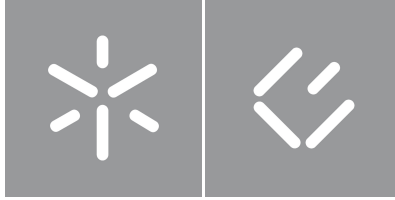


University of Minho

School of Economics, Management and Political Science

Sofia Mascarenhas Chumbo Pires

**Inflation, Living Costs, and
Support for Far-Right Parties
in Europe**



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Master's Dissertation in Economics

Dissertation supervised by

Linda Veiga

Fabio Padovano*

** under the scope of the Double Degree related to the International Master's
in Public Policies from University of Rennes*

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Statement of Integrity

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Sofia Mascarenhas Chumbo Pires

Abstract

Far-right parties' popularity and political power have been increasing markedly across Europe, especially since the beginning of this decade. Although this phenomenon is not new and has long attracted scholarly attention, the underlying economic mechanisms remain contested, and the role of rising living costs remains largely unexplored.

This dissertation aims to fill that gap by examining whether cost-of-living shocks translate into far-right electoral support, using pooled individual-level data from the 2019 and 2024 European Election Studies matched to Eurostat price indicators across 24 EU member states. The empirical analysis consists in the estimation of weighted mixed-effects probit models with random intercepts at the country and NUTS II level. Several robustness checks are implemented to strengthen the analysis, including separate estimations by survey wave, the application of the Benjamin–Hochberg false discovery rate correction, and fixed-effects multilevel probit specifications.

Results show that average aggregate-level inflation effects are statistically unstable once cross-country heterogeneity is fully accounted for, suggesting that rising living costs do not exert a homogeneous effect on support for far-right parties. On the contrary, conditional effects are significant: increases in food, energy, house prices, and rents amplify political support for far-right parties among individuals who are dissatisfied with democracy, already share values associated with far-right ideology, and belong to the lower class. High levels of regional crime further translate already-existing grievances into far-right political support. Additionally, political interest is positively associated with higher far-right support, which is intensified with inflation shocks.

Thus, this study demonstrates that inflationary pressures on essential goods function as a conditional, rather than uniform, catalyst for far-right support, intensifying radicalisation among already predisposed social groups.

Keywords Far-right, populism, inflation, living costs

Resumo

A popularidade e a influência política dos partidos de extrema-direita têm visto um aumento acentuado na Europa, principalmente desde o início da presente década. Embora este fenómeno já tenha recebido alguma atenção académica, ainda não existe consenso sobre o funcionamento dos mecanismos económicos que o sustentam. Particularmente, o papel do aumento do custo de vida continua subexplorado.

Esta dissertação procura dar resposta a essas questões, examinando de que forma o aumento do custo de vida se materializa em apoio político a partidos de extrema-direita, usando dados ao nível individual agrupados das sondagens de 2019 e 2024 dos Estudos Europeus sobre as Eleições, cruzados com indicadores de preços do Eurostat para 24 Estados-membros da União Europeia. A análise utiliza modelos probit multinível de efeitos mistos ponderados, com interceções aleatórias ao nível do país e NUTS II, complementados por vários testes de robustez, incluindo estimações separadas por edição de sondagem, a correção de Benjamin-Hochberg e a estimação dos modelos multinível com efeitos fixos.

Os resultados empíricos mostram que o efeito da inflação ao nível agregado não é estatisticamente significativo quando se controla para a heterogeneidade inter-países, o que sugere que o aumento do custo de vida não exerce um efeito homogéneo no aumento do apoio a partidos de extrema-direita. Contrariamente, os efeitos condicionais revelam-se significativos: aumentos nos preços da comida, da energia, e nos preços e rendas das casas amplificam o apoio a partidos de extrema-direita em indivíduos descontentes com o funcionamento da democracia, alinhados *a priori* com valores políticos da extrema-direita, e de classes sociais mais baixas. Níveis elevados de criminalidade regional têm o mesmo efeito de traduzir tensões políticas e económicas pré-existentes em apoio à extrema-direita. Adicionalmente, o interesse político está positivamente associado ao apoio a estes partidos, intensificando-se com choques inflacionários.

Assim, este estudo mostra que pressões nos preços de bens essenciais funcionam como um catalisador condicional, ao invés de uniforme, do apoio a partidos de extrema-direita, intensificando a radicalização de grupos sociais com predisposição anterior.

Palavras-chave Extrema-direita, populismo, inflação, custo de vida

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Acronyms

AME	Average Marginal Effect
CRE	Correlated Random-Effects (Mundlak test)
EES	European Election Study
EU	European Union
FDR	False Discovery Rate (Benjamini-Hochberg FDR correction)
FE	Fixed-Effects
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCOR	Housing Cost Overburden Rate
HICP	Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices
HPI	House Price Index
HRI	House Rent Index
ICC	Intraclass Correlation Coefficient
NUTS II	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (Level 2)
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
RE	Random-Effects

Chapter 1

Introduction

The resurgence of far-right parties' popularity in Western democracies is a notable feature of contemporary politics (see Figure 1). Although their re-emergence can be traced back to the 1990s, their true take-off in Europe appears to have coincided with the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis ([Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022](#)).

In recent years, these parties have consolidated their position across the political landscapes of EU member states. Notable examples include the election of Giorgia Meloni, leader of *Fratelli D'Italia*, as Italy's Prime Minister in 2022; the rising support for Germany's AfD, Finland's Finns Party, France's *Rassemblement National*, and Portugal's CHEGA; as well as the proliferation of smaller far-right movements throughout Europe.

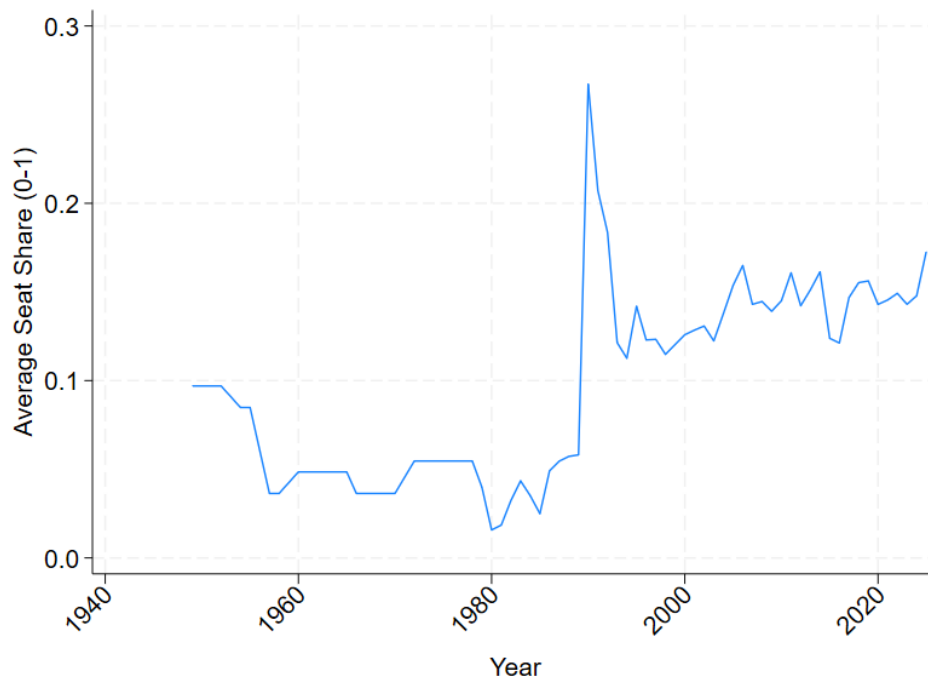


Figure 1: Far-right average parliament seat share in EU Member States (1945-2025)

At the same time, Europe has faced a severe inflationary shock after three decades of price stability. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, inflation surged, particularly in food and energy prices, exerting pressure on household budgets (Pallotti et al., 2023). Moreover, housing costs increased sharply across many European countries (Galster and Ok Lee, 2021), further contributing to the rise in the costs of living.

The electoral success of far-right parties has become a central topic in political economy and political science, reflecting a growing concern with understanding the renewed appeal of these movements (see Figure 2), whose bad impacts for the economy and society are vastly documented (Funke et al., 2023; Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022).

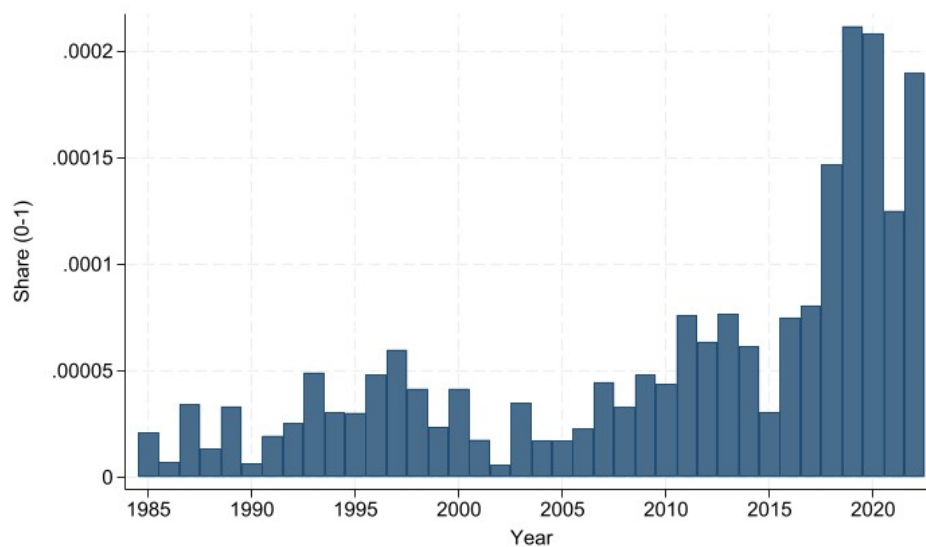


Figure 2: Share of JSTOR articles mentioning "far-right" in their title and/or abstract (1985-2022)

The literature on the drivers of support for extremist parties has extensively documented the role of economic distress triggered by key events such as globalisation (Rodrik, 2021), the Global Financial Crisis (Funke et al., 2016; Roumanias et al., 2022), and the Migration Crisis (Dinas et al., 2019), among others. Evidence shows that individuals are more likely to support radical parties when economic conditions deteriorate. Yet despite this broad consensus, the specific channel of essential goods price inflation (the cost of food, energy, and housing that shapes households' everyday living standards) has received little systematic empirical attention.

This dissertation aims to fill this gap. Using pooled data from the 2019 and 2024 European Election Studies for 24 EU member states, it investigates whether rising prices of essential goods and housing have contributed to increased support for far-right parties in Europe. Accordingly, the dissertation moves beyond asking whether price increases matter in general and instead examines the conditions under which they

translate into far-right support by combining baseline price-effect specifications with a systematic analysis of socio-economic moderators, and models of crime-context amplification. Being the most substantial contribution to the literature, it shows that price shocks matter conditionally: their political consequences depend on voters' pre-existing institutional discontent, social class position, immigration attitudes, gender, political interest, and the safety conditions of their local environment.

Five main findings emerge. It shows that aggregate-level average price effects on far-right parties' support are unstable once cross-country heterogeneity is accounted for. Second, rising living costs are shown to be a radicalisation mechanism of already dissatisfied and vulnerable individuals. Third, a gender gap in far-right support is observed, as men are consistently more likely to politically identify with them than women. Fourth, political interest is positively associated with far-right support, and increases in essential goods' prices further reinforce this trend. Fifth, high-crime regional contexts amplify the political translation of dissatisfaction, lower social class, and anti-immigration attitudes into far-right voting, a contextual amplification mechanism consistent with H3.

The dissertation is organised as follows. Chapter 2 discusses and systematizes the relevant literature. Chapter 3 describes the data, presents and justifies the testable hypotheses, and outlines and justifies the empirical strategy implemented. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the empirical results and robustness checks. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, limitation and further research direction related to this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Despite some academic debates on the elements defining far-right parties, most scholars converge on the idea of an ideological core combining ethno-nationalist, xenophobic, authoritarian and anti-establishment populist rhetorics (Rydgren, 2007). Within the scope of this literature, populism is generally understood as a "third-centered" ideology that antagonises regular people with "corrupted elites" (Mudde, 2004). As populism doesn't provide a clear common ideology (e.g. it doesn't categorically state who the "people" and "elites" are), it manifests differently across the political spectrum. In right-wing populism, "the people" are typically framed as the native and culturally homogeneous nation, while "the elites" are associated with national and supranational political institutions, technocrats, and mainstream media. This discourse is often accompanied by anti-expert and anti-globalisation rhetoric, and communicated through simplified and confrontational messaging that entices political conflict between ordinary citizens and corrupt elites (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022).

Additionally, there is an ongoing discussion about the correct usage of "far" versus "radical" right labels.

Political science literature makes a distinction between *radical* and *extreme* right. Parties classified as extreme right are characterised by a fundamental rejection of democratic institutions and an aim to overthrow them, while those belonging to the radical right accept acting within democratic boundaries but oppose certain civil liberties (Mudde, 2019; Pirro, 2023). While some scholars advocate for the use of precise categories, Pirro (2023) explains that employing "far-right" as an umbrella term can be useful given the ambiguity surrounding the rejection of democratic institutions, particularly considering that parties which appear to act within democratic limits often exhibit backstage, symbiotic relationships with extremist right-wing movements. Considering this argument, "far-right" is the nomenclature adopted for the parties analysed in this study, which is also consistent with the database used to classify European parties as far-right. ((Rooduijn et al., 2020).

A significant portion of the literature has focused on the demand-side determinants of far-right parties'

electoral success, referring to the factors that explain why citizens support and vote for such parties, while a complementary strand has examined supply-side determinants, which encompass the electoral rules, political competition dynamics and party organisational aspects enabling these parties to translate popular support into electoral results (Golder, 2016). Within this research, two broad approaches are commonly distinguished: one emphasises structural factors, such as macroeconomic conditions or shocks, while the other examines micro-level factors, including individual socio-economic characteristics and political attitudes. (Stockemer et al., 2018). Despite this distinction, these approaches frequently overlap (Rodrik, 2021), as economic and cultural mechanisms are often causally interrelated and empirically difficult to disentangle.

Moreover, with respect to the types of mechanisms used to explain support for far-right parties, three types of logic emerge: economic grievances, cultural backlash, and protest vote arguments. These arguments are tested using a wide range of different variables and indicators, and econometric methodologies (Stockemer et al., 2018).

This chapter is devoted to explaining the rationale for each of these mechanisms, summarising key findings, and motivating the empirical strategy used in the present study.

2.1 Economic Grievances Argument

The logic of the economic grievances argument has its roots in the realistic conflict theory (LeVine and Campbell, 1972), which holds that competition over limited economic resources can generate conflict between groups with opposing material interests. Within this framework, populist far-right parties often capitalise on such grievances by framing immigrants or other minorities as rival groups competing for scarce resources. In doing so, they attribute economic hardship to these out-groups, as well as to other actors such as political elites or welfare recipients, thereby redirecting blame and mobilising resentment among voters (Guiso et al., 2024; Golder, 2003, 2016).

