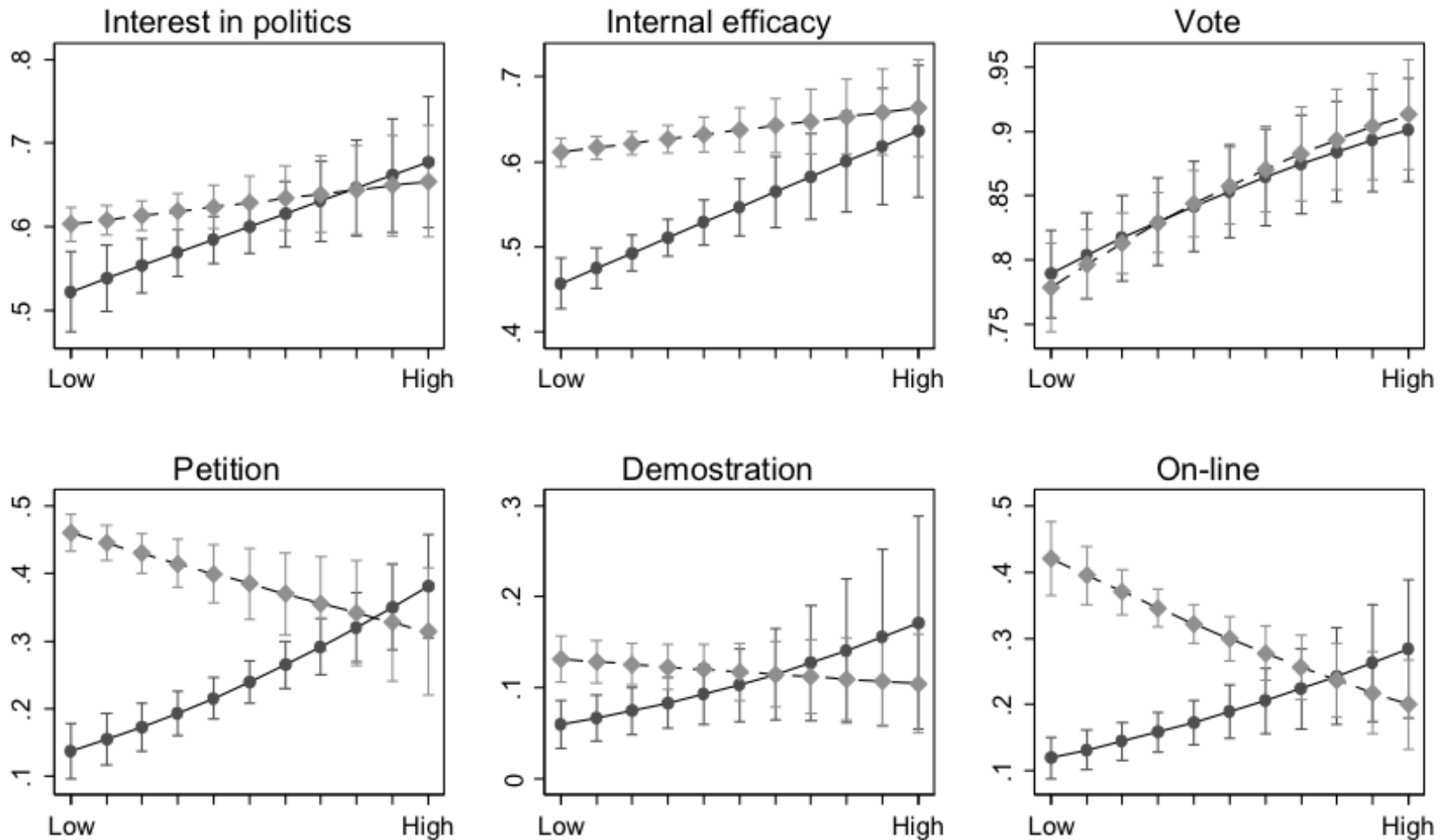


Populist Discourse and Political Action: A Survey Experiment

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- Populism as a “sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people” (Jansen 2011)
- Corrective to inclusiveness: populism can mobilize excluded sectors of society, improving their integration into the political system (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012)

