Attitudinal Species of Populism
Survey Evidence from Nine European Countries

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Populism's ideological ubiquity

- Populism as a thin-centered ideology
  - Chameleonic, appears necessarily attached to full fledged host ideologies
  - Populist core ideas easily adapted to any ideology (compare recent European and Latin American experiences)

- Populist parties in Europe are ideologically diverse
  - Radical right, neoliberal, radical left
  - Different stances on immigration, cultural and economic issues, EU

- But we don't know much about differences in policy preferences among populist citizens

- Populist party supporters often viewed as protest voters (i.e. not motivated by ideology) or contrarily as fundamentally ideological
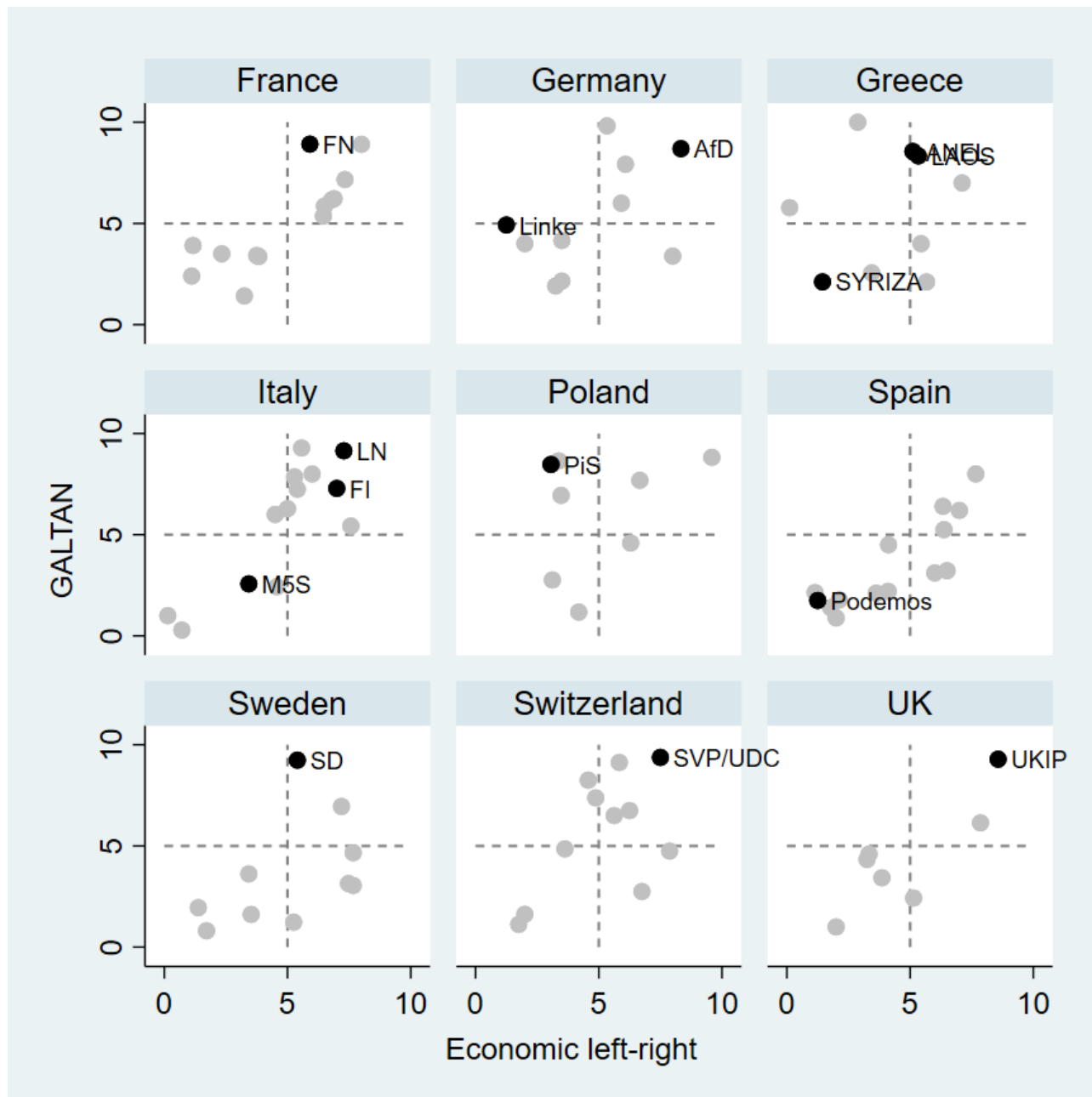
Research questions

- How people's populist attitudes are combined with positions on key policy domains?

