

# **Project Equalize**

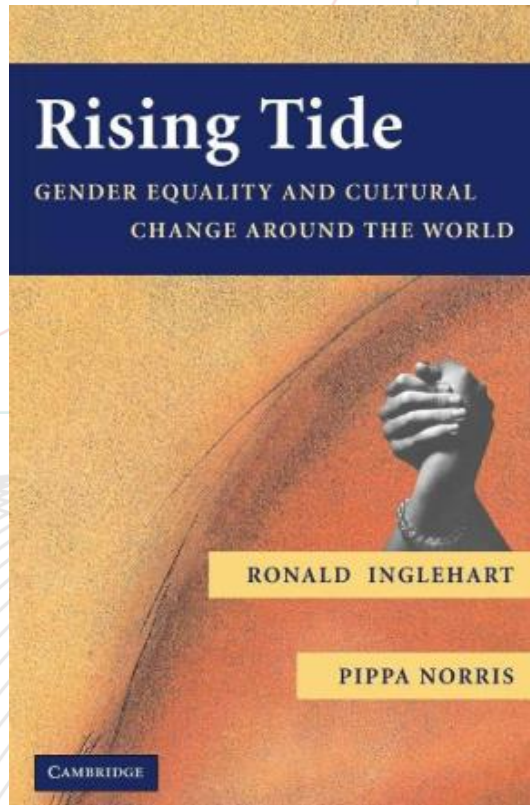
**Interrogating the Gen Z Gender Divide:  
Divergence in Political Ideology and Support  
for Safeguarding Women's Empowerment**

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University of Gothenburg, Sweden**

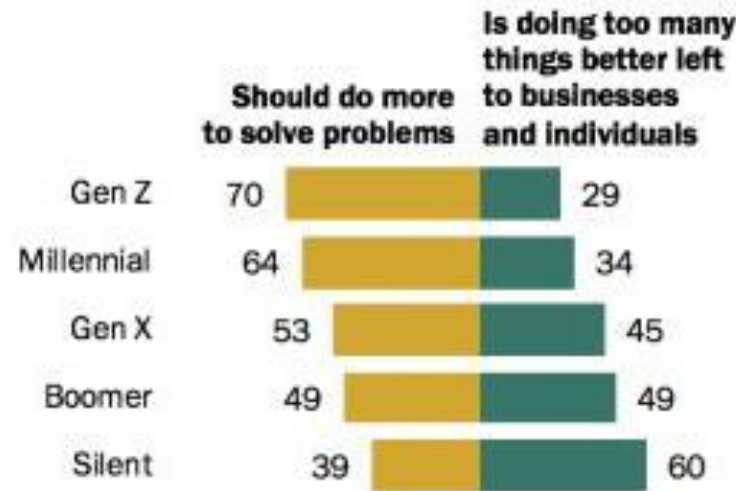
# Aren't the young supposed to be the most progressive?

- Lots of theory & evidence to suggest younger generations are more progressive than previous ones...



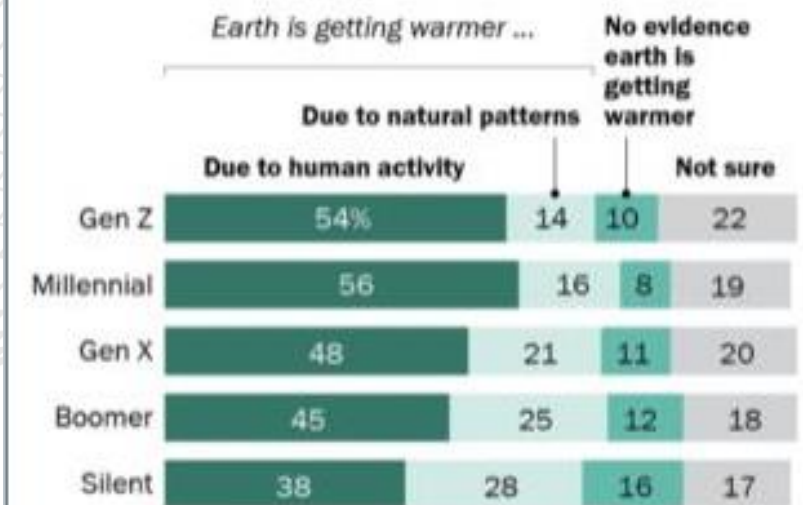
## Gen Z more likely than other generations to want an activist government

% saying government ...



## Gen Z, Millennials, most likely to say climate change is due to human activity

% saying ...