Populist attitudes, income, and political engagement



Populism: —●— Low —◆— High

- Who is mobilized (or demobilized) by populist discourse?
- Political action/protest as dependent variable
- Context of left-wing populism

Populism and participation

Populist discourse: framing of issues as struggle between good people and evil elite

May appeal to:

- Populist citizens → activates populist attitudes
- Socioeconomically deprived
 - Emphasis on common people → collective identity
 - Corrupt elite → blame attribution, moral outrage
 - Defense of popular sovereignty → legitimacy

Expectations

H1. Populist discourse mobilizes participation among citizens with higher levels of populist attitudes, while demobilizing those with lower levels of populism

H2. Populist discourse mobilizes participation among the more socioeconomically deprived citizens.

H3. Populist discourse mobilizes participation among the ordinarily less politically active citizens

Empirical strategy

Data:

- Online survey of young & middle-aged Spanish residents (N=995)
- Quotas for sex, age groups, education, & size of municipality

Experimental design:

- Post-test only, between subjects
- 2 (**discourse**: populist vs. non-populist) ×
3 (**source cue**: populist label vs. Podemos cue vs. control)

	Non-populist	Populist
Control	1	2
Populist label	3	4
Podemos cue	5	6

Treatments: control

This message is being disseminated through the social media:

We propose to stop public health cuts to put an end to hospital waiting lists and the deterioration of health care.

Treatments: populist discourse

This message is being disseminated through the social media:

We propose to stop public health cuts to put an end to hospital waiting lists and the deterioration of health care. We cannot let people die in hospital corridors while politicians fill their pockets at the expense of the public health system.

Treatments: populist label

This **populist** message is being disseminated through the social media:

We propose to stop public health cuts to put an end to hospital waiting lists and the deterioration of health care. **We cannot let people die in hospital corridors while politicians fill their pockets at the expense of the public health system.**

Treatments: Podemos cue

Podemos is circulating this message through the social media:

We propose to stop public health cuts to put an end to hospital waiting lists and the deterioration of health care. We cannot let people die in hospital corridors while politicians fill their pockets at the expense of the public health system.

Measurement

Dependent variable:

- Would you [**sign a petition / attend a demonstration**] in support for ending cuts in public health services?
(0= certainly no, 10=certainly yes)

Conditioning variables:

- Populism: Akkerman et al.'s (2014) six 7-point agreement items
- Deprivation: based on EPICES score, 10 yes/no items (economic status, health coverage, family support, and leisure activity)
- Past participation: done in last 6 months (petition, buy/boycott, contact, donate, demonstration, strike)

