



COVID-19 CRISIS

IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

December 2022





PREFACE

The study *COVID 19 crisis: implications and lessons for European social democracy* is a summary of the outcomes of a two-year long joint project, which FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies and FES – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung conducted with the initial support of Istituto Cattaneo in Bologna and then successfully concluded with the invaluable help of Kieskompas in Amsterdam.

At the point of inception in late spring 2020, the ambition of the founders was to investigate the change of attitudes of the citizens within 6 European Union Member States during and after the COVID pandemic. Perhaps as with many others, the initiators had been too optimistic to trust that it would be possible to get the situation under control within several months. Instead, it continued and consequently, the two waves of the survey that was put in the field by Dynata simply captured the opinions in two respective moments (December 2020/2021, and October/November 2021) – showing how the alternating views during the profound crisis. In the case of some of the questions, the shifts were profound indeed. And they allowed cherishing the hope that some of the social democratic policy proposals could be reconsidered as possibly the only desirable, sustainable way out of the hardships at hand.

But the ambition of the endeavor was higher than to reconfirm what many other polling had been suggesting, namely: that people longed to organize themselves and mutually support one another inside of the communities; that there was a greater trust confined in the public institutions and that COVID essentially left many with a daunting feeling of precarity, impoverishment, and insecurity about the future. All the partners involved wanted to dive deeper and hence the survey comprised at the end of 13 sociodemographic and 63 thematic questions. The level of detail allowed segmenting the vast data collected twice – each time in six countries (France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, and Poland) and on a sample of 1.000 citizens within each of them. Thanks to cross-tabulations and analyses of the overlap of the vote propensity, it was possible to extract very specific answers regarding the trends among diverse groups. There was a special focus on the opinions held by the voters and sympathizers of the center-left, of course. And in its spirit the next pages and especially the sections entitled “key findings” are meant to serve as a piece of policy advice.

After the first wave, FEPS and FES had taken some time to discuss the initial results also in the circles of experts from the six countries in question. The objective was to put the findings in a country-specific context and explain both similarities, as also divergencies when making an overall comparison. These debates had a form of closed round tables, which involved Members of National Parliaments, Members of the European Parliaments, academics, trade unionists, civil society experts, party strategists and pollsters, youth representatives, and publicists. While the organizers remain incredibly grateful to all of those incredible individuals for their time, enthusiasm, and output – it wouldn't be possible to name them all, as the total number overpassed 200. That said, still it is important to mention the gratitude towards the organisations who helped to gear



these – especially Centrum im. Ignacego Daszynskiego, Olaf Palme Center, Foundation Pablo Iglesias, Foundation Rafael Campalans, as also respective FES regional Offices in Madrid, Stockholm, Warsaw, Paris, and Rome.

The cycle of the round tables was further concluded with the so-called EU-level launch. Perhaps the most interesting takeaways were the dilemmas, that this study articulates as pressing challenges for the social democratic movement across the continent. If to tease with naming just a few of them, these would be: if there is a return to the debate about the future of the state, how can it be claimed by social democrats this time? If the social democratic voters are among the better educated, more well-off ones – how can the progressive parties build credible agenda that could electorally unite the voices of these with those of the other, more precarious groups in the society? If contrary to the debates in media, still majorities of citizens in the surveyed countries consider themselves moderates, how can social democrats stand out as a distinctive force among the traditional parties? Evidently, many more examples and hints about the possible answers are included in the next 6 Chapters.

Of course, readers may wonder how valid these findings are, taking into account the time that passed since the data was collected and the number of developments that had taken place – including especially Russian aggression in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and the cost-of-living crisis, as also the recent elections (including here France, Sweden, and Italy). But even though all of these are profound and have an incredible impact on both the context and the way people perceive the reality around, still the strength of this particular study is that it focuses on some long-term trends. In that sense, though it offers a snapshot of what was going on when the pandemic was a dominant factor, it also can remain an inspiration for the progressives beyond the recent 5th wave of COVID.

With that in mind, we are eager to offer this document for broader consideration. And while doing so, we would like to thank again Istituto Cattaneo (with Salvatore Vassalo, Moreno Mancuso and Federico Vegetti) for all the cooperation in designing the questionnaire and obtaining the data; as also Dynata for having completed the two waves of surveys. Furthermore, we would like to express our gratitude towards Kieskompas (with André Krouwel and Yordan Kutiyski) whose team engaged with us in several rounds, and then completed this important document and the supplementary 6 country-case studies. To that end, we are indebted to all our partners (and their teams) and all the individuals, who supported us on this long journey and made sure that the final result meets the expectations when it comes to a high-quality, relevant policy research paper. And neither this nor the countless accompanying meetings would have been possible, if not for the hard work of our own colleagues – including here especially Celine Guedes from FEPS and Adrianna Hornung from FES, who shouldered all the organizational load.

Dr Ralf Hexel
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Dr Ania Skrzypek
Foundation for European Progressive Studies

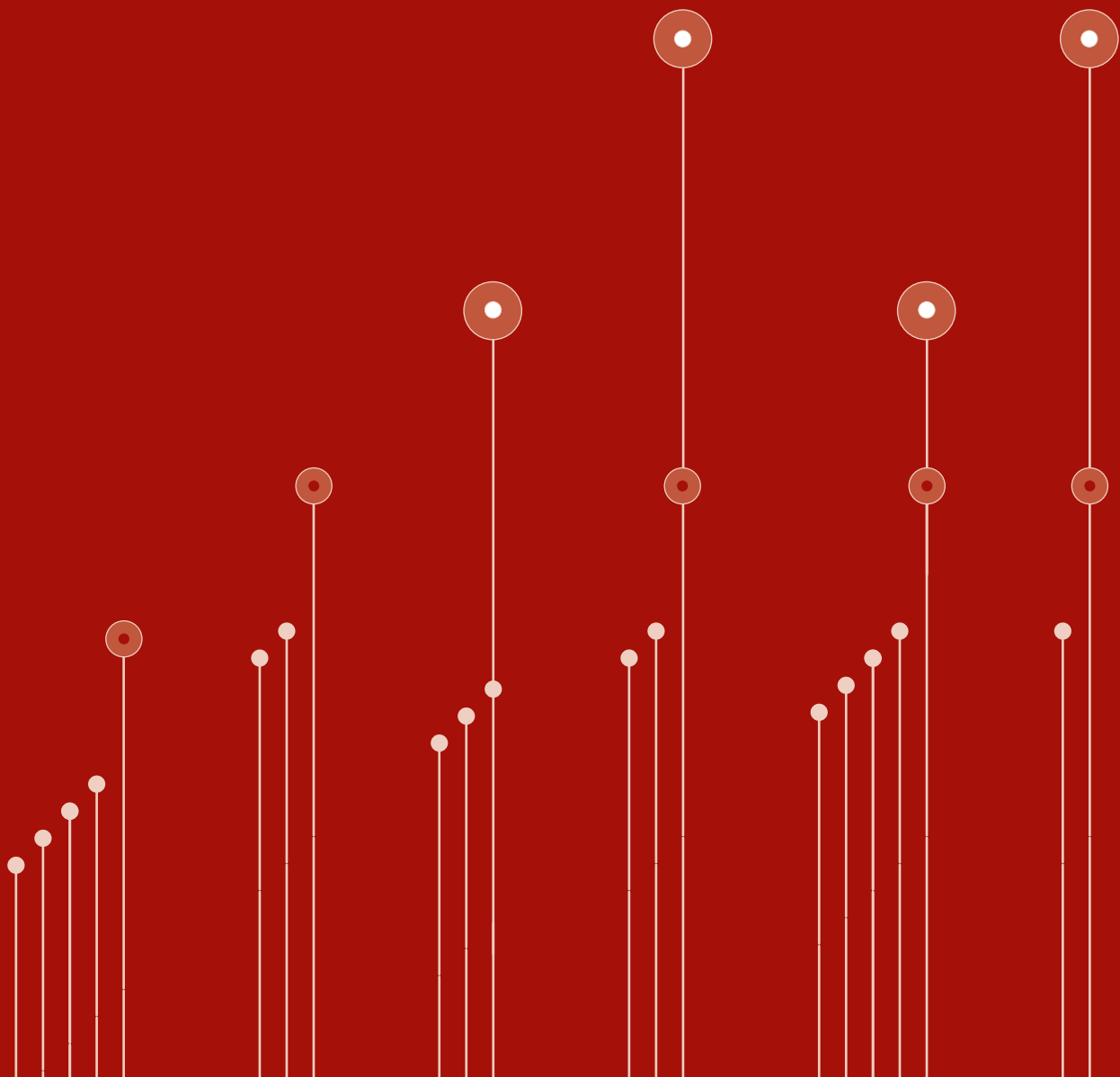
CONTENT

	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: DECISIVE SHIFTS IN THE PUBLIC ATTITUDES DURING COVID-19 CRISIS IN 6 EU MEMBER STATES	4
	DATA AND METHODS: 78 QUESTIONS FOR 12,000 RESPONDENTS	10
	1 THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID 19 CRISIS: BUILDING ON THE INCREASED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENTS	12
	2 THE POST-PANDEMIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGENDA: PREVENTING THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT-WING	18
	3 THE GRAND EXPECTATIONS, THE EU AND THE STATE: DELIVERING ON THE HOPES FOR MORE AND BETTER PUBLIC POLICIES	24
	4 THE CHALLENGE TO RECONNECT: OVERCOMING THE POLITICAL AMBIGUITY AMONG CITIZENS	30
	5 THE SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD: FORGING A SHIELD AGAINST CONSPIRACY THEORIES	38
	6 THE PROGRESSIVE STRATEGY: WITHSTANDING THE COMPETITION ON LEFT AND RIGHT	48
	APPENDIX	54
	AUTHORS	98



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DECISIVE SHIFTS IN THE PUBLIC
ATTITUDES DURING COVID-19
CRISIS IN SIX EU MEMBER STATES



1. COVID-19 Crisis, Institutional Trust, and Support for Incumbents

During the COVID-19 pandemic, incumbent governments gained trust and support regardless of their political affiliation in an apparent example of the ‘rally-round-the-flag’ phenomenon – when a country’s government experiences an increase in public support during times of crisis. In general, left-leaning (social democrat) governments saw higher support levels compared to right-leaning incumbent governments. This is due to the left’s proactive approach to managing the pandemic, including a focus on extending welfare provisions, thus maintaining citizens’ income and well-being. Needless to say, support levels varied depending on the specific country and the way the pandemic was managed. Results show that opinions on measures and policies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems are polarised, yet the public generally favoured restrictions aimed at limiting the spread of the virus.

With regard to the perception of personal risk, in most countries, a majority of the population did not think they would contract the SARS-CoV-2 virus, with the exception of Poland. Yet, the population still supported restrictive measures, as at the same time, people were very much concerned that the virus could endanger their health. The highest levels of concern about the danger COVID-19 poses to their health were found in Italy, Spain, and Germany. Supporters of social democratic parties were among the least concerned about contracting the virus. Supporters of smaller and radical right parties were the least likely to perceive COVID-19 as a danger to their health. In particular, extremist and populist voters were much less concerned. In Spain, the far-left Podemos-IU voters were the least concerned about the dangers posed by the virus.

This divergence in political orientation is relevant. During the pandemic, citizens faced a trade-off between protecting public health and the economy and jobs. In line with left-wing priorities, majorities in most countries prioritised public health over the economy and jobs. However, a partisan divide was visible: Left-wing voters generally tended to prioritise public health over economic concerns, while right-wing voters were more concerned with preserving economic activity. However, these differences were not always consistent, and the priority given to public health or the economy and jobs could also vary depending on the specific country and its economic situation.

All governments struggled to balance public health risks and economic damage in their pandemic response. Social democrat voters are more likely to see the government’s approach as balanced, except in Poland, where the New Left was very critical of the right-wing government and its actions. Supporters of incumbent parties and older respondents overall have higher degrees of support for anti-pandemic measures and feel less negative about their effects. Ideological distance from parties in power is a greater factor in citizens’ evaluation of anti-COVID-19 measures rather than the type of measures taken. The far right is generally against government policy, criticising either too much or too little action to protect public health or jobs.

Deep political polarisation emerged between centrist left and right voters and extremist and populist supporters, particularly when it comes to vaccination and the curbing of individual freedoms. Mainstream party voters support vaccination efforts, while those on the political extremes harbour conspiratorial and anti-establishment sentiments, hindering the progress of vaccination. In that sense, social democrats inside and outside government sided with the majority opinion with their emphasis on getting vaccinated, even though this strong congruence with public opinion did not necessarily pay off in electoral fortunes. Extreme and populist supporters are sceptical of the purpose and effectiveness of vaccinations and resist restrictions on individual freedoms, which they view as a violation of civil liberties. In some countries, this division led to political turmoil and even violence. Despite this, the majority of progressive and centrist liberal voters prioritise health and support vaccination, meaning that the more serious rift was on the right end of the political spectrum.

Less than half of the respondents in France and Poland reported willingness to get vaccinated during the vaccine rollout. Nevertheless, the actual number of vaccinated citizens is currently higher. Social democrat voters were among the most likely to get vaccinated. The majority of respondents support mandatory vaccination for public and social activities, with moderate centrist and social democratic voters the most supportive. Although it is a controversial stance, most respondents agreed that vaccination should be a pre-condition for having access to public and social activities. Far-right parties, except in France, are the least supportive of vaccination.

Crises — particularly the widespread impact of a pandemic — might not be fertile ground for social democrats to distinguish themselves, as all governments will have relatively high levels of social protectionism as a core policy aim.

2. The Post-pandemic Socio-economic Agenda: Preventing the Rise of the Radical Right-wing

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on working conditions. The economic impact has been substantial; many industries suffered from lockdowns and restrictions. Assessing the pandemic’s effect on working conditions is crucial, with employment type playing a role in impact distribution. The effect on working conditions has been significant, particularly in southern countries with less developed welfare states. As expected, most respondents were negatively affected; younger and female respondents reported a more marked deterioration in their quality of life than other demographic groups. The impact is less prominent in Germany and Sweden, indicating the influence of the countries’ wealth and welfare systems. In all countries except for Spain, social democratic voters were the least affected group, suggesting they work in sectors less impacted by COVID-19 measures. In contrast, voters for smaller parties and the far-right reported the most negative consequences on their working conditions.

When it comes to their future economic outlook, respondents have mixed opinions that differ by country. However, in all countries apart from Sweden, respondents expected the subsequent year to be economically worse than the



previous one. Comparing the economic situation in 2021 to 2020, many citizens experienced a decline in economic conditions, with Italy, France, and Poland being the hardest hit. Nearly 60 per cent of workers in Poland reported a decrease in living standards, with smaller party and radical right voters experiencing the greatest worsening of their economic situation. Social democrats have the opportunity to propose policies to help those affected, but debates about deserving versus undeserving are expected. The pandemic's asymmetrical effects on different groups and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine may fuel these debates and be politically exploited by the extreme right. Regarding the future economic outlook, a larger proportion of respondents expect their situation to worsen rather than improve, with the largest group expecting no change. The most optimistic respondents are social democratic voters, with the exception of Sweden and Poland. A majority of respondents in Germany, Sweden, and Poland reported being comfortable with their income, while less comfort was reported in Southern Europe. This indicates an increased North-South divide in Europe. Social democratic voters have the highest living standards in all countries except for Sweden, with support for the centre-left often associated with personal well-being. Meanwhile, support for the centre-left from economically vulnerable working-class segments is declining; these voters are turning to extreme movements on the right and left.

As an important indicator of economic security, home ownership is crucial for improving living standards. To maintain the support of the lower and middle classes, social democratic parties should implement policies that provide access to affordable housing and increase homeownership. Homeownership is an indirect measurement of income and financial status. Nevertheless, respondents in Western Europe report a higher degree of satisfaction with their income and general living standard, in spite of the lower degree of home ownership. Respondents in Poland and Italy are most likely to be homeowners, but there are disparities in housing markets, prices, and quality across the countries. In Sweden, many respondents reported owning a house with a mortgage. These housing market differences must be kept in mind when interpreting survey results. The results suggest that centre-right and far-right voters are more likely to own a home outright compared to green party and left-wing voters.

The results indicate that social democracy is supported by voter groups who are more economically secure and have a higher standard of living. Support for the centre-left is often associated with personal well-being. The centre-left will need to continue to appeal to the middle class and address the decline in support from the most economically precarious working classes. The degree of homeownership, which is strongly linked to income and financial status, may also be an important factor in determining the electoral prospects of left-wing parties.

3. Great expectations: Support for the EU in Times of Pandemic

With regard to public opinion on the European Union and economic regulations, we see that the already existing political divisiveness has not declined but instead increased,

despite the huge financial support the EU provided to member states. Even though majorities still view their country's EU membership favourably in all surveyed countries, the proportion of people who express ambivalence towards the EU is often larger than those who are negative about it. The centre-left should be cautious towards this ambivalence, as it might easily shift to pure Euroscepticism if economic conditions worsen. Indifference prevails in the countries with EU support below 50 per cent — Sweden, France and Italy. Social democrats are among the most supportive of EU membership; nevertheless, there is also pronounced ambivalence among this voter group.

Over 60 per cent of respondents in all countries agree the state should play a greater role in economic regulation, a traditional left-wing policy that enjoys majority support. Left-wing voters are most in agreement, and right-wing voters are more likely to object. Social democrats could benefit from this development by putting emphasis on the positives of economic regulation in terms of consumer protection, fair competition and environmental protection. There is also a large degree of cynicism and anti-system sentiment among respondent groups with lower income and less education, as well as people with a (populist) right-wing orientation and those professing no political ideology: Further deterioration of living standards can advance such sentiments.

This study also examined the relationship between the likelihood of voting for social democrats and institutional trust. Specifically, the results reveal that voters who support social democratic parties have some of the highest levels of political trust in the electorate. Incumbency matters, as PiS voters in Poland are supportive of state intervention despite PiS being seen as right-wing. There is a positive correlation between voting for social democrats and institutional trust in all countries except Poland, where Nowa Lewica voters have low political trust. The index measuring political trust consists of national and EU institutions. Average evaluations of institutional responses to the pandemic differ, with high evaluations in Germany, Poland, and Spain and lower evaluations in France and Italy.

4. The Challenge to Reconnect: Overcoming the Political Ambiguity Among Citizens

Looking at the deeper political and ideological profiles of voters, we see that political extremism is still a marginal issue in society, and a growing number of citizens do not identify with either side of the left-right divide. Contrary to the debates reflected in the media, the data show that the largest sections of the electorate in each country are moderates who tend towards the political centre. This suggests that political radicals and extremists are a small but often vocal minority. In addition, there is a growing number of citizens that do not identify with either side of the left-right divide, including the centre.

The analyses indicate there is a large degree of voter loyalty, with most voters maintaining their vote preferences over time, at least when comparing the previous European election to the next national one. Much of the 'political noise' during the pandemic seems to originate from a small and unrepresentative group of citizens with extrem-

ist political orientations. However, we cannot rule out that the longer-term (economic and social) impact of the pandemic will not change the political preferences of voters.

The analyses also highlight that highly educated individuals, as well as those who can easily make ends meet, are more likely to support moderate parties and have moderate opinion structures, whereas radical parties enjoy support predominantly from less educated and more economically precarious respondents. Most of the population has a moderate amount of education; social democrats rely on this group of voters. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened economic disparities, creating a segment of society that feels unsupported and vulnerable to the influence of extremist and populist forces. This pattern is also reflected in respondents' opinion structure. In that sense, the pandemic has deepened the 'cognitive' cleavage between the highly educated and less educated groups, the latter facing much more severe consequences due to their working conditions, labour market position, access to (alternative financial) resources and housing conditions.

The *raison d'être* of social democracy is to address the issues faced by socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Due to rising inequality, the cost of living crisis, and soaring house prices, social democratic parties may benefit from shifting further to the left on economic policy by expanding access to (higher) education, improving wages and labour opportunities, and tackling 'in-work precariousness'. Many people can no longer afford to live in areas with the best career opportunities. Earlier studies found that when social democratic parties shift to the right in economic terms, their vote share decreases, especially in countries with high levels of income inequality. While social democratic parties are almost 'natural' inhabitants of the centre, their weakened electoral position in many countries and limited coalition options run the risk of colluding with the right, embracing market, financialisation, and reductions in tax and welfare state, which makes these parties abandon the historic promise of a more egalitarian and economically just society. This will inevitably lead to continued decline.

5. The Sustainable Way Forward: Forging a Shield Against Conspiracy Theories

Voters perceive political actors and policies from a particular worldview and mindset. Here we examine how party support, including vote intentions for social democratic parties, correlates with populist sentiments, conspiracy beliefs, and science scepticism.

Starting with the latter, many respondents in France, Germany, Italy, and Poland felt that scientific research is more flawed than people realise. Supporters of far-right and smaller fringe parties agreed the most with this statement, while social democratic party voters were least likely to doubt the quality of scientific research. While science scepticism is stronger on the extreme and conservative right, where the questioning of the validity of scientific findings on issues such as climate change or evolution is easily found, people on the extreme left can also exhibit scepticism towards science, particularly in areas such as biotechnology.

Belief in conspiracy theories mushroomed during the pandemic, particularly when it comes to the origin of COVID-19, the quickly engineered vaccines, and the role of pharmaceutical companies. Those attracted to populist parties and in precarious economic situations are more likely to have a conspiratorial mindset. This study finds that conspiracy theories related to 5G and denial of the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic receive much lower acceptance across countries, compared to the other conspiracy theories included in the questionnaire. It is crucial that established parties promote an alternative narrative to conspiracy theorists and offer solutions to the problems of the political establishment rather than simply criticising it. Climate change is an example of an issue about which the majority of respondents are concerned, including both centre- and far-right voters. The centre-left should further emphasise the necessity of policies aimed at tackling climate change as it is a matter capable of bringing people together. Nevertheless, these policies should ensure that the economic burden of a transition to a sustainable economy should be spread out evenly among all social classes, shielding the most vulnerable citizens.

With regard to a populist outlook, meaning that instead of economic and cultural cleavages, the main antagonism is portrayed as a struggle between a good people and a corrupt elite, as in earlier studies, we also find that social democrats are among the least populist-minded respondent groups: They do not see politics as a zero-sum game between political rivals. This confirms other accounts on the profile of centre-left voters that have found that defectors are not populist in orientation and would not largely switch to radical right-wing populist and disrupter parties.

Where social democratic parties did well in recent elections, recovery seemed driven by the tactical considerations of voters in terms of government composition. Social democrats have a brighter future in countries where they have a real chance of forming or joining the government, while their vote share remains low in countries where they have poor prospects of holding office. Social democrats have also benefited from realignment patterns among voters and the departure of strong leaders from competitors. However, the outlook for the broader left, particularly when including the radical left, is bleak, and their failure to gain traction for their alternative vision of a post-capitalist future has led to deep reflection about upcoming strategies. Overall, the left is weakening. Progressive voters in Western Europe are highly pragmatic in choosing parties that have the best chance of articulating their hopes and protecting social democracy from right-wing governments. For social democracy to recover, it must convince voters that they are serious contenders for government office.

This suggests that the centre-left should be cautious when engaging with their political adversaries. Since centre-left voters also exhibit relatively high degrees of trust in science and traditional political institutions, these high-trust voters will not easily shift to the conspiratorial and populist end of the political spectrum. Social democratic parties win power and office in the political centre. The high-trusting and no-nonsense electorate of the centre-left demands evidence-based and proven policies



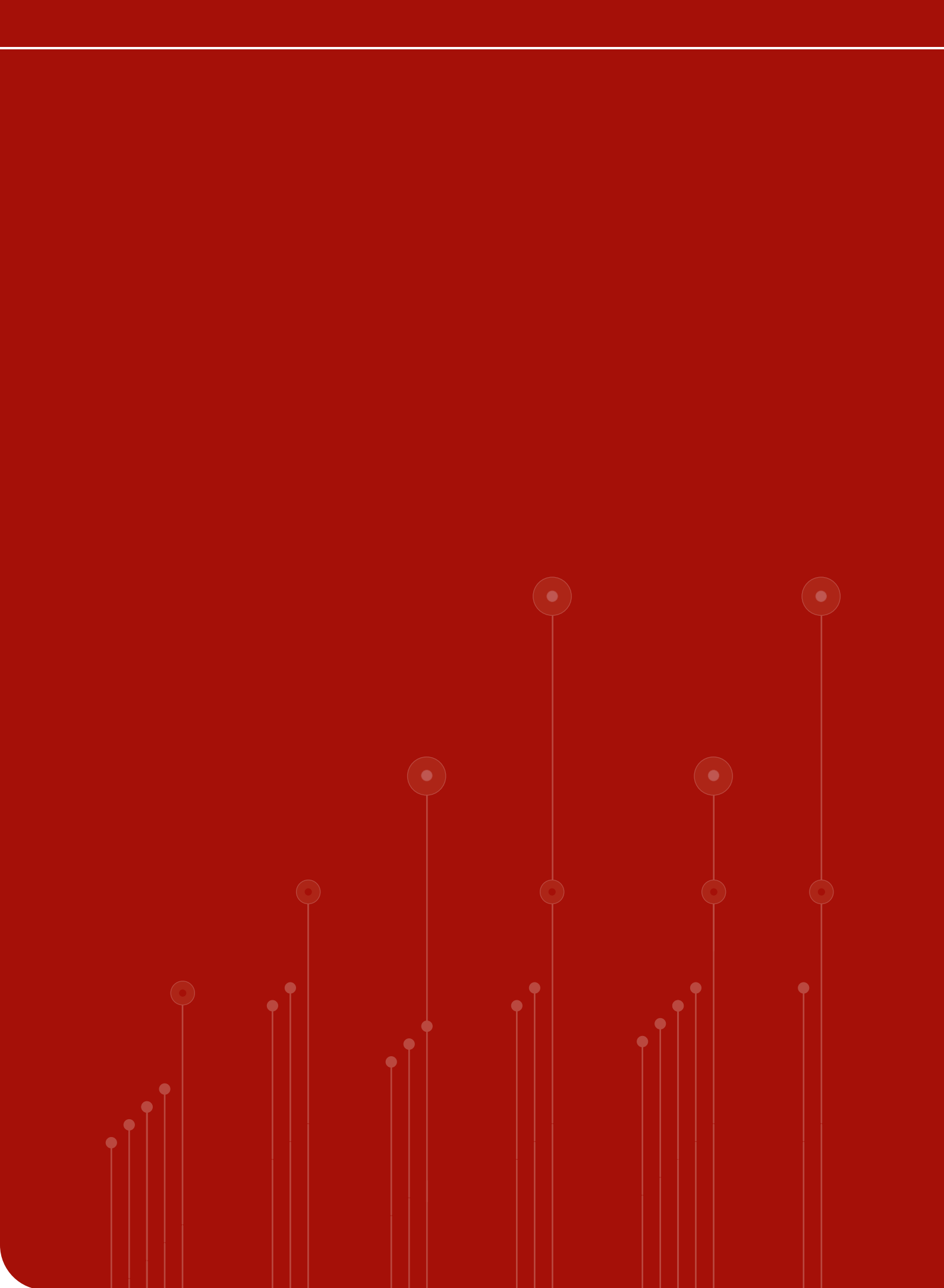
that are in the best interest of the entire society rather than ideological rigidity. Centre-left voters will be more likely to support social democratic parties if they are credible governmental actors who implement policies that lead to a more just society. Social democracy, as seen in this study, is supported mostly by people who do not need financial state support themselves but value assistance for the less fortunate and strongly favour public investments in people and infrastructure that keeps an economy modern, dynamic, and sustainable.

6. The Progressive Strategy: Withstanding the Competition on the Left and the Right

The electoral vulnerability of social democrats and the strength of respondents' identification with each political party is analysed by assessing the vote propensity of different political parties and estimating the percentage of overlap between the social democrats and other parties. Here we find a pattern that is often seen as contradictory to the argument that the electoral fortunes of the centre-left lie in the political centre and in competition with the centre-right.

This study finds that social democrats are vulnerable to electoral competition from green and radical left parties in most countries, with the exception of Germany, where the Christian Democrats are the main competitor. In different countries, different parties pose the biggest electoral threat to the social democrats, such as the far-left Vänsterpartiet and Miljöpartiet de Gröna in Sweden, KO and Polska 2050 in Poland, and Unidas Podemos in Spain. The Italian party system is fragmented, leading to a high degree of partisan detachment, with PD voters considering other left-wing and liberal parties, as well as far-right Lega and FdI.

Note, however, that this means that supporters of the social democrats also favour more radical left and green options, while vice versa, political radicals on the left might be less likely to vote for a centrist party. Nevertheless, in most countries, competition for centrist voters is crucial if social democrats want a seat at the government table. The literature on electoral volatility for the social democrats suggests that former social democratic voters with a centrist ideological position are more likely to switch allegiance than left-leaning social democrats. In short, there is more electoral 'leakage' in the centre. The increasing alignment of the centre-left with green and radical left political parties may alienate centrist voters for an extended period. This does not mean that social democrats should not celebrate the shared values with the entire left or emphasise and work on policy development and collaboration with their Green and radical left counterparts. However, totally abandoning the political centre may, in some countries, mean a (further) loss of credibility in the centre-left's claims to be an effective and competent party of government. At the same time, when in government and particularly when in coalition with the centre-right, social democratic parties should avoid being drawn into austerity policies and welfare state retrenchment.





DATA AND METHODS

78 QUESTIONS FOR
12,000 RESPONDENTS



This study offers an in-depth overview of public opinion in six European countries by comparing the stances of various demographic and political groups. Respondents were segmented by gender, age, educational attainment, economic well-being, and ideological orientation. Most importantly, voter groups were identified based on respondents' current vote intention. Comparing citizen categories allows policy-makers and political campaigners alike to make informed decisions when targeting specific population groups.

The results compare how the aforementioned groups of respondents answered the various closed-ended survey questions. Questions on the same topic (e.g., support for measures against the COVID-19 pandemic) that use a scale rather than ordinal answer categories were used to create indices after a reliability analysis was performed to confirm that they measure the same concept. For these indices, the mean scores for each respondent group were estimated; the groups were subsequently plotted on two-dimensional scatterplots comprised of two indices. Again, the average mean scores between the two waves were calculated for each voter group.

Two waves of survey data in six countries: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, were collected by Dynata, in coordination with the Cattaneo Institute, in December 2020/January 2021 and October/November 2021, respectively. In each country, each wave comprises a sample of about 1,000 respondents, representative of the demographic composition and political preferences of that country. In total, 12,057 respondents participated in the surveys.

The questionnaires used in both waves contained largely overlapping questions, allowing for an over-time comparison of public opinion on various socioeconomic issues. Given that there were very minor opinion differences between the two waves for items included in both survey iterations, the average percentage and mean scores for these questions are reported, with several exceptions. The following questions were only asked in the first wave of the survey and, therefore, only results from this wave are reported:

- There are different views on how the national government balanced, in the short run, protecting jobs and protecting public health when responding to the coronavirus pandemic.
- There are different views on how the national government balanced preserving public health and preserving individual freedom when responding to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Some hope to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible, others believe that it would be risky to get vaccinated. If the health authorities provide you an opportunity to get vaccinated, how likely is it that you will do so?
- Have you installed the national contact tracing app on your smartphone?

In addition, several questions were only included in the second wave of the questionnaire and, therefore, only results from this wave were reported:

- Some people argue that the COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory for everyone to stop the pandemic, others that people should always be free to choose whether to get vaccinated or not.
- Compared to the end of 2020, do you think that your own economic situation...
- And thinking about the next 12 months, do you think that your own economic situation...

The indices measuring conspiracy belief, populist sentiments, and the question asking respondents to evaluate the "NextGenerationEU" plan were also included in the second wave only; therefore, only this second wave data is analyzed for these items.



CHAPTER 1

THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS: BUILDING ON THE INCREASED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENTS



Likelihood of Contracting the Virus and Concern

When it comes to perceptions of how likely it is for respondents to contract SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, it is remarkable that most respondents didn't think they will get infected. Only about 30 per cent of respondents in all countries, apart from Poland, deem contracting the virus a possibility. In Poland, this percentage is higher than 40 per cent. In most countries, radical-right party voters are least likely to think they will get infected, yet social democratic voters also seem to have low concerns about contracting the virus. Social democratic voters are among the least concerned about contracting the virus themselves.

Much more public concern is visible when it comes to the danger the virus poses to people's health. A vast majority of respondents report a strong or moderate concern that the virus could endanger their personal health. This concern is highest in Italy, Spain, and Germany, whereas it is less pronounced in Sweden, Poland, and France. Supporters of smaller and radical right parties are least likely to perceive the virus as a danger to their health. This reflects the rhetoric of the far-right parties, which often argue that the measures to cope with the pandemic are exaggerated or even a threat to basic freedoms, but also relates to the educational level of this voter group – less educated voters and conspiracy theorists are overrepresented among the radical right electorate. Spain is the only exception, where the far-left Podemos-IU voters are least concerned with the dangers posed by the virus.

Evaluations of Governmental Policy Against the Pandemic

Governments need to weigh the public health risks of the pandemic versus economic damage measures to curb the spread of the virus. Needless to say, there is a substantial divide about whether governments got the balance right. Social democratic voters, however, are concentrated among the voter groups that consider that the government approach is balanced overall. The only exception is Poland, where Nowa Lewica (New Left, NL) is very critical of the (right-wing) government's approach, and the majority of nearly all voter groups think more should have been done to protect jobs.

The overall pattern suggests that support for the government measures is strongly dependent on support for the incumbent party or parties: voters of the governing parties or those ideologically close to the governing party (e.g. France) are more likely to be supportive of measures against COVID-19, whereas electorates least likely to support incumbent parties, such as far-right voters in most countries, are least supportive of the measures. In Sweden, for example, the government took a different approach and lockdowns were hardly introduced.

Nevertheless, the far right is still against government policy. While the Swedish government took an almost diametrically opposed strategy compared to other countries, ideological distance from the parties in power is far more explanatory for citizens' evaluation of anti-COVID-19 measures rather than the type of measures taken. In Sweden, the main criticism comes from far-right SD voters who insist that more should have been done to protect public health, while in other countries, governments are criticised by the radical right for doing too little to protect jobs.

Likelihood of Getting Vaccinated

When it comes to respondents' likelihood to get vaccinated, France and Poland are the outliers where less than half of the respondents report willingness to get vaccinated (the study was done during the out-roll of the vaccine in many countries). Nevertheless, in all countries, the actual percentage of vaccinated citizens is currently higher than the numbers derived from the data at the time it was collected. In all countries, social democratic voters are among the most likely to get vaccinated, which points to their high confidence in science.

Mandatory Vaccination

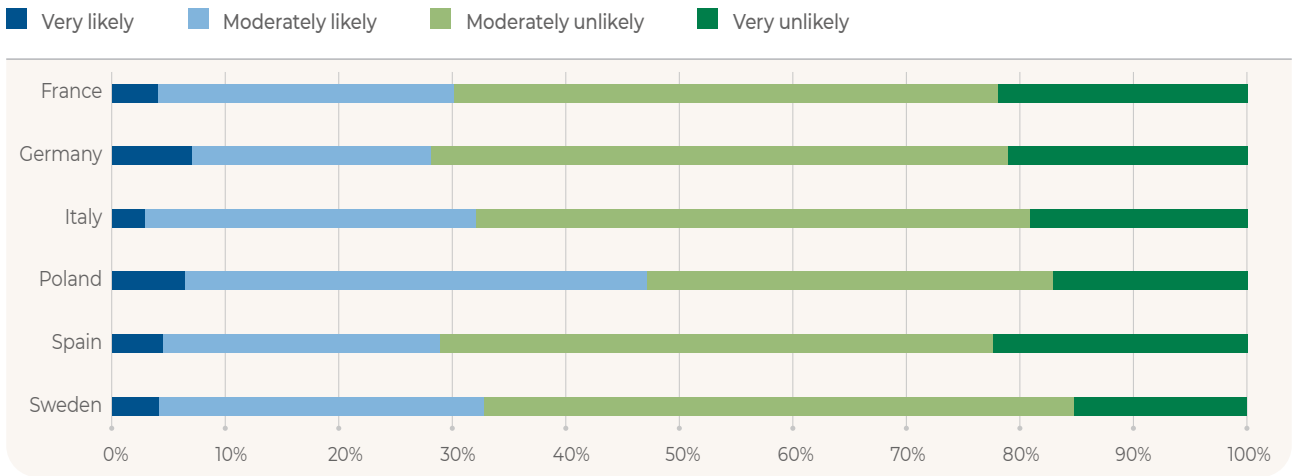
Mandatory vaccination for COVID-19 is a controversial topic. Figure 17 (p. 66) shows public opinion on support for vaccine mandates, revealing that more than 60 per cent of respondents think there should be some form of mandatory vaccination, at least when it comes to having access to public and social activities. The proportion is only lower in France and Poland, where satisfaction with the COVID prevention measures is also lower.

When it comes to party preferences, it is clear that voters of the moderate centrist parties, and the social democrats, are among the most supportive of mandatory vaccination. This suggests that the social democrats would be electorally safe in case they approve some form of vaccination mandates: it appears that following the strategy, where people are asked to be vaccinated or to have recently recovered from COVID to access public events, would be the least controversial option for the electorate at large. It comes as no surprise that far-right parties in all countries, apart from France, are the least supportive of vaccination.

* For detailed graphics on chapter 1 see Annex pp. 56–67.

Figure 1 – Concern with COVID-19: cross-national comparison

In your opinion, how likely is it that you will contract COVID-19?



How concerned are you that a COVID infection might endanger your health?

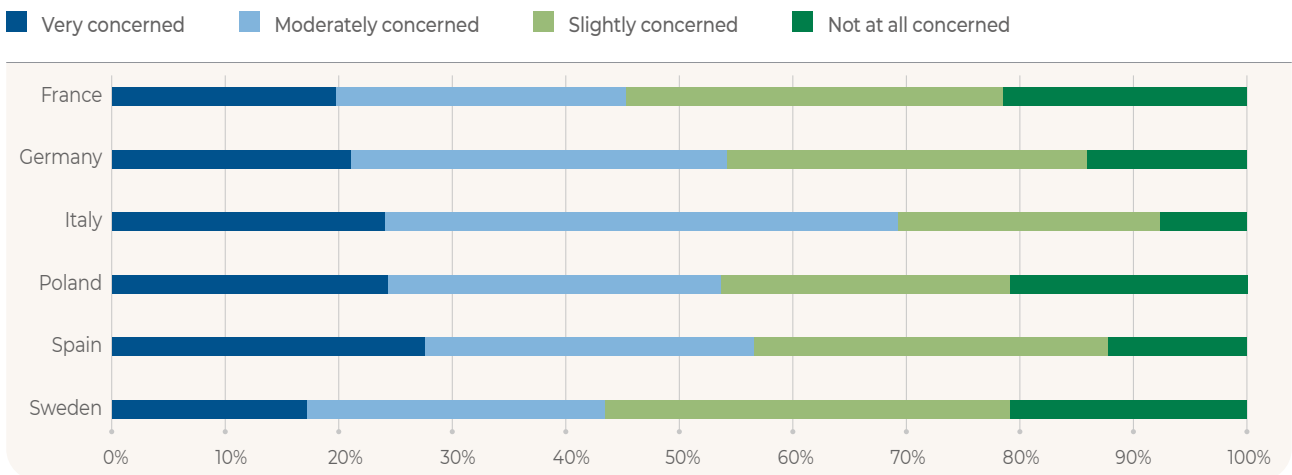


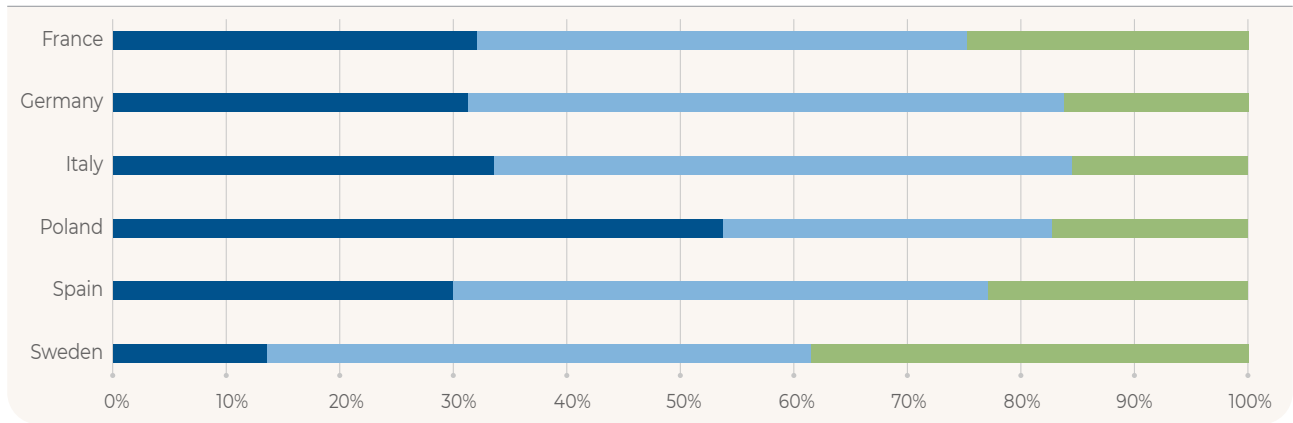
Figure 1 reveals the differences in opinion patterns across countries regarding citizens' concern with COVID-19. When it comes to the perception of the likelihood of contracting SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), it is clear that Polish respondents are the most concerned – Poland is the only country in which more than 40 per cent of respondents reported it is (moderately) likely that they will contract the virus. In all other countries, between 20 and 40 per cent of respondents say it is likely that they will contract COVID-19, with German respondents least likely to say so.

When it comes to perceptions of how dangerous SARS-CoV-2 is for respondents' health, there are more substantial differences. Spanish and Italian respondents, in particular, were most concerned that the virus would pose a danger to their health: these findings are intuitive given that these two countries were among the 'hardest hit' by the pandemic. Swedish and French respondents, on the other hand, reported the least concern about the effects the virus would have on their health. Nevertheless, close to 80 per cent or more of respondents in all countries reported feeling at least slightly concerned that the virus might pose a danger to their health.

Figure 2 – Government balance: cross-national comparison

Government balance: jobs or public health

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect public health instead of jobs
- They got the balance about right
- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect jobs instead of public health



Government balance: freedoms or public health

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to contain the pandemic that unduly restricted people's freedom
- They got the balance about right
- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to preserve people's freedom that irresponsibly worsened the public health

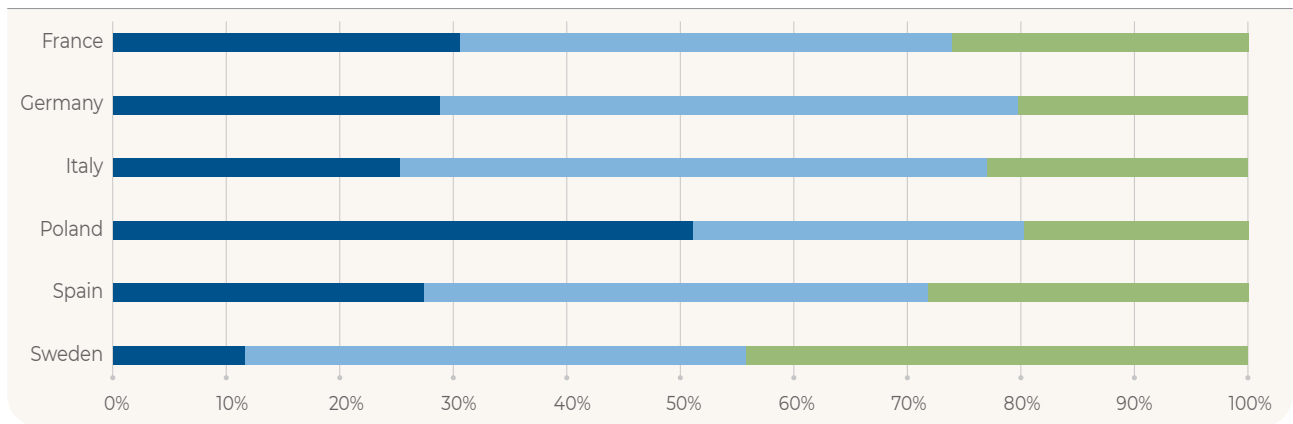


Figure 2 displays the public perception of government policies aimed at curbing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 while at the same time undermining economic performance due to large-scale business closures. Voices critical of anti-COVID-19 measures also argued that these measures undermine personal freedoms.

In all countries except for Poland, a majority of citizens reported that the government got the balance about right or has exaggerated measures to protect the economy and

personal freedoms. These results show that the public generally favoured restrictions aimed at curbing the pandemic or even thought that the measures were too relaxed. Sweden, known for its more relaxed approach compared to other European states, had a notably higher proportion of respondents saying that the government did not take sufficient measures to protect public health. In Poland, on the other hand, most respondents considered the measures to be too stringent and that they undermined employment and freedoms.

KEY FINDINGS 1

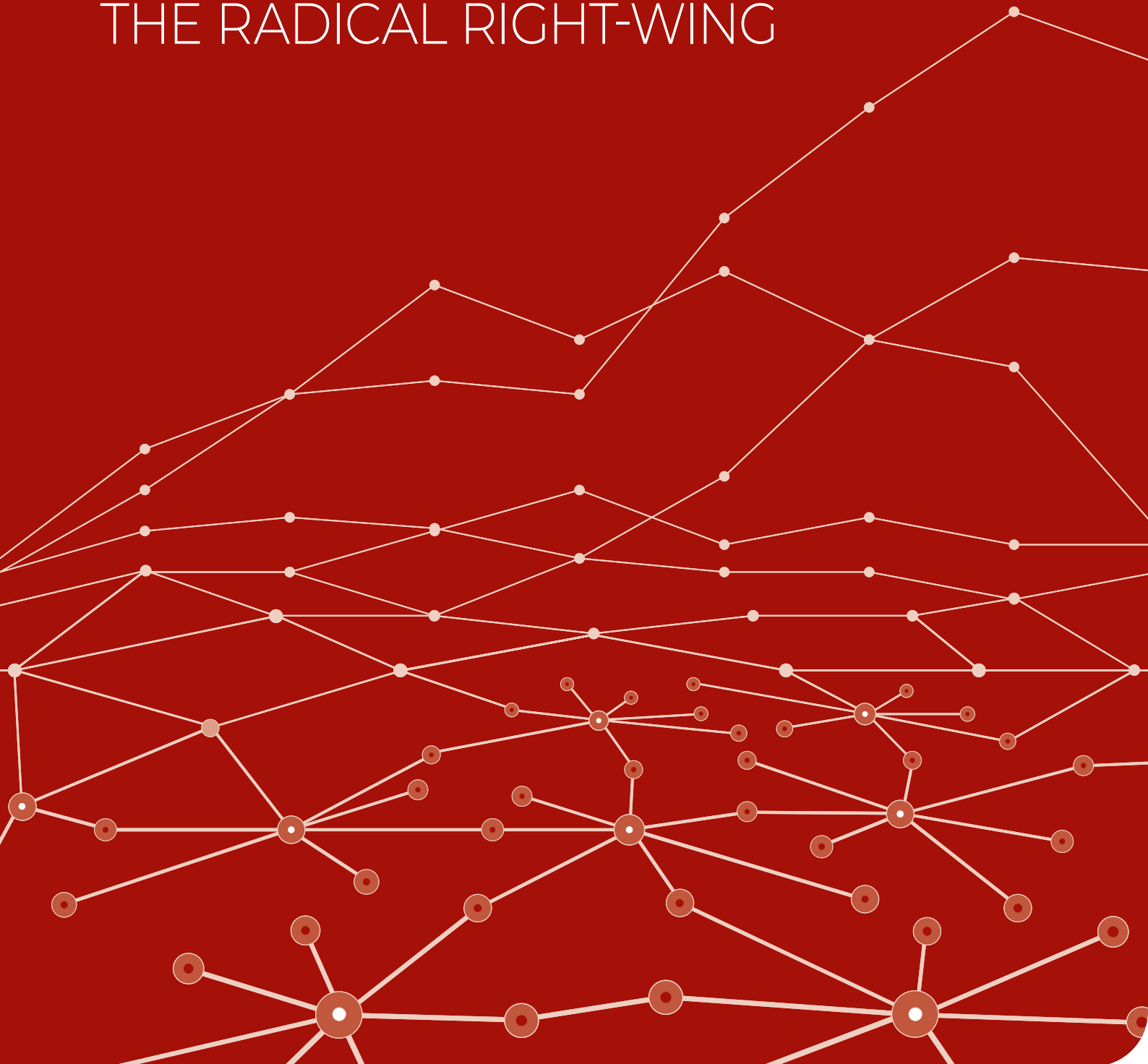
- Respondents were less concerned about contracting the virus but are worried about the effects it might have on their health once they become sick.
- Radical right party voters are least likely to be worried about getting sick.
- Opinions about whether governments took the correct approach in their handling the pandemic are polarized: some believe more should have been done to tackle the pandemic, others that the measures went too far. A substantial proportion of respondents say that the government got the balance right.
- The best party/government pandemic response remains open to interpretation. Although some sectors of society were disgruntled with the limitations implemented on access to businesses and events, the results show that these have been predominantly vocal minorities. At the same time, public support of the government has generally increased across Europe during the pandemic. This shows that despite the apparent dissatisfaction, following a science-based approach towards the pandemic is most likely to result in either maintaining or gaining additional voter support.





CHAPTER 2

THE POST-PANDEMIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGENDA: PREVENTING THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT-WING



Impact of COVID-19 on Working Conditions

The economic impact of the pandemic has been substantial, as many sectors were hit hard by the lockdowns and other restrictions. It is thus crucial to assess the effect of the pandemic on respondents' working conditions. Based on employment type, many sections of society have been negatively affected by the pandemic. This worsening of working conditions is less prominent in Germany and Sweden, which suggests that the general wealth of these countries and the quality of their welfare states mediated the pandemic's impact on working conditions and household incomes.

In all countries, except for Spain, social democratic voters were the voter groups least affected by the pandemic. This suggests that many social democratic voters apparently work in sectors that were less severely pressured by the measures aimed at curbing the number of infections. In contrast, voters of the far right, supporters of smaller parties, and green party supporters tended to report the most negative consequences of the pandemic on their working conditions.

The Economic Situation in 2021, compared to 2020

With regard to the economic situation of respondents in 2021 compared to 2020, it is clear that the economic conditions of many citizens deteriorated. These economic difficulties are more pronounced in Italy, France, and Poland. Workers in Poland were hit especially hard; nearly 60 per cent of respondents reported a decline in living standards. Again, we see that voters of smaller parties and the radical right report the strongest worsening of their economic situation. Measures aimed at helping people in economic difficulties would benefit such respondents and may shift their electoral preferences, although their mindset is more often static in their negative evaluation of politics in general. Considering that parties on the (populist) right are rarely in favour of increased public spending, social democrats have the opportunity to propose or implement policies that help the most affected.

Nevertheless, such direct welfare support often sparks debates about the 'deserving and undeserving', which is to be expected as the pandemic has had asymmetric effects on different groups in society with very negative effects on (service) sectors that also employ many minority groups. The ongoing war in Ukraine may further fuel this debate, considering the millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Europe. There is a real risk that the consequences of the pandemic and the disproportional negative effects on those who were already economically vulnerable will be politically exploited by the extreme right.

Future Economic Outlook

Many tend to be rather sceptical regarding their economic perceptions for the next year: in all countries, the proportion of respondents who believe their situation will worsen is larger than the respondents who think otherwise. Nevertheless, the largest group of respondents in all countries think that their situation will remain the same: this percentage is largest in Sweden and lowest in Poland. Social democratic voters are comparatively more positive about the upcoming 12 months, as signified by the fact that they are among the most optimistic respondents in all countries except for Sweden and Poland, where the opposite is the case.

When it comes to respondents' income situation, majorities of above 70 per cent report that they are comfortable or at least can cope with their income in Germany, Sweden, and Poland. This percentage is lower in Southern Europe (Spain, France, and Italy), which were also among the European countries hardest hit by the pandemic. This could suggest that the pandemic has increased the North (West)-South divide across the continent. Social democratic voters are among the respondents with the highest living standards in all countries, except for Sweden. These and previous findings indicate that support for the centre-left is often strongly associated with personal wellbeing, not with personal hardship or unemployment. Social democracy is a movement of voter groups who do not necessarily need the state to support them personally but are nevertheless more altruistically inclined and desire to alleviate the economic hardship of fellow citizens. While social democratic parties have always been 'catch-all parties' with substantial middle-class support, there is clearly a decline in support from the most economically precarious working classes. Many within the most precarious social segments of societies have cast their political fate with extremist movements on the right and left (an issue we address in the section on party competition).

Homeownership

Homeownership can be used as an indirect measurement of income and financial status; it is often perceived as a way to feel more economically secure and can lead to intergenerational wealth. Especially in Western Europe, owning a home is equivalent to achieving a higher social status. It can lead to more financial security and access to capital. Figure 21 (p. 74) reveals the degree of homeownership in the 6 countries included in this study, with German and Swedish citizens being least likely to own a home outright (although these countries also have good social housing in the rental sector). Respondents in Poland and Italy are most likely to be homeowners; however, there are wide disparities in housing markets, house prices, and quality across the countries in this study. In Sweden, for example, many respondents reported owning a house under a mortgage. It is important to keep these structural housing market differences in mind when interpreting survey results.

When it comes to party preferences, the results suggest that voters of centre-right and liberal parties are most likely to own a home. Spain and Italy are exceptions; in these countries, the voters of social democratic parties are most likely to own their homes outright. This suggests that social democratic voters are on higher steps of the economic ladder in these two countries in comparison to the same voter group elsewhere. In contrast, left-wing voters in France and Poland are least likely to be homeowners. Providing social housing and increasing homeownership is already becoming crucial issues in elections across Europe. Many urban areas are experiencing steep increases in real estate prices, making homeownership for young families highly problematic. Responses to this situation by the centre-left will very much determine whether lower-class and middle-class voters will support social democratic parties. It is clear that access to affordable housing appeals to the population at large.

* For detailed graphics on chapter 2 see Annex pp. 68–75.

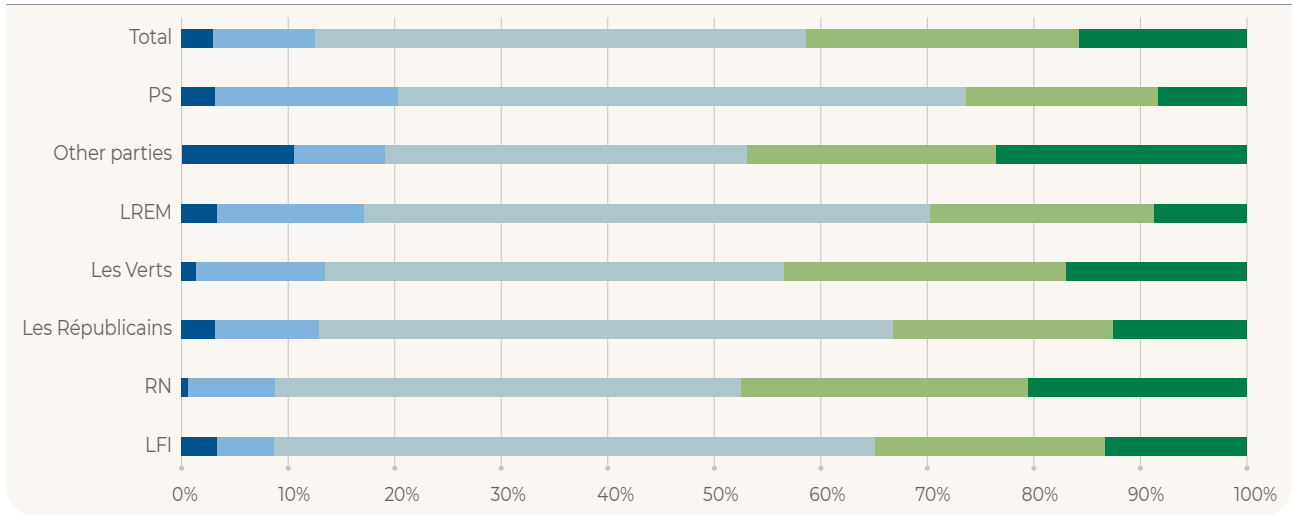


Figure 3 – Changes in Economic Situation between 2020 and 2021

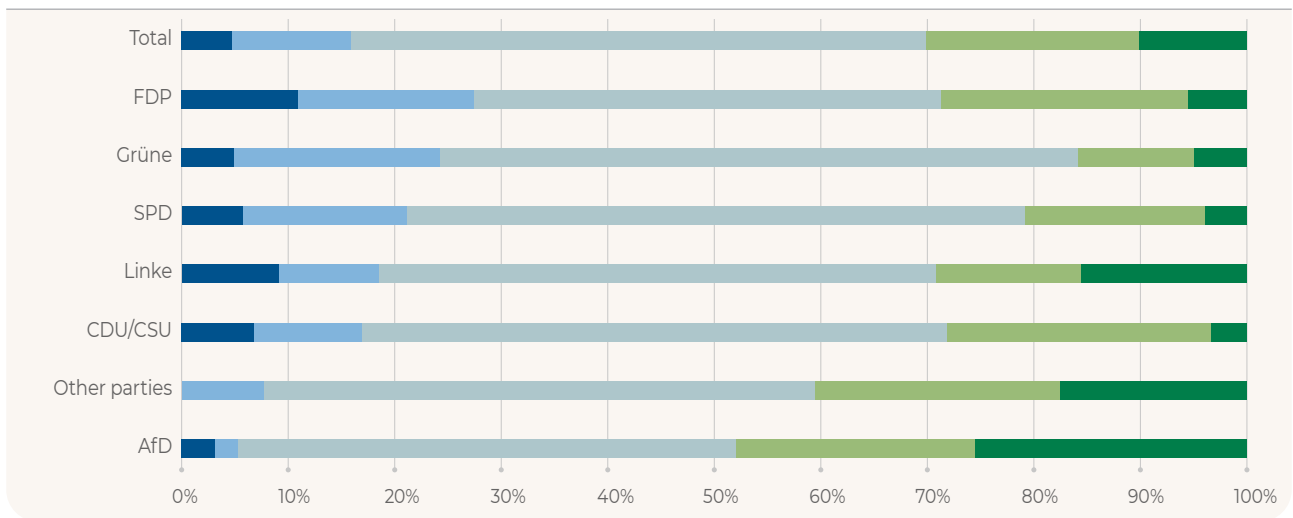
Compared to the end of 2020, do you think that your own economic situation ...