- Which ideological species of populists can be identified?

- How these vary by country?

- Expectations:
  - Cross-national variations are explained by supply-side factors
  - Some ideologies are better suited to populism than others

Populist parties and policy issues

- Immigration
    - Populist radical right (PRR) is typically nativist (Mudde 2007)
    - Main consideration behind support for PRR (e.g., Ivarsflaten 2008)
    - But not for the populist left

- Cultural issues
    - Some PRR parties combine anti-immigrant attitudes with a (strategic?) liberal approach to gender issues and sexual minorities (e.g., LPF)
    - But not the rule: some PRR strongly traditionalist, particularly in eastern Europe
    - PRR also characteristically authoritarian – i .e. submission to authority, law and order (Mudde 2007)

Populist parties and policy issues

- Economic issues
    - Main concern for populist radical left (but de-emphasizing class), not PRR parties
    - PRR parties have come to adopt "welfare chauvinism", and are usually markedly leftist in central and eastern Europe

France | Germany | Greece
Italy | Poland | Spain
Sweden | Switzerland | UK

GALTAN

Economic left-right

Source:
CHES 2014

Data and measures

- ## Livewhat online survey
  - June 2015
  - Adult residents in 9 countries
  - N > 2000 per country (total N = 18368)
  - Quota-balanced in terms of sex, age, and education

- ## Populist attitudes scale (Akkerman et al. 2014)

  Likert 5-point agreement scales

  1. The politicians in [country] need to follow the will of the people
  2. The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions
  3. The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people
  4. I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician
  5. Elected officials talk too much and take too little action
  6. What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out on one's principles
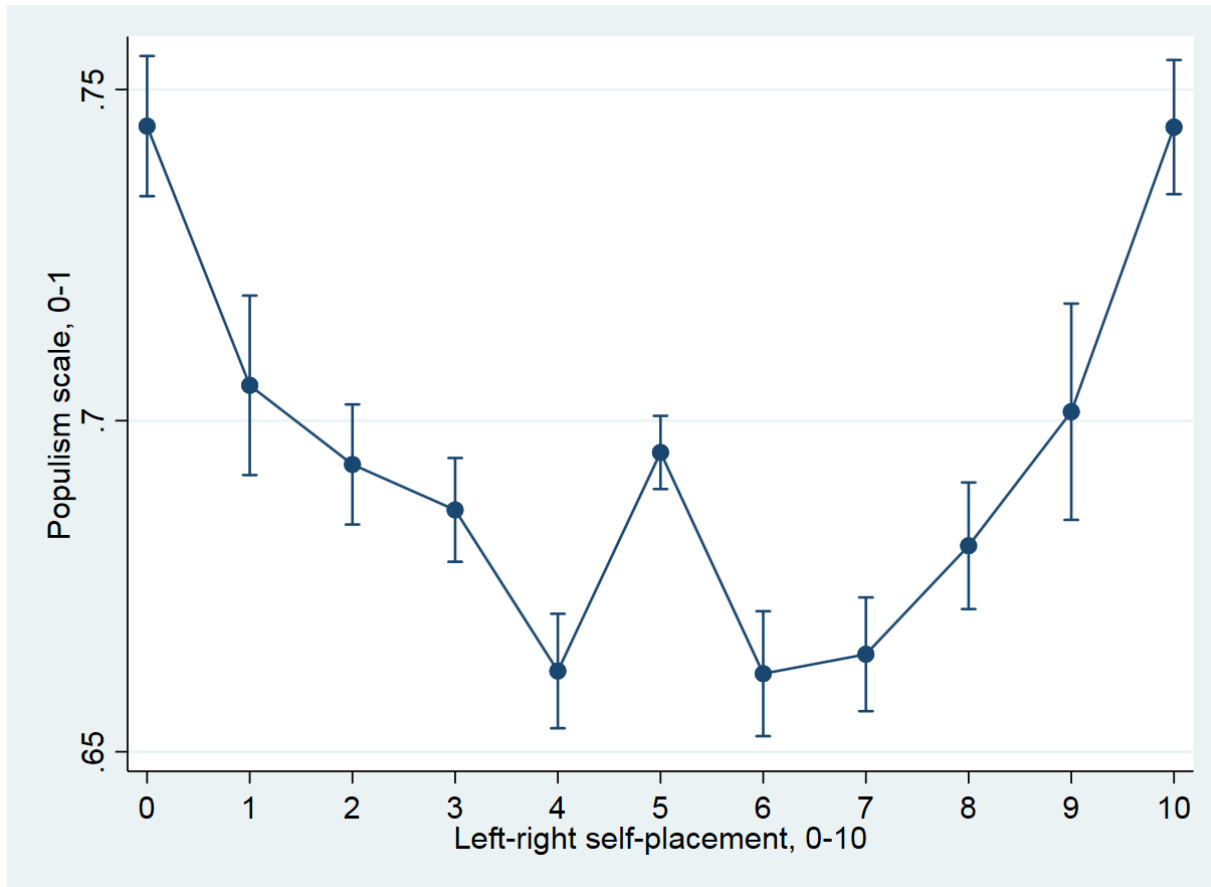
Data and measures