Analysis

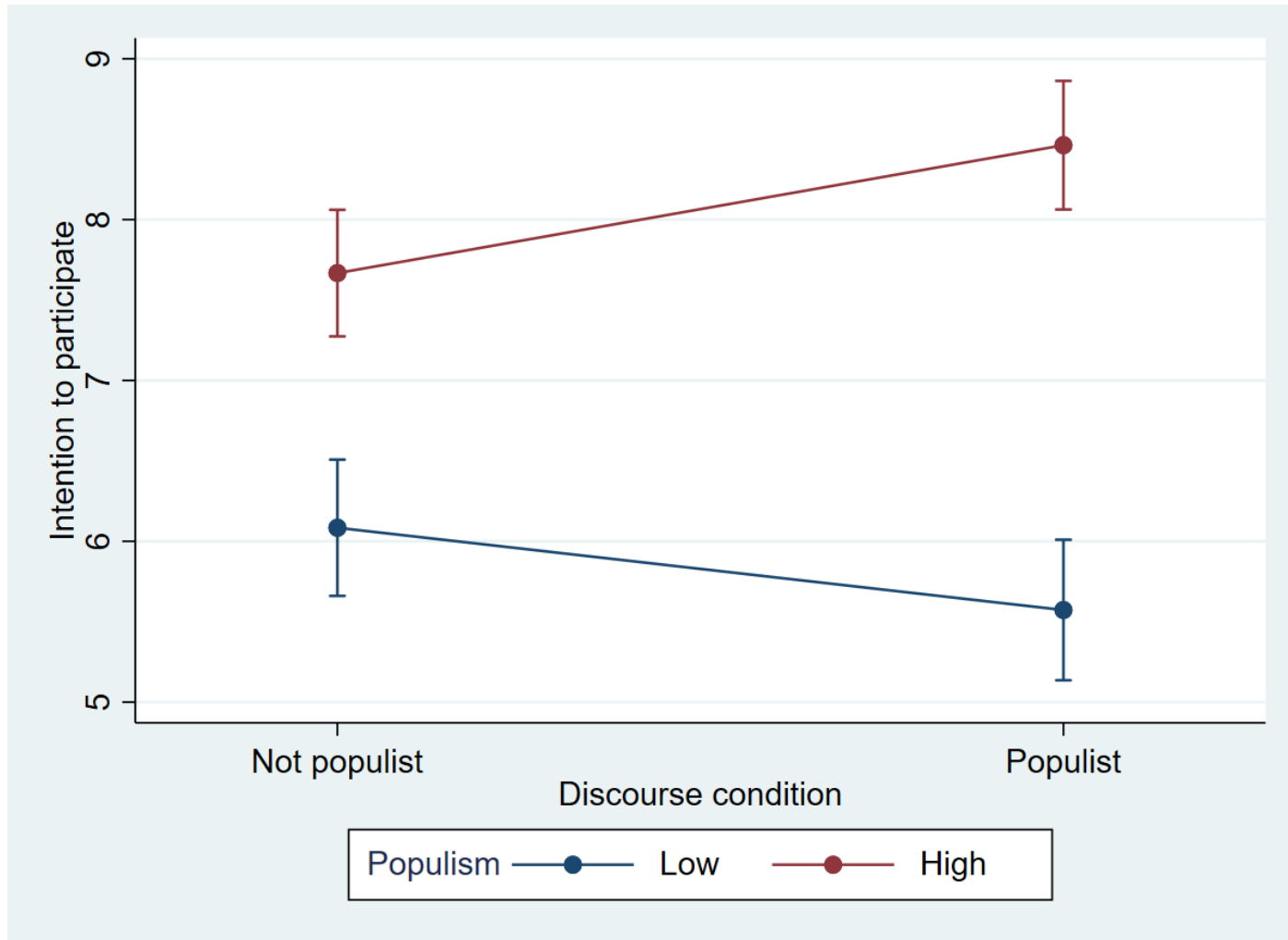
Baseline models:

- participation = discourse + cue
($F_{3, 991} = 0.64, p = 0.589$)
- participation = discourse + cue + discourse × cue
($F_{5, 989} = 0.92, p = 0.465$)