■ Got a lot better
 ■ Got a little better
 ■ Stayed the same
 ■ Got a little worse
 ■ Got a lot worse

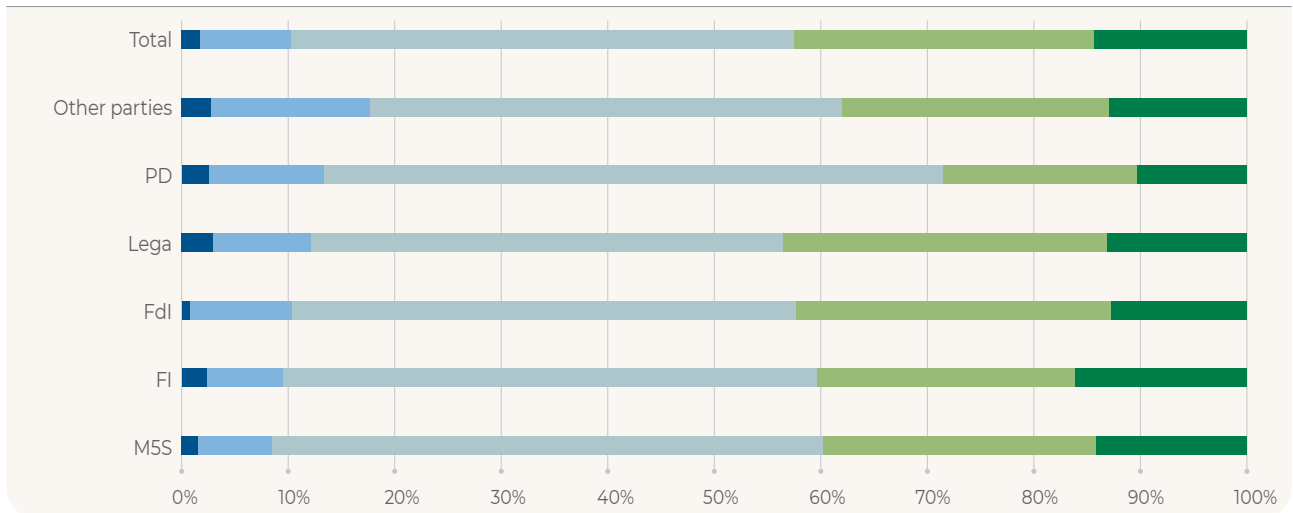
FRANCE



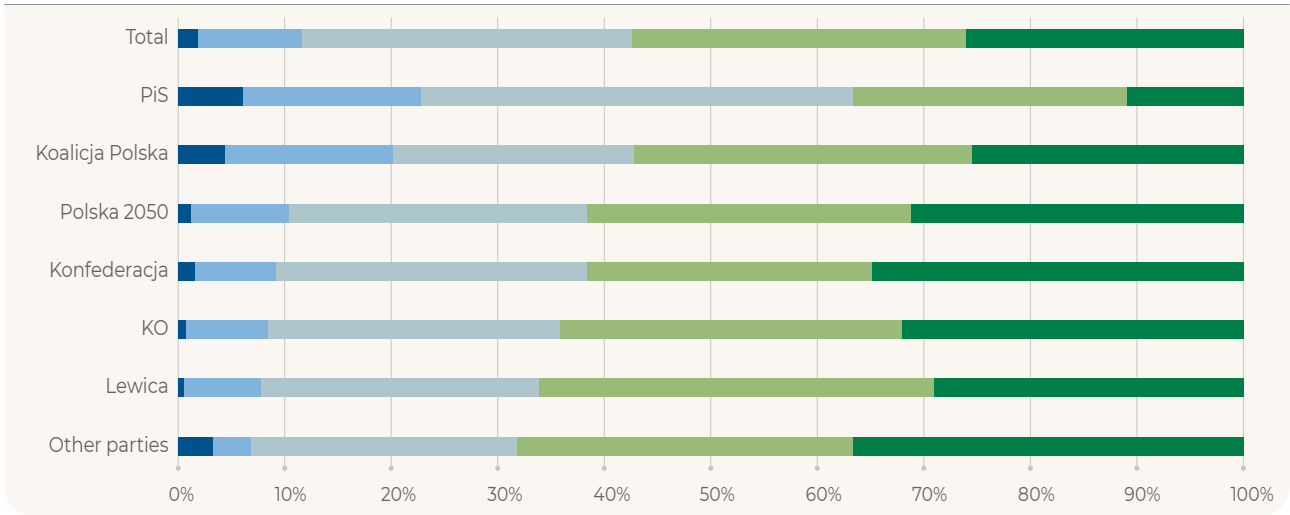
GERMANY



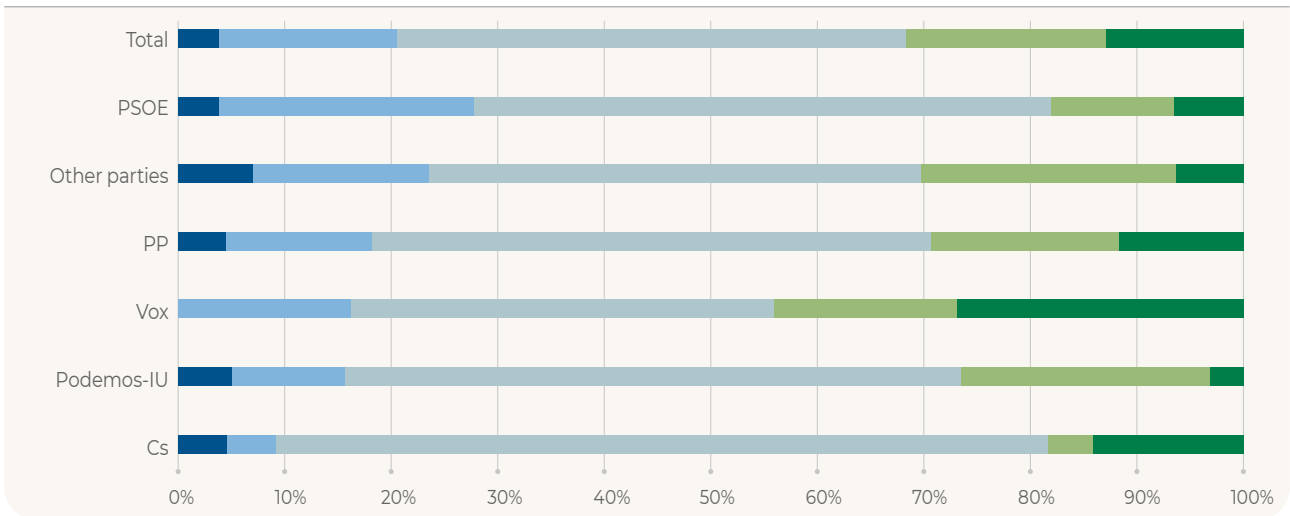
ITALY



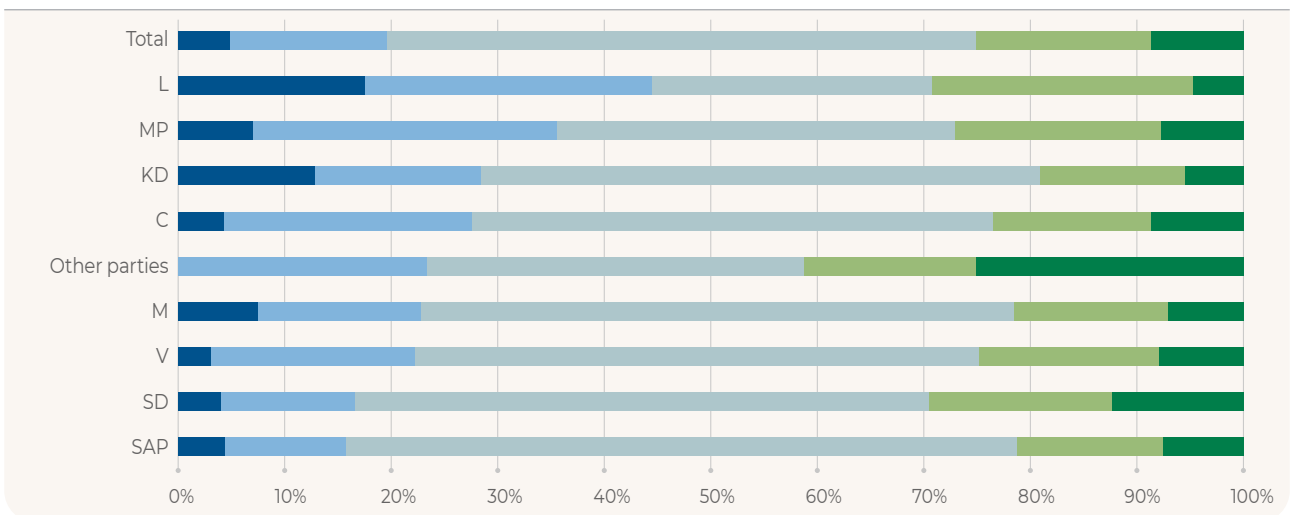
 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN



KEY FINDINGS 2

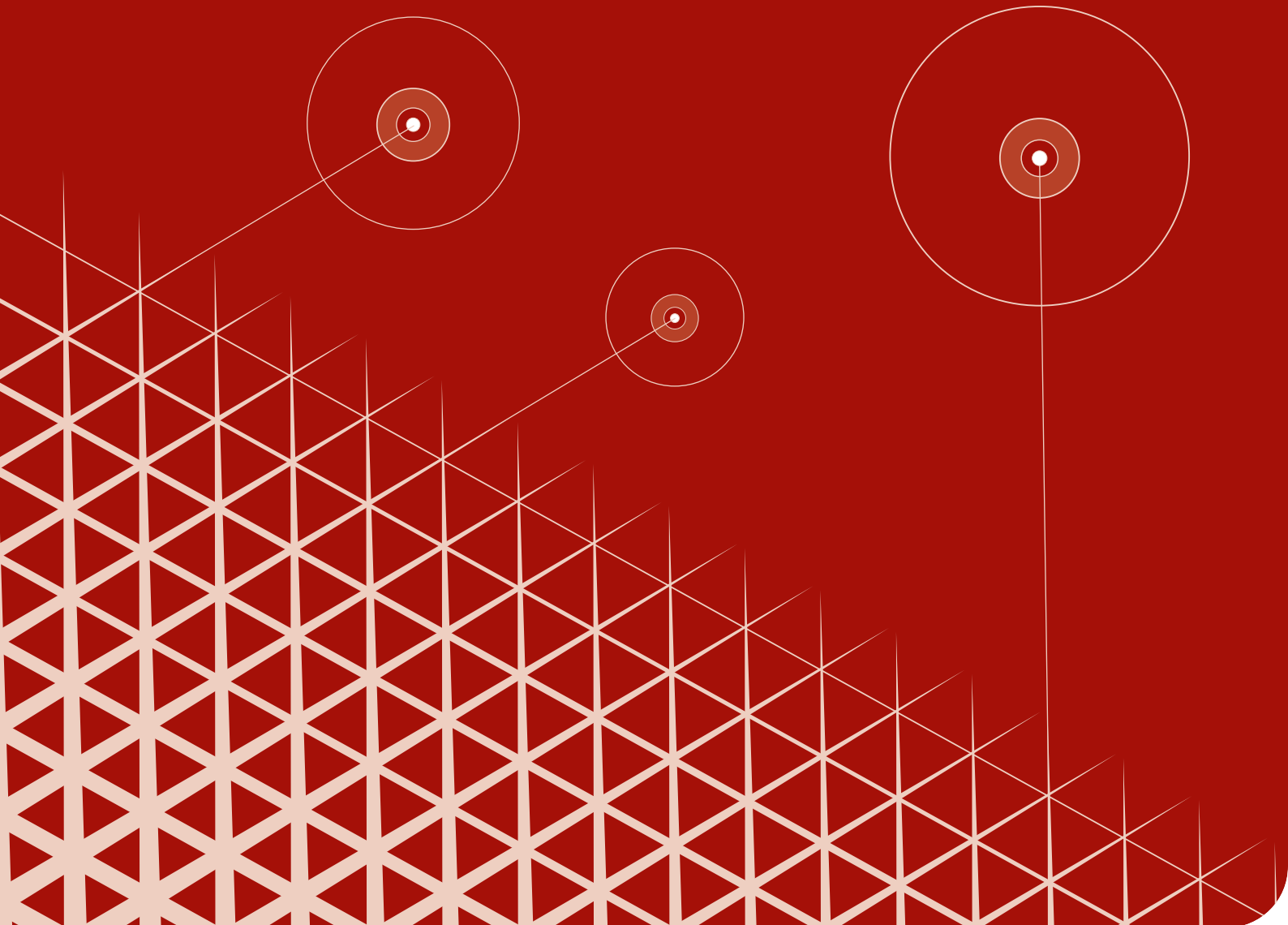
- Although the majority of respondents report that their working conditions and economic situation remained the same during the pandemic, the proportion of those negatively affected is substantial.
- Voters of radical right parties report the largest degree of economic deterioration. Economic difficulties are a known factor contributing to the increased support of the far right.
- Social democratic voters were among the respondent groups least negatively affected by the pandemic which suggest they have good employment conditions and are generally higher on the economic ladder compared to the average respondent.
- While centre-right voters were the most likely to own a home overall, social democratic voters were the most likely to be homeowners in Spain and Italy.





CHAPTER 3

THE GRAND EXPECTATIONS,
THE EU AND THE STATE: DELIVERING
ON THE HOPES FOR MORE AND
BETTER PUBLIC POLICIES



EU Membership

Ever since Brexit, Europeans have been anxious if there was to be anyone else to follow and leave the Union. Perceptions of European Union membership show low support for the EU and widespread indifference, wherein EU membership is seen as neither good nor bad. Even though in all countries included in this study, the largest proportion of respondents view EU membership positively, this proportion is lower than 50 per cent in Sweden, France, and Italy. In these three countries, the proportion of respondents who think that their country's EU membership is a bad thing is also larger than in Germany, Spain, and Poland.

Still, social democratic voters were among the voter groups most supportive of their country's EU membership — a pattern we also discerned in a study during the 2019 European Elections. It is important to keep in mind that in all analysed countries, the proportion of people who expressed ambivalence about EU membership is larger than those who were negative about it. Policymakers should be cautious towards this ambivalence, as it might easily shift to pure Euroscepticism if the economic conditions deteriorate further.

Economic Regulation by the State

In what can be interpreted as positive news for social democrats, more than 60 per cent of respondents in all countries in this comparative study agree that the state should play a greater role in economic regulation. This result is most striking in France, Italy, and Spain. As can be expected, in all countries, voters of the moderate and radical left agree most with this proposition, while right-wing voters are more likely to object to economic state intervention. Incumbency matters: this pattern differs in Poland, where voters for the governing Law and Justice party (PiS) are very supportive of state intervention in the economy, despite the fact that the PiS is generally seen as a right-wing party in its economic orientation. While voters of far-right and liberal parties were the most likely to oppose economic regulation, more than half of them also agreed that the state should play a greater role in regulating the economy. It is interesting to note that these proportions of positive evaluation of states playing an active role in economic life provide a fertile ground for centre-left politics. Generous state support for sectors and citizens that were negatively impacted by the pandemic was effective and popular. Needless to say, after the pandemic, governments will feel the need to 'balance the books'; however, the war in Ukraine and the resulting increase in energy prices could mean that governments will keep maintaining a Keynesian economic strategy.

Institutional Trust and Likelihood to Vote for the Social Democrats

Figure 23 (p. 78) reveals the relationship between the likelihood of voting for the social democrats and indices measuring various political concepts. The punctured lines in the graphs show whether there is a positive or negative correlation between each index and the propensity to vote (PTV) for the social democrats. The PTV is generated by asking how likely it is that a respondent will ever vote for a social democratic party, measured on a scale from 0 = "Would never vote for party" to 10 = "Would certainly vote for party". The indices are constructed by combining sever-

al questions that measure the same underlying concept, as measured by means of factor analyses and reliability analyses. The blue dots in each graph reveal the average score of respondents who answered with each of the 11 points of the PTV scale for the institutional trust index.

Accordingly, Figure 23 reveals the relationship between the PTV for social democratic parties and institutional trust. The results show that, in all countries, there is a positive correlation between the likelihood of voting for the social democrats and institutional trust, revealing that social democratic voters and sympathisers are among the most institutionally trustful citizens in their respective countries.

In all countries except for Poland, trust increased with each point of vote propensity increase for the social democrats. In Poland, those most likely to vote for Nowa Lewica have low political trust, yet there is still a positive correlation between the two variables.

The index measuring political trust consists of numerous national institutions: the national parliament, regional and local government, the police, the healthcare system, the judicial system, as well as the European Union. Although these are different institutions, statistical analyses confirmed that the index they form measures the same underlying concept, meaning that if a respondent evaluates one institution in a certain way, they are very likely to evaluate all other institutions the same way. In other words, there is a very strong correlation between the answers to all institutional trust questions. The analysis of the correlation between the voting propensity for the social democrats and each individual institution is presented in this report's appendix.

Evaluations of Institutional Responses to the Pandemic

Figure 5 below compares the evaluation of institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across countries. The various institutional evaluation questions were asked on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 = completely negative evaluation to 10 = completely positive evaluation.

The results report the average evaluation (mean value) per country. On average, respondents evaluated their national healthcare systems the most positively compared to all other listed institutions (a score higher than 6), whereas they were critical of their government's efforts to protect the economy (this was the only question where the average score was lower than 5). Italians, Germans, and the French are most satisfied with their governments. The results make it clear that Poles are the least satisfied with the institutional responses to the pandemic at both the national and the local levels. Only when it comes to their evaluation of the EU did Polish voters score higher than German voters, who were least positive about the EU in this study.

* For detailed graphics on chapter 3 see Annex pp. 76–91.

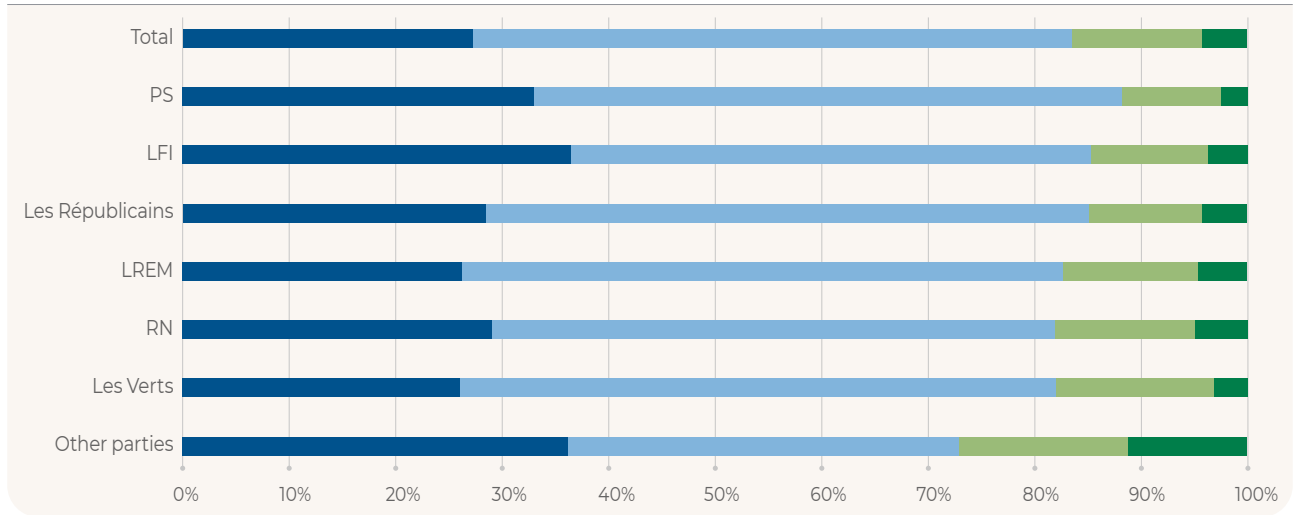


Figure 4 – Economic Regulation by the State

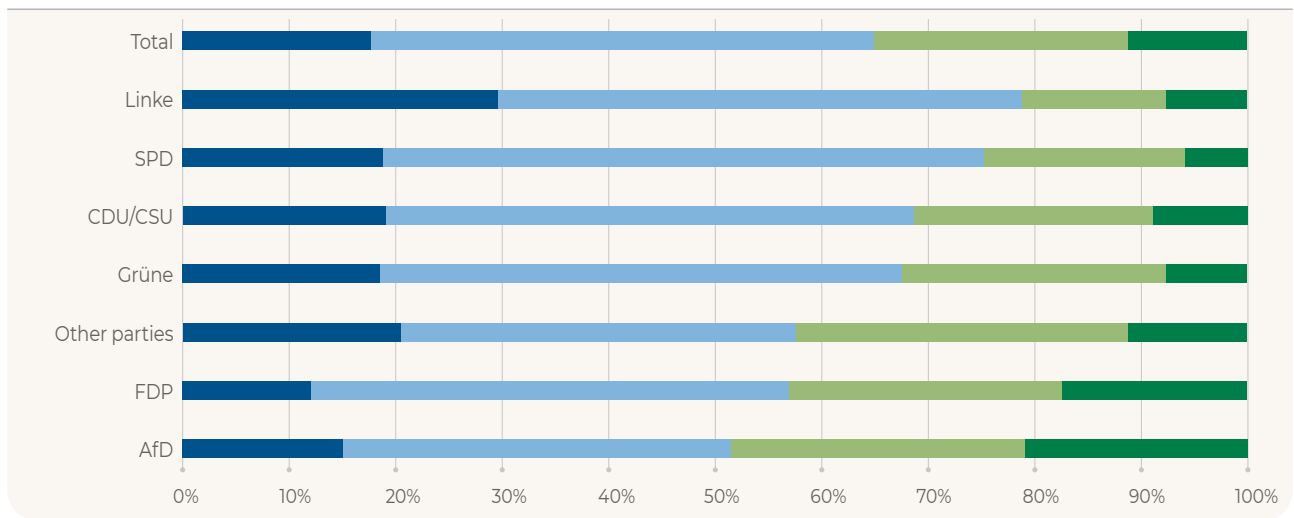
“The state should play a greater role in the regulation of the economy”

■ Agree strongly
 ■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Disagree strongly

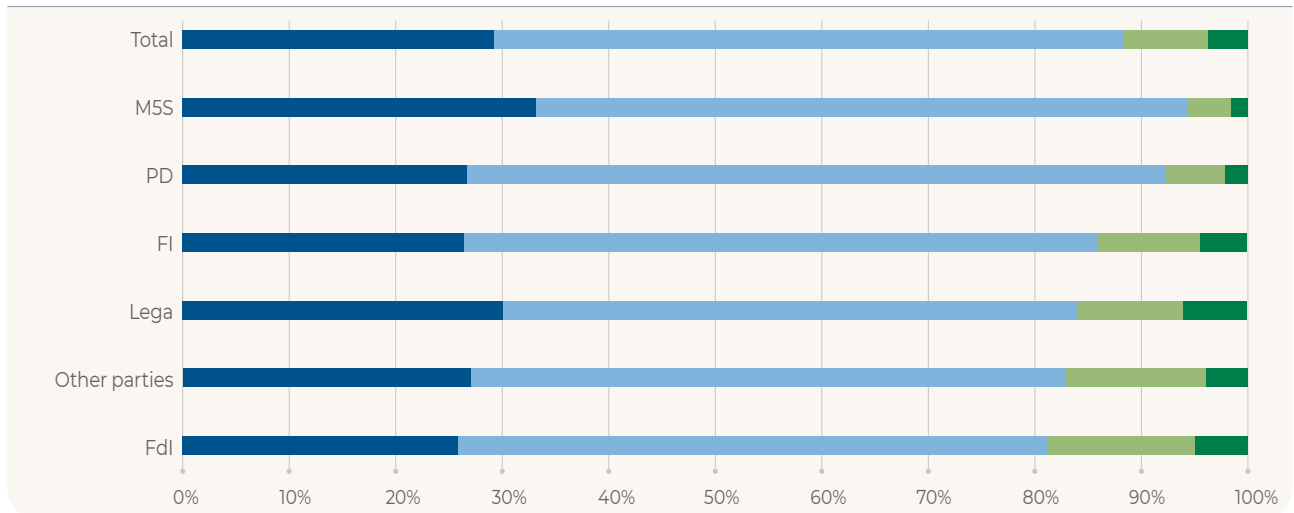
FRANCE



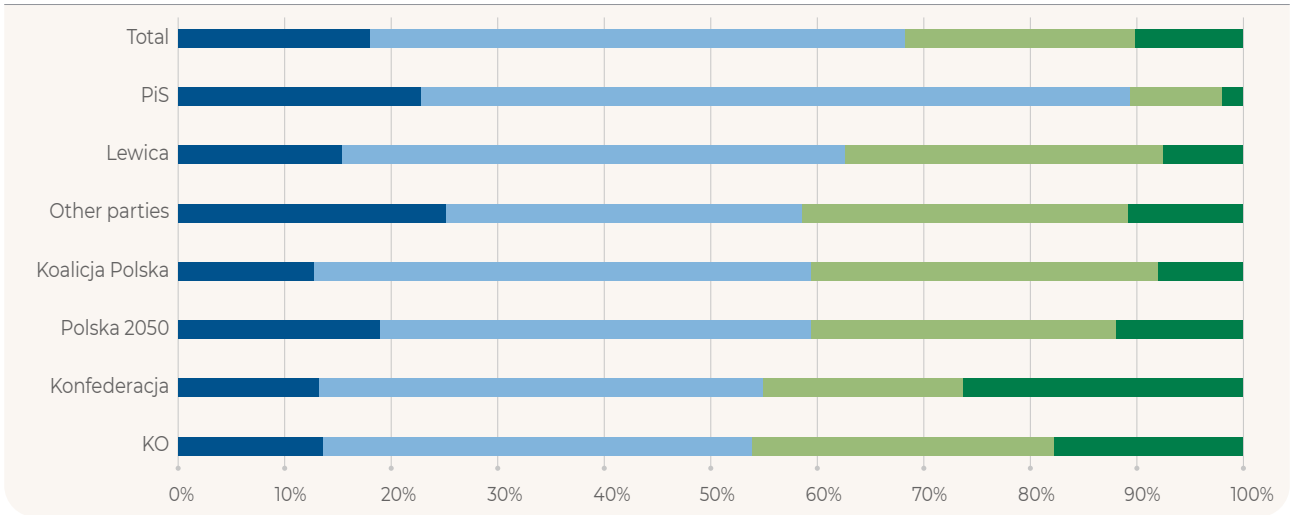
GERMANY



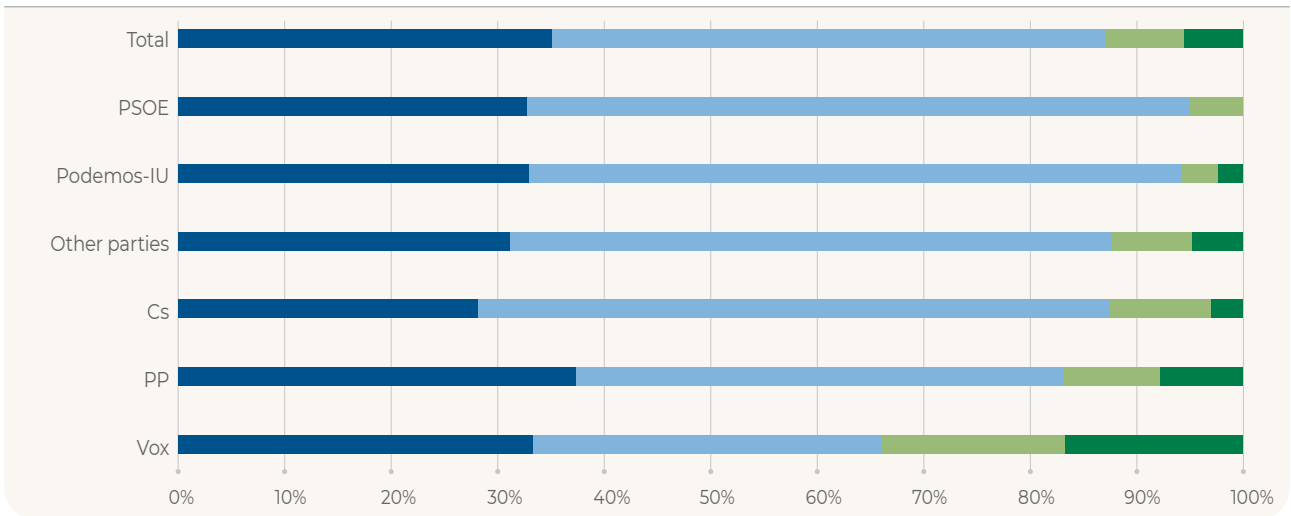
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

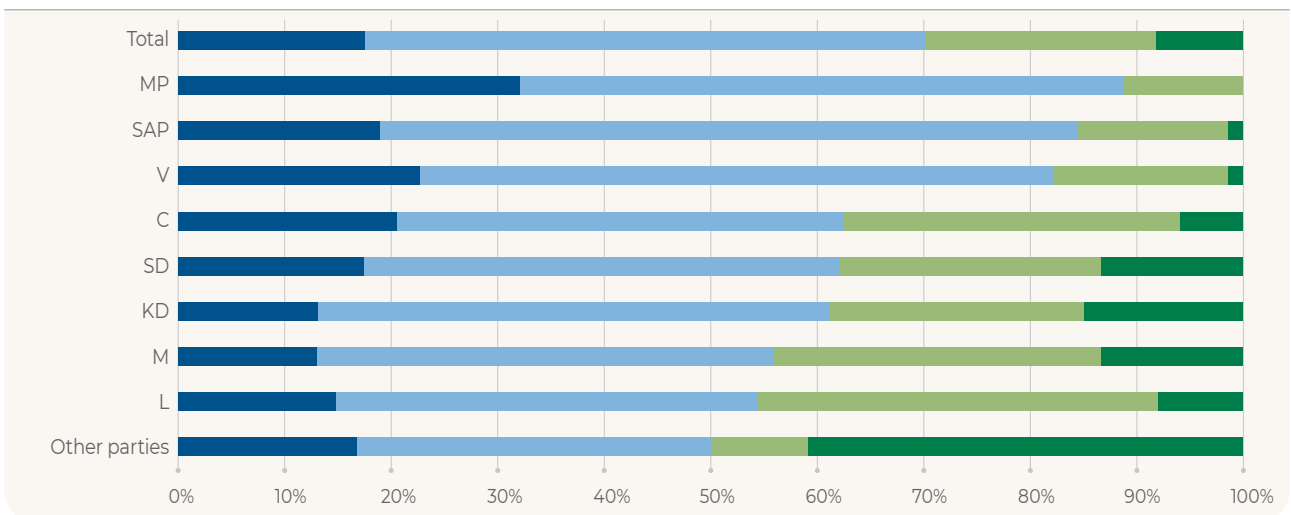
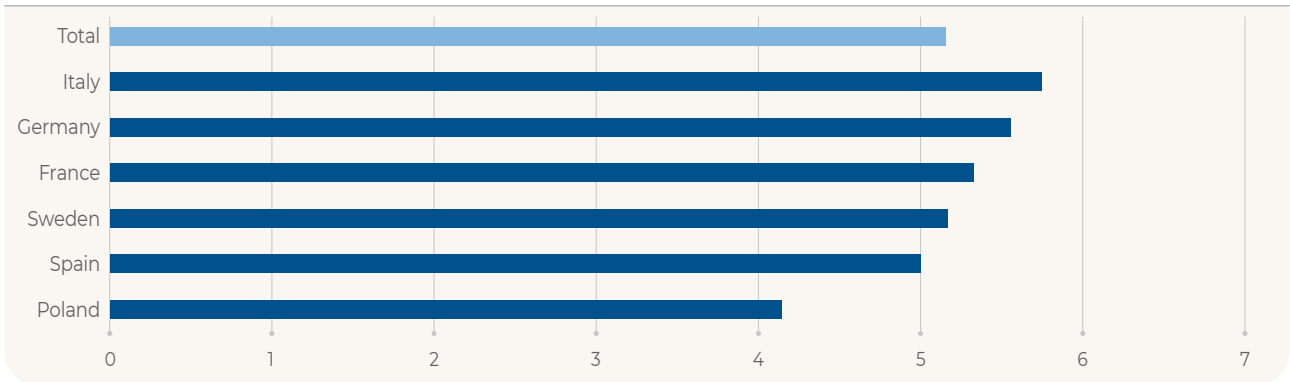




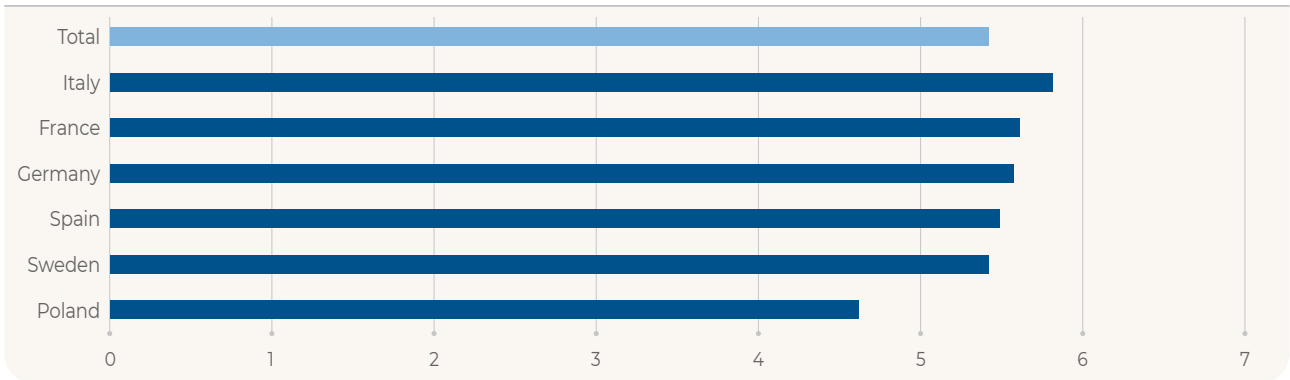
Figure 5 – Evaluation of institutional responses to the pandemic: cross-national comparison

0 = completely negative 10 = completely positive

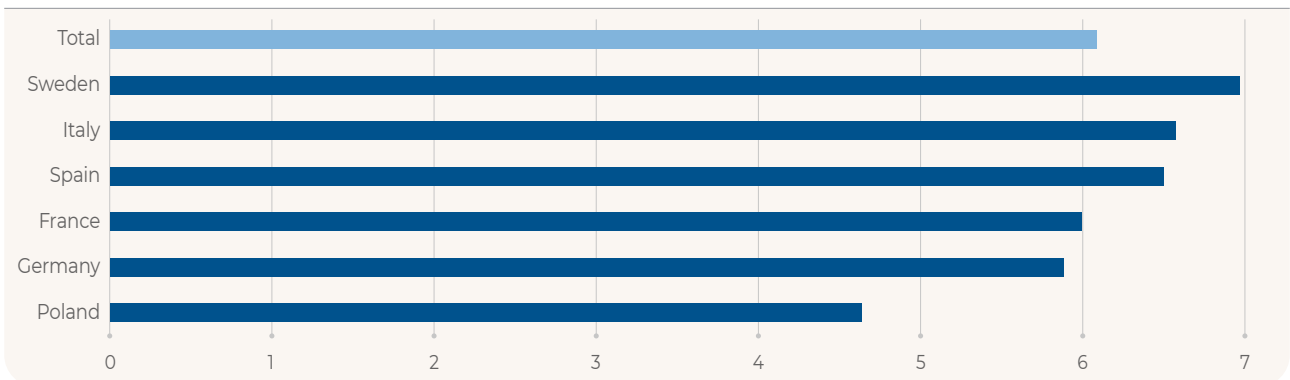
Evaluation of national government's measures against COVID-19



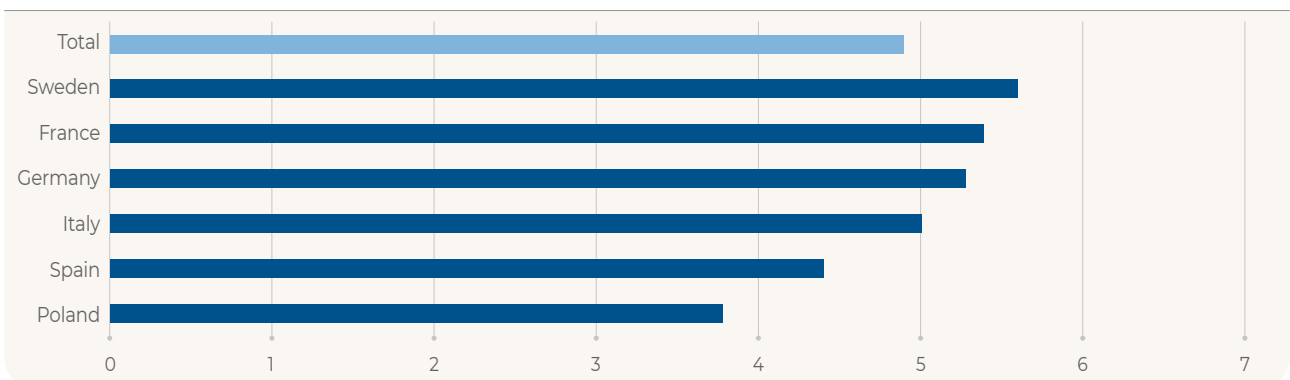
Evaluation of local government's measures against COVID-19



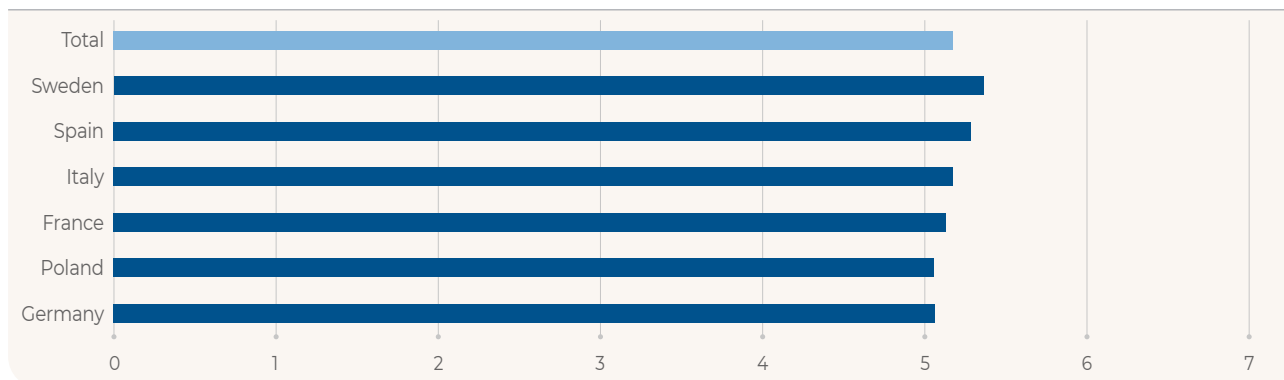
Evaluation of national healthcare system response to COVID-19



Evaluation of national government's efforts to protect the economy



Evaluation of European Union's efforts to protect the economy



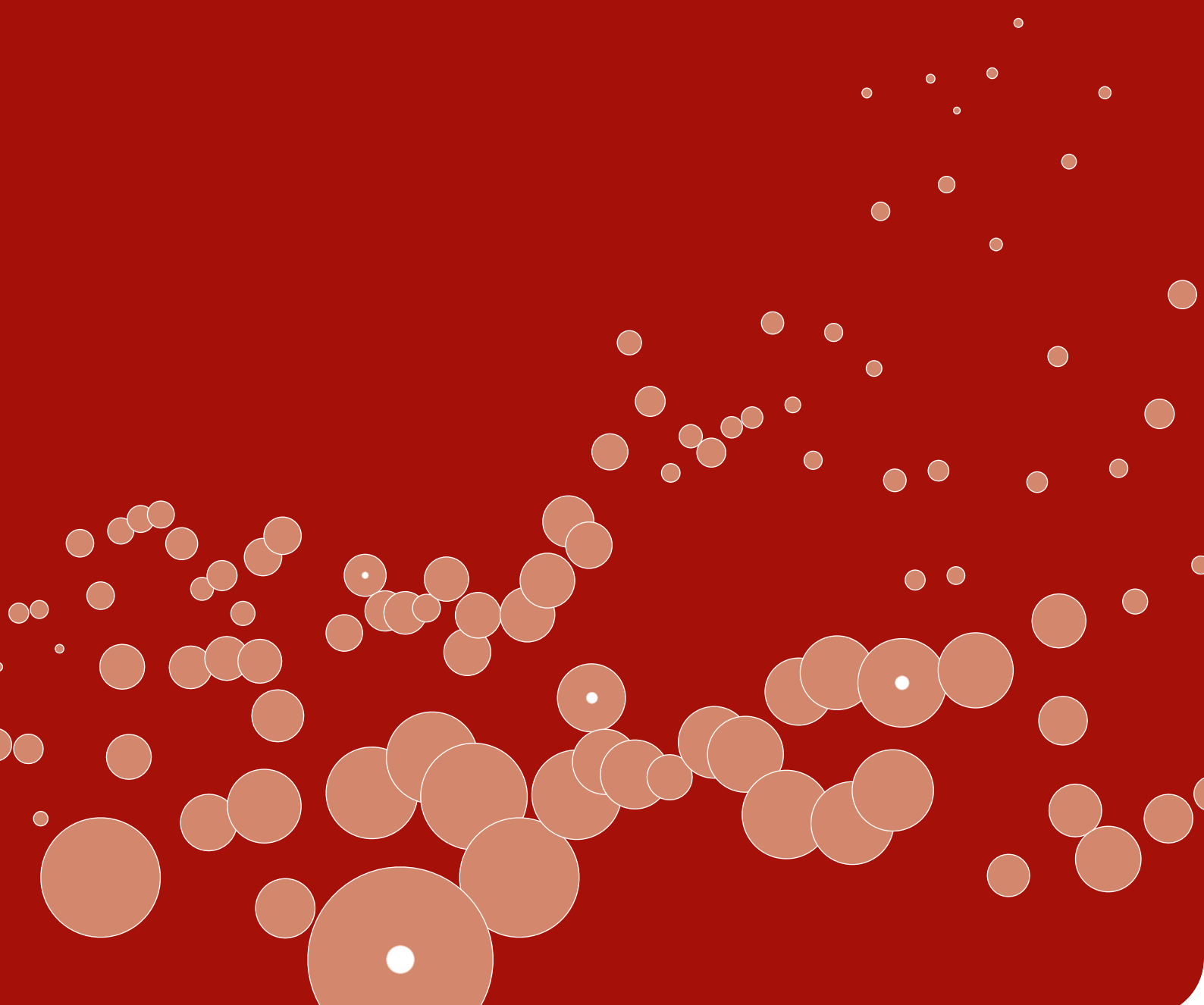
KEY FINDINGS 3

- Although public opinions towards the EU are predominantly positive, a large fraction of European citizens is ambivalent towards the Union. This points that there is a realistic possibility of support for the EU deteriorating further. Social democratic voters are some of the voters most supportive of the EU.
- Large sections of the European electorate support increasing their state's role in economic regulation – an opportunity for the centre-left. Nevertheless, given that the data was collected in the context of a pandemic where public spending increased to support businesses in hardship, it is possible that voters will be less supportive of economic regulation in the post-pandemic period.
- When it comes to institutional trust, it is clear that there is a positive correlation between the likelihood to vote for the social democrats and higher institutional trust. Striving to improve the living conditions and education level of citizens could potentially increase support for social democrats. Such measures should largely benefit disaffected citizens, as this could result in withdrawal of support for the far right.
- Although citizens are rather positive about their country's healthcare system response to the pandemic, they have little support for their government's efforts to protect the economy. In fact, the EU's efforts to protect the economy are seen more positively than measures taken by the national government. Nevertheless, both national and local institutions are not seen in a very positive light when it comes to handling the pandemic. Lessons of what policies were implemented should be considered, so that different policies can be implemented in the future.



CHAPTER 4

THE CHALLENGE TO RECONNECT: OVERCOMING THE POLITICAL AMBIGUITY AMONG CITIZENS



Ideology

With regard to political ideology (Figure 6), there is a clear pattern showing that the political fringes represent a very small proportion of each country's population. The respondents who identify as radical left or radical right do not exceed 10 per cent in any of the countries included in this comparative study. Contrary to the often-dominant extremist voices on social media, where a lot of attention is attributed to issues promoted by political fringes, in real life, political radicalism still remains rather marginal. At the same time, there is a growing number of citizens that do not identify with either side of the left-right divide.

These 'no ideology' respondents are present within the electorates of each political party and are the largest proportion of respondents in France, Poland, and Italy. Nevertheless, social democrat parties do not appear to be popular among such voters, who instead can be found supporting small parties and the radical populist right parties. These de-ideologised respondents normally have less overall education and find themselves in more precarious economic predicaments, which may lead to their disinterest in ideological positioning. Social democrats rely predominantly on moderate, centre-left voters. Considering that respondents with higher education and good jobs tend to be ideologically moderate, social democrats could appeal to this group by expanding access to (higher) education and improved labour opportunities. As was shown earlier, the pitfall is that even with good jobs, it is becoming increasingly difficult to afford good housing in urban areas, creating a very broad 'squeezed middle' of hard-working people in precarious financial situations. Combatting such 'in-work precariousness' should be at the forefront of social democratic concerns.

Education

In terms of education (Figure 7), the data suggests that people with middle levels of education are the largest group in society. Even though social democrats rely on a substantial proportion of highly educated voters, their voter base is also predominantly middle-educated. Overall, supporters of moderate centrist parties are more likely to have more education, while the populist far right is appealing most to more practical and less educated voters.

The social rift that was discussed earlier, wherein economically precarious citizens with less education working in service sectors had the highest risk of contracting COVID-19 during the pandemic while highly educated people with better working and living conditions had a much lower risk of getting sick, has deepened economic disparities during the pandemic. The combination of economic vulnerability, greater health risks at work, and worse housing conditions creates a segment of society that does not feel supported by state institutions and mainstream, moderate political forces. Despite very effective state intervention and support for precarious groups during the pandemic, extremist and populist forces have successfully exploited the anxieties and fears of these disadvantaged groups. On top of that, these populists have pushed conspiracies and anti-science propaganda to undermine the measures to prevent COVID-19 infections.

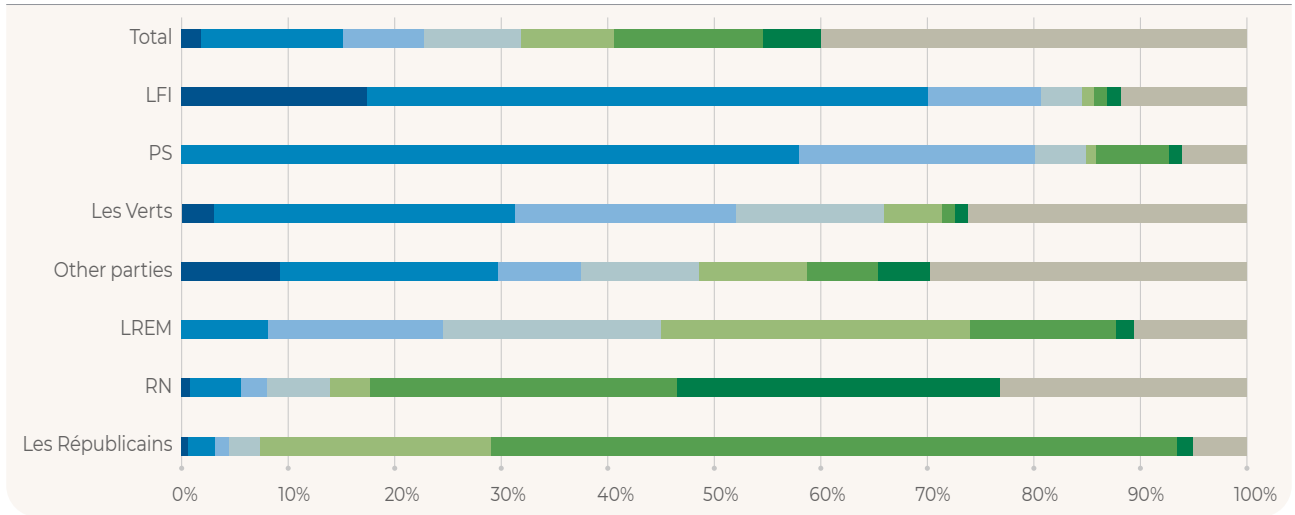


Figure 6 – Political ideology

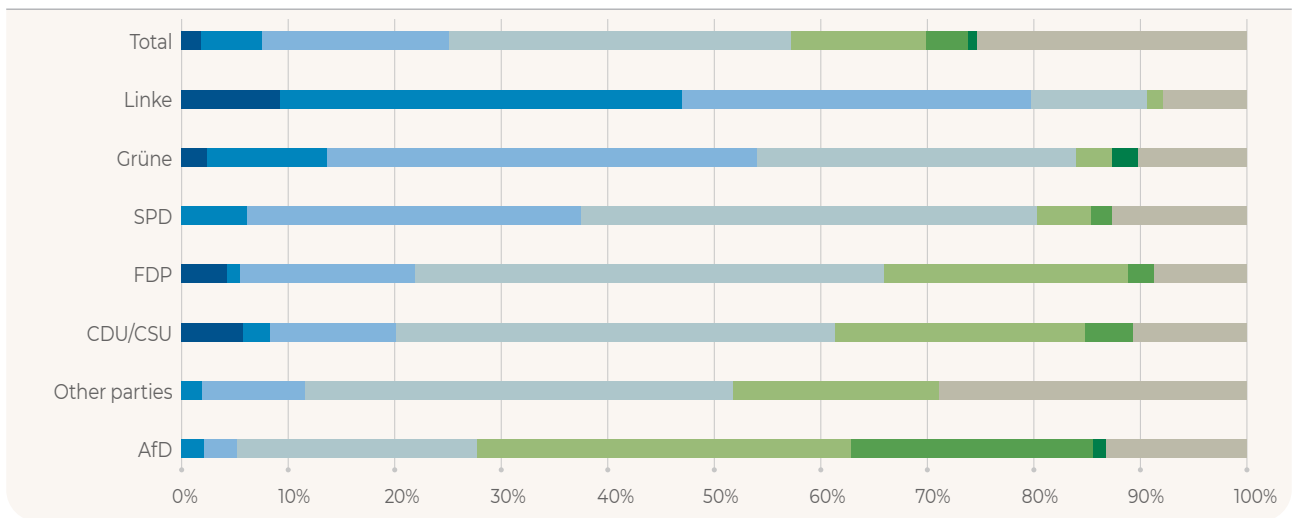
Consider the following labels. Which one best expresses the way you define yourself politically?

■ Radical Left
 ■ Left
 ■ Center-Left
 ■ Center
 ■ Center-Right
 ■ Right
 ■ Radical Right
 ■ None of these

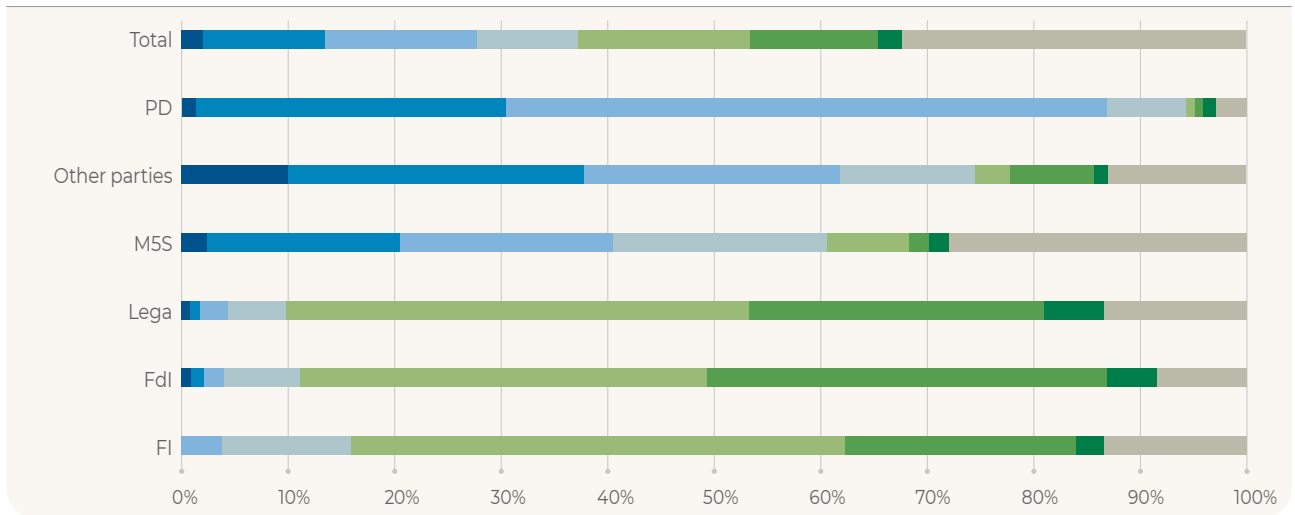
FRANCE



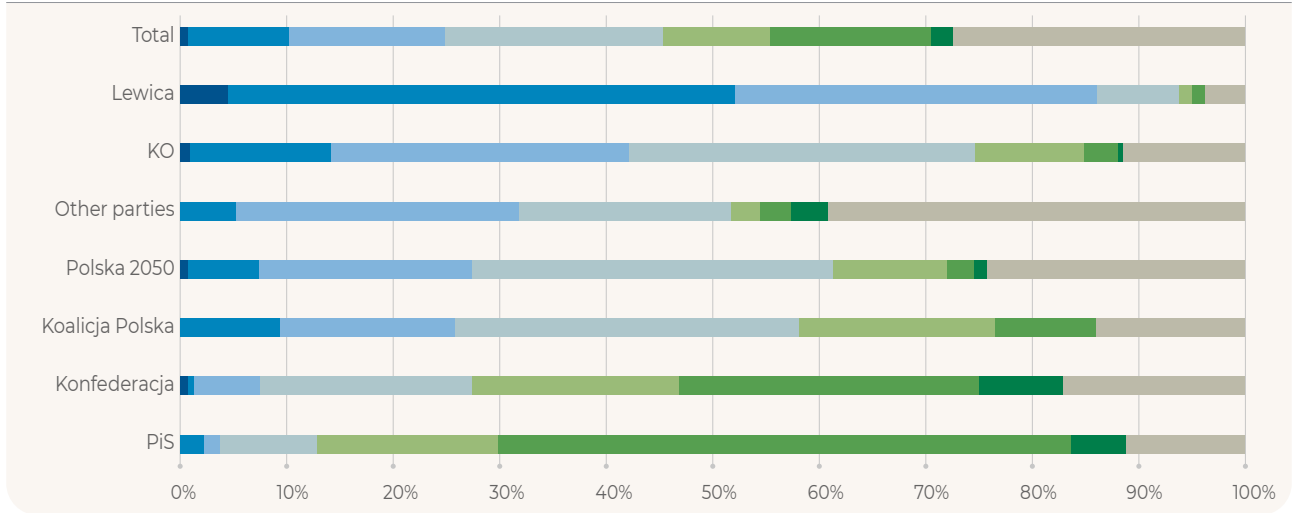
GERMANY



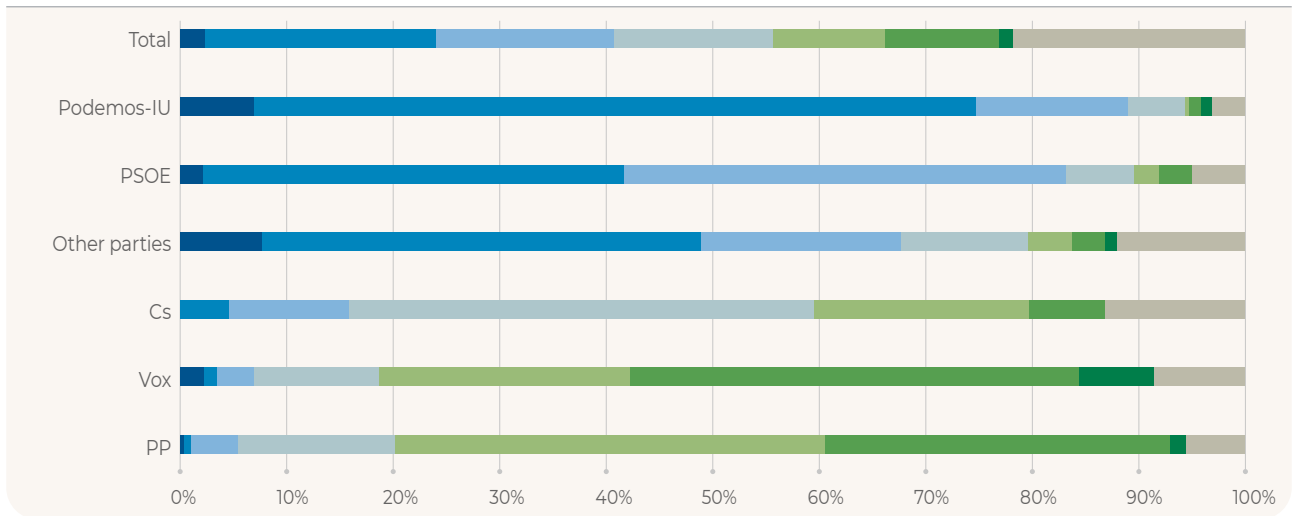
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

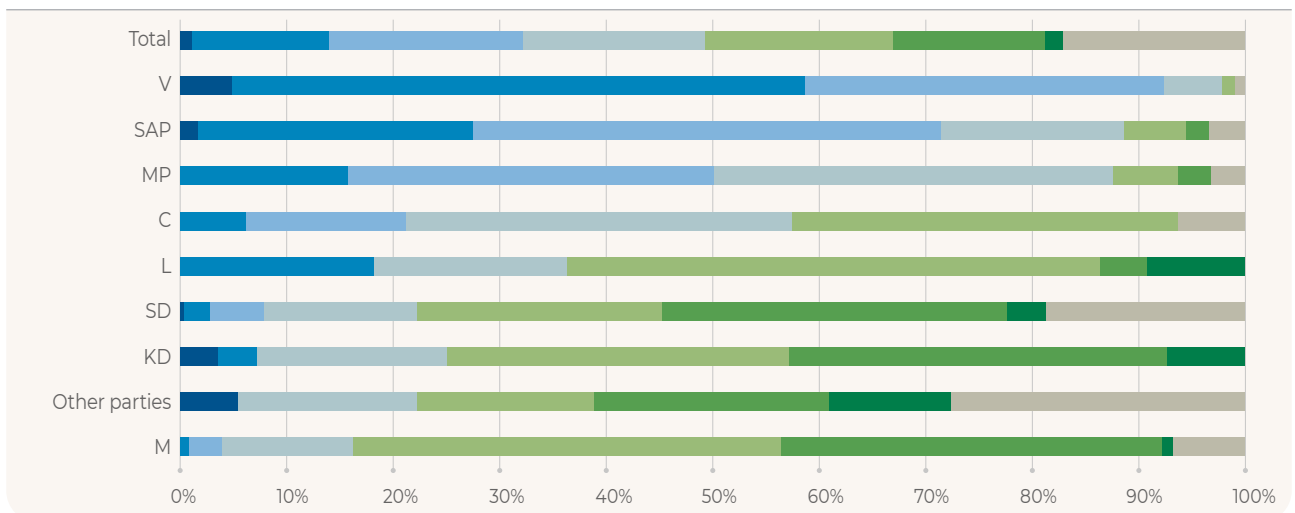
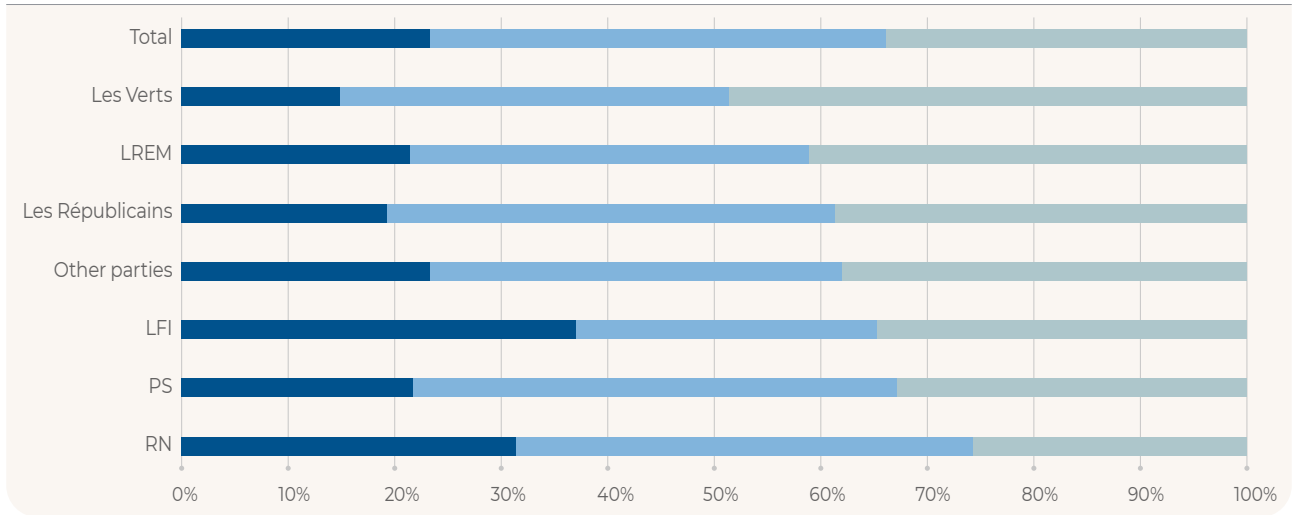