Consistent with this perspective, a large body of literature links the electoral success of populist far-right parties to macroeconomic shocks, including economic crises (e.g., Funke et al., 2016; Roumanias et al., 2022), the globalisation of trade (e.g., Colantone and Stanig, 2018b, 2019; Rodrik, 2018, 2021), periods of economic stagnation (e.g., Greve et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021), and limited access to essential public services (Cremaschi et al., 2025). These structural developments can generate both objective (e.g., Stoetzer et al., 2023) and perceived forms of economic deprivation (e.g., Ferrari, 2021; Gugushvili et al., 2025; Jacobs and Kayser, 2025). The former encom-

passes macroeconomic measurements such as unemployment and wage stagnation (e.g., [Autor et al., 2020](#)), and the later includes subjective measurements of one's declining economic situation, which can be either egotropic (e.g., [Ferrari, 2021](#)) or relative (e.g., [Burgoon et al., 2019](#)).

In their aftermath, the “losers” of economic change may develop resentment towards incumbent governments and towards minorities frequently targeted by far-right rhetoric. Thus, economic stress doesn't automatically translate into far-right electoral success: it is contingent on parties' ability to politically mobilise the discontent resulting from it ([Arzheimer, 2009](#)).

Along this line of reasoning, there is an ongoing methodological debate within this literature about how economic grievances translate into support for the far right, which aims to grasp whether economic grievances directly increase far-right support among voters, or whether their effects operate indirectly through the mediation of political attitudes and perceptions (e.g., [Ferrari, 2021](#)).

This section is dedicated to presenting the relevant findings that fall in the two broad literature scopes previously mentioned.

2.1.1 Economic Crises

It is well established in the political economy literature on voting behaviour that voters reward or punish incumbent parties based on economic performance and macroeconomic events occurring during their time in office (e.g. [Kramer, 1971](#); [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000](#); [Lewis-Beck et al., 2008](#); [Lewis-Beck and Martini, 2020](#); [Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993](#)). There is evidence that this assessment of economic performance operates either through personal experience of economic grievances (*pocketbook voting*) ([Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979](#)) or through observation and evaluation of aggregate macroeconomic indicators (*sociotropic voting*) ([Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981](#)).

Furthermore, voters respond to crisis management, punishing incumbent parties for perceived incompetence in handling adverse economic events ([Healy and Malhotra, 2010](#)). Following this logic, a significant body of research examines whether major economic crises, largely exogenous in nature, lead voters to penalise incumbent parties by shifting their support towards anti-establishment alternatives ([Dehdari, 2022](#)).

First, this has been documented historically. [De Bromhead et al. \(2013\)](#) studied how the Great Depression contributed to the rise of fascist and other anti-establishment parties across several countries, demonstrating that prolonged economic failure enabled these parties to credibly position themselves as the only viable alternative capable of restoring prosperity, a strategy shared by contemporary far-right parties ([Funke et al., 2023](#)). [Funke et al. \(2016\)](#) further assessed the political impact of the Great Depression,

post-WWII banking crises, and other major financial crises, finding that in their aftermath, individuals are more likely to vote for far-right parties, parliaments become more fragmented, and political discontent intensifies, as evidenced by rising rates of riots, strikes, and political demonstrations. These findings highlight how financially disruptive crises have historically carved a path towards political polarisation.

Second, this pattern extends to more recent economic crises. [Algan et al. \(2017\)](#) show how the mass unemployment resulting from the Great Recession eroded electoral trust in both national and European political institutions, thereby fostering support for anti-establishment parties. Drawing on ([Giuliano and Spilimbergo, 2014](#); [Malmendier and Nagel, 2016](#)), the authors suggest that this erosion of institutional trust may be permanent, as severe recessions leave long-lasting scars on the political attitudes of affected cohorts. Similar findings are reported by [Dehdari \(2022\)](#), who analyses the Swedish case using both objective and self-reported measures of economic stress, and analogous conclusions are drawn by [Ahlquist et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Gyöngyösi and Verner \(2022\)](#) regarding other macroeconomic shocks that induce economic stress among voters.

[Roumanias et al. \(2022\)](#) extends this analysis by identifying the specific mechanisms through which economic shocks are converted into far-right electoral success. They find that the sharp drops in GDP during the Greek crisis enabled Golden Dawn to mobilise latent discontent and reframe economic grievances through a nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric, which benefited the party electorally.

Moreover, evidence suggests that the fiscal policy response to economic shocks significantly contributed to the rise of far-right support. [Ponticelli and Voth \(2020\)](#) demonstrate that fiscal consolidations—often implemented to combat debt crises—are systematically linked to social unrest. A prominent historical example is interwar Germany, where austerity measures fostered the social discontent and political opportunity necessary for the rise of the National Socialist Party ([Galofré-Vilà et al., 2021](#); [Voigtländer and Voth, 2026](#)).

This pattern remains evident in contemporary contexts. [Fetzer \(2019\)](#) shows how welfare reforms following the Great Recession in the UK fueled the electoral success of the UK Independence Party. Analogously, [Dal Bó et al. \(2018\)](#) find that the labour market uncertainty created by such austerity measures increased support for the Sweden Democrats, particularly among economically vulnerable demographics whose pre-existing anti-immigration sentiments were activated by their declining economic security.

2.1.2 Globalisation, Automation and Long-Term Economic Decline

Another branch of the literature on economic grievances examines the impact of secular trends, such as globalisation, automation, and regional long-term economic decline on the electoral success of far-right

parties. This body of research focuses on identifying the 'losers' of these structural shifts, namely individuals whose economic security and social status have been undermined by international trade and technological advancement, to assess whether these groups have pivoted towards far-right electoral options (e.g. [Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022](#)).

Regarding globalisation, early findings suggest that votes for the Republican Party increased in response to trade shocks affecting industries facing import competition ([Margalit, 2011](#)). Furthermore, incumbent parties are often electorally penalised following such shocks ([Jensen et al., 2017](#)), a finding consistent with economic voting theory ([Kramer, 1971](#); [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000](#)).

More recently, [Autor et al. \(2020\)](#) demonstrate that the high level of unemployment resulting from the closure of manufacturing plants due to Chinese import competition ([Acemoglu et al., 2016](#); [Autor and Dorn, 2013](#); [Autor et al., 2016](#)) contributed to an increase in political polarisation in the US, with predominantly white counties becoming more ideologically conservative ([Autor et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, this shock led legislators to vote on trade bills in a more protectionist direction ([Feigenbaum and Hall, 2015](#)).

Similar conclusions were found in the study of the European case ([Colantone and Stanig, 2018b](#)). [Dippel et al. \(2022\)](#) analyse the effect of trade liberalisation in Germany and found a causal relationship between increased support for far-right parties and the negative employment effects of trade on manufacturing workers. Similar results were found for the case of France ([Malgouyres, 2017](#)) and Italy ([Barone and Kreuter, 2021](#); [Caselli et al., 2020](#)). Furthermore, regions of the UK that were more adversely affected by trade competition were more likely to vote in favour of the Brexit referendum ([Colantone and Stanig, 2018a](#)).

[Rodrik \(2018\)](#) states that, while the increase in economic inequalities resulting from international trade is predictable according to standard trade theory, there is a lack of redistribution of trade gains from 'winners' to 'losers'. This can foster latent resentment towards winning elites, which far-right parties politically capitalise on. Consistent with this argument, [Pástor and Veronesi \(2021\)](#) show that trade-driven increases in inequality can raise voters' aversion to inequality, which in turn boosts support for populist parties advocating protectionist policies.

Automation, although a more recent and distinct phenomenon, produces similar labour market effects. Like trade, job automation is expected to negatively affect the employment and earnings of low ([Autor et al., 1998](#)) and middle-skilled workers ([Goos et al., 2014](#)) by substituting tasks previously performed by them. [Frey et al. \(2018\)](#) show that electoral districts with a greater proportion of workers in routine-based jobs were significantly more likely to support Trump in the 2016 US Presidential Election. Additionally, ([Anelli](#)

et al., 2019) found that greater exposure to robot adoption increased support for far-right parties in Western European countries, as automation-induced economic insecurity and political disillusionment drove voters away from mainstream parties, a finding corroborated by (Im et al., 2019).

More recently, greater attention has been placed on regional economic decline as secular phenomenon driving far-right support. Rodríguez-Pose (2018) introduced a conceptual framework theorising that support for far-right parties stems from regions that were previously prosperous but have undergone sustained economic decline. Inhabitants of such regions, often peripheral to the country's political and economic centres, are driven by feelings of abandonment and resentment towards a system they perceive as having failed them, making them receptive to anti-establishment parties. This idea has been empirically confirmed by Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2021) in the context of Trump's presidential elections (2016, 2020), as well as by Lee et al. (2018) and Carreras et al. (2019) for Brexit, Dijkstra et al. (2020b) for Eurosceptical voting, and Greve et al. (2023) for AfD votes in Germany. In particular, Greve et al. (2023) found that long-term economic decline politically mobilises discontent through the collective memory of a more prosperous economic past, reinforced by the existence of old industrial sites.

2.1.3 Living Costs

As exposed in the previous subsections, the relationship between declining living conditions, economic insecurity and far-right support has been mainly studied using indicators of individuals' economic conditions, particularly those related to the labour market.

The literature consensus is that economic insecurity is a multidimensional variable, encompassing objective and subjective dimensions of welfare (Osberg, 2015). Moreover, it often has a risk prism, reflecting uncertainty in labour market developments and future earnings prospects. (Osberg, 2015; Bossert and D'Ambrosio, 2013). Therefore, common measurements of economic insecurity in the empirical literature include income (Ferrari, 2021), perceptions of financial distress (Ferrari, 2021; Guiso et al., 2024; Ivanov, 2023; Rohde, 2023), unemployment (Guiso et al., 2024; Ivanov, 2023), job insecurity (Ivanov, 2023), among others. These papers find a positive relationship between economic insecurity and populist alignment, as well as an erosion of trust in political institutions.

More recently, attention has turned to other components affecting economic insecurity, such as the cost of living, which constitutes a fundamental dimension of households' economic well-being (OECD, 2024). Following the housing crisis phenomenon many European countries are facing (Hick et al., 2025; OECD, 2021), scholars have increasingly turned their attention to housing unaffordability as a significant source of economic stress. Evidence suggests that rising housing costs are associated with declining

support for income redistribution, growing political polarisation, and deterioration of institutional trust (Ansell and Cansunar, 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2022, 2025). There is also evidence for Germany that regional increases in rents are associated with increased support for far-right parties (Abou-Chadi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, inflation is also starting to spike interest in the literature. Baccini and Weymouth (2025) found that individuals facing a higher inflation burden were more likely to vote Republican in the 2022 US Congressional Elections. Additionally, Federle et al. (2024) show that inflation shocks throughout history had been associated with increased support for populist and extremist parties.

Nonetheless, despite recent interest and a literature- and evidence-based rationale supporting it, the role of living costs and declining purchasing power in shaping support for the far-right remains largely unexplored. This is surprising, given that changes in living costs, particularly for essential goods, capture a dimension of economic stress that is highly salient in citizens' daily lives. Unlike other macroeconomic indicators, price increases are directly and repeatedly experienced by individuals, making them highly salient and likely to influence voting behaviour through pocketbook considerations or similar electoral reactions. One possible explanation lies in the historically low inflation environment that characterised most European economies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which limited both the political salience of living costs as a driver of electoral behaviour and the cross-country variation necessary for credible empirical identification. The recent inflationary episode thus represents both a politically significant shock and a timely opportunity to examine this channel empirically.

2.2 Cultural Backlash Argument and Immigration

Parallel to the economic perspective, another line of research focuses on cultural backlash as a driver of far-right support. The institutionalisation of progressive values and increased immigration in Europe since the early 21st century ignited discontent among more conservative socioeconomic groups (Weeks and Allen, 2023). Far-right parties strategically amplify these grievances by framing themselves as defenders of traditional values and national identity, thereby attracting voters who feel alienated by rapid cultural and demographic changes (Betz, 1994; Inglehart and Norris, 2016).

2.2.1 Reaction to Progressivism

Recent advances for women and for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities constitute one source of cultural backlash against parties advocating progressive causes. These developments have generated resentment among conservative or previously dominant social groups, who perceive their identities to be under threat.

Consequently, they seek political leaders who advance conservative values-centred agendas (Noury and Roland, 2020).

This discontent is rooted in perceptions of declining dominance over political priorities among ethnic and cultural elites (Mutz, 2018; Weeks and Allen, 2023), and in a perceived decline in social status among previously advantaged groups, who attribute their downward movement in the social hierarchy to progressive cultural norms (Gidron and Hall, 2017).

Among other psychological triggers, this political strategy is fueled by the “politics of fear,” that is, the strategic mobilisation of anxieties and perceived threats (particularly those related to cultural and identity threats, the erosion of traditional values, as well as broader anxieties concerning national autonomy) to foster social divisions, legitimise exclusionary policies, and therefore increase far-right parties’ appeal (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Wodak, 2015).

In recent years, far-right parties have capitalised on this logic by centring their agenda on opposing social movements and public discourse that strive for the rights of vulnerable groups such as women (Bernardez-Rodal et al., 2022), sexual (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018) and ethnic minorities (Breyer et al., 2025).

Progresses in women’s rights have been steady throughout this century, but they have recently met with a wave of resistance, as shown by the rise of online groups such as the “manosphere”, where users spread the view of women’s emancipation as being a zero-sum process, meaning that they view progress in women’s rights as a direct loss for men (Rothermel, 2023). Far-right parties mobilise this logic by articulating anti-feminist positions alongside nativist and anti-Islamic narratives, promoting traditional gender roles and women’s “responsibility” for reproduction and domestic care as a means of safeguarding national identity and ensuring the demographic reproduction of the native population (Bernardez-Rodal et al., 2022; Rothermel, 2023). A similar strategy is employed against the progress on the rights of sexual minorities, by characterising it as a fundamental threat to the traditional family unit and the preservation of national cultural identity (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018).

This zero-sum framing also operates in relation to racial minorities and immigrants, with conservatives often interpreting advances in their rights as occurring at the expense of the native population. Evidence further indicates that cultural backlash is particularly pronounced in this area, exceeding that directed at women and sexual minorities (Breyer et al., 2025). In this context, anti-Islam sentiment emerges as a salient dimension of contemporary backlash, increasingly endorsed and instrumentalised by far-right leaders to mobilise electoral support (Oztig, 2023; Pickel and Öztürk, 2020).

2.2.2 Immigration

There is a consensus that anti-immigration attitudes are strongly associated with support for far-right parties (Barone et al., 2016; Stockemer et al., 2018; Van der Brug et al., 2000), and such attitudes are typically shaped by whether natives perceive immigrants as economic or cultural threats Betz (1994); Erisen and Kentmen-Cin (2017); Facchini and Mayda (2009); Noury and Roland (2020).

These negative attitudes towards immigration is contingent on several factors. First, the literature shows that the size of immigration waves matters. While small settlements of immigrants can reduce far-right voting, large migration waves are likely to increase it (Vertier and Viskanic, 2018). Similarly, Ajzenman et al. (2022) found that in regions more exposed to mass transit migration, individuals are more likely to develop anti-immigration sentiments. These findings are backed by (Barone et al., 2016; Becker et al., 2016; Edo et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there is evidence that sometimes the far-right vote is not pushed by real but rather perceived intensity of migration flows (Barrera et al., 2020).

Second, immigrants' skill level influences backlash. Halla et al. (2012) found that far-right voting was more prevalent in Austrian regions with a higher share of immigrants with a level of skills closer to the native ones. However, that is not a consensus in the literature, as Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) shows that rich and poor natives equally oppose low-skilled immigration due to labour market and taxation-related concerns. Similar conclusions were reported by (Mayda et al., 2022; Moriconi et al., 2022).

Third, language and cultural proximity are relevant predictors of cultural backlash. Tabellini (2020) finds that anti-immigration sentiments among US citizens are stronger when immigrants differ from natives in language and religious beliefs, which in turn favours the election of conservative legislators.

