Aspiration versus Apprehension: Economic Opportunities and Electoral Preferences

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Abstract

Recent studies take increasingly refined views of how socio-economic conditions influence political behavior. We add to this literature by exploring how voters' *prospective* evaluations of economic and social opportunities relate to electoral contestation versus stabilization of the political economic system underpinning the knowledge society. Using original survey data from eight West European countries, we show that positive prospects are associated with higher support for mainstream parties (incumbents and opposition) and lower support for radical parties on all levels of material well-being. Our results support the idea that "aspirational voters" with positive evaluations of opportunities (for themselves or their children) represent an important stabilizing force in advanced democratic capitalism. However, we also highlight the importance of radical party support among "apprehensive voters" who are economically secure but perceive a lack of long-term opportunities. To assess these findings' implications, we discuss the relative importance of these groups across different countries.

Keywords: economic and social opportunities; electoral behavior; radical party support; knowledge economy; European politics

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1. Introduction

The political repercussions of structural economic change across advanced democracies have brought about two strikingly different developments: on the one hand, we observe an ever-growing share of highly educated citizens, whose coveted skills are seen as a guarantee for aggregate prosperity and growth in modern "knowledge economies". On the other hand, the gains of economic modernization are not shared equally and many observers emphasize that globalization and technological change are producing a pool of dissatisfied voters defying the policies and politics that sustain structural change. The different emphasis of the two accounts suggests strikingly different prospects for stability or upheaval of democratic governance. While widespread upskilling in the knowledge economy promises growing prosperity and thus a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and democracy, the second perspective paints a more fragile picture and expects more disruptive transformations of the political landscape. It stands to reason that both narratives hold some truth: stability and contestation hinge on the relative importance of the constituencies who either perceive that they have what it takes to thrive in the knowledge economy or who are worried about their future place in a dynamic and fast-changing society.

In this paper, we contribute to the study of the structural foundations of partisan upheaval in postindustrial democracies. Our specific contribution is to investigate how *perceptions of social and economic opportunity* relate to electoral preferences. We study how the position of voters in a changing economy and society affects their support for mainstream parties versus radical parties. In the electoral context of the early 21st century, mainstream parties – and incumbents in particular – represent continuity, while radical parties challenge structural trends and fundamentally contest economic and societal dislocations. Mainstream opposition parties might call for structural adaptation within the confines of the existing system, but they do not question long-term structural trajectories in the way that radical parties do (De Vries

and Hobolt 2020). Hence, by looking at support for mainstream incumbent parties, mainstream opposition parties, as well as radical parties, we focus on expressions of varying degrees of willingness to support or upend the political status quo.

With our focus on prospective evaluations of opportunities, we build on a range of recent contributions in the literature on long-term party system change that have increasingly come to recognize the limited explanatory capacity of individuals' immediate material circumstances for their political attitudes and behavior. A rapidly growing literature has started to look beyond objective socio-economic status and introduced subjective and relational concepts of well-being and status perceptions to identify "winners" and, especially, "losers" of structural change (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Smith and Pettigrew 2015; Pettigrew 2017; Burgoon et al. 2019; Gest 2016; Kurer 2020; Steenvoorden and Harteveld 2018; De Vries and Hoffmann 2018; Teney et al. 2014; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Gidron and Hall 2017). What these studies have in common is a conceptualization of voter perceptions that refers to their present or retrospective experience. We directly contribute to this literature by arguing that much of the core conflict arising from the emerging knowledge economy are of an inherently forward-looking nature: voters form their belief in the political system based on perceptions of prospective opportunity – for themselves as well as the next generation.

The expectation of a system-stabilizing effect of positive future opportunities is in line with core insights of the well-established literature on economic voting, which emphasizes the importance of voters' *perceptions* of the economy, as well as how evaluations of *future* economic performance matter for incumbent versus opposition support. Indeed, a large body of studies on economic voting concludes that voters' perceptions of economic conditions (versus their objective material conditions), and their prospective (alongside retrospective) perceptions most consistently relate to support for incumbent government parties (Clarke et al. 2004; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007;

Duch and Stevenson 2008). However, the long-term, encompassing, and fundamental nature of ongoing transformations of the economy and electoral realignments implies that beyond the familiar distinction between incumbent versus opposition parties, we should further distinguish between more versus less radical forms of opposition (Hernández and Kriesi 2016). The above-cited literature on grievances in times of structural change shows that voters' sense of (lacking) economic opportunity may relate to deeper grievances linked to questions of dignity, identity and belonging in a changing society. Such sentiments in particular seem to provide the link to support for the radical right, which has been the primary challenge to mainstream parties in the recent decades. Consequently, our study integrates the insights of the economic voting literature on government support with the findings of a growing literature highlighting a more structural backlash against economic change and the political elite.

More specifically, we argue and demonstrate that perceptions of economic opportunity cross-cut objective socio-economic indicators, resulting in political coalitions that transcend vertical divisions of society. Most importantly, we discuss the relevance of two key constituencies emerging from our conceptual framework: aspirational voters and apprehensive voters. *Aspirational* voters are not immediate beneficiaries of the ongoing economic-structural context, but they are confident enough about their (and their childen's) prospects to support a rather reformist, system-sustaining approach to policies and governance (potentially voting for mainstream opposition parties, but hesitant to support radical parties). They may play an important – even decisive – role in stabilizing democratic capitalism across advanced societies (Iversen and Soskice 2019).

However, we argue that there is also a highly relevant flipside to this line of reasoning: *apprehensive* voters are relatively well-off in immediate material terms, but they are concerned to see society and the economy develop in a direction that threat-

ens their and their children's sources of status and well-being. As a consequence, they are wary of structural change and of its societal implications, they perceive "the system" to be steering in the wrong direction, and they thus support a more radical contestation of mainstream parties' politics and policies.

Drawing on original survey data fielded in eight Western European countries, we first examine the political implications of positive and negative perceptions of economic opportunity. We provide evidence that perceptions of long-term economic opportunity – in an intra- as well as intergenerational perspective – are consistently negatively related to support for radical parties (but not to *mainstream* opposition, as expected). Notably, "aspirational" voters support radical parties at below-average levels, in contrast to well-off but "apprehensive" voters. Only voters who are both doing well and are confident about the future support incumbents at above-average levels.

We discuss the political implications of these findings by pointing to the cross-national distribution of these groups: While a coalition of confident and aspirational voters makes up for 60-70 percent of the electorate in the Nordic and continental European countries, more than 55-60 percent of voters in Spain and Italy evaluate economic and social prospects negatively. Negative evaluations are so widespread in these countries that they represent around 50% even among mainstream party voters only, making their impact on government decisions even more likely.

Since this study is based on observational data, we cannot exclude that radical parties themselves generate and sustain negative views of the future among their supporters. However, while radical parties (and radical right parties especially) certainly appear to mobilize and build on such sentiment, our data indicates that the share of pessimistic voters does not relate to the size and strength of radical parties across countries. Rather than reflecting relative party strength, the shares of voters

with optimistic versus pessimistic perceptions of future prospects seems to reflect structural context conditions: majority coalitions of optimistic voters emerge where welfare states are generous and accessible and where national knowledge-economies provide labor market opportunities to match expanding skill supply.

2. Opportunity Perceptions and Electoral Choice

Empirical research on the rise of challenger parties and the fragmentation of the mainstream left and right across advanced democracies has increasingly converged on the insight that focusing on voters' objective and immediate socio-economic status (e.g. current income or employment status) is insufficient for explaining radical versus mainstream voting. Against many of the early hypotheses in this literature - according to which the unemployed, the poor and/or nonstandard "cheap labor" were supposed to be the recruiting ground for radical challenger parties, especially on the right (e.g. Betz 1993; Esping-Andersen 1999; Lubbers et al. 2002; Mughan et al. 2003; King and Rueda 2008), we now know that the economic situation of voters need to be theorized in their temporal and cross-sectional context.

Indeed, rather than concluding that economic circumstances are irrelevant for understanding the political developments of the last decades, several contributions have since adopted a more integrated and contextualized perspective on how socio-economic circumstances might shape electoral choices. To situate our own perspective, we outline three ways in which researchers have so far adapted conceptualizations of socio-economic status as a driving factor of political behavior: i) by highlighting the importance of status relative to others, ii) by emphasizing dynamic changes in status over time, or iii) by highlighting the subjective nature of status perceptions.[1]

[1]Note that while the following systematization of this literature distinguishes approaches focused on relative, changing, and/or subjective status, the separation is largely analytical and various ap-

First, research on *relative* deprivation emphasizes that voters compare their own economic situation to that of others in their society (Runciman 1966). If such a comparison by voters leads them to conclude that they are – unjustly in their view – disadvantaged, this may fuel resentment and a receptiveness for political appeals that play on that resentment (Pettigrew 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Burgoon et al. 2019; Kurer 2020). The importance of relative judgments of economic well-being and related fairness perceptions is also evident in ethnographic studies, for instance of rural or declining industrial communities in the US or the UK, members of which often emphasize the arduousness and struggles of their own working life while drawing comparisons to the ("unfairly") comfortable lives of professionals or public employees in thriving city centers (Gest 2016; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016).

Second, some researchers have looked at how *dynamic* changes in voters' (objective or subjective) socio-economic status might explain political preferences. Burgoon et al. (2019) study "positional deprivation", defind as "a situation where the increase in disposable income of an individual is smaller relative to the growth in income of other groups in the same country's income distribution". Also looking at objective changes, Kurer (2020) and Kurer and Gallego (2019) explore the employment trajectories of threatened routine workers, distinguishing relative and absolute changes in status. A dynamic perspective is also implicit in some of the studies on subjective social status and nostalgia (Gidron and Hall 2017; Steenvoorden and Harteveld 2018). More explicitly, Gest et al. (2017) ask survey respondents to compare the status of "people like them" today to what they think it was 30 years ago, in order to get at a more diffuse sense of backsliding among certain social groups. Again, ethnographic work has captured perceptions of relative status loss using qualitative methods. Hochschild's (2016) well-known metaphor of a social escalator towards the American Dream on which members of the "old" middle classes feel that they are overtaken by members of ethnic minorities, immigrants, women, or public sector workers vividly illustrates

proaches combine several or all of these aspects.

how changes in relative social status might matter to individuals (on Germany, see also Nachtwey 2016).

A third relevant strand of work has more generally emphasized the importance of *subjective* measures of immediate, relative or dynamic deprivation (e.g. Teney et al. 2014) or of subjective social status (Gidron and Hall 2017; Mutz 2018). Gidron and Hall show that lower levels of subjective social status are associated with support for the radical right across developed democracies, and they trace in particular how the self-perceived social status of men without a college education (relative to women) has declined in the past decades as a consequence of structural transformations of the economy and society. These concepts inherently include a relational element, even if the relevant temporal or dynamic reference points may not always be discussed upfront. Subjective judgments of status are also ever-present in the aforementioned ethnographic studies with their focus on individuals' own interpretations of their economic circumstances.

We learn from these important contributions that to better understand how voters' economic situation affects their political behavior, we need to capture (theoretically and in measurement) how these voters perceive their situation in context. And while this insight represents important progress in studying the economic-distributive sources of voting for parties that defend or contest the existing economic and social order, many of the status threats voters invoke when assessing their economic situation refer to the future - e.g. work conditions deteriorating, risks of automation, prospects of "increasing" immigration etc. Similarly, radical parties themselves tend to operate with prospective narratives and scenarios of threat. Consequently, we explore how voters' expectations for their future relate to their electoral preferences.

Our focus on voter's perceived prospective evaluations of the economy and society is entirely in line with the main insights of the economic voting literature, which

emphasizes the relevance of socio-tropic, subjective and prospective evaluations of economic performance for incumbent party support (e.g. Clarke et al. 2004; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008). Our approach is complementary in that it adds a more long-term structural perspective on evaluations of the economy. We hence distinguish between mainstream incumbent, mainstream opposition *and* radical parties, because the contestation of established mainstream parties by radical challengers is at the core of a fundamental realignment of European party systems that cannot be conceptualized in terms of incumbent versus opposition exclusively (Hernández and Kriesi 2016).

Indeed, the rise of radical challenger parties has been the primary concern of the recently burgeoning research on how the socio-economic status of voters relates to feelings of relative deprivation and threat, and how radical right parties in particular capitalize on these perceptions by activating more culturally framed resentment against mainstream parties (Gest 2016; Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016; De Vries and Hoffmann 2018; Gidron and Hall 2017; Kurer 2020). Hence, in terms of drivers of electoral preferences, we also need to embed voters' perceptions of (their own and society's) economic performance in a more structural and sociological theorization of preference (and grievance) formation.

In theorizing the electoral implications of perceived prospects, we directly build on an argument advanced by Iversen and Soskice (2019), which suggests that "aspirational voters" play a vital role in stabilizing advanced capitalist democracies with their support for mainstream parties. Aspirational voters, according to Iversen and Soskice, are voters who are not (yet) direct beneficiaries of the advanced sectors representing the engine of democratic capitalism[2], but who believe that they or their children have good prospects of some day joining the ranks of skilled workers employed

[2]Today that would mostly refer to the key sectors of the knowledge economy, concentrating cognitive, creative and communicative occupations.

in these knowledge-intensive sectors and of benefiting from structural development in the longer run. In the authors' account, this segment of aspirational voters is an important stabilizing factor in advanced democratic capitalism, as it stands for political continuity and "reformism", thereby enabling the growth that eventually fuels demand for skilled and educated labor.

Conversely, Iversen and Soskice argue that populist or anti-system appeals fall on fertile ground among individuals and families who feel they are excluded from the metaphorical escalator of growth and progress. Adverse political economic developments brought about by the transition to the knowledge economy (such as geographical segregation between successful cities and a stagnating or declining periphery) play a crucial role in undermining certain voters' confidence in future opportunities. In this vein the authors also point to the rapid spread of populism in the aftermath of the Great Recession, an observation that resonates well with the findings of Hernandez and Kriesi (2016): With the economic crisis undermining confidence in incumbent parties, support for opposition forces is particularly likely to take the form of radical party support if and when voters cease to see a place for themselves and their children in an ever more knowledge-intensive and globalized society. Shorter-term economic voting dynamics can hence accelerate the rise of radical parties and thereby fuel more lasting party system change.

