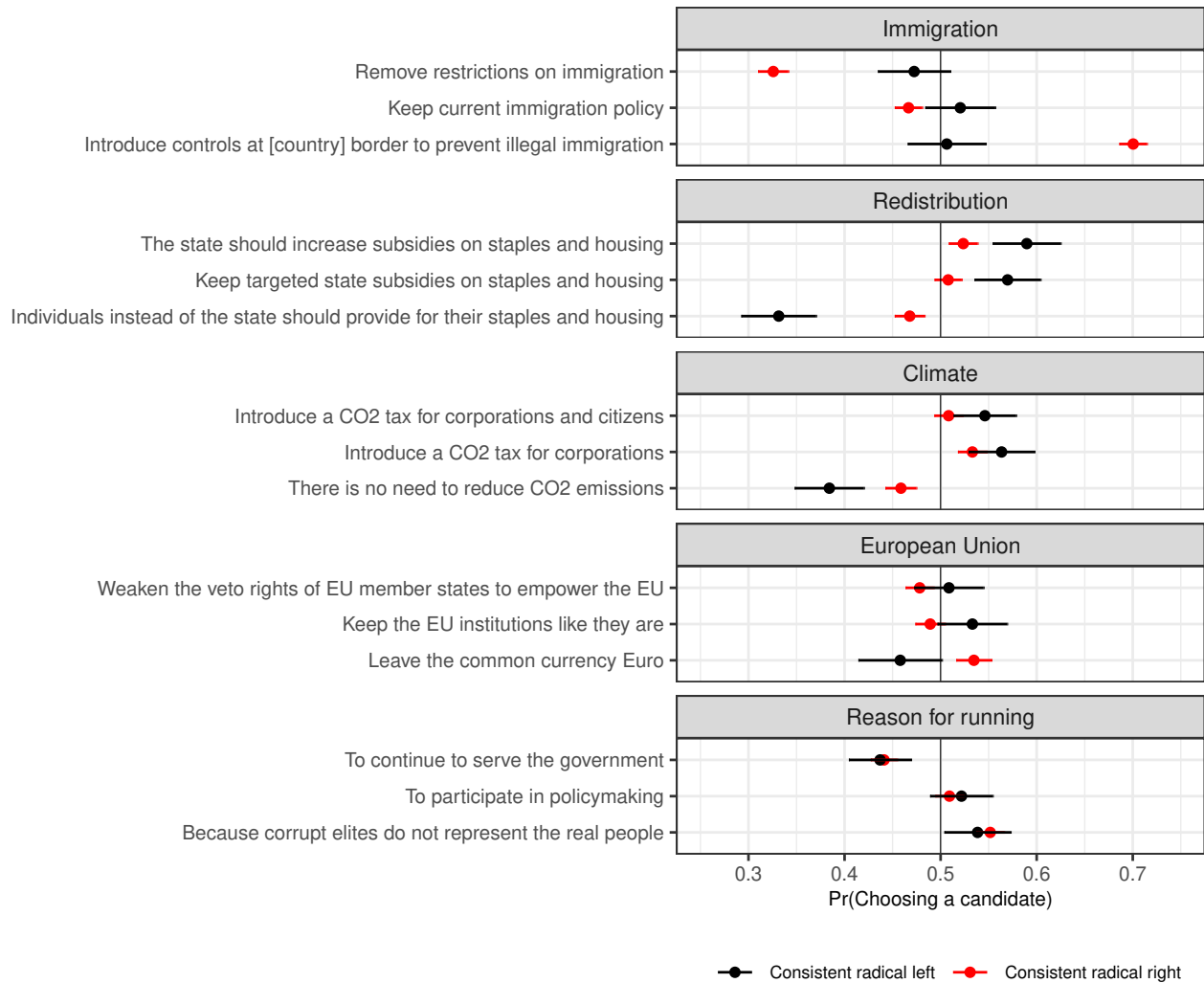


Figure A16: Consistent radical right vs. consistent radical left voters.