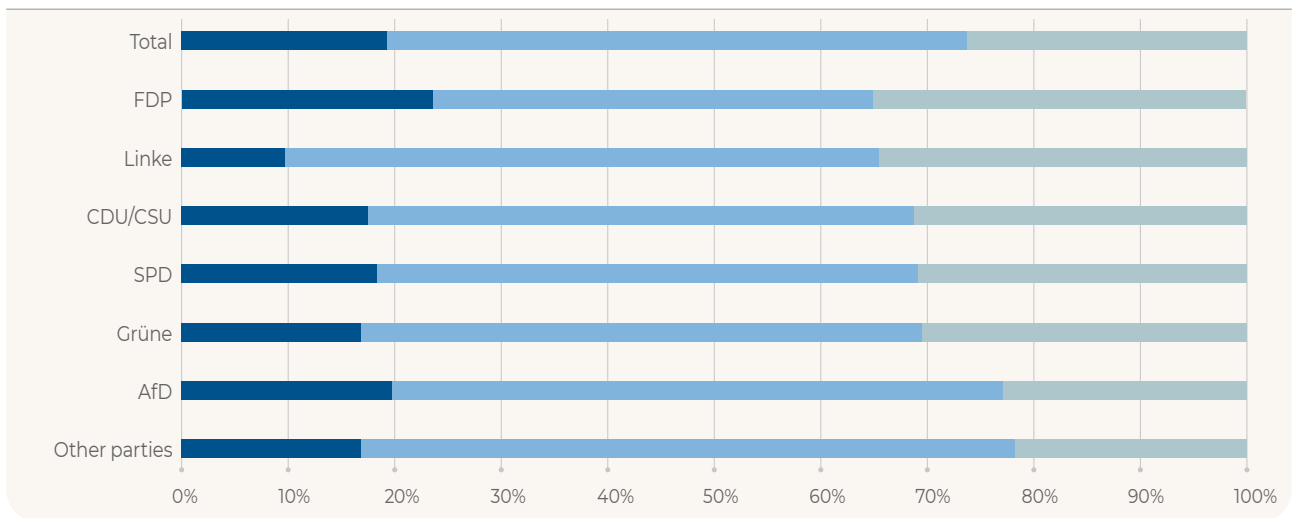
Figure 7 – Education

Low education Middle education High education

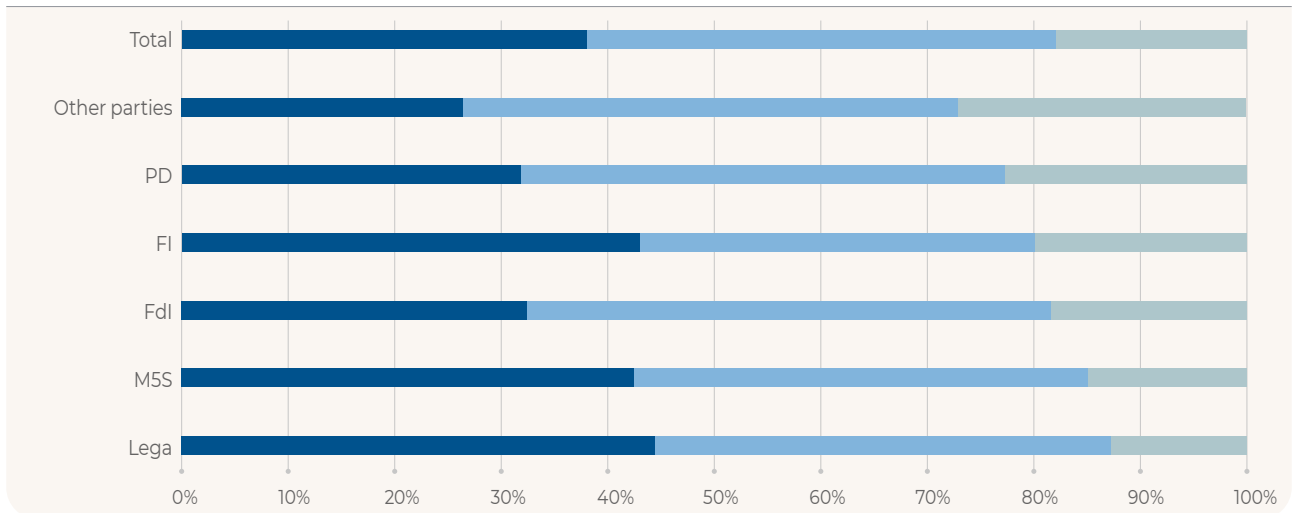
FRANCE



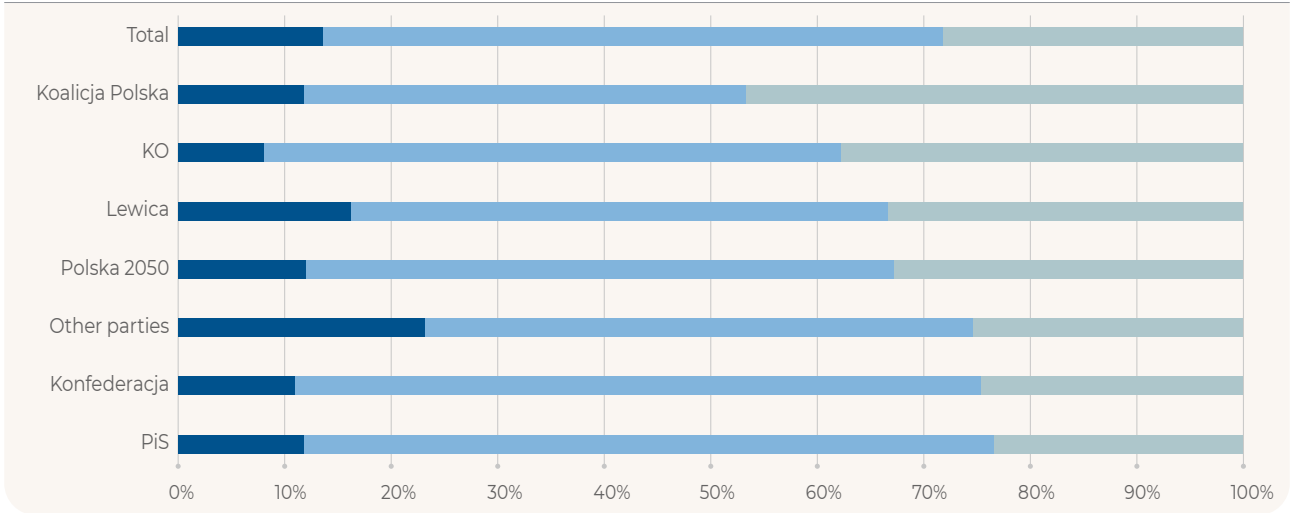
GERMANY



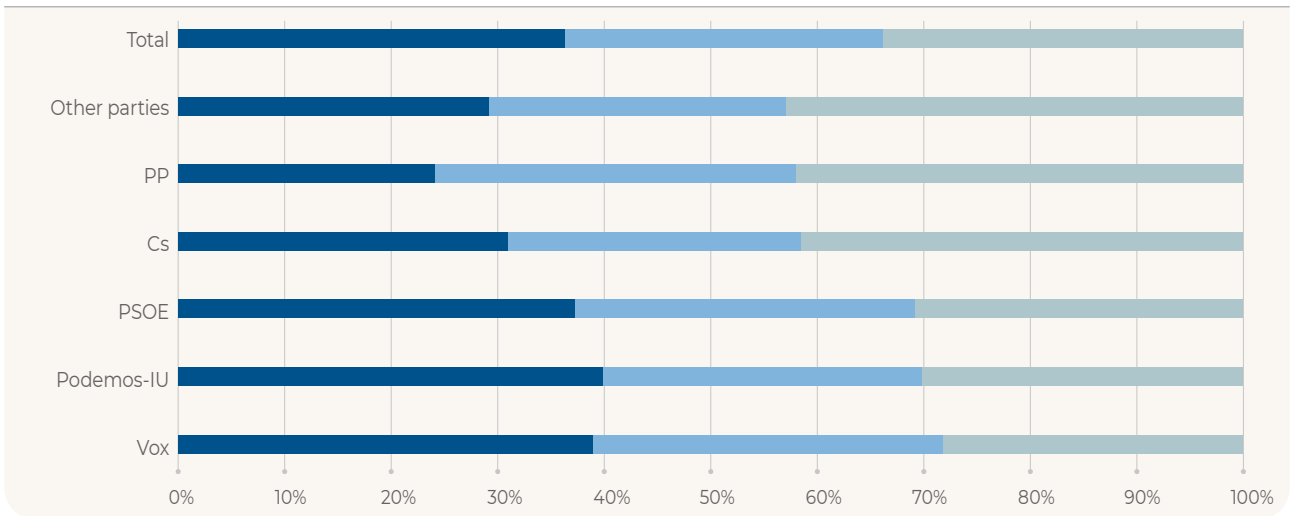
ITALY



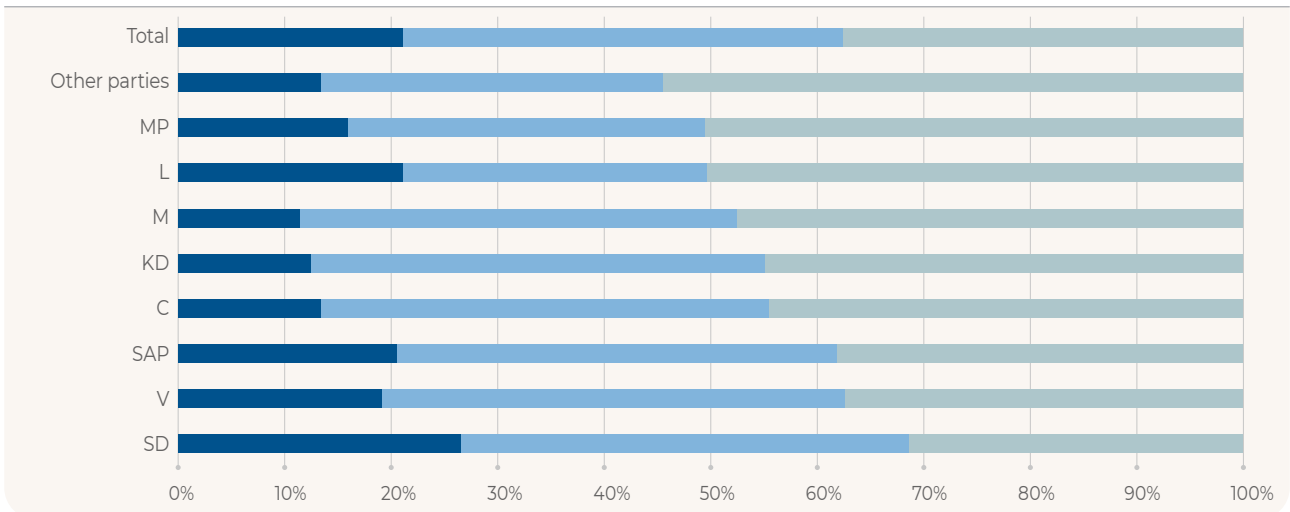
 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN



KEY FINDINGS 4

- Despite of the notable presence of ideological fringes in the public debate – the vast majority of European citizens are politically moderate or do not profess a clearly defined ideology.
- People with a medium amount of education are the majority of citizens in most countries – in Spain and Italy, there is a large number of less educated citizens.
- The combined proportion of political radicals on both the left and the right does not exceed 10 percent in any of the countries included in the report.
- Highly educated citizens are far from being a majority of the population although they are overrepresented among the social democratic electorate.
- The number of citizens without political ideology is increasing.





CHAPTER 5

THE SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD: FORGING A SHIELD AGAINST CONSPIRACY THEORIES



Science Scepticism

Figure 30 (p. 92) reveals respondents' opinions towards scientific research during this pandemic, as governments relied on scientists for advice on how to curb infections. Perhaps in light of the rising scepticism towards anti-pandemic measures, a large proportion of respondents in France, Germany, Italy, and Poland answered that scientific research is more flawed than people realise.

Given the anti-science propaganda from the populist wing of the European political landscape, voters and supporters of the far right and smaller fringe parties agree the most with the proposition that science is flawed, while the voters of social democratic parties are least likely to doubt the quality and integrity of scientific research. In France, both extremes, the far left and far right, were more likely to doubt science compared to other voter groups.

These findings show that, while politicians rely heavily on expert and scientific advice during a crisis like a pandemic with many unknowns, this comes with a substantial risk of political polarisation and alienation of certain sectors of society. Many people in precarious work situations and with poor housing conditions are also sceptical of science. Those who need such scientific expertise the most to remain safe are also the ones who display growing disapproval of the pandemic measures and non-compliance with the restrictions.

Conspiracy Theories

The far right also peddled many – often absurd – conspiracies during this pandemic. Conspiracy theories generally draw on the idea that a powerful group is secretly plotting activities that will harm you or your group and appear to be increasing in prevalence since the start of the pandemic. Those believing in conspiracies do so without any proof or empirical evidence. The percentage of people who believe that there is a conspiracy behind the COVID-19 pandemic says something about how fearful, vulnerable, and precarious people feel today. In times of crisis, people look not only for protection but also for explanations of why they feel threatened. Conspiracy theories provide the 'complexity reduction' that helps people feel they understand the world around them. In a pandemic, it is problematic when conspiracy theorists overclaim knowledge, are overconfident in their own evaluation, and become less open to new opinions or adverse information. This leads them to reject information from official sources and the political establishment.

We asked respondents to what extent they agreed with four conspiracy theories: "the virus is a biological weapon intentionally released by China", "5G technology is causing the coronavirus to spread faster", "the virus has been spread by multinational pharmaceutical companies now ready to make huge profits by selling the vaccine", and "the coronavirus is a hoax". Again, we find that respondents most attracted to populist parties and in economically precarious situations are the most likely to believe in conspiracy theories related to the pandemic. Notably, a large proportion of respondents stated they believe the proposition that SARS-CoV-2 was intentionally released by China; this conspiracy theory has the largest degree of agreement across all 6 countries. About 40 per cent of respondents in Germany, Italy, and France agree with the

proposition. In Sweden, the proportion is lower than 30 per cent, while in Spain and Poland it is higher than 50 per cent. Without exception, voters of the radical right are most likely to agree with the proposition. Social democratic voters tend to agree less than the average respondent. With disinformation rife online, the data suggests that belief in conspiracy theories has increased during the pandemic, which most likely results from the insecurity people experience and are known to fill the knowledge gap with compensatory convictions.

Concern with Climate Change

Climate change is an issue of increasing concern among the European public at large. It is obvious that all voter groups are at least somewhat concerned with climate change, as measured by the 11-point scale asking respondents if they consider that climate change will have a dramatic impact on future generations. The fact that all voter groups, with the exception of small party voters in Sweden but including radical right party voters across all six countries, scored higher than 5 on this scale indicates that even those most sceptical about climate change realise that it will have a profound impact on our societies in the future.

Naturally, the voters of green and especially radical left parties are the most likely to be concerned with climate change. At the same time, the voters of centre-right and far-right parties are among the least likely groups to worry about the impact of the shifting climate. Social democratic voters are also very concerned with climate change. Moreover, in Spain, voters for the Christian democratic PP report a slightly higher concern than those who vote for the centre-left PSOE.

The figures 9 and 10 below as well as figure 31 (p. 94) reveal the relationship between the likelihood of voting for the social democrats and indices measuring various political concepts. The punctured lines in the graphs show whether there is a positive or negative correlation between each index and the PTV for the social democrats. The indices are constructed by combining several questions that measure the same underlying concept, as measured by means of factor analyses and reliability analyses. The blue dots in each graph reveal the average score of respondents who answered with each of the 11 points of the PTV scale for each index.

* For detailed graphics on chapter 5 see Annex pp. 92–97.

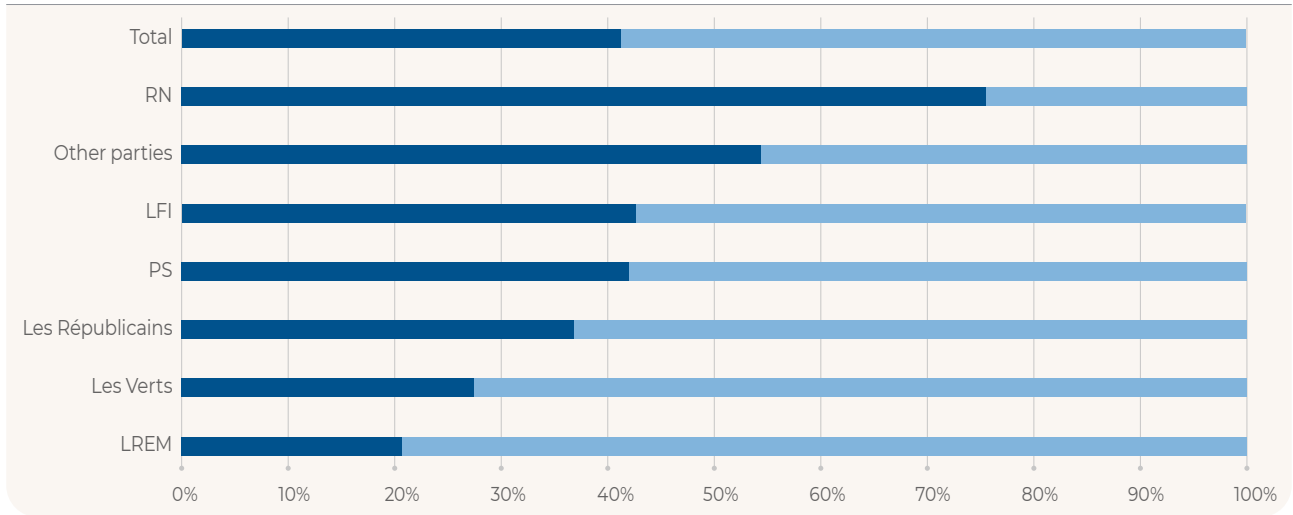


Figure 8 – Conspiracy belief

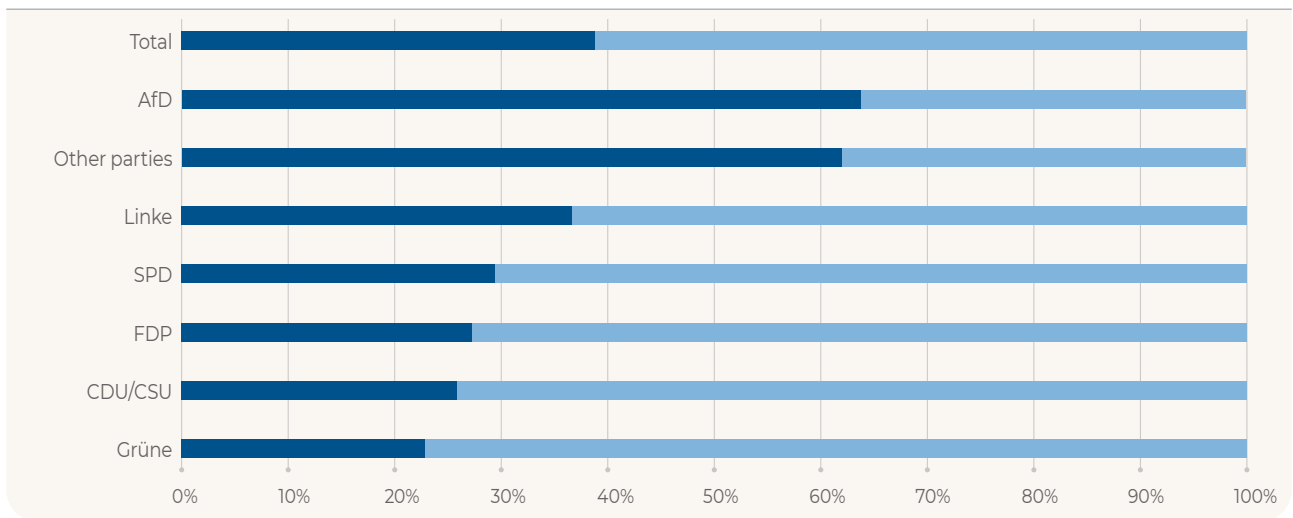
“The virus is a biological weapon released by China”

Agree Disagree

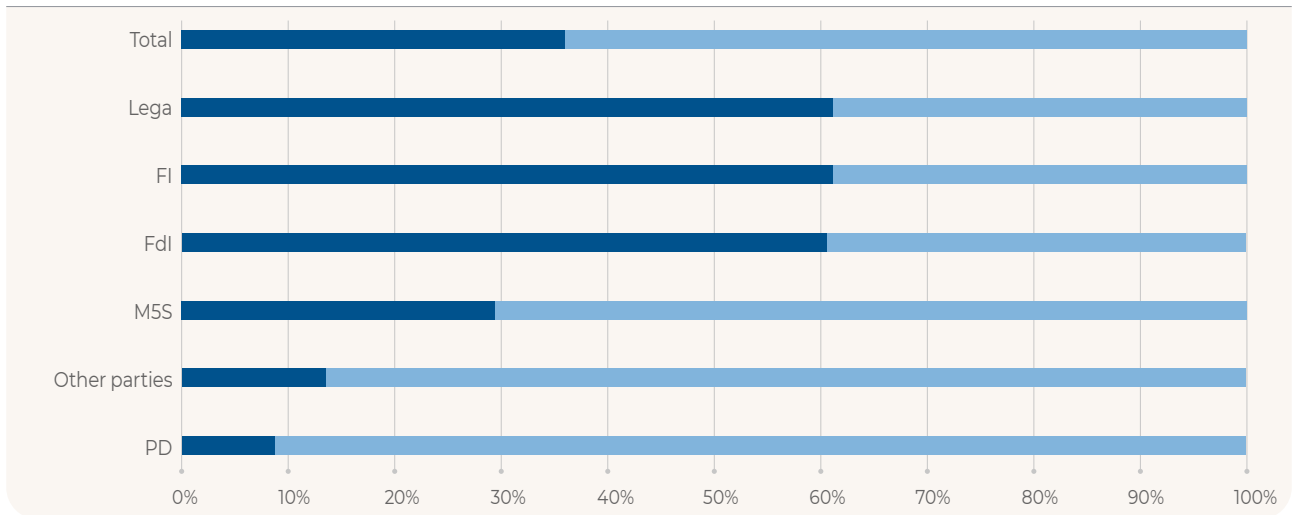
FRANCE



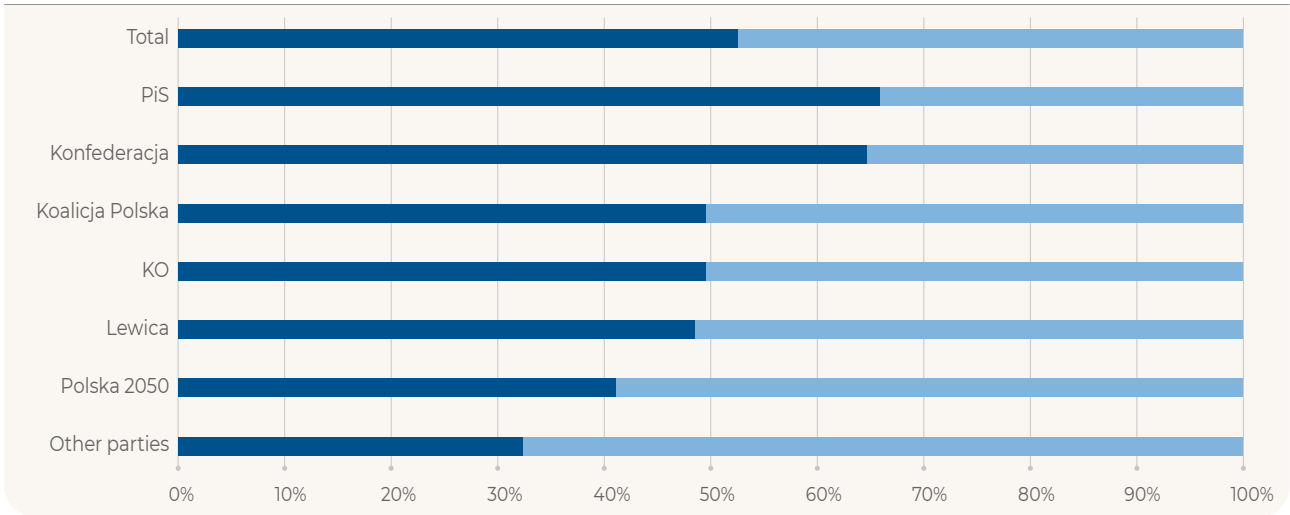
GERMANY



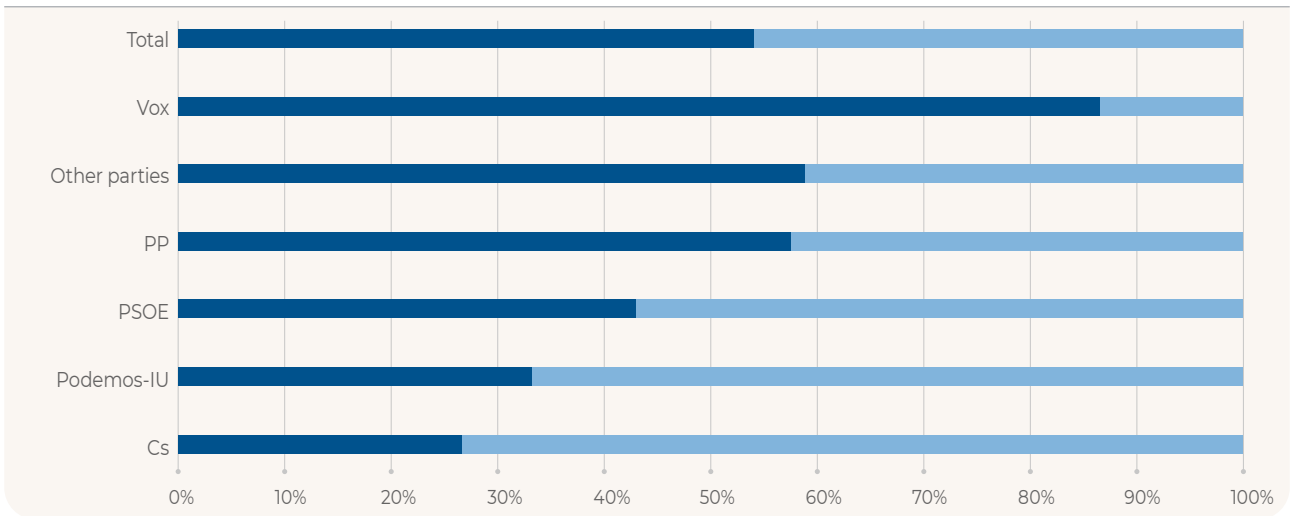
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

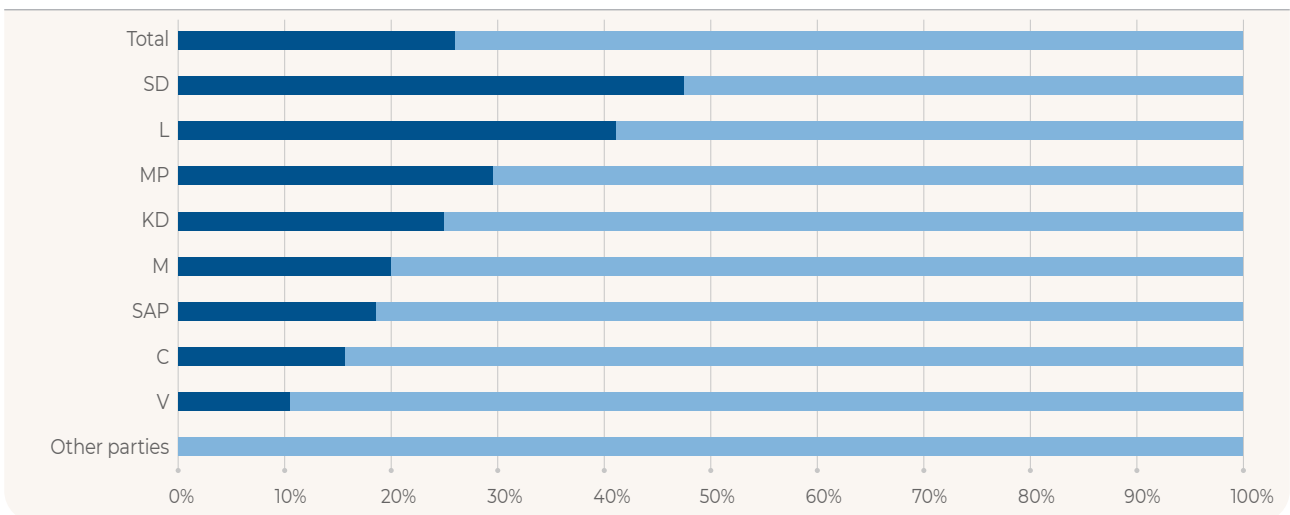
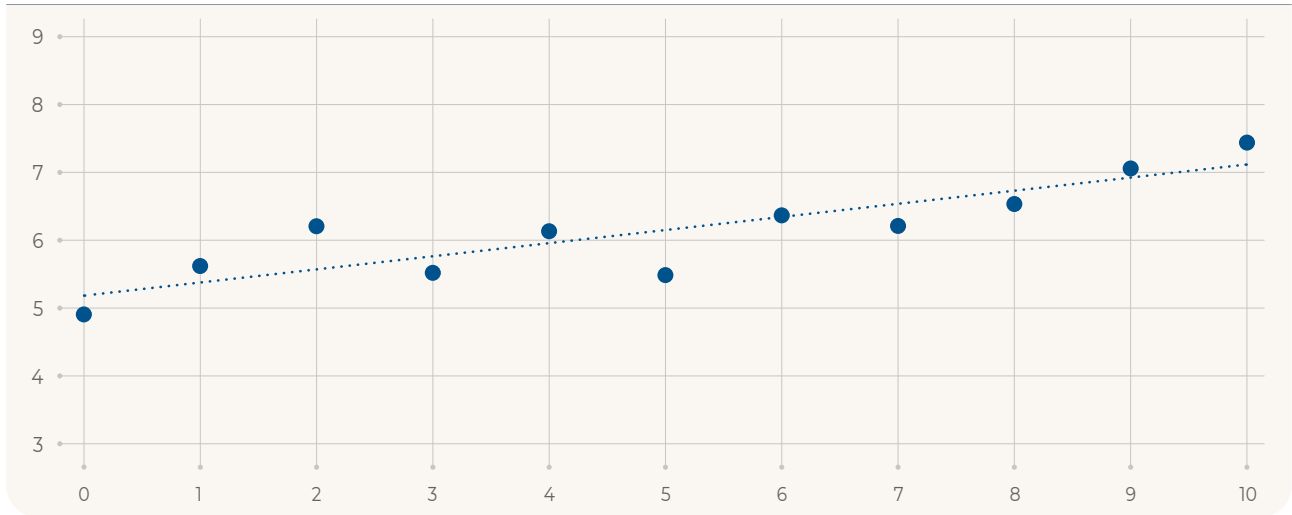




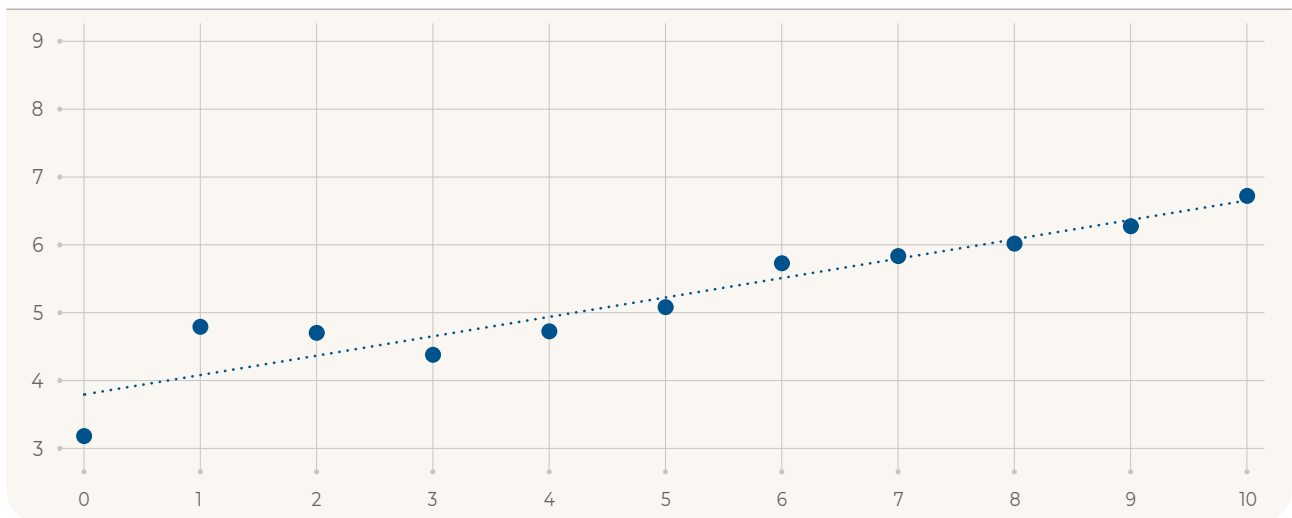
Figure 9 – PTV and Support for COVID-19 Measures

- Vertical scale: Support for COVID-19 measures (3 – 9)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

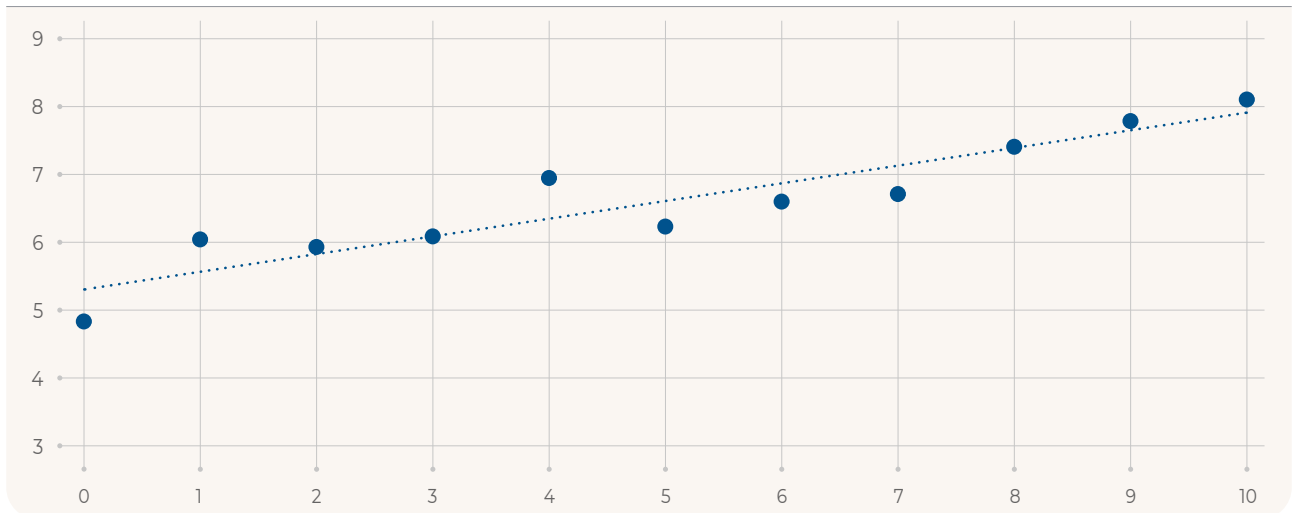
 FRANCE – PS




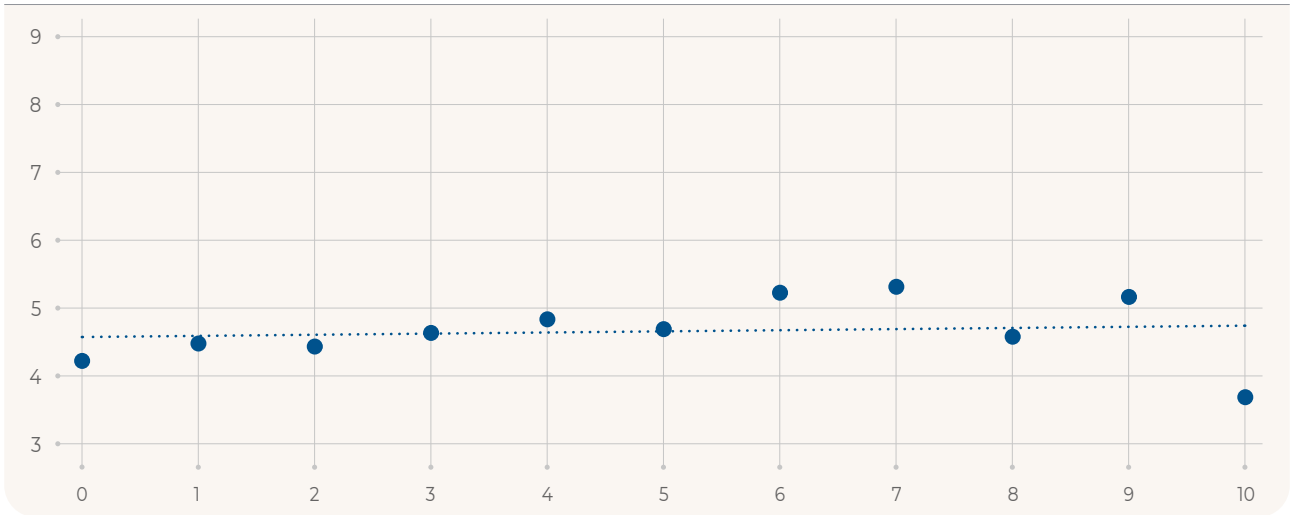
 GERMANY – SPD



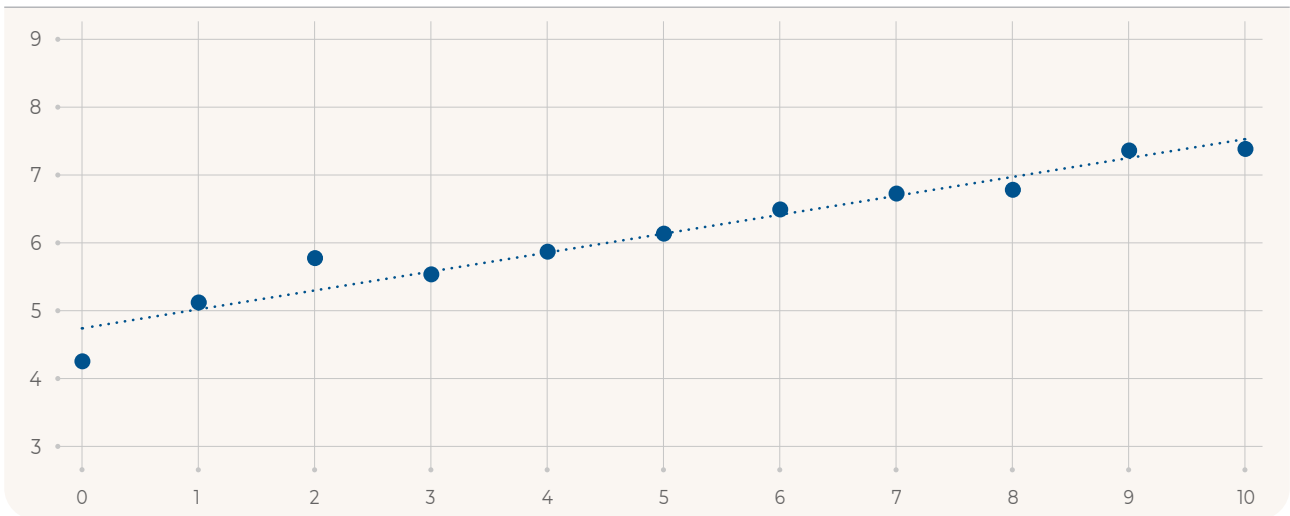
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

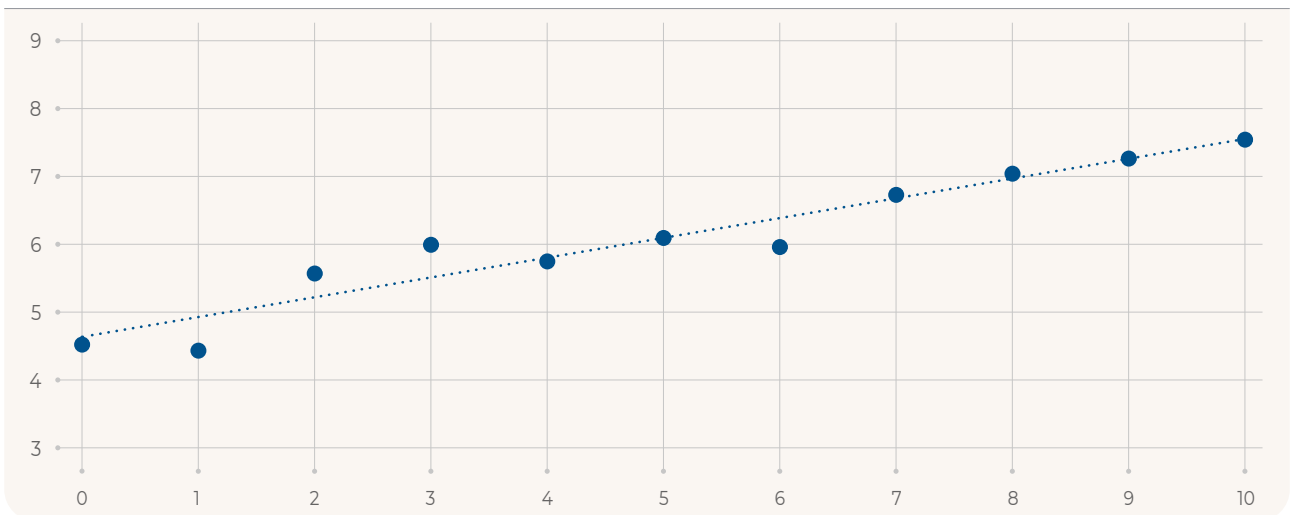
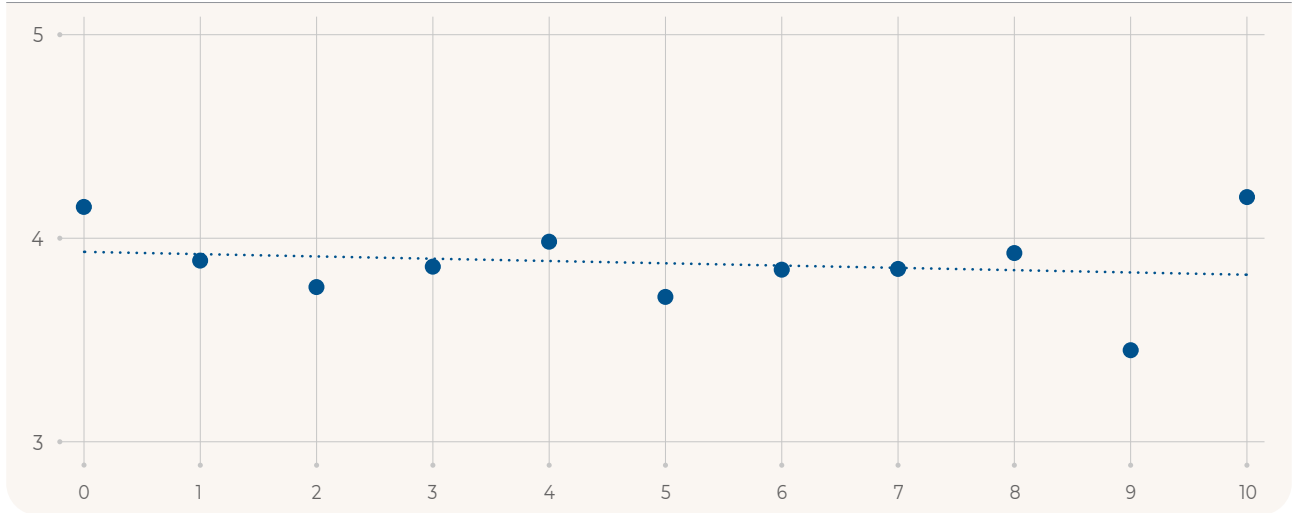




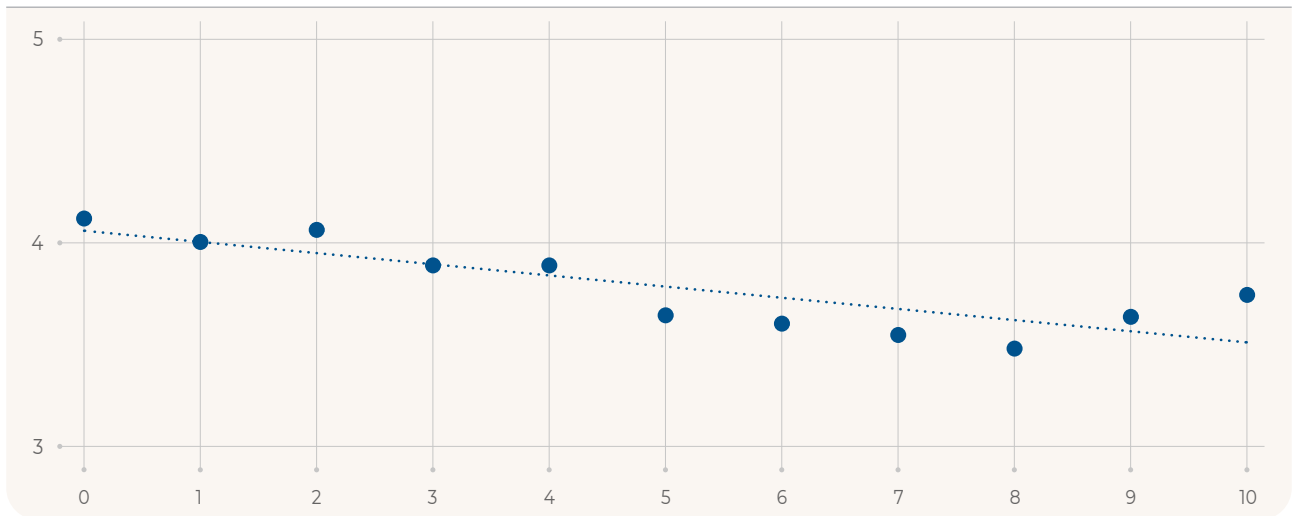
Figure 10 – PTV and Populism

- Vertical scale: Populism (3 – 5)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

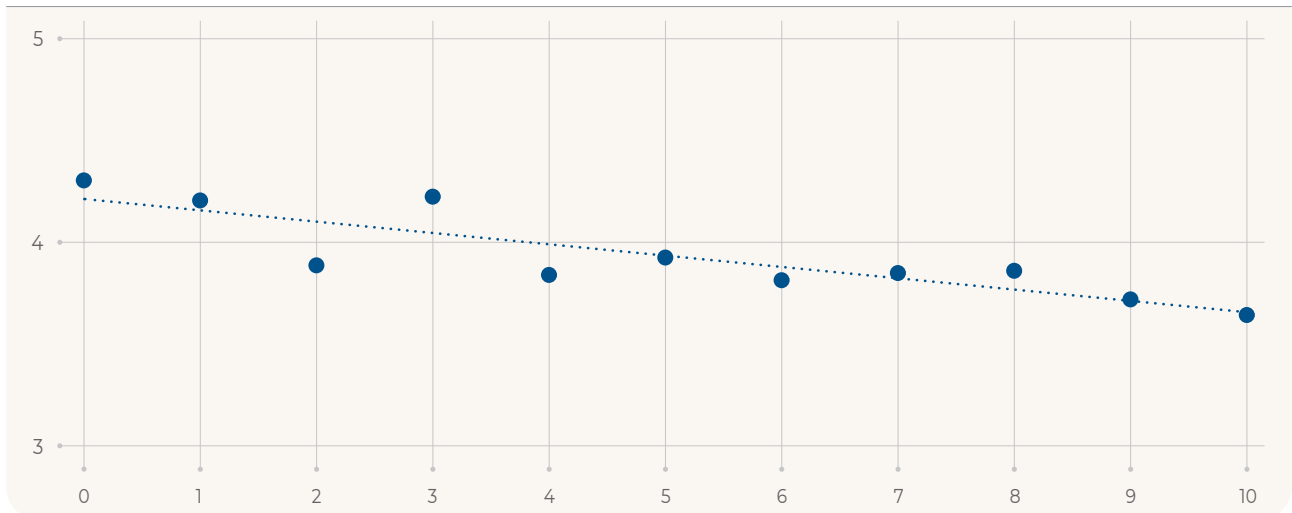
 FRANCE – PS




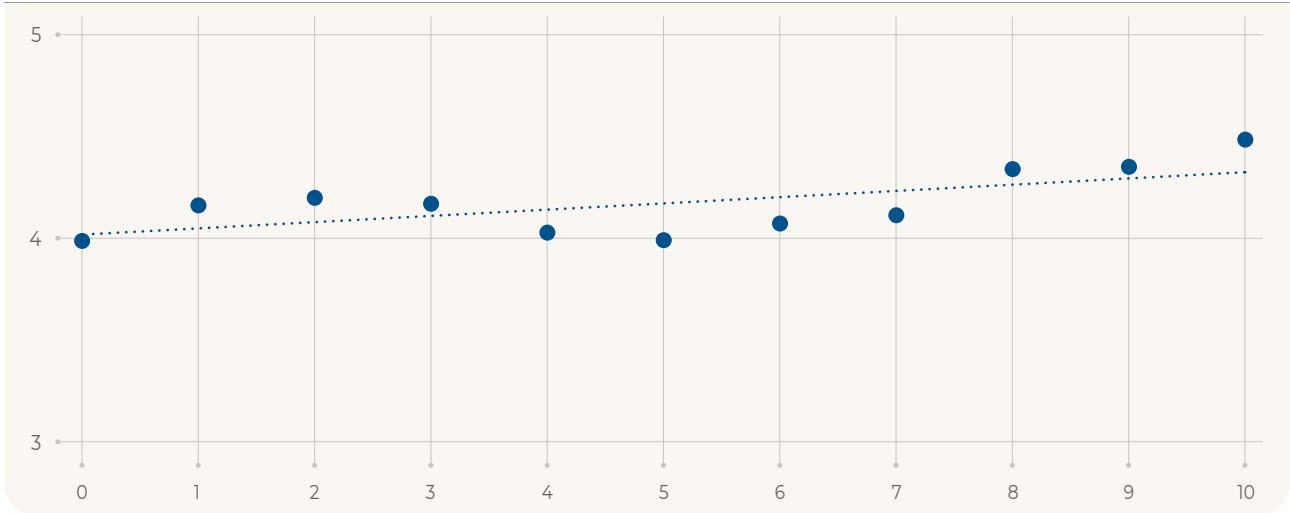
 GERMANY – SPD



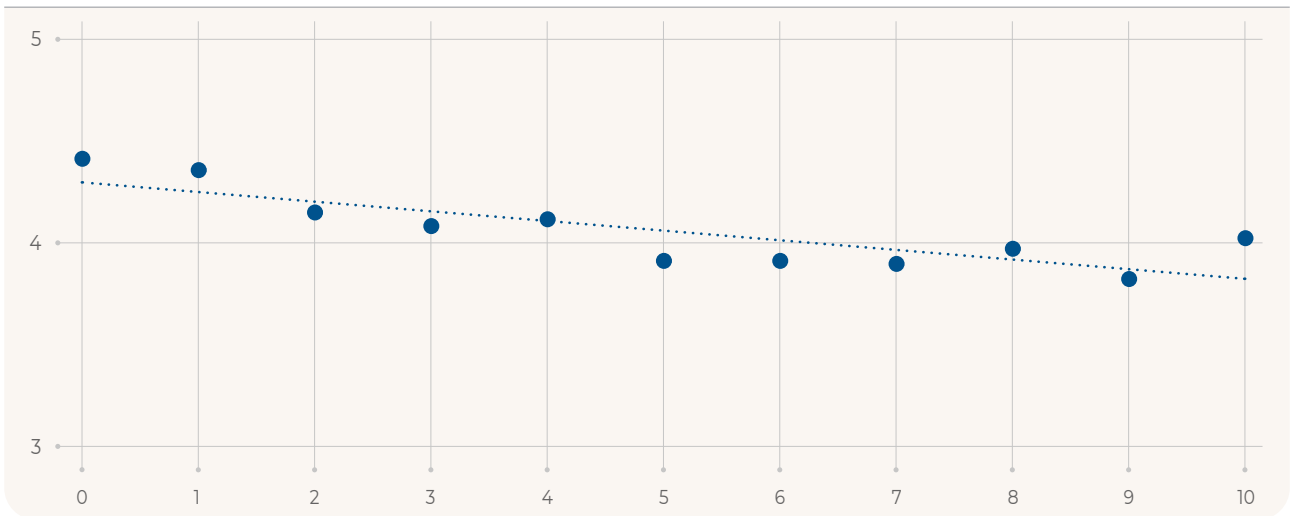
 ITALY – PD



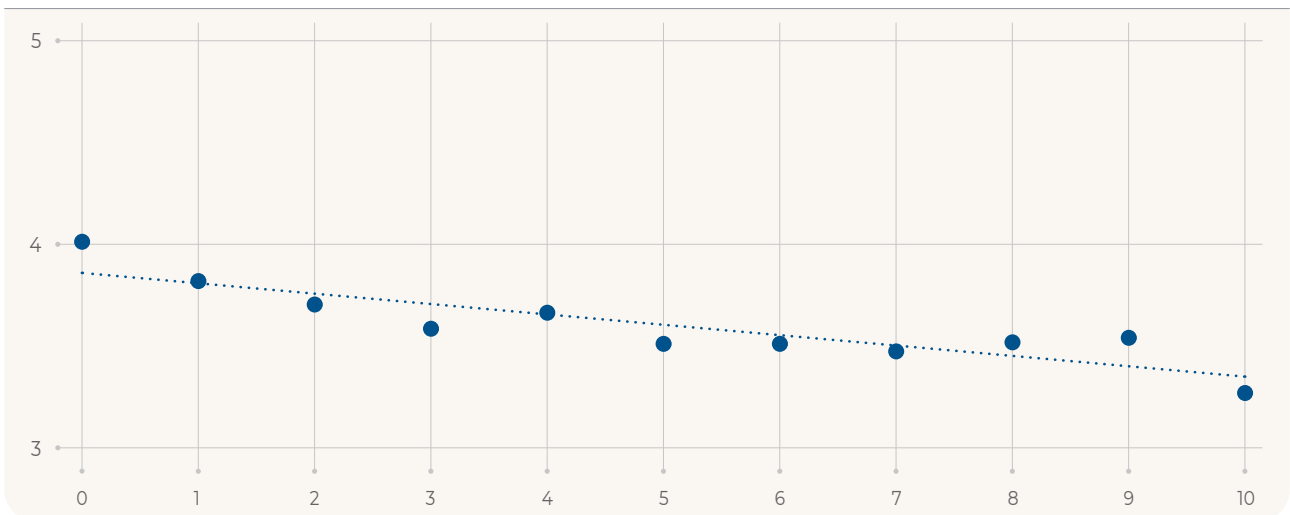
 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP





Belief in Conspiracy Theories and the Propensity of Voting for the Social Democrats

When we look at conspiracy belief and its relation to the likelihood to vote for the social democrats, there is a clear negative correlation between these two variables, meaning that centre-left voters are less prone to believe in conspiracy theories. The centre-left electorate is still vulnerable to a conspiracy mentality in Poland and France, but less so in Spain and Italy, where respondents who give social democrats a PTV score of “10” are more likely to believe in conspiracies than those who give such parties a score of “9”: this could also be explained by the relatively small sample size. There might not be sufficient respondents for each point of the 10-point scale. Nevertheless, overall, there is a negative trend between voting for social democrats and a conspiratorial mindset.

Support for COVID-19 Measures and the Propensity of Voting for the Social Democrats

Needless to say, support for COVID-19 measures impacts the likelihood that people adhere to the restrictions to combat viral infections. Figure 9 shows that as the likelihood to vote for social democrats increases, support for measures combatting the COVID-19 pandemic increases as well. These findings suggest that criticism against the measures for curbing the pandemic will not play in favour of the social democrats.

Again, the only outlier is Poland, where the correlation between these two variables is somewhat weaker, and there was a big difference between respondents giving Nowa Lewica a PTV score of “9” and “10”, with the latter having a much lower score. This can be interpreted as an expression of the sharp criticism that core Nowa Lewica voters have of the far-right PiS government. The overall pattern is, however, that supporters of social democratic parties are more likely to support measures that help reduce the number of infections. Considering that social democratic voters generally believe in science more than the average respondent, it is understandable that they recognise the seriousness of the pandemic and generally sympathise with acts of collective responsibility.

Populism and the Propensity of Voting for the Social Democrats

Using an index of statements that measure an anti-elitist, populist outlook, Figure 10 reveals the relationship between the PTV for the social democrats and populism, i.e. the belief that political elites are profoundly corrupt. There is a negative relationship between the likelihood of supporting social democracy and populism in all countries apart from Poland and, to some extent, France.

This finding shows that voters critical of the political elite are least likely to vote for the social democrats and that criticising the political system as such will not play in the centre-left’s favour, even when they are not in power. Social democrats are simply not anti-establishment, anti-elite voters. Nevertheless, this is related to the possibility of incumbency: in countries where social democrats have been in power, there is a stronger correlation between the two variables. This explains the pattern in Poland, where Nowa Lewica is an opposition party with slim

chances of governing the country or entering a governing coalition. This might be explained by the political reality in the country where the governing far-right party has been embedded in the state, and left-wing activists are sometimes pursued.