Moreover, some authors argue that the primary driver of far-right support is not cultural backlash *per se*, but rather economic insecurity stemming from routine economic developments, long-term secular trends, or economic crises, which in turn fosters cultural backlash and anti-immigration sentiments within society (Dinas et al., 2019; Ferrara, 2023; Ferrari, 2021; Guiso et al., 2017, 2024; Rohde, 2023). Moreover, some authors argue that the primary driver of far-right support is not cultural backlash *per se*, but rather economic insecurity stemming from routine economic developments, long-term secular trends, or economic crises, which in turn fosters cultural backlash and anti-immigration sentiments within society (Dinas et al., 2019; Ferrara, 2023; Ferrari, 2021; Guiso et al., 2017, 2024; Rohde, 2023). While the primacy of economic factors remains contested in the literature (Margalit, 2019), it is nonetheless widely argued that economic and cultural grievances are not mutually exclusive mechanisms shaping support for far-right parties (Manunta et al., 2025).

2.3 Protest Vote Argument

One key dilemma in the literature explaining far-right support concerns the motivations underlying individuals' voting behaviour. On the one hand, a branch of the literature argues that support for anti-establishment parties primarily reflects dissatisfaction with the political status quo and existing institutions. This appeal stems from these parties' anti-establishment rhetoric, which is further reinforced by their exclusion through the cordon sanitaire strategies adopted by mainstream parties (Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007). On the other hand, a distinct strand advances that voters may support these parties because they believe they offer the best solutions to the economic and cultural issues they perceive, consistent with the classical Public Choice view of a utility-maximising voter.

Many authors have studied political discontent and resentment towards economic and political elites as a direct or indirect mechanism fostering far-right parties' political success (Altomonte et al., 2019; Betz, 1994; Funke et al., 2016; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000; Mayer and Perrineau, 1992; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021).

In opposition, Van der Brug et al. (2000) and van der Brug and Fennema (2003) show that the support for European anti-establishment far-right parties, rather than mostly coming out of political discontent directly, is mostly driven by ideological alignment and anti-immigration stances. That view is supported by (Brils et al., 2022; Zhirkov, 2014).

Muis et al. (2022) complementary shows that far-right parties' power to attract votes motivated by discontent decreases once these parties "become the system" and join government coalitions. Similar conclusions are presented by (Cohen, 2020; Kriesi and Schulte-Cloos, 2020).

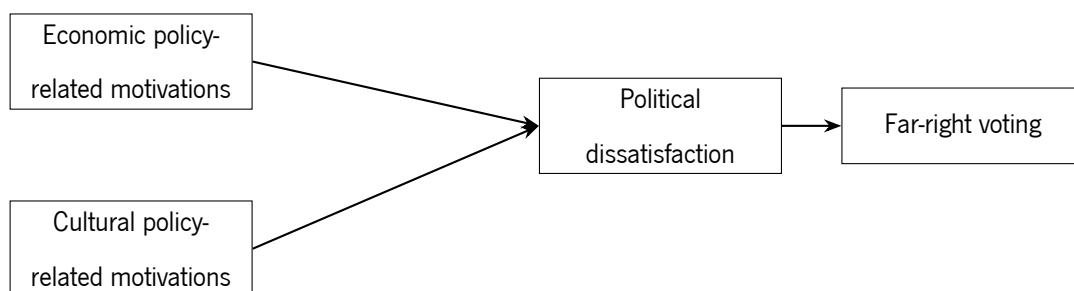


Figure 3: Indirect paths linking economic and cultural grievances to far-right voting.

Adapted from (Muis et al., 2022)

2.4 Socio-Economic Characteristics

Another strand of the literature examining support for far-right parties focuses on how socio-economic characteristics shape individuals' political choices. The underlying rationale is that different demographic groups not only display varying propensities to align with the core values of far-right ideology (e.g. [Harteveld et al., 2015](#)), but also respond differently to economic and social developments. As a result, macroeconomic and sociological phenomena are unlikely to affect individuals in a homogeneous way (e.g. [Oesch, 2008](#)).

While this socio-economic framework assumes predictable patterns of support, [Stockemer et al. \(2018\)](#) show that traditional predictors such as education, employment, and immigration attitudes often lack consistent significance, pointing to a more heterogeneous electorate whose underlying dynamics are not fully captured by standard survey measures. This heterogeneity suggests that individual characteristics do not operate in isolation, but rather interact with broader economic and contextual conditions.

2.4.1 Gender

Among individual characteristics, gender is one of the most consistently analysed and successful socio-demographic predictors of far-right support ([Stockemer et al., 2018](#)). Numerous studies have confirmed the existence of a gender gap, with men being more likely than women to vote for far-right parties ([Stockemer et al., 2018](#)), especially among younger cohorts ([Off et al., 2025](#)). This can be explained by the male-dominated leadership and anti-feminist rhetoric of many far-right parties ([Anduiza and Rico, 2024](#); [Givens, 2004](#); [Ralph-Morrow, 2022](#)), men's generally higher social conservatism, or parties' aggressive political style, which may discourage women from supporting them, even if they politically identify with them ([Harteveld et al., 2015](#)), and behavioural gender differences such as risk aversion ([Oshri et al., 2023](#)).

Additionally, ([Gidron and Hall, 2017](#)) highlight the role of subjective social status, arguing that far-right parties appeal disproportionately to men whose perceived social standing has declined as a result of economic restructuring and cultural change. By framing such transformations as threats to traditional gender roles, these parties mobilise status anxiety as a driver of support among men who feel their position in the social hierarchy to be under threat.

Nonetheless, the gender gap associated with far-right support has been declining over the years ([Mayer, 2013](#)).

2.4.2 Age

Age also emerges as a relevant factor, with younger individuals often displaying stronger support for far-right parties, potentially due to youth unemployment and the heightened competition this group faces when entering the labour market (Stockemer et al., 2018). More specifically, precarious and temporary employment contracts that disproportionately affect this cohort have also been identified as a relevant mechanism (Zagórski et al., 2021). Beyond economic vulnerability, younger voters may also be more susceptible to far-right mobilisation due to weaker attachments to traditional parties and the greater salience they attach to issues such as immigration (van der Brug et al., 2026). Regarding the interaction between age and gender, there is evidence that the gender gap in far-right support is wider among younger cohorts, with young men increasingly gravitating towards the far right while young women move in the opposite direction (Milosav et al., 2025).

2.4.3 Education

Educational attainment is another consistent predictor. Individuals with lower education tend to be more supportive of far-right parties, as they are more likely to face job competition due to globalisation and are more vulnerable to economic conditions, especially during downturns (Harteveld et al., 2015). For those reasons, far-right support is shown to increase among individuals with lower educational attainment when immigration rises (Cordero et al., 2022). Additionally, lower educational attainment is associated with more prevalent authoritarian and racist views (Scott, 2022), and with stronger anti-immigration attitudes (Cavaille and Marshall, 2019), making such individuals more susceptible to far-right rhetoric.

However, Stockemer et al. (2018) points out that globalisation and labour market effects may weaken over time, as job insecurity is rising for highly educated individuals as well. Furthermore, there is evidence that the education gap in far-right voting is widening across generations (Schäfer and Steiner, 2026).

2.4.4 Urbanization

As discussed in section 2.1.2, there is evidence that regional inequalities and economic decline foster the support for far-right parties (e.g. Carreras et al., 2019; Dijkstra et al., 2020a; Greve et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021).

At the individual level, this regional dimension translates into a consistent urban-rural divide, with residents of rural and peripheral areas being significantly more likely to support far-right parties (Harteveld et al., 2022). This divide is not merely a compositional artefact of rural areas concentrating lower-educated

or economically vulnerable individuals: even after accounting for individual characteristics, place of residence retains an independent effect, driven primarily by cultural rather than economic attitudes ([Huijismans and Rodden, 2025](#)). A key individual-level mechanism is place-based resentment, that is, the subjective perception of being politically and economically abandoned relative to urban centres ([Huijismans, 2023](#)), which is compounded by residential constraints that limit the ability of those in declining areas to exit their situation ([Patana, 2022](#)).

2.4.5 Unemployment and Poverty

A similar rationale applies to unemployment, social class, and rural residence. Economic grievances arising from unemployment, limited access to public services, and local economic decline ([Spies, 2013](#)) can foster far-right support. However, as highlighted by the meta-analysis in [Stockemer et al. \(2018\)](#), the empirical relationship between unemployment and far-right voting is not strongly consistent. One possible explanation is that far-right parties often prioritise groups perceived as "deserving" in their agenda, thereby excluding the unemployed from their core narrative. More broadly, the literature suggests that it is not actual economic hardship per se but rather the prospect of economic and status decline that most consistently drives far-right support, including among individuals in routine occupations facing occupational devaluation ([Kurer, 2020](#)), those who have experienced intergenerational downward class mobility ([Gugushvili et al., 2025](#)), those whose economic status has fallen below their expectations ([Kurer and Van Staalduinen, 2022](#); [Ciccolini, 2025](#)), and those threatened by automation who are nonetheless still managing financially ([Im et al., 2019](#)). Rising income inequality further compounds these dynamics by intensifying the perception of threatened social decline among lower and lower-middle income groups ([Engler and Weisstanner, 2021](#)).

2.4.6 Religion

Regarding religion, [Arzheimer and Carter \(2009\)](#) shows that, despite far-right parties' frequent invocation of Christian symbols, Christian individuals are more likely to support Christian democratic and conservative alternatives. Yet [Cremer \(2022, 2023\)](#) suggests that appeals to Christianity as a symbol of Western culture have enhanced cultural backlash and anti-immigration sentiments among the electorate, operating less as a genuine religious mobilisation than as a cultural identity strategy targeting increasingly secular voters. This has been confirmed in more recent cross-national evidence, as [Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville \(2022\)](#) find that in no Western European country is religiosity positively associated with far-right support.

2.5 Research Goal and Summary Table

This dissertation aims to address the research gap of assessing the impacts of inflation on essential goods and far-right support. In parallel, it examines heterogeneity in voting responses across socio-demographic groups, addressing [Stockemer et al. \(2018\)](#)'s critique of the lack of nuance in analyses of far-right voting patterns, while also exploring the role of economic grievances as a trigger for far-right support among individuals already economically, culturally, and politically dissatisfied ([Ferrari, 2021](#); [Guiso et al., 2024](#)).

Building on this broader framework of contextual economic and social stressors, the analysis further considers whether high-criminality environments constitute an additional source of perceived insecurity that may shape far-right support. This angle, to the author's knowledge, has not yet been explored in the existing literature.

Table 2 summarises the key findings of the literature discussed above.

Table 2: Determinants of Far-Right Support in the Literature

References	Mechanism	Main Findings
<i>Economic Grievances</i>		
Funke et al. (2016); Algan et al. (2017); Dehdari (2022)	Economic crises	Financial crises increase far-right voting through unemployment, economic distress, and declining institutional trust.
Ponticelli & Voth (2020); Fetzer (2019)	Austerity	Fiscal consolidations intensify social unrest and increase far-right support among vulnerable groups.
Autor et al. (2020); Colantone & Stanig (2018)	Trade shocks	Import competition leads to job losses and higher support for nationalist and far-right parties.
Anelli et al. (2019); Frey et al. (2018)	Automation	Automation-induced job risk increases support for far-right parties.
Rodríguez-Pose (2018); Dijkstra et al. (2020)	Regional decline	Long-term economic decline generates place-based resentment and far-right voting.
Ferrari et al. (2021); Guiso et al. (2024)	Economic insecurity	Objective and perceived financial distress increase support for populist and far-right parties.
Abou-Chadi & Kurer (2016)	Housing costs	Rising housing costs are associated with higher far-right support.

Continued on next page

Table 2 – continued

References	Mechanism	Main Findings
Baccini et al. (2025); Federle et al. (2024)	Inflation	Inflation shocks reduce real incomes and increase support for populist parties.
<i>Cultural Backlash and Immigration</i>		
Inglehart & Norris (2016); Betz (1994); Wodak (2015)	Identity threat	Resistance to progressive values and strategic mobilisation of cultural and identity threats are key drivers of far-right support.
Mutz (2018); Gidron & Hall (2017); Weeks & Allen (2023)	Status threat	Perceptions of declining dominance among previously advantaged groups and loss of social status fuel far-right voting.
Noury & Roland (2020); Bernardez-Rodal et al. (2022); Rothermel (2023)	Gender backlash	Far-right parties mobilise anti-feminist sentiment by framing women's rights as a zero-sum loss for men, promoting traditional gender roles alongside nativist narratives.
Paternotte & Kuhar (2018)	Anti-LGBT attitudes	Opposition to sexual minority rights, framed as a threat to the traditional family and national identity, is instrumentalised by far-right parties.
Breyer et al. (2025); Oztig (2023); Pickel & Öztürk (2020)	Anti-immigration attitudes	Cultural backlash is strongest against racial minorities and immigrants; anti-Islam sentiment is a salient and electorally mobilised dimension of contemporary far-right politics.
Vertier (2018); Ajzenman et al. (2022)	Migration exposure	Large immigration inflows increase perceived threat and far-right support.
Halla et al. (2012); Mayda et al. (2022)	Labour competition	Labour market concerns shape opposition to immigration, with mixed evidence.
Tabellini (2020)	Cultural distance	Cultural differences intensify backlash and nationalist voting.
Dinas et al. (2019); Guiso et al. (2024)	Economic roots	Economic insecurity indirectly fuels anti-immigration attitudes.
<i>Socio-economic Characteristics</i>		
Stockemer (2018); Harteveld et al. (2015)	Gender	Men are more likely to support far-right parties.

Continued on next page

Table 2 – continued

References	Mechanism	Main Findings
Zagórski et al. (2021); Van Hauwaert (2026)	Age	Younger voters show higher support, linked to labour market insecurity.
Cavaillé & Marshall (2019); Cordero et al. (2022)	Education	Lower education is associated with higher far-right support.
Harteveld et al. (2022); Huijsmans et al. (2023)	Geography	Rural and peripheral regions show stronger far-right support.
Kurer (2020); Engler & Weisstanner (2021)	Status decline	Perceived downward mobility is a key driver of far-right voting.

Chapter 3

Data and Methodology

This chapter presents the data used in the empirical analysis, outlines the main hypotheses, and justifies and describes the econometric methodology employed.

3.1 Data Description

The empirical analysis relies on two main data sources: the European Election Study (EES) databases resulting from the 2024 and 2019 waves, and Eurostat. These two EES waves provide individual-level information on approximately 1,000 surveyed citizens from each EU Member State. They gather information on voting behaviour, political preferences, and socio-economic characteristics. Despite not following the same individuals over time, design consistency across waves enables the use of repeated cross-sections to analyse patterns at the cohort level.

Four dependent variables related to voting behaviour are created from the EES. Parties are classified as far-right according to *The PopuList* dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2020), which provides information on the ideological positioning of European political parties. The dataset distinguishes between far-right parties and those labelled as "borderline" far-right. Thus, PFR_r equals one if the respondent states identifying more with a national far-right party categorised as far-right in *The Populist*, and zero otherwise; PFR_b is built considering the "borderline" cases. Accordingly, PFR_r equals one if the respondent reported voting for a far-right party, and zero otherwise; similarly, VFR_b includes parties classified as far-right under the broader definition.

The final sample covers 24 of the 27 EU Member States, excluding Malta, Ireland, and Lithuania. Malta is excluded as there is no data available on Maltese political parties in *The PopuList*. Conversely, no Irish parties are classified as far-right. In the case of Lithuania, far-right political parties are not offered as response options for the relevant EES questions. The list of countries included in the analysis and the party's classifications are reported in Annex's Tables 16 and 17.