We build on this conceptual contribution by Iversen and Soskice, but aim at differentiating more explicitly between subjective prospects and current socio-economic status. While a positive evaluation of future opportunities may function as a buffer against supporting radical parties even among lower-status voters, a negative view of future opportunities may also drive well-off voters towards the fringes of the political spectrum. There is no reason to think that economically secure individuals should be immune from losing confidence in the capacity of the political economic order to provide prosperity for them or their children over the life course. Differen-

tiating prospects and status develops our theoretical expectations beyond a median voter argument towards the conceptualization of different groups, their preferences and - importantly - their relative weight in society. It also extends a classical economic voting perspective by identifying two groups (mainstream opposition voters and radical opposition voters) who might be equally prone to punish incumbent parties for short-term economic downturns, but who differ fundamentally in whether their rejection of the incumbent extends to a more fundamental contestation of the political-economic system as a whole.

3. Theoretical Expectations

A main tenet of our argument is that lacking confidence in the system's capacity to provide opportunities results in opposition against parties that represent this very system, how it is governed, and maintained. However, beyond this hypothesized general anti-system effect, we are interested in whether and how the impact of voters' opportunity perceptions on party preferences varies with their immediate economic circumstances. To what extent can confidence in future prospects compensate for a less than ideal present? Even lower status voters in today's knowledge-based economy might very well support the current economic framework based on a positive evaluation of mobility prospects for their family in general and their children in particular. At the same time, we emphasize the mirror image of this argument: even someone with relatively high economic status *today* need not necessarily believe in a bright future for themselves and especially not for their children.

This reasoning leads us to formulate expectations by means of a simple two-by two table in which we distinguish voters with positive and negative expectations regarding their opportunities on the one hand, and high versus low current income

on the other hand.[3] Figure 1 summarizes our main expectations regarding *distinctive electoral preference hierarchies* for each quadrant.[4]

Our expectations are fairly straightforward regarding the two "unconflicted" quadrants where economic circumstances and expectations about opportunities reinforce each other. First, high-income voters with a positive evaluation of future opportunities are beneficiaries of today's political economic set-up and they do not expect this to change. They are also generally confident about seeing their children fare equally well. On average, these voters (whom we label "comfortable voters") have very little reason to support radical parties who threaten to disrupt the system, while they have every reason to support mainstream parties, and incumbent parties in particular, representing a record of building and defending that system.

Diametrically opposed in our two-by-two table are low-income voters with negative evaluations of their future opportunities, whom we expect to be prone to opposition support (or to abstention). More importantly, even more so than mainstream opposition voices, we expect the appeals of radical parties to resonate particularly with this group. Voters in this quadrant (whom we call "burdened voters") are not faring well in the modern knowledge economy and they perceive long-term perspectives to be bleak for themselves and their children. Hence, we expect them to support radical parties overproportionally, followed by mainstream opposition parties.

[3]Needless to say, the dichotomous distinction between "winners" and "losers" in terms of income, and optimists and pessimists in terms of economic opportunities represents a simplification of our argument for the sake of clear hypotheses. Later on, we will consider finer breakdowns and more nuanced distinctions in both conceptual terms and in our empirical testing.

[4]By distinctive electoral preferences, we mean deviations from average electoral preference distributions. This is important because most and least likely electoral outcomes in absolute terms are naturally also dependent on current baseline levels of support for different electoral options (for many reasons, including party identification, cleavage closure, the incremental adaptation of political supply etc.): notably, compared to radical parties, mainstream parties (incumbents or opposition) tend to attain relatively higher vote shares even in groups in which radical parties do disproportionately well.

		evaluation of future opportunity	
		positive	negative
income	high	Comfortable Voters: mainstream incumbent > mainstream opposition > radical	Apprehensive Voters: radical > mainstream opposition = mainstream incumbent
	low	Aspirational Voters: mainstream incumbent = mainstream opposition > radical	Burdened Voters: radical > mainstream opposition > mainstream incumbent

Table 1: Theoretical expectations: distinctive electoral preference hierarchies by quadrant

The remaining two quadrants are interesting because of how perceptions of opportunities might counterbalance immediate economic conditions. This makes them potentially pivotal for the long-term evolution of party systems and for coalitional electoral dynamics sustaining advanced capitalist democracies. For these two quadrants, we have no strong expectations about incumbent versus mainstream opposition support per se. In our view, cross-pressures stemming from current status as opposed to future opportunity perceptions, ideological considerations, or short-term economic voting might turn these groups in favor of either incumbent or mainstream opposition parties. However, these two conflicted groups' diverging confidence in opportunities delivered by the knowledge society results in clear expectations about their propensity to over-proportionally support radical parties.

Lower-income voters who are nevertheless optimistic about opportunities correspond to Iversen and Soskice's aspirational voters: we imagine these to be people who acknowledge that they have not (yet) fared particularly well, but who are confident that the existing political and economic framework can still generate opportunities for them and especially for their children. Such voters' bet on the knowledge economy should be associated with general support for parties associated with building and defending this order, i.e. both mainstream incumbent and opposition parties, while working as a buffer against support for radical parties, since potential radical

disruptions to the 'rules of the game' may be seen as obstructing already internalized visions for upward mobility.

Lastly, we are left with higher-income voters who evaluate future prospects negatively (our "apprehensive voters"): these are "winners" of the prevailing political economic order, but they nevertheless worry about what the future might hold for them or their children. These worries may be rationally founded (think of skilled routine workers in declining industries) or more culturally based on perceived threats of lifestyles and norms (e.g. with regard to a male breadwinner role model). We expect the perceived threat of economic and status decline to predispose these voters towards radical parties, rather than established mainstream parties (whether they be in government or opposition).

4. Data and Operationalization

We rely on original data collected in the context of a large research project on distributive policy preferences across Western Europe. Survey data was collected for 1'500 respondents in eight West European countries (Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain). The target population was a country's adult population (>18 years), with quotas on age and sex (crossed) and educational attainment. The total sample counts 12,506 completed interviews that were conducted between October and December 2018.

Independent variables: perceptions of opportunities

Most importantly for the research questions of this paper, the survey included an item battery asking respondents about perceptions of economic opportunity with respect to their own future as well as their children's (if any). The survey questions

asked about both labor market opportunities ("If you think of your future, how do you rate your personal chances of being in good, stable employment until you will retire?") and general social opportunities ("Now think beyond the labour market of your overall quality of life. How do you rate your personal chances of having a safe, fulfilled life over your life course?"). The questions were repeated to query respondents about their assessment of their children's chances on labor markets and life more generally. The precise wording and a correlation matrix of the various opportunity items is provided in Appendix B. Figure 1 shows distributions of the four opportunity measures. The general skew to the left with mean values above the mid-point suggests that a majority of respondents has rather positive evaluations of economic opportunity, for both themselves and the prospects of their children (if any).

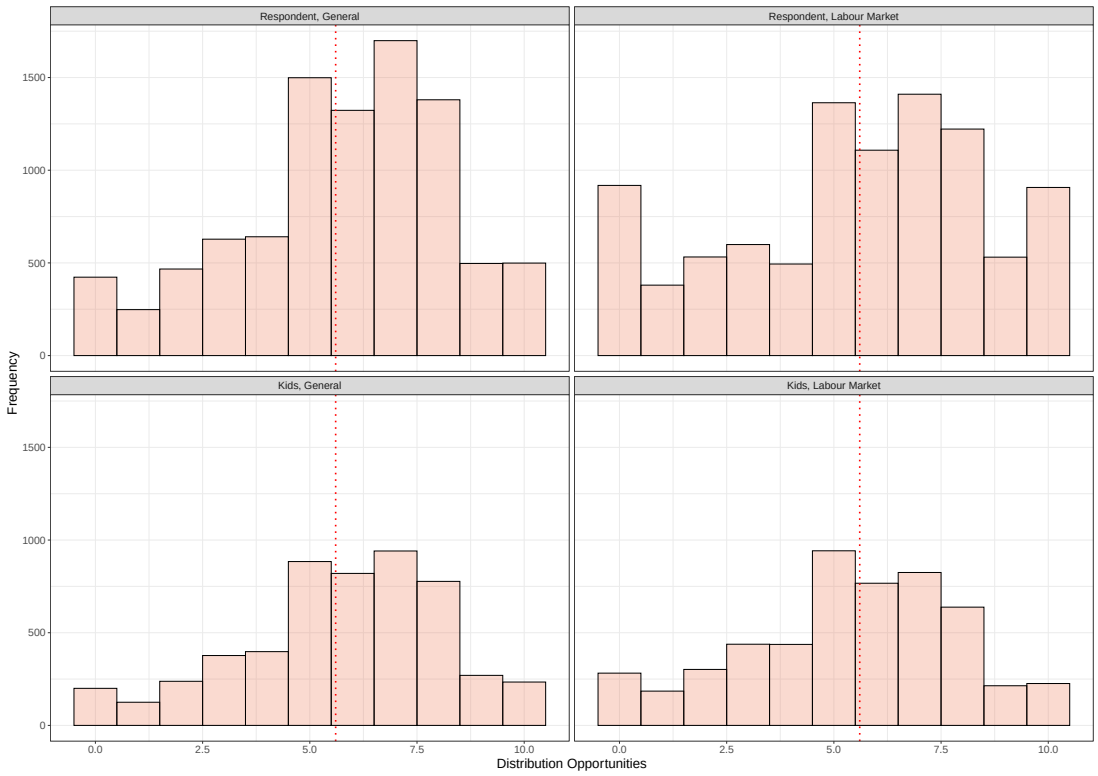


Figure 1: Distributions by Opportunity Type (vertical dotted line indicates mean value)

Unsurprisingly, different aspects of opportunity correlate significantly within respondent, but the data nevertheless reveals somewhat distinct assessments. General versus labor market opportunities correlate at r≈0.71 for respondents themselves and at r≈0.83 for their kids, but perceptions of respondent's own versus their kids' op-

portunities are less correlated (see Appendix Table B.1 for details).

Our procedure to test the theoretical expectations summarized in Table 1 is twofold. In a first step, we create a categorical variable that emulates the four groups of voters at the center of interest (aspirational, apprehensive, burdened and comfortable voters). To do so, we combine a dichotomized measure of perceived opportunities (positive versus negative) and a dichotomous measure of income-level (above versus below the country-specific median income). In our main analysis, we rely on social opportunities for respondents themselves as the main indicator of positive/negative prospective evaluations. In additional analyses, we also define these groups on the basis of respondents' perceived labor market opportunities and on the basis of perceived opportunities for respondents' children to probe the robustness of our results and to discuss implications of the varying strength of the relationship depending on the precise operationalization of opportunity perceptions.

In a second step, we use the full, continuous information on respondents' income and opportunity perceptions and run regression models that include the interaction of these two explanatory variables that are central to our theoretical framework. Note that, *regardless* of the level of current socio-economic status, our framework suggests that positive evaluations of future opportunities should relate to higher mainstream party support (either incumbents or opposition). We consider a possible interactive effect, in the sense that high socio-economic status and positive evaluations of future prospects may reinforce each other in how they relate to support for incumbents, and mainstream parties more generally. However, our most important expectation is that negative opportunity perceptions relate to radical opposition support at high *as well as* low levels of socio-economic status (i.e. that 'apprehensive voters' constitute an important group alongside 'aspirational voters').

Socio-demographic control variables

In order to assess how evaluations of opportunities affect electoral preferences at different levels of economic conditions, we must control for the socio-demographic profile of aspirational, apprehensive, burdened and comfortable voters. While we cannot establish the importance of opportunity perceptions without controlling for the composition of these groups, these socio-demographic profiles themselves are of interest. In advancing their original "aspirational voter" argument, Iversen and Soskice (2019) hardly characterize aspirational voters other than saying that they want to join the ranks of skilled workers. However, for the stability of advanced democratic capitalism, the question of *who* occupies our four quadrants is critical.

Figure 2 provides a general sense of each group's *defining* socio-demographic characteristics. The presented attributes try to give a qualitative summary of the characteristics of a "typical" representative of the respective quadrant. The presented typical attributes are the result of a large number of descriptive quantitative analyses in which we "predict" belonging to one of the four groups (see Appendix F). As "predictors" we consider education, age, gender, occupational class (following the Oesch 2008 class scheme), and occupational task group (routine versus non-routine), which has become a key job characteristic in the age of automation (Autor et al. 2003).

Although our four voter groups are, of course, heterogeneous in all of these respects, specific socio-demographic groups are clearly over-represented in each quadrant. Over-represented among comfortable voters are managers, technicians as well as socio-cultural specialists. More generally speaking, these are people with non-routine cognitive work. Meanwhile, the lower-educated, service workers, production workers (and to a lesser extent small business owners) – in other words, people with non-routine manual or routine task profiles – are typical burdened voters. Comfortable voters are also disproportionately male and older (>55) while burdened voters tend to be younger and female. These two quadrants encompass a contrast between direct beneficiaries of the knowledge economy (knowledge workers) and