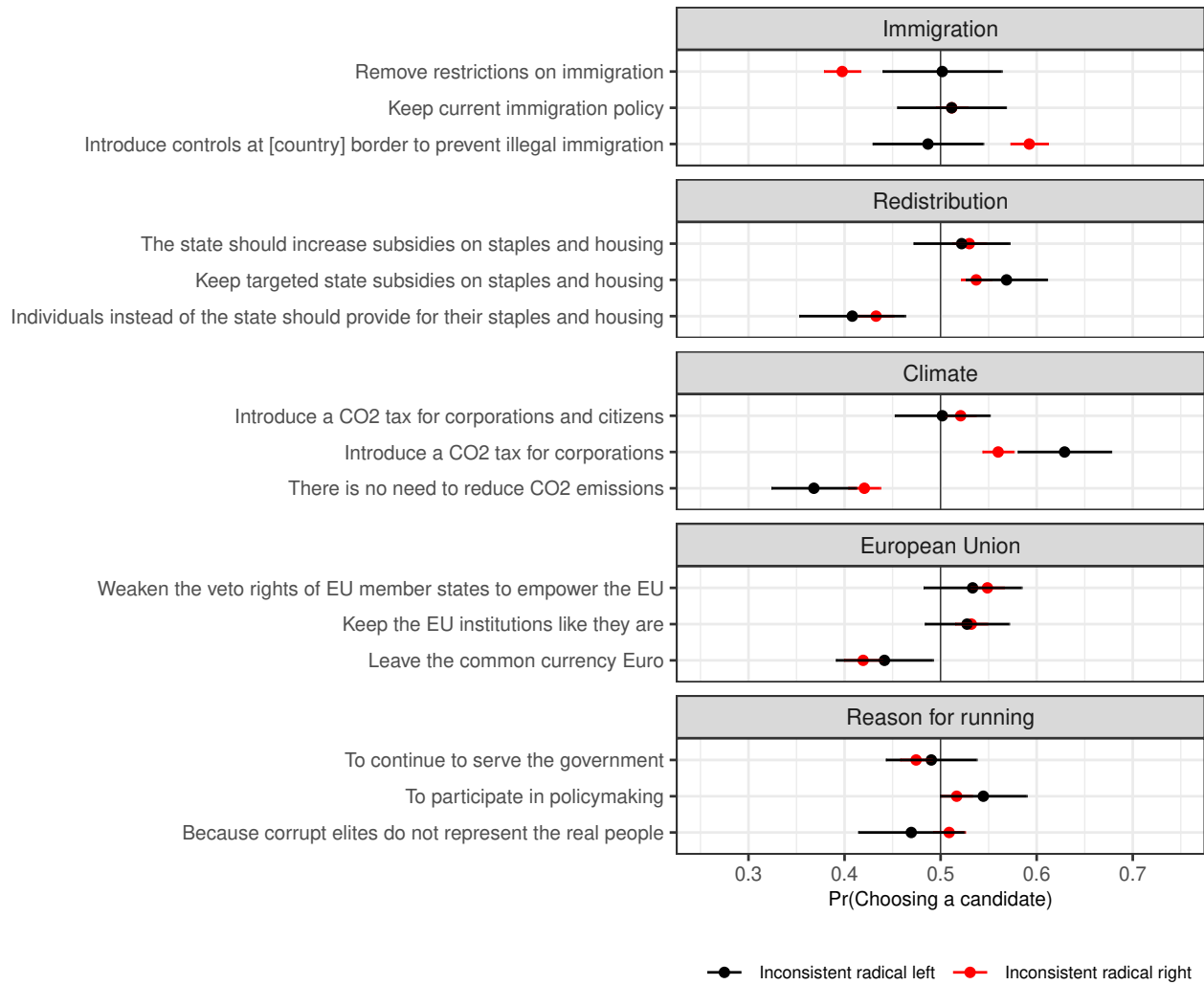


Figure A17: Inconsistent radical right vs. inconsistent radical left voters.

## A6.4 Comparison with non-voters

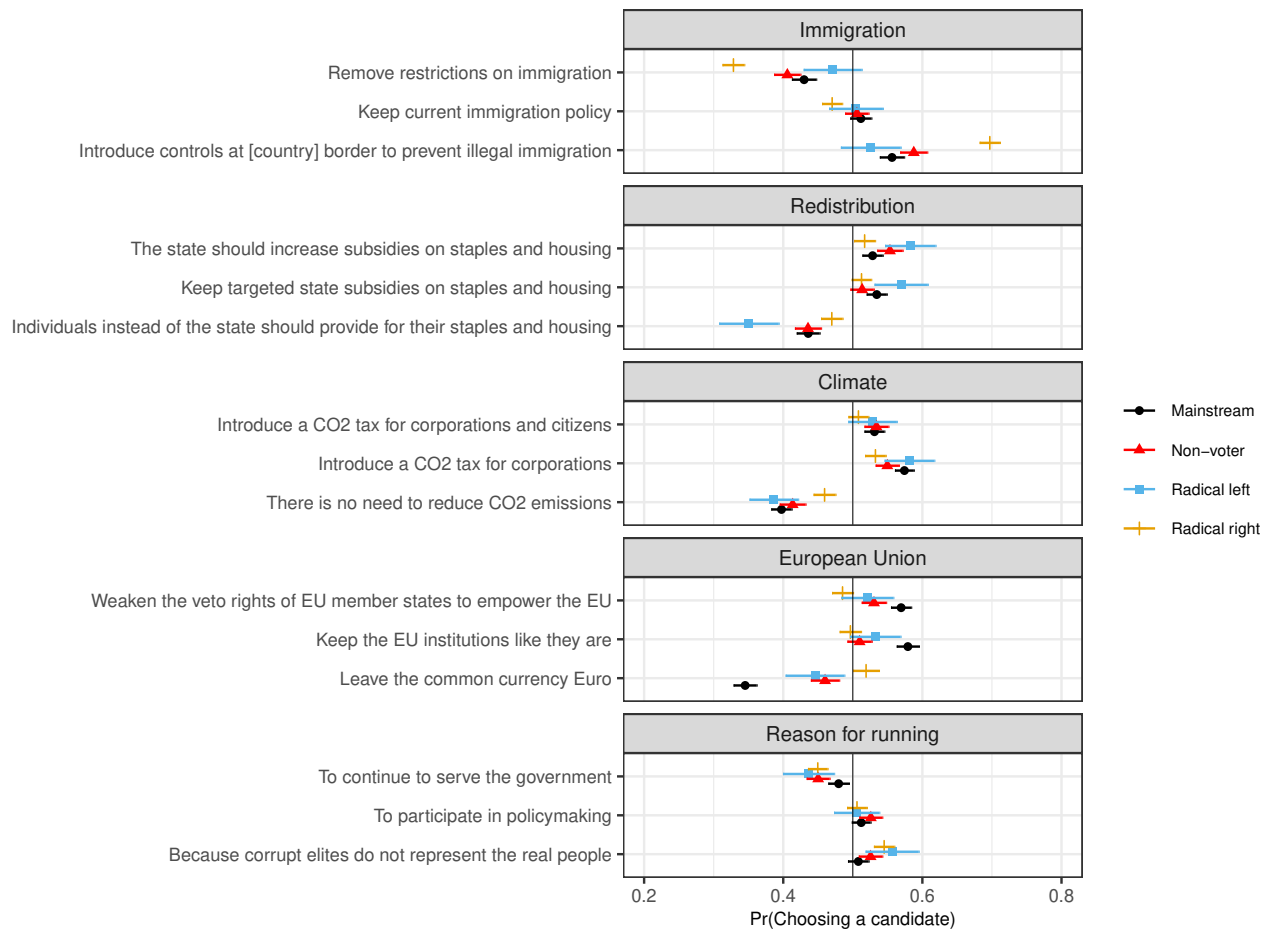


Figure A18: Regression results based on party choice or abstention in the 2019 European Parliament Election.