- Left-right self-placement (11-point)

- Policy positions (all bipolar, 11-point)
    - Economic issues: income inequality, individual vs. state responsibility, unemployment benefits, competition, taxes vs. services/benefits
    - Cultural issues: women's self-realization, abortion, homosexuals' right to adopt, children's obedience, tougher crime sentences
    - Immigration good/bad thing: for country's economy, for country's cultural life

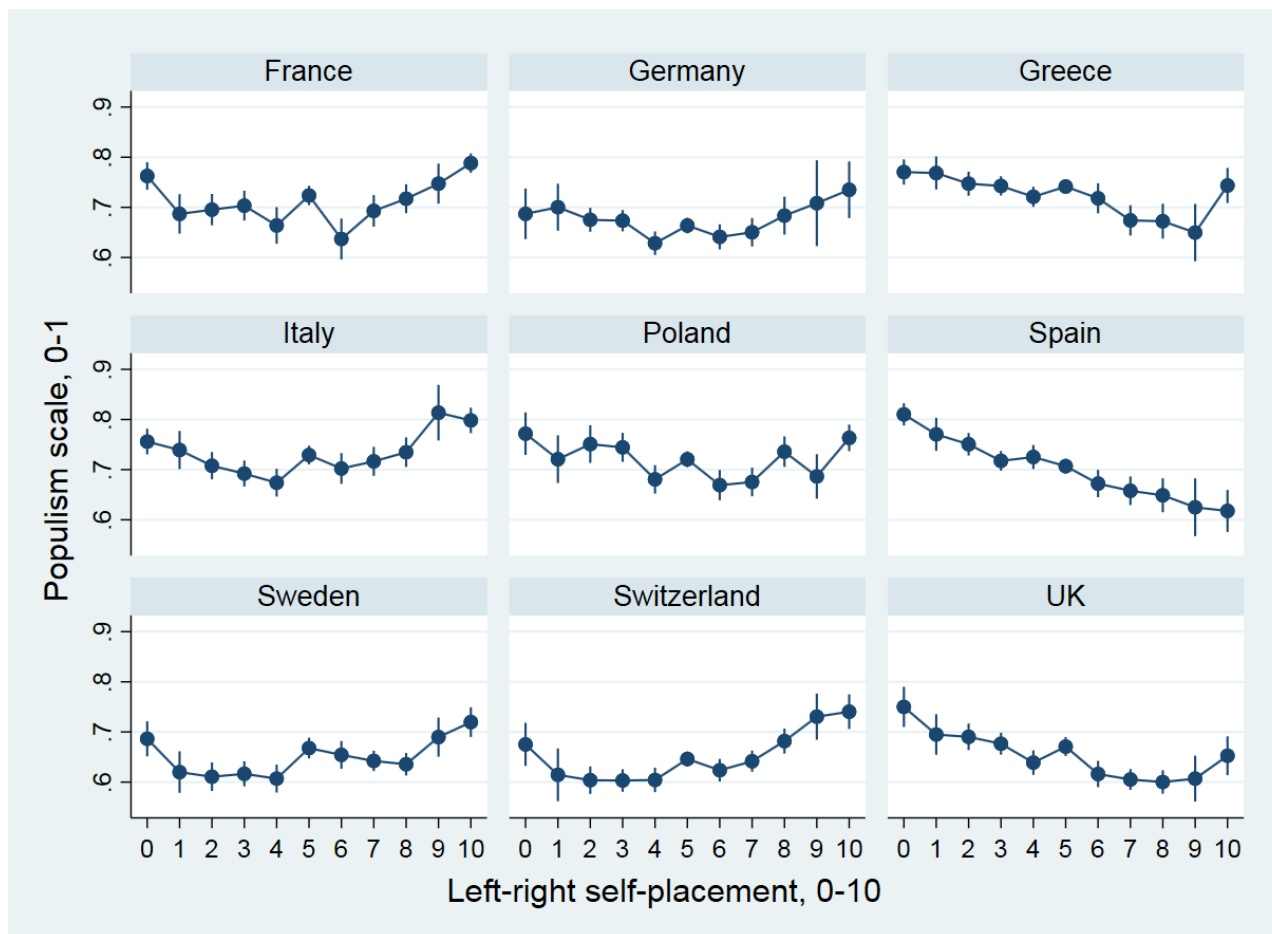- Sociodemographics