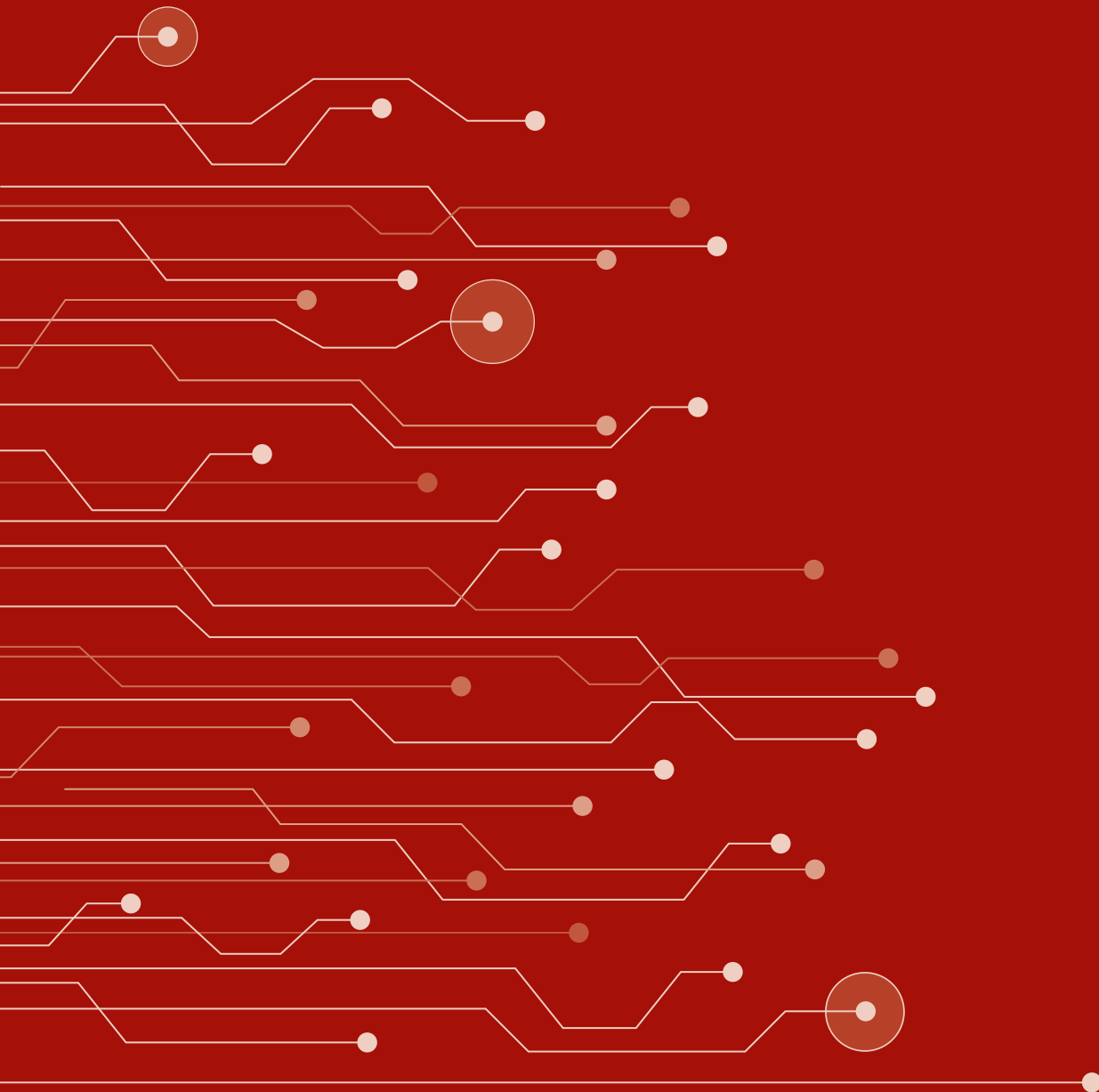
KEY FINDINGS 5

- There is a substantially large proportion of respondents sceptical about scientific research. This worrying sign points to an increase of science scepticism in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. When appealing to voters, political parties can either maintain an appeal for confidence in science or signal criticism of it. This strategy will have a different degree of success depending on the country, the situation on the ground, and the public opinion toward a scientific approach to policymaking.
- Conspiracy theories spread during the pandemic. While most conspiracy theories receive support from only a very small proportion of the public, others enjoy substantial support. In particular, the belief that China intentionally released the virus is widespread in Europe. Given that conspiracies are often disseminated by populist parties, their voters, as well as people on the lower end of the economic spectrum, are also most likely to be conspiracy believers.
- Social democratic voters are clearly less prone to believing in conspiracy theories than the average voter. This suggests that conspiracy-related messages will not appeal to the vast majority of centre-left voters.
- When it comes to climate change, voters on the left, including social democrats, are most concerned with the impending shifts in climate. Society at large is also increasingly concerned with the negative effects that climate change will bring, including those most sceptical about climate change. Nevertheless, measures that would result in decreasing CO2 emissions and a profound transition to a sustainable economy should be implemented gradually and with an eye on keeping consumer prices reasonable. While voters recognise the dangers of climate change, they can easily turn against political forces that put too much economic strain on the public while pursuing a climate neutral economy.
- Populist sentiments are also not innate to social democratic voters. The centre-left does not see politics as a zero-sum game. Such voters believe that there are politicians genuinely working to improve people's lives and that ideological adversaries can peacefully coexist despite having differing opinions. This suggests that the rhetoric of confrontation and demonizing the political establishment would not be useful for attracting moderate social democratic voters.



CHAPTER 6

THE PROGRESSIVE STRATEGY: WITHSTANDING THE COMPETITION ON LEFT AND RIGHT



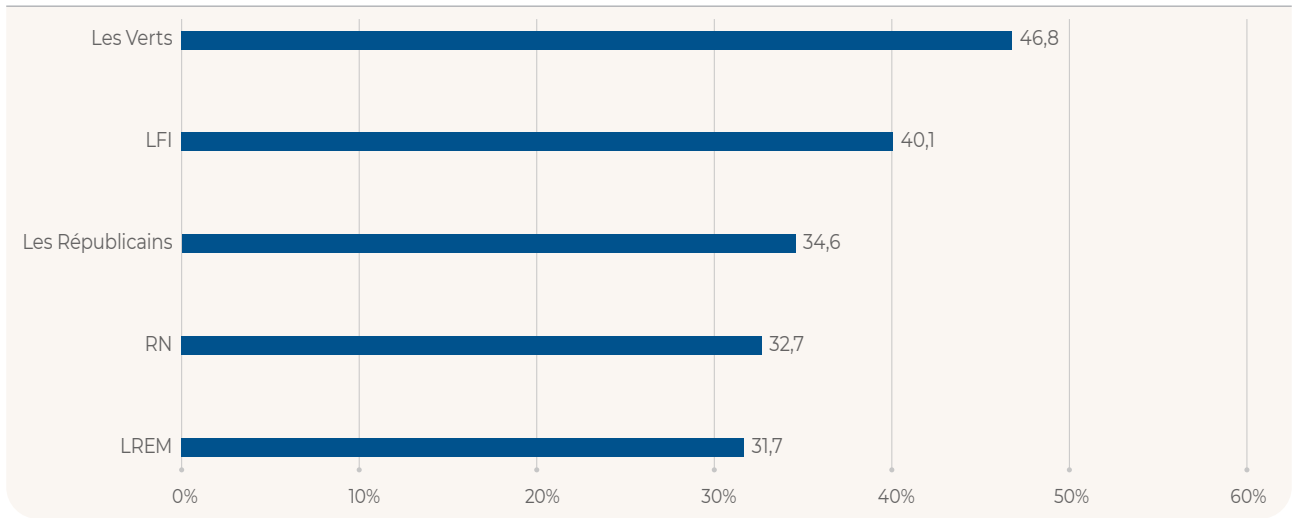
Analysing the overlap in vote propensity is useful for understanding which political parties are the main competitors of the social democrats. The percentage of overlap is estimated by selecting respondents who give both the social democrats and any other party a high PTV score (a high score would be an “8”, “9”, or “10”). The reported percentages, as seen in Figure 11 below, show the combined high PTV percentage for the other parties. These results reveal the vulnerability of social democrats by showing which other parties are most likely to syphon off support. What is also important here is the degree of PTV overlap – a party that has a high degree of overlap with many other parties (e.g. the French Socialist Party, PS) is particularly vulnerable to electoral competition compared to parties with lower PTV overlap (such as the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, PSOE).

The results suggest that in nearly all countries included in this research, the parties most likely to attract former social democratic voters are environmentalist and radical left parties. An interesting outlier emerges in Germany, where the centre-right Christian Democrats are also an important competitor to the SPD. This shows that the social democrats face competition from across the political spectrum, especially in Germany. In Sweden, the far-left Vänsterpartiet (V) and the Miljöpartiet de gröna (Environmental Party the Greens, MP) pose the biggest electoral threat to the social democrats, whereas the centrist and moderate parties are potential candidates for about 12 per cent of the SAP electorate. In Poland, nearly 35 per cent of Nowa Lewica voters consider voting for KO and nearly 30 per cent for Polska 2050. This suggests that a substantial proportion of the Polish left sympathises with the liberal parties opposed to the right-wing government. In Spain, only Unidas Podemos is a serious competitor of PSOE. The fragmented Italian party system has resulted in a high degree of partisan detachment, as evidenced by the high proportion of PD voters considering other left-wing and liberal parties. Notably, more than 10 per cent of respondents contemplated the far-right Lega and FdI, which suggests that PD is also very electorally vulnerable.

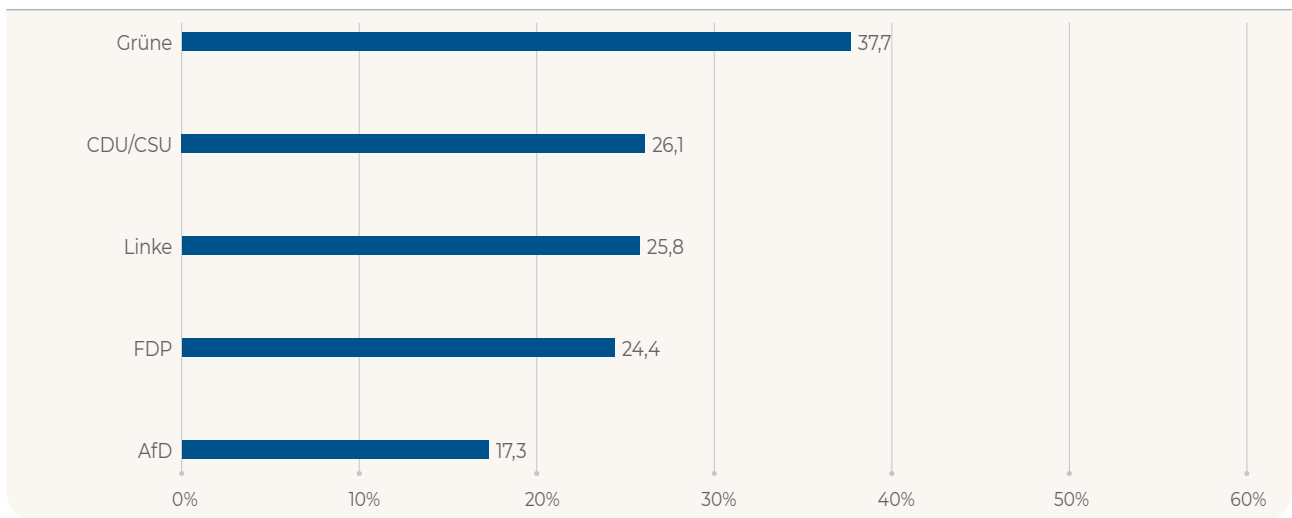


Figure 11 – Vote propensity overlap

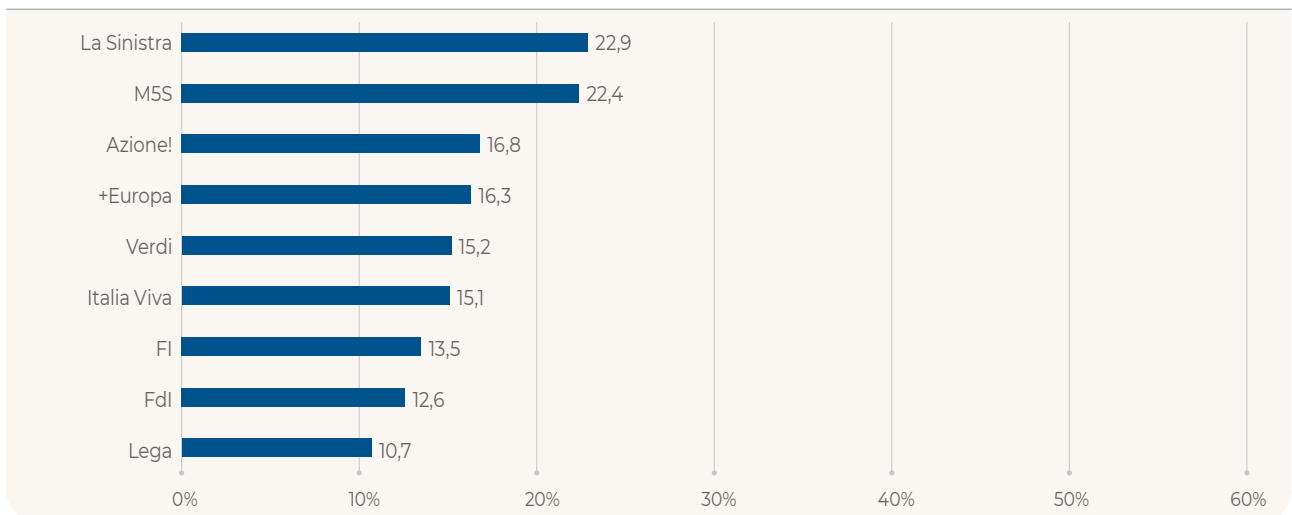
 FRANCE – PS


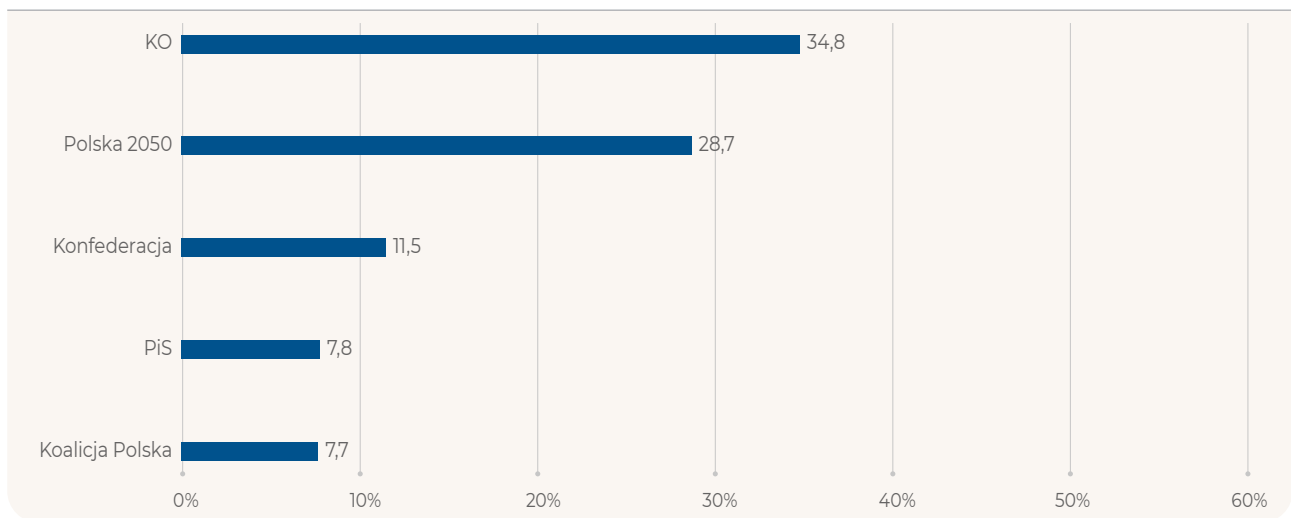
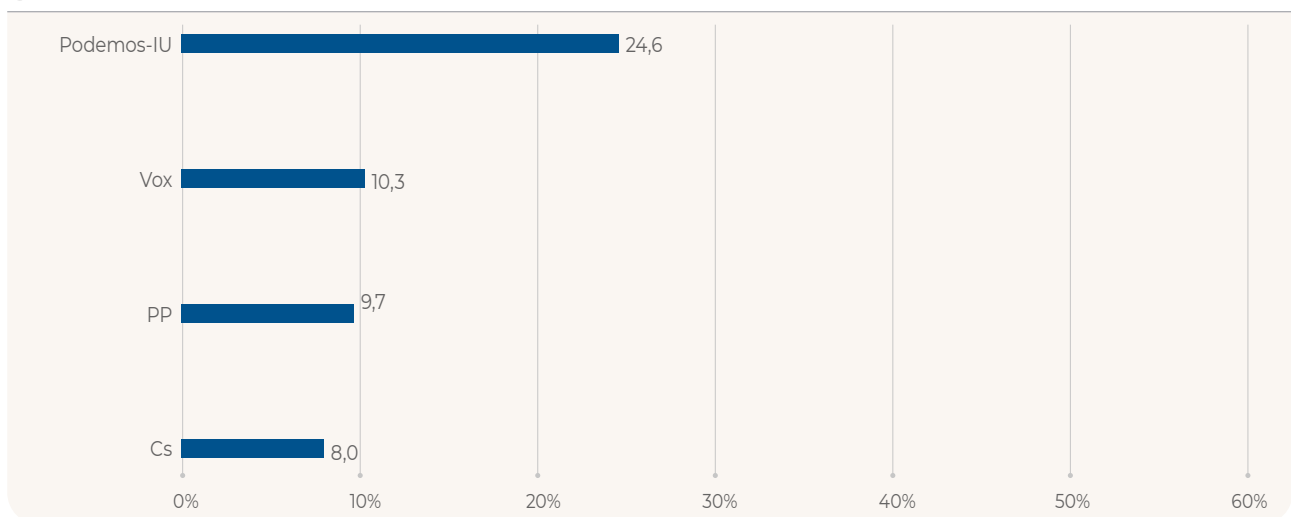
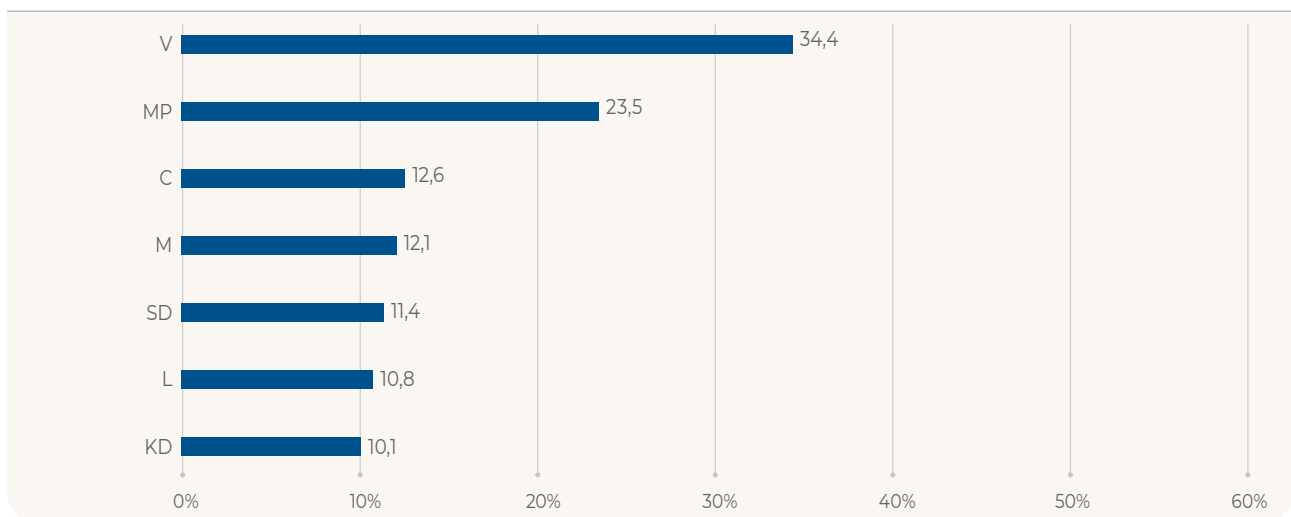


 GERMANY – SPD



 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA

 SPAIN – PSOE

 SWEDEN – SAP


KEY FINDINGS 6

- Radical-left and green parties are the main competitors of the centre-left.
- In numerous countries, particularly Germany, centre-right parties are also considered by a substantial proportion of social democratic voters.
- Given that they are a centrist party, the social democrats can rely on a variety of strategies to attract voters

who previously supported other parties. When pursuing vote-maximization is pursued, it is important for parties to adopt the optimal strategy based on their national characteristics. Depending on the ideological composition of the population and the structure of political competition, the centre-left can choose whether to propagate a more authentic left-wing policy or move towards the political centre by advocating a more moderate approach and fiscal discipline.





APPENDIX



Variables Used to Create the Indices

The tables below contain a list of the variables used to create the indices used in the study. In all cases, factor and reliability analyses were performed, confirming that the items consistently measure the same underlying concept.

Institutional Trust Index

- How much do you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The national parliament
- How would you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The regional and local institutions
- How much you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The police
- How much you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The healthcare system
- How much you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The judicial system
- How much you personally trust each of the institutions [...] The European Union

Support for COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Index

- How do you evaluate the national government's measures to protect citizens' health against COVID-19?
- How do you evaluate the regional and local government's measures to protect the citizens' health against COVID-19?
- How do you evaluate the national government's measures to protect the economy from the crisis produced by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How do you evaluate the European Union's measures to protect the economy from the crisis produced by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How do you evaluate the way the public healthcare system in your country is responding to the current wave of COVID-19 pandemic?

Support for Immigration Index

- Would you say it is generally bad or good for a nation's economy that people come to live here from other countries?
- And would you say that nation's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?

PICOM Conspiracy index

- I think that... – ...government agencies closely monitor all citizens.
- I think that... – ...politicians usually do not tell us the true motives for their decisions.
- I think that... – ...there are secret organizations that greatly influence political decisions.
- I think that... – ...many very important things happen in the world, which the public is never informed about.
- I think that... – ...events which superficially seem to lack a connection are often the result of secret activities.

Populism Index

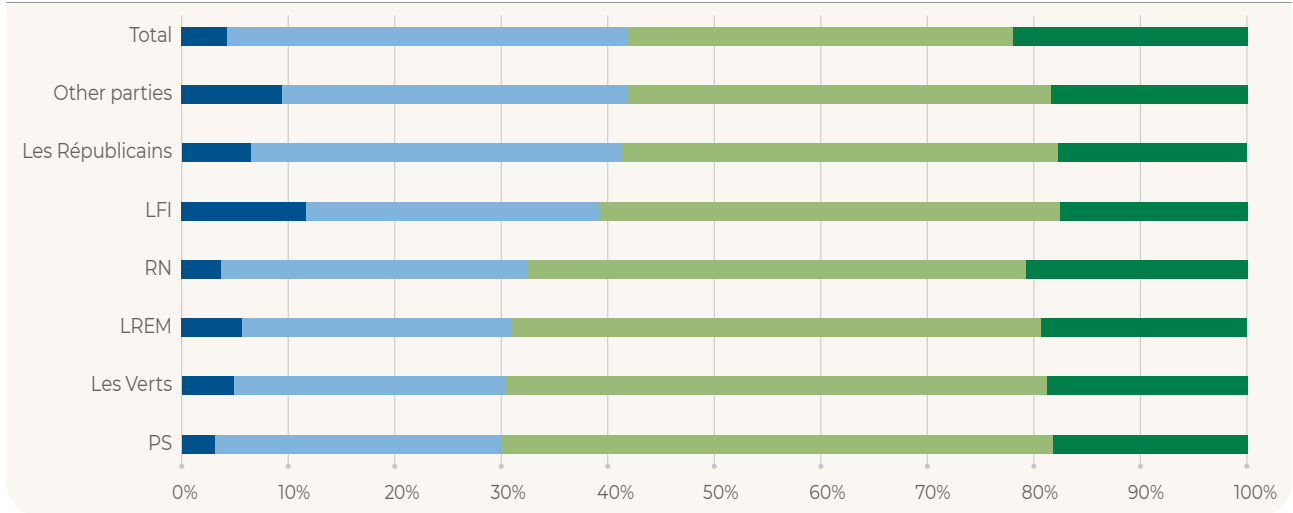
- How much do you agree with the following statements? – The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.
- How much do you agree with the following statements? – Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked.
- How much do you agree with the following statements? – Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people.



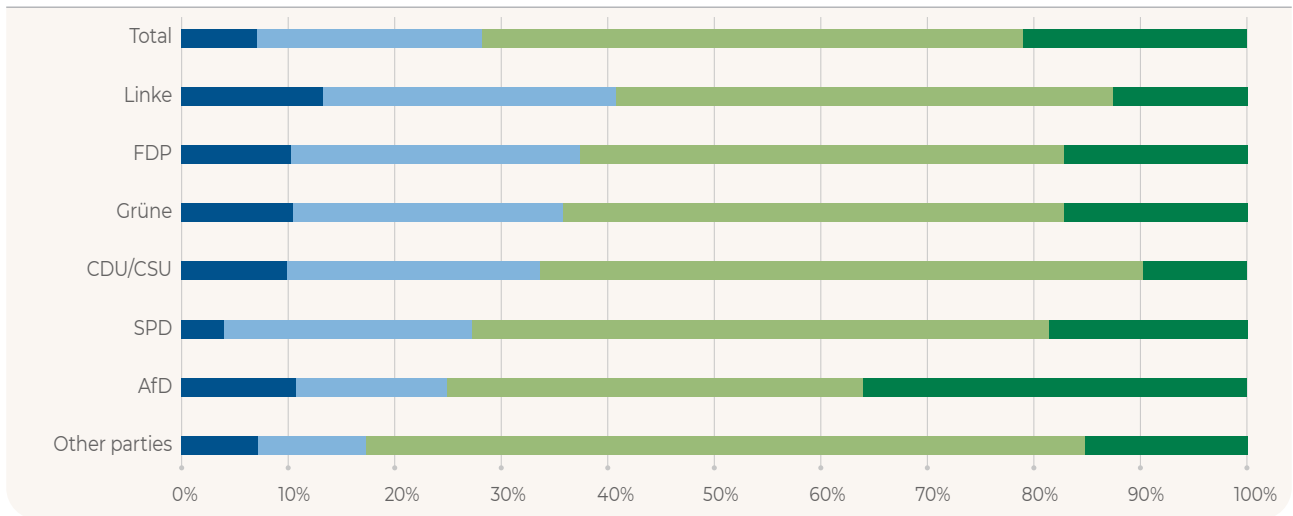
Figure 12 – In your opinion, how likely is it that you will contract COVID-19?

Very likely Moderately likely Moderately unlikely Very unlikely

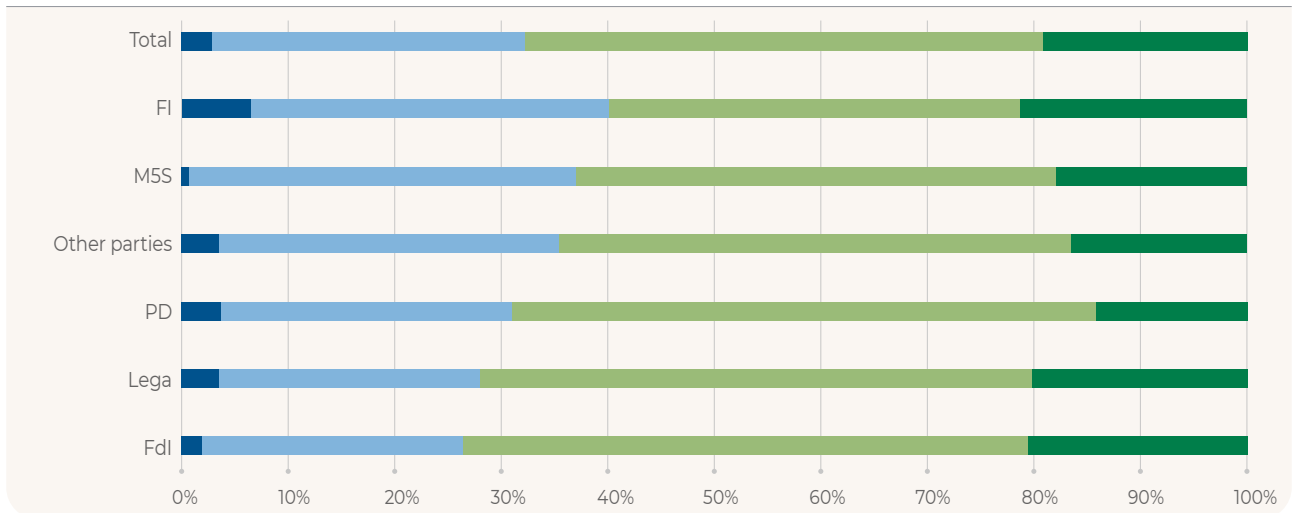
FRANCE



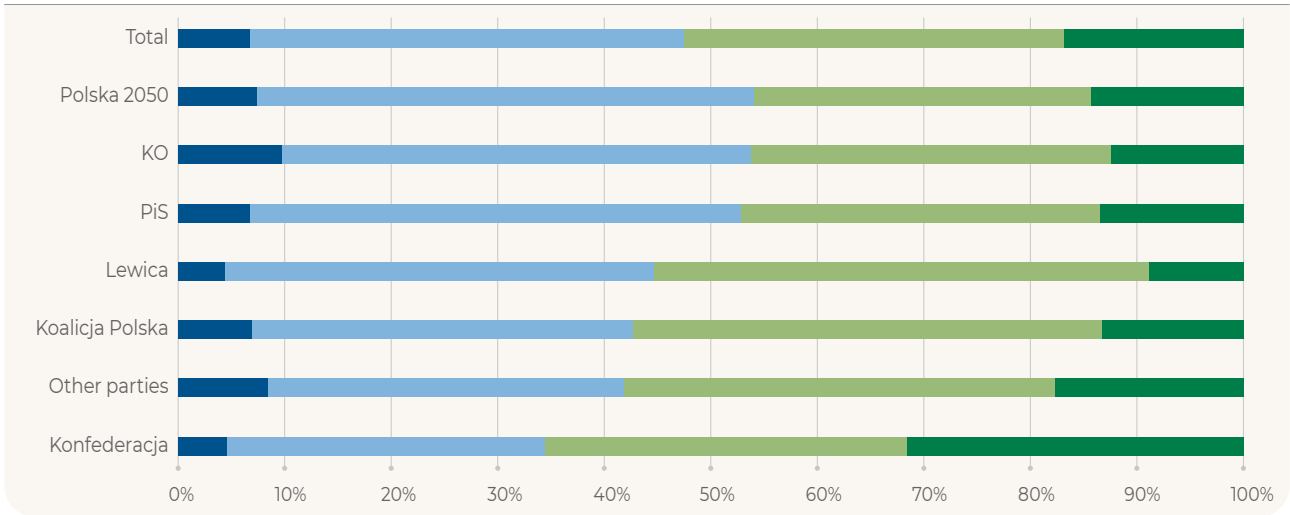
GERMANY



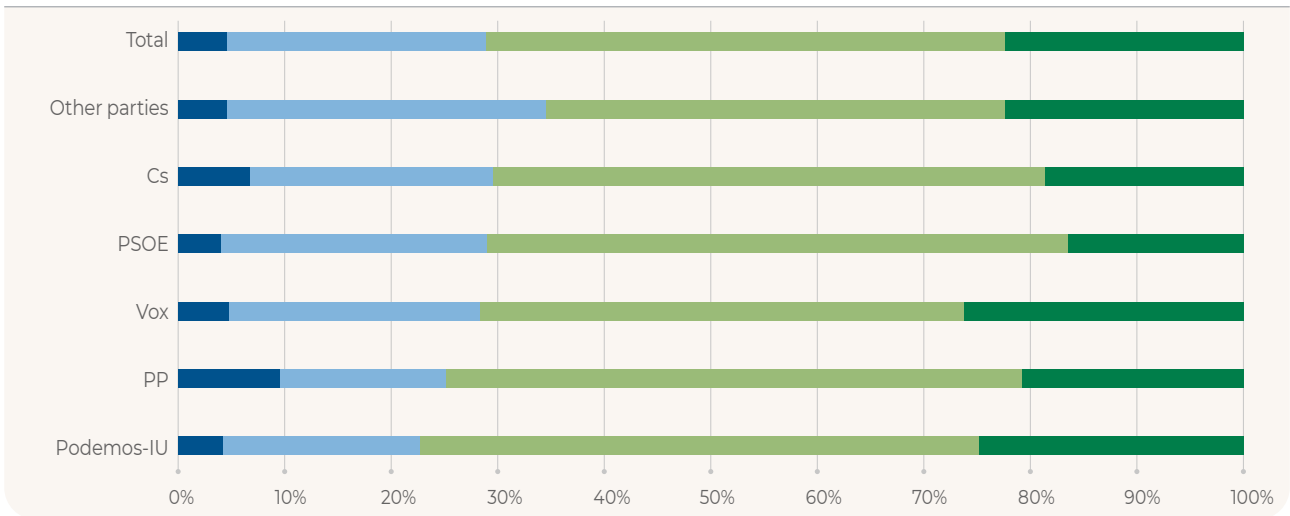
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

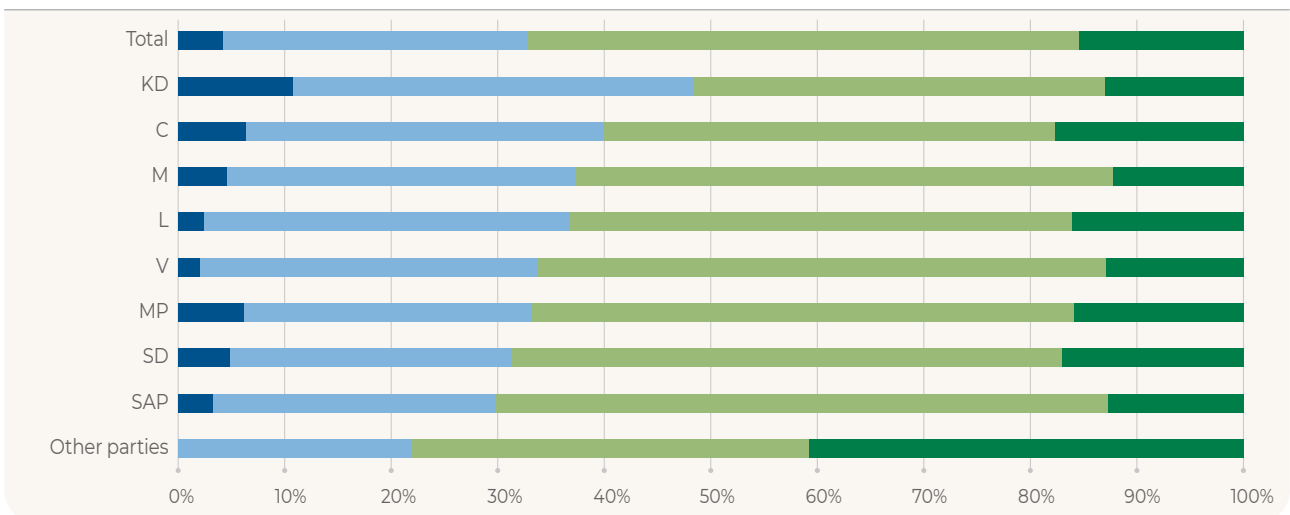
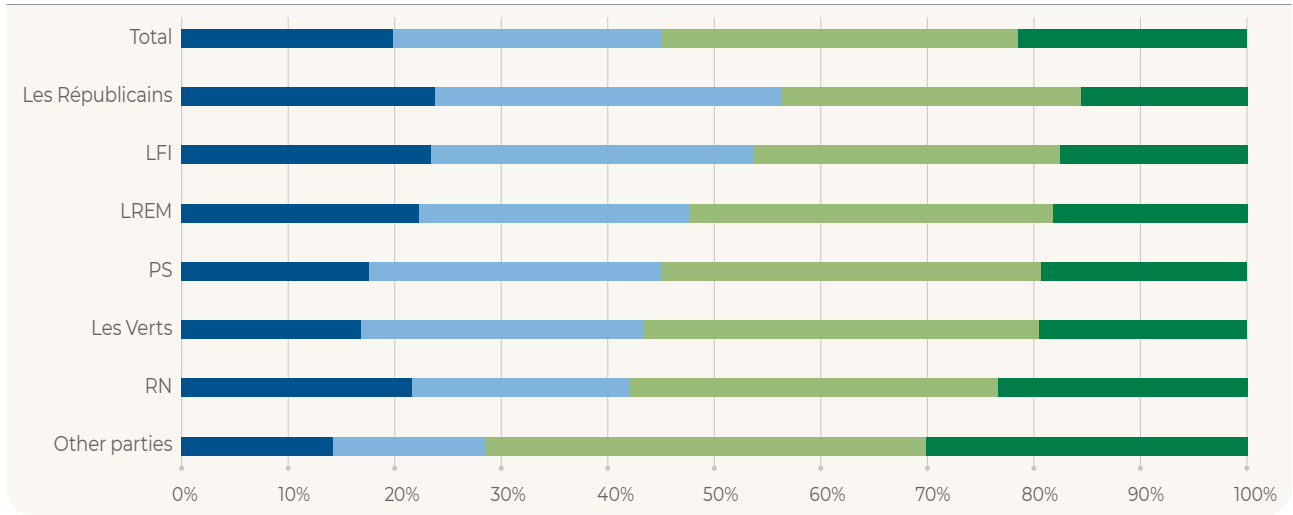




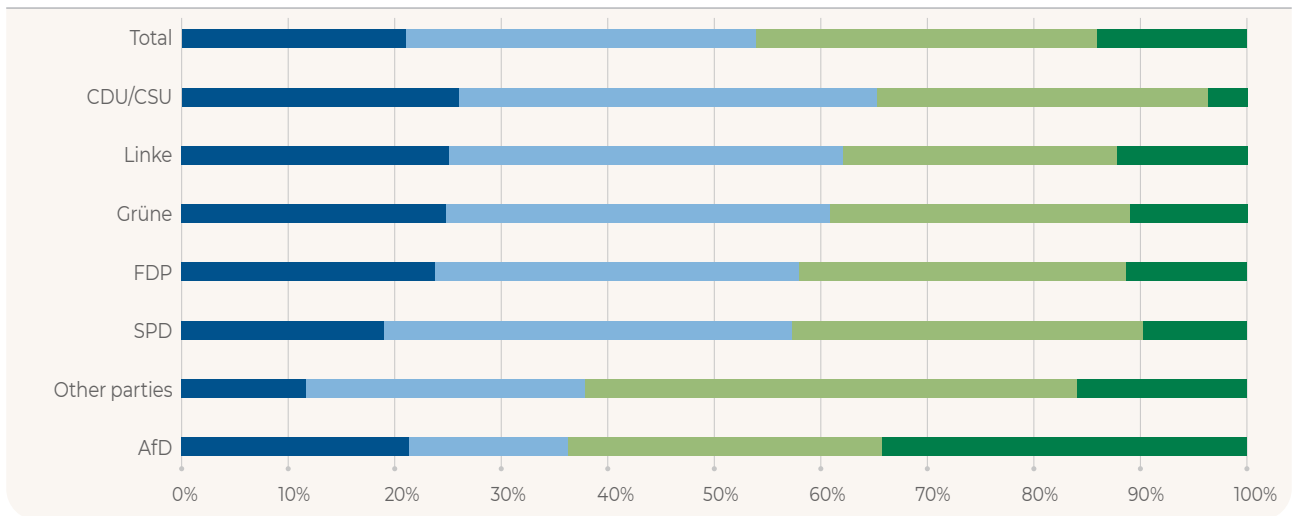
Figure 13 – How concerned are you that a COVID-19 infection might endanger your health?

Very concerned Moderately concerned Slightly concerned Not at all concerned

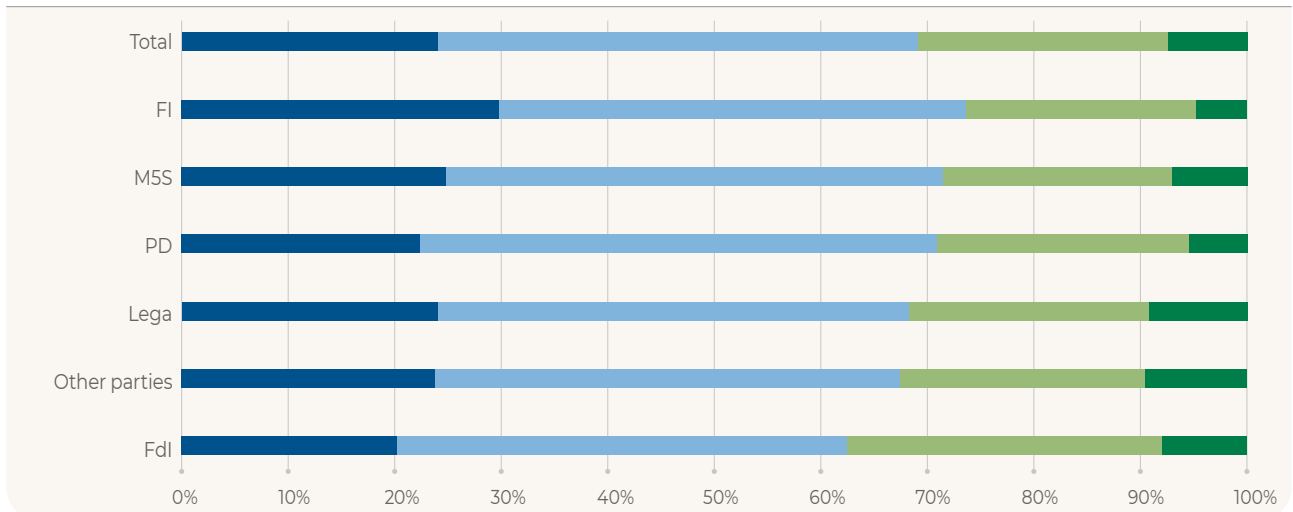
FRANCE



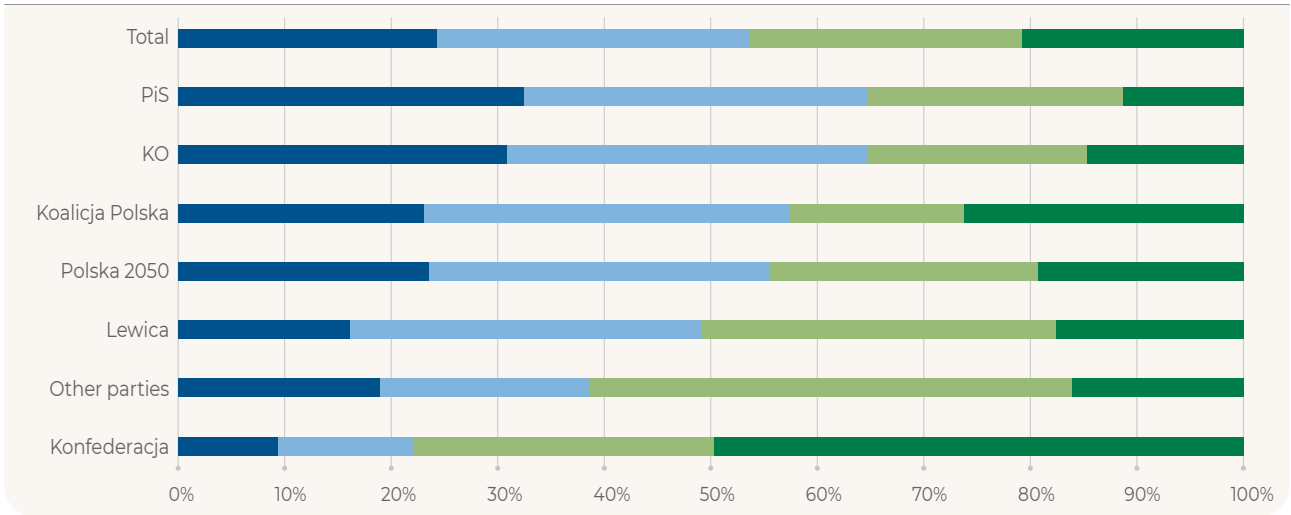
GERMANY



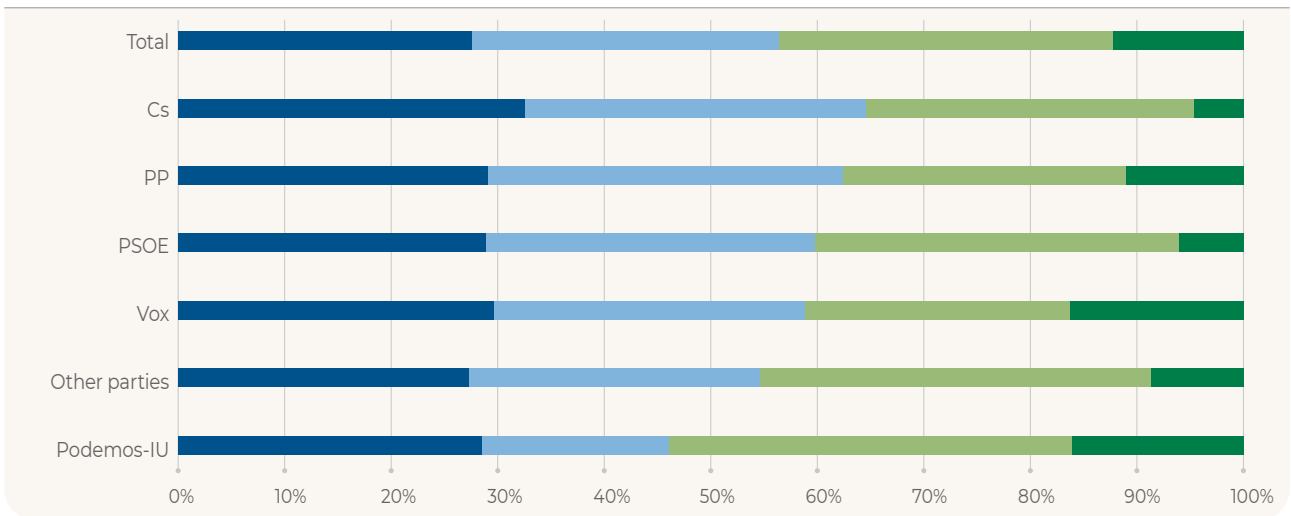
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

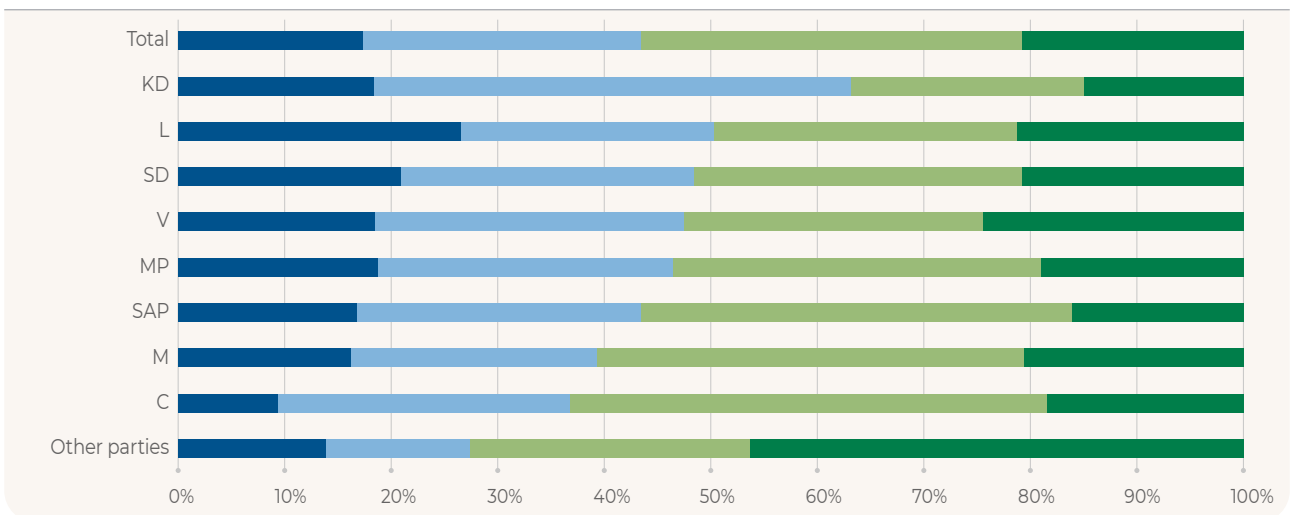
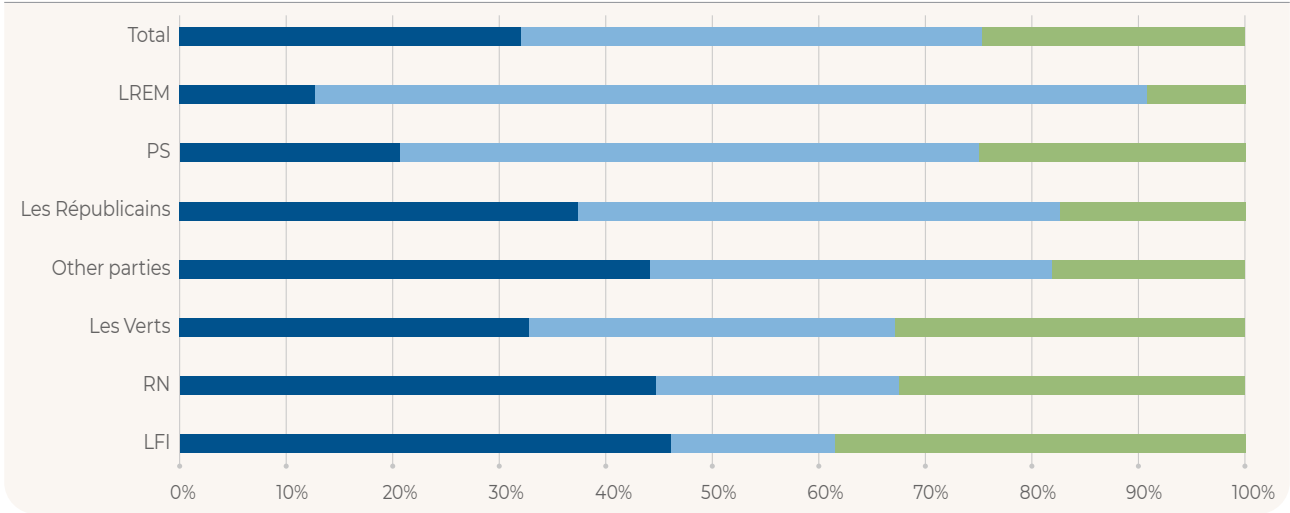




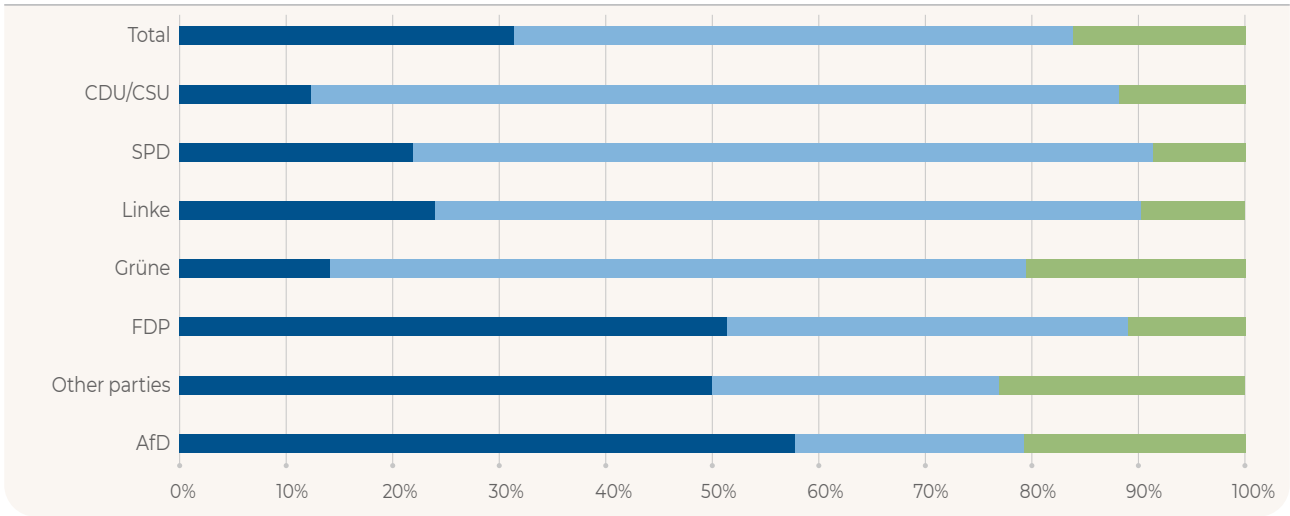
Figure 14 – Government balance – jobs or public health

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect public health instead of jobs
- They got the balance about right

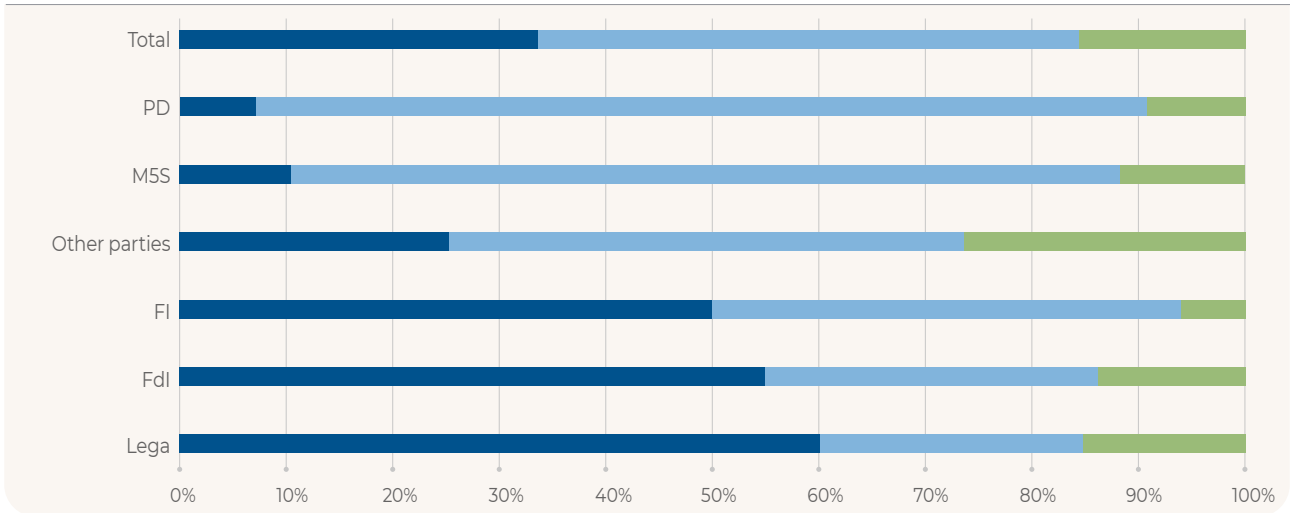
FRANCE



GERMANY

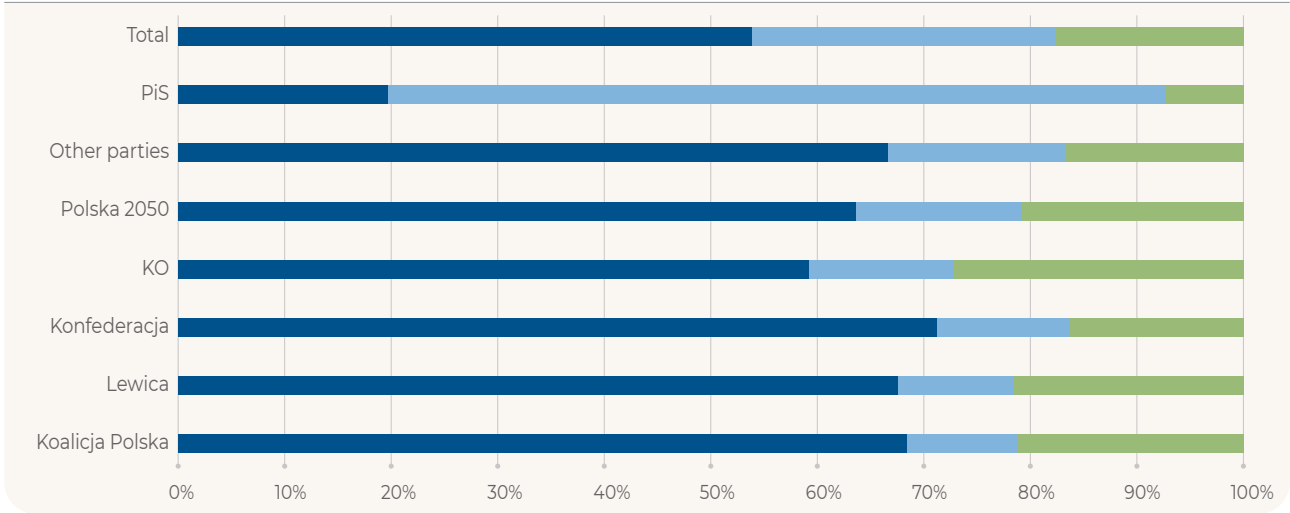


ITALY

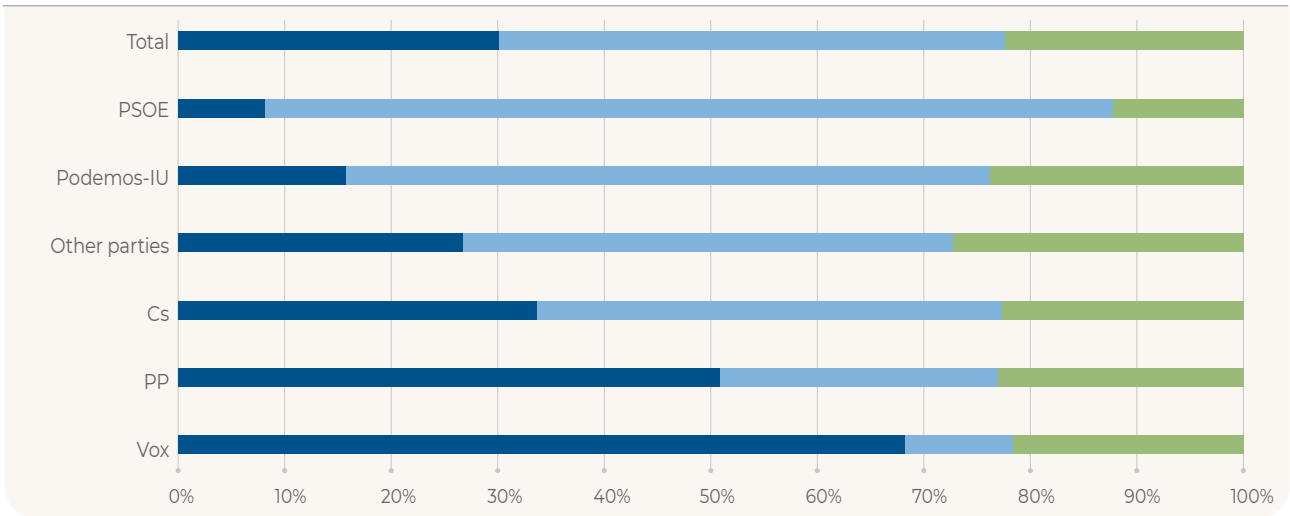


The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect jobs instead of public health