## A6.5 Issue trade-offs when faced with the least preferred issue proposal

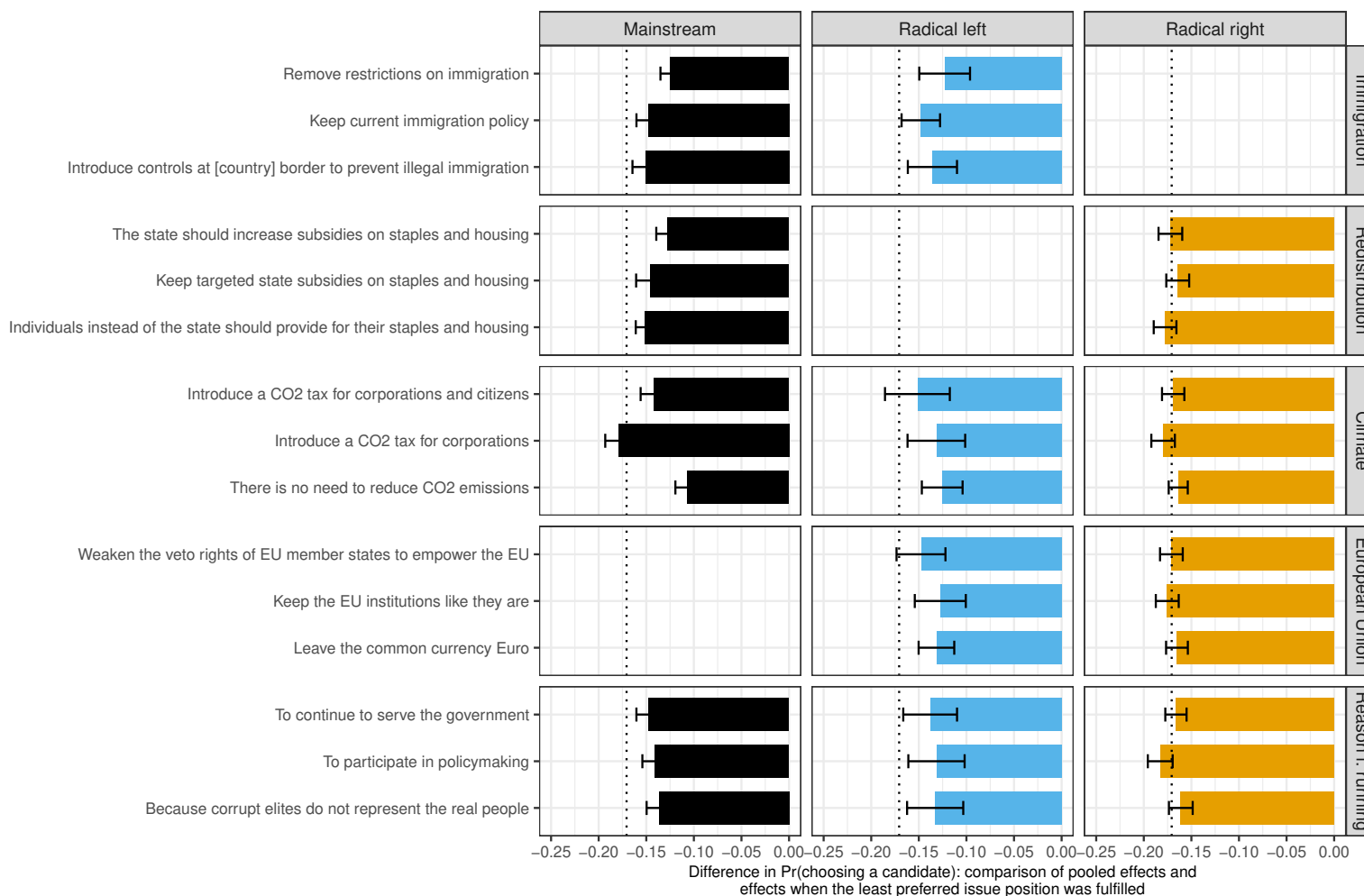


Figure A19: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the least preferred issue proposal among radical left, right, and mainstream voters was shown. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters.

## A6.6 Results for Green party voters

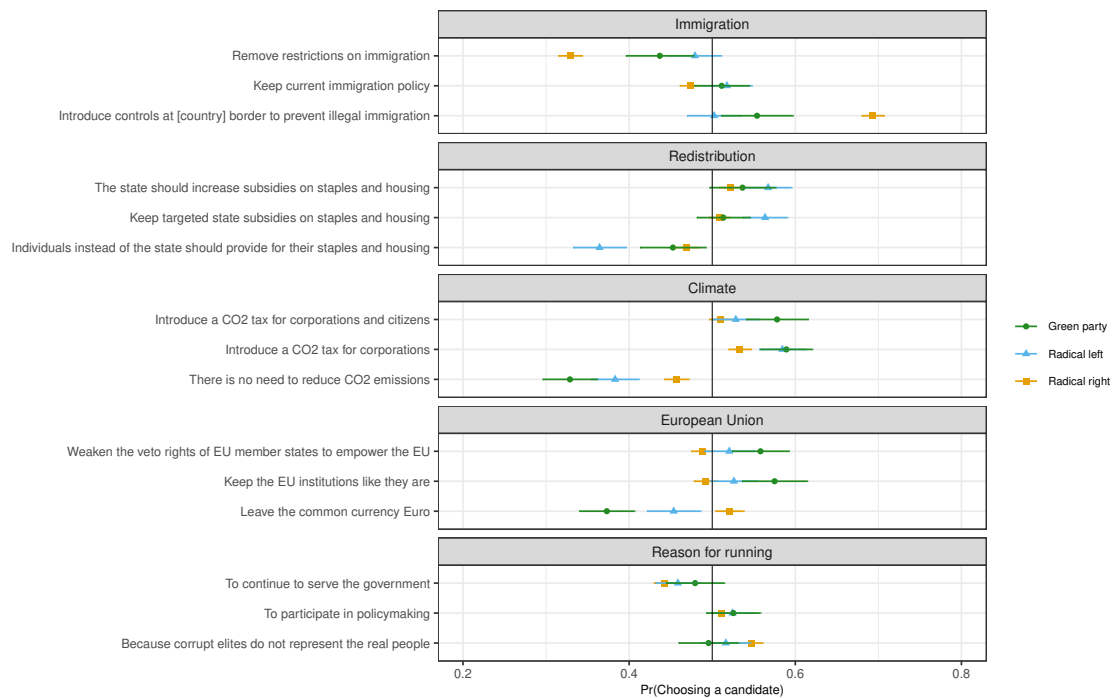


Figure A20: The effect of candidates' issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and Green party voters. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