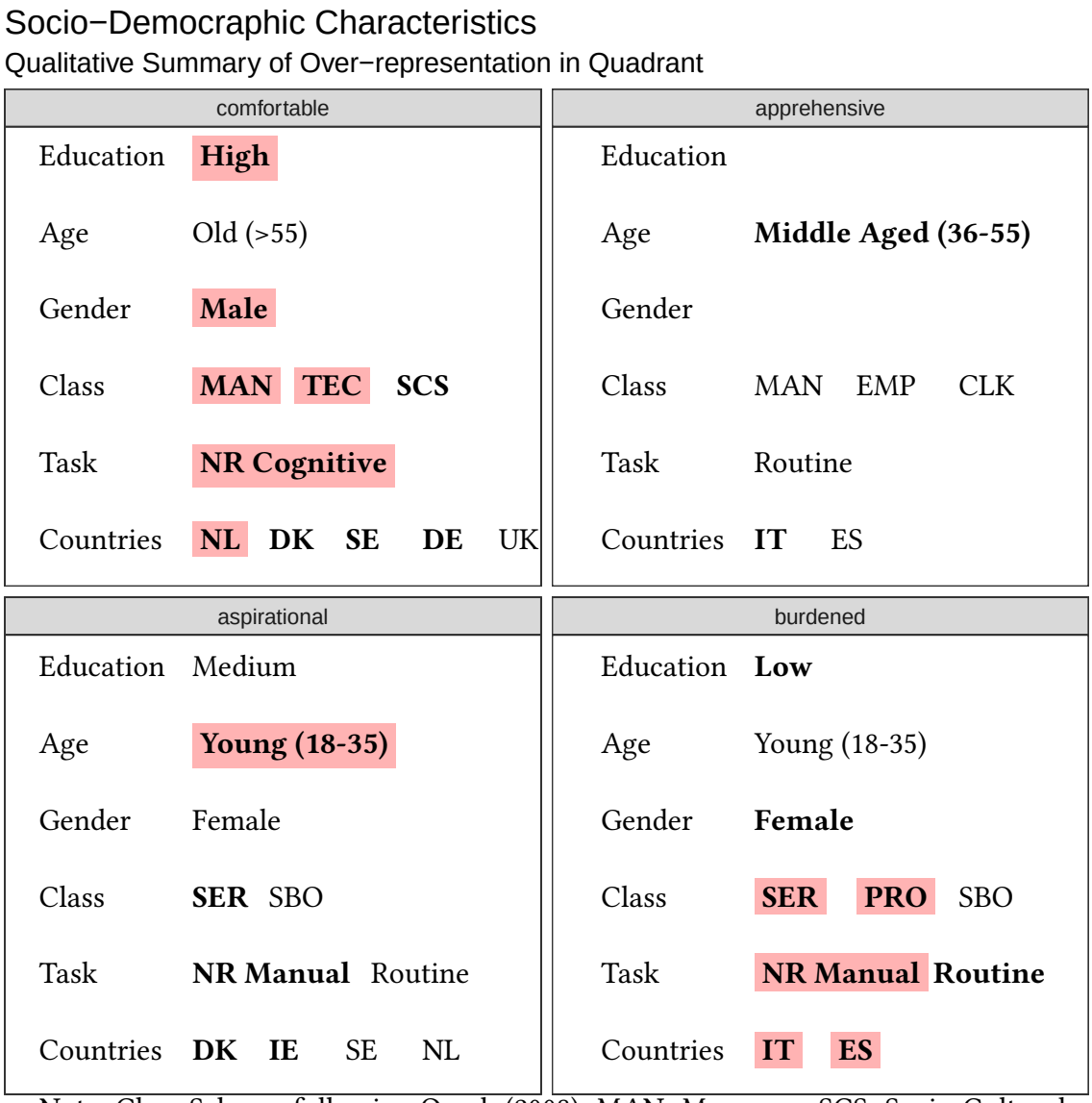
those groups most clearly excluded from knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy (unskilled workers), providing a first validation of how we operationalize our two-by-two table.

Age emerges as a key difference between aspirational and apprehensive voters. Aspirational voters are typically rather young (18-35), while apprehensive voters are typically middle-aged (36-55). Service workers (and small business owners, but not production workers) or people in non-routine manual work are also well-represented in the aspirational group, as are people with medium levels of education. Routine work is typical for apprehensive voters, who also have a slight above average probability of being managers, employers, and clerks (they are average in terms of gender and education). The resulting, somewhat simplified contrast between aspirational young service employees and apprehensive middle-aged routine employees bolsters our confidence in the operationalization of these quadrants.

Dependent variable: Party Preference

Following our theoretical framework, we group our dependent variable into three broad categories of political parties: mainstream incumbent parties, mainstream opposition parties and radical parties. Party type dominates incumbency status so that incumbent radical parties are coded as radical (in line with the view that long-term evaluations of economic and social change are associated with more fundamental endoresement versus rejection of the status quo)[5] Note that we file green parties (present in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) under mainstream party. While ecological movements entered the political scene as radical parties challenging the status quo, we count them among the mainstream (left) here, because they take a reformist stance to economic policies and democratic governance in the knowledge economy. Treating the greens as part of the mainstream left is consistent with our

[5]This concerns Lega and the Five Star Movement in Italy, as well as the Danish People's Party.



Note: Class Scheme following Oesch (2008): MAN=Managers, SCS=Socio-Cultural Specialists, TEC=Technicians, CLK=Clerks, SER=Service, PRO=Production, SBO=Small Business Owners, EMP=Employers.
Overrepresentation: Normal font=weak; bold=moderate; background=strong.

Figure 2: Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Voter Groups

theoretical argument but we want to emphasize that our findings are robust to excluding them from the mainstream category (see Appendix Figure D.1). We provide the full classification of parties in Appendix Table A.1. The presented results are based on respondents' vote choice in past elections, but they are robust to studying respondents' vote intention if there were elections next Sunday instead. The main difference is lower baseline levels of radical opposition support in vote intentions compared to past vote choice.

Due to the categorical nature of the dependent variable, the main analysis relies on multinomial logistic regression models. We can recover all our results when using a set of separate logistic or linear probability models, in which the vote choice for each party is coded as either voting for a party or not. Note that the main difference of our set-up compared to traditional economic voting models is in the differentiation within the zero-category: rather than studying whether or not a respondent supports the incumbent party, we are also interested in different types of incumbent defection (mainstream vs. radical opposition parties).

5. Results

We start by presenting the direct relationship between prospective economic opportunities and individual vote choice. We then take a closer look at the voting behavior of "aspirational voters", "apprehensive voters", as well as at interactions between continuous measures of income and opportunity perceptions. This allows us to assess our hypothesized expectations in the presented two-dimensional framework (see Table 1). It also sets the stage for a subsequent investigation of the political implications of our findings, for which we will first break down our outcome variable into parties on the left and right, and then discuss the relative importance of the four groups of voters across countries.

5.1. "Aspirational" versus "apprehensive" voting

Table 2 (visualized in Panel (a) in Figure 3) provides initial evidence that vote choice in favor of mainstream incumbent and opposition parties as opposed to radical parties is structured along a dimension of perceptions about future economic and social opportunity. Among respondents with more pessimistic views of future prospects, support for mainstream opposition parties is only marginally significantly higher than for incumbents (the reference category in the underlying multinomial model), but these voters are significantly more likely to vote for radical parties.

Within country and net of income, age, gender, education and occupational class, positive evaluations of opportunity are hence clearly associated with higher support for parties who broadly buy into the existing political economic system (whether or not they are currently in government). Panel (b) in Figure 3 demonstrates that these patterns are similar irrespective of whether voters were asked about their own or their children's general social prospects.

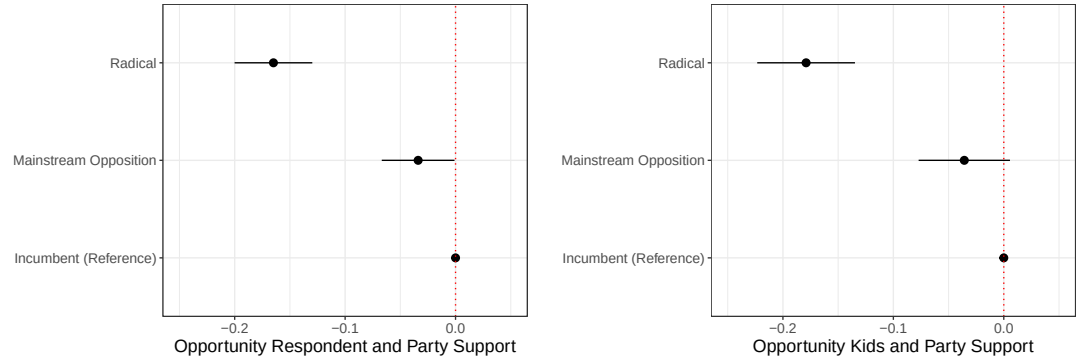
Figure 4 illustrates the importance of extending the economic voting literature's traditional measure of rejection/endorsement of the incumbent with the radical versus mainstream opposition distinction that is of key interest to the literature on structural transformations of party systems in advanced democracies. Negative prospective opportunities appear to be associated with a quite fundamental rejection of the political mainstream as a whole, not just with rejection of government incumbent parties. As is evident from Figure 4, failing to disentangle mainstream versus radical opposition to mainstream incumbents yields a moderately negative effect of perceived opportunities on support for the opposition as a whole. However, this moderate effect is in fact an average of a strong negative association with radical party voting and a weak negative relation with mainstream opposition support. These findings thus provide initial support for the idea that positive evaluations of future opportunity among

Table 2: Opportunity Respondent and Party Support (Multinomial, Reference: Incumbent Voting)

	Mainstream Opposition	Radical
Social Opportunity	-0.034^{*}	-0.165^{***}
	(0.017)	(0.018)
Income	-0.047^{**}	-0.063^{***}
	(0.014)	(0.016)
Age	-0.007^{**}	-0.009^{**}
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	0.080	-0.170^{*}
	(0.072)	(0.079)
Educ: Primary	-1.398	0.111
	(0.729)	(0.569)
Educ: Secondary I	-1.309	0.063
	(0.681)	(0.501)
Educ: Secondary II	-1.257	0.017
	(0.679)	(0.497)
Educ: Post-Secondary	-1.337	-0.041
	(0.683)	(0.502)
Educ: Short Tertiary	-1.403^{*}	-0.301
	(0.685)	(0.506)
Educ: Tertiary I	-1.294	-0.186
	(0.681)	(0.500)
Educ: Tertiary II	-1.179	-0.249
	(0.684)	(0.506)
Class: Lower Service	-0.199	0.206
	(0.110)	(0.128)
Class: Small Business	-0.178	0.169
	(0.170)	(0.188)
Class: Skilled Worker	-0.041	0.306^{*}
	(0.108)	(0.126)
Class: Unskilled Worker	-0.314^{*}	0.300
	(0.151)	(0.162)
AIC	9841.759	9841.759
BIC	10142.397	10142.397
Log Likelihood	-4874.879	-4874.879
Deviance	9749.759	9749.759
Num. obs.	5093	5093
K	3	3

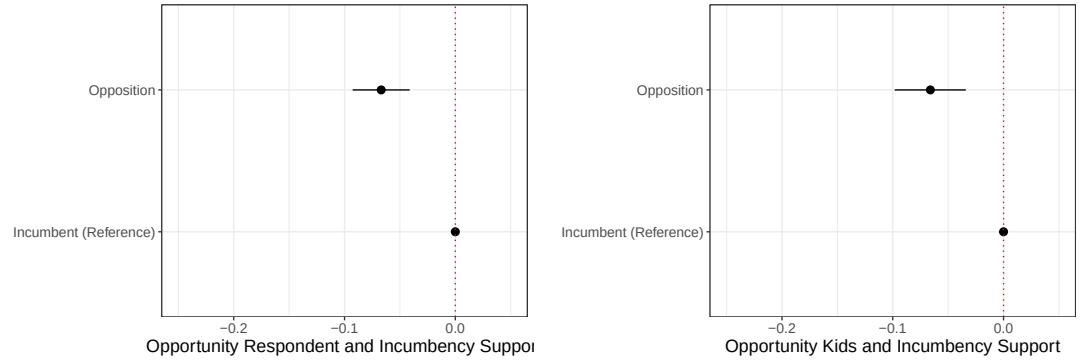
$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Multinomial Specification. All models include country-fixed effects.

"aspirational voters" may stabilize the political system by boosting mainstream party support in general.



(a) Opportunity Respondent **(b)** Opportunity Kids

Figure 3: General Social Opportunity and Party Choice (Multinomial)



(a) Opportunity Respondent **(b)** Opportunity Kids

Figure 4: Comparison to Traditional Economic Voting: Opportunity and Party Choice

Next, we further unpack the relationship between opportunity perceptions and electoral preferences by examining positive/negative expectations for voters at different levels of income. We are interested in the extent to which the electoral implications of prospective economic opportunity depend on current material circumstances. Do negative evaluations of future opportunity only increase support for radical parties among less well-off voters, or do their appeals also resonate with higher-status voters? Beyond support for the mainstream opposition, can negative perceptions of long-term life prospects turn such higher-status voters against the political mainstream overall?

To that aim, we look at voting behavior among the four types of voters introduced in the theory section: higher-income respondents with positive evaluations of future

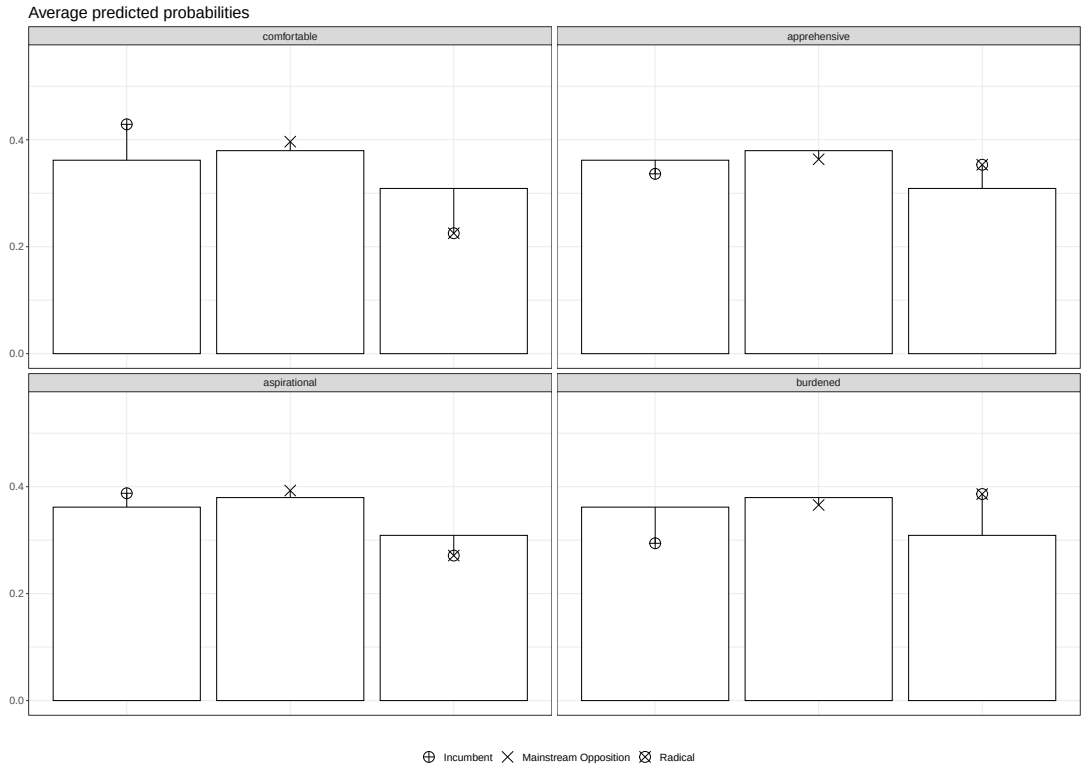


Figure 5: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party types

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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opportunities (comfortable voters), higher-income respondents with negative evaluations (apprehensive voters), and analogously for lower-income respondents (aspirational voters and burdened voters). We do this by looking at predicted probabilities of party support by quadrant, controlling for age, gender, education, class, and country. Figure 5 shows predicted probabilities based on a set of logistic models of support for mainstream incumbents, mainstream opposition, and radical parties (see Appendix Table C.3 for full regression results). The figure displays unweighted average probabilities across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The white bars in the figure represent average predicted vote shares for each of the three outcomes across the entire sample, hence offering a rough baseline probability of support. The shapes indicate quadrant-specific deviations from these baseline probabilities (corresponding to the 'distinctive' electoral preferences listed in Table 1).