Empirical strategy

- Simple OLS models of populism on
    1. left-right (categorical)
    2. policy positions

- Latent Class Analysis on pooled dataset
    1. 12 policy items
    2. We use resulting classification to explore its ability to predict populism across countries

Populist attitudes and the left-right continuum

OLS on pooled data set. Dependent variable is scale of populist attitudes (0-1). Country fixed effects.

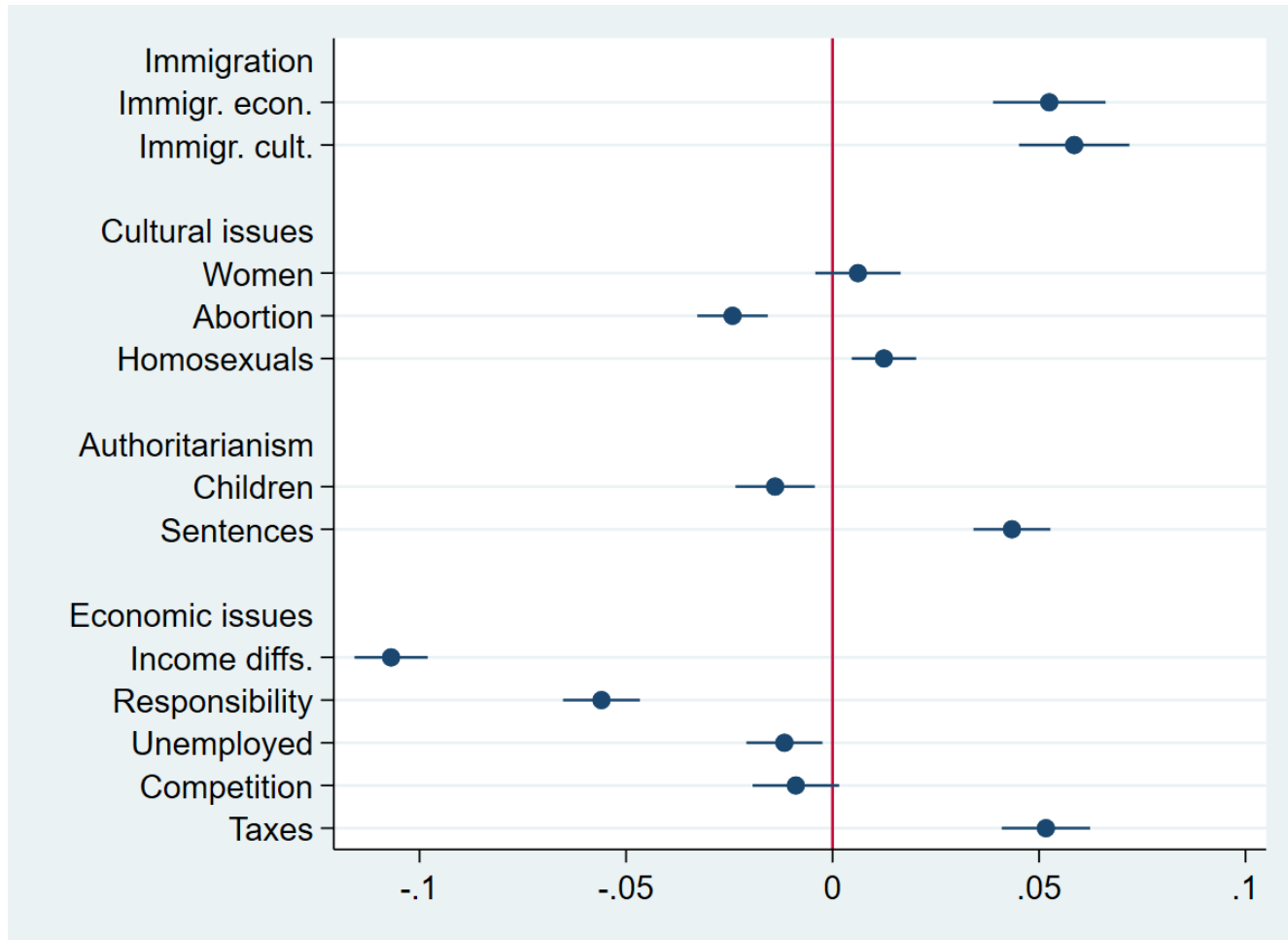# Populist attitudes and left-right: Country patterns