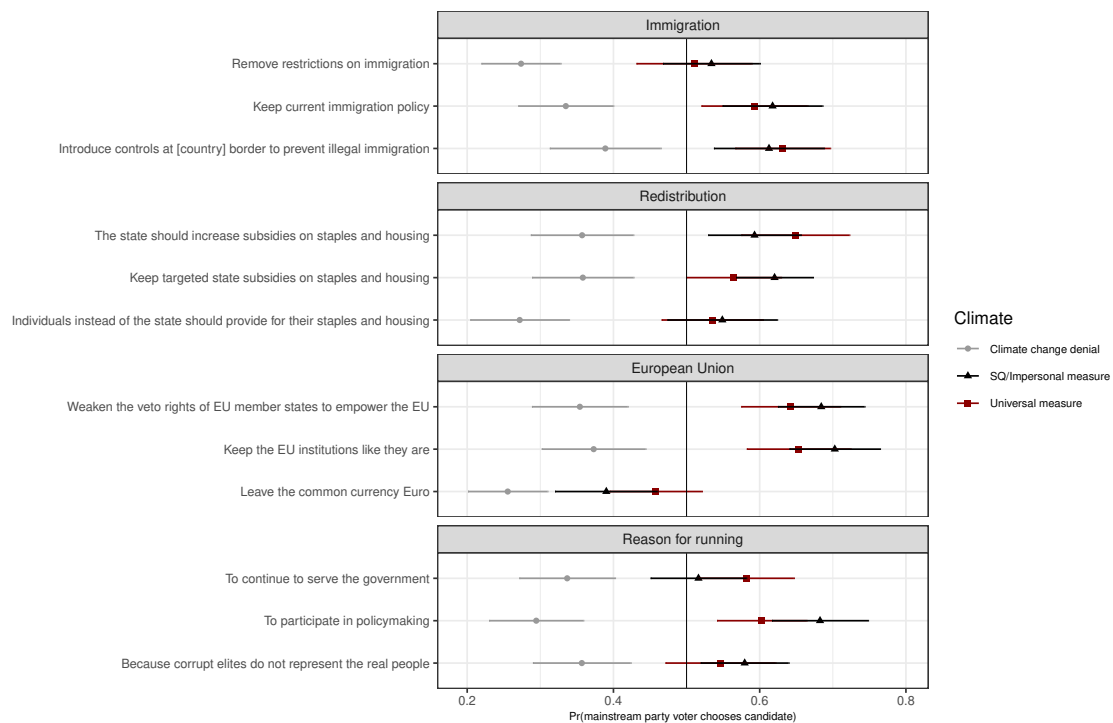


Figure A21: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among Green party voters holding candidates' proposals on climate. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

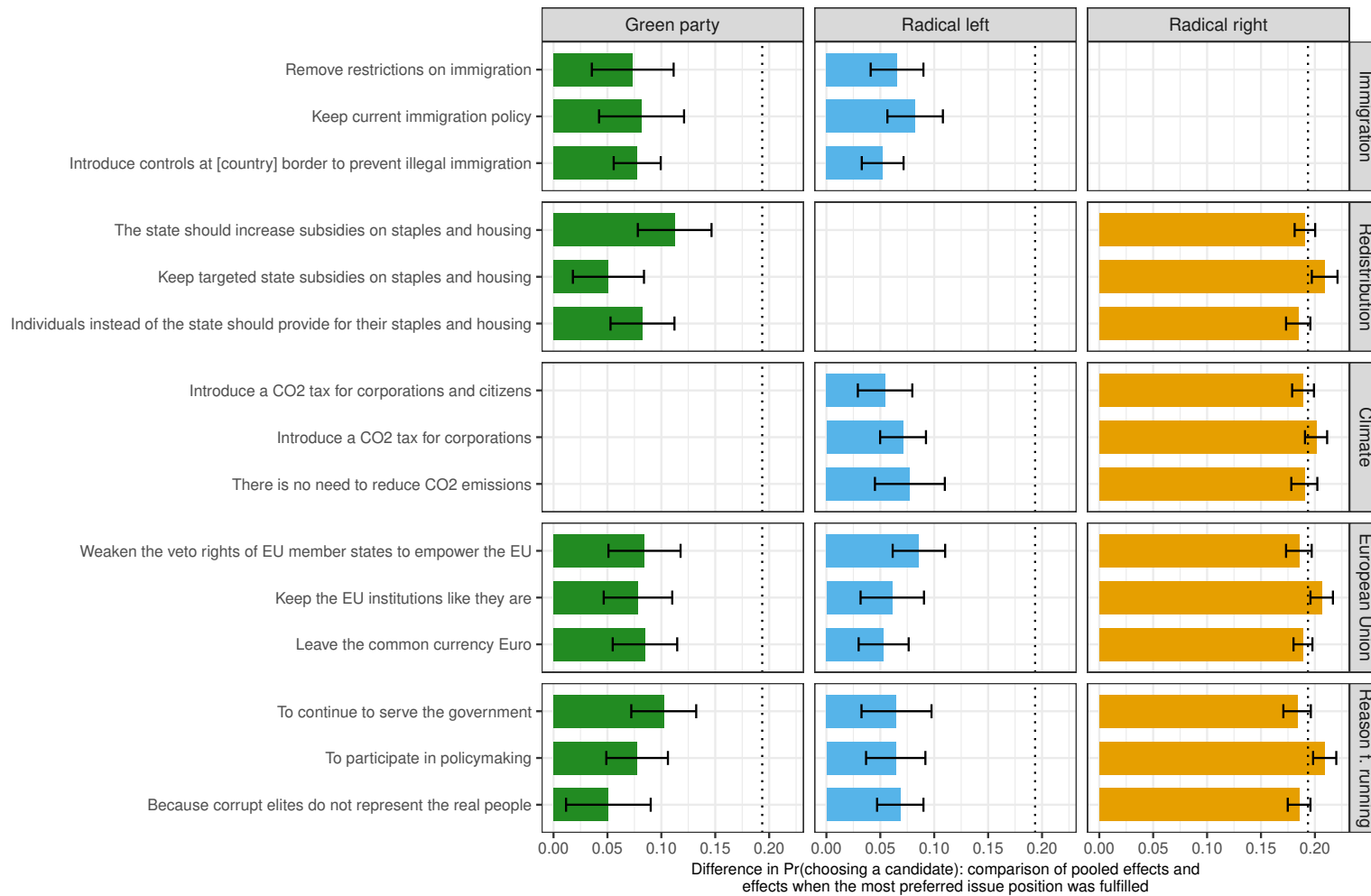


Figure A22: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and Green party voters was shown. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