 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

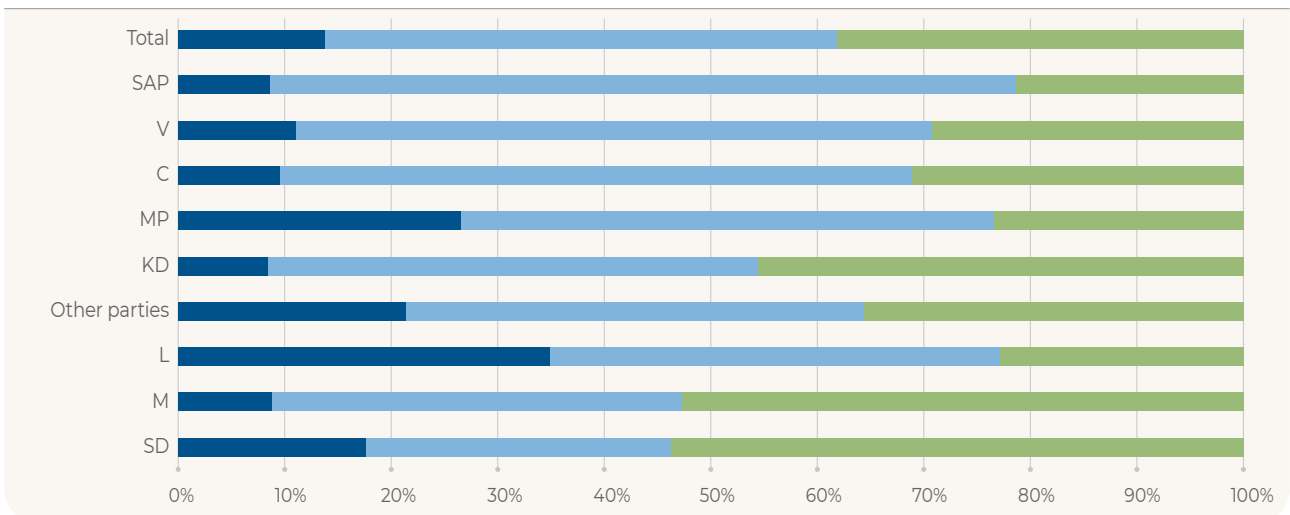
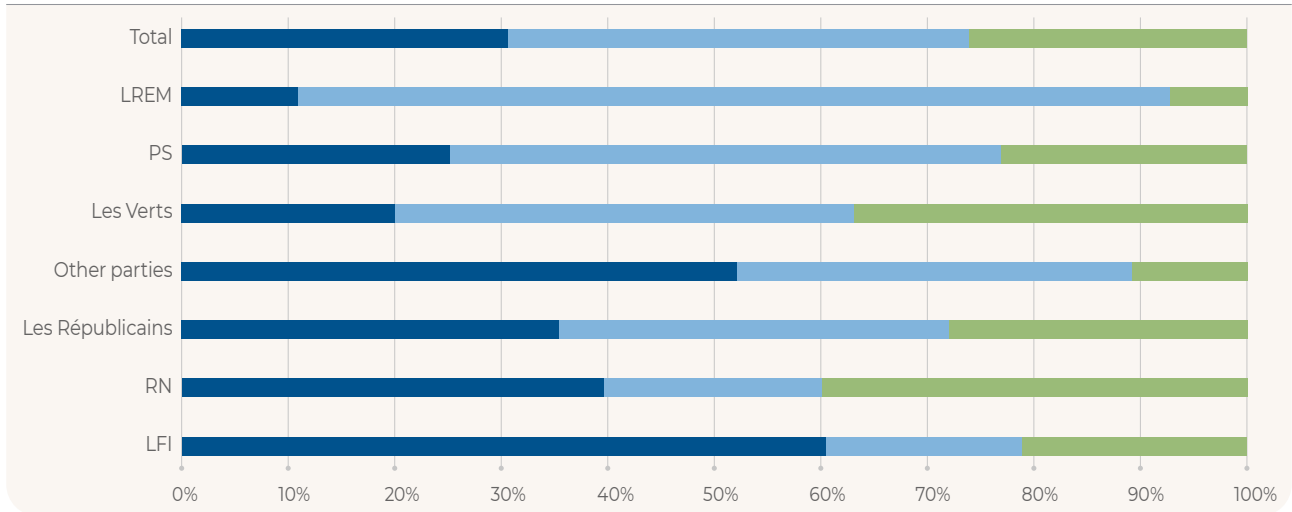




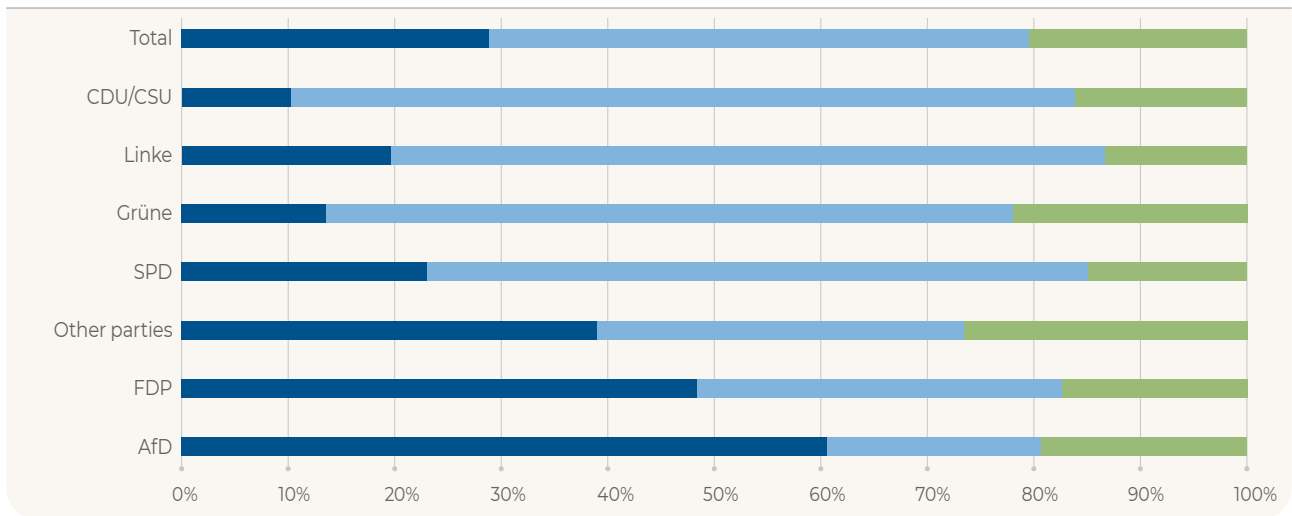
Figure 15 – Government balance – freedoms or public health

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to contain the pandemic that unduly restricted people's freedom
- They got the balance about right

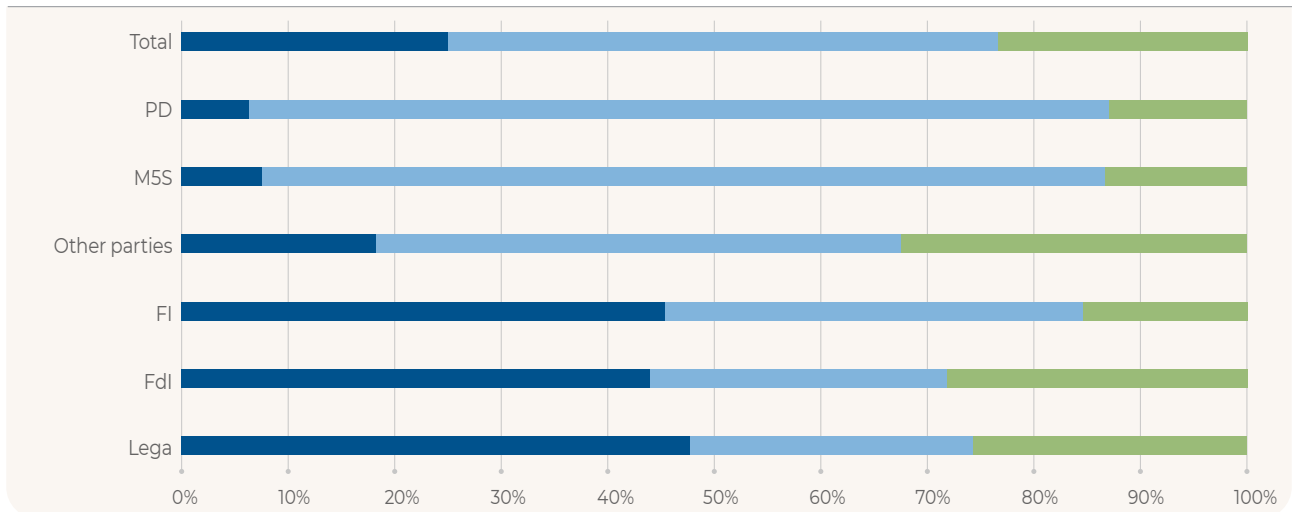
FRANCE



GERMANY

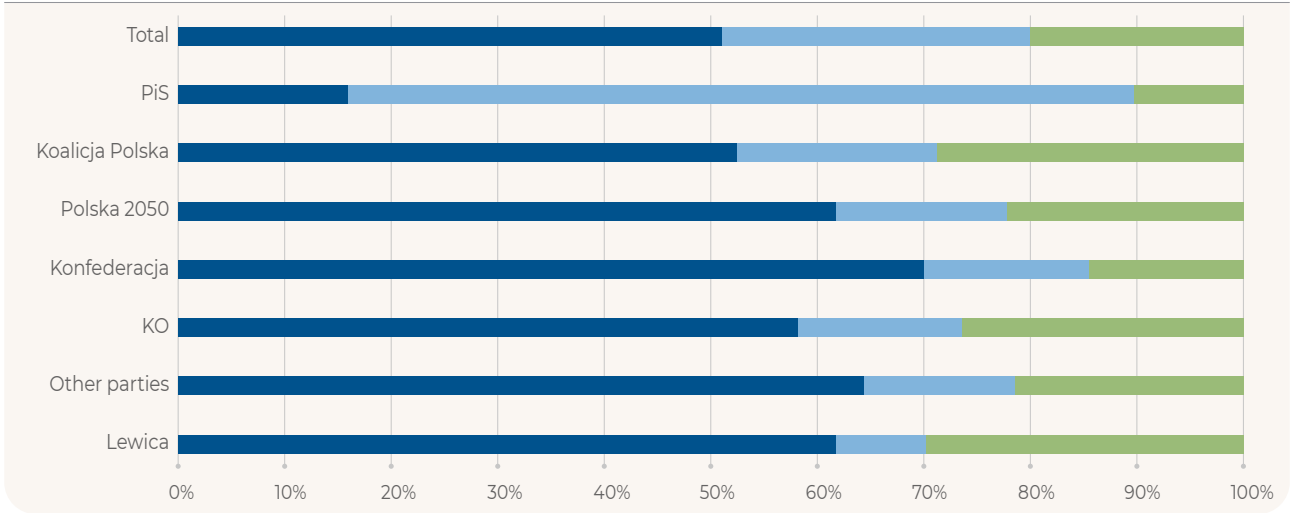


ITALY

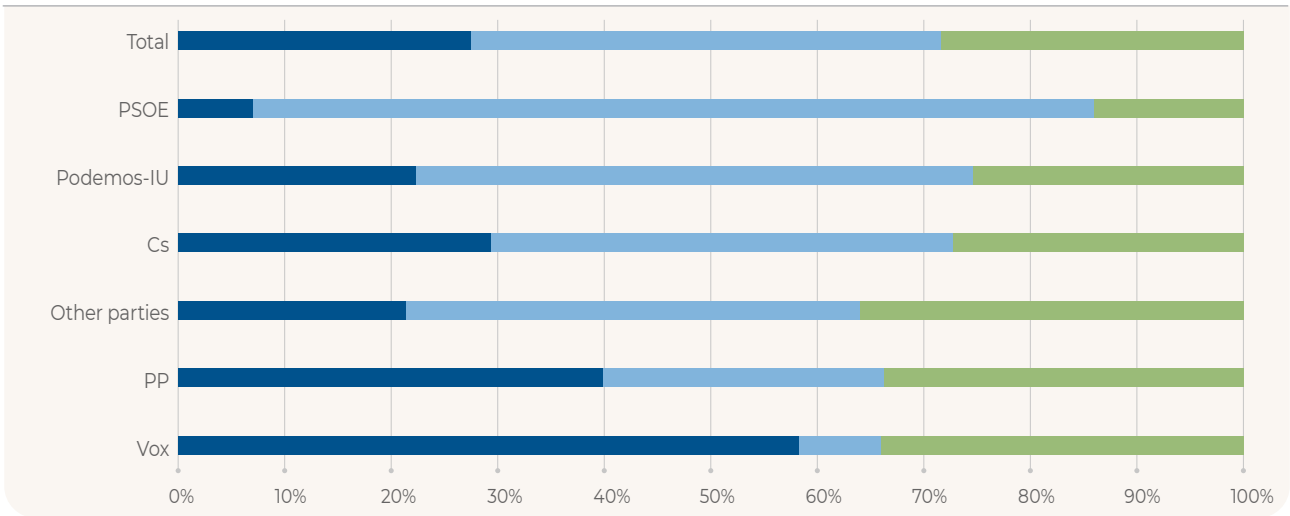


The government has taken exaggerated precautions to preserve people's freedom that irresponsibly worsened the public health

 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

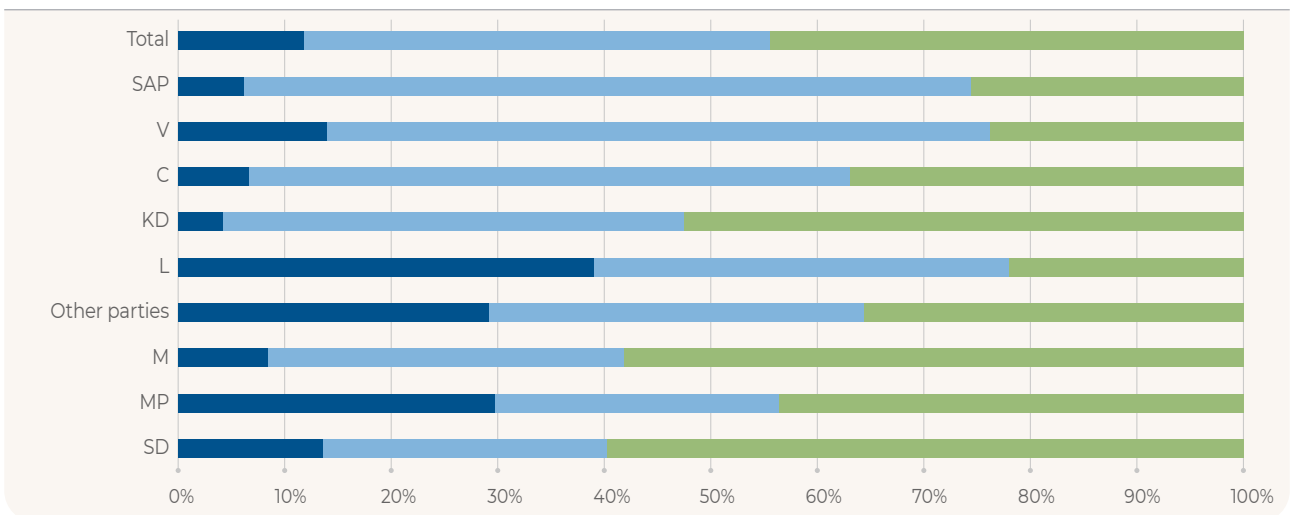


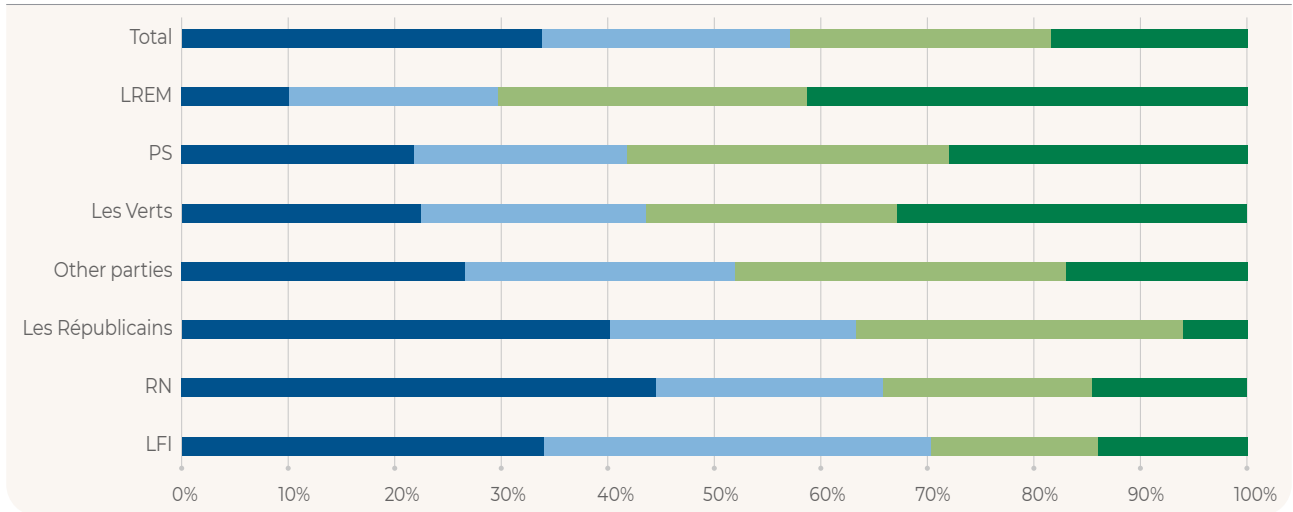


Figure 16 – Likelihood of getting vaccinated

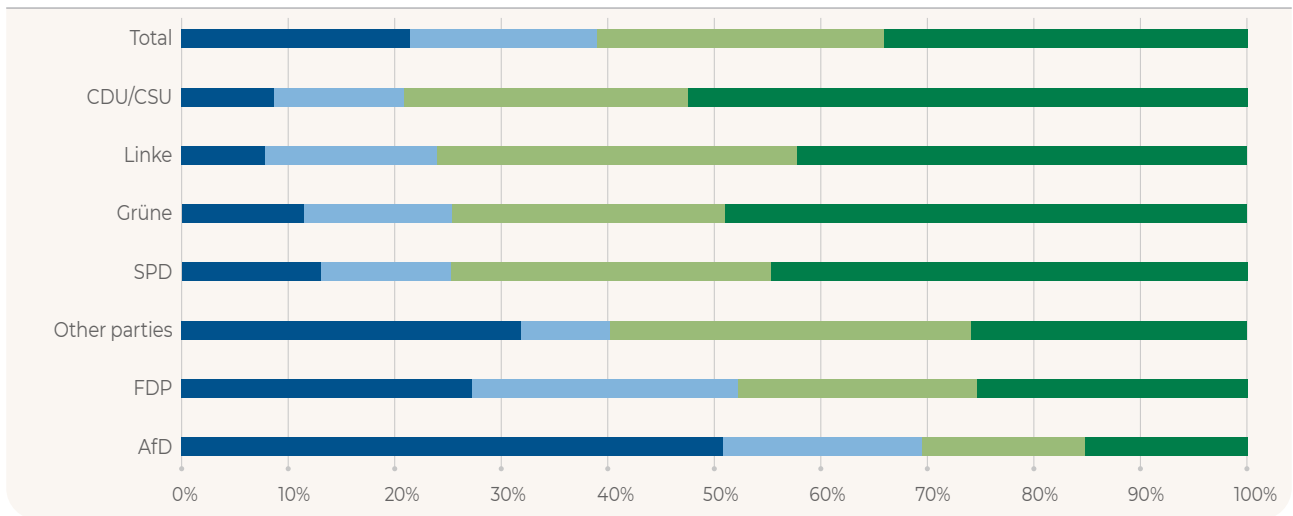
If the health authorities provide you an opportunity to get vaccinated, how likely is it that you will do so?

Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely

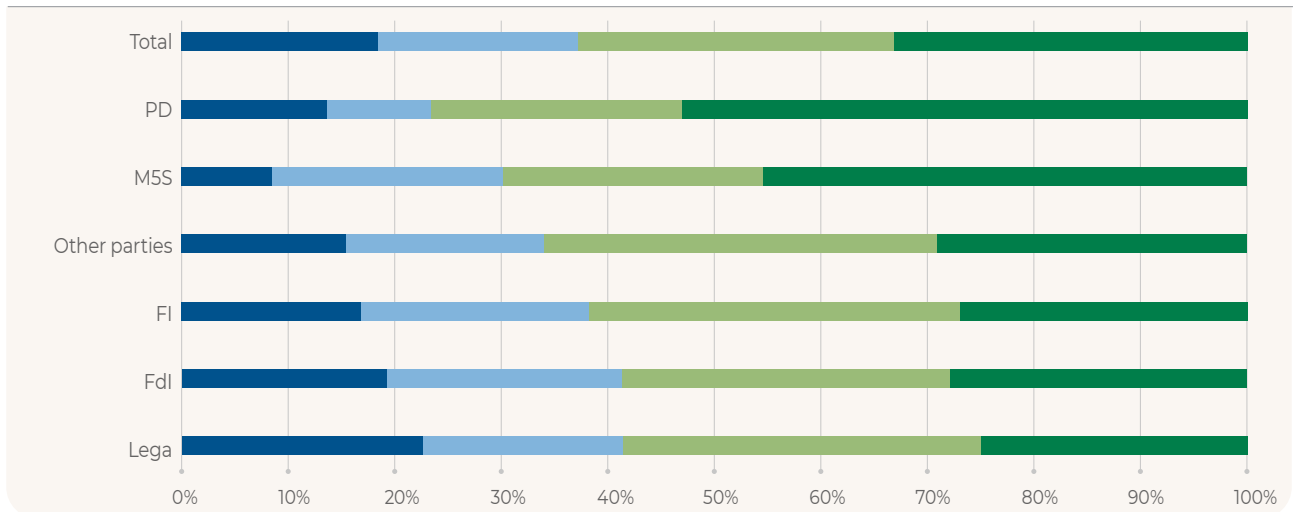
FRANCE



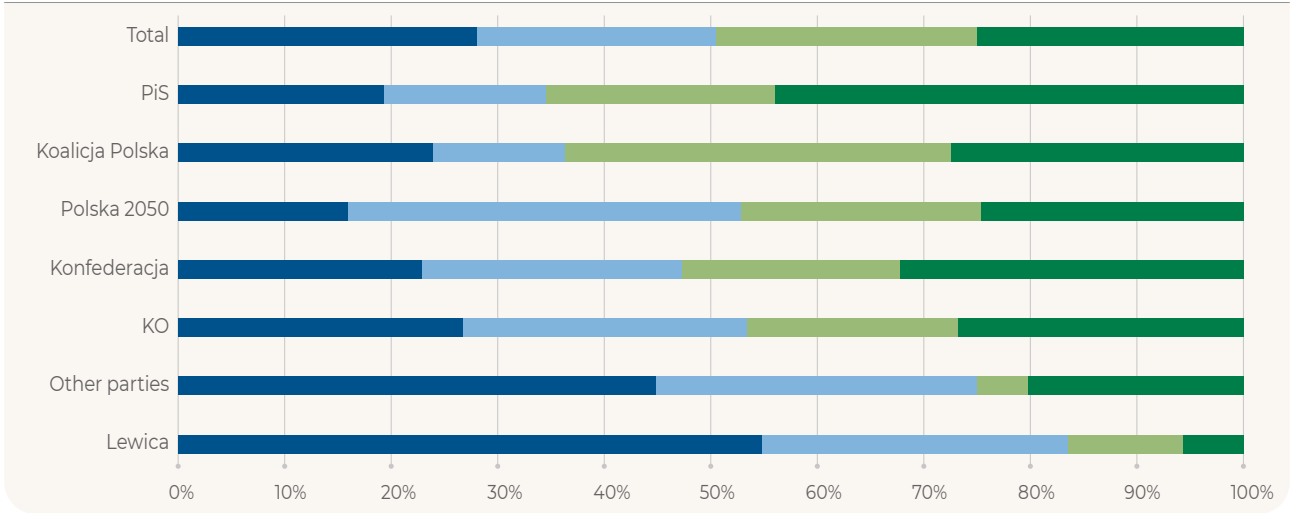
GERMANY



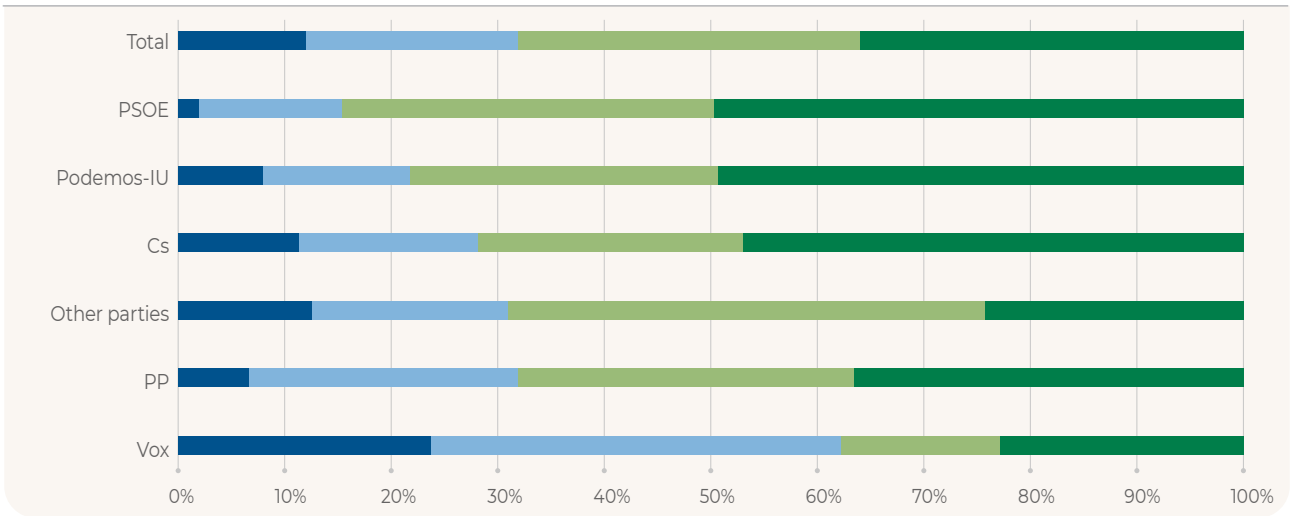
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

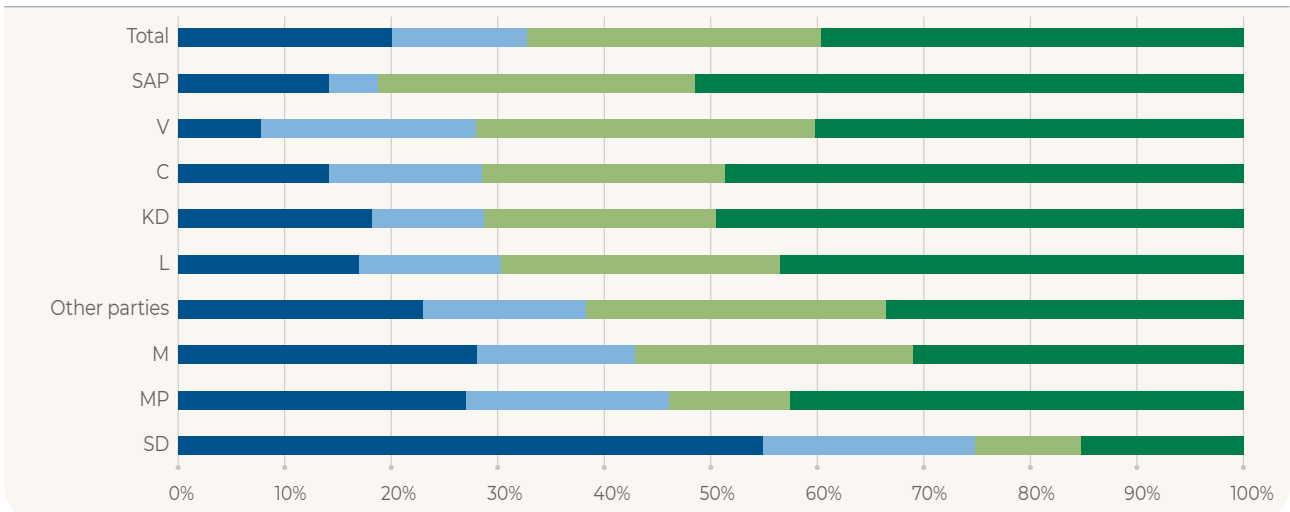
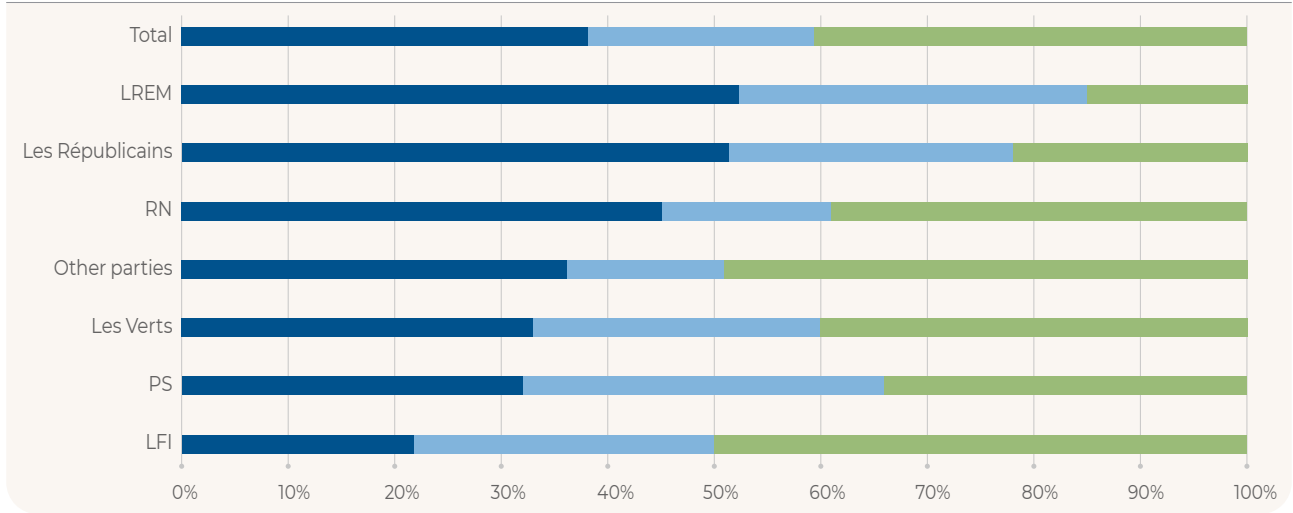




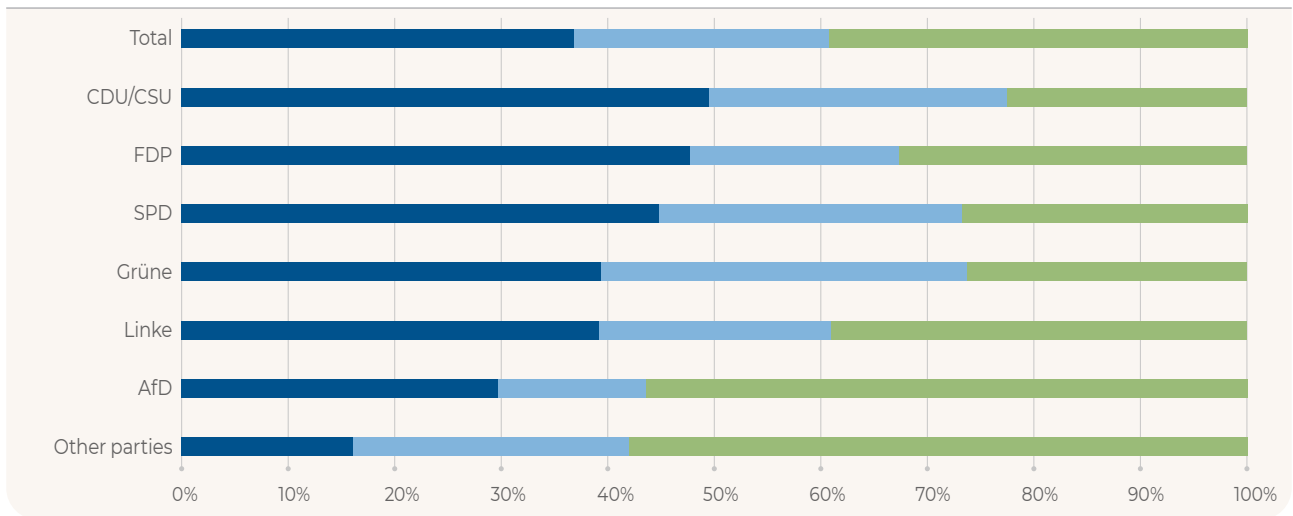
Figure 17 – Mandatory vaccination

- COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory for everyone
- COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory to access public places and social activities

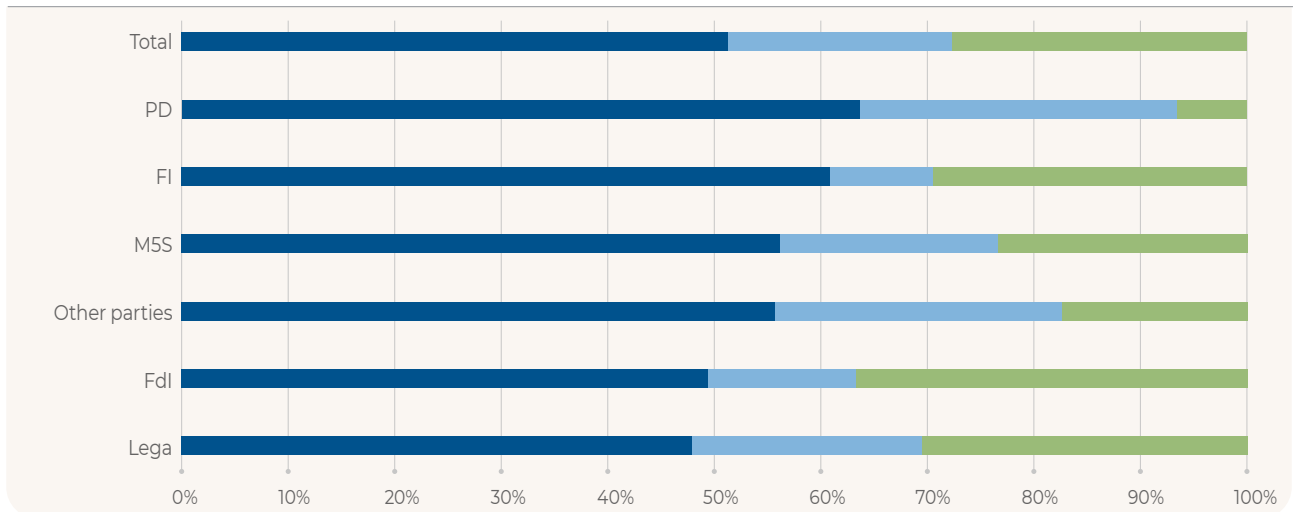
FRANCE



GERMANY

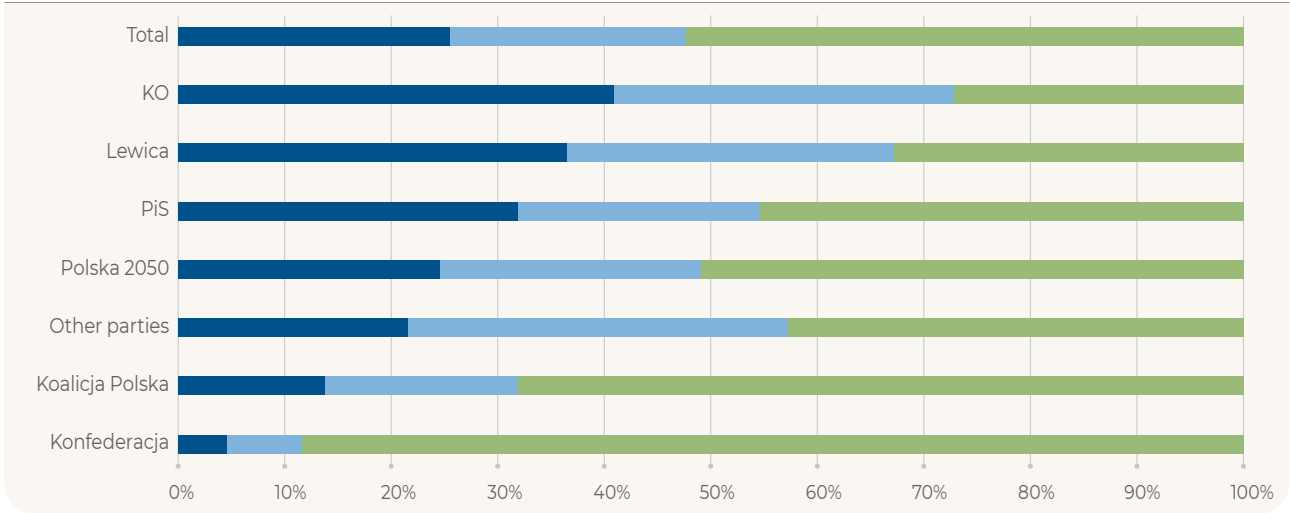


ITALY

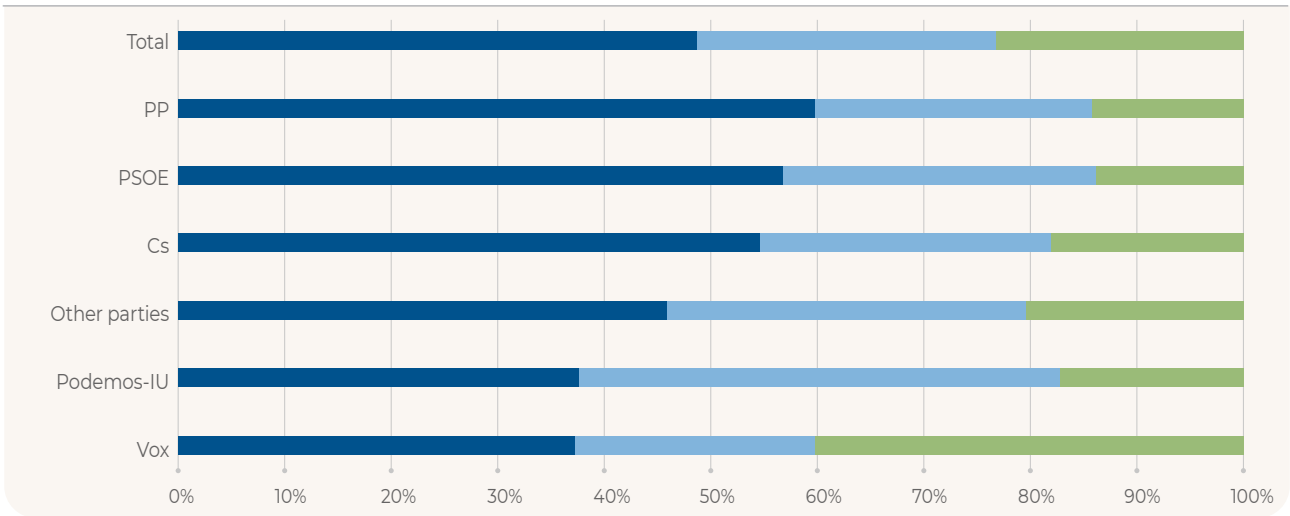


■ People should be able to choose whether to get vaccinated against COVID-19 or not without consequences

 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

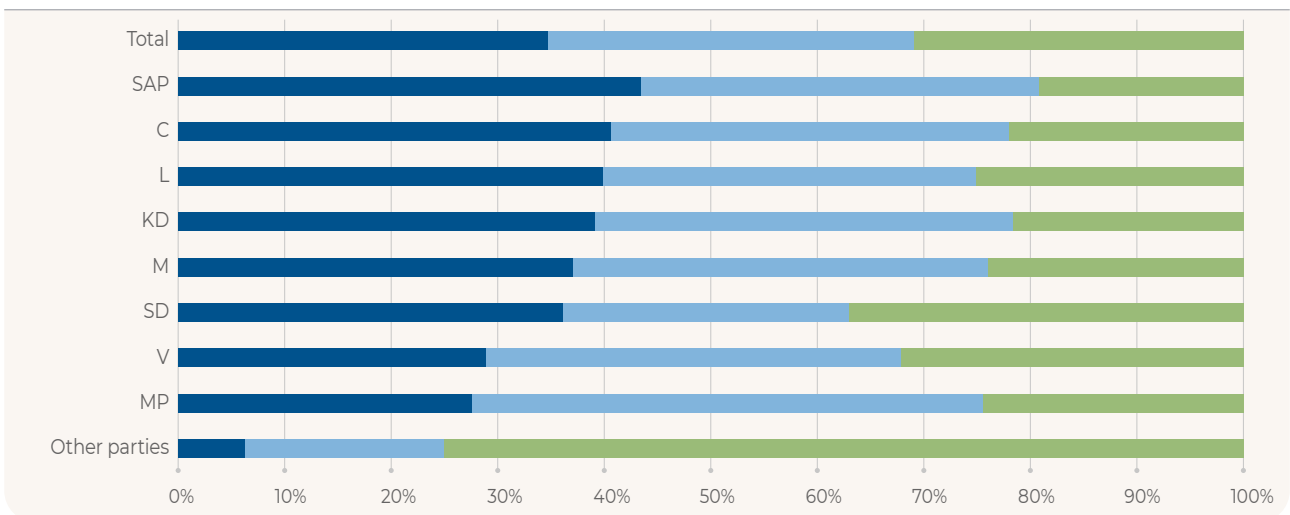
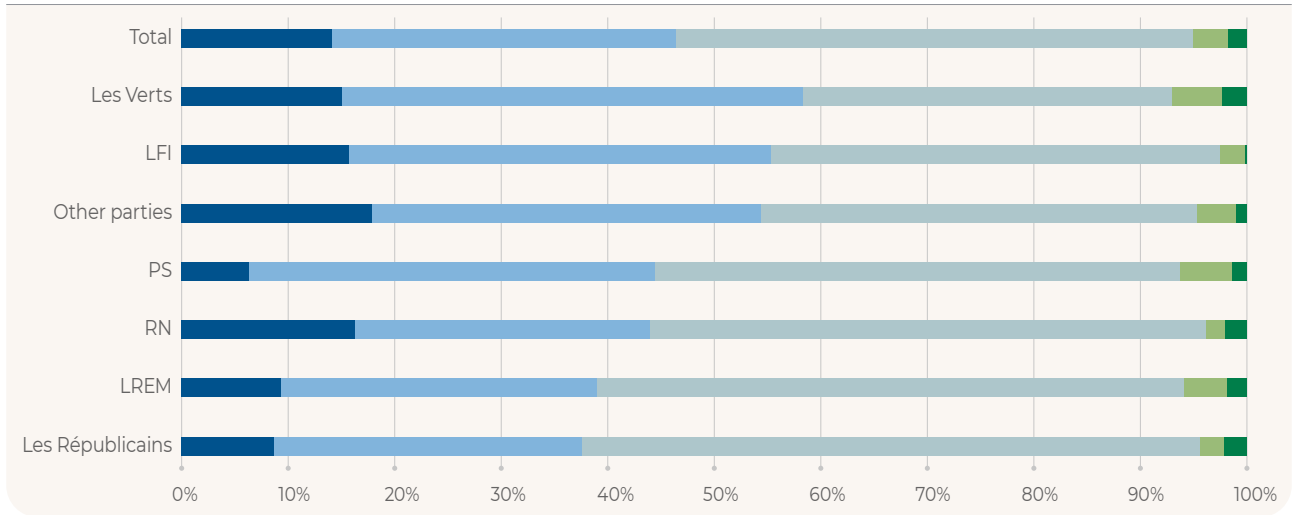




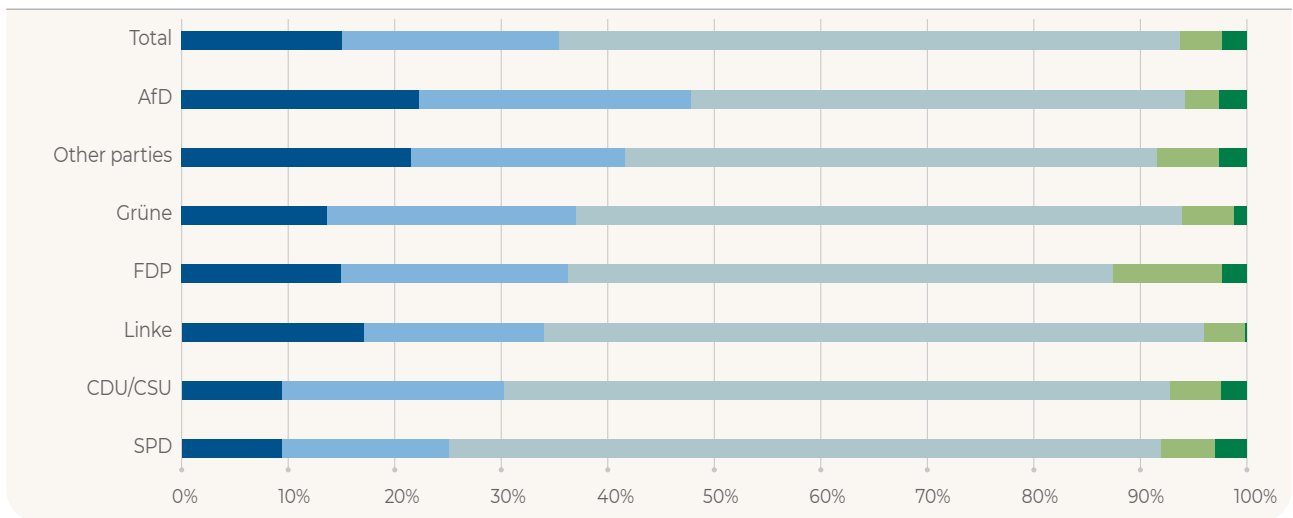
Figure 18 – How would you assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on your working conditions?

My working conditions ... :
■ Got much worse ■ Remained the same ■ Improved a lot
■ Got somewhat worse ■ Improved somewhat

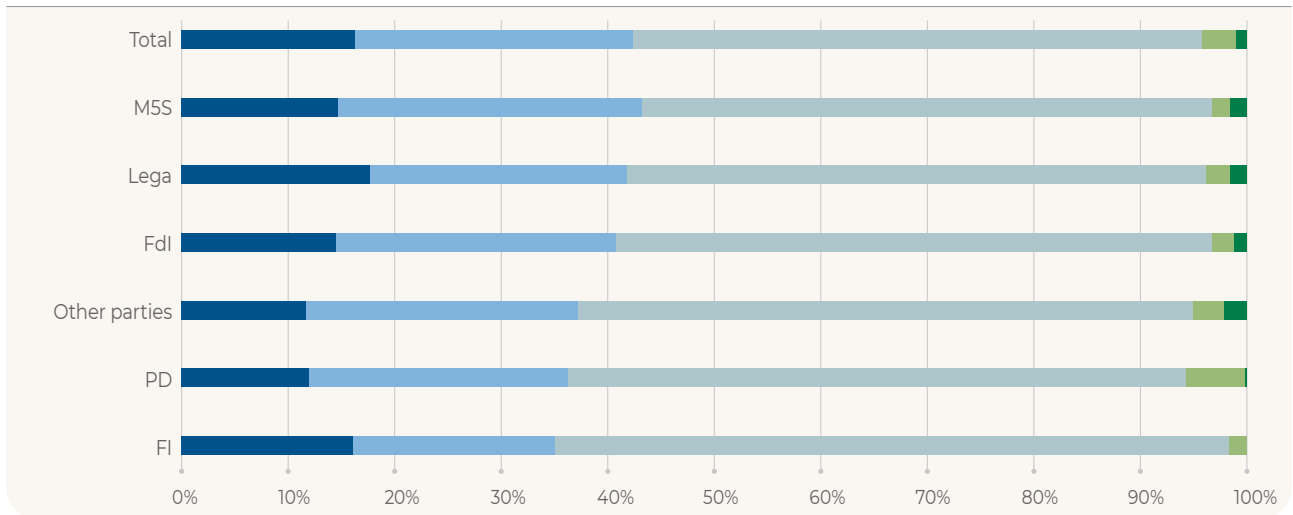
FRANCE



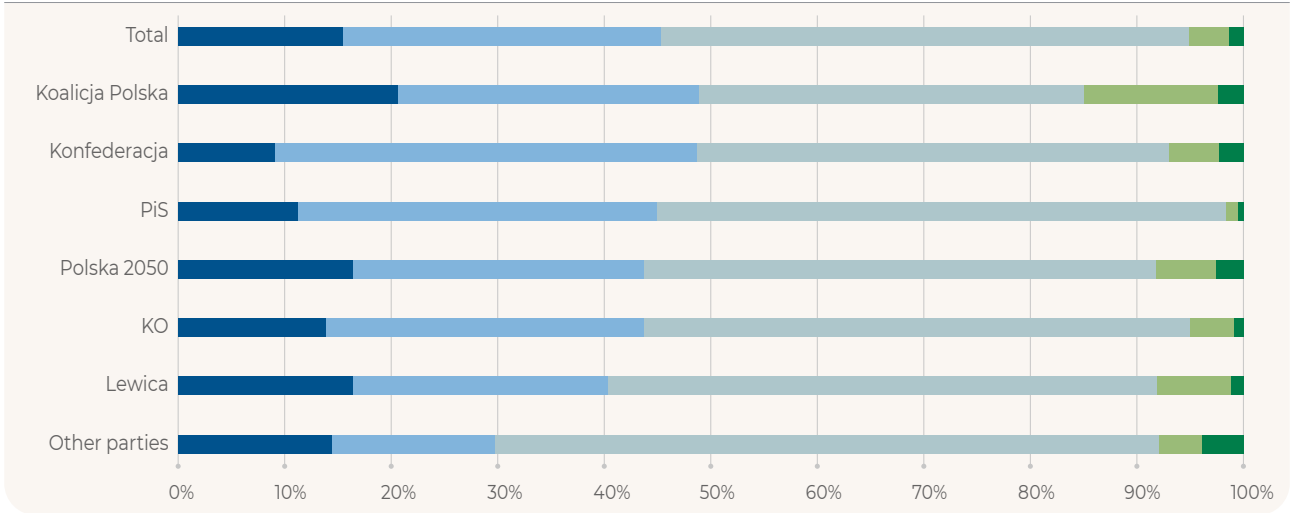
GERMANY



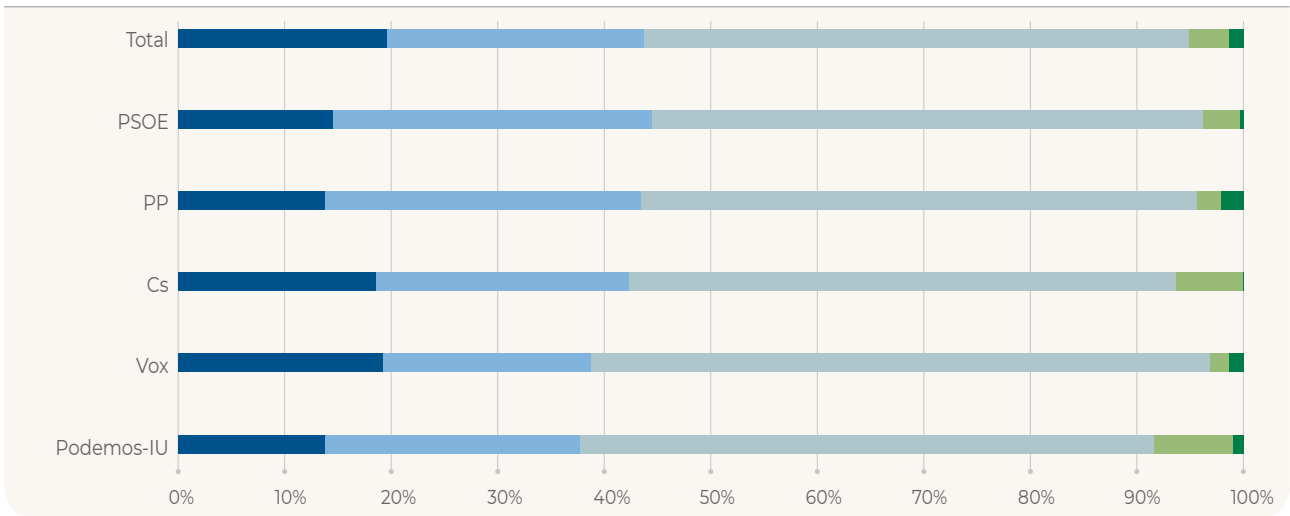
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

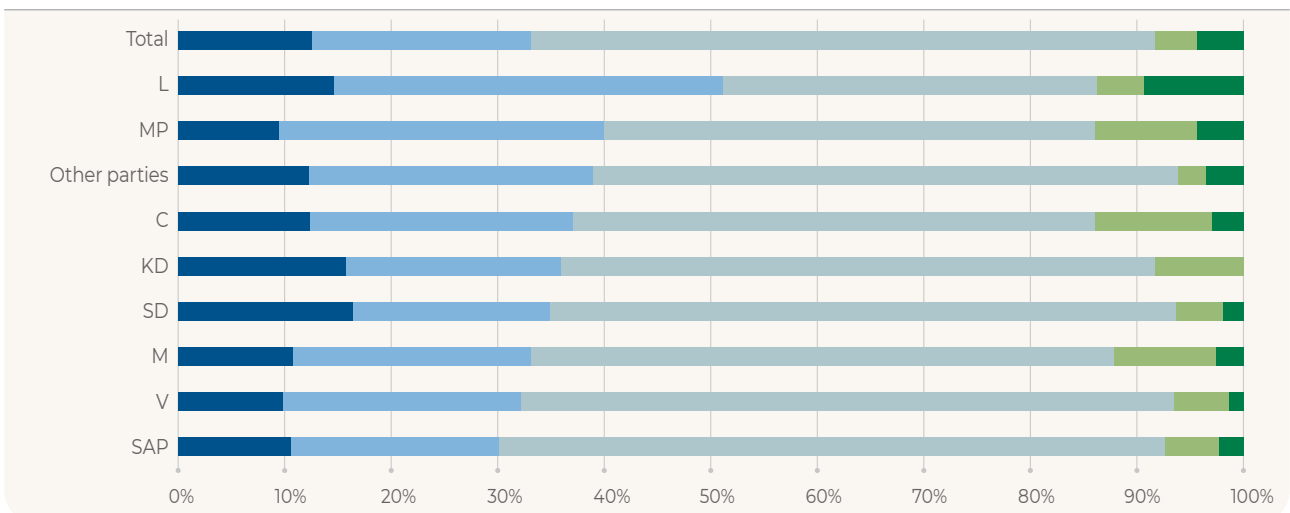


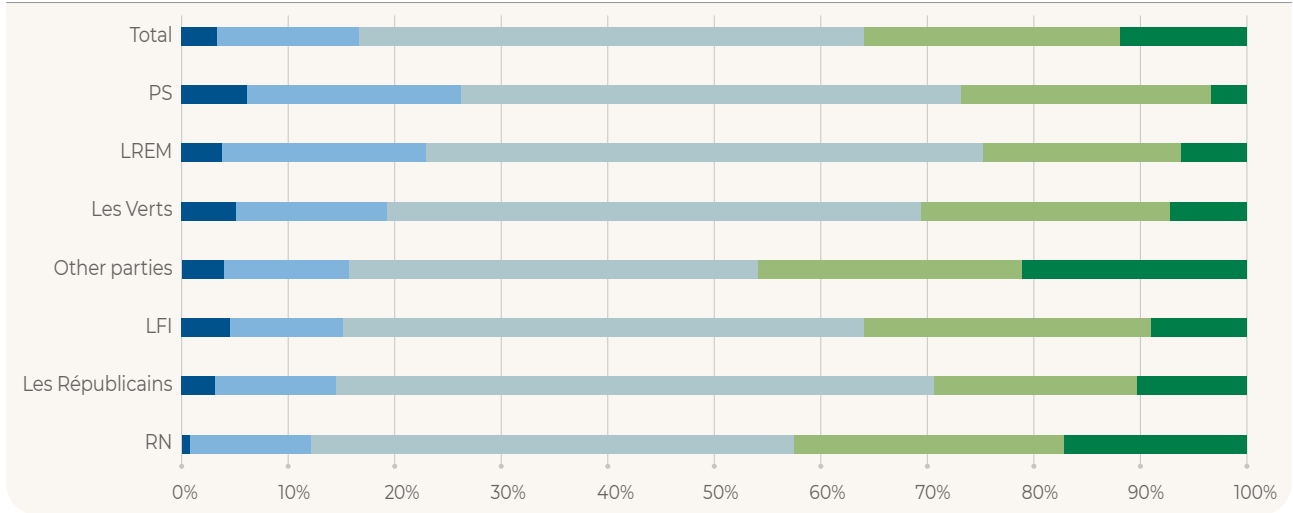


Figure 19 – Economic outlook for the next 12 months

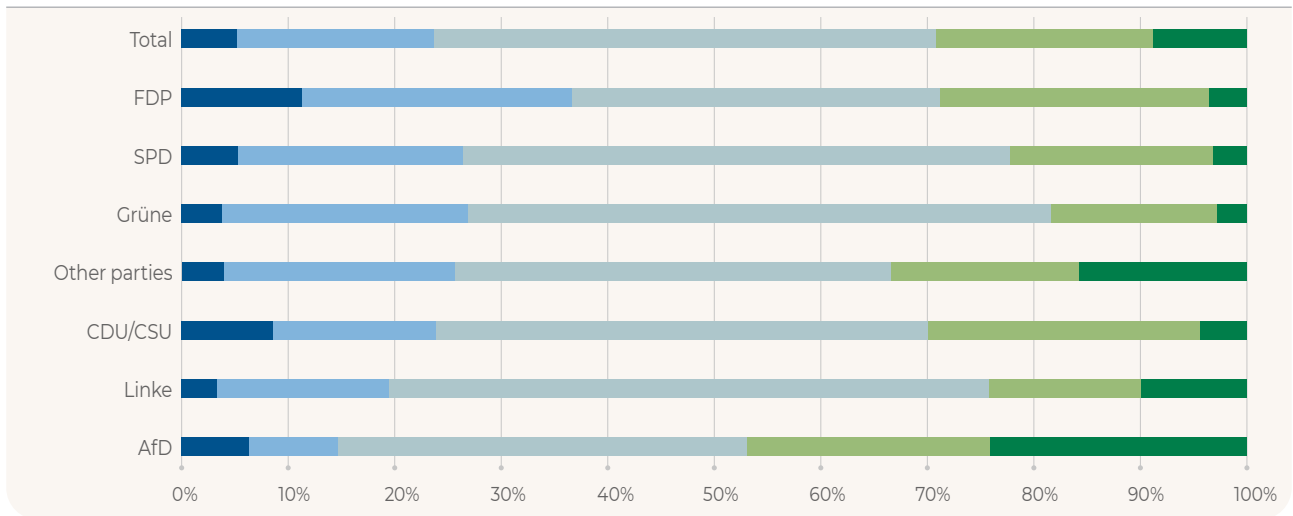
And thinking about the next 12 months, do you think that your own economic situation ...