These predicted probabilities confirm that negative evaluations of opportunity increase radical party support. Support for radical parties is always higher on the right hand-side (negative evaluations) than on the left hand-side (positive evaluations). The reverse is true for mainstream parties, especially for incumbents (in line with what the economic voting literature would suggest).

Notably, as hypothesized, comfortable voters display above-average support for incumbents, below-average support for radical parties, and more average support for the mainstream opposition. For burdened voters, this is broadly reversed. Next, among our cross-pressured voters (aspirational and apprehensive), the radical versus mainstream distinction appears to be more relevant than that between incumbents and mainstream opposition. Apprehensive voters support radical parties at above-average rates (but not the mainstream opposition), while the opposite is true for aspirational voters. Also viewed in absolute terms, aspirational voters – like apprehensive voters – have a similarly high probability to support mainstream incumbent and opposition parties.[6]

This brings us to an important observation, namely that only the *combination* of a high income and confidence in future opportunities appears to be associated with above-average levels of support for incumbent parties. This double-endorsement of the status quo is only truly characteristic of comfortable voters (and to a much smaller degree of aspirational voters). Voters who are well-off but 'apprehensive' about their future support incumbents at below-average rates (less clearly so than burdened vot-

[6]Note that Figure 5 likely underestimates differences in voting behavior across voter groups (since we know that "aspirational" voters, "burdened" voters etc. are by no means average in terms of socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics). Hence, as an upper bound, we also show predicted probabilities for emblematic cases of the four quadrants in Appendix Figure D.2: a "comfortable" older, male, high-skilled manager; an "aspirational" young, educated woman working in the service sector; an "apprehensive" middle-aged, medium-skilled male clerk; and a "burdened" younger, low-skilled male service worker.

ers, but in contrast to aspirational voters). This is in line with an important insight from the economic voting literature, namely that *perceptions* of economic conditions are particularly important for incumbent support.

Another important observation follows from this, but draws attention to radical parties. Importantly, and this is a crucial addition to the aspirational voter argument: while high socioeconomic status tends to reduce support for radical parties (comparing the top and bottom panels in Figure 5 for both worried and confident voters), it only compensates negative evaluations of future opportunities to a limited extent. Above-average rates of radical party support among apprehensive voters, even though lower than among burdened voters, may well be politically consequential depending on this groups' size and political relevance (we discuss this in a next step).

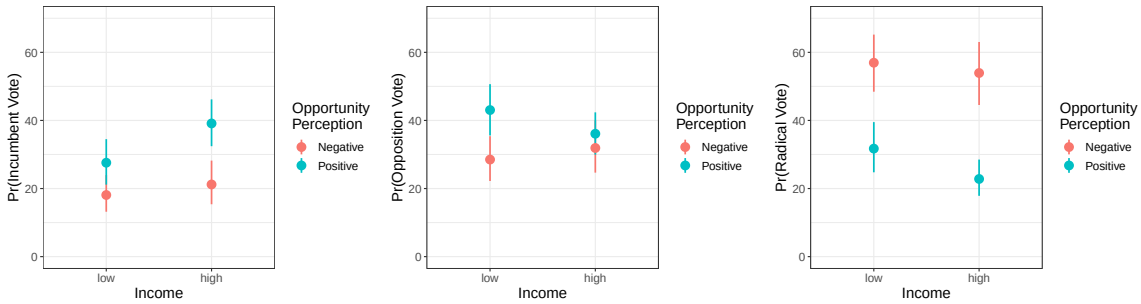
In sum, these findings support the idea that aspirational voters may join the existing 'winners' of the knowledge society but they also highlight that it is not enough to ask whether the median voter is aspirational. Well-off voters, too, might punish the established political elite as a whole when disenchanted with their prospects. Negative views of future opportunities among higher-income voters are associated with a pattern of voting behavior that resembles that of burdened voters, the outright 'losers' of the knowledge society, more than that of comfortable voters.

5.2. Interacting Income and Opportunity

Interaction models including the full range of both explanatory variables of interest are an evident alternative to creating discrete groups from dichotomized levels of income and opportunity (see Appendix Table C.4 for full regression results). Remember that our theoretical argument is consistent with, but does not *require* that income and

opportunity perceptions reinforce each other's effects. The four stylized groups of voters could also result from an additive process, where one dimension simply comes on top of the other. In that case, current economic circumstances and evaluations of future opportunity would be robust, yet separate, predictors of vote choice, implying that they are substitutes rather than direct moderators of each other.

The first visualization in Figure 6 emulates the theoretical framework by showing predicted probabilities only for combinations of high/low income and positive/negative social opportunity perceptions. For example, the estimate corresponding to low income/ positive opportunity is an approximation of the voting behavior of an aspirational voter. The three panels in Figure 6 indeed provide some evidence for a mutual and partly reinforcing impact of our two explanatory variables. With respect to incumbent voting, Panel (a) confirms our interpretation that it is only the combination of high income *and* positive opportunity perceptions that markedly increases support for parties in government. The pattern regarding mainstream opposition support is less pronounced and does not suggest significant interaction effects. When it comes to radical voting, Panel (c) confirms that opportunity perceptions are a key determinant of support. Clearly, voters with positive opportunity perceptions are much less likely to support radical parties and this difference is even slightly accentuated among high-income voters.

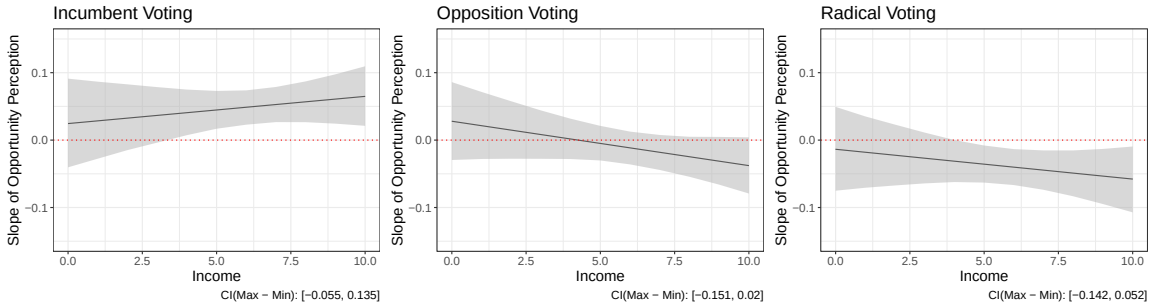


(a) Mainstream Incumbent Voting **(b)** Mainstream Opposition Voting **(c)** Radical Voting

Figure 6: Interaction Income X Opportunity Perception

Figure 7 provides another illustration of the same interaction model by showing the slope of opportunity perceptions over the full range of respondents' income

levels (measured in deciles). Again, the results suggest that the interaction of both dimensions is particularly relevant to explain incumbent voting. Positive opportunities significantly reinforce support for government parties but only among mid-income and high-income earners. The evidence with respect to mainstream opposition voting is weaker and not suggestive of a clear interactive relationship between income and opportunity. Finally, we see that respondents with positive social opportunity evaluations on any level of income are less likely to vote radical and particularly so if they are of higher socio-economic status. The one important implication that Figures 6 and 7 jointly provide is that higher socio-economic status proxied by income levels cannot effectively compensate for the lack of positive opportunity perceptions when it comes to radical voting. The interaction models hence again highlight the societal and political relevance of the group of apprehensive voters who might feel attracted by anti-system appeals *in spite of* their relatively comfortable socio-economic status.



(a) Mainstream Incumbent Voting **(b)** Mainstream Opposition Voting **(c)** Radical Voting

Figure 7: Interaction Income X Social Opportunity Perception (Continous)

5.3. Implications and Robustness

With regard to the groups that are of primary interest in this paper – aspirational and apprehensive voters – we might of course ask whether voting for radical left and/or radical right parties drives these groups' divergent propensity to support the political mainstream. This distinction is furthermore likely to provide important implications regarding the mechanisms through which negative opportunity perceptions are mo-

bilized among well-off voters in particular. In line with the literature discussed at the outset of this study, we would expect apprehensive voters to turn specifically to radical right parties. Indeed, the appeals of nativist-traditionalist radical right parties are supposed to resonate well with apprehensive voters, because their negative perceptions of opportunities are likely to take the form of a more diffuse sense of unease with, resentment at, and rejection of broader economic and social change among these voters. Precisely because these apprehensive voters are well-off, and often well-protected by the labor market institutions and welfare states in the countries we study, their sense of dislocation is unlikely to be fully mitigated by further material protection and compensation (as radical left parties would claim). Prospects of precarity or unemployment are likely not foremost on the minds of apprehensive voters who turn to the radical right (especially where apprehensive voters enjoy protected "insider" labor market status). Rather, as occupational status hierarchies, family models, gender roles, or children's mobility prospects change in the knowledge economy, forward-looking concerns related to social position, a sense of dignity and societal worth, and identity present a somewhat more obvious link to radical right parties programmatic profile.

From this development follows the observable implication that our results should be particularly clear and strong for radical right parties. Figure 8 decomposes the mainstream and radical categories into left and right. Indeed, we see that aspirational voters and apprehensive voters differ clearly with regard to radical right support (with apprehensive voters displaying higher support) but not regarding radical left support, where these groups are fairly average. While comfortable and burdened voters differ with regard to radical party support *in general* (and, unsurprisingly, regarding mainstream right support), the story of aspirational and apprehensive voters is clearly one about the radical right.

We further probe the robustness and validity of our main results with various

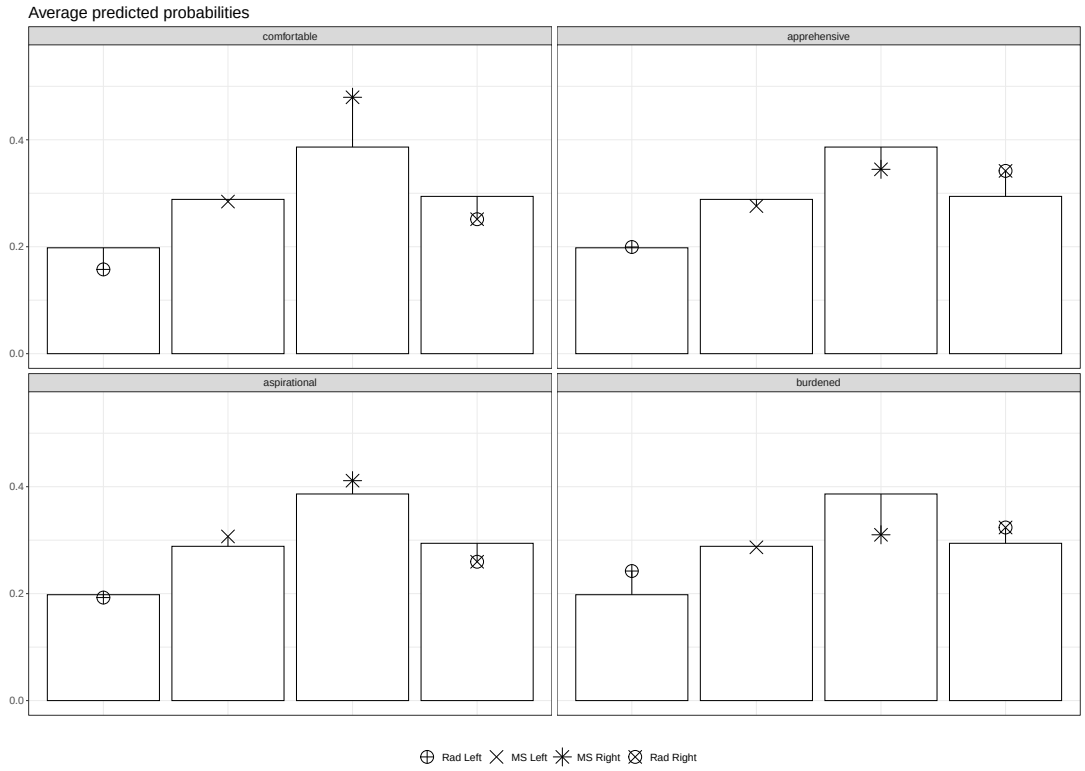


Figure 8: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party families

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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additional analyses. The following paragraphs provides a compact verbal summary, the respective Figures and Tables can be found in Appendix D.

As mentioned above, Figure D.1 shows that our results do not depend on our classification of Green parties as mainstream parties. The results of the main analysis hold when treating Green parties (present in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden) as a separate party group. Next, Figure D.2 shows that the pattern presented in Figure 5 is even more pronounced if we look at "emblematic" representatives of each of our quadrants rather than a respondent with averaged characteristics. In addition, we show in Figure D.3 that the predictions visualized in Figure 5 hold in a standard (multinomial) regression framework. We also demonstrate that our results do not hinge on a specific set of countries included in the analysis. The pattern of results presented above are robust to a jackknife-like procedure of excluding countries one

by one (Figure D.4).

Next, we extend our admittedly simplistic dichotomous framework differentiating between "rich" and "poor" voters by breaking average predicted probabilities down for three income levels (i.e. for six different groups). The integration of a socio-economic middle category allows for some further refinements of these results. The main difference, however, is between high-income voters and the rest. The pattern among mid-income and low-income voters is relatively similar.

Finally, we exploit our detailed questionnaire to show that our results hold when looking at perceptions with respect to respondents' kids rather than their own prospects (Appendix Figures D.6 and D.8). The general pattern is very similar. We also show that we can recover most of our results with an item capturing opportunity perceptions that more specifically tap into prospects on labor markets rather than general social life chances (Appendix Figures D.7 and D.9). This alternative operationalization produces similar but somewhat weaker results, especially with regard to apprehensive voters. Their political grievances seem to be more strongly motivated by a general negative view about social opportunities rather than their view on prospects at the workplace.