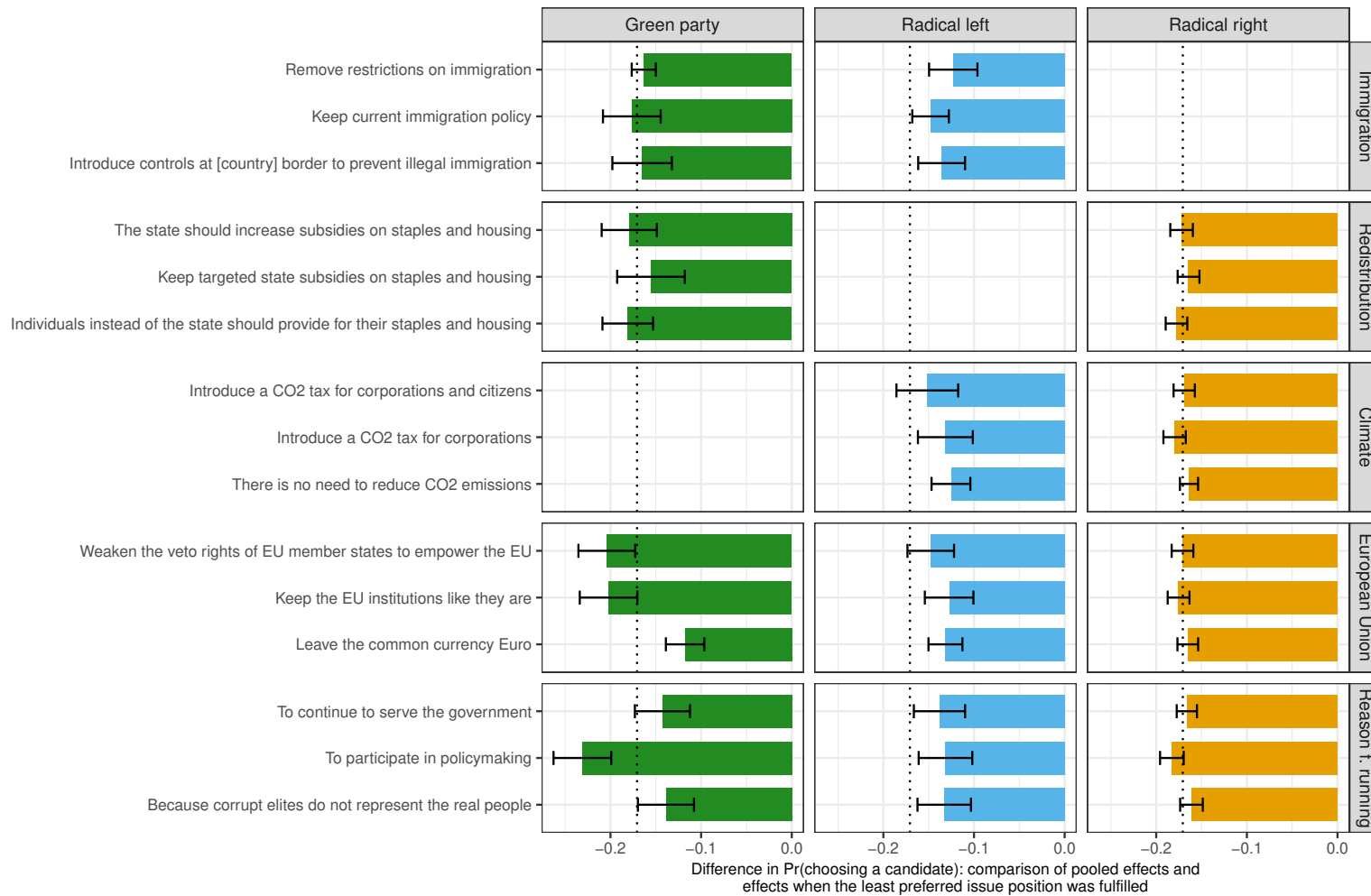


Figure A23: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the least desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and Green party voters was shown. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## A7 Duration of conjoint tasks

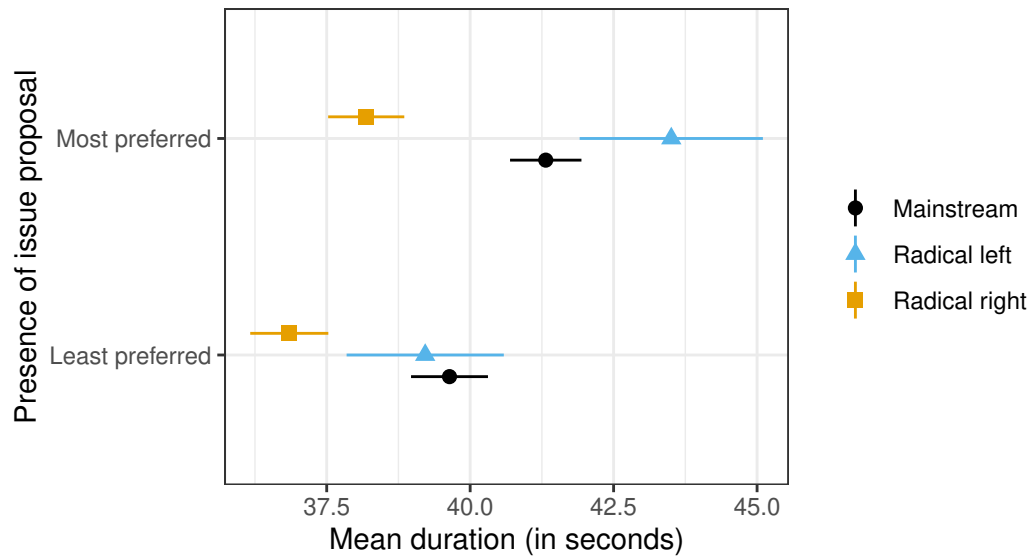


Figure A24: Mean of task duration by candidate profile and issue type. We subsetting tasks where the three groups of voters were faced with either their most desirable or least desirable issue proposals, but not both. Only tasks with less than 5 minutes (300 seconds) duration were chosen to remove outliers. However, other thresholds led to similar results. Error bars represent standard errors.



## A8 Replication study with German sample

Table A10: Demographics in the German replication study (%).

| Gender | Age      |       |       |       |         | Education |        |       | Income |        |       |
|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
| Female | 29/under | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60/over | Low       | Medium | High  | Low    | Medium | High  |
| 49.83  | 18.68    | 17.85 | 17.43 | 22.58 | 23.46   | 31.27     | 31.37  | 37.35 | 42.06  | 33.89  | 23.48 |

*Note:* Education levels were categorized according to ISCED.

Table A11: Count and share of voters' party family in the German replication study.

| Party family        | Count | Percent |
|---------------------|-------|---------|
| Christian Democracy | 782   | 19.47   |
| Green/Ecologist     | 618   | 15.39   |
| Liberal             | 436   | 10.86   |
| Radical Left        | 337   | 8.39    |
| Radical Right       | 490   | 12.20   |
| Social Democracy    | 952   | 23.71   |