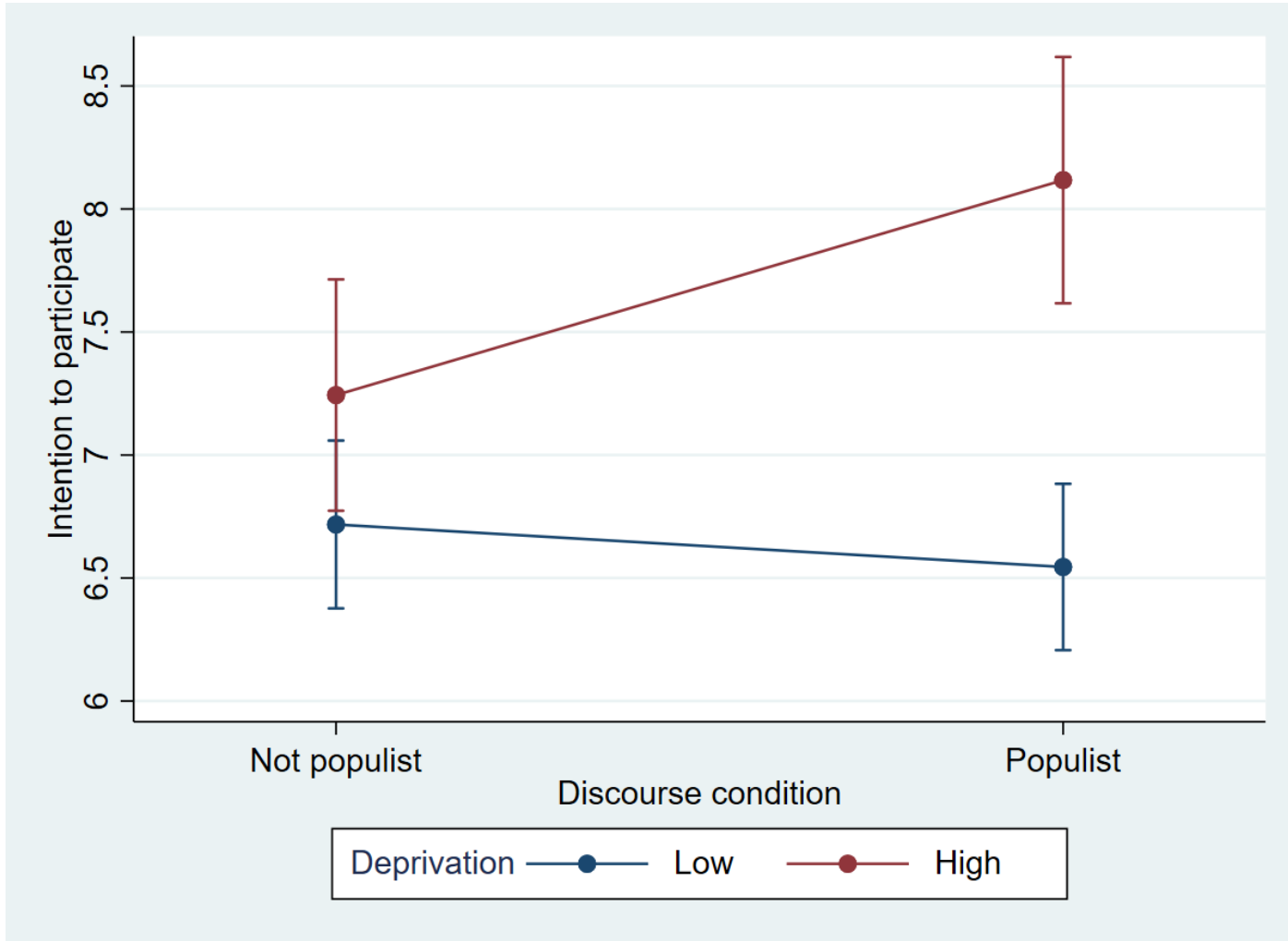
Interaction models:

- participation = discourse + cue + **discourse × populism**
- participation = discourse + cue + **discourse × deprivation**
- participation = discourse + cue + **discourse × participation**