6. Electoral Coalitions in the Knowledge Economy

We have suggested a conceptual framework in which beneficiaries of post-industrial knowledge economies are understood not only on the basis of their objective socio-economic standing, but also on the basis of their subjective perception of future economic opportunities in a changing economy and society. Hence, as a final step, we wish to get back to the two contrasting narratives about political contestation in post-industrial societies outlined above. As a direct implication of our analysis, the

prospects of structural change and political stability depend on the relative size and political relevance of each of the four groups. If more confident pro-system forces, consisting of comfortable but also of aspirational voters, dominate democratic competition, modern knowledge economies have a fairly stable backing among the population and will be able to avoid potential disruption from the minority of voters who are and/or feel left behind by economic modernization. Figure 9 shows the relative importance of each of the four constituencies in each country under study. On average, the more confident coalition indeed clearly outweighs the pessimistic coalition.

At the same time, however, the plot reveals striking and highly relevant variation in relative group sizes. Continental and Northern European countries are characterized by a large share of voters (60-70%) who believe in economic opportunity for themselves and their children. However, much in contrast, voters in the European South show a much stronger prevalence of a negative perceptions of economic opportunity. In both Italy and Spain, pro-system aspirational and comfortable voters represent a minority coalition. They are outnumbered by burdened and apprehensive voters who are relatively more likely to support radical parties. The relative strength of the four groups in Southern Europe represents a political configuration with much more limited support for creating and sustaining modern knowledge economies. Of course, this also points towards a potentially self-reinforcing dynamic, whereby less knowledge-based economies are less likely to create and sustain the electoral coalitions that might support pro-system agendas set to further deepen the knowledge economy within the existing framework. What is more, the share of burdened and apprehensive voters in the Southern European countries is so high that they even represent a relevant share of mainstream party electorates (around 50%), whereas they are mostly confined to the more radical party constituencies in the Continental and Northern European countries (see Appendix E). Thereby their impact on government formation and policies is even more likely, reinforcing the suggested self-reinforcing dynamics. The two Anglo-Saxon countries in our sample, Ireland and the United

Kingdom, represent a middle ground between the two ends of the spectrum with a slight majority for the pro-system coalition.[7]

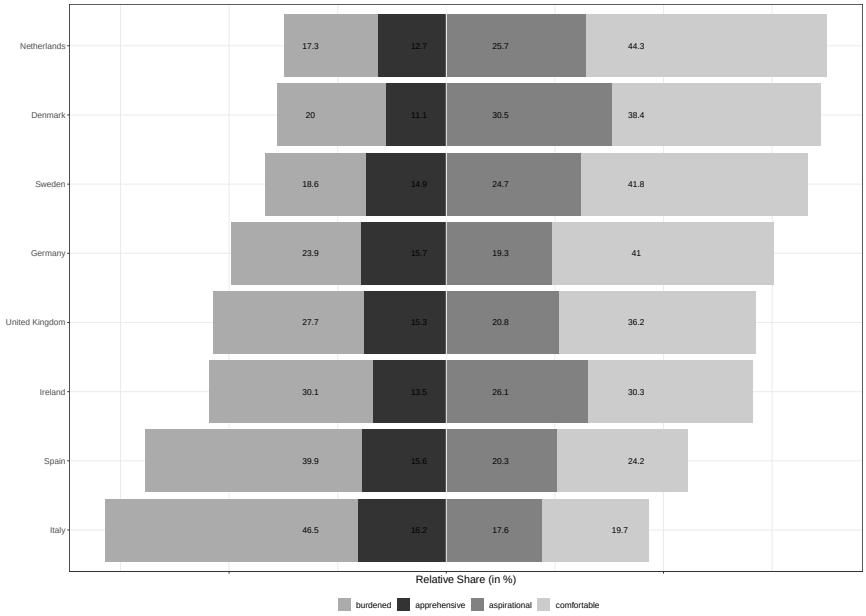

Figure 9: Cross-National Variation in Relative Importance of Groups

7. Conclusion

Widespread political disruption and the ascent of radical parties critical of the establishment in almost all advanced capitalist democracies has led to renewed interest in the structural determinants behind these electoral challenges to the political economic status quo. The most recent body of work has produced a near consensus among scholars that studying voters' objective and immediate socio-economic circumstances falls short of explaining radical or populist voting. Instead, researchers have highlighted the importance of relative, dynamic and subjective perceptions of economic and social conditions. We add to this strand of research by demonstrating

[7]Of course, we do not directly equalize group size and political influence. Even if the size of the apprehensive voter group we highlight in this paper may be moderate in numerical terms, their historically strong but threatened social and political position likely predisposes them to be politically active and vocal.

the electoral implications of prospective evaluations of economic opportunity for voters themselves, as well as for their offspring. We further complement the economic voting literature by taking a long-term structural perspective on the idea of electoral rejection/endorsement of the status quo (distinguishing between mainstream versus radical opposition to incumbent parties).

Our empirical analysis provides robust evidence that prospective economic opportunity, net of objective material conditions, is an important channel through which radical political disruption works and, potentially, can be mitigated. "Aspirational voters" (Iversen and Soskice 2019) who might not do well themselves but positively evaluate economic or social opportunities in the future, not least for their children, tend to be clearly less supportive of radical parties (even though they may support the mainstream opposition). To some extent, prospective economic opportunity and current material conditions represent substitutable factors that reduce the likelihood of supporting radical parties. Positive evaluations of opportunity could even mitigate the success and possibly the further rise of such parties. However, this prospect appears more tenuous in the long term when we take the socio-demographic profile of aspirational voters into account: much appears to depend on whether this sizeable group characterized by its youth, mid-level education, and non-routine manual work in the service sector maintains high hopes for the future, and this – within the framework of advanced democratic capitalism – depends largely on future growth and job creation to match continuing educational expansion. These macro-conditions can shape both the subjective prospects of today's young aspirational voters, and of tomorrow's potentially aspirational youth. *Disappointed* status expectations could make people more prone than ever to vote for radical parties (Kurer and van Staalduinen 2020).

Another cautionary note regarding the potential of evaluations of opportunities to bolster support for the political mainstream concerns what we call "apprehensive voters": We show that negative social and economic expectations are associ-

ated with higher support for radical parties even among well-off voters, suggesting that the aspirational voter argument might also be reversed. Well-off apprehensive voters are in fact highly susceptible to the appeals of radical parties, in particular the nativist-traditionalist appeals of radical right parties. Only the combination of both factors (high status and positive evaluations of opportunities) is associated with above-average support for mainstream incumbents. From the perspective of the political mainstream, it may be considered reassuring that the socio-demographic groups that typically belong to "apprehensive" and also lower-income "burdened" voters – routine workers, production workers, or the lower-educated – tend to be shrinking. Meanwhile, our "comfortable" voters who staunchly support mainstream parties (especially incumbents) are made up of groups of knowledge workers that tend to be growing in the occupational structure. Our analyses at least indicate that young people, the highly educated, and high-skilled voters are not (yet) overly "apprehensive" about their own and their children's future opportunities.

A key reason why we contend it is worthwhile investigating prospective evaluations relates to their policy implications: While nostalgic visions of the past may not be impossible to combat, people's prospective evaluations are arguably the more important political battleground: unlike with retrospective views, parties in principle have the chance of improving people's evaluations of opportunities not just by supplying narratives of promise and hope, but through policies that will have a tangible impact on people's lives. Hence, these findings obviously raise the question of which policies affect evaluations of future opportunities. If open education systems, social investment and opportunities for social mobility in the labor market and the educational system affect these evaluations positively, this implies certain policy leverage to limit support for radical parties. In such a case, policies potentially could even have a double effect on political preferences, via perceptions of parents on the one hand, and via both immediate economic circumstances as well as perceptions among their children on the other hand. The varying size of the aspirational voter

group across the countries in our study indicates that some policy leverage may indeed exist for how e.g. younger voters, people with medium levels of education, or service sector workers view their future opportunities. However, so far, the empirical evidence (e.g. Gingrich 2019) shows only very limited effects of investments in human capital and even social transfers on voters of radical parties, as well as very low levels of support for social investment policies precisely among the voters of the radical left and right Häusermann et al. (2019). These findings cast doubt on the idea that economic-distributive public investments in labor market capacities effectively improve the subjective evaluation of these opportunities among voters of radical parties.

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Supplementary Material

A. Party Coding

Table A.1: Party Family Classification

Country	Incumbent	Opposition	Radical
Denmark	Liberal Alliance	Social Democrats	RG Alliance
	Venstre	D Soc-Lib Party	Socialist PP
	Conservative PP	The Alternative	Danish PP
Germany	SPD	FDP	AFD
	CDU/CSU	Greens	Left
Ireland	Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
		Labour Party	Solidarity
		Social Democrats	
Italy		Forza Italia	Lega Nord
		Liberi e Uguali	M5S
		Fratelli d'Italia	
Netherlands	Democrats 66	50plus	PVV
	VVD	Groen Links	Socialist Party
	Chr-Dem Appeal	PVDA	
	Christian Union		
Spain	PSOE	CDC	Podemos
		Ciudadanos	
		PP	
Sweden	SAP	Center Party	Sweden
	MP	Liberal Party	Democrats
		Moderates	Vänsterpartiet
		KD	
United Kingdom	Conservatives	Labour	UKIP
		LibDem	
		SNP	

B. Description of Different Opportunity Measures

Item Wording:

- **Labor Market Opportunity (Respondent)**: The world is changing fast. When you think about the future, how do you rate your personal chances of having a good, stable job until you retire?

- **General Opportunity (Respondent)**: Now please think beyond the job market to your overall quality of life. How do you rate your personal chances for a secure, fulfilling life?

- **Labor Market Opportunity (Children)**: Please think now about the life your child will face in this changing world. How do you assess your child's chances of finding good, stable employment until retirement?

- **General Opportunity (Children)**: Now please think beyond the job market to your child's overall quality of life. How do you rate your child's chances for a secure, fulfilling life?

Correlation Matrix:

Table B.1: Correlation between Opportunity Measures

	General_Self	LM_Self	General_Kids	LM_Kids
General_Self	1.00	0.71	0.66	0.62
LM_Self	0.71	1.00	0.44	0.49
General_Kids	0.66	0.44	1.00	0.83
LM_Kids	0.62	0.49	0.83	1.00

C. Regression Tables

The following tables provide full regression results for the analyses shown and/or discussed in the main body of the manuscript.

Tables Section: Aspirational vs apprehensive voting

Table C.1 shows results visualized in Figure 3 (Panel (b)).

Table C.1: Opportunity Kids and Party Support (Multinomial, Reference: Incumbent Voting)

	Mainstream Opposition	Radical
Kids Opportunity	-0.036	-0.179^{***}
	(0.021)	(0.023)
Income	-0.015	-0.081^{***}
	(0.019)	(0.020)
Age	-0.005	-0.011^{*}
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Educ: Primary	-1.052	0.323
	(1.234)	(1.488)
Educ: Secondary I	-1.275	-0.047
	(1.192)	(1.447)
Educ: Secondary II	-1.482	-0.241
	(1.193)	(1.447)
Educ: Post-Secondary	-1.505	-0.274
	(1.196)	(1.450)
Educ: Short Tertiary	-1.519	-0.491
	(1.200)	(1.456)
Educ: Tertiary I	-1.457	-0.250
	(1.195)	(1.450)
Educ: Tertiary II	-1.193	-0.320
	(1.200)	(1.457)
Class: Lower Service	0.000	0.348^{*}
	(0.140)	(0.162)
Class: Small Business	-0.203	0.235
	(0.208)	(0.229)
Class: Skilled Worker	0.179	0.520^{**}
	(0.139)	(0.161)
Class: Unskilled Worker	-0.182	0.422^{*}
	(0.192)	(0.207)
AIC	6262.462	6262.462
BIC	6541.767	6541.767
Log Likelihood	-3085.231	-3085.231
Deviance	6170.462	6170.462
Num. obs.	3203	3203
K	3	3

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Multinomial Specification. All models include country-fixed effects.

The two models in table C.2 show results visualized in Figure 4 (Panels (a) and (b), respectively).

Table C.2: Opportunity and Incumbent Support

	Opportunity Respondent	Opportunity Kids
General Opportunity (Respondent)	-0.067^{***}	
	(0.013)	
General Opportunity (Kids)		-0.066^{***}
		(0.016)
Income	-0.046^{***}	-0.032^{*}
	(0.012)	(0.015)
Age	-0.006^{**}	-0.006^{*}
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Female	0.025	0.013
	(0.057)	(0.073)
Educ: Primary	-0.631	-0.477
	(1.158)	(1.161)
Educ: Secondary I	-0.596	-0.646
	(1.135)	(1.131)
Educ: Secondary II	-0.493	-0.711
	(1.135)	(1.131)
Educ: Post-Secondary	-0.506	-0.703
	(1.137)	(1.133)
Educ: Short Tertiary	-0.644	-0.828
	(1.139)	(1.137)
Educ: Tertiary I	-0.547	-0.746
	(1.137)	(1.133)
Educ: Tertiary II	-0.358	-0.452
	(1.138)	(1.136)
Class: Lower Service	-0.036	0.071
	(0.091)	(0.115)
Class: Small Business	-0.045	-0.065
	(0.131)	(0.159)
Class: Skilled Worker	0.032	0.166
	(0.090)	(0.115)
Class: Unskilled Worker	-0.130	-0.079
	(0.118)	(0.152)
AIC	7379.221	4698.373
BIC	7532.696	4841.011
Log Likelihood	-3666.611	-2326.187
Deviance	7333.221	4652.373
Num. obs.	5842	3647

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. All models include country-fixed effects.

Table C.3 shows results visualized in Figure 5.