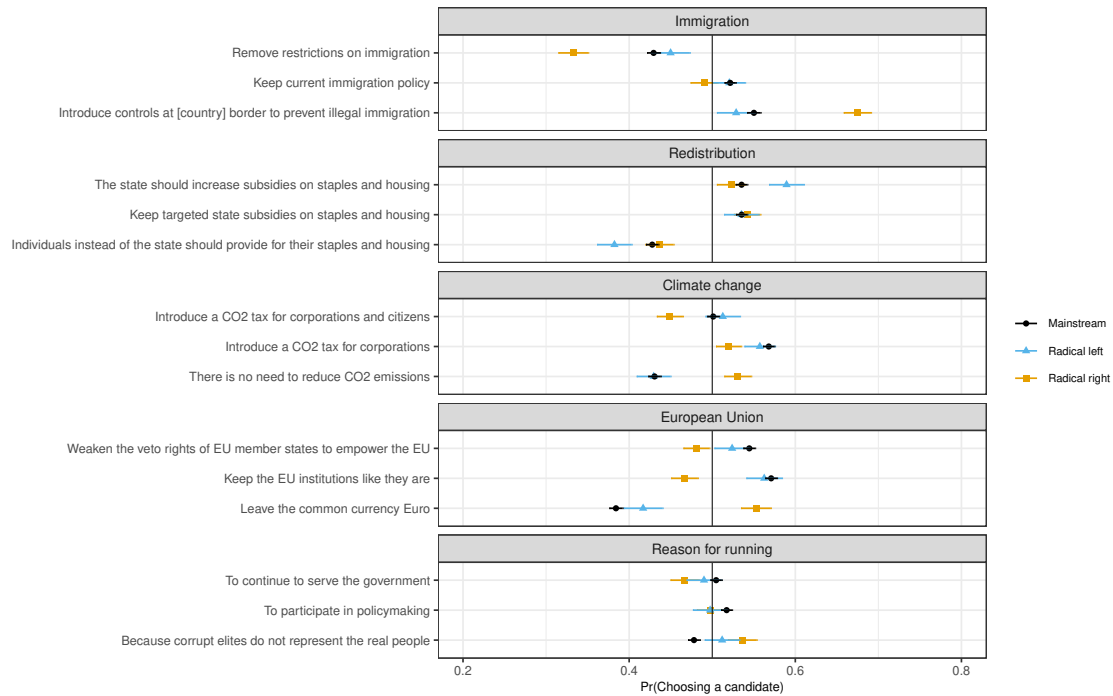


Figure A25: The effect of candidates' issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters (replication of Figure 1 in main paper). German sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

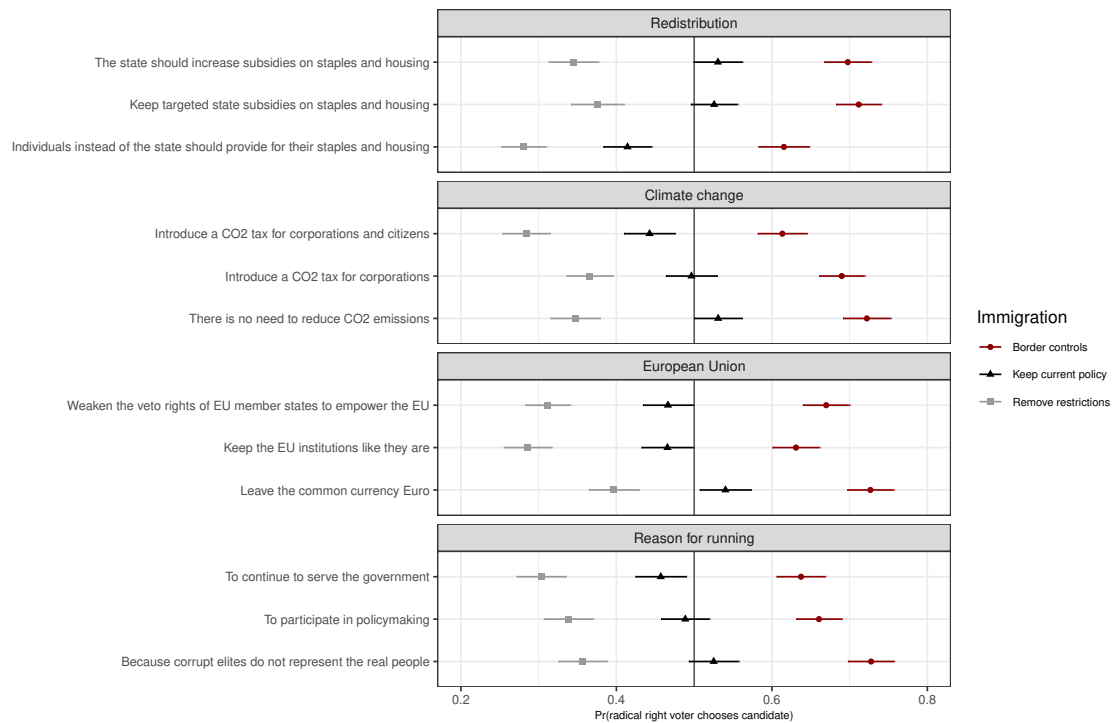


Figure A26: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical right voters holding **candidates' proposals on immigration constant**: border controls, status quo or removing restrictions (replication of Figure 2 in main paper). German sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

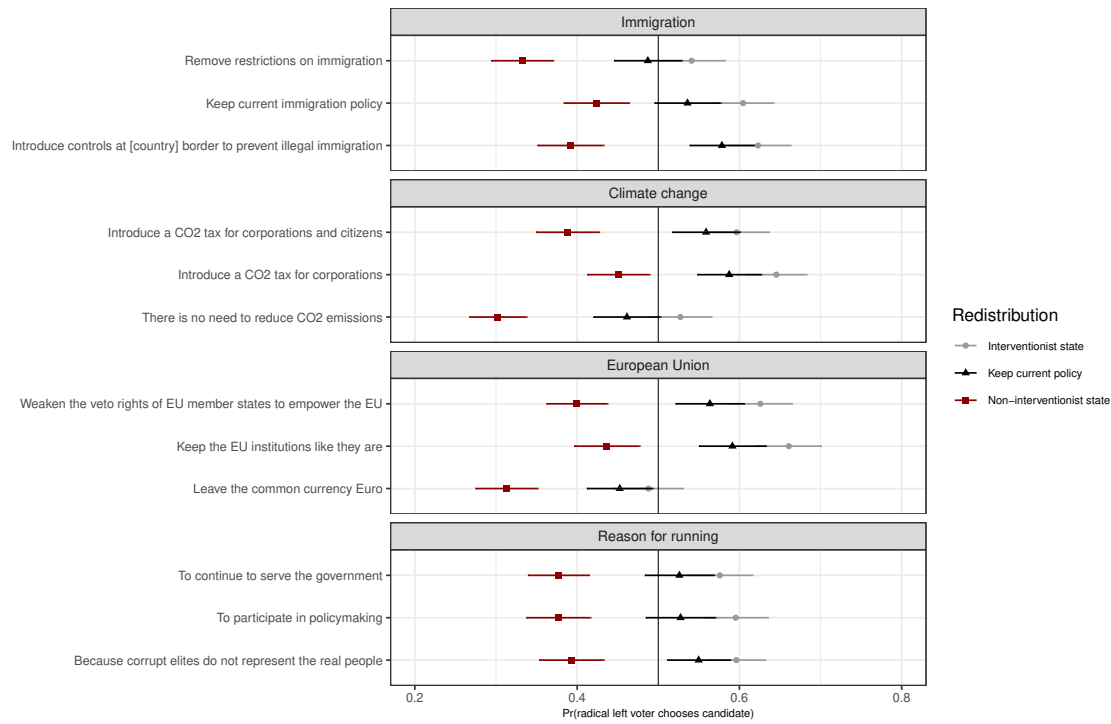


Figure A27: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical left voters holding **candidates' proposals on redistribution constant** (replication of Figure 3 in main paper). German sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