The explanatory variables can be grouped in three categories: socio-economic characteristics and political attitudes, which are derived from the EES waves, and macroeconomic indicators, which are obtained from Eurostat. Socio-economic controls include a set of dummy variables for gender (*Man*), age group (*Young*), educational attain-

ment (below secondary level - *BelowSec* - and above - *AboveSec*), residence in a large city (*City*), unemployment status (*Unemployed*), self-reported social class (*LowClass*), and religious affiliation (*Christian*). Political attitudes are captured through indicators for interest in politics (*IntPol*), dissatisfaction with democracy (*DissDem*), opposition to same-gender marriage (*OppSGM*), opposition to income redistribution (*OppRedist*), and support for restrictive immigration policies (*OppImmig*).

Price data¹ comprise national-level indicators of the inflation rate (*Inf*) and several of its sub-components: food (*Food*), bread and cereals (*Bread*), and household energy consumption. Additionally, the analysis includes housing market indicators such as the House Price Index (*HPI*), the House Rent Index (*HRI*), and the Housing Cost Overburden Rate (*HPOR*), which measures the share of the population spending 40% or more of household disposable income on housing expenses. This last variable was tested but not included in the final regressions.

Accordingly, price data are available only at the national level. To address this, national statistical institutes for all countries included in the empirical analysis were contacted to determine the availability of regional data. Only Portugal and Spain provide inflation data at the NUTS II level; however, these series are not harmonised and were therefore not included in the analysis.

Additional macroeconomic controls² include the one year-lagged difference between NUTS II GDP and national average (*GDPNUTSII_d*), the one-year lag and one-year change in unemployment rate at the NUTS II level (*UnempNUTSII*, *UnempNUTSII_c*), the one year-lagged difference between NUTS II unemployment rate and national average (*UnempNUTSII_d*), and at-risk-of-poverty rate at national and NUTS II level (*ARPoverty*).

Crime rate variables (*Assaults*, *Homicides*, *Robbery*) are dummies that are equal to one if the regional incidence of assaults, homicides, and robberies exceeds the 75th percentile across EU NUTS II regions.

Whenever available, the analysis employs indicators at the NUTS II level to explore within-country variations; national-level data is used otherwise. Definitions and data sources are reported for each variable in Table 3. Table 4 presents descriptive statistics.

ARPoverty, *HICP-Bread* and *HPOR* were included in preliminary regressions but not in the final specifications.

Additionally, the empirical analysis applies the survey's post-stratification weights, accounting for gender, age, region, urbanisation and education levels (*WGT3* in EES2019 and *WIGHT2* in EES 2024). That improves sample's representativeness of the EU population.

Figures 4 and 5 show correlations between the different specifications of dependent variables and political attitudinal variables, respectively.

As the support and voting variables constructed using the restricted definition of far-right parties are nested within the corresponding variables constructed using the broader definition, their correlation is very high and positive (around 0.96), as expected. By contrast, the correlation between support and vote

¹ Eurostat (2025a,b,c)

² Eurostat (2025d,e)

Table 3: Description of the Variables

Variable	Brief description	Source
PFR_r	Dummy = 1 if the party the respondent most identifies with is classified as far-right under the stricter parties' classification, 0 otherwise	EES
PFR_b	Dummy = 1 if the party the respondent most identifies with is classified as far-right under the broader parties' classification, 0 otherwise	EES
VFR_r	Dummy = 1 if the respondent voted for a party classified as far-right under the stricter party classification in the last election, 0 otherwise	EES
VFR_b	Dummy = 1 if the respondent voted for a party classified as far-right under the broader party classification in the last election, 0 otherwise	EES
Man	Dummy = 1 if respondent is male	EES
Young	Dummy = 1 if respondent is aged 16–35	EES
City	Dummy = 1 if respondent lives in a large city	EES
BelowSec	Dummy = 1 if education is below secondary level	EES
AboveSec	Dummy = 1 if education is above secondary level	EES
LowC	Dummy = 1 if respondent identifies as working or lower class	EES
Unemployed	Dummy = 1 if respondent is unemployed	EES
Christian	Dummy = 1 if respondent is Christian	EES
IntPol	Dummy = 1 if interested in politics	EES
DissDem	Dummy = 1 if dissatisfied with democracy	EES
OppSGM	Dummy = 1 if opposes same-sex marriage	EES
OppRedist	Dummy = 1 if opposes income redistribution	EES
OppImmig	Dummy = 1 if favours restrictive immigration policies	EES
Inf_t	Inflation rate (HICP – All items)	Eurostat
HICP-Bread	Inflation rate for bread and cereals (HICP)	Eurostat
HICP-Food	Food inflation rate (HICP)	Eurostat
HICP-Energy	Energy inflation rate (HICP)	Eurostat
HousePrice	House Price Index (residential property prices)	Eurostat
HouseRent	House Rent Index	ECB
HPOR	Housing cost overburden rate (share paying >40% of income)	Eurostat
ARP	At-risk-of-poverty rate	Eurostat
$GDPNUTSII_d$	Difference between NUTS II real GDP and national average	Eurostat
$UnempNUTSII$	One-year lagged unemployment rate (NUTS II level; national level when missing)	Eurostat
$UnempNUTSII_c$	One-year change in unemployment rate (NUTS II level; national level when missing)	Eurostat
$UnempNUTSII_d$	Difference between NUTS II unemployment rate and national average	Eurostat
Assaults	Police-recorded assault offences per 100,000 inhabitants	Eurostat
Homicides	Police-recorded intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants	Eurostat
Robbery	Police-recorded robberies per 100,000 inhabitants	Eurostat

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Obs.
Socioeconomic variables from the EES					
<i>PFR_r</i>	0.112	0.315	0	1	51,691
<i>PFR_b</i>	0.119	0.323	0	1	51,691
<i>VFR_r</i>	0.134	0.341	0	1	51,691
<i>VFR_b</i>	0.140	0.347	0	1	51,691
<i>Man</i>	0.486	0.500	0	1	51,691
<i>Young</i>	0.272	0.445	0	1	51,691
<i>City</i>	0.741	0.438	0	1	51,691
<i>BelowSec</i>	0.315	0.464	0	1	48,959
<i>AboveSec</i>	0.181	0.385	0	1	48,959
<i>LowClass</i>	0.385	0.487	0	1	51,691
<i>Unemp</i>	0.061	0.239	0	1	51,691
<i>Christian</i>	0.557	0.497	0	1	51,691
<i>IntPol</i>	0.593	0.491	0	1	51,691
<i>DissDem</i>	0.209	0.406	0	1	51,691
<i>OppSGM</i>	0.350	0.477	0	1	51,691
<i>OppRedist</i>	0.245	0.430	0	1	51,691
<i>OppImmig</i>	0.398	0.489	0	1	51,691
Economic variables from Eurostat					
<i>ARP</i>	16.187	3.707	9.5	23.8	50,724
<i>Inf_r</i>	2.171	1.141	0.3	5.8	51,691
<i>HICP-Food</i>	2.090	1.702	-2.9	5.8	51,691
<i>HICP-Bread</i>	2.013	2.366	-3.7	8.7	51,691
<i>HICP-Energy</i>	-0.372	4.003	-10.1	9.7	51,691
<i>HousePrice</i>	5.709	4.639	-5.237	16.955	49,695
<i>HouseRent</i>	8.318	4.966	2.6	28.5	25,656
<i>GDPNUTSII_d</i>	0.736	1.005	-2.960	3.290	39,508
<i>UnempNUTSII</i>	6.285	3.578	1.3	30	51,691
<i>UnempNUTSII_c</i>	-0.297	0.849	-4.6	2.8	51,691
<i>UnempNUTSII_d</i>	0.057	1.867	-5.9	17.8	51,691
Other variables from Eurostat					
<i>AssaultsNUTSII</i>	282.915	251.489	15.1	1421.04	36,825
<i>HomicidesNUTSII</i>	1.199	0.922	0	6.020	34,880
<i>RobberyNUTSII</i>	40.793	58.077	1.20	505.39	39,265

variables is substantially lower, although still large and positive (around 0.6). This difference likely reflects the fact that ideological proximity does not always translate directly into electoral support, as voters may strategically favour parties with greater perceived electoral viability but still ideologically close to them (Myerson and Weber, 1993). For that reason, similar empirical results are expected for regressions using PFR_b and PFR_r , as well as for those using VFR_b and VFR_r . However, this does not necessarily hold for regressions using PFR_b and VFR_b or PFR_r and VFR_r .

Political attitudinal variables may raise multicollinearity concerns, since individuals supporting far-right parties plausibly hold many of these beliefs simultaneously, as they together make up the far-right ideological profile (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). However, as shown in Figure 5, correlations among these variables are small, suggesting multicollinearity is unlikely to pose significant estimation issues.

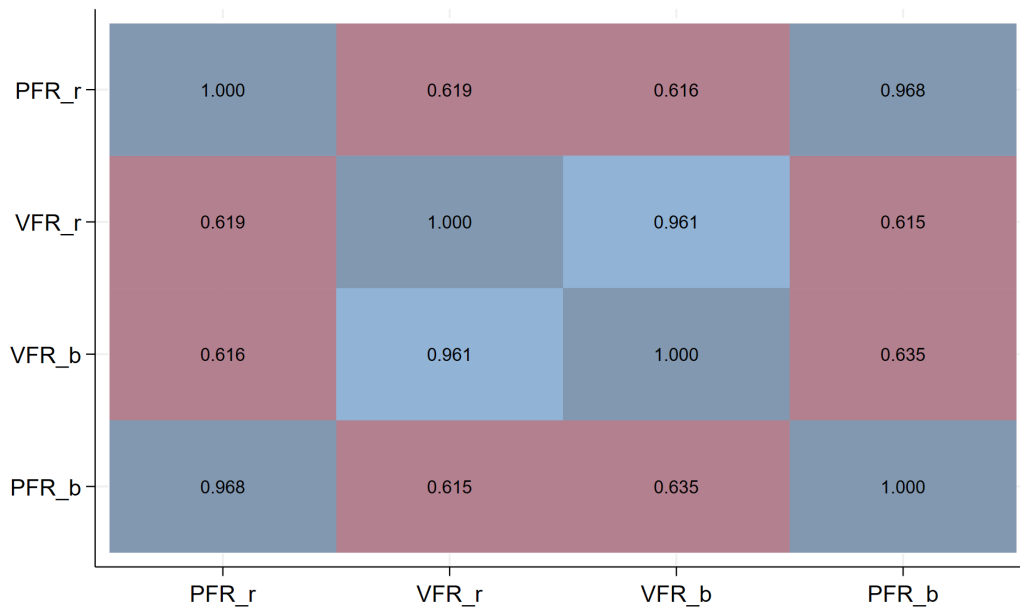


Figure 4: Correlation matrix - dependent variables

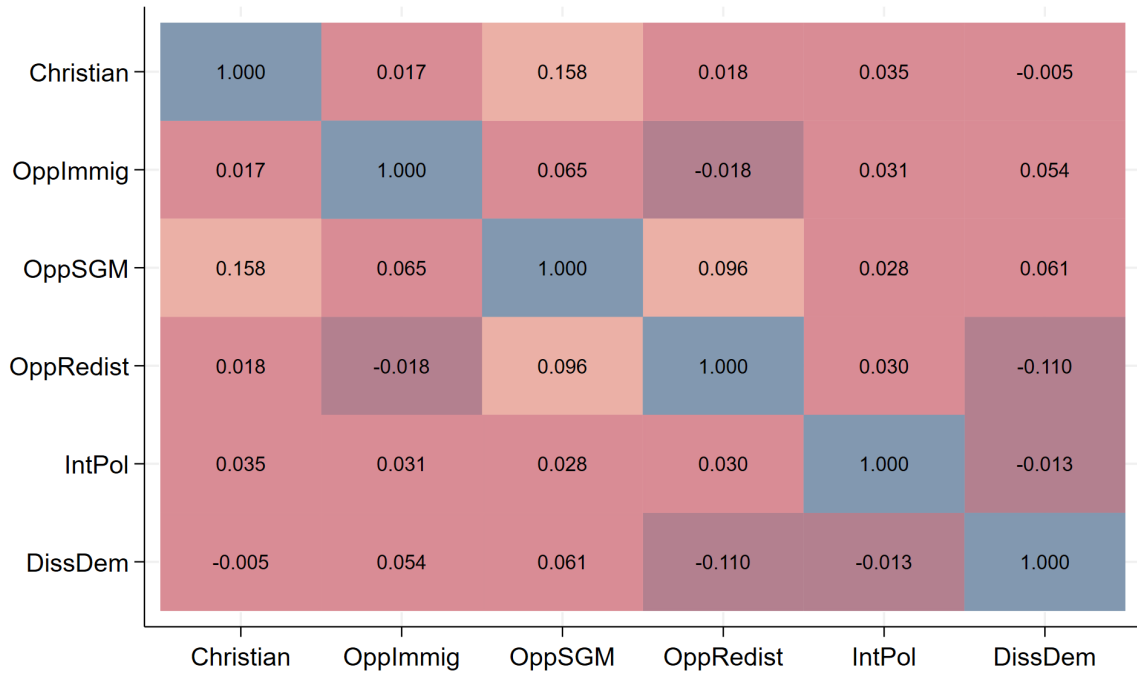


Figure 5: Correlation matrix - political attitudinal variables

3.2 Testable Hypotheses

This dissertation seeks to empirically evaluate three hypotheses, each intended to fill distinct literature gaps.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): An increase in the cost of living is associated with a higher likelihood of support for far-right parties.

H1 aims to address the underexploration of rising living costs as a channel through which economic grievances translate into the growing popularity and electoral success of far-right parties. This channel is expected to weaken once country and regional-level heterogeneity are rigorously controlled for, as contextual characteristics at both levels may capture a significant part of the variation otherwise attributed to rising living costs. That concern is particularly relevant given the limited cross-country variation in inflation within the EU, which shares a common monetary policy, and the fact that the data span only a two-year period.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The effect of an increase in the cost of living on support for far-right parties is stronger among economically vulnerable and politically discontent individuals.

H2 focuses on testing if rising living costs further amplify already existing economic and cultural grievances among demographic groups already predisposed to support far-right parties in the first place. This approach is well-grounded in previous literature that explores how the impact of economic shocks in political proximity to far-right parties is expected to be heterogeneous across different social groups. Additionally, it also tests rising living costs as a catalyst for political radicalisation among individuals who are discontent with political institutions.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Higher levels of criminality strengthen the relationship between economic grievances and support for far-right parties.

Lastly, H3 assesses whether high regional crime rates amplify support for far-right parties among economically vulnerable individuals or those already inclined toward the far right, by heightening perceived insecurity and reinforcing underlying grievances.

3.3 Empirical Model and Methodology

The empirical analysis employs multilevel mixed-effects probit models with random intercepts at the country and level, which use the cumulative distribution function of the standard normal distribution to estimate how changes in the explanatory variables affect the probability of individuals supporting or voting for far-right parties. The probability is modelled as a function of price changes, individual-level socio-economic and national or regional-level macroeconomic controls, and year fixed effects.