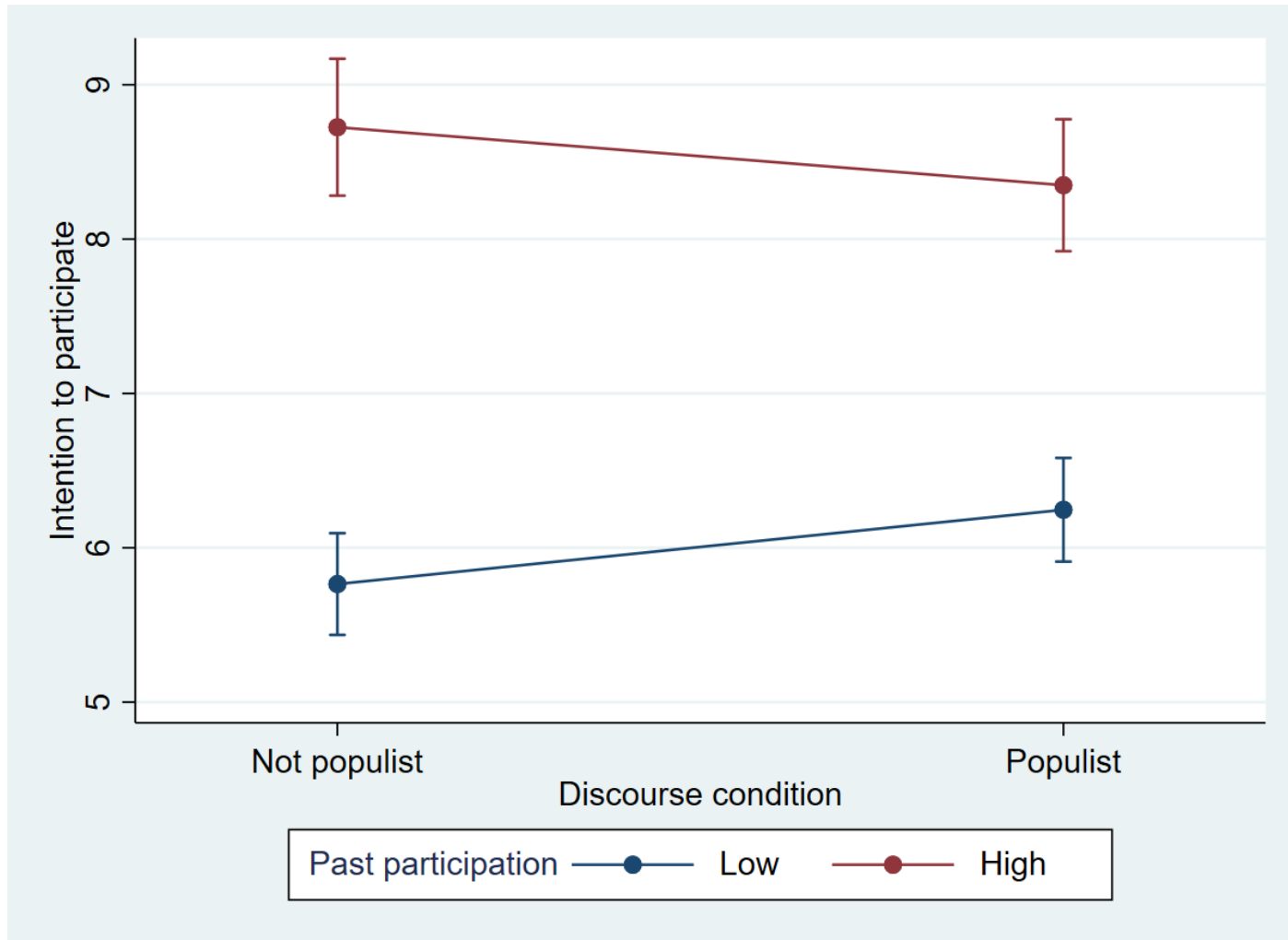
Populist discourse × respondent's populism



Populist discourse × deprivation



Populist discourse × participation record



Conclusion

Populist discourse:

- activates populist attitudes
- mobilizes the socioeconomically deprived
- reduces participation inequalities