Will get a lot better Will get a little better Will stay the same Will get a little worse Will get a lot worse

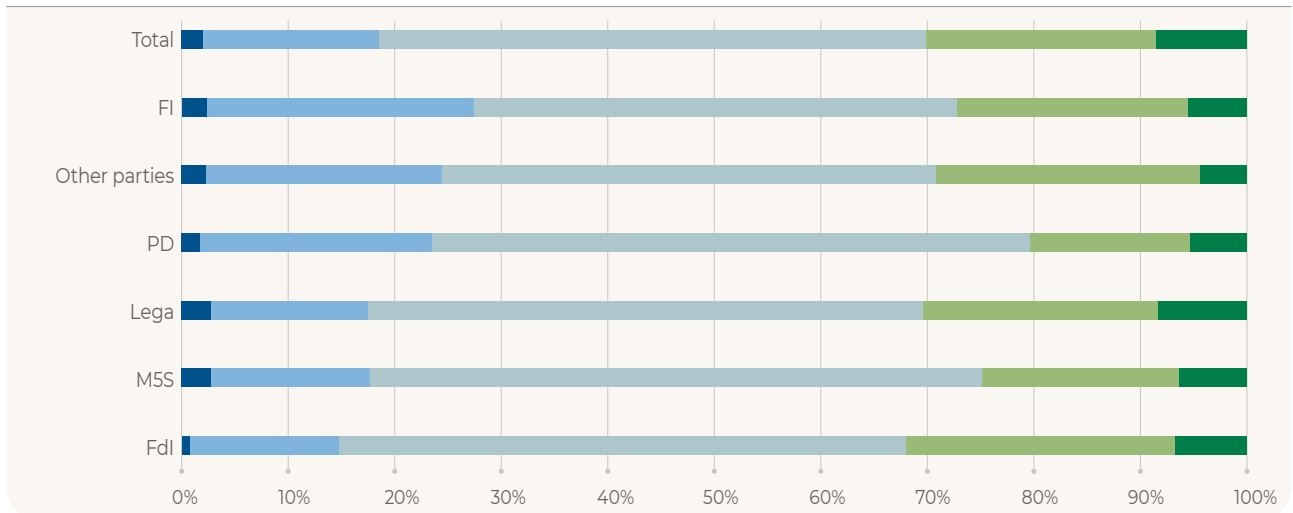
FRANCE



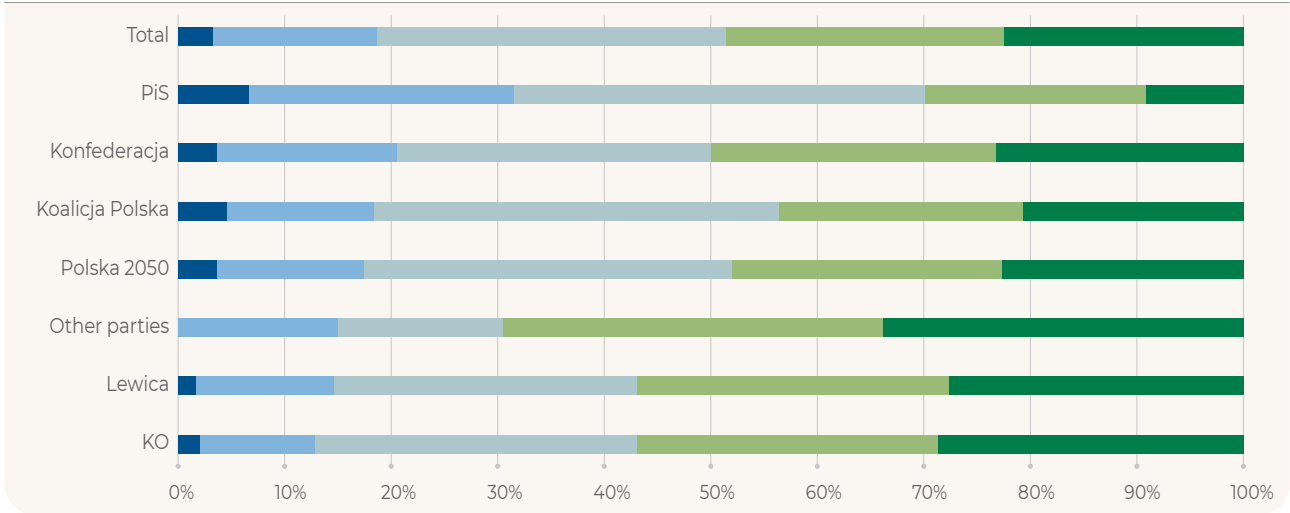
GERMANY



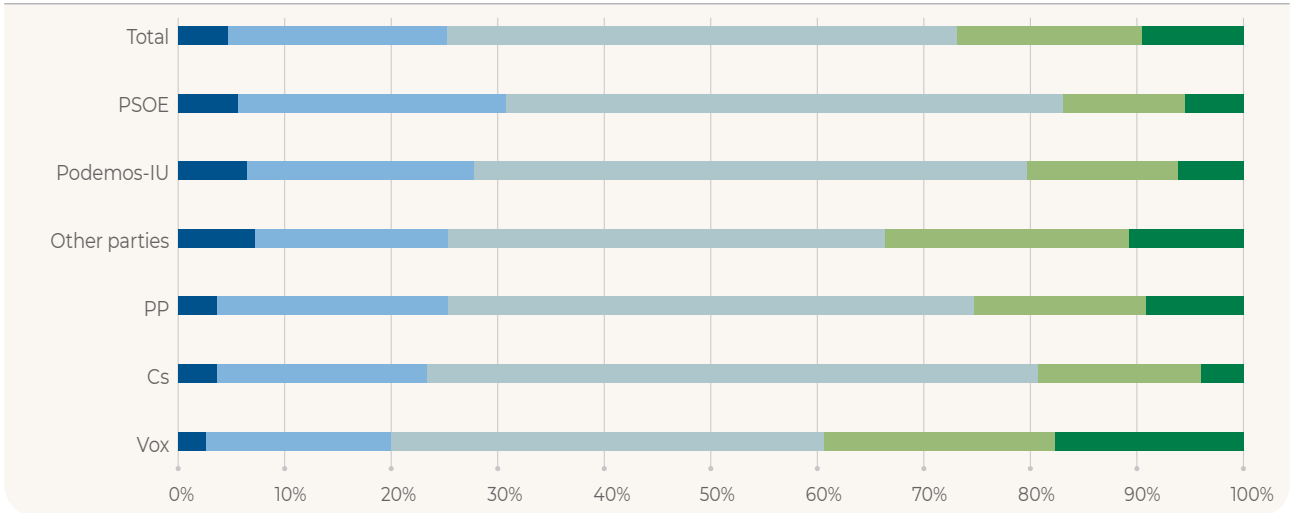
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

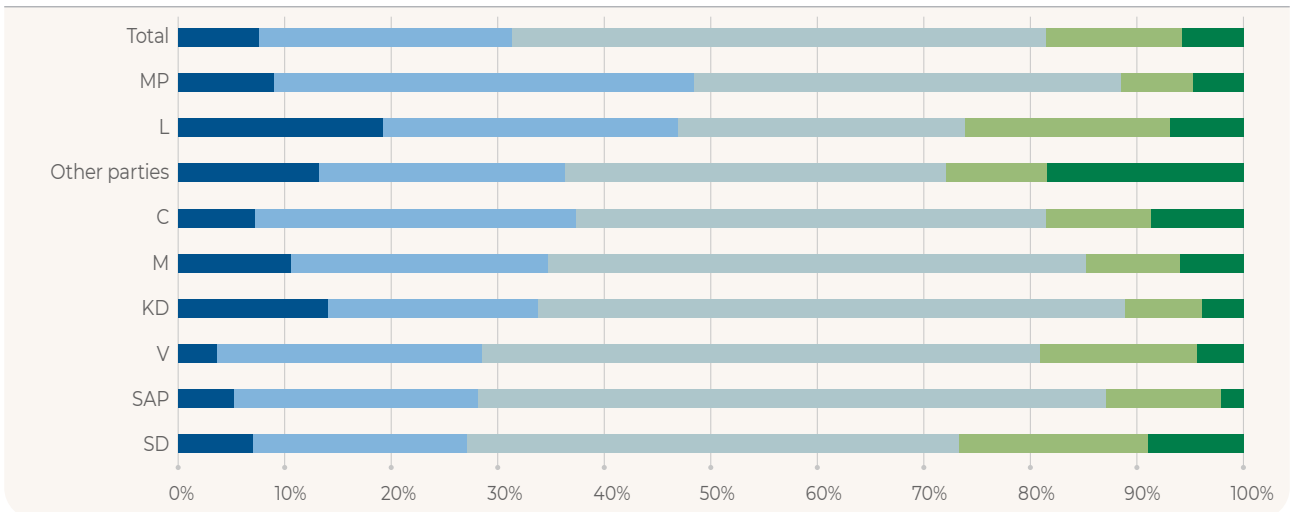


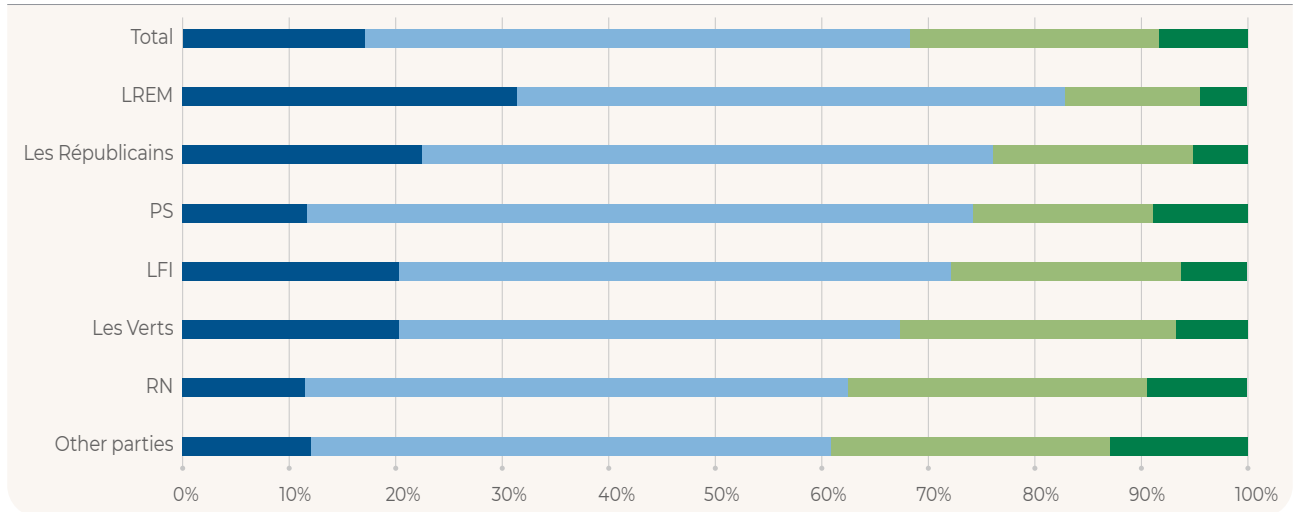


Figure 20 – Income situation

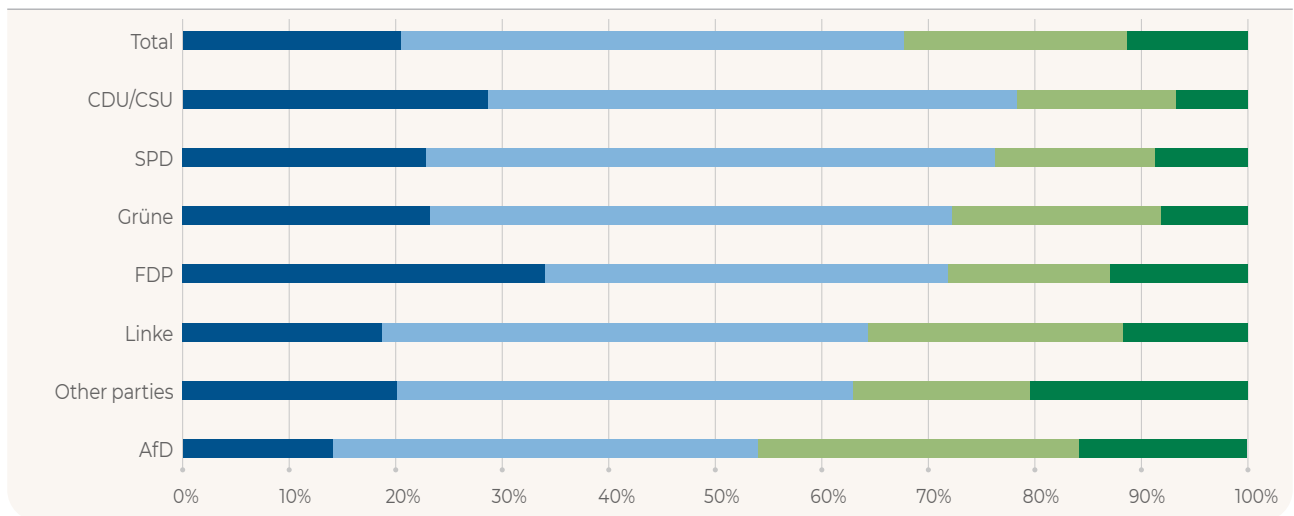
Which of these descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?

Living comfortably Coping Finding it difficult Finding it very difficult

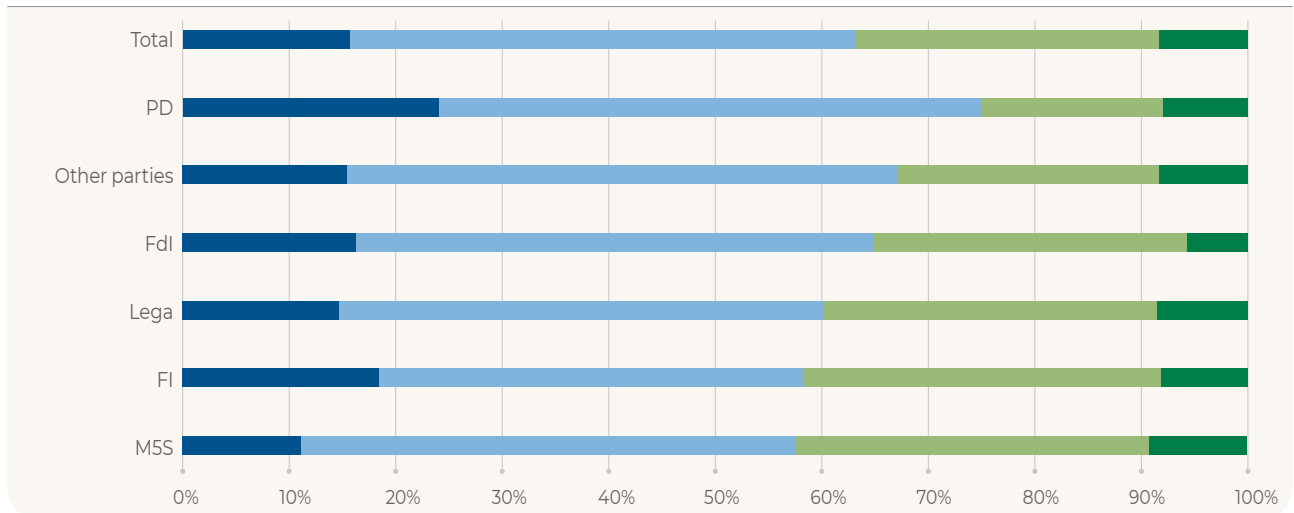
FRANCE



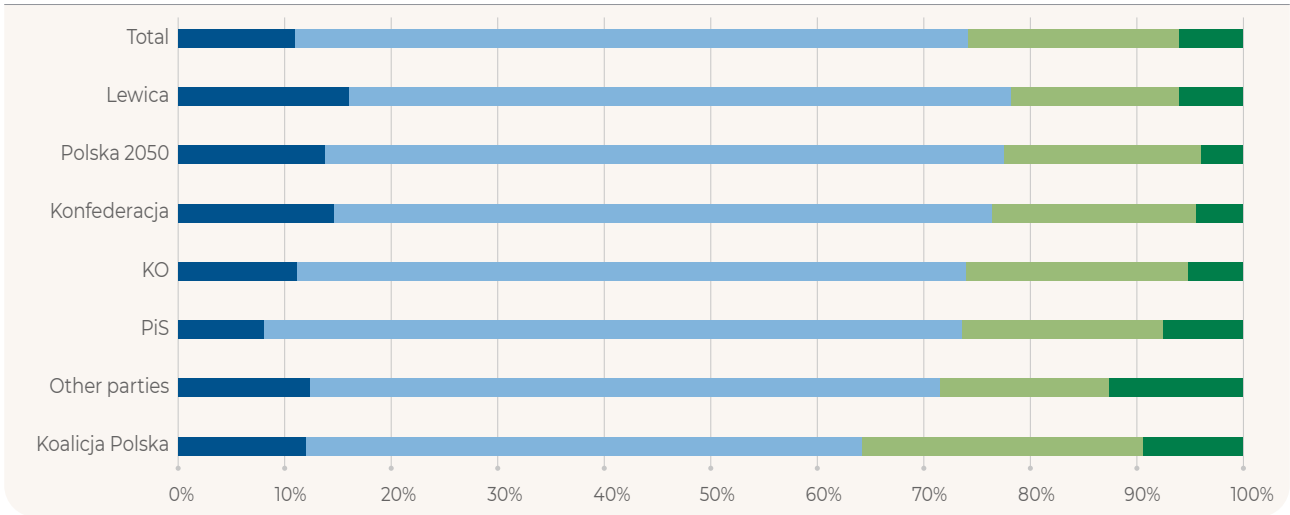
GERMANY



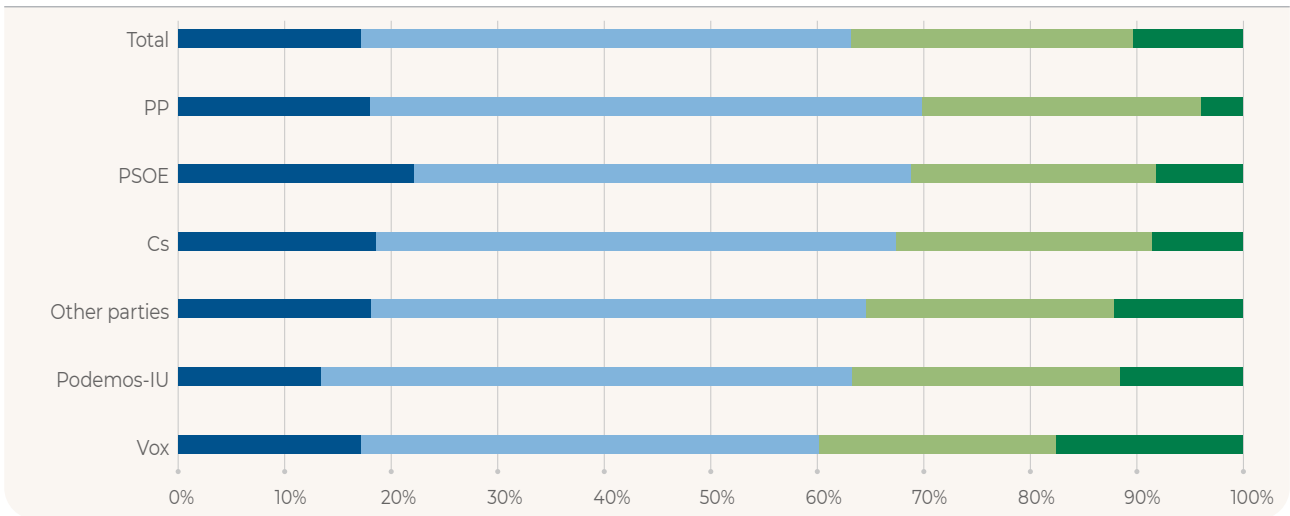
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

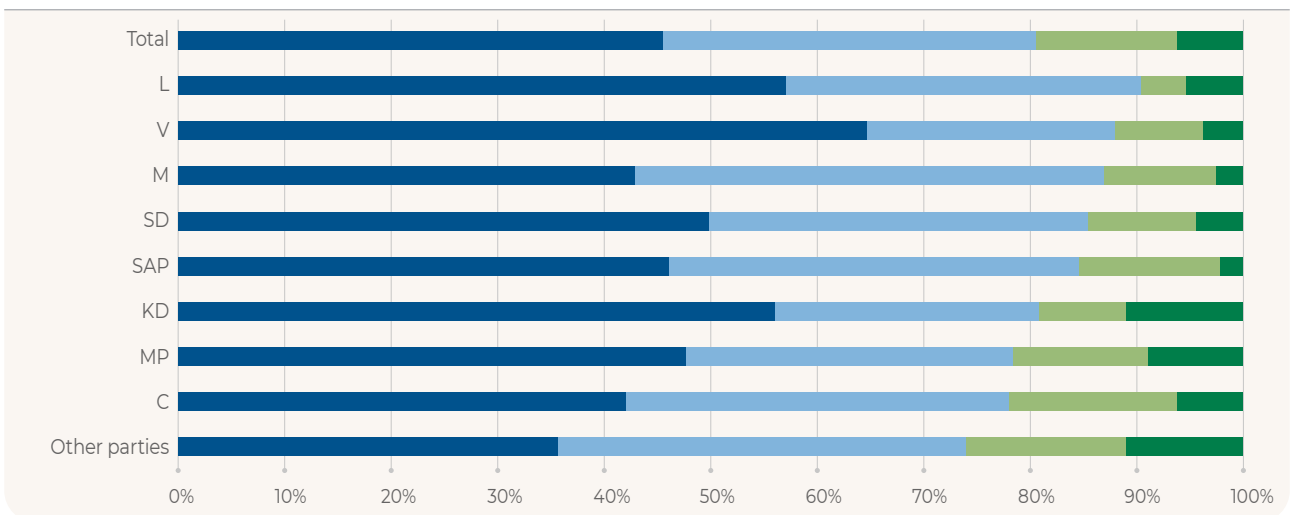
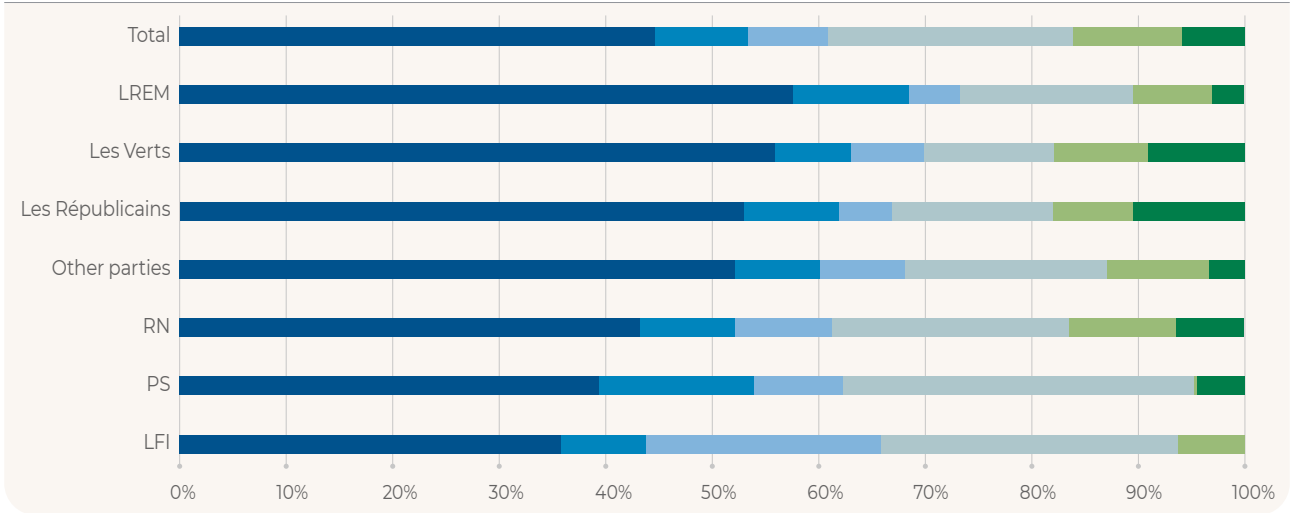




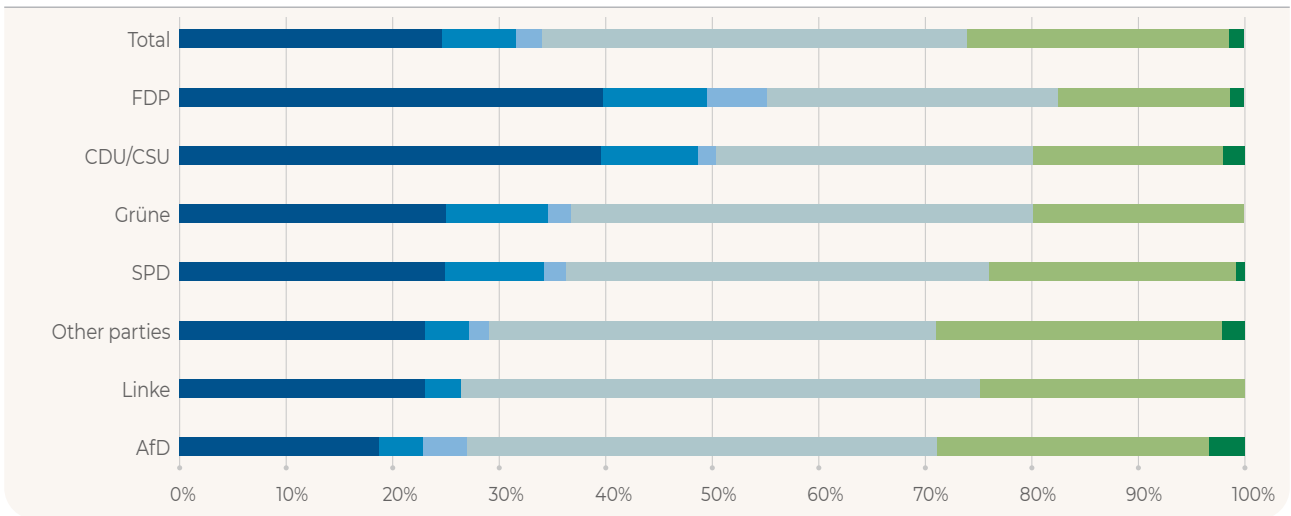
Figure 21 – Homeownership

- Own home outright
- Own home on mortgage
- Rented from local authority
- Rented from private landlord/owner
- Rented from a housing association
- Other

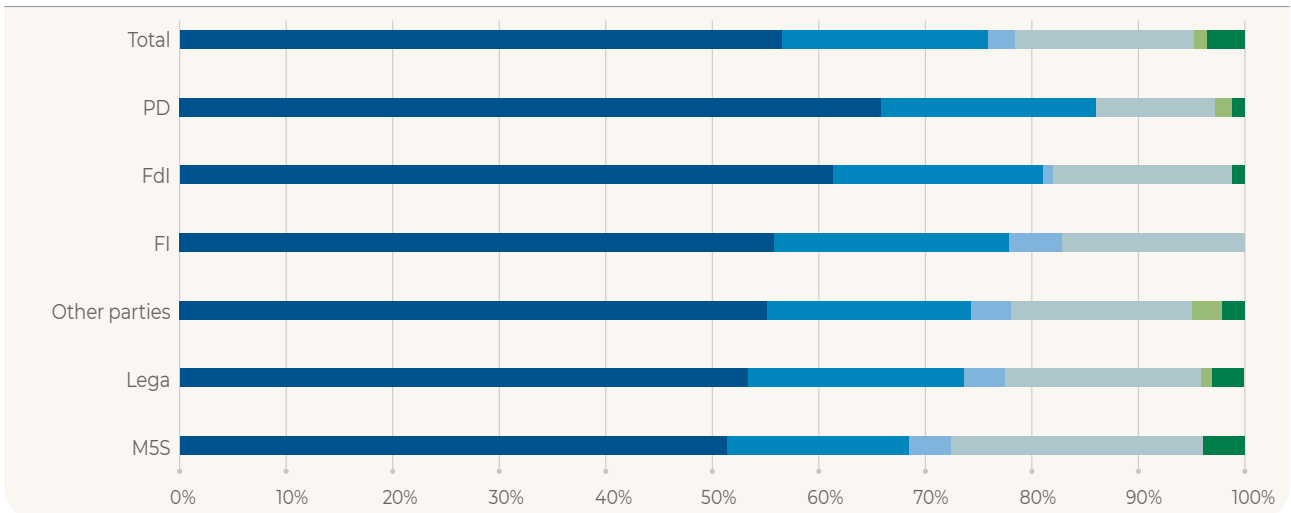
FRANCE



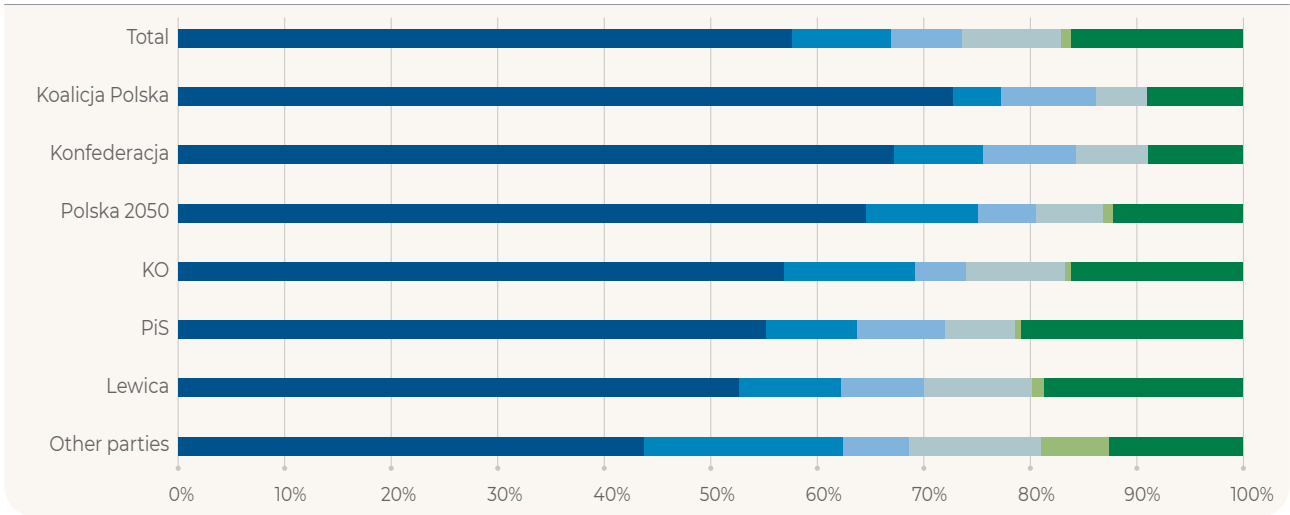
GERMANY



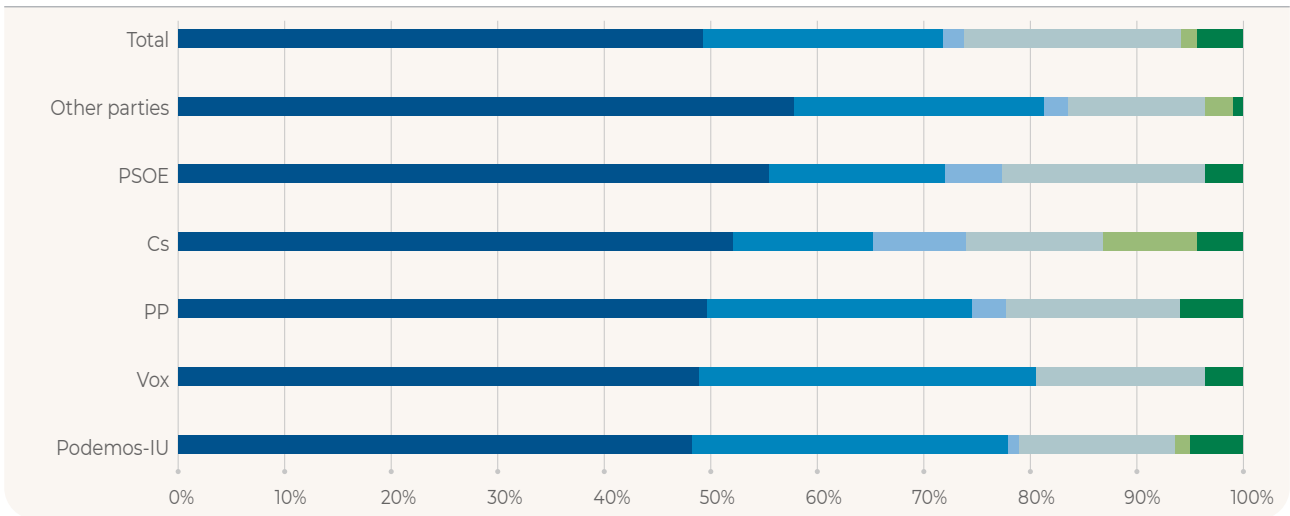
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

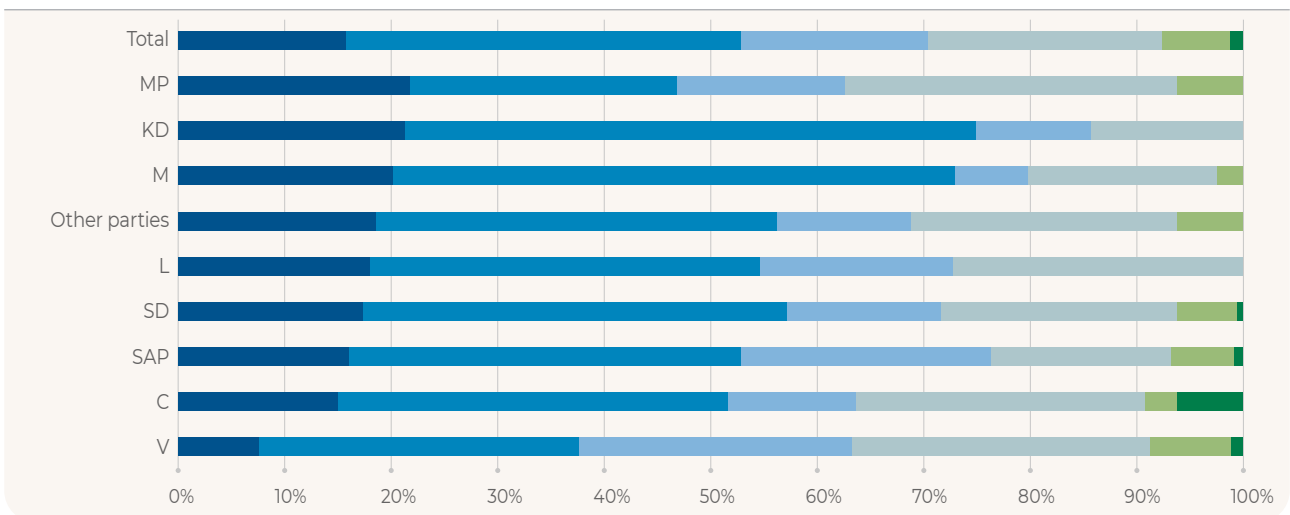


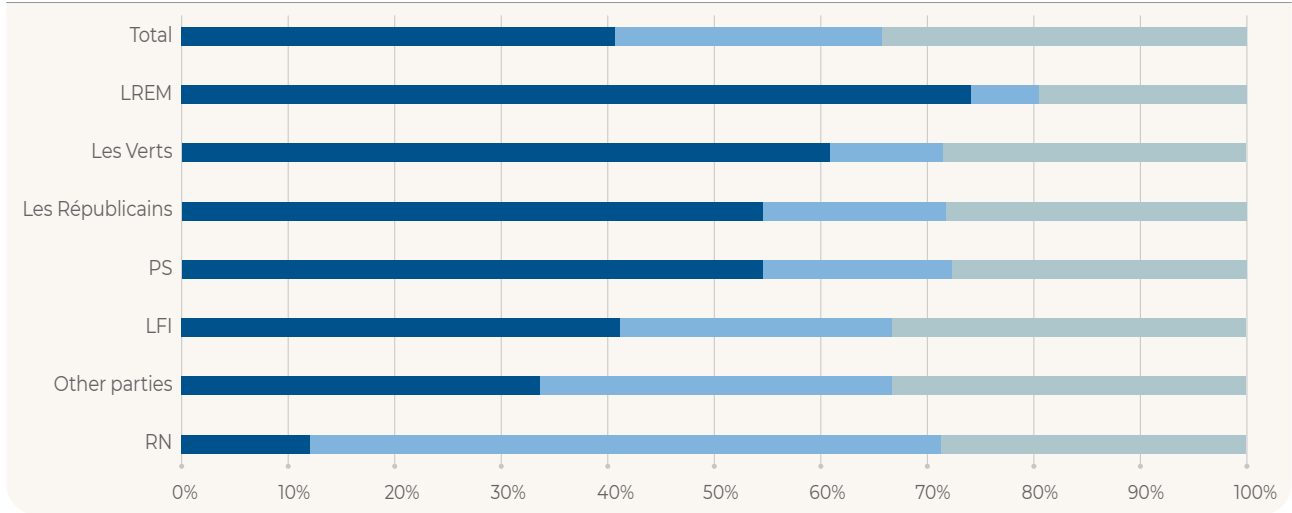


Figure 22 – Membership in the EU

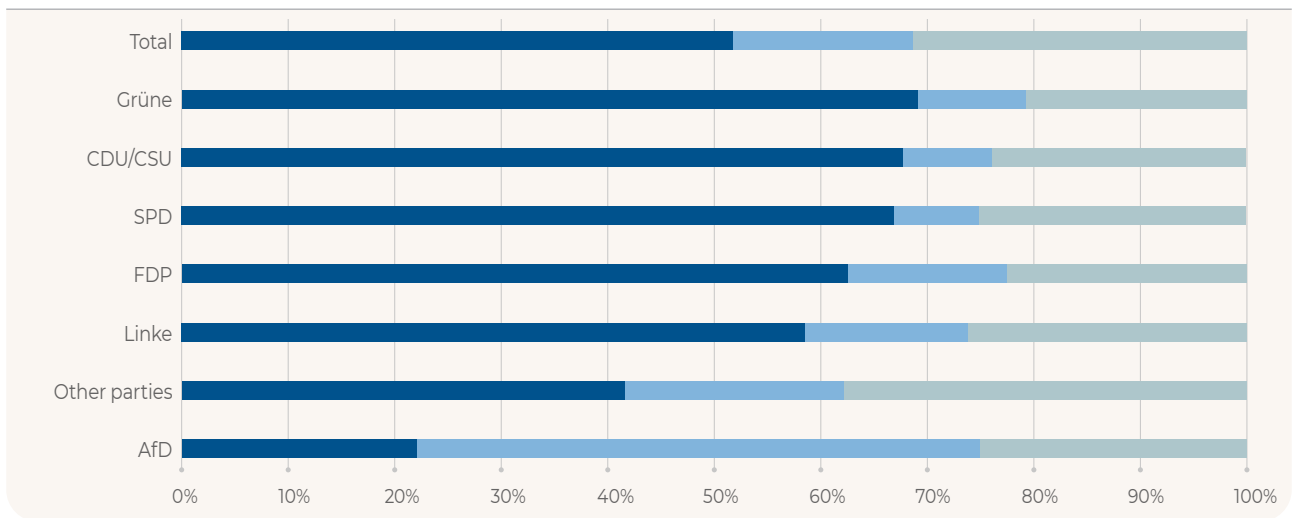
Generally speaking, do you think that your country's membership of the EU is ...?

■ A good thing ■ A bad thing ■ Neither good nor bad

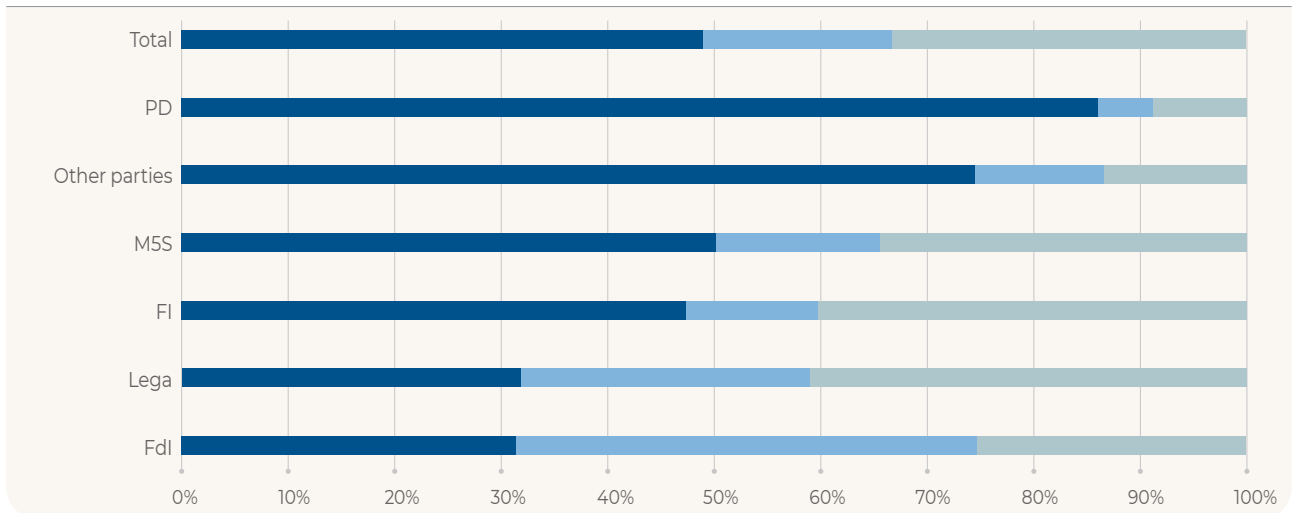
 FRANCE



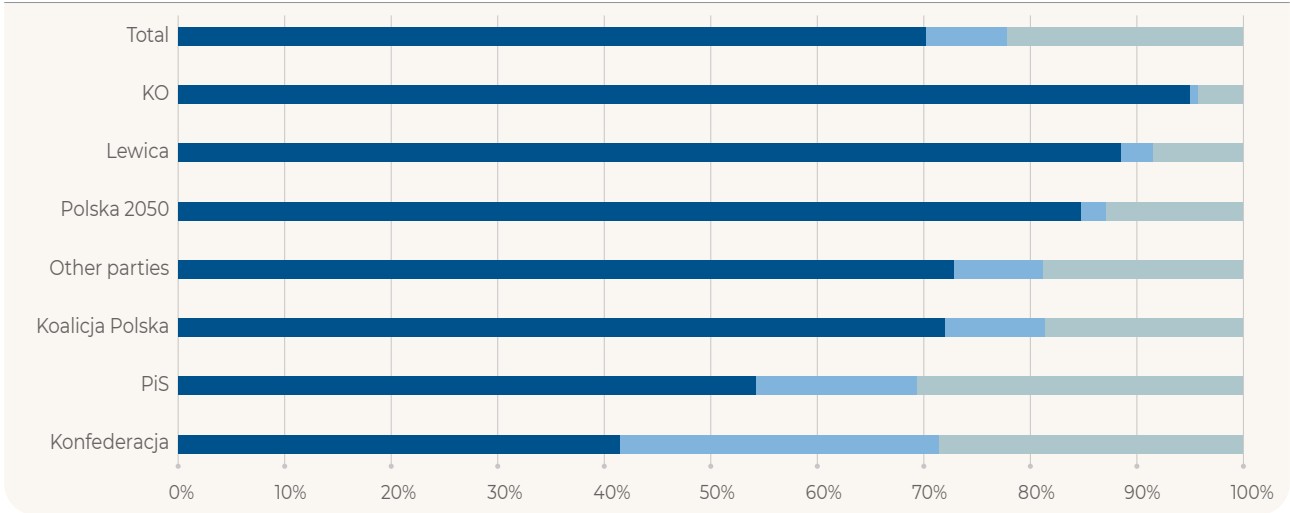
 GERMANY



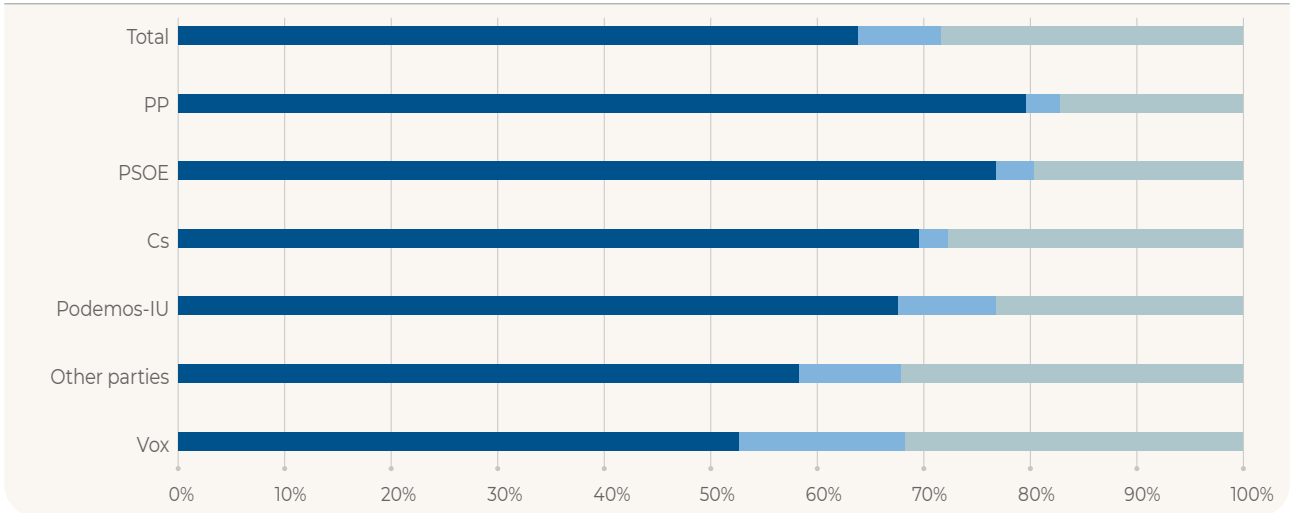
 ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

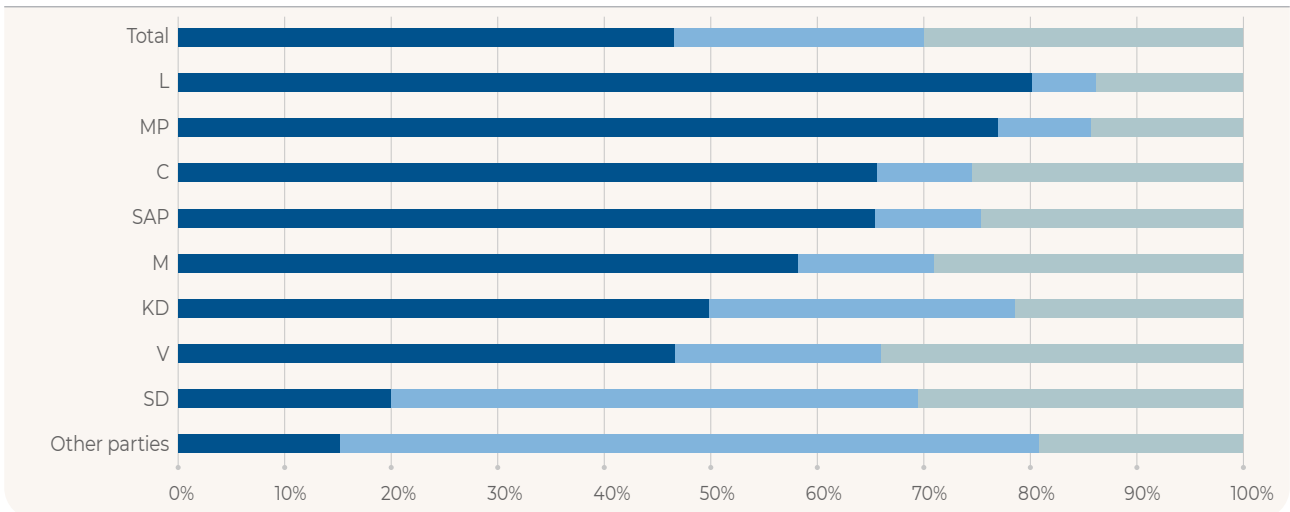
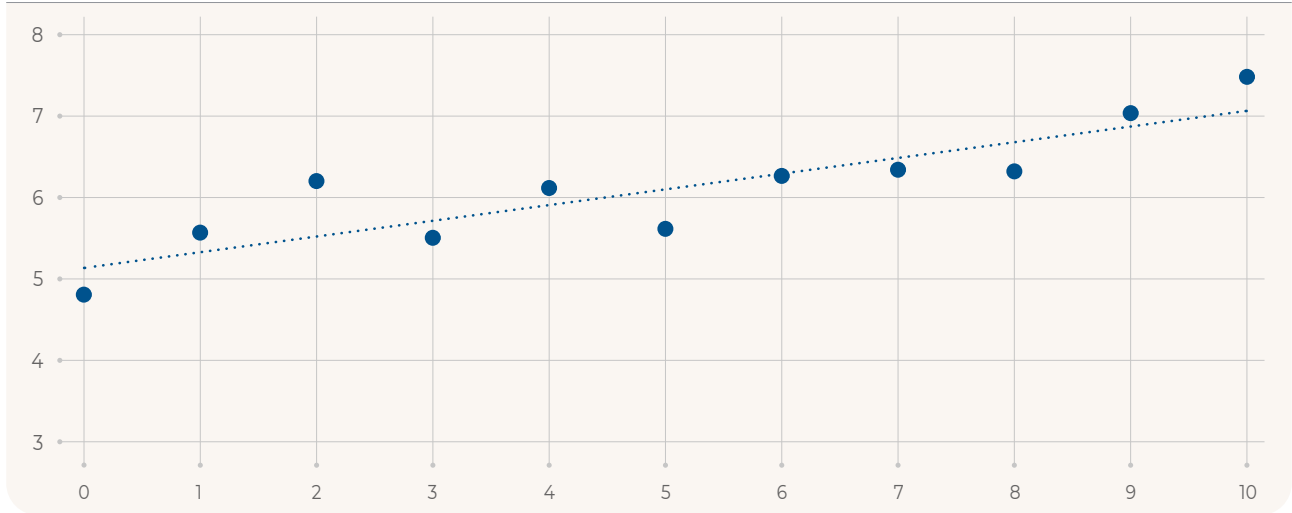




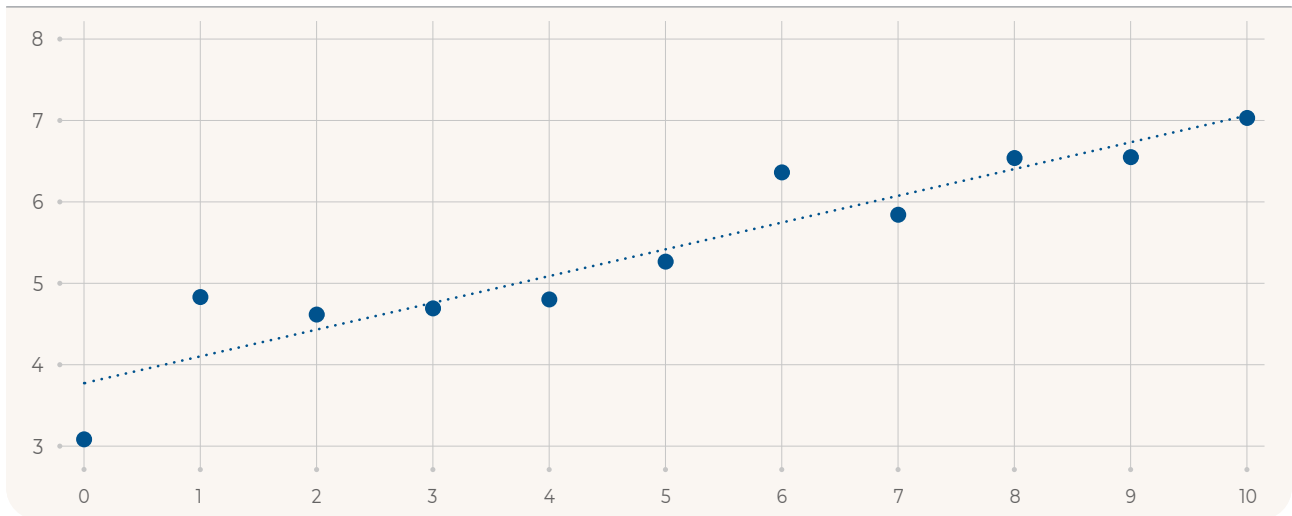
Figure 23 – PTV and institutional trust

- Vertical Scale: Institutional trust (3 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for PS (0 – 10)

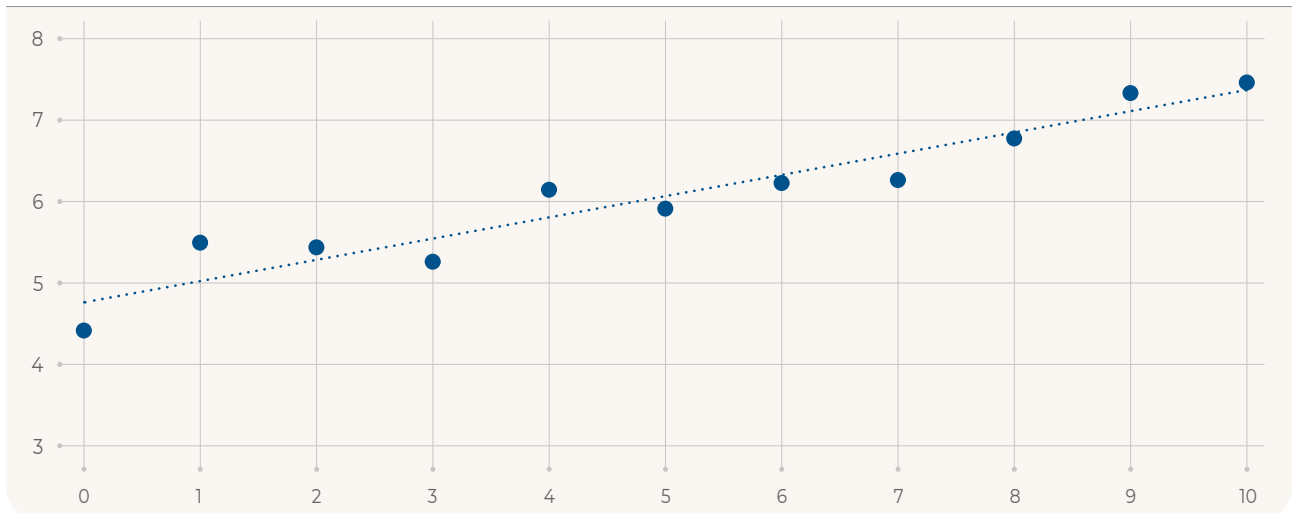
 FRANCE – PS




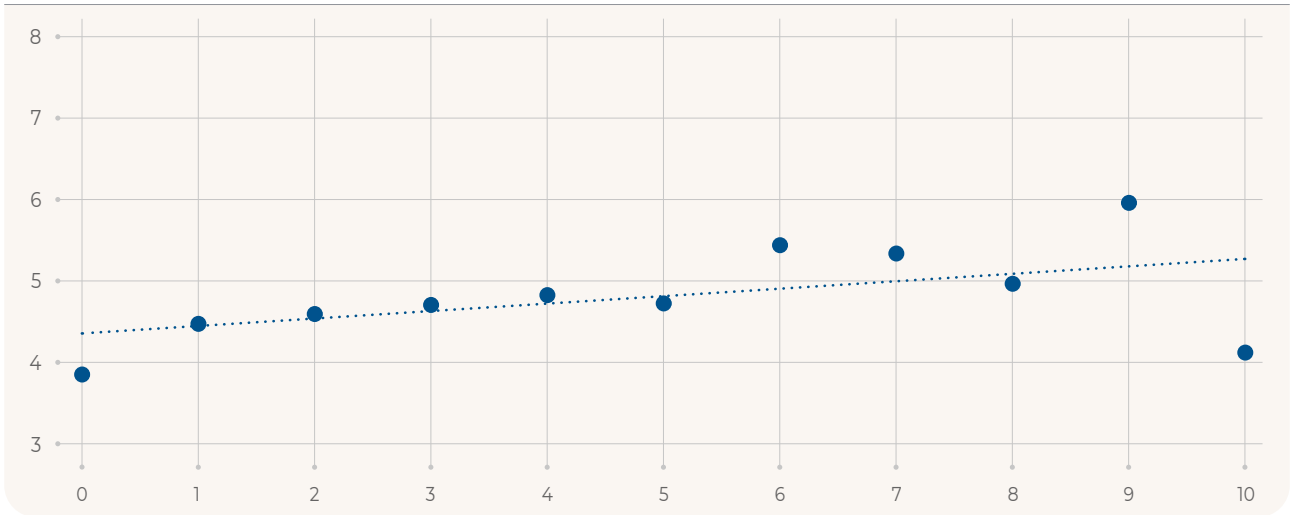
 GERMANY – SPD



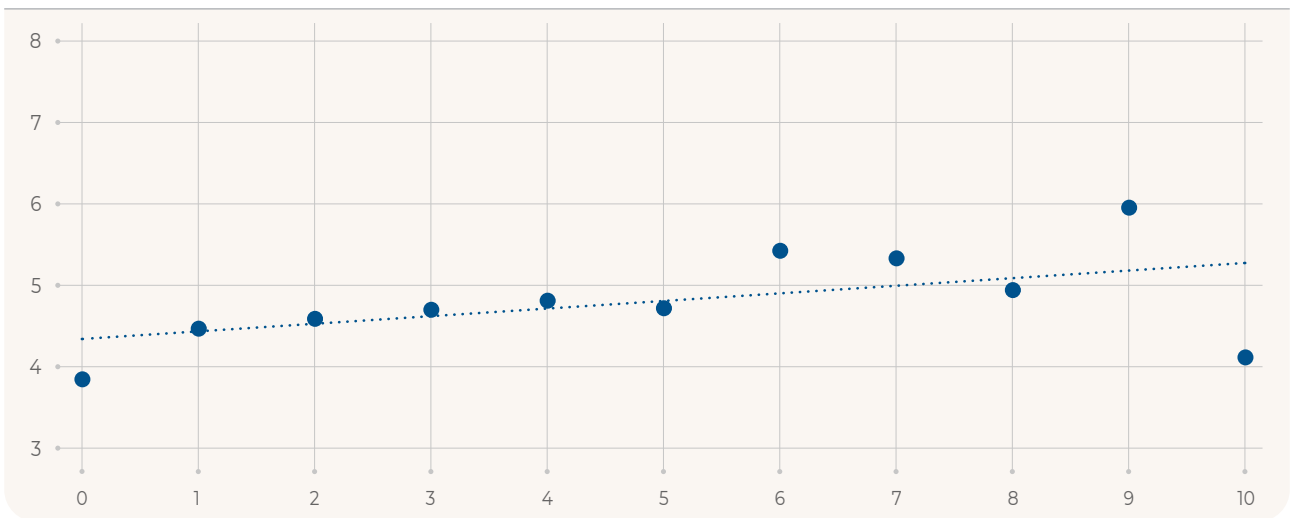
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

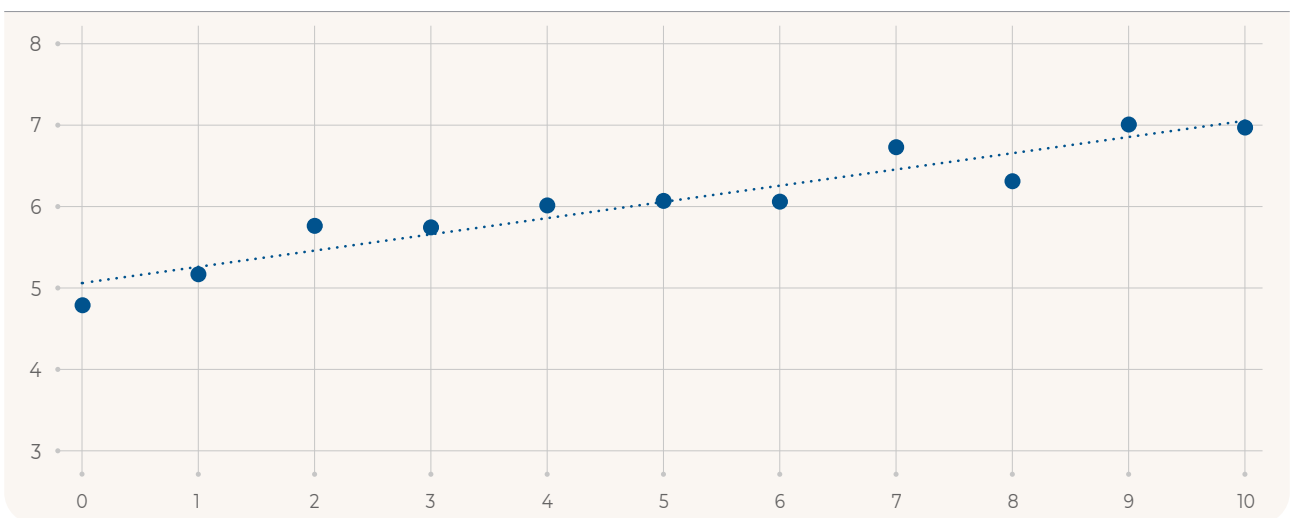
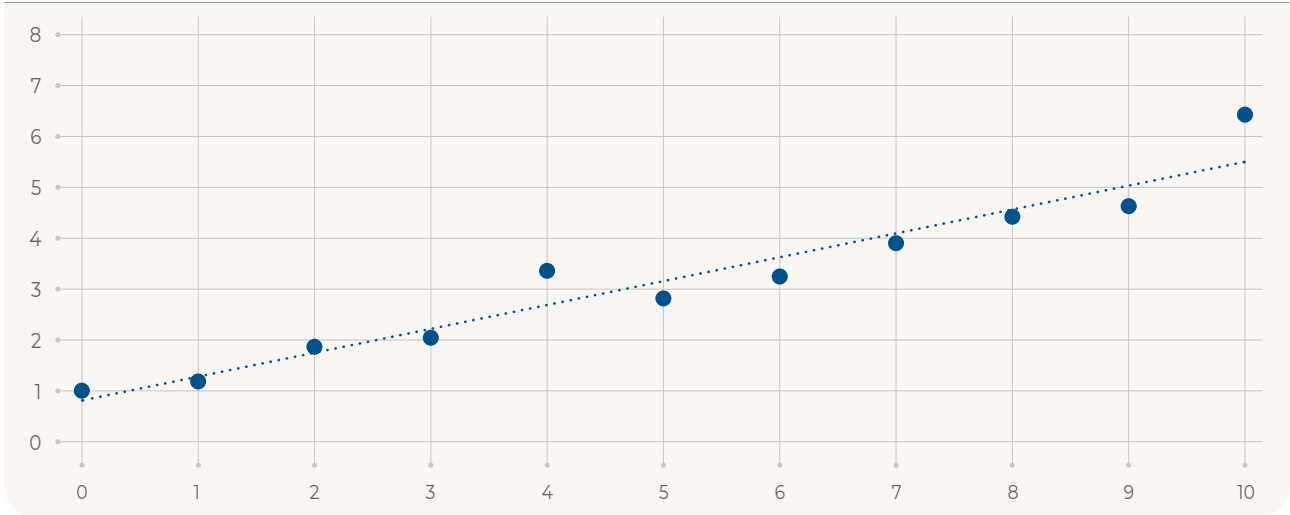