The multilevel specification is motivated by the nested structure of the data, given that EES respondents are nested within NUTS II regions, which are themselves nested within countries. As argued by [Oshchepkov and Shirokanova \(2022\)](#), multilevel regressions should be applied to data with such a hierarchical structure. This approach addresses three limitations of single-level estimation. Given that OLS does not account for within-group error correlation nor for unobserved group-level heterogeneity, it is susceptible to standard error underestimation and biased coefficient estimates, respectively. These shortcomings are addressed within the multilevel framework, which explicitly models within-group correlation through random intercepts and controls for unobserved group-level characteristics. Moreover, whereas OLS constrains the effect of each variable to be homogeneous across groups, the multilevel model relaxes this assumption by allowing coefficients to vary across groups through the inclusion of random slopes. The multilevel probit framework, therefore, represents the most conservative and suited methodology.

There are three types of estimated models, each corresponding to one of the three testable hypotheses, presented in Section 4.1. The first model examines the aggregate effects of inflation and its sub-

components on the propensity to support far-right parties. The second model estimates interaction effects between socio-economic moderators and price variables on the probability of respondents supporting far-right parties. Finally, the third model investigates interaction effects between existing economic and cultural grievances and criminality variables on the likelihood of far-right support. Several robustness checks are described and applied in Sections 4.2.

The model used to test H1 is specified as follows:

$$PFR_{irct} = 1 \mid v_c, u_{r(c)} = \Phi(\beta_1 \text{Price}_{ct} + \beta_2 X_{it} + \beta_3 Z_{rct} + \delta_t + v_c + u_{r(c)}) \quad (3.1)$$

Where $PFR_{irct} = 1$ is the binary indicator that is equal to one if individual i from NUTS II region r and country c at year t politically identifies with a far-right party, and zero otherwise. Alternative specifications of the dependent variable, PFR, VFR_B and VFR substitute this binary indicator as a robustness check.

$\Phi(\cdot)$ denotes the standard normal cumulative distribution function. Price_{ct} denotes the alternative measures of aggregate, country-level price variables, including overall inflation, the sub-components of food and energy, as well as housing price and rent indexes. Each one of these measurements is entered separately in different specifications.

X_{it} is a vector of individual-level socio-economic characteristics (gender, age, education, urban residence, perceived social class, unemployment, religion) and expressed political attitudes (political interest, dissatisfaction with democracy, and opposition to same gender marriage, income redistribution and open immigration policies). Z_{rct} is a vector of regional-level macroeconomic controls, including different measures of the unemployment rate and real GDP. These include the one-year lag, the one-year growth rate, and the deviation of the regional value from the national average.

δ_t represents the wave fixed effect, capturing characteristics that are common to the 2019 and 2024 rounds, respectively; v_c and $u_{r(c)}$ denote the country and NUTS II region random intercepts, which account for country and regional unobserved heterogeneity.

H1 predicts that $\beta_1 > 0$, implying that higher inflation increases the likelihood of respondents expressing support for far-right parties.

To test H2, an interaction term between price variables and key socio-economic moderators (M_{it} is introduced in Equation (3.1). Its specification is provided below:

$$P(PFR_{irct} = 1 \mid v_c, u_{r(c)}) = \Phi\left(\beta_1 Price_{ct} + \beta_2(Price_{ct} \times M_{it}) + \beta_3 M_{it} + \beta_4 X_{-M,it} + \beta_5 Z_{rct} + \delta_t + v_c + u_{r(c)}\right) \quad (3.2)$$

These moderators include political attitudes linked to discontent and economic or cultural grievances (*LowC*, *DissDem*, *Opplmmig*, *OpSGM*, *IntPol*) and socio-economic characteristics that are systematically associated with higher far-right support, as presented in Chapter 2 (*Man*, *Young*, *BelowSec*). Each moderator is included in separate regressions; $X_{-M,it}$ denotes the remaining individual controls.

Thus, H2 predicts that $\beta_2 > 0$, which suggests that increasing price levels boosts far-right support among already discontent individuals.

Finally, to assess H3, Equation (3.1) is augmented by incorporating three crime indicators.

$$P(PFR_{irct} = 1 \mid v_c, u_{r(c)}) = \Phi\left(\beta_1 Crime_{rct} + \beta_2 Griev_{it} + \beta_3(Crime_{rt} \times Griev_{it}) + \beta_4 Price_{ct} + \beta_5 X_{-G,it} + \beta_6 Z_{rct} + \delta_t + v_c + u_{r(c)}\right) \quad (3.3)$$

These are operationalised as binary dummy variables that identify regions with levels of *Assaults*, *Homicides*, and *Robbery* exceeding the sample median. These dummies interact with grievances-related dummies (*Man*, *LowC*, *BelowSec*, *DissDem*, *Opplmmig*, *OppSGM*, *IntPol*, *Christian*). Overall inflation is kept as a control for price levels, denoted by Inf_{ct} .

Thus, H3 predicts that $\beta_3 > 0$, meaning that high criminality rates foster support for far-right parties by increasing their autocratic appeal, especially among already discontent and vulnerable demographics.

Chapter 4

Empirical Results

4.1 Main results

This section presents the average marginal effects (AME) derived from the baseline mixed-effects multilevel probit model, alongside those obtained from models incorporating interaction terms between socioeconomic characteristics and inflation variables, and between crime-related variables and grievances-related variables.

4.1.1 Baseline Model's Results

Table 5 reports the first set of results. AMEs are computed as the sample average of each predictor's marginal effect on the probability of the outcome, evaluated at each observation's own covariate values. Thus, AMEs represent percentage-point changes in predicted probabilities and are directly interpretable as such.

The specification of the macroeconomic controls is guided by the results reported in Annex Table 18. Throughout the empirical analysis, the one-year change in the unemployment rate is used as the sole macroeconomic control. This specification is preferred because it preserves the full sample and avoids a substantial loss of approximately 6,500 observations. In contrast, the inclusion of the difference between NUTS II GDP and the national average reduces the sample size considerably without delivering meaningful gains in explanatory power, as the variable is not statistically significant in either regression.

Results presented in Table 5 show that a one per cent increase in overall inflation is associated with a 1.5 percentage point increase in the propensity to support far-right parties, at a 10% significance level. When disaggregating inflation, this relationship appears to be driven primarily by increases in food prices and house prices, both of which are positively associated with far-right support at the 10% significance level. In contrast, changes in energy and rental prices do not exhibit statistically significant effects. While

these findings provide some limited support for H1, the evidence is not robust across all cost-of-living components.

Therefore, H1 is not fully supported once cross-country effects are controlled for using random intercepts at the country and NUTS II level. This was a predictable analysis outcome, since many papers highlight how macroeconomic developments don't have homogeneous and direct impacts on different demographics (e.g. [Ferrari, 2021](#); [Oesch, 2008](#)). Similarly, the one-year unemployment rate change exhibits no discernible effect on respondents' preferences for far-right parties.

Nonetheless, several socioeconomic variables are relevant to explain far-right political preferences.

Consistent with the previous literature (e.g. [Stockemer et al., 2018](#)), men are more likely than women to sympathise with these parties, being 1.35 to 1.47 percentage points more likely to support them. Likewise, individuals with education below the secondary level are around 1.6 percentage points more likely to support the far right than those with only secondary education, in line with previous empirical findings (e.g. [Scott, 2022](#)).

Table 5: Average Marginal Effects for the Baseline Model

VARIABLES	Inf _n	HIPC-Food	HIPC-Energy	HousePrice	HouseRent
Man	0.01460*** (3.197)	0.01438*** (3.120)	0.01446*** (3.170)	0.01480*** (2.920)	0.01447*** (3.140)
Young	0.01705*** (2.871)	0.01679*** (2.810)	0.01696*** (2.870)	0.01713*** (2.700)	0.01702*** (2.810)
City	-0.00511 (-1.158)	-0.00483 (-1.110)	-0.00474 (-1.080)	-0.00517 (-1.110)	-0.00456 (-1.030)
BelowSec	0.01616*** (2.789)	0.01593*** (2.650)	0.01654*** (2.820)	0.01483** (2.560)	0.01704*** (2.830)
AboveSec	-0.01556*** (-2.584)	-0.01566** (-2.550)	-0.01511** (-2.510)	-0.01547** (-2.430)	-0.01491** (-2.430)
Unemp	0.00053 (0.079)	0.00073 (0.110)	0.00037 (0.060)	-0.00108 (-0.160)	0.00016 (0.020)
LowC	0.00061 (0.160)	0.00062 (0.170)	0.00057 (0.150)	0.00210 (0.530)	0.00055 (0.140)
Christian	0.01563* (1.926)	0.01552* (1.920)	0.01544* (1.920)	0.01682** (2.010)	0.01538* (1.910)
DissDem	0.03573	0.03504	0.03509	0.03258	0.03530

Continued on next page

Table 5 – continued

VARIABLES	Inf _n	HIPC-Food	HIPC-Energy	HousePrice	HouseRent
	(1.520)	(1.510)	(1.520)	(1.320)	(1.510)
OppSGM	0.06075***	0.05998***	0.06034***	0.06156***	0.06070***
	(3.407)	(3.330)	(3.340)	(3.260)	(3.350)
OppRedist	0.01444*	0.01423*	0.01418*	0.01479*	0.01419*
	(1.958)	(1.930)	(1.950)	(1.870)	(1.940)
Opplmmig	0.05267***	0.05215***	0.05219***	0.05314***	0.05248***
	(3.324)	(3.240)	(3.280)	(3.070)	(3.260)
IntPol	0.02237***	0.02202***	0.02189***	0.02299***	0.02207***
	(2.942)	(2.870)	(2.860)	(2.810)	(2.870)
y2019	-0.03107	-0.05153***	-0.05120***	-0.04789***	-0.04372**
	(-1.592)	(-2.800)	(-2.900)	(-2.660)	(-2.230)
Inf _n /Price	0.01537*	0.00623*	0.00154	0.00607*	0.00035
	(1.751)	(1.680)	(0.970)	(1.900)	(0.540)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.00937	-0.01010	-0.01026	-0.00887	-0.01066
	(-1.132)	(-1.330)	(-1.220)	(-1.170)	(-1.310)
Observations	44,044	44,044	44,044	42,364	44,044
Log likelihood	-13,505	-13,506	-13,518	-13,065	-13,522

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Among these factors, high educational attainment emerges as the most influential socio-economic characteristic, as having a higher education decreases the probability of supporting far-right parties by around 1.6 to 2 percentage points. This conclusion supports previous findings showing that higher education plays a role in reducing support for political views rooted in authoritarianism and racial prejudice (Scott, 2022), and thus in lowering the propensity to vote for far-right parties within this demographic. Moreover, being a man and having low educational attainment are also consistent predictors of increased far-right support. The dummy variable *Young* is only statistically significant in the regressions that include inflation and the HIPC-Food index as price variables.

Second, religious affiliation seems to play an important role in defining preferences for far-right parties. The coefficient associated with the dummy variable that identifies Christian individuals is positive and strongly statistically significant. The impact of religion is relatively expressive, as Christian respondents are around 1.6 to 2.2 percentage points more likely to express a preference for far-right parties than their non-Christian counterparts in every specification. These results align with findings from Cremer (2022, 2023) and Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville (2022), which suggest that evoking Christian symbology is effective for far-right political mobilisation.

Third, political attitudes are shown to be the strongest predictors of far-right support. Coefficients related to

rejection of same sex marriage, income redistribution, and immigration are consistently large, positive, and statistically significant, all of which increase the likelihood of preferring far-right parties. Notably, anti-immigration and anti-same gender marriage attitudes constitute the most influential factor, as individuals expressing such views are approximately 5.3 to 6.2 percentage points and 5.7 to 6.3 percentage points more likely to report support for far-right parties. These results go in line with previous well-established findings relating cultural grievances with far-right political alignment (e.g. [Barone et al., 2016](#); [Inglehart and Norris, 2016](#); [Weeks and Allen, 2023](#)).

Fourth, interest in politics is consistently associated with a higher predisposition to support far-right parties, as individuals who report it are 1.6 to 2.2 percentage points more likely to politically identify with these parties. One possible explanation is that political interest increases exposure to partisan messages and strengthens ideological attachment. Moreover, politically engaged individuals may be more likely to translate latent economic and cultural grievances into explicit political preferences.

Fifth, the coefficients for individuals from lower social classes, urban areas, unemployed, and dissatisfied with democracy are not statistically significant in any specification. This suggests that discontent with democratic institutions and perceived economic scarcity are not always translated into far-right support.

In summary, support for far-right parties appears to be shaped primarily by cultural-political attitudes and socio-demographic characteristics rather than by aggregate economic conditions. Once country- and regional-level heterogeneity are accounted for, rising living costs, unemployment, and GDP growth exert no systematic effect. By contrast, younger age, male gender, Christian affiliation, lower education, and opposition to immigration, same-sex marriage, and income redistribution consistently predict far-right alignment. These findings suggest that economic grievances may exert influence only when mediated by specific socio-economic or attitudinal factors, providing a rationale for the subsequent interaction analyses (Subsections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3).

4.1.2 Interaction Model's Results

To evaluate H2, 32 interactions between 5 price variables (Inf_n , $HIPC-Food$, $HIPC-Energy$, $HousePrice$, $HouseRent$) and 8 socio-economic moderators (Man , $Young$, $DissDem$, $LowC$, $Opplmmig$, $OppSGM$, $BelowSec$, $IntPol$) were tested. Table 6 presents the interaction effects in probability units ($\Delta Pr(y = 1)$), evaluated at the sample mean of the corresponding price variable. A number of key findings become evident.

First, individuals who are dissatisfied with democracy ($DissDem$) are the most responsive to inflation across its different components in terms of increased support for far-right parties. Compared to their counterparts, they are 3.6 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.036$, $p < 0.011$) more likely to support far-right parties when $HIPC-Food$ is at its sample mean, 3.4 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.034$, $p < 0.075$) for house prices, and 3 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.030$, $p < 0.000$) for $HIPC-Energy$. This evidence supports the idea of a protest vote, as rising living costs work as a catalyst for far-right support among already politically discontent individuals. Individuals who identify themselves as being part of the working class ($LowC$) are equally reactive but less intensely, as, compared to their

Table 6: Interactions Between Price Variables and Individual Grievances

Moderator $\times$ Economic variable	Moderator coef.	Price coef.	$\Delta Pr(y = 1)$	Interaction p-value
Man $\times$ HICP-Food	0.048	0.034	0.014**	0.041
Man $\times$ HouseRent	0.140***	0.006	0.015***	0.000
LowC $\times$ HICP-Food	0.077**	0.064**	0.001**	0.025
LowC $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.009	0.007	0.000**	0.027
LowC $\times$ HousePrice	0.082	0.051**	0.002*	0.089
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Food	0.419***	0.075***	0.036**	0.011
DissDem $\times$ HousePrice	0.533***	0.058***	0.034*	0.075
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.251*	0.002	0.030***	0.000
IntPol $\times$ HICP-Food	0.108	0.029	0.022**	0.077
OppSGM $\times$ HousePrice	0.308***	0.035	0.059***	0.000
OppSGM $\times$ HouseRent	0.423***	0.000	0.060***	0.004
Opplmmig $\times$ HouseRent	0.416***	0.005	0.053***	0.058
BelowSec $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.148***	0.008	0.018***	0.046

Notes: Multilevel mixed-effects probit with random intercepts at country and NUTS II levels, with robust standard errors and grievance-moderator interactions. All models include the full set of individual controls. 'Moderator coef.' and 'Price coef.' are main-effect coefficients on the latent index scale; 'Moderator coef.' is the effect of the grievance variable when the price variable equals zero, and 'Price coef.' is the effect of the price variable when the grievance equals zero. $\Delta Pr(y = 1)$ is the difference-in-differences interaction effect in probability units, evaluated at sample means of other covariates using `predict(mu fixedonly)`. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

counterparts, they are 0.9 percentage-points ($\Delta Pr = 0.009$, $p < 0.025$) more likely to support far-right parties when HIPC-Food is at its sample mean, and 0.2 percentage-points ($\Delta Pr = 0.003$, $p < 0.027$; $p < 0.089$) for HIPC-Energy and housing prices.