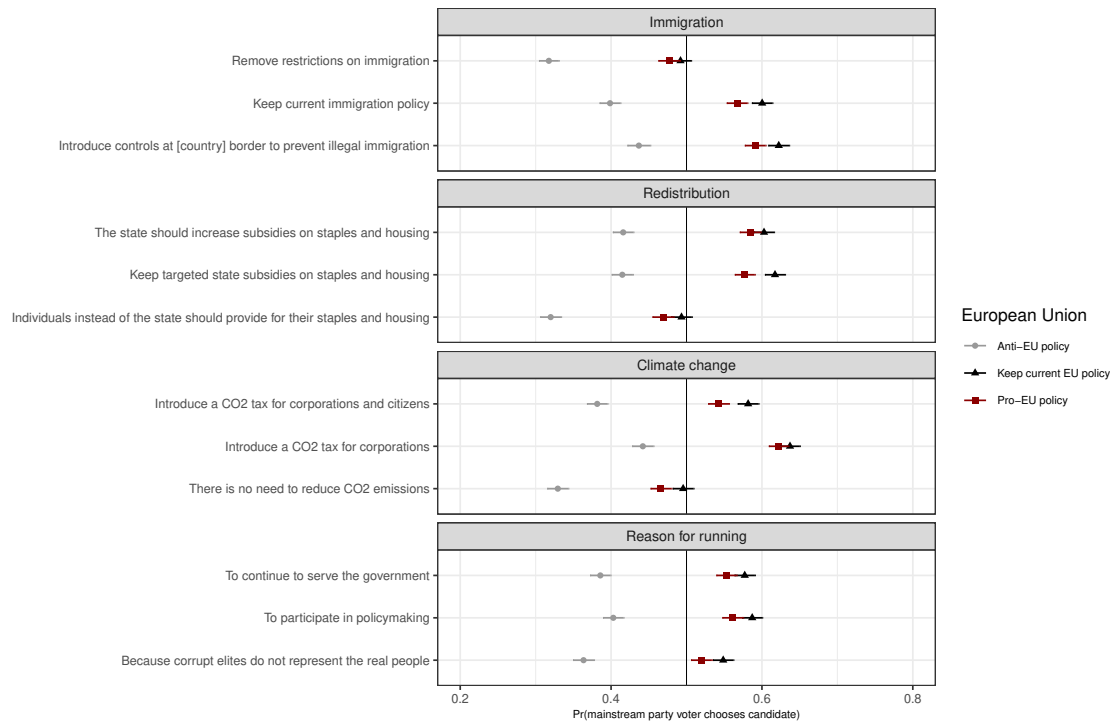


Figure A28: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among mainstream voters holding **candidates' proposals on the EU constant** (replication of Figure 4 in main paper). German sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