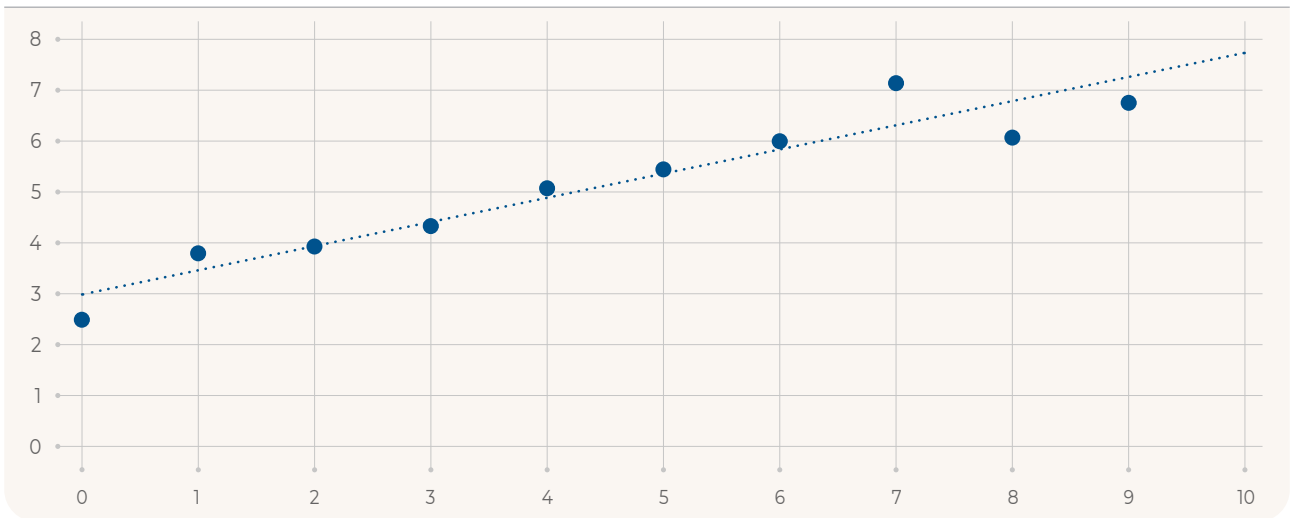
Figure 24 – Trust in the European Union

- Vertical scale: Trust in the European Union (0 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

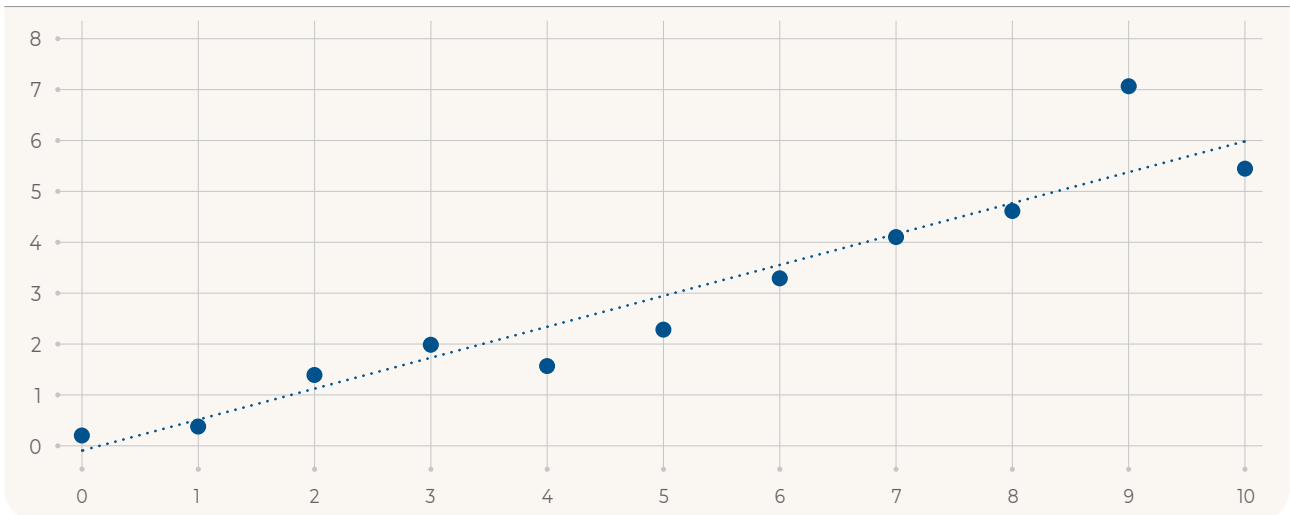
 FRANCE – PS




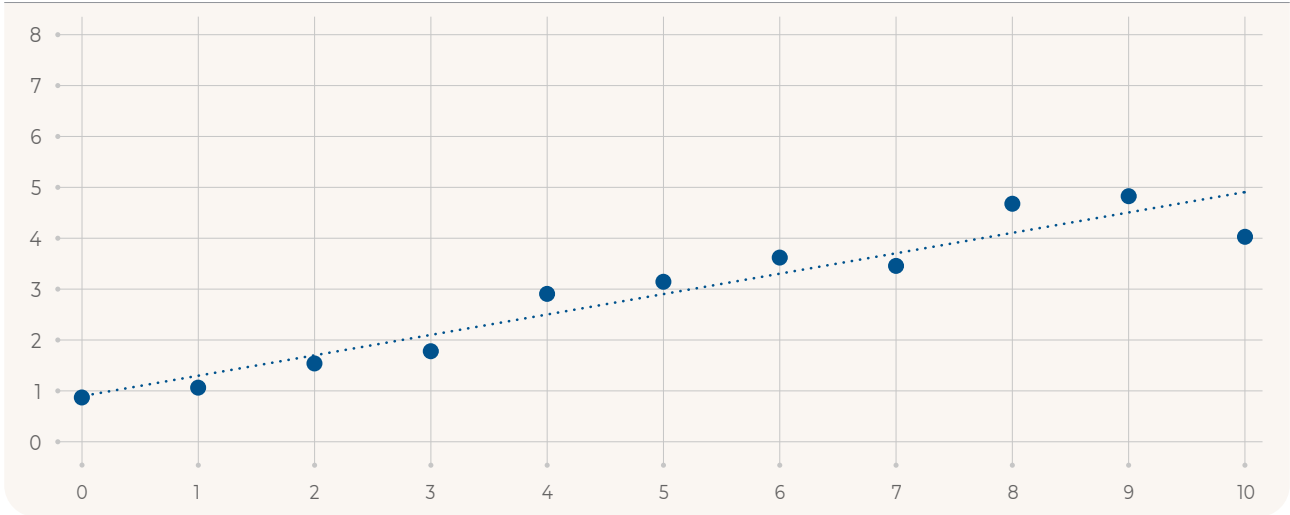
 GERMANY – SPD



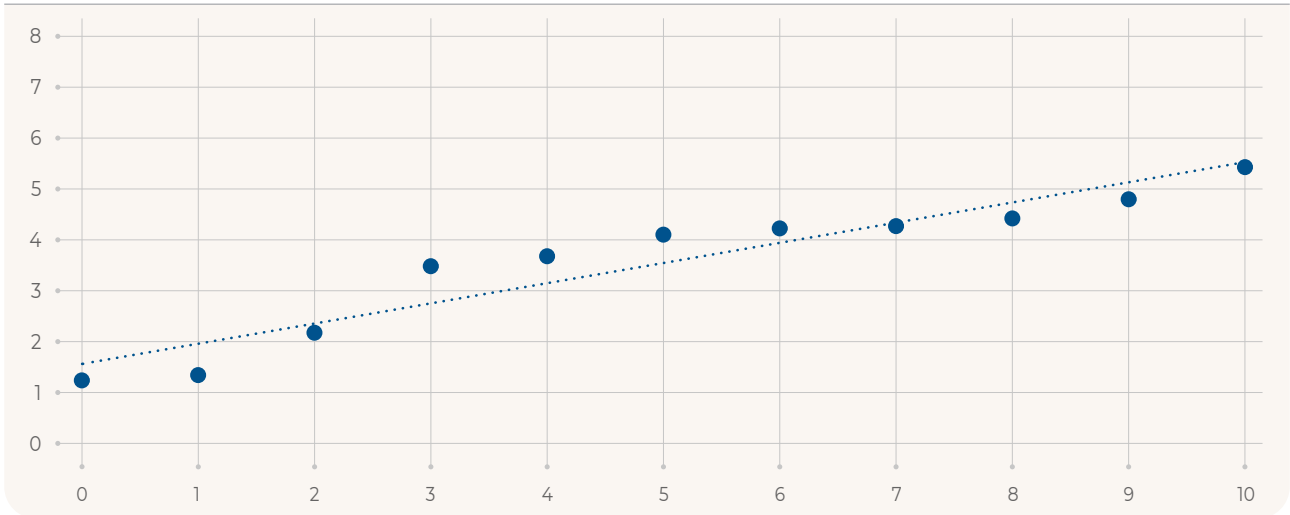
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

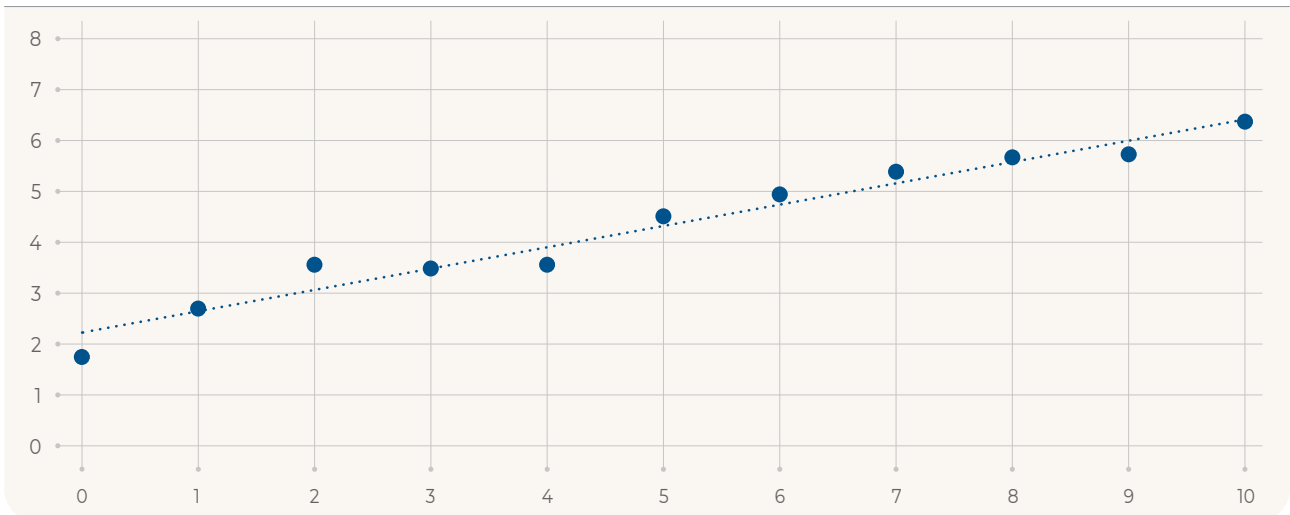
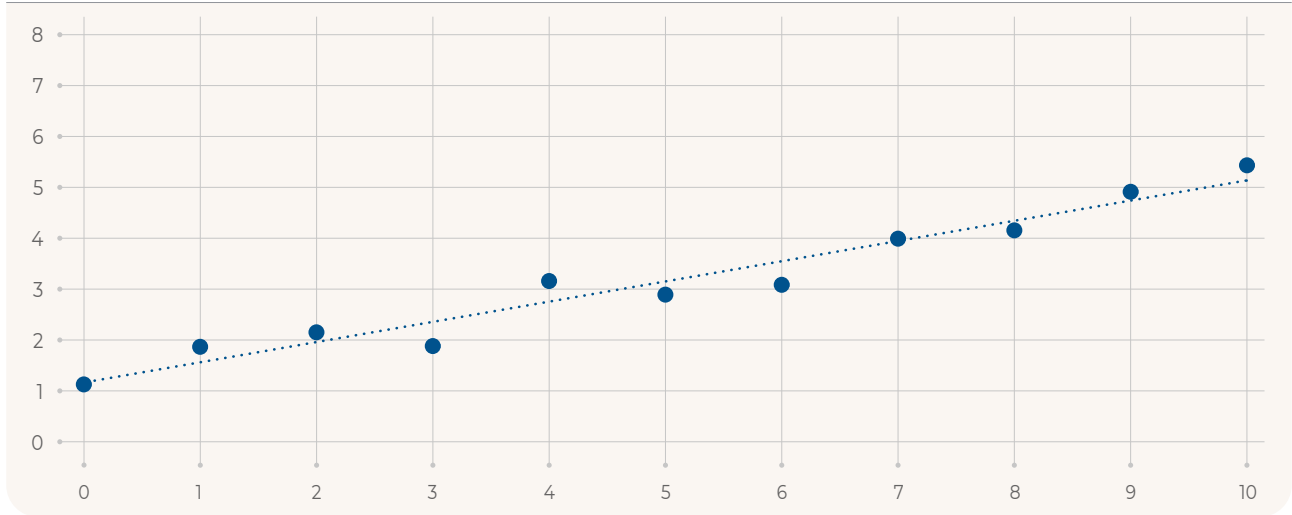




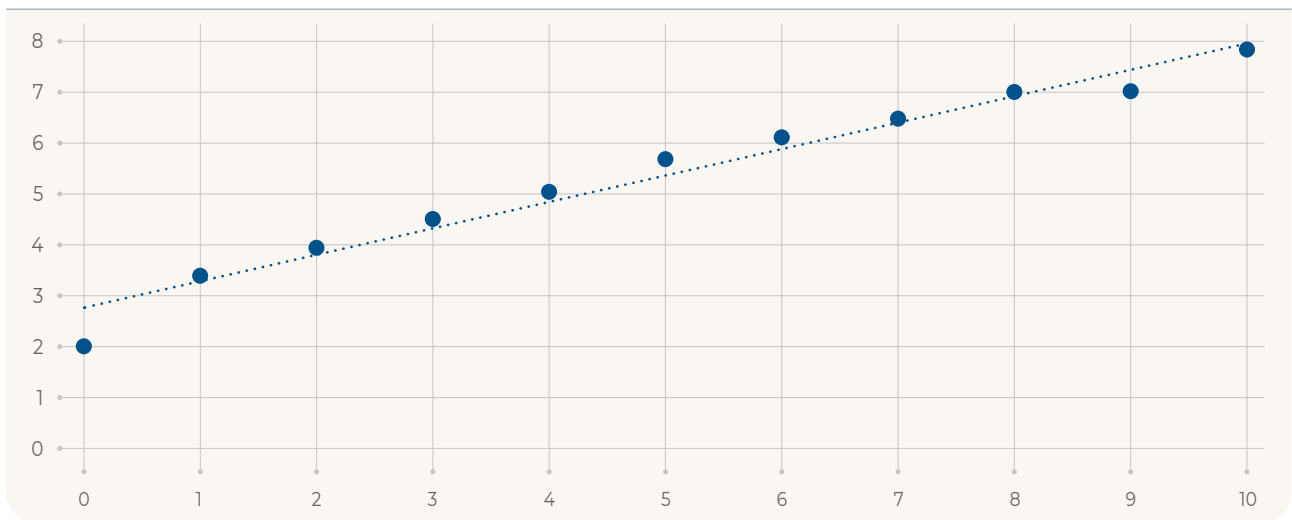
Figure 25 – Trust in Parliament

- Vertical scale: Trust in parliament (0 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

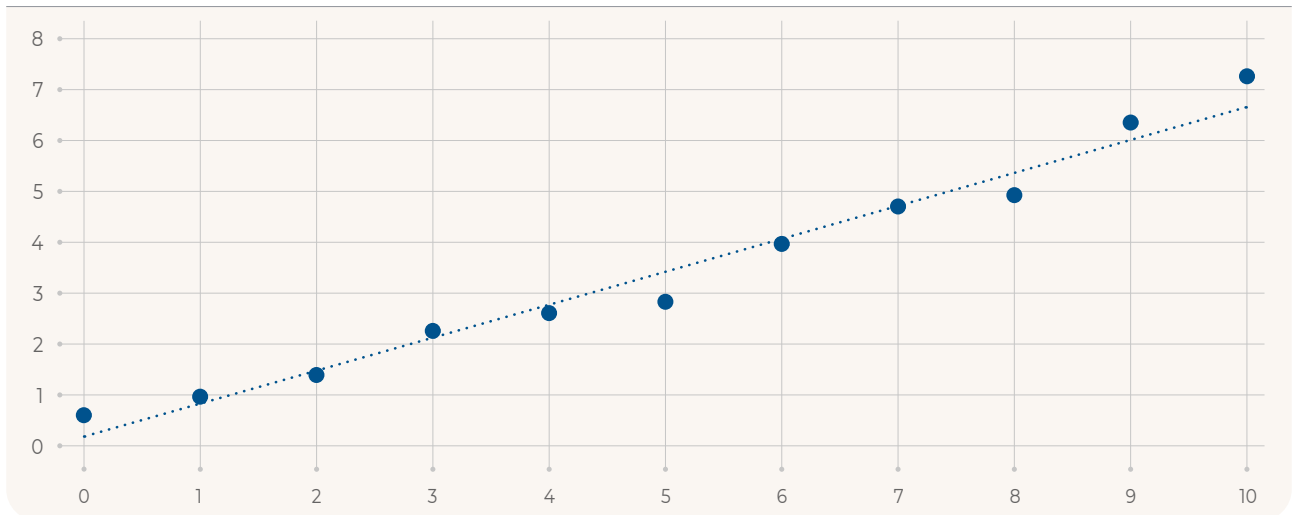
 FRANCE – PS




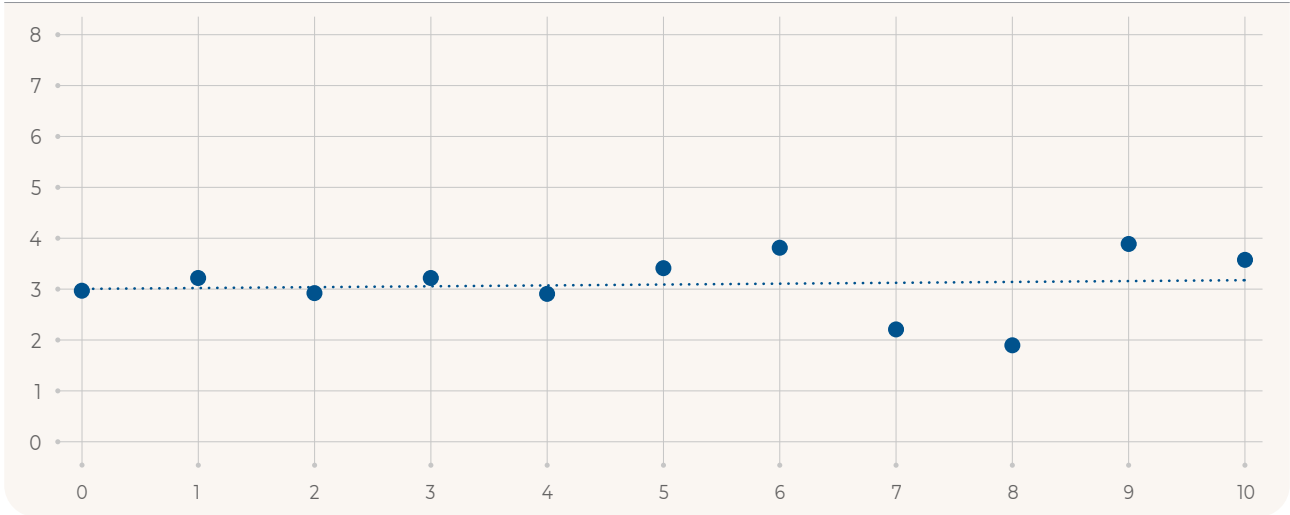
 GERMANY – SPD



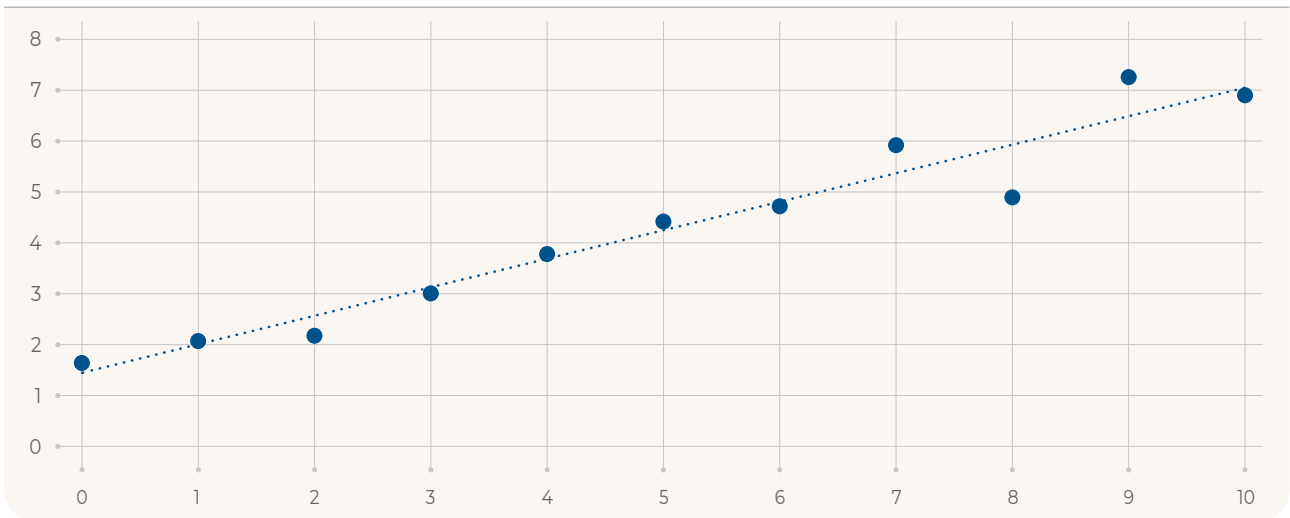
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

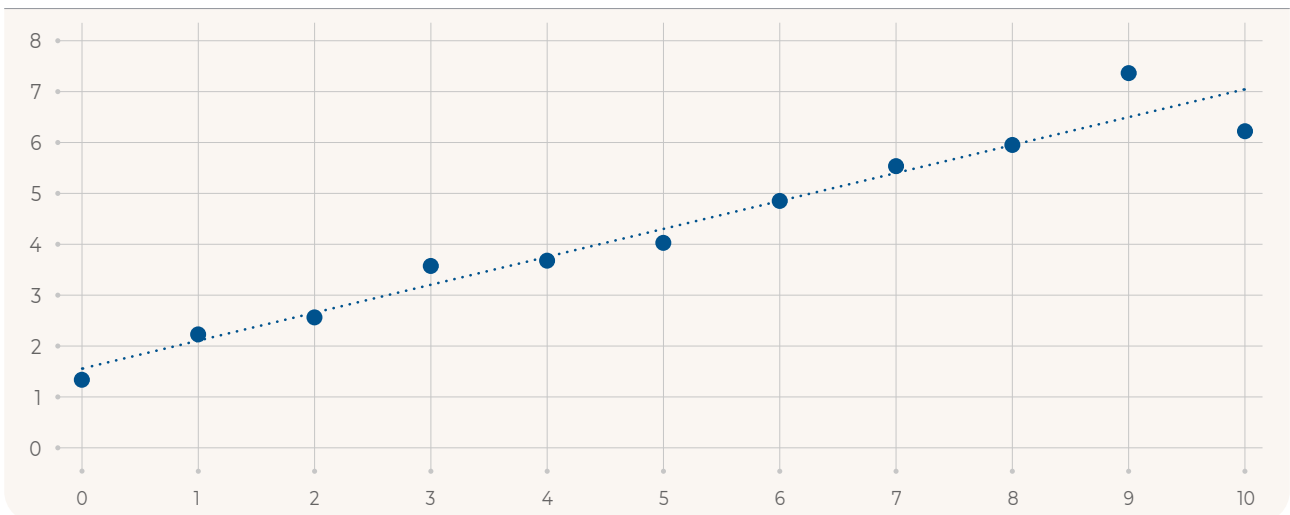
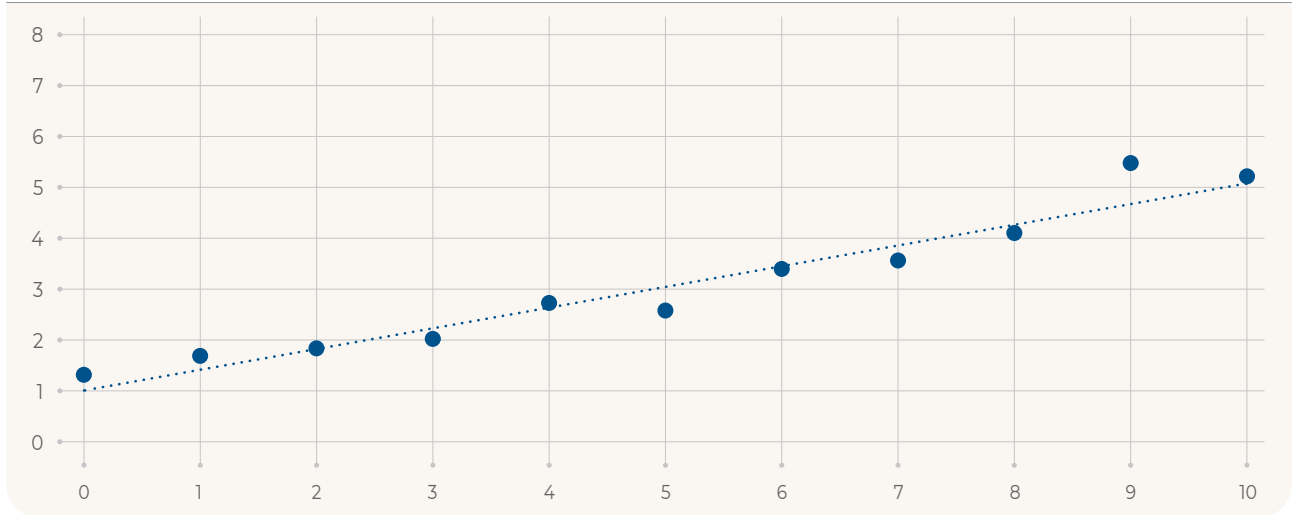




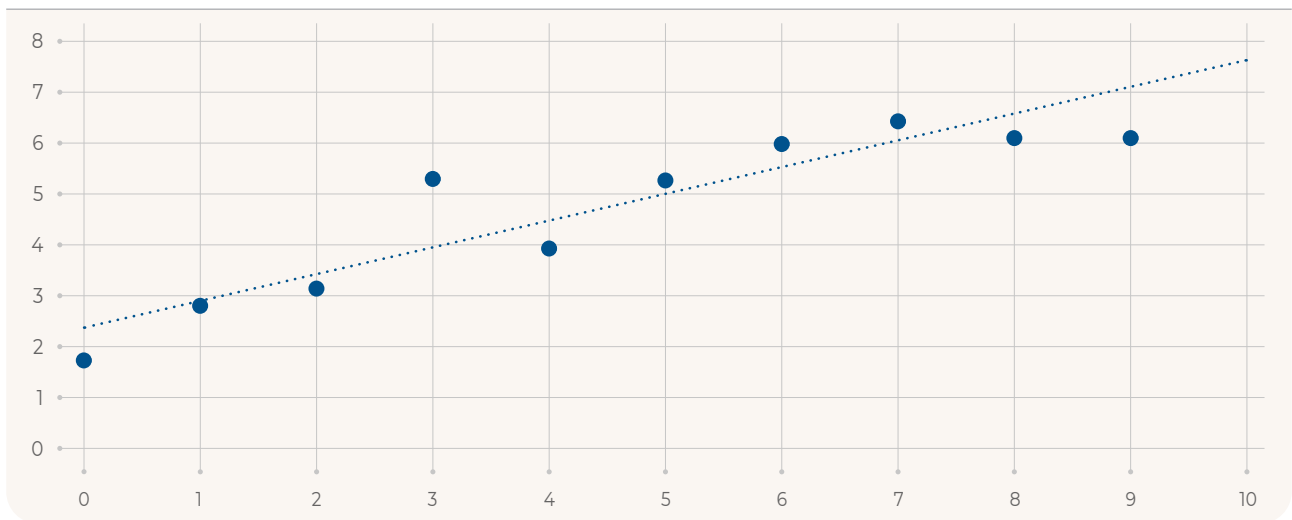
Figure 26 – Trust in the judiciary

- Vertical scale: Trust in judiciary (0–8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0–10)

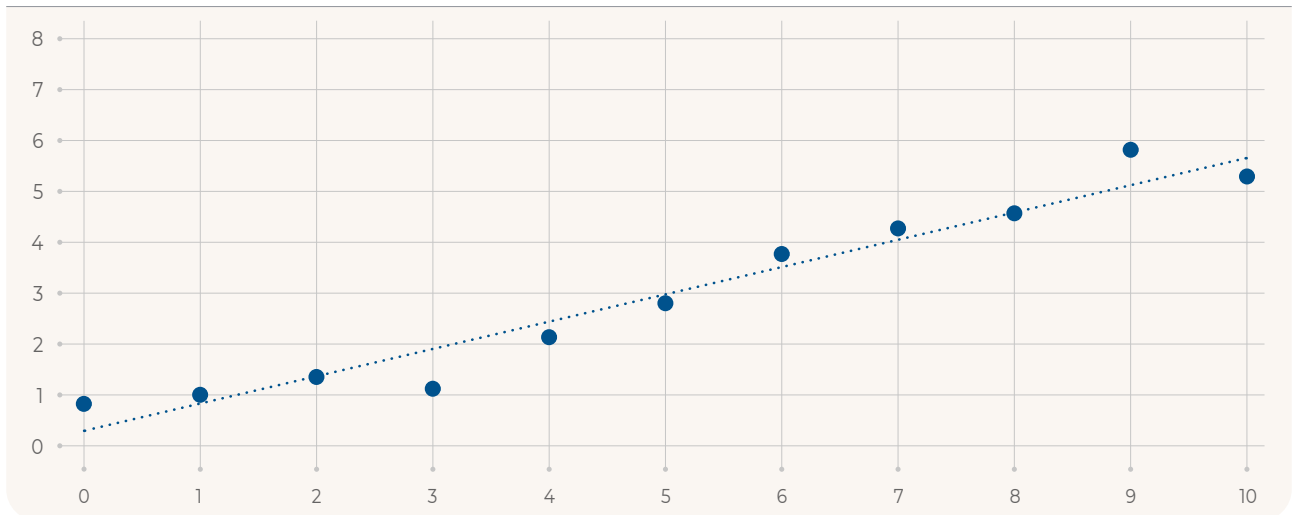
 FRANCE – PS




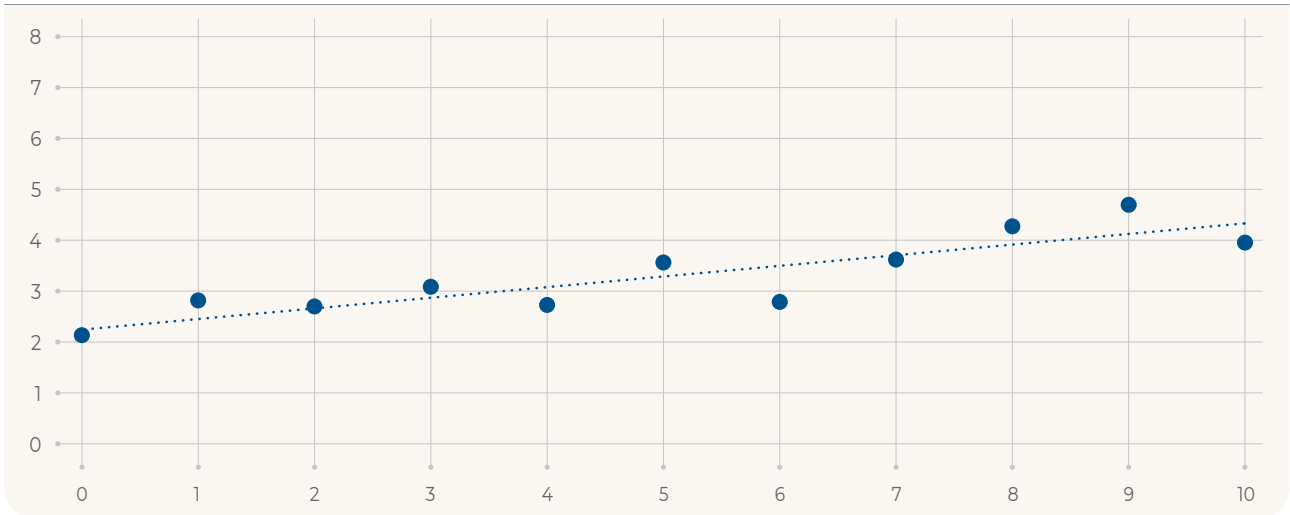
 GERMANY – SPD



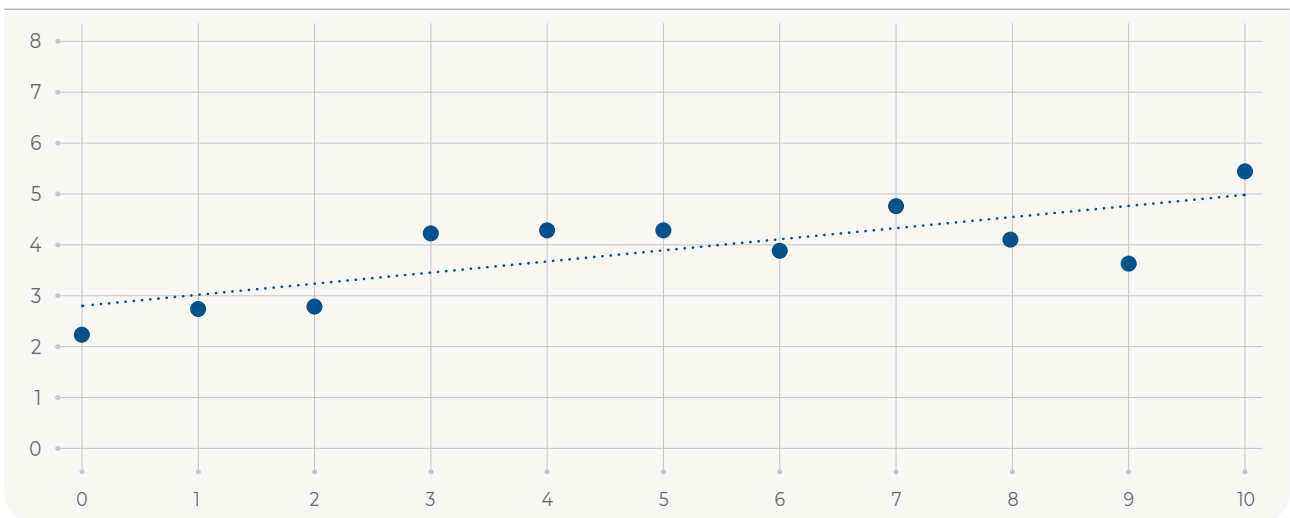
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

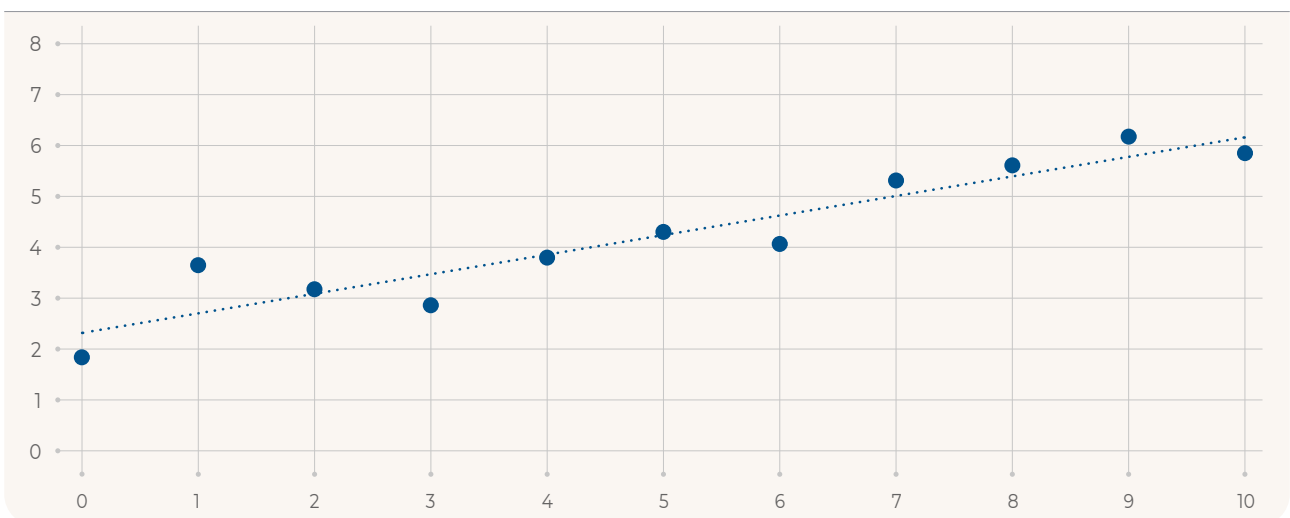
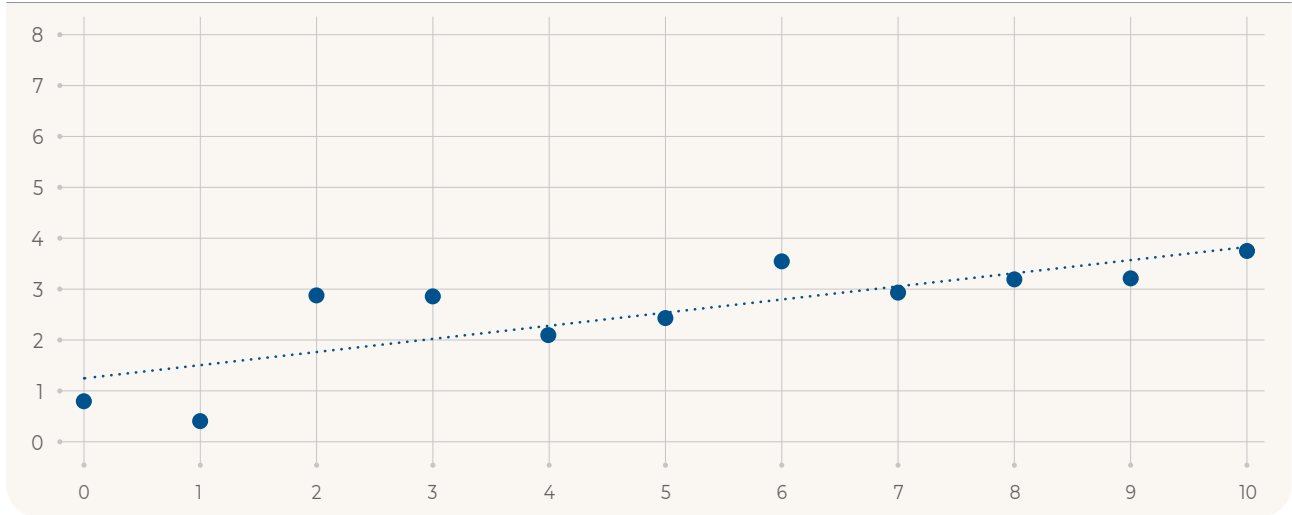




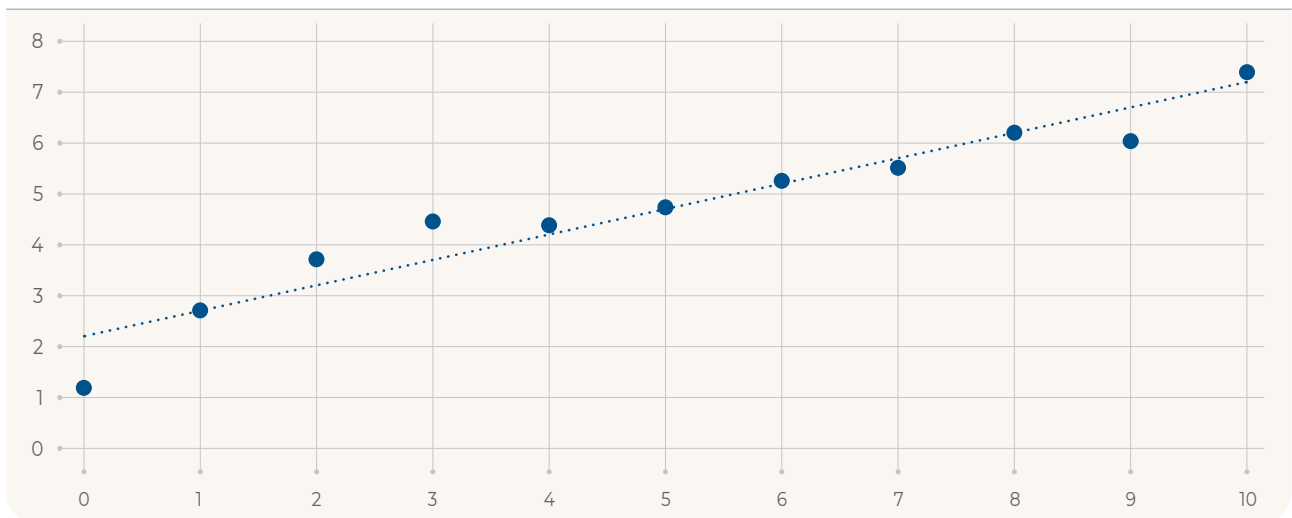
Figure 27 – Trust in healthcare

- Vertical scale: Trust in healthcare (0 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

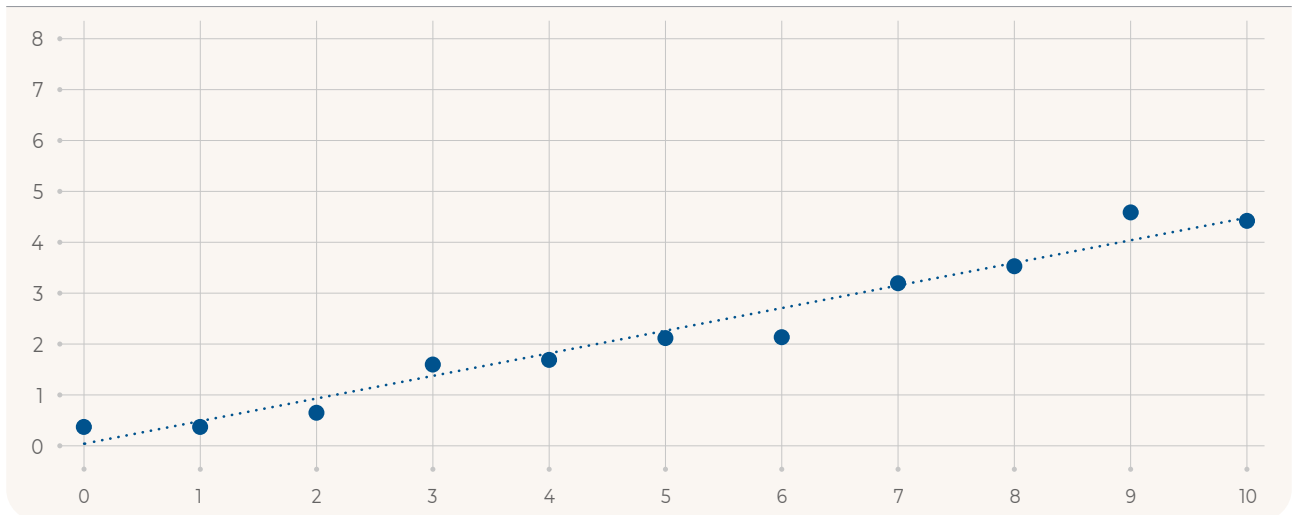
 FRANCE – PS




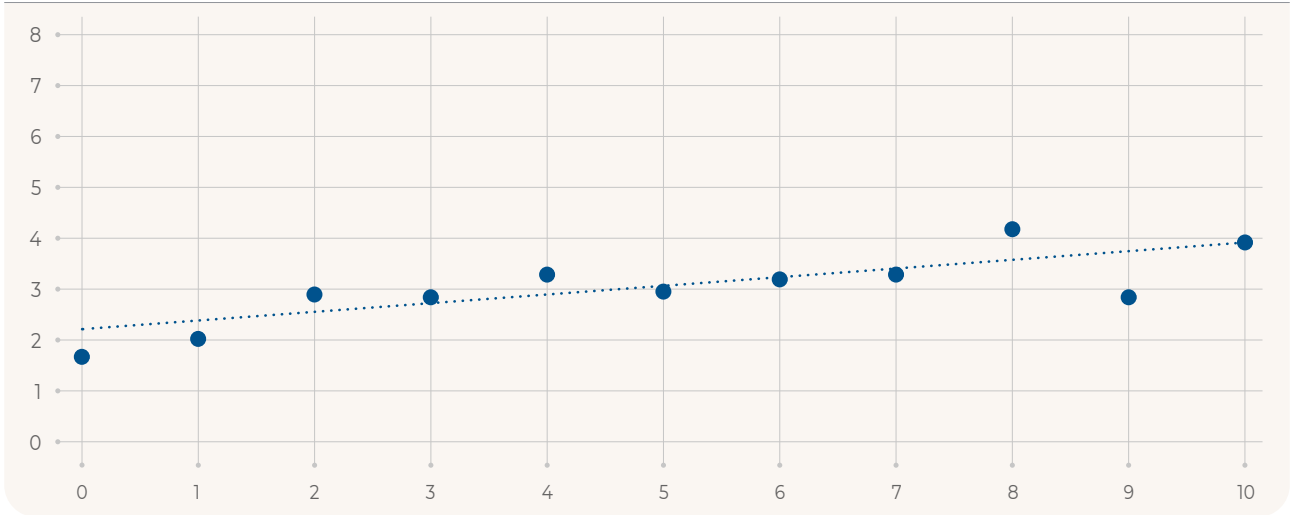
 GERMANY – SPD



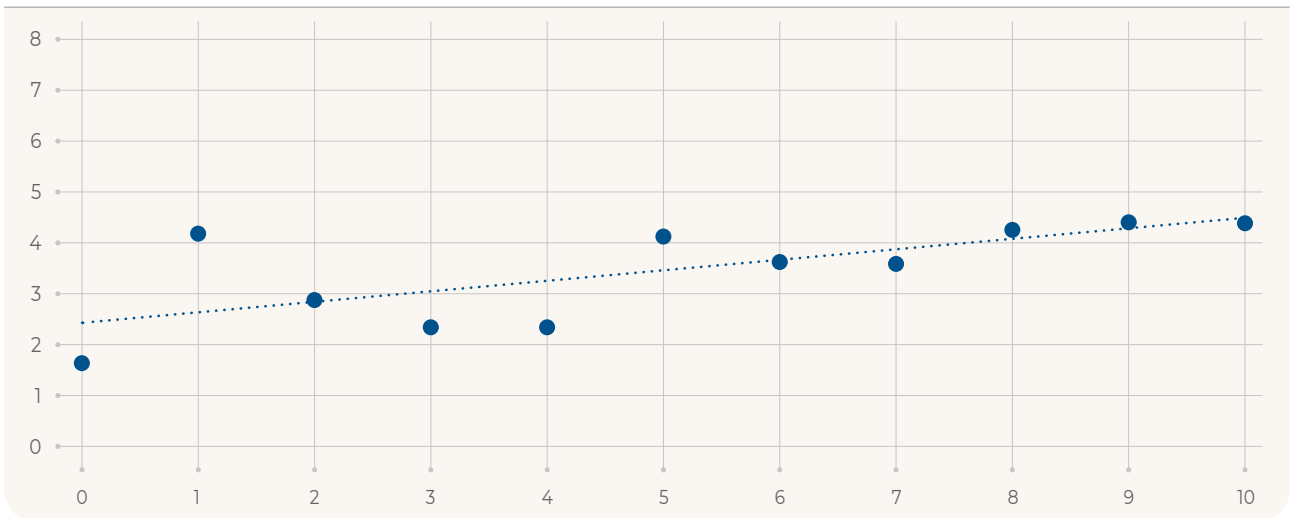
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

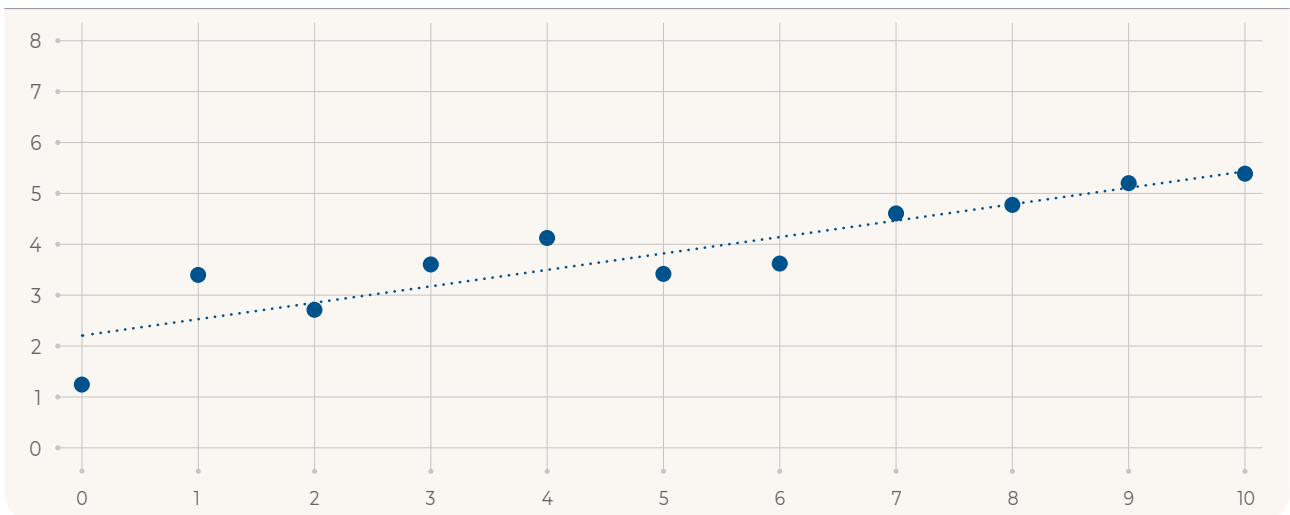
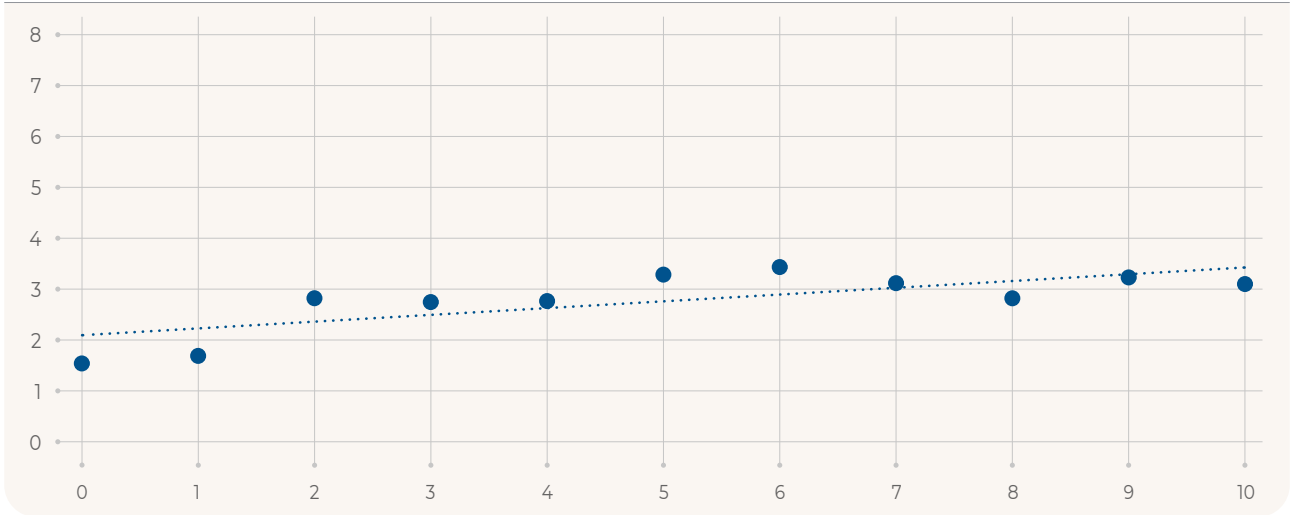




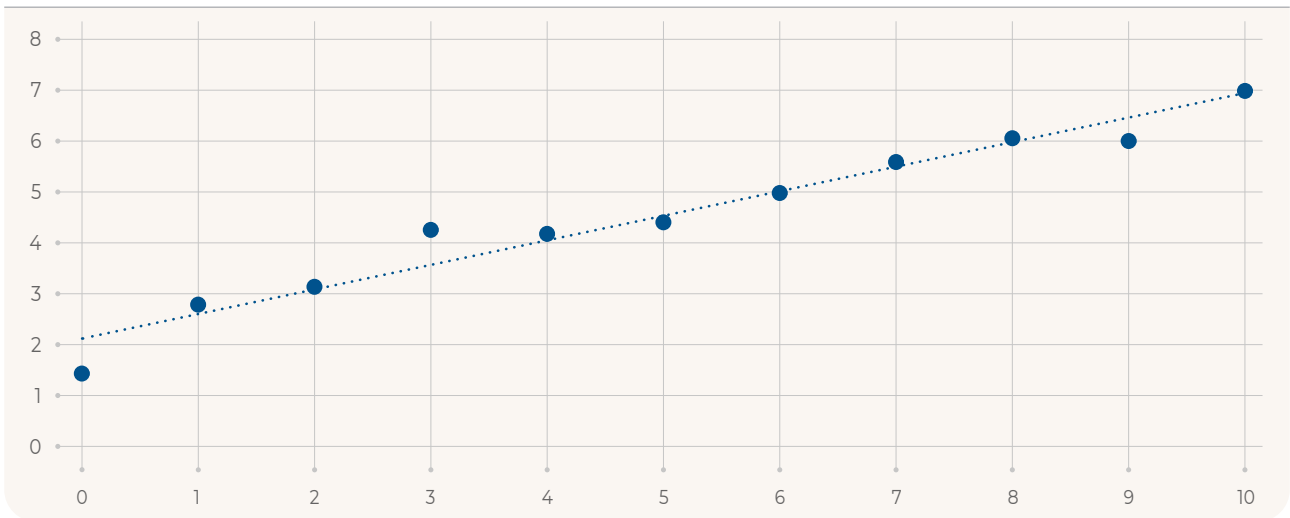
Figure 28 – Trust in police

- Vertical scale: Trust in police (0 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

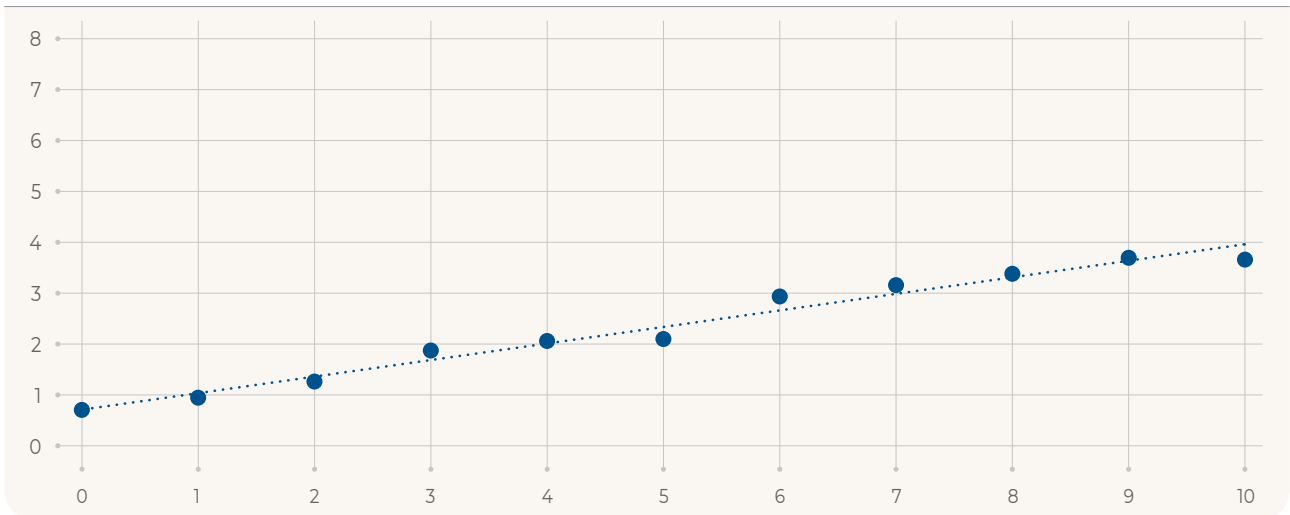
 FRANCE – PS




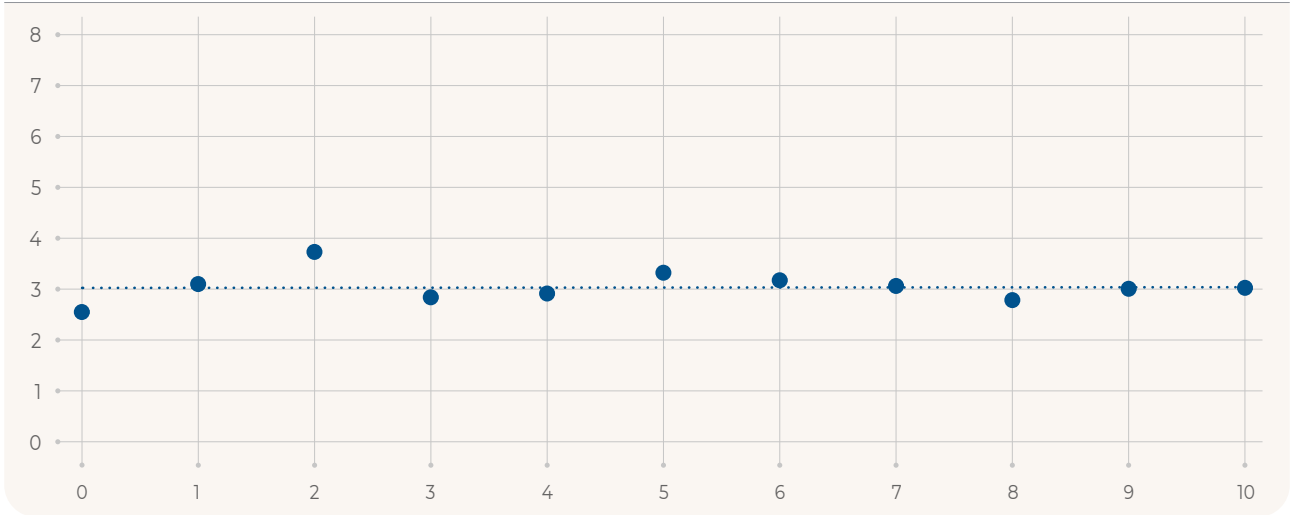
 GERMANY – SPD



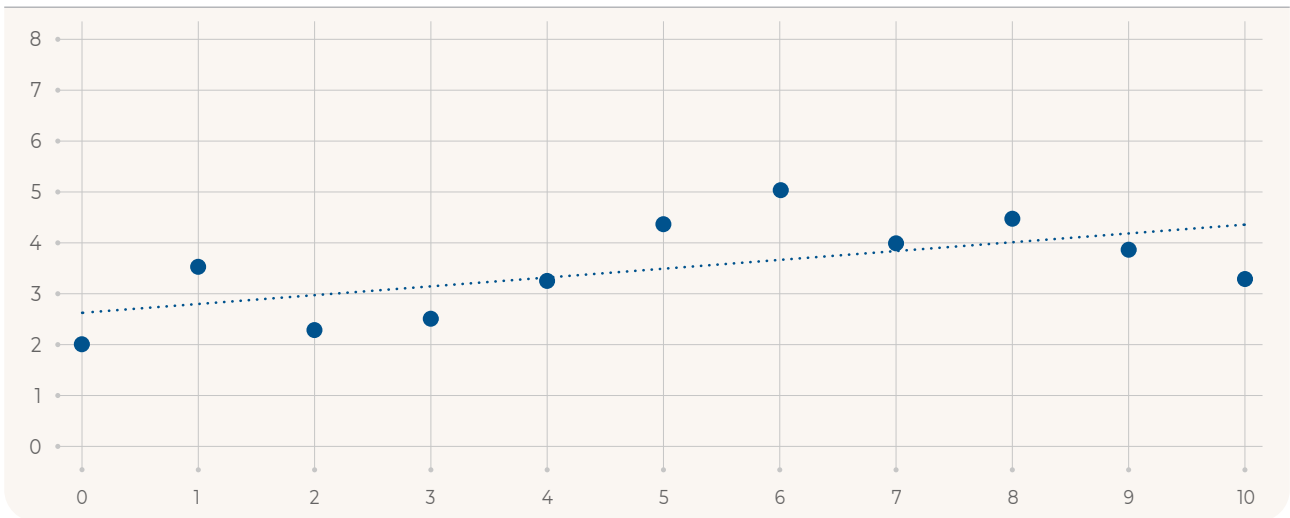
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