Second, groups that politically align with the far-right ideological core *a priori* exhibit the most significant responses to rising prices. Individuals opposing same gender marriage (*OppSGM*) become 5.9 and 6 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.059$, $p < 0.000$; $\Delta Pr = 0.060$, $p < 0.004$) more likely to support far-right parties when house prices and rents are at their sample mean, respectively. Similarly, individuals opposing open immigration policies (*Opplmig*) become 6.3 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.063$, $p < 0.058$) more likely to politically identify with far-right parties when house rents are at their sample mean. These results show how inflation in essential commodities may have the potential to radicalise individuals who are already predisposed to support right-wing ideologies.

Other social groups that also have a predisposition to politically support the far-right also follow a similar behaviour. Men become 1.7 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.017$, $p < 0.041$) more likely to support far-right parties

when HIPC-Food is at its sample mean, and 1.5 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.015$, $p < 0.000$) for house prices. Individuals who have below secondary level educational attainment are 1.8 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.018$, $p < 0.046$) more likely than their counterparts to support far-right parties when HIPC-Energy is at its sample mean.

Therefore, H2 is supported by the empirical results, as rising living costs are shown to act as a mechanism to translate latent grievances into political support for far-right parties. These findings are in line with the arguments of [Ferrari \(2021\)](#) and [Guiso et al. \(2024\)](#).

Furthermore, results highlight that financial vulnerability does not appear to be a sufficient condition for far-right mobilisation, as the effect of price increases on the likelihood of supporting far-right parties among individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to the lower social class is the weakest. Instead, rising living costs seem to translate into stronger far-right support primarily among individuals who previously held conservative values and who are dissatisfied with democratic institutions.

4.1.3 Crime Interaction Model's Results

To assess H3, 27 interactions between 3 crime variables (*Assaults*, *Homicides*, *Robberies*) and 9 moderators (*Man*, *DissDem*, *LowC*, *Opplmmig*, *Christian*, *City*, *OppSGM*, *BelowSec*, *IntPol*) were tested. Table 7 reports the interaction effects in probability units ($\Delta Pr(y = 1)$), computed as the differences-in-differences effect among the moderator and crime dummies, and the interaction p-value. The table presents the 10 statistically significant interactions (p-value < 10). Several patterns emerge.

Across specifications, there is evidence that high-criminality environments have political implications, pushing some groups to support far-right parties, and deterring others from doing so.

First, this amplification is particularly pronounced among individuals dissatisfied with democracy. The gap in far-right support between respondents who report being dissatisfied with democracy and their counterparts is 12 and 15.5 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.098$, $p < 0.001$; $\Delta Pr = 0.115$, $p < 0.013$) larger in high-robbery and high-assaults regions, respectively, relative to low-crime areas. A similar pattern emerges for individuals who oppose open immigration policies, as the difference in support between this group and their counterparts increases by 6.8 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.068$, $p < 0.037$) in high-robbery regions.

Other groups exhibit more moderate effects. Regarding individuals who identify as belonging to the lower class, the gap in far-right alignment between this group and the counterpart is 3.3 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.033$, $p < 0.000$) higher in high-assaults regions. Additionally, the difference in far-right identification among individuals with low educational attainments and their counterparts is 3.8 percentage points higher in high-assault areas ($\Delta Pr = 0.028$, $p < 0.056$).

On the other hand, there are social groups for which high-criminality contexts may exert a relative discouraging effect on far-right support. The gap in far-right identification between Christians and non-Christians is 2.8 and 3.2

Table 7: Interactions Between Crime Context Variables and Individual Grievances

Grievance $\times$ Crime context	Grievance coef.	Crime coef.	$\Delta Pr(y = 1)$	Interaction p-value
Opplmmig $\times$ HighRobbery	0.341***	0.350	0.068**	0.037
DissDem $\times$ HighRobbery	0.095	0.269	0.155***	0.001
DissDem $\times$ HighAssaults	0.100	0.098	0.120**	0.013
LowC $\times$ HighAssaults	-0.043	0.0888	0.033***	0.000
BelowSec $\times$ HighAssaults	0.091**	0.115	0.038***	0.002
OppSGM $\times$ HighHomicide	0.4640***	0.4063*	- 0.006*	0.093
OppSGM $\times$ HighAssaults	0.494***	0.293***	-0.004*	0.087
Christian $\times$ HighHomicide	0.219***	0.452**	-0.032***	0.004
Christian $\times$ HighAssaults	0.202**	0.2711***	-0.028**	0.013

Notes: Multilevel mixed-effects probit with random intercepts at country and NUTS II levels, with robust standard errors and grievance-moderator interactions. All models include the full set of individual controls. 'Grievance coef.' and 'Crime coef.' are main-effect coefficients on the latent index scale; 'Grievance coef.' is the effect of the grievance variable when the crime indicator equals zero (below-75th percentile crime area), and 'Crime coef.' is the effect of the above-75th percentile crime dummy when the grievance variable equals zero. $\Delta Pr(y = 1)$ is the interaction effect in probability units, computed as $[Pr(\text{griev} = 1, \text{crime} = 1) - Pr(\text{griev} = 0, \text{crime} = 1)] - [Pr(\text{griev} = 1, \text{crime} = 0) - Pr(\text{griev} = 0, \text{crime} = 0)]$, using `predict(mufixedonly)`. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.028$, $p < 0.013$; $\Delta Pr = 0.032$, $p < 0.004$) smaller in high-assault and high-homicide regions, respectively, compared with low-crime areas. Likewise, the difference in far-right alignment between individuals who oppose same gender marriage and their counterparts is 0.4 and 0.6 percentage points ($\Delta Pr = 0.004$, $p < 0.087$; $\Delta Pr = 0.006$, $p < 0.093$) smaller the same high-crime contexts, although these effects are weaker and only marginally statistically significant. While not anticipated by the initial hypothesis, this finding suggests that when crime is high, safety concerns may matter more than cultural or religious identity in driving far-right support, narrowing the differences between social groups.

Therefore, H3 is overall supported by the empirical results, which show that high levels of criminality increase the appeal of far-right parties among particular social groups that hold pre-existing grievances. In line with the effect of rising prices on far-right support, a high-crime context appears to constitute a particularly effective channel for the activation of political and cultural grievances, with effects that are especially strong and significant among individuals who are discontent with the functioning of democracy.

As discussed in Section 6, these findings suggest that support for far-right parties among discontented demographic groups is not automatic but instead depends strongly on the context in which these grievances are activated. This provides an important contribution to the literature on contextual determinants of far-right support, as it doc-

uments, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first quantitative evidence of the effect of criminality on voters' far-right support.

Nonetheless, this topic calls for further research. The relationships identified require a more nuanced analysis, as the mobilising potential of the far right is unlikely to depend on high-criminality rates per se, but rather on whether individuals attribute rising crime to out-groups (particularly immigrants), whether they expect to be personally affected, whether their concerns about crime are egotropic or sociotropic, and whether they perceive far-right parties as the most competent actors to address crime, among other disputable mechanisms.

4.2 Robustness Checks

This section discusses the robustness checks applied to assess the consistency of the results obtained from the interaction models.

4.2.1 Different Dependent Variable Specifications

As introduced in Chapter 3, different specifications of the dependent variable are computed to assess whether results are sensitive to the definition of far-right parties and/or the difference between declaring support versus voting for far-right parties. Consistent estimates across different specifications would imply that the main findings are not driven by a particular way of coding the dependent variables, and therefore represent meaningful statistical relationships.

Most results remain statistically significant across specifications, though several differences are worth noting. First, age loses statistical significance in models where voting for far-right parties is used as the dependent variable. Second, individuals who identify as belonging to the lower class are more likely to vote for far-right parties than their counterparts, with this effect significant at the 5% level. Finally, low educational attainment ceases to be statistically significant when the dependent variable shifts from far-right identification to far-right voting.

Furthermore, aggregate inflation is non-statistically significant across most specifications, as shown by Table 8. Similar results are obtained for regressions using inflation sub-components, as shown by Annex's Tables 19, 20, 21 and 22.

As discussed in Subsection 3.2, the reduction in statistical significance in regressions using votes for far-right parties as the dependent variable was to be expected, as it may reflect the distinction between political support and actual voting behaviour. Voters often face strategic considerations when casting their ballots, which do not necessarily contradict their alignment with far-right parties.

Table 8: Support for Far-Right Parties – Robustness Check

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man	0.01460*** (3.197)	0.01479*** (2.972)	0.01216** (2.518)	0.01432*** (2.802)
Young	0.01705*** (2.871)	0.01877*** (2.989)	0.00470 (0.855)	0.00608 (1.017)
City	-0.00511 (-1.158)	-0.00663 (-1.385)	-0.00335 (-0.814)	-0.00349 (-0.806)
BelowSec	0.01616*** (2.789)	0.01881*** (3.023)	0.00933* (1.825)	0.01000* (1.774)
AboveSec	-0.01556*** (-2.584)	-0.01645*** (-2.579)	-0.01777** (-2.560)	-0.01998*** (-2.754)
Unemp	0.00053 (0.079)	-0.00053 (-0.077)	-0.00552 (-1.189)	-0.00470 (-0.884)
LowC	0.00061 (0.160)	0.00123 (0.289)	0.00797** (2.017)	0.00384 (0.968)
Christian	0.01563* (1.926)	0.02035** (2.283)	0.02059** (2.125)	0.02108** (2.144)
DissDem	0.03573 (1.520)	0.03827 (1.598)	0.03805 (1.483)	0.03625 (1.415)
OppSGM	0.06075*** (3.407)	0.06405*** (3.390)	0.05686*** (3.366)	0.05698*** (3.299)
OppRedist	0.01444* (1.958)	0.01776** (2.150)	0.01691** (2.180)	0.02079** (2.449)
Opplmmig	0.05267*** (3.324)	0.05922*** (3.437)	0.06119*** (3.160)	0.06155*** (3.094)
IntPol	0.02237*** (2.942)	0.02610*** (3.168)	0.01789*** (2.689)	0.01599** (2.537)
y2019	-0.03107 (-1.592)	-0.04413** (-2.046)	-0.03877* (-1.646)	-0.03111 (-1.109)
Inf _n /Price	0.01537* (1.751)	0.00731 (0.804)	0.00292 (0.188)	0.00086 (0.066)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.00937 (-1.132)	-0.01338 (-1.505)	-0.01389 (-1.345)	-0.00500 (-0.407)
Observations	44,044	44,044	44,044	44,044
Log likelihood	-13,505	-14,092	-14,862	-15,276

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Dependent variables: PFR_r = far-right support (restricted); PFR_b = far-right support (borderline); VFR_r = far-right vote (restricted); VFR_b = far-right vote (borderline).

Table 9 reports the 12 statistically significant interactions of socio-economic moderators with rising living costs, estimated across four different dependent variable specifications.

Table 9: Robustness Check: Price Levels Interactions across Alternative Dependent Variables

Moderator $\times$ Economic variable	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man $\times$ HICP-Food	0.014**	0.015**	0.014**	0.012**
Man $\times$ HouseRent	0.015**	0.016***	0.015***	0.013**
LowC $\times$ HICP-Food	0.001**	0.003	0.010**	0.010**
LowC $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.000**	0.004	0.009**	0.009**
LowC $\times$ HousePrice	0.002*	0.003*	0.010**	0.006
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Food	0.036**	0.039*	0.037	0.038*
DissDem $\times$ HousePrice	0.034*	0.037*	0.038*	0.038*
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.030***	0.033***	0.032***	0.032***
IntPol $\times$ HICP-Food	0.022**	0.026**	0.018***	0.016**
OppSGM $\times$ HousePrice	0.059***	0.064***	0.057**	0.057**
OppSGM $\times$ HouseRent	0.060***	0.065***	0.056***	0.056***
Opplmmig $\times$ HouseRent	0.053**	0.060**	0.062**	0.061
BelowSec $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.018***	0.014**	0.009	0.006

Notes: Multilevel mixed-effects probit with random intercepts at country and NUTS II levels, with robust standard errors and grievance-moderator interactions. All models include the full set of individual controls. Each cell reports $\Delta Pr(y = 1)$, defined as the difference in predicted probabilities between moderator groups at the sample mean of the corresponding price variable. Dependent variables are PFR_r (far-right support, restricted), PFR_b (far-right support, borderline), VFR_r (far-right vote, restricted), and VFR_b (far-right vote, borderline). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

The effects of rising food prices and rents on men and individuals interested in politics, energy prices on individuals dissatisfied with democracy, and increasing housing costs on those opposing same-gender marriage emerge as statistically significant across all four model specifications. Notably, the interaction effects between dissatisfaction with democracy and rising energy prices, and between individuals opposed to same-gender marriage and increasing rents are significant at the 1% level in every specification, making them the most robust findings.

Additional consistently significant interactions include the impact of higher rental costs on individuals opposed to open immigration policies, and the effect of rising food prices on those dissatisfied with democracy. In contrast, interactions involving individuals with lower income and educational attainment are the least robust.

Similarly, Table 10 reports the 9 statistically significant interactions of socio-economic moderators with crime context variables, estimated across four different dependent variable specifications. The effects of high robbery rates on individuals

dissatisfied with democracy and opposing immigration, and high assault rates on individuals dissatisfied with democracy, stand out as the most robust results, remaining statistically significant across all specifications. In contrast, the effects for individuals opposing same-gender marriage are the least consistent across specifications, consistent with earlier evidence of a comparatively weak relationship.

Overall, the statistical significance of interactions related to the crime context are comparatively more consistent across specifications.

Table 10: Robustness Check: High-Crime Interactions across Alternative Dependent Variables

Moderator $\times$ Crime variable	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Opplmmig $\times$ HighRobbery	0.068**	0.079***	0.059**	0.049**
DissDem $\times$ HighRobbery	0.155***	0.145***	0.107**	0.109***
DissDem $\times$ HighAssaults	0.120**	0.097***	0.096**	0.096**
LowC $\times$ HighAssaults	0.033***	0.024*	0.033	0.030
BelowSec $\times$ HighAssaults	0.038***	0.033**	0.033	0.026
OppSGM $\times$ HighHomicide	−0.006*	−0.015	−0.008	−0.007
OppSGM $\times$ HighAssaults	−0.004*	−0.017*	0.003	0.003
Christian $\times$ HighHomicide	−0.032***	−0.034*	−0.035	−0.036*
Christian $\times$ HighAssaults	−0.028**	−0.023	−0.029*	−0.039***

Notes: Multilevel mixed-effects probit with random intercepts at country and NUTS II levels, with robust standard errors and grievance-moderator interactions. All models include the full set of individual controls. Each cell reports $\Delta Pr(y = 1)$, the difference-in-differences interaction effect expressed in probability units. Dependent variables are PFR_r (far-right support, restricted), PFR_b (far-right support, borderline), VFR_r (far-right vote, restricted), and VFR_b (far-right vote, borderline). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

4.2.2 Wave Split (2019 VS 2024)

The 2019 and 2024 EES waves have as their background two structurally different economic and electoral contexts. To understand whether results are driven by time-independent trends, models were re-estimated separately for each wave.

Table 11 reports the p-values for the 2019 and 2024 wave splits for statistically significant interactions discussed in Subsections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3.