Source: Pew Research Centre (2019) "Gen Z looks a lot like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues"

# The puzzle: is there a Gen Z, gender divide on politics?

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## Opinion Data Points

### A new global gender divide is emerging

Young men and young women's world views are pulling apart. The consequences could be far-reaching

A wide ideology gap is opening up between young men and women in countries across the world

Political ideology of 18-29s (% liberal minus % conservative), by sex



Source: Financial Times (2024) A new global gender divide is emerging

### Are young women more left wing than men - and, if so, why?

23 August 2025

BBC

Share

Imaan Asim BBC News

### Why more young men in Germany are turning to the far right

10 February 2025

BBC

Jessica Parker Berlin Correspondent and Kristina Volk

### Gen Z men, women have a deep political divide. It's made dating a nightmare

CHARLES TREPANY USA TODAY

POLITICS

### Why are men so much more right-wing than women now?

Vox

### How young men are changing what conservatism looks like in Canada

CBC

Gen-Z is heading in opposite directions politically: women turning left, while men go right





# Interrogating the Literature: Why expect a growing divide?

- Why – Differing perceptions of threat or opportunity under progressive societal change (Alexander et al. 2025; Campbell and Cowper-Coles 2025; Grasso and Shorrocks 2025; Off et al. 2022).
  - **Societal progress in diversity, equity and inclusion has generated a stark difference in improvement in resources, opportunities and autonomy for young women** relative to their mothers/grandmothers compared to young men relative to their fathers/grandfathers.
  - **The youngest generation of women has bypassed young men** in higher education, on average, thus signalling real potential to dominate the labour market for the first time in their societies.
  - **Young men may be more vulnerable to perceptions of progressive societal change as threatening** and stagnate in their progressivism, or move in more conservative directions.
  - **Young women may see opportunity in progressive societal change** and move left to safeguard/advance this.

# Interrogating the Literature: Why expect a growing divide?

## Why (Part 2)

- **Right-wing parties/influencers** politicise gender by presenting women's advancements as threatening and target and mobilise young men through social media

(Abou-Chadi et al. 2021; Baker et al. 2024; Bernardez-Rodal et al. 2020; Renström and Bäck 2024)

- The younger generation of women is aware of the pervasiveness of sexual discrimination post **#MeToo** movements

(Anduiza and Rico 2022; Hoffman 2021; Horeck et al. 2024)

# Interrogating the Literature: Where do we see evidence?

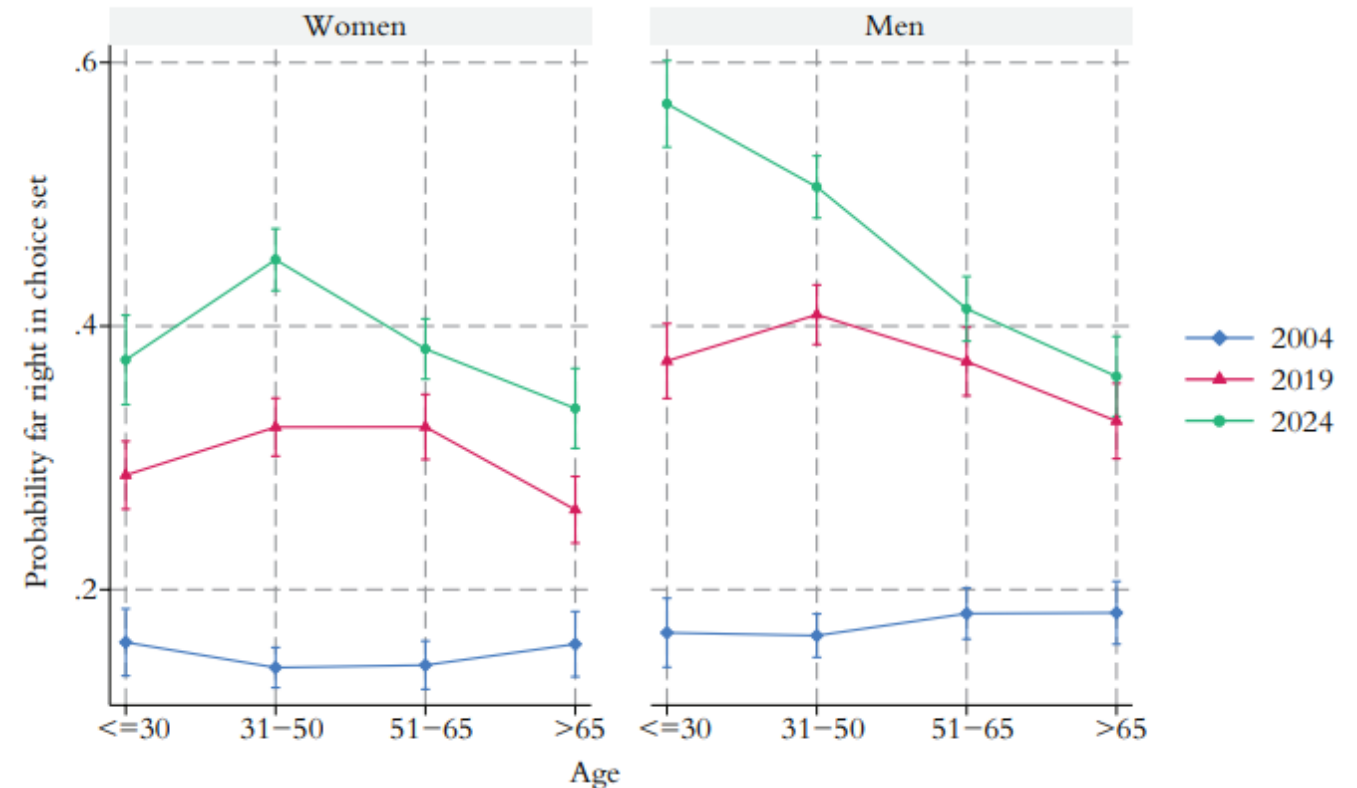
- **Voting Behaviour** (Abou-Chadi 2024; Off et al. 2025)
- **Left-Right Placement** (Nennstiel and Hudde 2025)
- **Attitudes towards gender equality** (Off et al. 2022, 2025; Kim and Kweon 2022; Alexander et al. 2025).