OLS on country samples. Dependent variable is scale of populist attitudes (0-1).

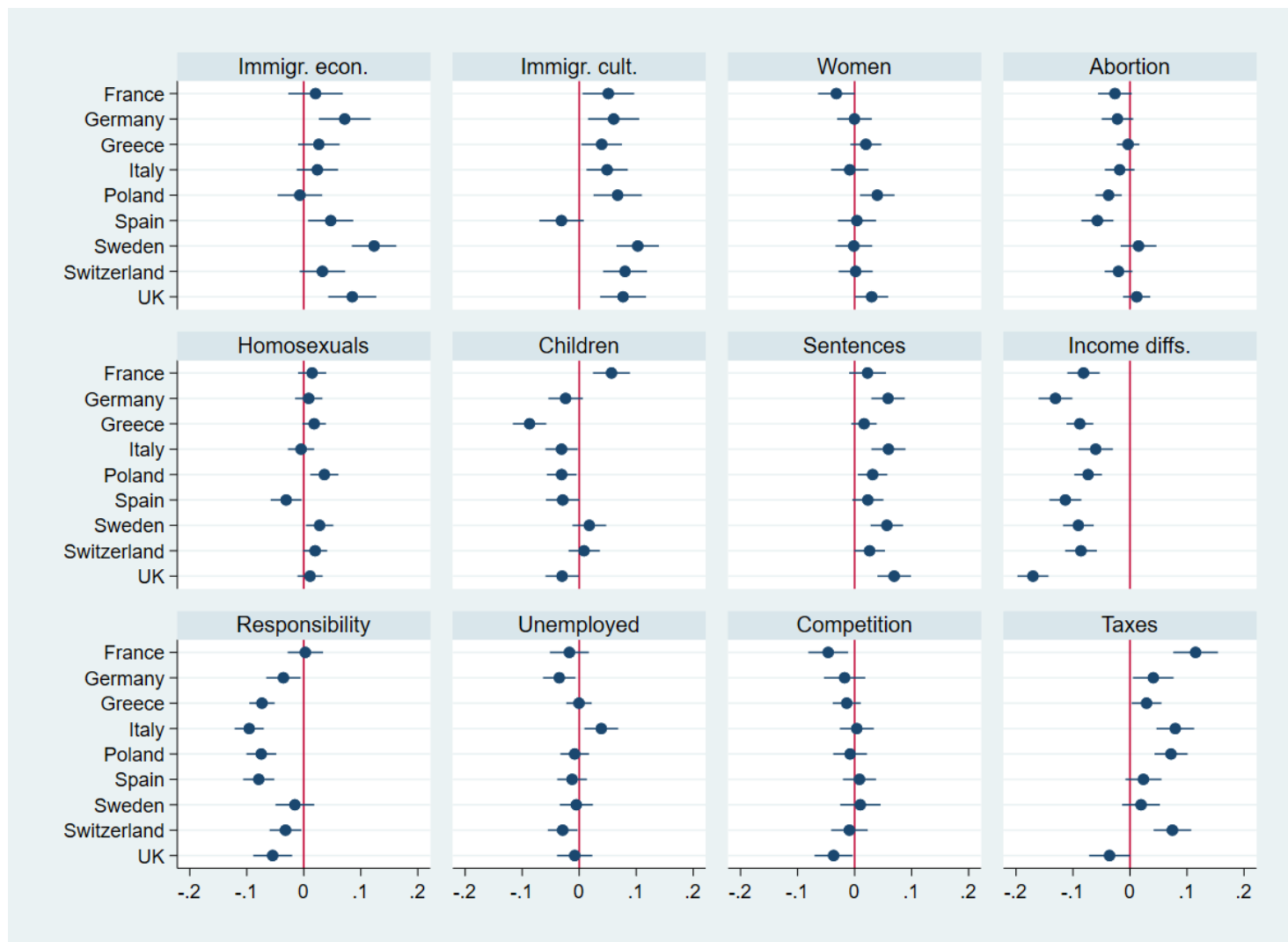# Populist attitudes and the left-right continuum

- Distribution of populism over left-right spectrum has U shape: most prevalent on both extreme left and extreme right. This is consistent with findings about the prevalence of populist rhetoric in party discourse (e.g., Rooduijn & Akkerman 2015).