Regarding interactions with price levels, only two relationships remain consistently statistically significant across both waves: increased far-right support among individuals opposed to same-gender marriage in response to rising house prices and rents. By contrast, the effects of higher food prices among men, energy prices among individuals who report being interested in

Table 11: Economic and Crime Context Interactions With Individual Grievances: Wave Robustness

Moderator $\times$ Contextual variable	$\Delta Pr(y = 1)$	Pooled p-value	Wave p-value		Interpretation
			2019	2024	
<i>Price interactions</i>					
Man $\times$ HICP-Food	0.0133	0.2363	0.2363	0.2786	Neither
Man $\times$ HouseRent	0.0138	0.6919	0.6919	0.0000***	2024 only
LowC $\times$ HICP-Food	0.0026	0.1079	0.1079	0.0352**	2024 only
LowC $\times$ HICP-Energy	−0.0009	0.0031	0.0031***	0.7664	2019 only
LowC $\times$ HousePrice	0.0027	0.0001	0.0001***	0.4592	2019 only
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Food	0.0324	0.0097	0.0097***	0.4044	2019 only
DissDem $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.0209	0.1930	0.1930	0.0003***	2024 only
DissDem $\times$ HousePrice	0.0268	0.0001	0.0001***	0.2991	2019 only
IntPol $\times$ HICP-Food	0.0141	0.1391	0.1391	0.4078	Neither
OppSGM $\times$ HousePrice	0.0413	0.0041	0.0041***	0.0002***	Both
OppSGM $\times$ HouseRent	0.0415	0.0019	0.0019***	0.0256**	Both
Opplmmig $\times$ HouseRent	0.0381	0.1207	0.1207	0.5342	Neither
BelowSec $\times$ HICP-Energy	0.0109	0.0094	0.0094***	0.5506	2019 only
<i>Crime context</i>					
Opplmmig $\times$ HighRobbery	0.0193	0.2421	0.2421	0.0350*	2024 only
DissDem $\times$ HighRobbery	0.1136***	0.0002	0.0002***	0.0080***	Both
DissDem $\times$ HighAssaults	0.1979***	0.0121	0.0121**	0.1259	2019 only
LowC $\times$ HighAssaults	0.0621***	0.0003	0.0003***	0.0390**	Both
BelowSec $\times$ HighAssaults	0.0793***	0.0034	0.0034***	0.6978	2019 only
OppSGM $\times$ HighHomicide	−0.0103	0.0092	0.0092***	0.0125**	Both
OppSGM $\times$ HighAssaults	0.0557***	0.2271	0.2271	0.0295**	2024 only
Christian $\times$ HighHomicide	−0.0323**	0.0009	0.0009***	0.0010***	Both
Christian $\times$ HighAssaults	−0.0450**	0.0164	0.0164**	0.0728*	Both

Notes: Multilevel mixed-effects probit with random intercepts at country and NUTS II levels, with robust standard errors. Estimations include the full set of individual controls. $\Delta Pr(y = 1)$ and the pooled p-value are from the full pooled model. Wave p-values report the interaction term significance estimated separately on the 2019 and 2024 samples. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

politics, and house rents among individuals opposing open immigration policies are not statistically significant when the waves are analysed separately.

As for crime-related interactions, five effects remain statistically significant across both waves, including positive effects for individuals dissatisfied with democracy in high-robbery regions and those identifying as lower class in high-assault regions, as

well as negative effects for individuals opposing same-gender marriage in high-homicide regions and Christians in high-homicide and high-assault regions. No effect fully loses statistical significance when the waves are analysed separately. Again, findings related to the influence of the crime context on far-right support appear relatively more robust than those associated with living costs.

The results of this wave-split analysis indicate that most of the specific interaction effects are not uniformly robust over time. In other words, it is not possible to generalise that particular forms of rising living costs or criminality consistently increase far-right support among the same social groups across contexts. Nevertheless, these inconsistencies do not undermine the paper's broader conclusion that, overall, rising prices and high levels of criminality do foster greater support for far-right parties among vulnerable groups by amplifying pre-existing grievances.

4.2.3 Benjamini-Hochberg FDR correction

When many model specifications are run simultaneously, the probability of obtaining false positives increases mechanically, as some results will appear statistically significant purely by chance, even in the absence of any true underlying effect. The Benjamini-Hochberg False Discovery Rate (FDR) correction ([Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995](#)) addresses this concern by controlling the expected proportion of significant results that are false positives, rather than the probability of committing any single false positive. Results that survive FDR correction at the 10% level can be interpreted as unlikely to be artefacts of multiple testing.

Table 12 presents the correction's results. The BH-FDR correction substantially reduces the number of statistically significant relationships between the effects of increases in living costs in far-right support among given socio-economic groups. This indicates that several effects might be false positives arising from testing a high number of interactions.

Nonetheless, five relationships remain robust. The effects of increased house rents on men and on individuals opposing same-gender marriage, housing prices on individuals opposing same-gender marriage, and energy prices on individuals dissatisfied with democracy remain significant at the 5% level. The effect of increased food prices on individuals dissatisfied with democracy remains significant at the 10% level. The interactions involving individuals who oppose same-gender marriage were also consistent under the wave-split analysis, which indicates them as the most robust specific price-related mechanisms of far-right radicalisation. Therefore, cultural grievances, as opposed to economic grievances, appear to translate more effectively into far-right support. Concurrently, rising house prices and rents constitute a particularly consistent driver of far-right identification.

Crime-related interactions are also comparatively more robust under the BH-FDR correction, with six out of nine surviving this robustness check. The interactions involving individuals identifying as lower class, those with lower educational attainment, and individuals dissatisfied with democracy in high-robbery areas remain statistically significant at the 5% level. The interactions involving individuals dissatisfied with democracy in high-assault regions and Christians in high-homicide regions remain statistically significant at the 10% level.

Therefore, the robustness analysis confirms that the moderation of far-right support by crime context is not an artefact of multiple testing. Amplifying effects, especially among individuals dissatisfied with democracy, those identifying as lower class, and lower-educated respondents, prove sufficiently robust to survive stricter inferential criteria. Conversely, the statistical significance of dampening effects among individuals opposing same-gender marriage did not hold.

Furthermore, assaults and robberies emerge as stronger catalysts of far-right support than homicides. This likely reflects

Table 12: Economic and Crime Context as Moderator of Individual Grievances: BH FDR Correction

Moderator $\times$ Contextual variable	p-value	q-value	Interpretation
<i>Price interactions</i>			
Man $\times$ HouseRent	0.000	0.000	Survives at 5%
OppSGM $\times$ HousePrice	0.000	0.003	Survives at 5%
DissDem $\times$ HIPC-Energy	0.000	0.005	Survives at 5%
OppSGM $\times$ HouseRent	0.004	.0035	Survives at 5%
DissDem $\times$ HIPC-Food	0.011	0.068	Survives at 10%
LowC $\times$ HIPC-Food	0.025	0.124	Does not survive
LowC $\times$ HIPC-Energy	0.027	0.124	Does not survive
Man $\times$ HIPC-Food	0.041	0.164	Does not survive
BelowSec $\times$ HIPC-Energy	0.046	0.164	Does not survive
Opplmmig $\times$ HouseRent	0.058	0.187	Does not survive
DissDem $\times$ HousePrice	0.075	0.206	Does not survive
IntPol $\times$ HIPC-Food	0.077	0.206	Does not survive
LowC $\times$ HousePrice	0.089	0.219	Does not survive
<i>Crime context</i>			
LowC $\times$ HighAssaults	0.000	0.000	Survives at 5%
DissDem $\times$ HighRobbery	0.001	0.016	Survives at 5%
BelowSec $\times$ HighAssaults	0.002	0.021	Survives at 5%
Christian $\times$ HighHomicide	0.004	0.028	Survives at 5%
DissDem $\times$ HighAssaults	0.013	0.057	Survives at 10%
Christian $\times$ HighAssaults	0.013	0.057	Survives at 10%
Opplmmig $\times$ HighRobbery	0.037	0.141	Does not survive
OppSGM $\times$ HighAssaults	0.087	0.294	Does not survive
OppSGM $\times$ HighHomicide	0.093	0.278	Does not survive

Notes: Benjamini–Hochberg false discovery rate (BH-FDR) correction; p-value is the unadjusted interaction p-value, and q denotes the BH-adjusted p-value. Only interactions with $p < 0.10$ are reported.

the greater salience of these types of crimes. Unlike homicides, which are relatively rare and often mediated through the media, assaults and robberies may generate a more immediate and direct sense of personal threat, which in turn may increase support for the far right. Importantly, this relationship is particularly pronounced among individuals discontent with democracy, who appear especially responsive to higher levels of criminality.

The fact that dissatisfaction with democracy is not statistically significant in the baseline models, but emerges as one of the most relevant grievance variables in the living costs, and especially in crime context interactions, suggests that political dissatisfaction does not, in itself, increase support for far-right parties. Rather, it appears to require contextual triggers (such as rising price levels and criminality) to be translated into such support.

One additional aspect worth discussing is the inconsistency of interaction effects observed among individuals opposed to immigration. Despite being one of the strongest individual-level predictors of far-right support, opposition to immigration does not appear to be substantially amplified by rising living costs or high-criminality contexts. This may reflect a ceiling effect, whereby individuals already so predisposed to vote for far-right parties that contextual factors add little further pressure. Alternatively, this group may already attribute economic hardship and crime to immigration, leaving additional contextual developments without marginal explanatory power.

Overall, the Benjamini–Hochberg correction indicates that only a limited set of interaction effects remains robust. Nevertheless, the surviving interactions support the core argument and are broadly consistent with hypotheses H2 and H3, suggesting that rising living costs and crime can reinforce pre-existing grievances, translating them into far-right support among vulnerable groups.

4.2.4 Methodology Robustness Checks

The final step to assess the results' robustness is to examine whether the methodology chosen was econometrically appropriate.

This subsection begins by presenting the standard deviations of the random intercepts at the country and NUTS II levels, together with the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), which indicates the proportion of total variance attributable to each level. A high ICC suggests that respondents within the same region or country resemble one another more closely than they resemble respondents from other regions or countries. In turn, this indicates that the clusters estimated by the multilevel model are substantively and statistically meaningful, thereby justifying the use of a multilevel probit specification. By contrast, if the ICCs are negligible, a standard probit model would be sufficient.

Table 13 presents the values of country and region ICCs in the relevant price-related variables.

Table 13: Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICC) for Three-Level Random-Effects Model

Price variable	N	ICC Country [95% CI]	ICC NUTS II Country [95% CI]
HICP-Food	44,044	0.412 [0.206, 0.655]	0.438 [0.235, 0.664]
HousePrice	42,364	0.459 [0.244, 0.691]	0.481 [0.270, 0.699]
HICP-Energy	44,044	0.418 [0.206, 0.664]	0.444 [0.237, 0.673]
HouseRent	44,044	0.405 [0.199, 0.652]	0.432 [0.228, 0.661]

The ICC values, ranging from 40.5% to 48.1%, indicate that a substantial proportion of the variance in reported far-right support is attributable to differences at the country and NUTS II levels, thus supporting the use of the three-level multilevel model.

Second, the Mundlak test was used to assess whether the explanatory variables are correlated with unobserved country-specific heterogeneity. This is done by estimating a random effects model augmented with the country-level means of the regressors and comparing its coefficients with those from the standard random effects model. If the Mundlak test rejects the null hypothesis, this indicates a violation of the standard panel data assumption that the regressors are uncorrelated with country-specific unobserved heterogeneity.

Table 14 reports the average marginal effects of relevant variables in the likelihood of a respondent reporting support for

a far-right party, and the Mundlak tests' p-values.

Table 14: Mundlak Test Results

Price variable	AME RE	AME CRE	Difference (CRE – RE)	Mundlak p-value
HICP-Food	0.00032	0.00033	0.0000075	0.970
HousePrice	0.00168	0.00169	0.0000157	0.961
HICP-Energy	–0.00109	–0.00110	–0.0000103	0.970
HouseRent	0.00085	0.00089	0.0000342	0.682

As p-values are higher than 10%, the test fails to reject the null hypothesis, and therefore it is not possible to conclude that regressors are correlated with country and regional-level characteristics. Therefore, the use of a multilevel probit model with random effects is adequate and econometrically correct.

As a final robustness check, the models were re-estimated using fixed effects instead of random effects. Table 15 highlights the differences in coefficients between the fixed- and random-effects estimations, as well as the statistical significance of the fixed-effects coefficients.

Table 15: Comparison of AME – Random Effects vs Fixed Effects

Covariate	AME RE	AME FE	Difference (FE – RE)	FE p-value
Man	0.0131	0.0211	0.0080	0.001
LowC	0.0028	0.0052	0.0024	0.329
DissDem	0.0328	0.0536	0.0208	0.071
Opplmmig	0.0453	0.0808	0.0355	<0.001
IntPol	0.0193	0.0356	0.0163	<0.001
OppSGM	0.0557	0.0940	0.0383	<0.001

Overall, the results indicate that the coefficients from the fixed-effects model are generally larger than their random-effects counterparts. Both models yield coefficients with the same signs, and the patterns of statistical significance are consistent, supporting the choice of the random effects specification.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This dissertation extensively studied whether and how rising living costs have contributed for the recent resurgence of far-right parties' support in the European Union. The central finding is that increases in the prices of essential goods are associated with greater far-right electoral support, but that these effects are heterogeneous rather than uniform, as stated by authors such as [Ferrari \(2021\)](#) and [Guiso et al. \(2024\)](#).

The effect of overall and sub-components inflation is rarely statistically significant once country and NUTS II level unobserved heterogeneity is controlled for, implying that after controlling for country and regional random effects, the variation in far-right support is predominantly explained by unobserved local and national characteristics, leaving little independent effect of inflation.

The strongest and most relevant findings concern living costs interactions with socio-economic and attitudinal characteristics. Results indicate that rising living costs tend to mobilise economically vulnerable voters or individuals already predisposed to far-right radicalisation. Specifically, men show increased support for far-right parties when food and housing rents rise; those dissatisfied with democracy react to rising food, energy, and housing prices; individuals opposed to same-gender marriage are influenced by increases in housing prices, and rents, as well as those opposing open immigration policies. Individuals from lower social classes may respond to increases in food and energy prices, and individuals with less than secondary-level education may be particularly responsive to energy price increases; though these results are comparatively weaker, as concluded by the multiple robustness checks employed.

In contrast, the effect of increased house prices and rental costs on individuals opposing same-gender marriage survive all the robustness checks, being the most robust and statistically reliable association in the analysis. These results have important political implications, highlighting how ongoing housing market crises in many European countries can pose serious risks to democratic stability within EU Member States.

Complementarily, the results indicate that regions with high levels of criminality channel individual grievances toward increased far-right support. Dissatisfaction with democracy, low income, and low educational attainment show stronger associations with far-right support in high-crime regions. Notably, the interactions involving dissatisfaction with democracy withstand all robustness tests, suggesting that this social group is consistently and particularly susceptible to far-right radicalisation in contexts of rising criminality. On the other hand, evidence shows that Christians are robustly and consistently alienated from far-right parties in high-criminality regions.

These results carry significant policy implications. The first is that inflationary shocks have political consequences, as they can contribute to the political radicalisation of vulnerable social groups. Therefore, to ensure democratic stability, price stabilisation is crucial both in times of strong political polarisation and as a means of preventing it. Furthermore, policies

targeting the affordability of essential goods appear to be more efficient than broader macroeconomic policies.