# Interrogating the Literature: Where do we see evidence?



- **Young men are significantly more likely** than older men and women of any age group to indicate a high likelihood **that they would ever vote for a far-right party** in their countries.
- Analysis of the 2024, 2019 and 2004 waves of the European Election Study (EES) based on European Parliament Elections. The analysis includes 13 countries and over 80 elections.

**Figure 4:** Predicted probability of having the radical right in the consideration set conditional on age and gender



Source: Abou-Chadi, Tarik. 2024. 'A Gendered Far-Right Wave among Young Voters in Western Europe?' *European Journal of Politics and Gender* (Bristol, UK), December 13, 1–6.



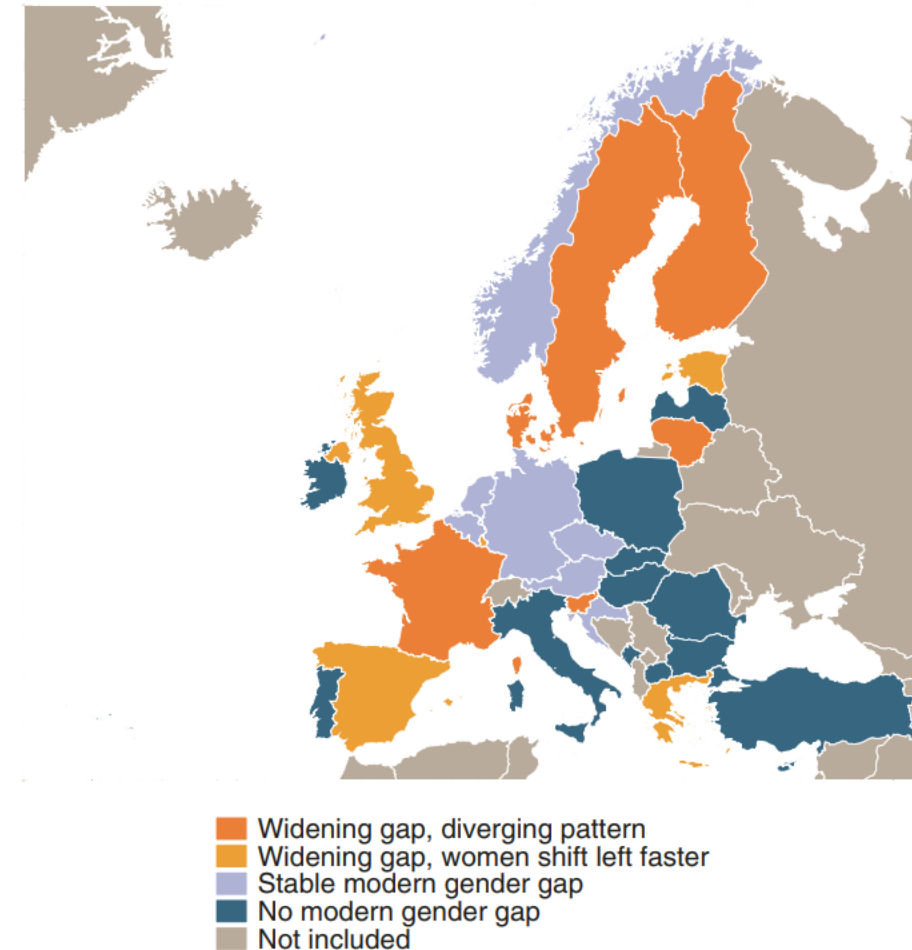
# Interrogating the Literature: Where do we see evidence?