Table C.3: Opportunity Types and Party Support

	Incumbent	Mainstream Opposition	Radical
Type: Apprehensive	-0.478^{***}	-0.149	0.719^{***}
	(0.097)	(0.092)	(0.098)
Type: Aspirational	-0.207^{*}	-0.017	0.280^{**}
	(0.087)	(0.084)	(0.095)
Type: Burdened	-0.721^{***}	-0.139	0.883^{***}
	(0.098)	(0.087)	(0.094)
Age: 26-35	-0.009	-0.242	0.318^{*}
	(0.143)	(0.130)	(0.151)
Age: 36-45	0.233	-0.378^{**}	0.226
	(0.141)	(0.128)	(0.149)
Age: 46-55	0.220	-0.335^{**}	0.181
	(0.139)	(0.127)	(0.147)
Age: 56-65	0.224	-0.313^{*}	0.169
	(0.145)	(0.133)	(0.153)
Age: 66 and older	0.513^{**}	-0.280	-0.244
	(0.184)	(0.171)	(0.207)
Female	-0.041	0.146^{*}	-0.147^{*}
	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.071)
Educ: Medium	0.044	0.143^{*}	-0.240^{**}
	(0.077)	(0.073)	(0.080)
Educ: High	0.048	0.021	-0.098
	(0.057)	(0.054)	(0.058)
Class: Employers	-0.158	0.290	-0.205
	(0.205)	(0.184)	(0.222)
Class: Managers	0.263^{*}	-0.119	-0.178
	(0.107)	(0.103)	(0.118)
Class: Production Workers	-0.238	-0.165	0.340^{**}
	(0.131)	(0.118)	(0.122)
Class: Service Workers	0.171	-0.249^{*}	0.102
	(0.107)	(0.101)	(0.109)
Class: Small Business Owners	0.116	-0.146	0.032
	(0.157)	(0.146)	(0.158)
Class: Soc. Cult. Profs	0.078	-0.073	0.017
	(0.118)	(0.114)	(0.127)
Class: Tech. Profs	-0.093	0.137	-0.062
	(0.131)	(0.123)	(0.141)
AIC	5720.125	6396.536	5437.642
BIC	5890.051	6566.462	5607.568
Log Likelihood	-2834.062	-3172.268	-2692.821
Deviance	5668.125	6344.536	5385.642
Num. obs.	5093	5093	5093

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. All models include country-fixed effects.

Tables Section: Interacting Income and Opportunity

Table C.4 shows results visualized in Figures 6 and 7.

Table C.4: Interacting Opportunity and Income (Continuous)

	Incumbent	MS Opposition	Radical
Social Opportunity	0.065^{*}	0.084^{**}	-0.121^{***}
	(0.032)	(0.028)	(0.030)
Income	0.024	0.028	−0.014
	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.032)
Income X Opportunity	0.004	−0.007	−0.004
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Age	0.008^{**}	−0.003	−0.004
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Female	−0.030	0.153^{*}	-0.162^{*}
	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.071)
Education	0.011	0.056^{**}	-0.086^{***}
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.024)
Class: Employers	−0.137	0.274	−0.223
	(0.205)	(0.185)	(0.222)
Class: Managers	0.236^{*}	−0.138	−0.126
	(0.107)	(0.104)	(0.119)
Class: Production Workers	−0.240	−0.159	0.335^{**}
	(0.130)	(0.117)	(0.121)
Class: Service Workers	0.176	-0.241^{*}	0.085
	(0.107)	(0.101)	(0.109)
Class: Small Business Owners	0.111	−0.137	0.038
	(0.156)	(0.145)	(0.157)
Class: Soc. Cult. Profs	0.083	−0.100	0.037
	(0.119)	(0.114)	(0.127)
Class: Tech. Profs	−0.098	0.117	−0.038
	(0.131)	(0.124)	(0.141)
AIC	5717.006	6381.774	5420.340
BIC	5854.254	6519.022	5557.588
Log Likelihood	−2837.503	−3169.887	−2689.170
Deviance	5675.006	6339.774	5378.340
Num. obs.	5093	5093	5093

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. All models include country-fixed effects.

Tables Section: Implications [Robustness see below]

Table C.5 shows results visualized in Figure 8.

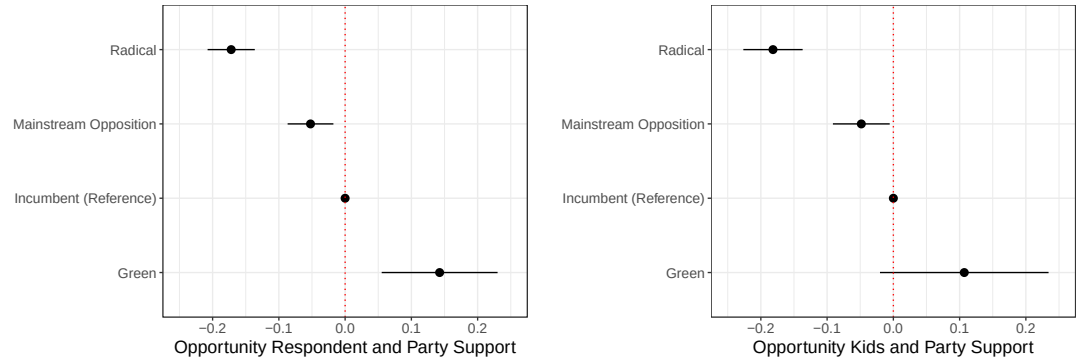
Table C.5: Opportunity Types and Party Support

	Rad Left	MS Left	MS Right	Rad Right
Type: Apprehensive	0.432^{**}	-0.045	-0.622^{***}	0.774^{***}
	(0.134)	(0.100)	(0.096)	(0.119)
Type: Aspirational	0.370^{**}	0.114	-0.308^{***}	0.081
	(0.121)	(0.088)	(0.084)	(0.120)
Type: Burdened	0.788^{***}	0.011	-0.795^{***}	0.637^{***}
	(0.123)	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.118)
Age: 26-35	0.266	0.082	-0.543^{***}	0.646^{***}
	(0.181)	(0.128)	(0.126)	(0.184)
Age: 36-45	0.218	-0.242	-0.171	0.579^{**}
	(0.180)	(0.130)	(0.123)	(0.182)
Age: 46-55	0.227	-0.094	-0.253^{*}	0.487^{**}
	(0.178)	(0.127)	(0.122)	(0.180)
Age: 56-65	0.080	-0.063	-0.197	0.449^{*}
	(0.190)	(0.134)	(0.129)	(0.188)
Age: 66 and older	-0.346	-0.090	0.156	0.024
	(0.299)	(0.180)	(0.171)	(0.265)
Female	-0.042	0.199^{**}	-0.021	-0.296^{**}
	(0.093)	(0.069)	(0.066)	(0.090)
Educ: Medium	-0.081	0.072	0.212^{**}	-0.504^{***}
	(0.103)	(0.077)	(0.075)	(0.100)
Educ: High	0.065	-0.033	0.048	-0.140^{*}
	(0.077)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.070)
Class: Employers	-0.467	0.315	0.065	-0.232
	(0.334)	(0.206)	(0.197)	(0.299)
Class: Managers	-0.424^{**}	0.091	0.116	-0.026
	(0.162)	(0.114)	(0.105)	(0.148)
Class: Production Workers	0.011	0.142	-0.487^{***}	0.437^{**}
	(0.164)	(0.128)	(0.126)	(0.150)
Class: Service Workers	0.059	0.173	-0.326^{**}	0.250
	(0.139)	(0.109)	(0.104)	(0.139)
Class: Small Business Owners	-0.281	-0.105	0.144	0.117
	(0.228)	(0.162)	(0.148)	(0.194)
Class: Soc. Cult. Profs	0.402^{**}	0.346^{**}	-0.450^{***}	-0.106
	(0.155)	(0.121)	(0.117)	(0.164)
Class: Tech. Profs	-0.292	0.240	-0.054	-0.006
	(0.187)	(0.133)	(0.124)	(0.177)
AIC	3418.452	5742.215	6100.390	3656.072
BIC	3587.485	5911.247	6269.423	3825.105
Log Likelihood	-1683.226	-2845.107	-3024.195	-1802.036
Deviance	3366.452	5690.215	6048.390	3604.072
Num. obs.	4921	4921	4921	4921

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. All models include country-fixed effects.

D. Robustness

Figure D.1 shows results when treating Green parties as a separate party group (analoguous to Figure 3 in the main body).



(a) Opportunity Respondent **(b)** Opportunity Kids

Figure D.1: General Social Opportunity and Party Choice (Multinomial, Green party separately)

Figure D.2 shows that the pattern presented in Figure 5 is even more pronounced if we look at "emblematic" representatives of each of our quadrants rather than a respondent with averaged characteristics.

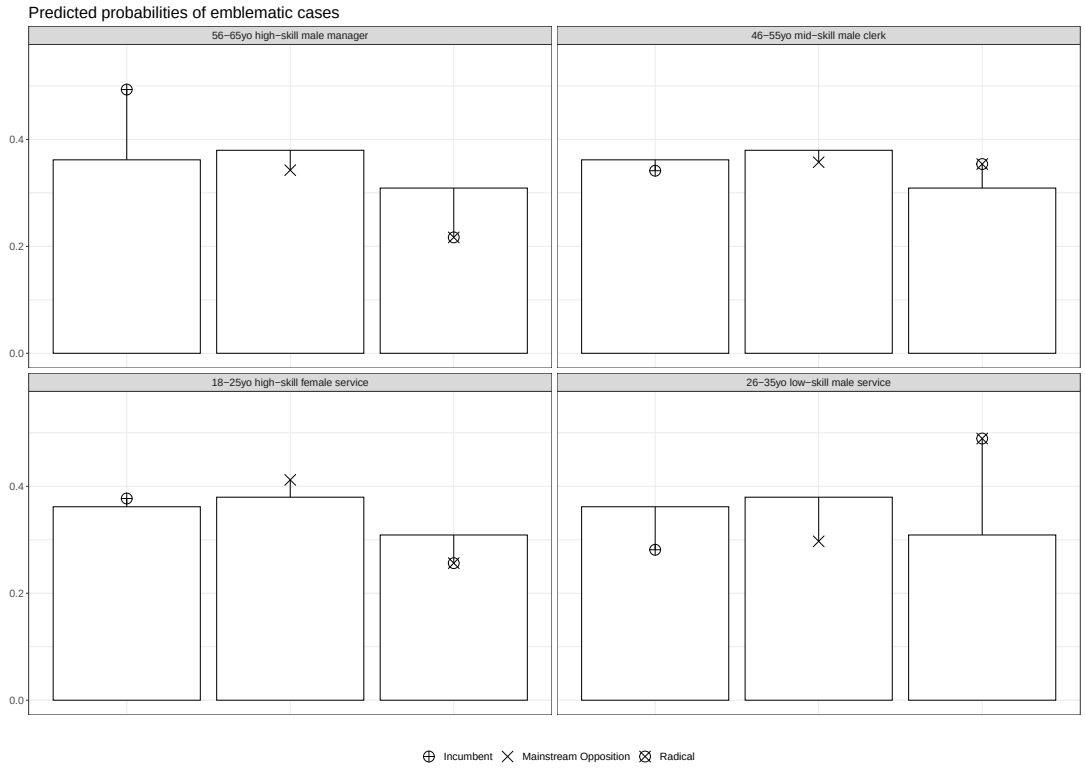


Figure D.2: Predicted probabilities of support for different party families for emblematic cases of comfortable, aspirational, apprehensive, and burdened voters

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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Figure D.3 shows that the predictions visualized in Figure 5 hold in a standard (multinomial) regression framework.

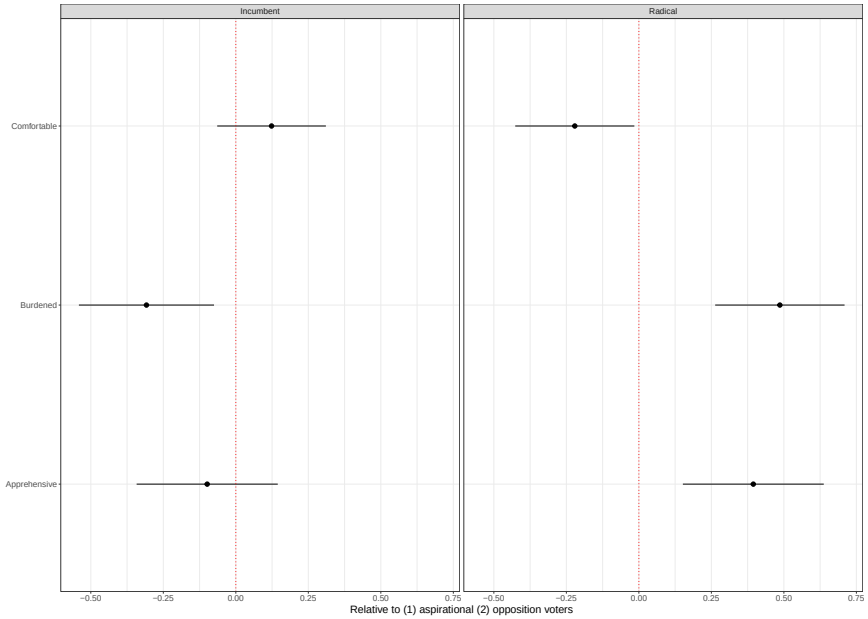

Figure D.3: Quadrant and Party Choice (Multinomial)

Figure D.4 demonstrates that our results do not hinge on a specific set of countries included in the analysis. The pattern of results presented above are robust to a jackknife-like procedure of excluding countries one by one.

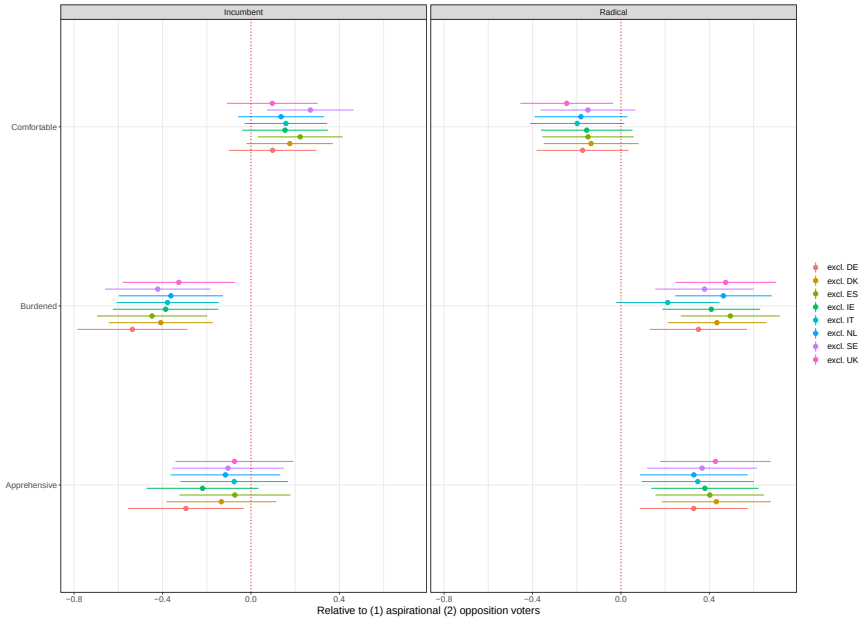

Figure D.4: Quadrant and Party Choice (Multinomial, Country Jackknife)

Figure D.5 extends our admittedly simplistic dichotomous framework differentiating between "rich" and "poor" voters by breaking average predicted probabilities down for three income levels (i.e. for six different groups). The integration of a socio-economic middle category allows for some further refinements of these results.