- One deviation is those in the middle category (which is likely attracting the reluctant to reveal their preferences, the undefined, etc.).

- Aggregate pattern masks substantial country variation. In a few countries populism is typically right (e.g., CH) or left (e.g., Spain). But there's evidence of a link between populism and radicalism.

- Increasingly limited ability of the left-right continuum to account for policy differences across dimensions.

Policy issues: pooled analysis

FIML on pooled data set. Dependent variable is scale of populist attitudes (0-1). Policy scales are coded to run from "left" (lower values) to "right" (higher: anti-immigrant, cultural traditionalist, authoritarian, economic liberal, anti-EU). Country fixed effects. All predictors coded on a 0-1 scale.

Policy issues: Country patterns

FIML on country samples. Dependent variable is scale of populist attitudes (0-1). Policy scales are coded to run from "left" (lower values) to "right" (higher: anti-immigrant, cultural traditionalist, authoritarian, economic liberal). All predictors coded on a 0-1 scale.

Policy issues

- Populism largely associated with anti-immigrant attitudes, but are ambivalent on authoritarian values, welfare, and cultural issues.

- Some notable exceptions across countries.

- Some relevant "inconsistencies" within domains: particularly taxes vs. services/benefits, homosexuals' right to adopt.

- Limitations: (1) linear associations; (2) purely additive effects; (3) multicollinearity.
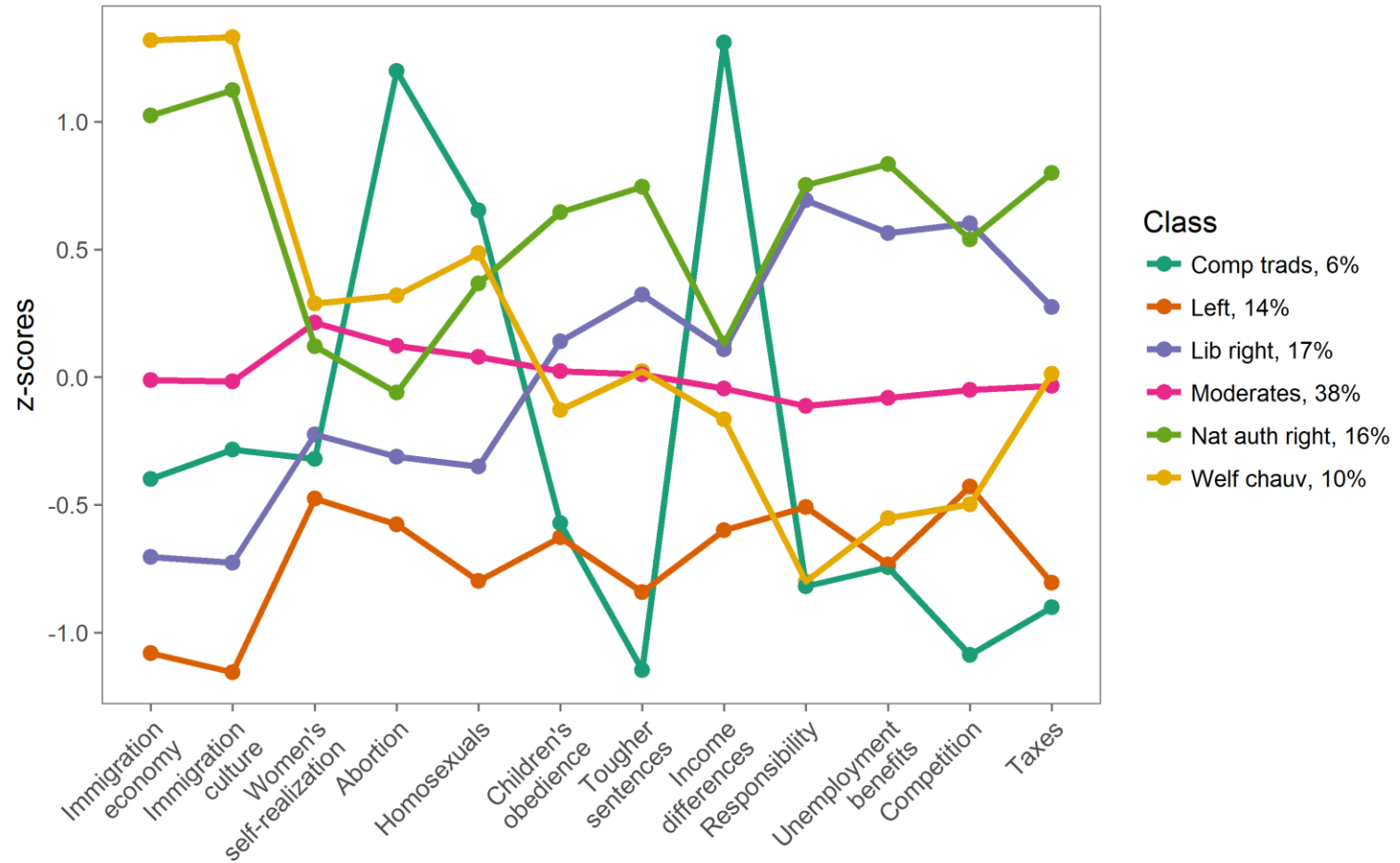
Latent class analysis