The second policy implication is related to the housing crisis that many European countries currently face. Providing a solution to this issue in terms of housing accessibility is crucial to prevent increased far-right political radicalisation, among other pressing policy goals.

Lastly, as dissatisfaction with democracy catalyses political radicalisation in rising living costs and high criminality contexts, governments should act towards restoring citizens' trust in democratic institutions.

Even though this dissertation constitutes a pioneering attempt to quantify the impact of rising living costs and criminality on the predisposition toward far-right political identification, several limitations should be acknowledged. The first concerns the availability of inflation data. As these data are only available at the national level and the pooled dataset covers just two years, within-country variation is extremely limited. This may have constrained the ability to identify independent effects of inflation, as much of the observed association is likely absorbed by unobserved country- and NUTS II-level heterogeneity.

Secondly, as explained in Chapter 3, Ireland was excluded from the empirical analysis because it does not have far-right parties according to the *The PopuList* classification. As discussed by [Golder \(2003\)](#), this may introduce sample selection bias, since some explanatory variables that affect the electoral success of far-right parties may also influence whether such parties emerge in the first place. By restricting the sample to countries where far-right parties exist, the analysis conditions on the outcome of a prior selection process, which may bias the estimated relationships.

Third, econometric analyses based on survey responses are inherently limited because responses may be affected by reporting bias and subjectivity. In the EES in particular, several explanatory variables rely on respondents' own perceptions (ex: perceived social class) and may therefore not fully capture the underlying characteristic of interest.

Another limitation of these questionnaires, noted by [Stockemer et al. \(2018\)](#), is that they do not capture the complexity required to fully understand the nature of political alignment. For instance, the quantitative scale of opposition to open immigration policies does not allow us to identify the motivations behind such views, meaning whether they stem from prejudice toward particular ethnic groups, concerns about economic consequences, or other considerations. Furthermore, it is not possible to determine whether this position reflects a stable ideological stance or is contingent on conjunctural factors such as current economic conditions, recent political events, or perceived shifts in immigration flows.

All of these dimensions, in interaction with far-right parties' political and communication strategies, are likely to shape whether and how different social groups increase their support for such parties, while also complicating the identification of causal relationships. As a result, the findings documented in this dissertation should be interpreted as correlational patterns.

Therefore, several research avenues can be pursued based on this analysis. Regarding the effects of price levels on far-right support, further research could examine how voters respond to incremental changes in inflation, rather than the average levels analysed in this dissertation. Furthermore, this analysis could be extended to far-left parties, which may also be able to politically capitalise on rising prices. Additionally, a complementary analysis of parties' political strategies regarding inflation could help explain why certain social groups are more likely than others to shift towards far-right support in a context of rising prices. As for the relationship between crime and support for far-right parties, as previously discussed in Section 4.1.2, further research is needed for a better understanding of underlying mechanisms, particularly how individuals interpret and attribute crime, perceive their personal vulnerability, distinguish between egotropic and sociotropic concerns, and assess the competence of far-right parties in addressing criminality.

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Appendix A

Countries' Information

A.0.1 Countries Covered in EES and Populist

Table 16: Countries Covered by Dataset

Country	Code	EES 2024	EES 2019	PopuList
Austria	AT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belgium	BE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	BG	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cyprus	CY	Yes	Yes	Yes
Czechia	CZ	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	DE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denmark	DK	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estonia	EE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spain	ES	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finland	FI	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	FR	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greece	GR	Yes	Yes	Yes
Croatia	HR	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	HU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ireland	IE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Italy	IT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	LT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	LU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Latvia	LV	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malta	MT	Yes	Yes	No
Netherlands	NL	Yes	Yes	Yes
Poland	PL	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portugal	PT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Romania	RO	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sweden	SE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovenia	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovakia	SK	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom	UK	No	Yes	Yes

A.0.2 Classification of Far-Right Parties Based on The PopuList

Table 17: Far-Right Party Classification According to The PopuList

Country	Party / Parties*
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB), <i>New Flemish Alliance (N-VA)</i>
Bulgaria	Attack (Ataka); National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB); Revival (V); Will (Volya)
Cyprus	National Popular Front (ELAM); <i>Solidarity (Allilegii)</i>
Czechia	Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)
Germany	Alternative for Germany (AfD)
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DF); New Right (NB)
Estonia	Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)
Spain	Voice (VOX)
Finland	Finns Party (PS)
France	National Rally (RN); Reconquest (R)
Greece	Golden Dawn (XA); Greek Solution (EL); Independent Greeks (ANEL)
Croatia	<i>Bridge (Most)</i> ; Croatian Growth (Hrast); Croatian Sovereignists (HS); Homeland Movement (DP)
Hungary	Fidesz (Fidesz); Our Homeland Movement (MH)
Italy	Brothers of Italy (Fdi)
Latvia	National Alliance (NA); Fatherland and Freedom (LNNK)
Netherlands	<i>Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB)</i> ; Forum for Democracy (FvD); Party for Freedom (PVV)
Poland	Confederation of the Polish Crown (Korona); Law and Justice (PIS); Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic - Liberty and Hope (KKBLN)
Portugal	Enough (CH)
Romania	Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR); Greater Romania Party (PRM) ; Save Romania Union (USR); United Romania Party (PRU)
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS); People's Party Our Slovakia (L'SNS); We Are Family (SR)
Slovenia	Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS); Slovenian National Party (SNS)
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)

*Parties written in italic represent borderline cases

Appendix B

Complementary Empirical Results' Tables

Table 18: Alternative Macroeconomic Control Variables

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\ln f_n$	0.01481 (1.615)	0.01537* (1.751)	0.01539* (1.798)	0.01401 (1.612)
UnempNUTSII	-0.00432 (-1.151)			-0.00367 (-1.193)
UnempNUTSII _c		-0.00937 (-1.132)		
UnempNUTSII _d			-0.00209 (-1.025)	
GDPNUTSII _d			-0.00468 (-0.928)	-0.00523 (-1.049)
Observations	44,044	44,044	37,731	37,731
Log likelihood	-13,506	-13,505	-12,198	-12,192

Notes: AMEs from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models with random intercepts at the country and NUTSII level. Standard errors are robust. All specifications include the full set of individual-level controls shown in the baseline model. Regression (1) includes one-year lagged unemployment rate; regression (2) includes one-year change in unemployment rate; regression (3) includes the difference between the NUTSII unemployment rate and real GDP and the national averages; regression (4) includes one-year lagged unemployment rate and the difference between NUTSII real GDP and the national average.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Appendix C

Robustness Checks

Table 19: Robustness Check - HIPC-Food

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man	0.01438*** (3.120)	0.01421*** (3.113)	0.01209** (2.498)	0.01426*** (2.797)
Young	0.01679*** (2.810)	0.01664*** (2.798)	0.00464 (0.843)	0.00597 (0.994)
City	-0.00483 (-1.110)	-0.00471 (-1.097)	-0.00352 (-0.866)	-0.00375 (-0.872)
BelowSec	0.01593*** (2.650)	0.01575*** (2.633)	0.00863 (1.580)	0.00909 (1.518)
AboveSec	-0.01566** (-2.550)	-0.01532** (-2.496)	-0.01822*** (-2.583)	-0.02061*** (-2.796)
Unemp	0.00073 (0.110)	0.00059 (0.091)	-0.00521 (-1.152)	-0.00436 (-0.836)
LowC	0.00062 (0.170)	0.00069 (0.186)	0.00799** (2.040)	0.00388 (0.988)
Christian	0.01552* (1.920)	0.01534* (1.900)	0.02074** (2.128)	0.02128** (2.152)
DissDem	0.03504 (1.510)	0.03433 (1.512)	0.03789 (1.485)	0.03614 (1.414)
OppSGM	0.05998*** (3.330)	0.05952*** (3.289)	0.05651*** (3.362)	0.05663*** (3.310)
OppRedist	0.01423* (1.930)	0.01395* (1.912)	0.01684** (2.173)	0.02075** (2.446)
Opplmig	0.05215*** (3.240)	0.05122*** (3.195)	0.06092*** (3.143)	0.06126*** (3.078)
IntPol	0.02202*** (2.870)	0.02167*** (2.811)	0.01795*** (2.662)	0.01611** (2.550)
y2019	-0.05153*** (-2.800)	-0.03128 (-1.532)	-0.04769** (-1.969)	-0.03873 (-1.535)
HICP-Food	0.00623* (1.680)	0.00691* (1.936)	0.00580 (1.012)	0.00656 (1.072)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.01010 (-1.330)	-0.00056 (-1.267)	-0.01430 (-1.441)	-0.00522 (-0.469)
Observations	44,044	44,044	44,044	44,044
Log likelihood	-13,506	-14,087	-14,848	-15,258

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 20: Robustness Check - HIPC-Energy

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man	0.01446*** (3.170)	0.01477*** (2.970)	0.01215** (2.526)	0.01436*** (2.793)
Young	0.01696*** (2.870)	0.01873*** (2.979)	0.00471 (0.857)	0.00611 (1.016)
City	-0.00474 (-1.080)	-0.00642 (-1.335)	-0.00334 (-0.808)	-0.00333 (-0.768)
BelowSec	0.01654*** (2.820)	0.01901*** (3.032)	0.00928* (1.860)	0.01047* (1.860)
AboveSec	-0.01511** (-2.510)	-0.01625** (-2.541)	-0.01772** (-2.566)	-0.01981*** (-2.703)
Unemp	0.00037 (0.060)	-0.00057 (-0.083)	-0.00550 (-1.181)	-0.00477 (-0.889)
LowC	0.00057 (0.150)	0.00119 (0.282)	0.00796** (2.012)	0.00382 (0.967)
Christian	0.01544* (1.920)	0.02020** (2.261)	0.02058** (2.126)	0.02096** (2.126)
DissDem	0.03509 (1.520)	0.03796 (1.597)	0.03793 (1.488)	0.03629 (1.412)
OppSGM	0.06034*** (3.340)	0.06394*** (3.357)	0.05680*** (3.352)	0.05708*** (3.270)
OppRedist	0.01418* (1.950)	0.01764** (2.134)	0.01686** (2.192)	0.02080** (2.442)
Opplmig	0.05219*** (3.280)	0.05907*** (3.404)	0.06106*** (3.159)	0.06180*** (3.080)
IntPol	0.02189*** (2.860)	0.02585*** (3.120)	0.01778*** (2.630)	0.01604** (2.504)
y2019	-0.05120*** (-2.900)	-0.05251*** (-2.798)	-0.04359* (-1.695)	-0.02689 (-1.140)
HICP-Energy	0.00154 (0.970)	0.00040 (0.226)	0.00059 (0.186)	-0.00148 (-0.573)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.01026 (-1.220)	-0.01347 (-1.504)	-0.01385 (-1.329)	-0.00513 (-0.426)
Observations	44,044	44,044	44,044	44,044
Log likelihood	-13,518	-14,097	-14,862	-15,270

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 21: Robustness Check - House Price Index

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man	0.01480*** (2.920)	0.01477*** (2.970)	0.01215** (2.526)	0.01436*** (2.793)
Young	0.01713*** (2.700)	0.01873*** (2.979)	0.00471 (0.857)	0.00611 (1.016)
City	-0.00517 (-1.110)	-0.00642 (-1.335)	-0.00334 (-0.808)	-0.00333 (-0.768)
BelowSec	0.01483** (2.560)	0.01901*** (3.032)	0.00928* (1.860)	0.01047* (1.860)
AboveSec	-0.01547** (-2.430)	-0.01625** (-2.541)	-0.01772** (-2.566)	-0.01981*** (-2.703)
Unemp	-0.00108	-0.00057	-0.00550	-0.00477

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Table 21 – continued

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
	(-0.160)	(-0.083)	(-1.181)	(-0.889)
LowC	0.00210	0.00119	0.00796**	0.00382
	(0.530)	(0.282)	(2.012)	(0.967)
Christian	0.01682**	0.02020**	0.02058**	0.02096**
	(2.010)	(2.261)	(2.126)	(2.126)
DissDem	0.03258	0.03796	0.03793	0.03629
	(1.320)	(1.597)	(1.488)	(1.412)
OppSGM	0.06156***	0.06394***	0.05680***	0.05708***
	(3.260)	(3.357)	(3.352)	(3.270)
OppRedist	0.01479*	0.01764**	0.01686**	0.02080**
	(1.870)	(2.134)	(2.192)	(2.442)
Opplmig	0.05314***	0.05907***	0.06106***	0.06180***
	(3.070)	(3.404)	(3.159)	(3.080)
IntPol	0.02299***	0.02585***	0.01778***	0.01604**
	(2.810)	(3.120)	(2.630)	(2.504)
y2019	-0.04789***	-0.05251***	-0.04359*	-0.02689
	(-2.660)	(-2.798)	(-1.695)	(-1.140)
HousePrice	0.00607*	0.00040	0.00059	-0.00148
	(1.900)	(0.226)	(0.186)	(-0.573)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.00887	-0.01347	-0.01385	-0.00513
	(-1.170)	(-1.504)	(-1.329)	(-0.426)
Observations	42,364	42,364	42,364	42,364
Log likelihood	-13,065	-14,097	-14,862	-15,270

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 22: Robustness Check - House Rent Index

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
Man	0.01447***	0.01479***	0.01222**	0.01435***
	(3.140)	(2.964)	(2.554)	(2.817)
Young	0.01702***	0.01878***	0.00464	0.00605
	(2.810)	(2.947)	(0.842)	(1.005)
City	-0.00456	-0.00639	-0.00325	-0.00344
	(-1.030)	(-1.324)	(-0.803)	(-0.801)
BelowSec	0.01704***	0.01912***	0.00947*	0.01009*
	(2.830)	(3.006)	(1.792)	(1.739)
AboveSec	-0.01491**	-0.01613**	-0.01800**	-0.02011***
	(-2.430)	(-2.490)	(-2.484)	(-2.684)
Unemp	0.00016	-0.00066	-0.00531	-0.00457
	(0.020)	(-0.096)	(-1.165)	(-0.874)
LowC	0.00055	0.00118	0.00790**	0.00381
	(0.140)	(0.280)	(2.047)	(0.967)
Christian	0.01538*	0.02019**	0.02049**	0.02104**
	(1.910)	(2.259)	(2.092)	(2.127)
DissDem	0.03530	0.03811	0.03738	0.03591
	(1.510)	(1.587)	(1.496)	(1.422)
OppSGM	0.06070***	0.06417***	0.05625***	0.05664***
	(3.350)	(3.375)	(3.338)	(3.300)
OppRedist	0.01419*	0.01764**	0.01684**	0.02076**
	(1.940)	(2.133)	(2.156)	(2.438)
Opplmig	0.05248***	0.05916***	0.06116***	0.06155***
	(3.260)	(3.407)	(3.143)	(3.084)

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Table 22 – continued

VARIABLES	PFR_r	PFR_b	VFR_r	VFR_b
IntPol	0.02207*** (2.870)	0.02594*** (3.124)	0.01763*** (2.628)	0.01586** (2.515)
y2019	-0.04372** (-2.230)	-0.04990** (-2.340)	-0.04629** (-1.994)	-0.03457 (-1.295)
HouseRent	0.00035 (0.540)	0.00025 (0.361)	-0.00084 (-0.756)	-0.00050 (-0.410)
UnempNUTSII _c	-0.01066 (-1.310)	-0.01370 (-1.582)	-0.01339 (-1.418)	-0.00472 (-0.403)
Observations	44,044	44,044	44,044	44,044
Log likelihood	-13,522	-14,096	-14,847	-15,271

Notes: Average marginal effects and t-statistics (in parentheses) from weighted mixed-effects multilevel probit models. Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