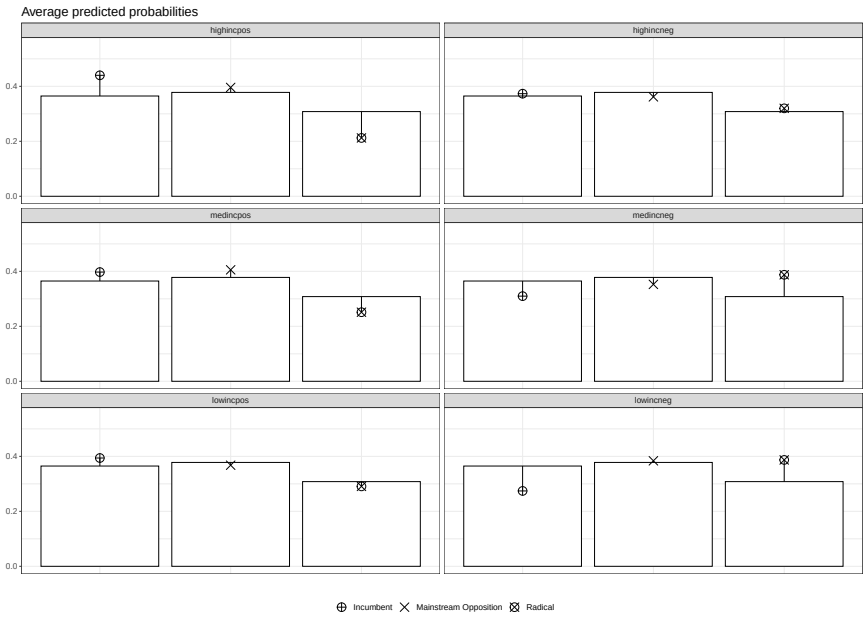

Figure D.5: Robustness: Income in 3 Categories (low, mid, high)

Figure D.6 shows that our results regarding incumbent vs. opposition vs. radical voting hold when looking at perceptions with respect to respondents' kids rather than their own prospects. Figure D.8 shows the same results with respect to support for different party families.

Figures D.7 and D.9 show that we can recover most of our results with an item capturing opportunity perceptions that more specifically tap into prospects on labor markets rather than general social life chances. This alternative operationalization produces similar but somewhat weaker results, especially with regard to apprehensive voters. Their political grievances seem to be more strongly motivated by a general negative view about social opportunities rather than their view on prospects at the workplace.

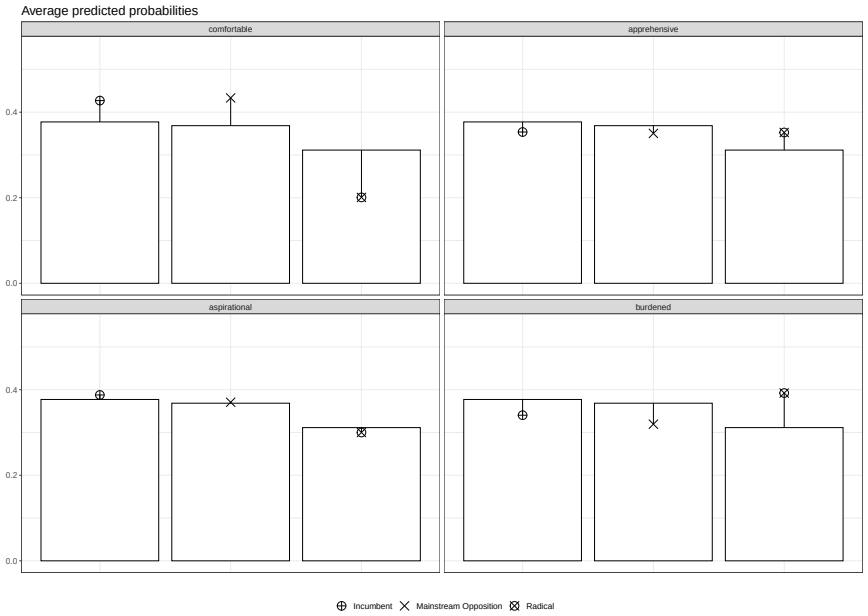

Figure D.6: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party types (Kids Social Opportunity)

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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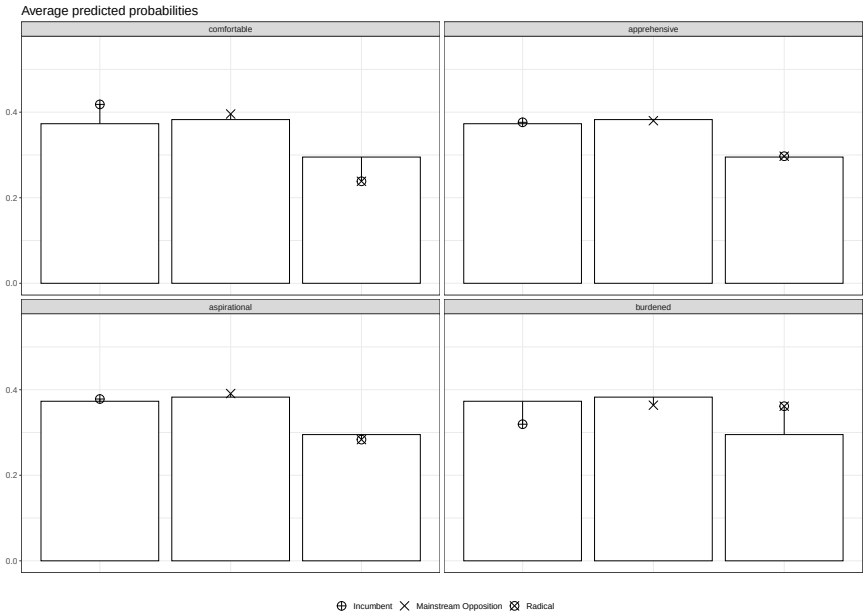

Figure D.7: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party types (Labor Market Opportunity)

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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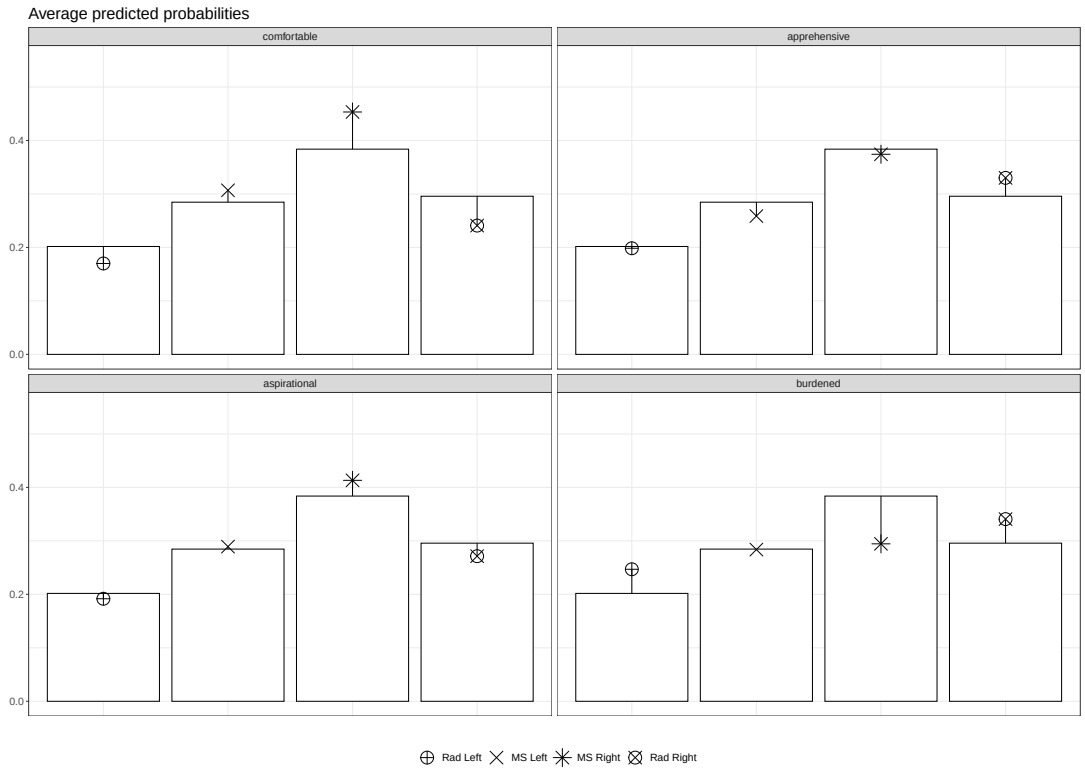

Figure D.8: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party families (Social Opportunity Kids)

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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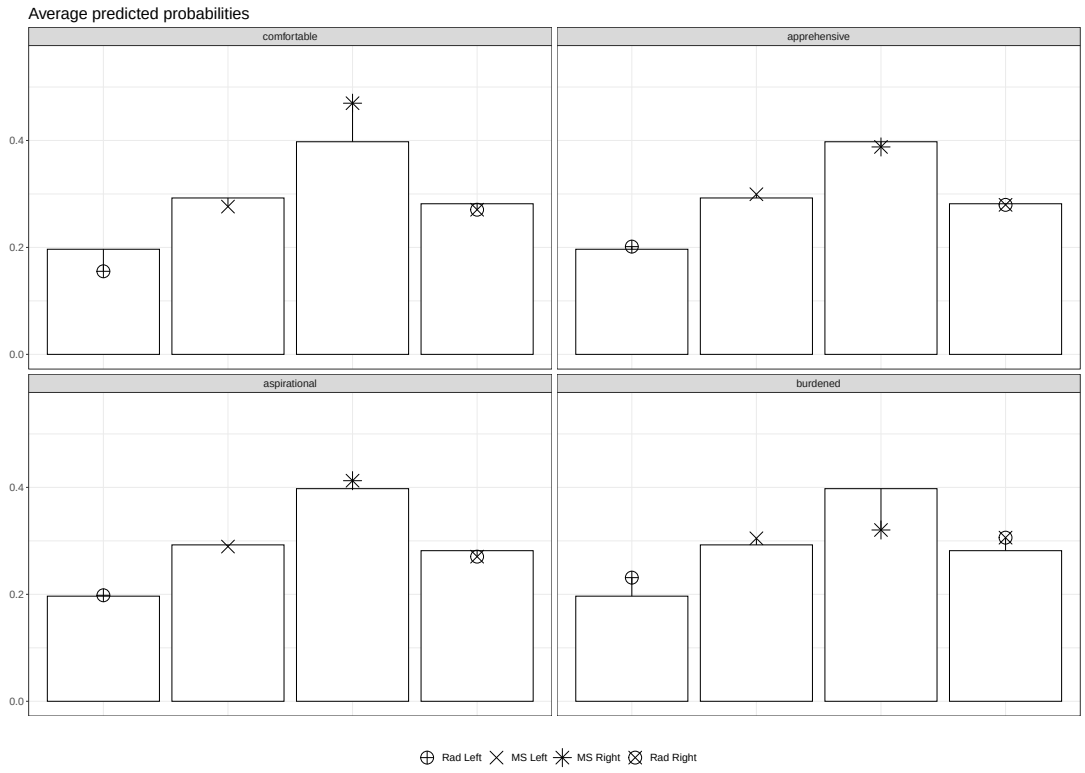

Figure D.9: Average predicted probabilities of support for different party families (Labor Market Opportunity)

Note: Probabilities are unweighted averages across all possible combinations of gender, class, education group, age group and country of residence. The baseline (white bars) are average predicted vote shares by party family across the entire sample.

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E. Potential Coalitions among Mainstream Voters

Figure E.1 shows relative shares of apprehensive and burdened voters among the subgroup of respondents who indicate to support of mainstream parties (any ideological leaning).

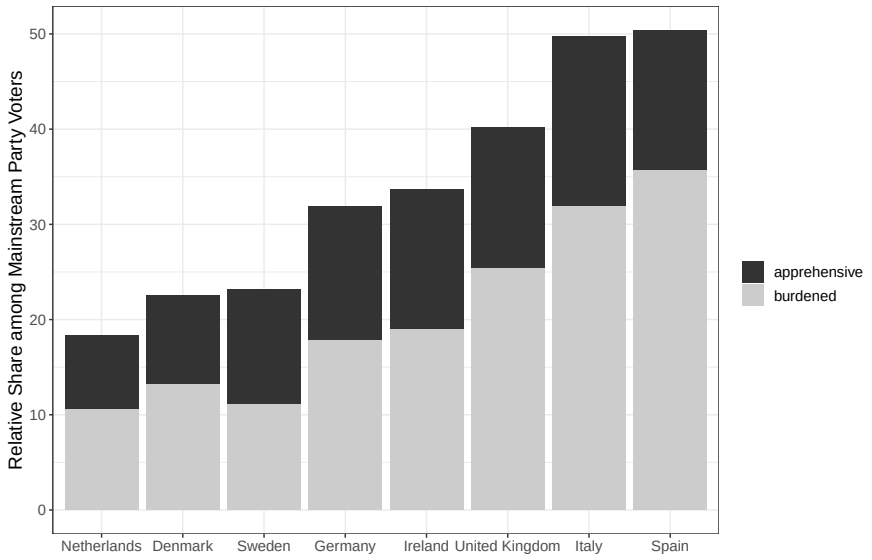

Figure E.1: Share of Burdened and Apprehensive among Mainstream Supporters

F. Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Voter Groups

The Figures in this section show the underlying multinomial models that result in our qualitative summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of each quadrant presented in Figure 2.