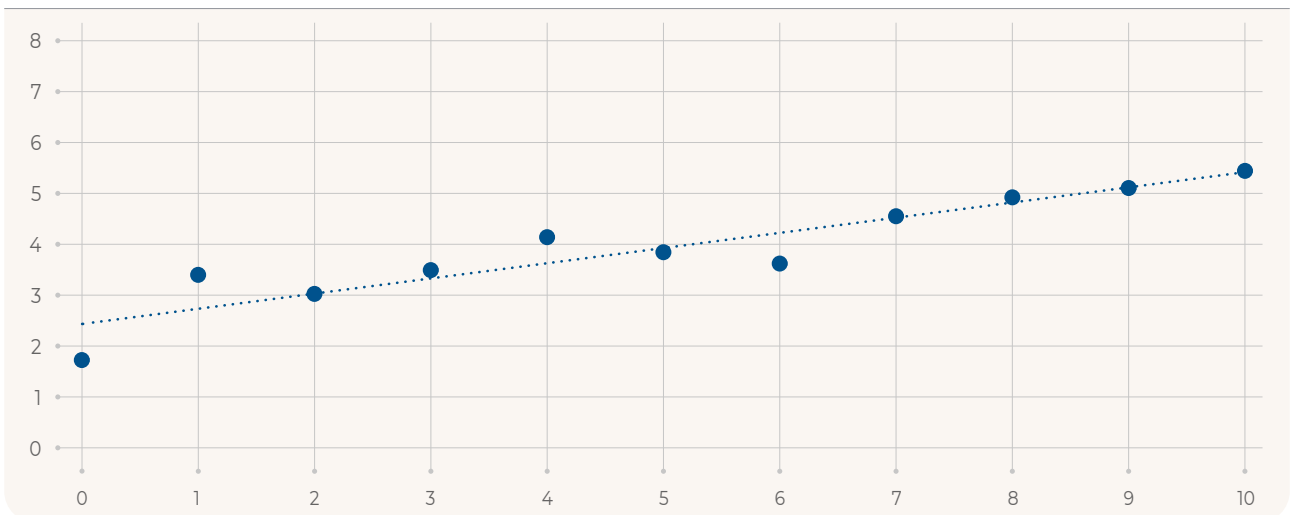
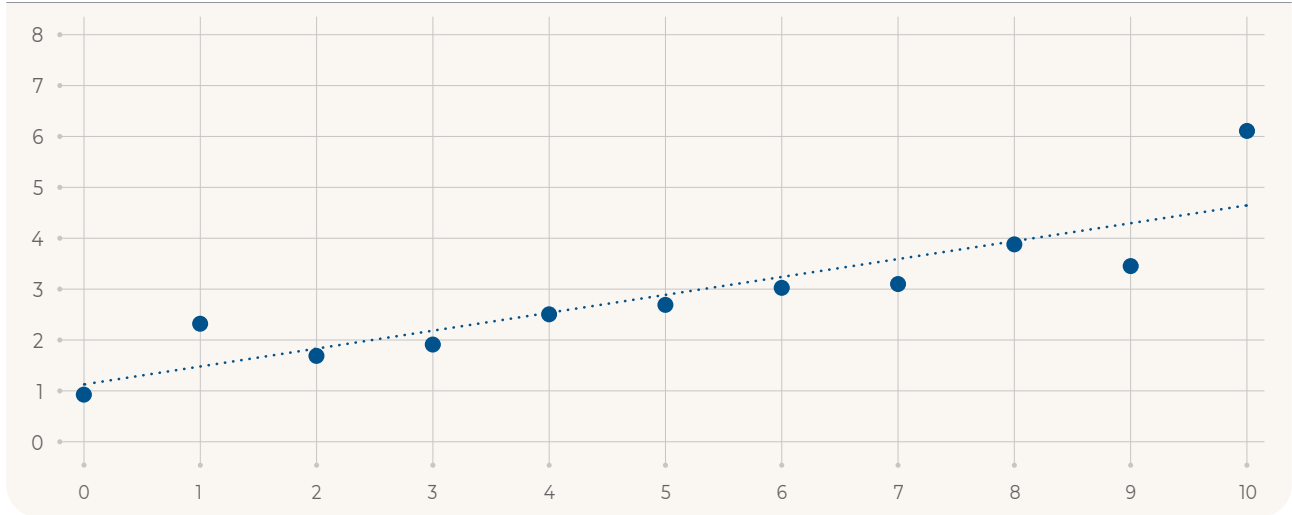




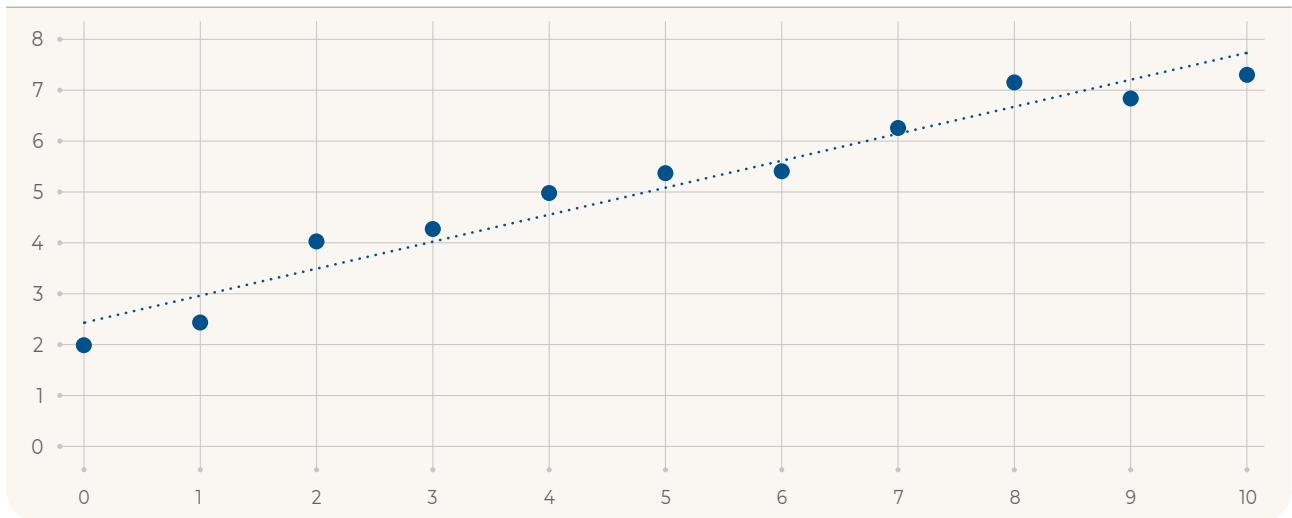
Figure 29 – Trust in local/regional government

- Vertical scale: Trust in local/regional government (0 – 8)
- Horizontal Scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

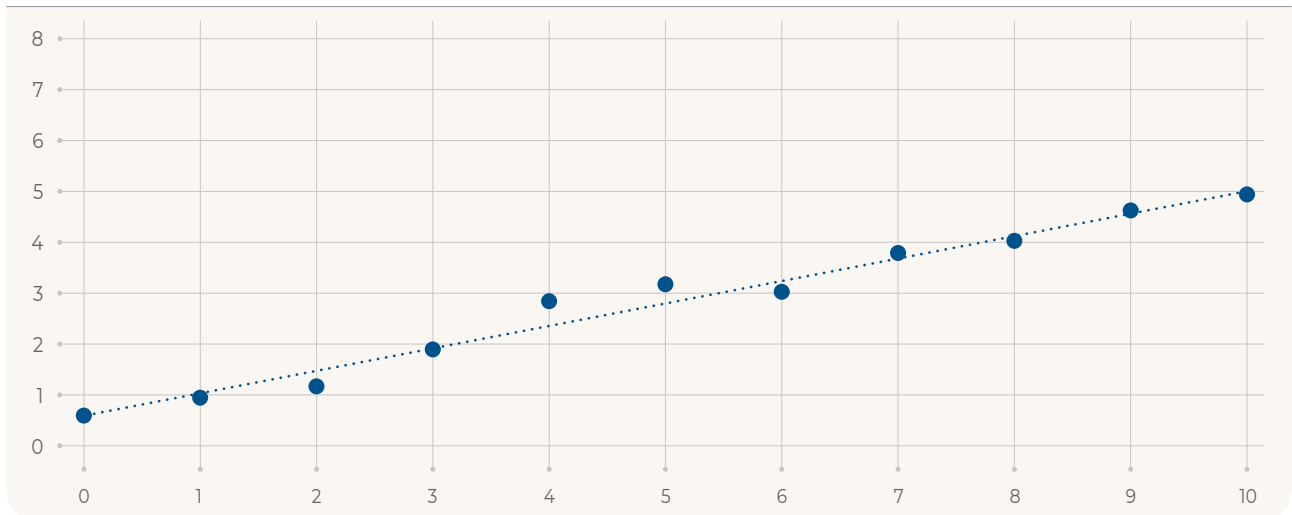
 FRANCE – PS




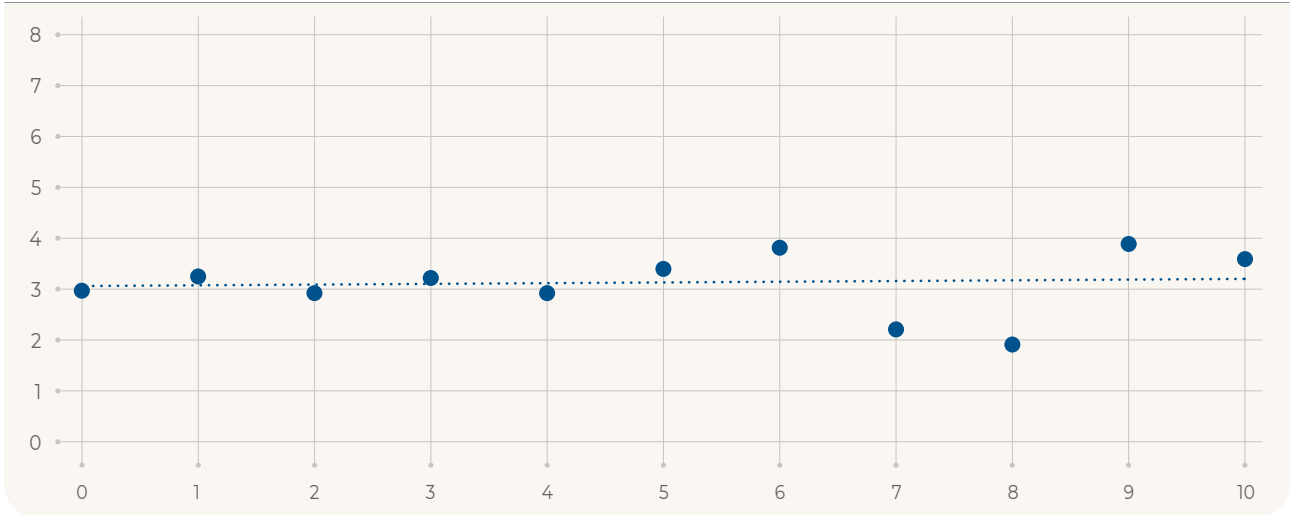
 GERMANY – SPD



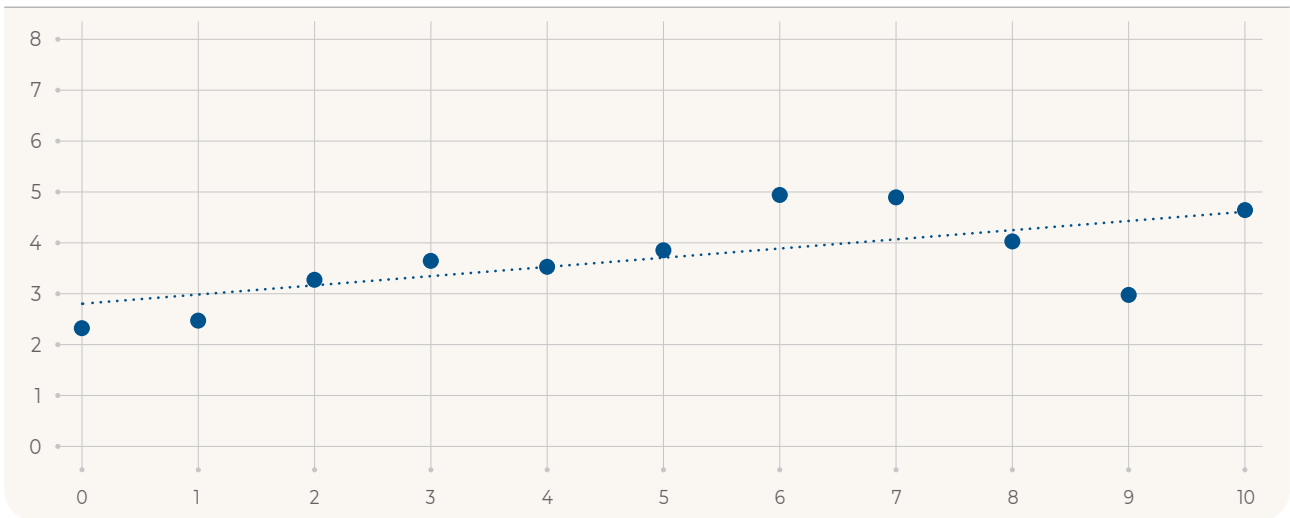
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

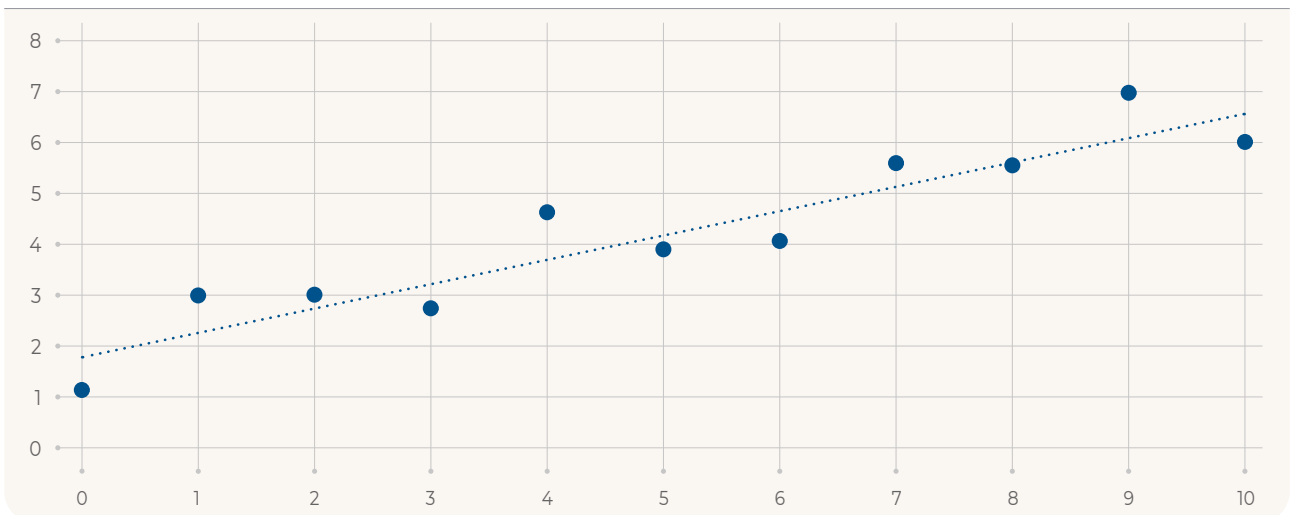
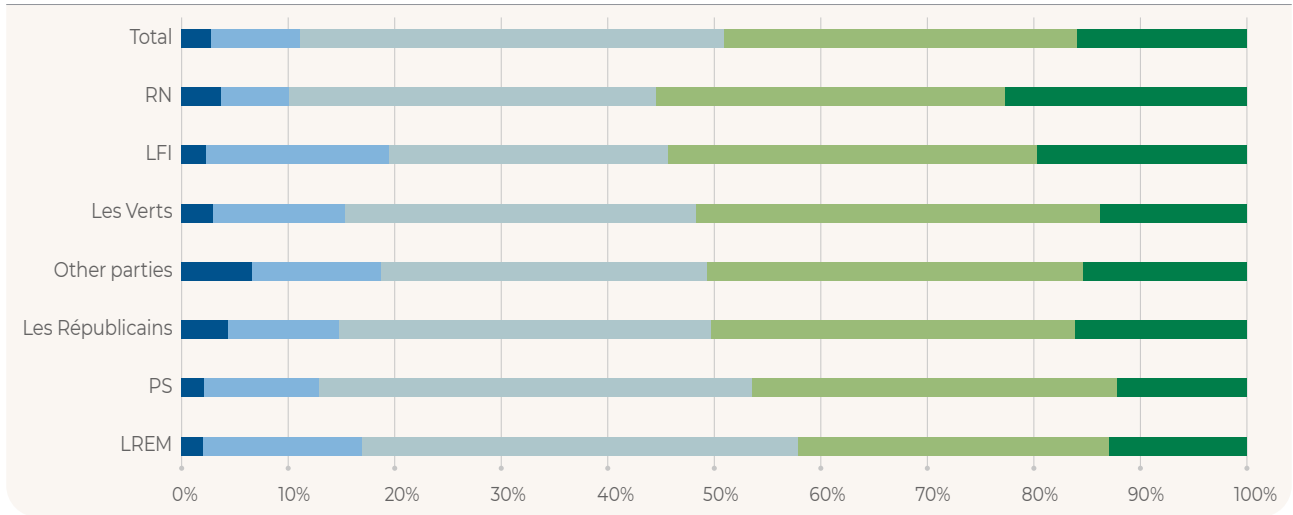


Figure 30 – Opinions towards scientific research

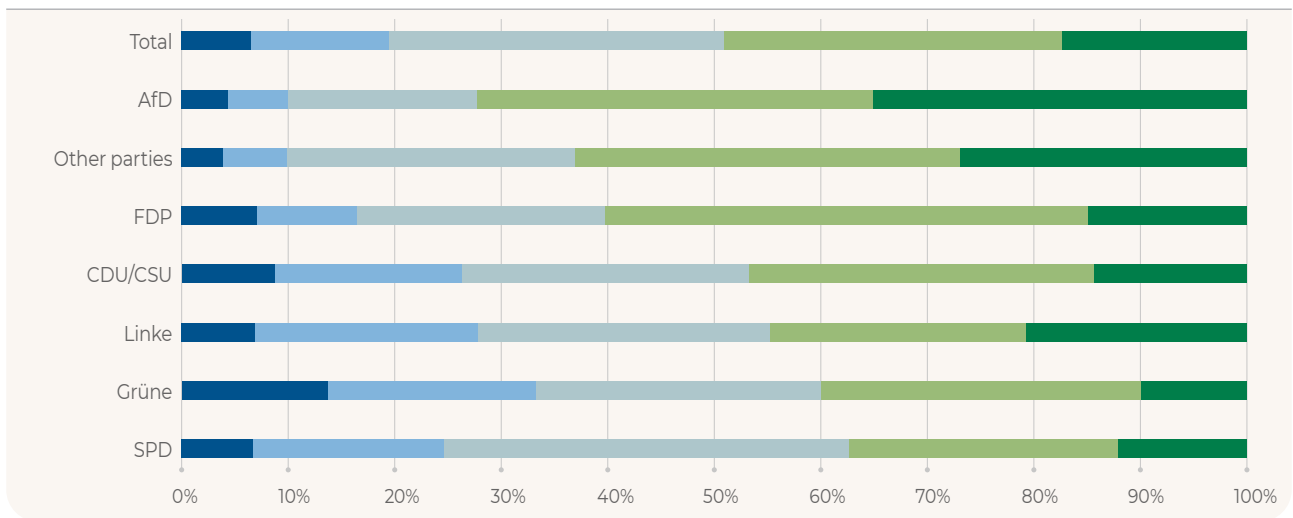
“People don’t realize how flawed a lot of scientific research is”

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

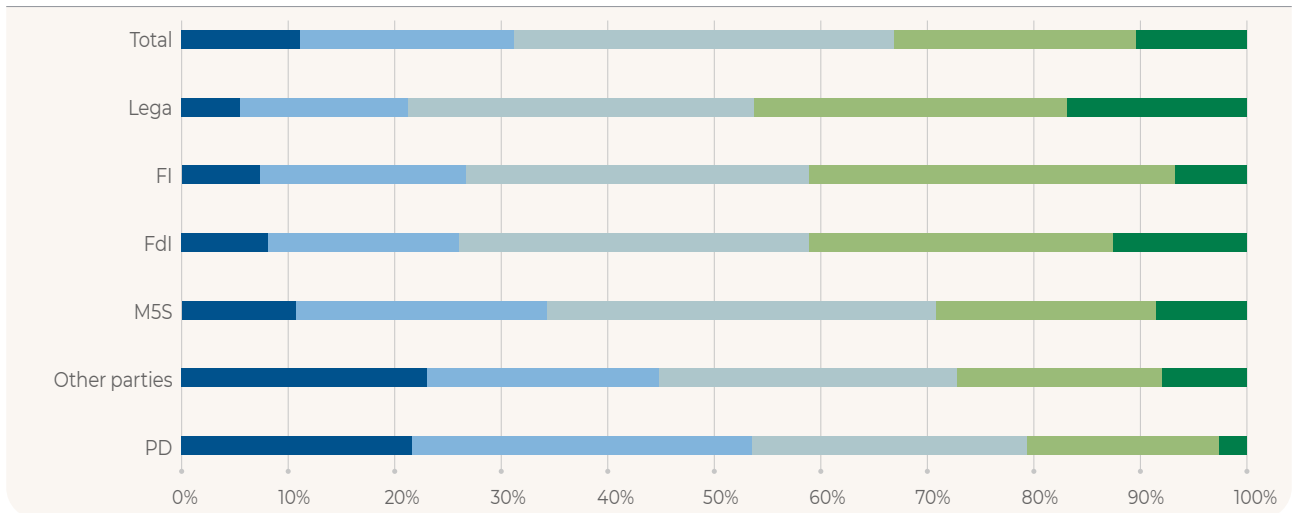
FRANCE



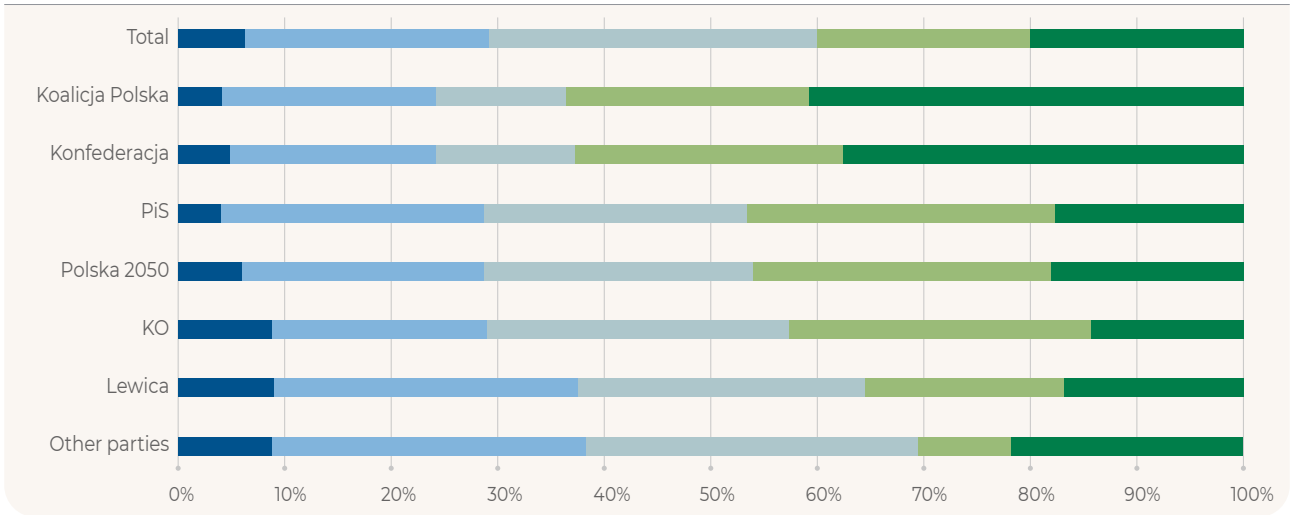
GERMANY



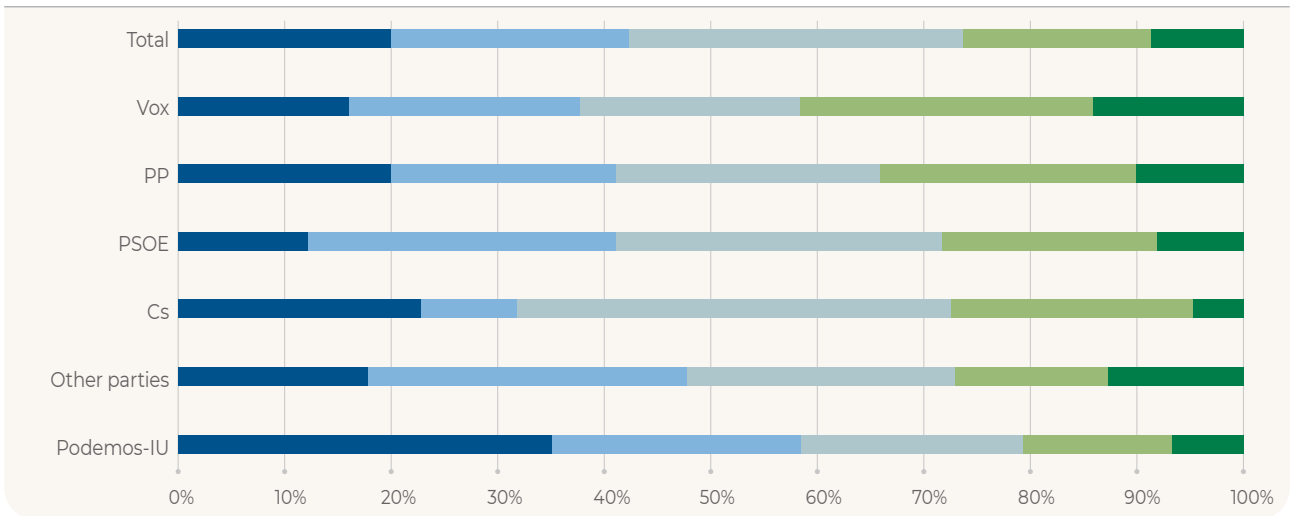
ITALY



 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN

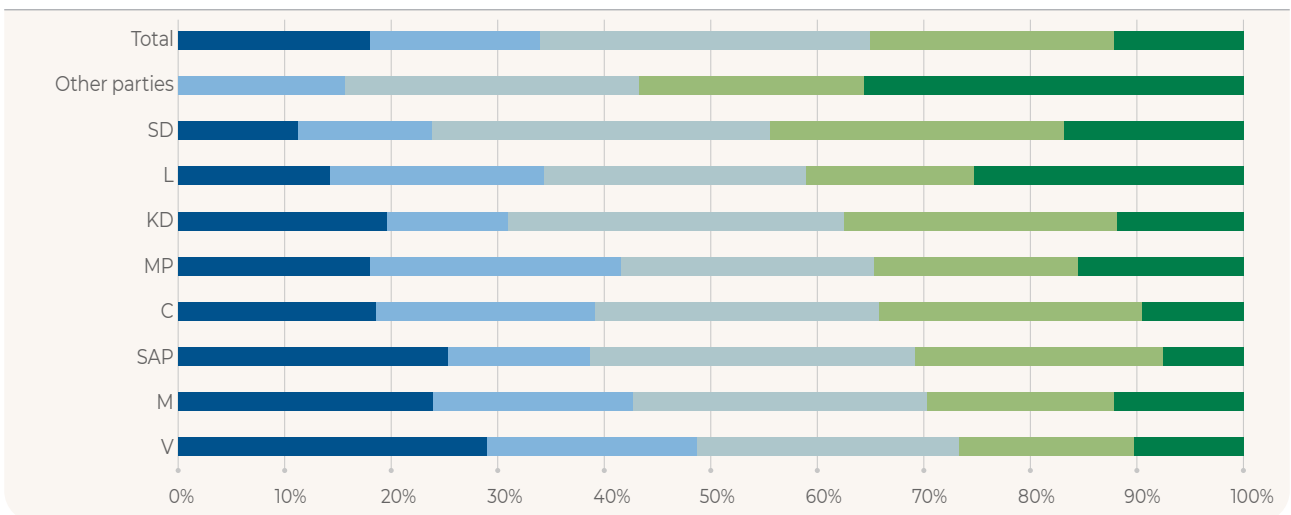
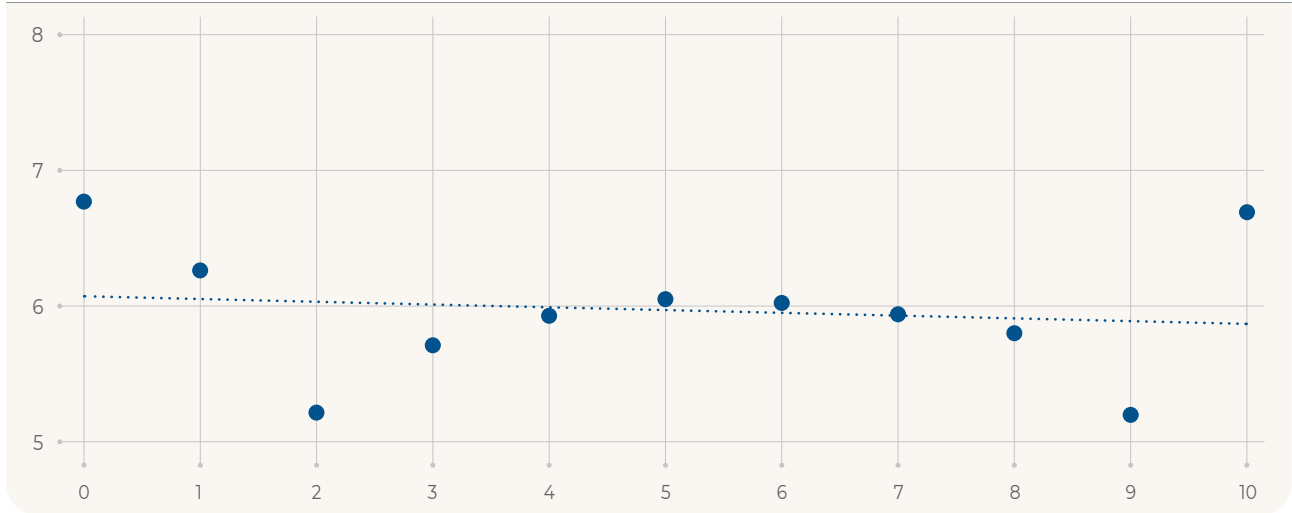




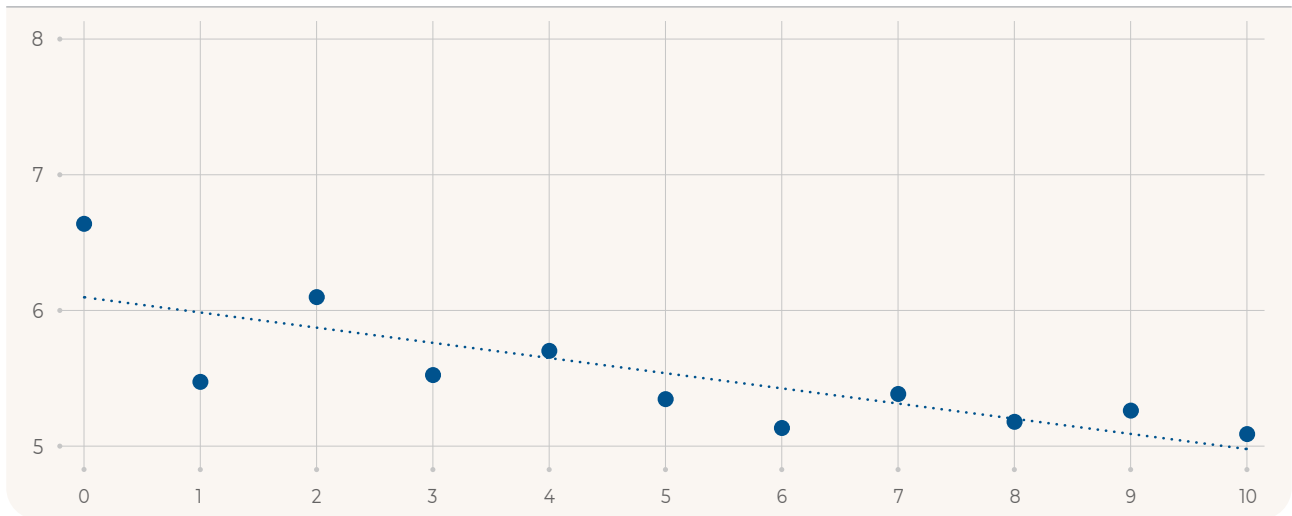
Figure 31 – PTV and Belief in Conspiracy Theories

- Vertical scale: Belief in conspiracy theories (5 – 8)
- Horizontal scale: Propensity to vote for respective party (0 – 10)

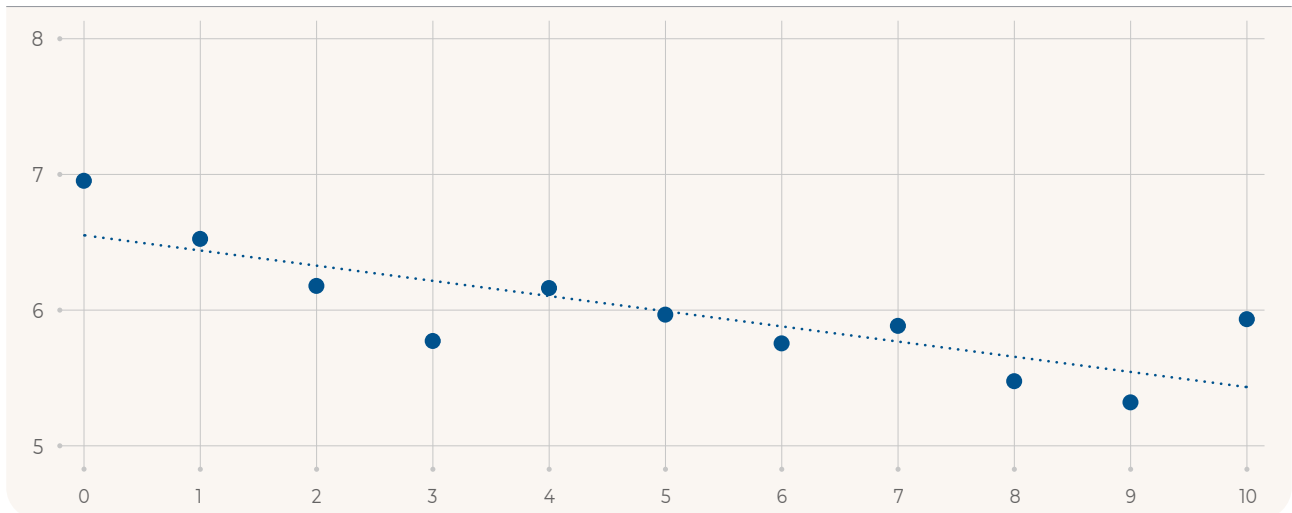
 FRANCE – PS




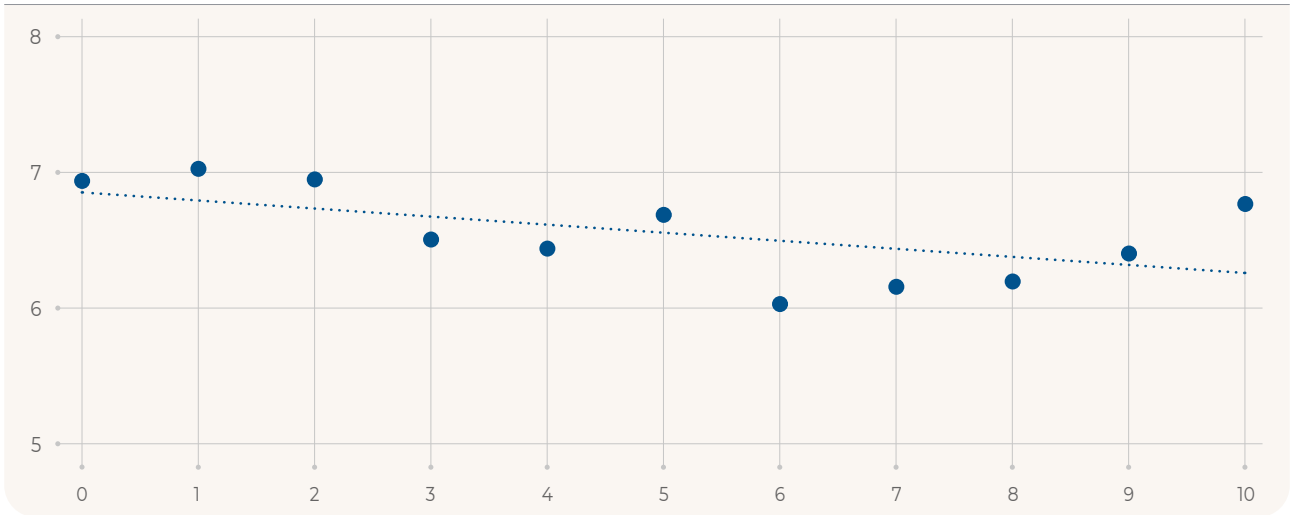
 GERMANY – SPD



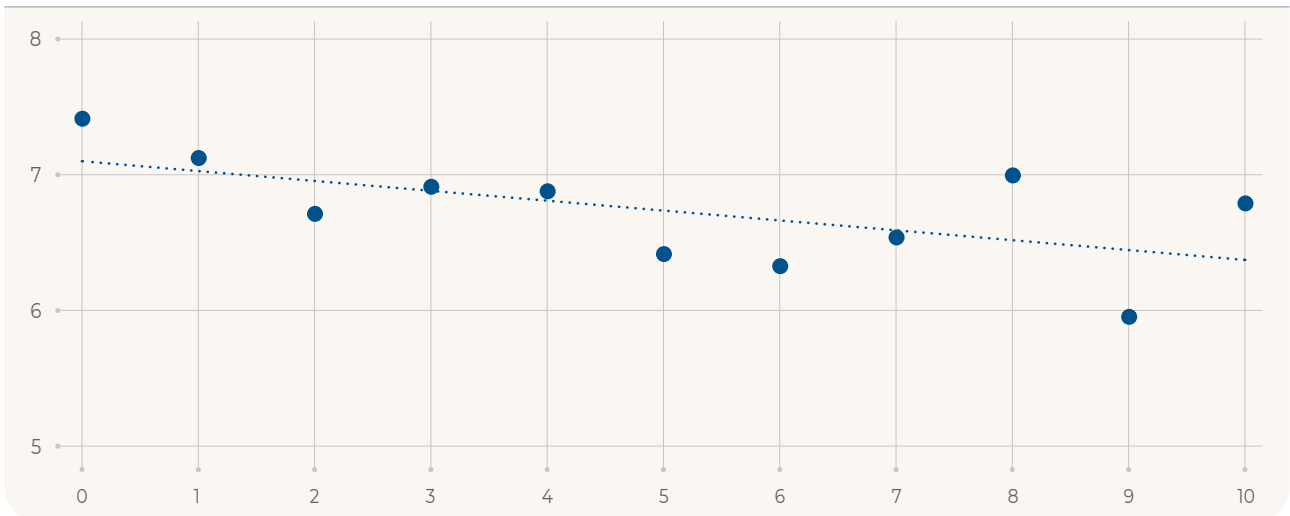
 ITALY – PD



 POLAND – NOWA LEWICA



 SPAIN – PSOE



 SWEDEN – SAP

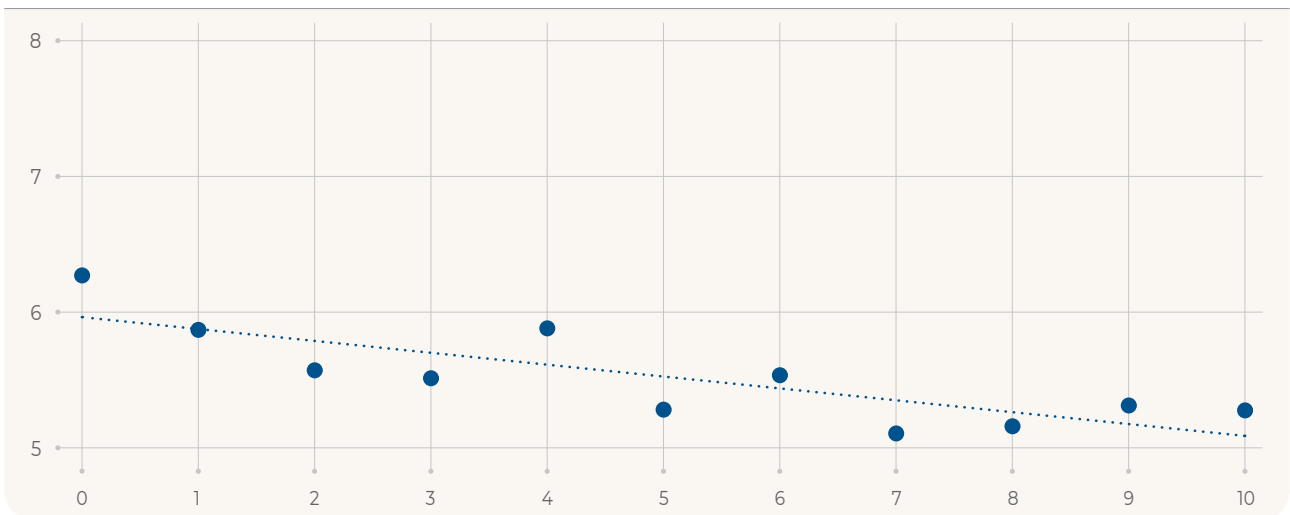


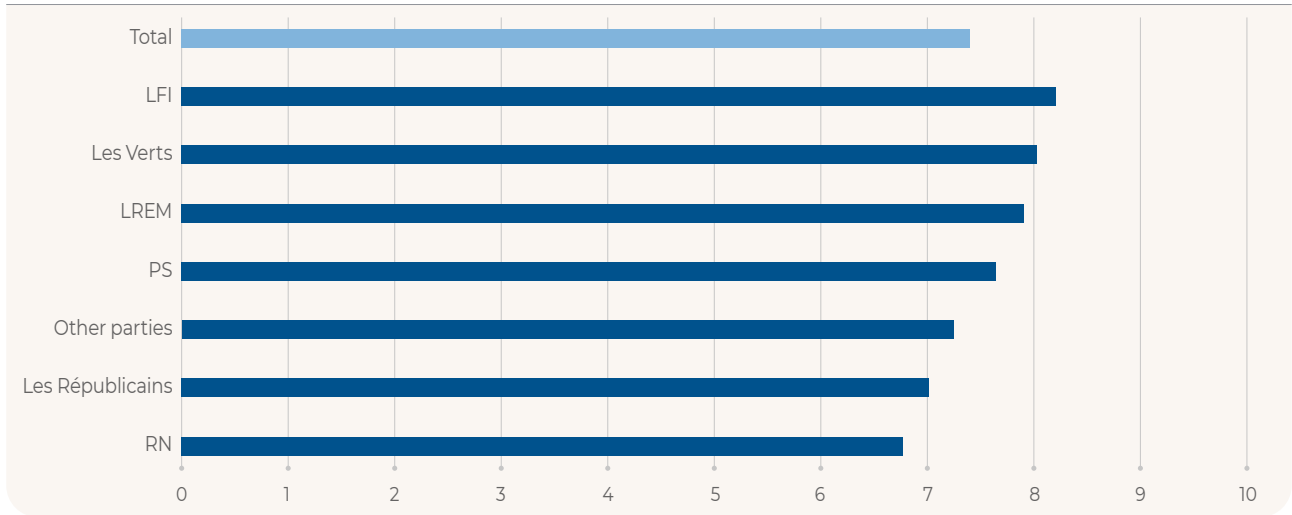


Figure 32 – Concern with Climate Change

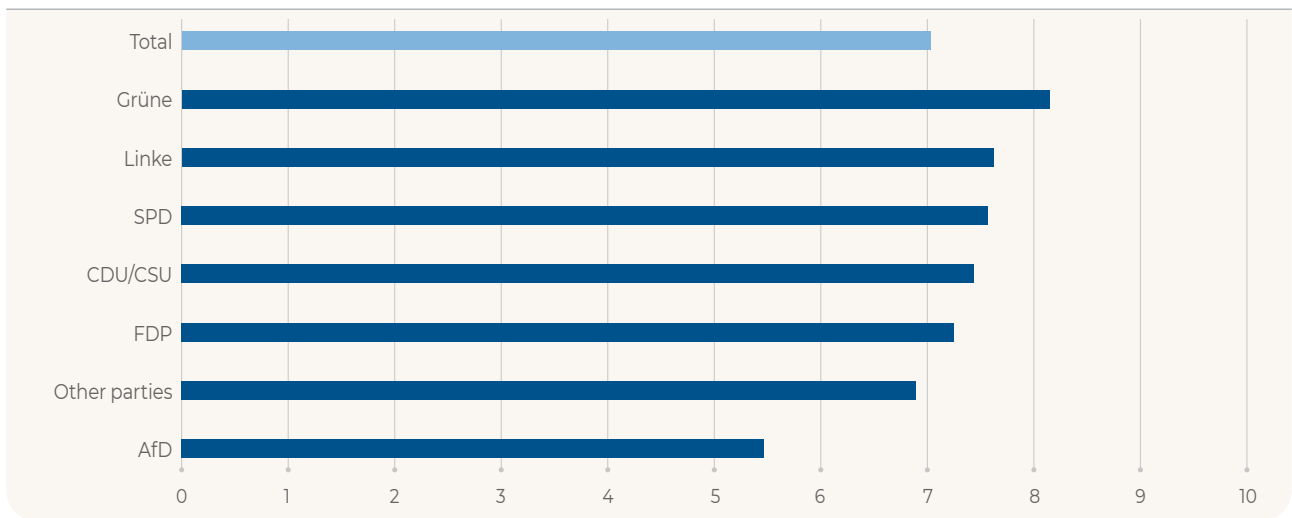
“Climate change will have a dramatic impact on future generations”

■ Agree

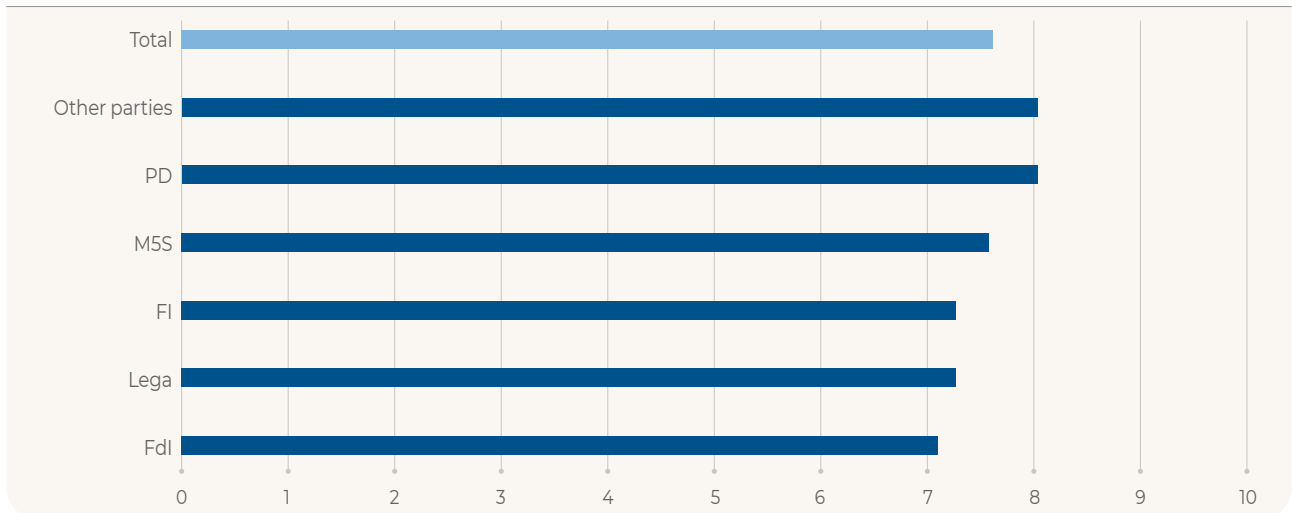
FRANCE



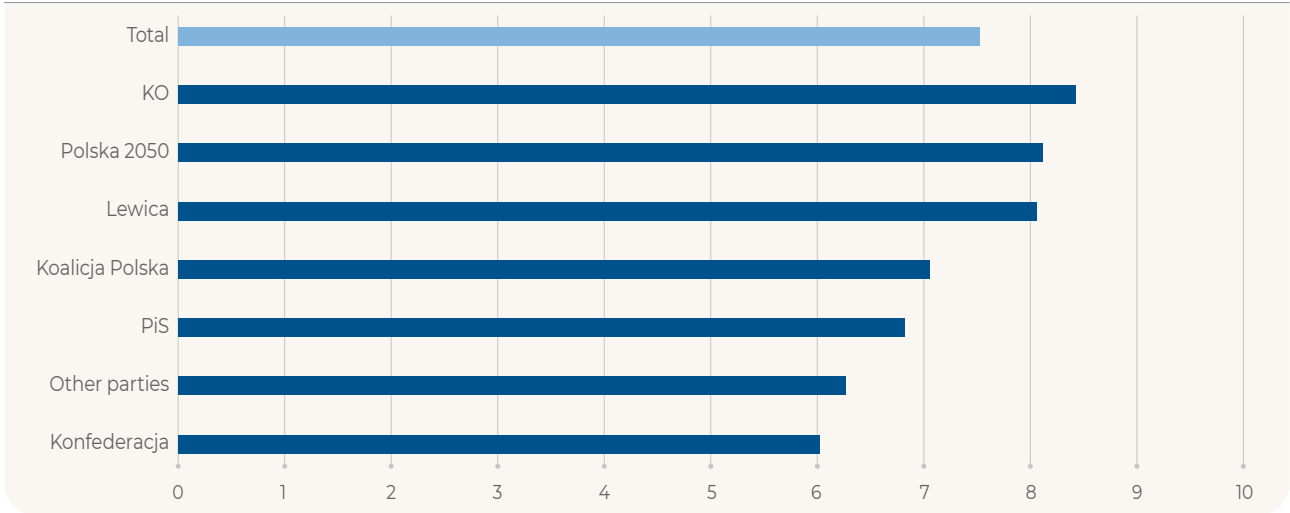
GERMANY



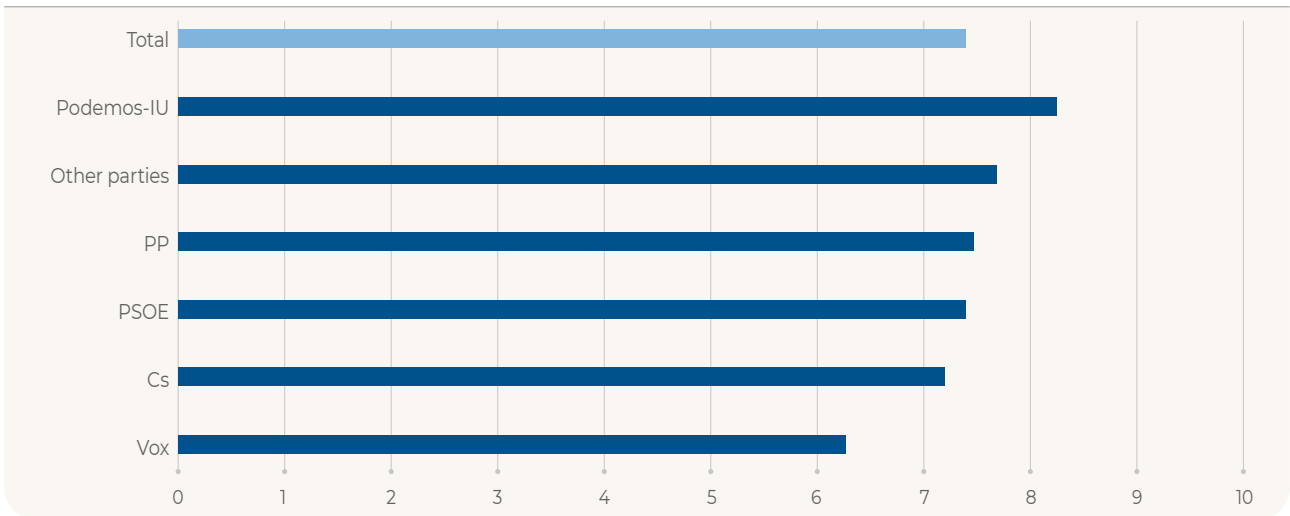
ITALY



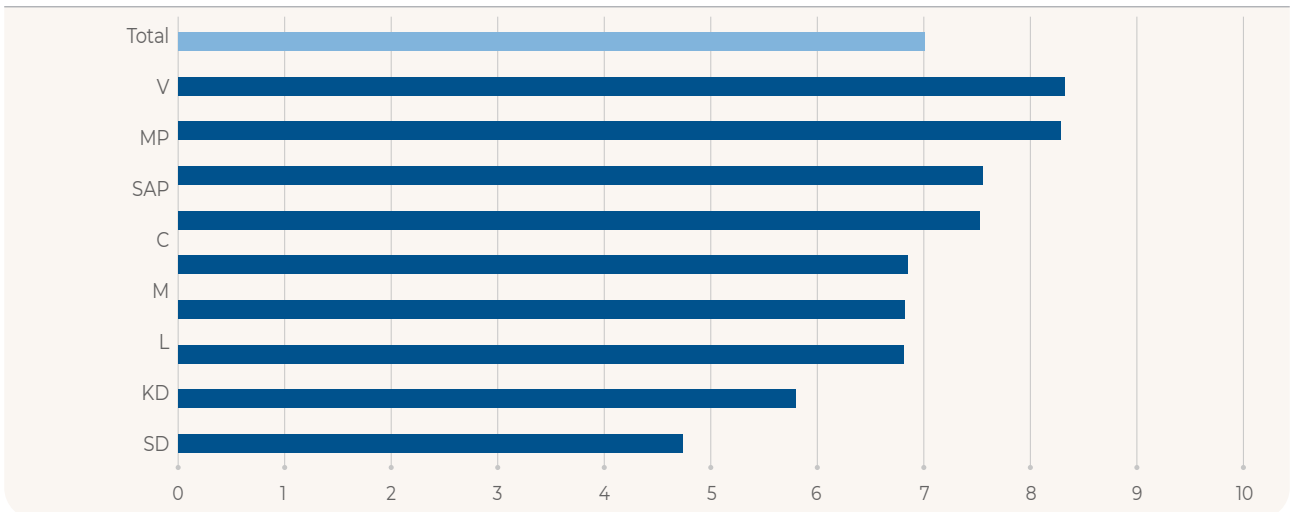
 POLAND



 SPAIN



 SWEDEN





AUTHORS

About Kieskompas (Election Compass)

Kieskompas is an independent scientific research institute specialising in quantitative data analysis, opinion polling, and voter profiling. Founded by Dr André Krouwel in collaboration with the VU University Amsterdam in 2006, Kieskompas is a market leader in the development and innovation of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs), used by more than 30 million people. Kieskompas is embedded in the academic community and is driven by a team of established researchers with a strong focus on political science, data science, and statistics. The company is best known for creating a methodology for visually displaying the positions of political parties in country-specific political landscapes in its VAAs. These online tools have been developed in collaboration with local academics in more than 40 countries, generating large-N datasets suitable for in-depth analyses.

André Krouwel

André Krouwel teaches comparative political science and communication at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and is the founder of Kieskompas (Election Compass). He develops online Voting Advice Applications that collect data on party positions and voter opinions. Krouwel's research focuses on public opinion and politically relevant sentiments, voting behaviour, political parties, and social movements. Recent research has also resulted in publications on conspiracy beliefs, opinions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the vote determinants for European fringe parties and Euroscepticism.

Yordan Kutiyski

Yordan Kutiyski is an MSc political science graduate from the VU University Amsterdam and holds a MA degree in Latin American studies from the Centre of Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA) at the University of Amsterdam. He is a quantitative researcher at Kieskompas. His research interests include voting behaviour and European and Latin American politics.



IMPRINT

FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Avenue des Arts 46
1000 Brussels
Belgium
info@feps-europe.eu
www.feps-europe.eu

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e. V.

Godesberger Allee 149
53175 Bonn
Germany
info@fes.de
www.fes.de

Responsibility for content and editing at FEPS
Ania Skrzypek, Director for Research and Training

Responsibility for content and editing at FES:
Ralf Hexel | European Integration / Sovereign Europe

Contact / Orders:

Adriana.Hornung@fes.de
Celine.Guedes@feps-europe.eu

Design and Illustrations:

pertext, Berlin | www.pertext.de

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the European Parliament, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) or the Friederich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Commercial use of media published by the FES or FEPS is not permitted without the written consent of the FES or FEPS. Publications by the FES may not be used for electioneering purposes.

ISBN 978-3-98628-372-8

© 2022



www.fes.de/bibliothek/fes-publikationen



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Parliament.