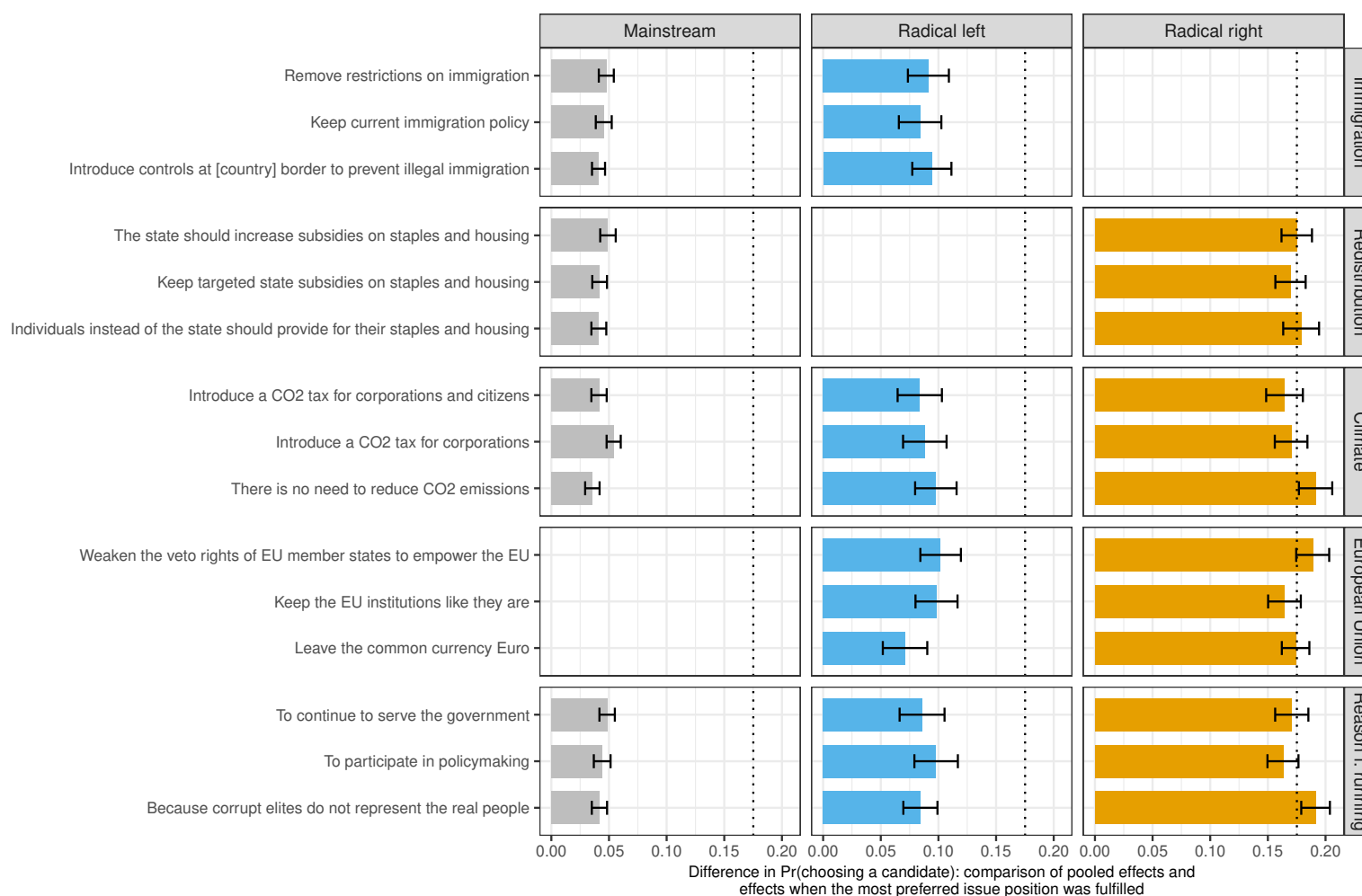


Figure A29: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and mainstream voters was shown. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters (replication of Figure 5 in main paper). German sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## A9 Power analysis

```
# cross-country radical left sample
cjpwr_amce(amce = 0.05, n = 170*8*2, levels = 3, alpha = 0.05) %>%
  kable("latex", digits = 2)
```

| power | type_s | exp_typeM | amce | n    | alpha | levels | delta0 |
|-------|--------|-----------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| 0.57  | 0      | 1.32      | 0.05 | 2720 | 0.05  | 3      | 0.5    |

```
# German replication study left sample
cjpwr_amce(amce = 0.05, n = 337*8*2, levels = 3, alpha = 0.05) %>%
  kable("latex", digits = 2)
```

| power | type_s | exp_typeM | amce | n    | alpha | levels | delta0 |
|-------|--------|-----------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| 0.85  | 0      | 1.09      | 0.05 | 5392 | 0.05  | 3      | 0.5    |

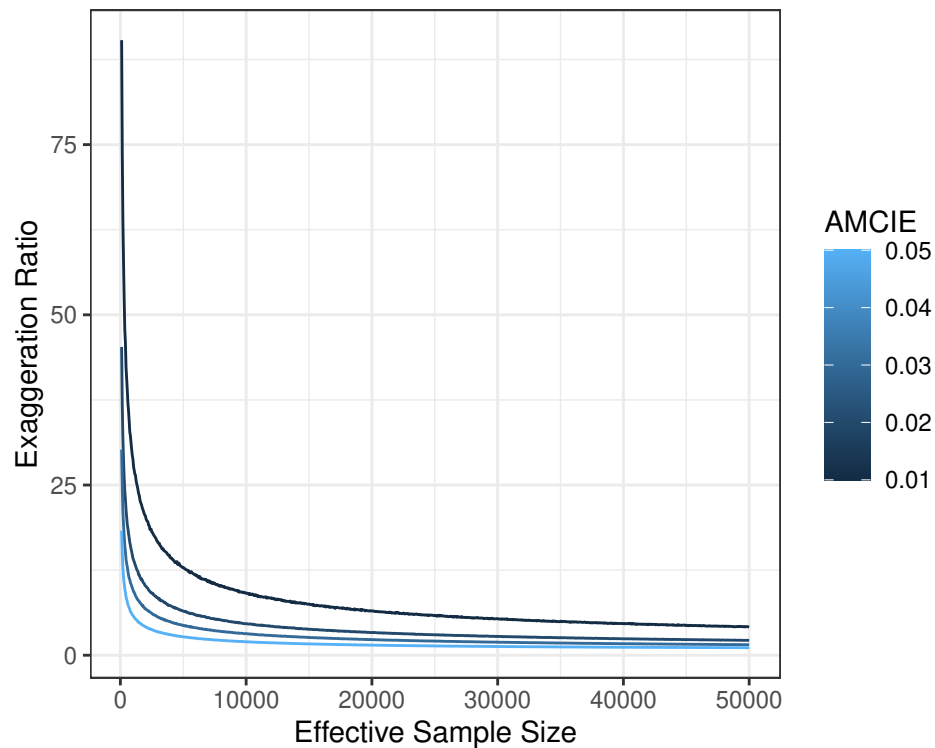


Figure A30: Exaggeration ratio by sample size and effect size (AMCIE). The plot shows that the exaggeration ratio in the estimation of conjoint experiments is low under AMCIE=0.05, even with smaller samples. Effective sample size refers to the number of rated tasks (i.e., profile comparisons).

## A10 R session information and used R packages

This document was built using R Markdown with the following environment and used R packages:

```
## R version 4.1.1 (2021-08-10)
## Platform: x86_64-apple-darwin17.0 (64-bit)
## Running under: macOS Big Sur 10.16
##
## Matrix products: default
## BLAS:   /Library/Frameworks/R.framework/Versions/4.1/Resources/lib/libRblas.0.dylib
## LAPACK: /Library/Frameworks/R.framework/Versions/4.1/Resources/lib/libRlapack.dylib
##
## locale:
## [1] en_US.UTF-8/en_US.UTF-8/en_US.UTF-8/C/en_US.UTF-8/en_US.UTF-8
##
## attached base packages:
## [1] stats      graphics  grDevices  utils      datasets  methods   base
##
## other attached packages:
## [1] cjpowR_1.0.0          quanteda.textplots_0.94 stringr_1.4.0
## [4] dplyr_1.0.9           purrr_0.3.4           tidyr_1.2.0
## [7] tibble_3.1.6          tidyverse_1.3.1       forcats_0.5.1
## [10] readtext_0.81         readr_2.1.2           quanteda_3.2.0
## [13] cregg_0.4.0           xtable_1.8-4          ggalt_0.4.0
## [16] openxlsx_4.2.4        ggpubr_0.4.0          ggplot2_3.3.5
## [19] gridExtra_2.3         janitor_2.1.0         stargazer_5.2.2
## [22] kableExtra_1.3.4      tinytex_0.38          knitr_1.39
## [25] easypackages_0.1.0
```

## A11 References

- Döring, Holger, and Philip Manow. 2019. “Parliaments and Governments Database (ParlGov): Information on Parties, Elections and Cabinets in Modern Democracies. Development Version.” <http://www.parlgov.org>.
- European Commission. 2019. “Eurobarometer 91.2 (2019).” GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7562 Datafile Version 1.0.0. <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13318>.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, Stijn van Kessel, Caterina Froio, Andrea Pirro, Sarah de Lange, Daphne Halikiopoulou, Paul Lewis, Cas Mudde, and Paul Taggart. 2020. “The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe.” <http://www.popu-list.org>.