- Latent profile analysis: LCA for continuous variables.

- Person-centered equivalent to factor analysis.

- Goal is to classify individuals from a heterogeneous population into smaller, more homogenous subgroups based on individuals' values on continuous variables.

- Like conventional LCA, LPA finds a latent categorical variable based on observed indicators.

- One of the main problems is deciding on the number of classes. Many fit measures, these usually suggest different solutions. Large sample size is an issue (any additional class keeps improving fit).
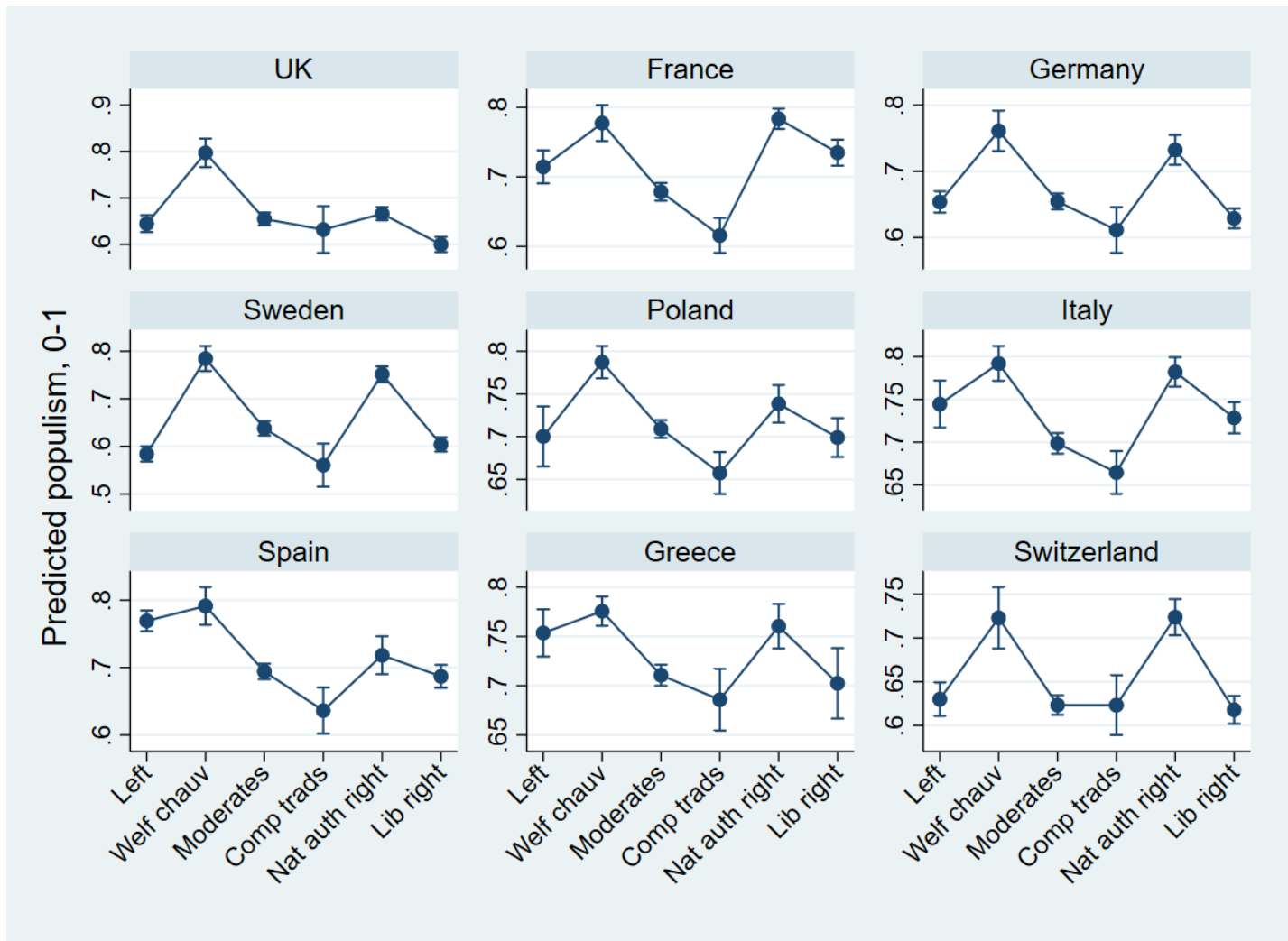
- Computationally demanding!