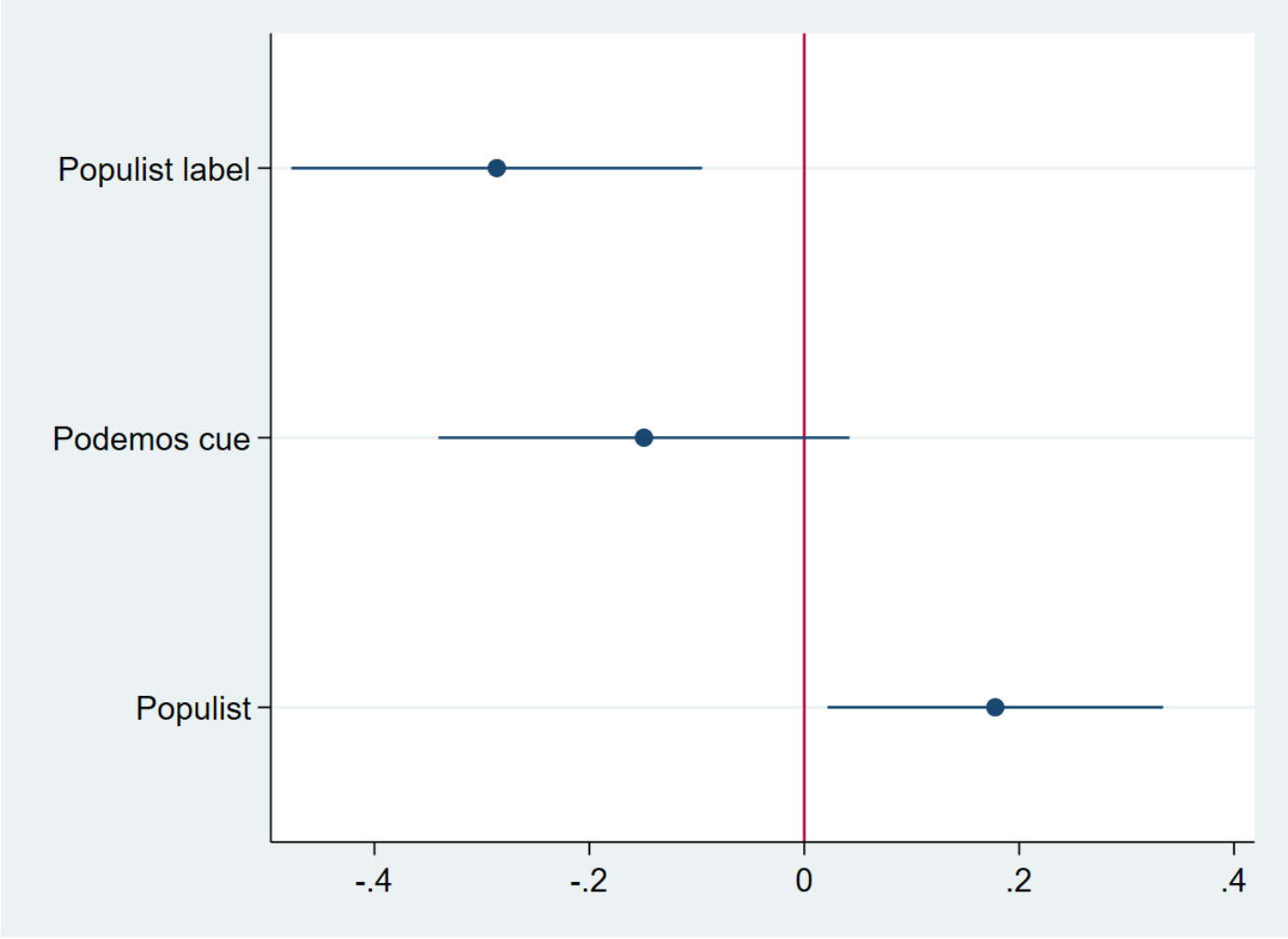
Limitations:

- Spain's left-wing (i.e. inclusionary) populism
- salient issue
- causal mechanisms?

Wage inequality

This message is being disseminated through the social media:

To reduce wage inequality, we propose to establish a legal limit so salaries may not be higher than 10 times the minimum wage. **We don't want people to have to subsist with a hunger salary while politicians fill their pockets defending the interests of the powerful.**



Thank you!