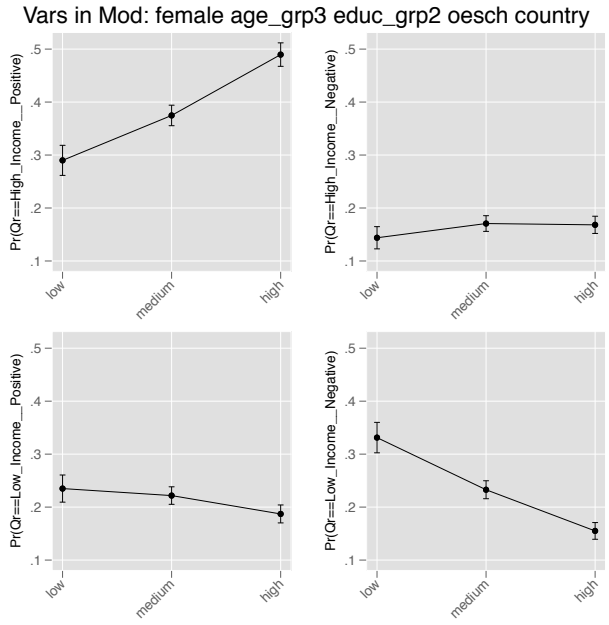

Figure F.1: Education

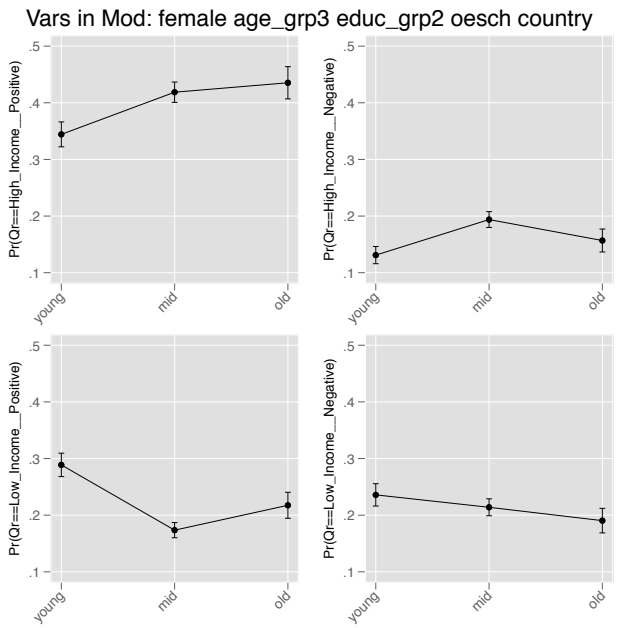

Figure F.2: Age Groups

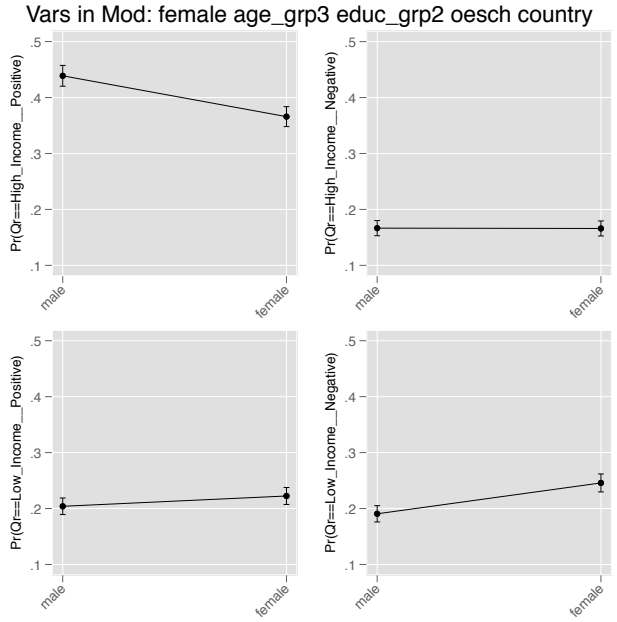

Figure F.3: Gender

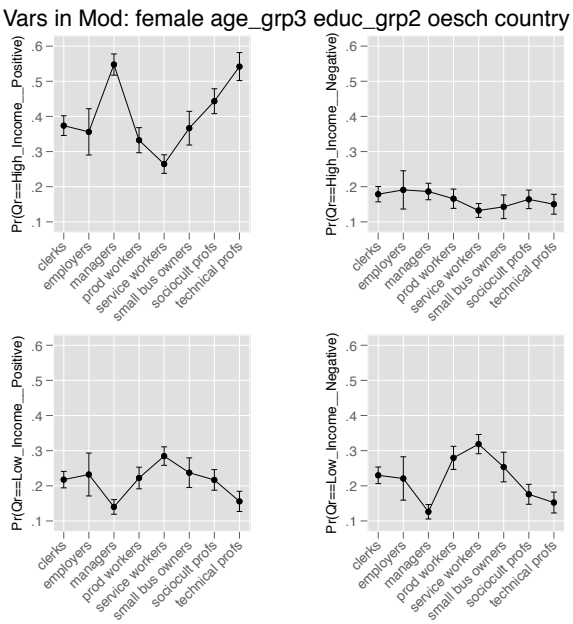

Figure F.4: Class

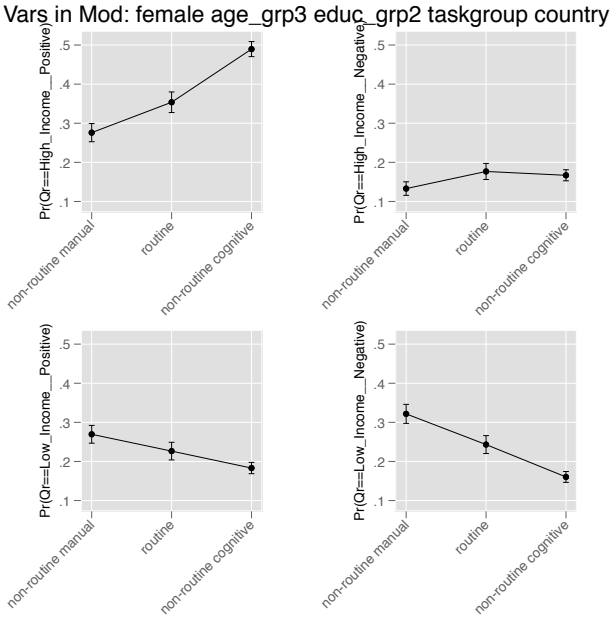

Figure F.5: Task Group

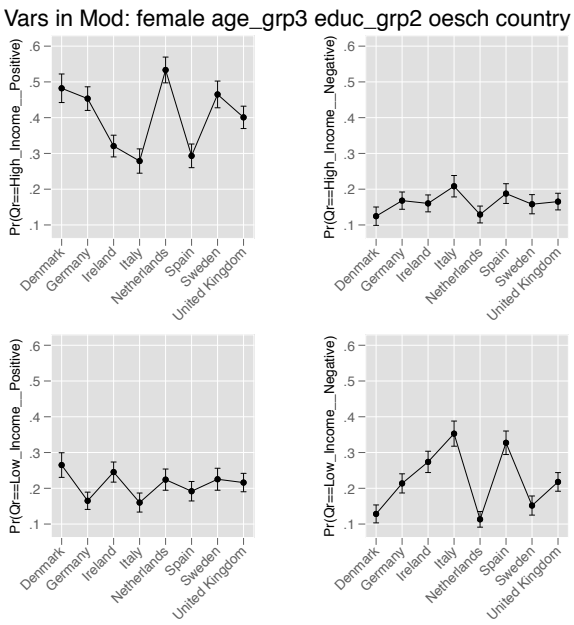

Figure F.6: Country

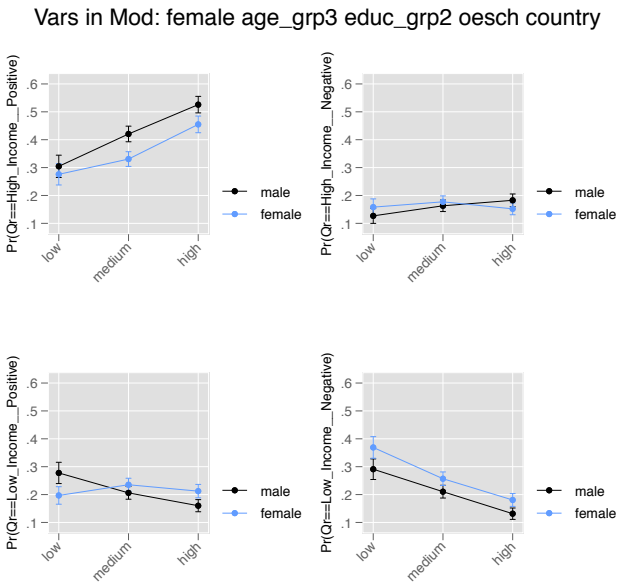

Figure F.7: Education by Gender

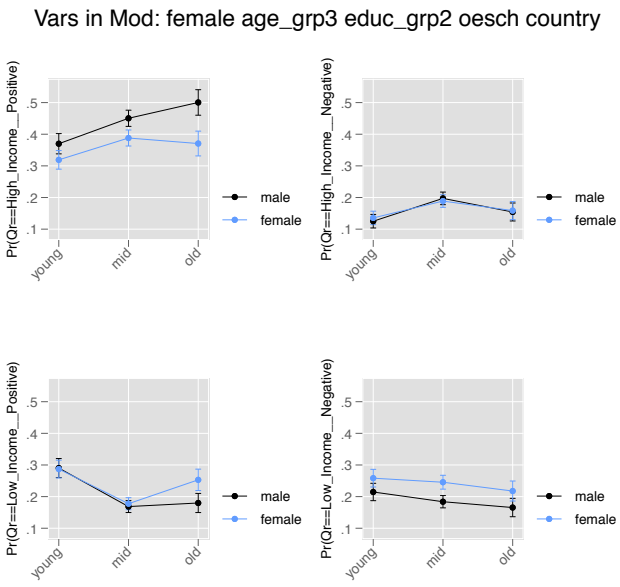

Figure F.8: Age by Gender

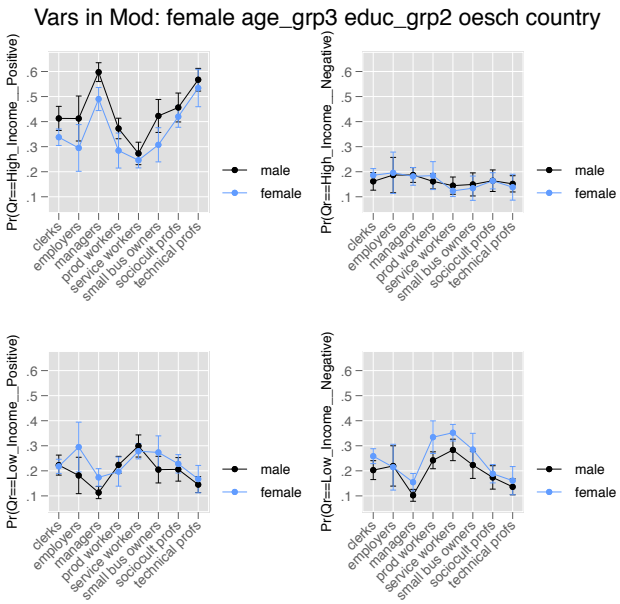

Figure F.9: Class by Gender

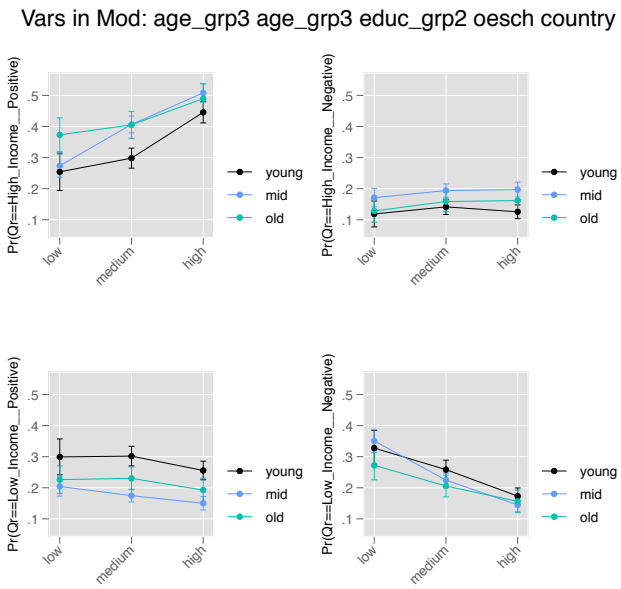

Figure F.10: Education by Age Group

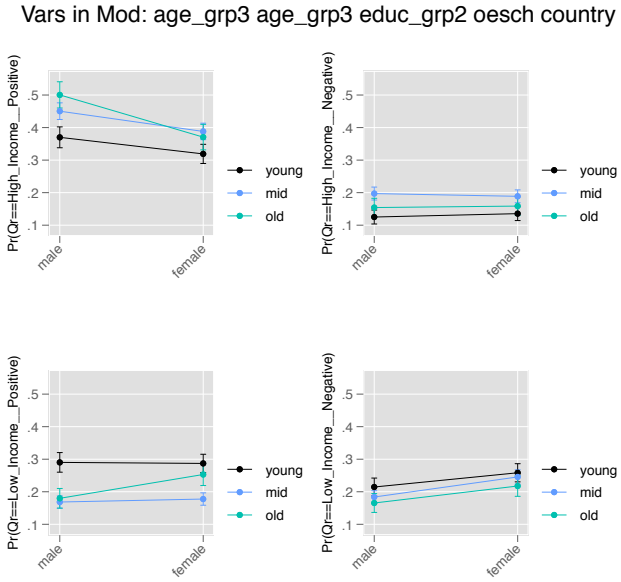

Figure F.11: Gender by Age Group

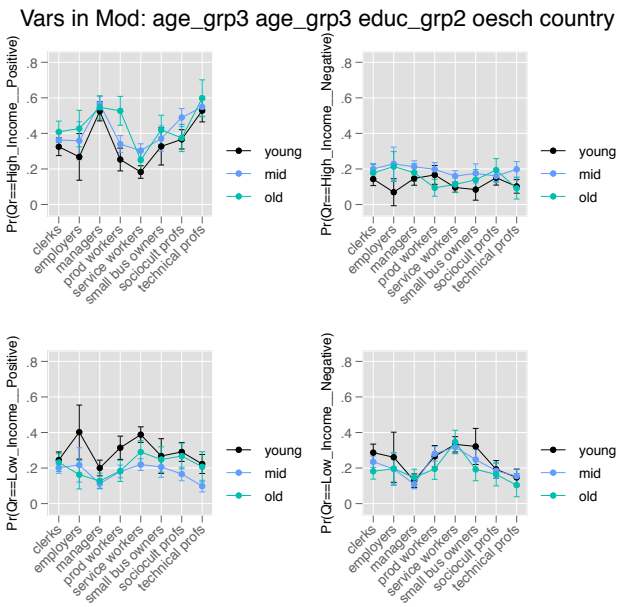

Figure F.12: Class by Age Group