LCA

- Two steps: (1) identify ideological classes, (2) examine their levels of populism across countries

- Observed variables: 12 individual policy items, EU and populism excluded

- Populism as a distal outcome

- We specify 1- to 9-class models:

No. of classes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Parameters	24	37	50	63	76	89	102	115	128
Observations	18220	18220	18220	18220	18220	18220	18220	18220	18220
AIC	95591,94	80016,25	72976,08	66952,99	63086,48	60388,35	57322,25	53327,31	50715,01
AICC	95592,01	80016,4	72976,36	66953,43	63087,12	60389,23	57323,41	53328,78	50716,83
BIC	95779,39	80305,23	73366,6	67445,03	63680,06	61083,46	58118,9	54225,49	51714,72
aBIC	95703,12	80187,64	73207,7	67244,82	63438,54	60800,63	57794,75	53860,02	51307,95
LMR test (p-value)		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,007
VLMR test (p-value)		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,007
Entropy		0,718	0,776	0,735	0,74	0,753	0,772	0,834	0,83
Smallest class		40,5	20,6	14,5	13,7	5,5	8,3	5,0	4,5
Largest class		59,5	53,0	40,8	38,2	38,0	28,9	25,6	21,0
Smallest avg. prob.		0,908	0,877	0,870	0,777	0,793	0,799	0,833	0,816

6-class solution

How policy family predicts populism across countries

OLS of populist attitudes scale (0-1) on 6-class solution, country fixed effects, and the interaction between the two.

Concluding remarks

- Two ideological families appear to be regularly more populist than average: welfare chauvinists and nativist authoritarian conservatives

- Importantly, this may happen without a relevant political party advocating those positions in the country

- Consistently less populist are compassionate traditionalists, liberal right, moderates…

- Also the left, except in Spain and Greece, where relevant radical left parties exist

- Future iterations
    - Take multilevel structure of data into account in the estimation of the models (multiple group LPA)
    - Include party support

Thank you!

Comments welcome
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Question wording of policy items

Income: "Incomes should be made more equal" vs. "We need larger income differences as incentives"

Responsibility: "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves" vs. "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for" (R)

Unemployed: "People who are unemployed should have to take any job available or lose their unemployment benefits" vs. "People who are unemployed should have the right to refuse a job they do not want" (R)

Competition: "Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas" vs. "Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people" (R)

Taxes: "Government should decrease taxes a lot and spend much less on social benefits and services" vs. "Government should increase taxes a lot and spend much more on social benefits and services" (R)

Mother: "A woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled" vs. "A woman can be fulfilled through her professional career" (R)

Abortion: "A woman who does not want to have a child should be allowed to have a free and safe abortion" vs. "Abortion should not be allowed in any case"

Homosexual: "Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children" vs. "Homosexual couples should not be allowed to adopt children under any circumstances"

Obedience: "Children should be taught to obey authority" vs. "Children should be encouraged to have an independent judgement" (R)

Sentences: "People who break the law should get tougher sentences" vs. "Tougher sentences do not contribute to reduce criminality" (R)

Migration economy: Would you say it is generally bad or good for the [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? Please state your answer on this scale where 0 means 'Bad' and 10 means 'Good'.

Migration culture: Would you say that the [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? Please state your answer on this scale where 0 means 'Undermined' and 10 means 'Enriched'.