To examine the development of left–right self-placement Nennstiel and Hudde (2025) utilize data from the Euro Barometers covering 466,089 individuals aged 20–29 years from 32 European countries over the years 1990–2023.

In **six countries**, they find a **widening gap** (shaded dark orange) **with young men recently moving (slightly) further to the right** and/or women moving further to the left.

In **five countries** (shaded light orange), they find that the **gap grows because men** are either **stable in their ideological left–right self-placement** or **moving further left, but women are moving at a faster pace to the left**.



**Figure 3** Countries classified by the development of gender gaps in left–right self-placement over time.

Source: World Country Polygons, EB (1990–2023), our own calculations.

Source: Nennstiel and Hudde. 2025. 'Is There a Growing Gender Divide among Young Adults in Regard to Ideological Left–Right Self-Placement? Evidence from 32 European Countries'. European Sociological Review, June 13, jcaf021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaf021>



# Interrogating the Literature: Where do we see evidence?



Off et al (2022) find that **young men are most likely to perceive advances in women's rights as a threat to men's opportunities**, particularly if they reside in regions with recent increases in unemployment.

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH article

Front. Polit. Sci., 15 August 2022

Sec. Political Participation

Volume 4 - 2022 |

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.909811>

This article is part of the Research Topic  
Mind the Backlash: Gender Discrimination  
and Sexism in Contemporary Societies

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## Who perceives women's rights as threatening to men and boys? Explaining modern sexism among young men in Europe



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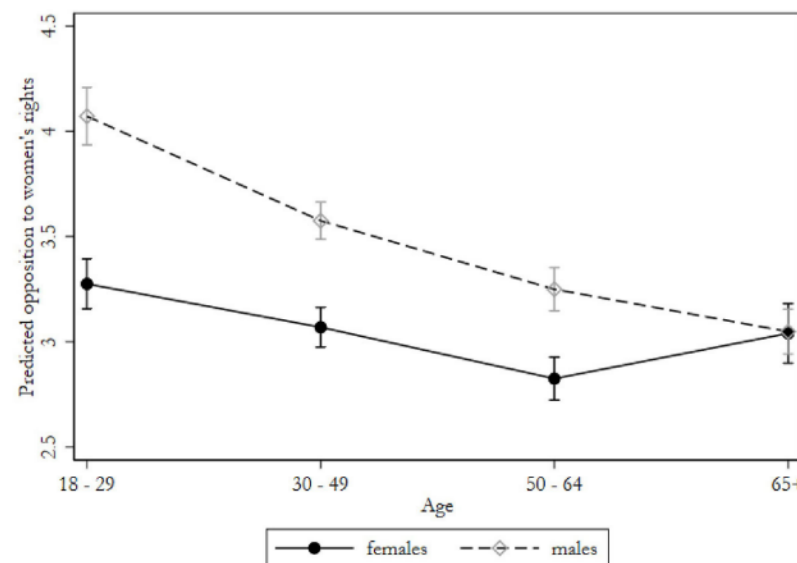


FIGURE 2

Test of H1: The interaction of age and gender. Predated values of the dependent variable from negative binomial estimation, with 95% CIs. Higher values of the dependent variable (y-axis) equal more opposition to advances in women's rights. Control variables from Figure 1 and country fixed effects are held constant at mean levels, and standard errors are clustered by region. All models include post-stratification and design weights.

Analysis of data from responses to a new question in the 2021 EQI survey, capturing 32,469 individuals nested in 208 NUTS 2 regions in 27 European Union countries.



# **Empirical Evidence**

## **i. Exit polls from recent elections**

# Young gender divide in elections: UK 2024 exit poll

Young men are twice as likely to vote 'Reform', young women are nearly twice as likely to vote Green

## How did Britons vote at the 2024 general election: age and gender

Which party did you vote for at the General Election in July 2024? % of 35,205 voters

Labour Lib Dem Green Other Reform UK Conservative

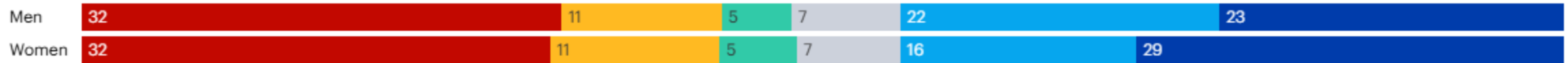
### 18-24 year olds



### 25-49 year olds



### 50-64 year olds



### 65+ year olds



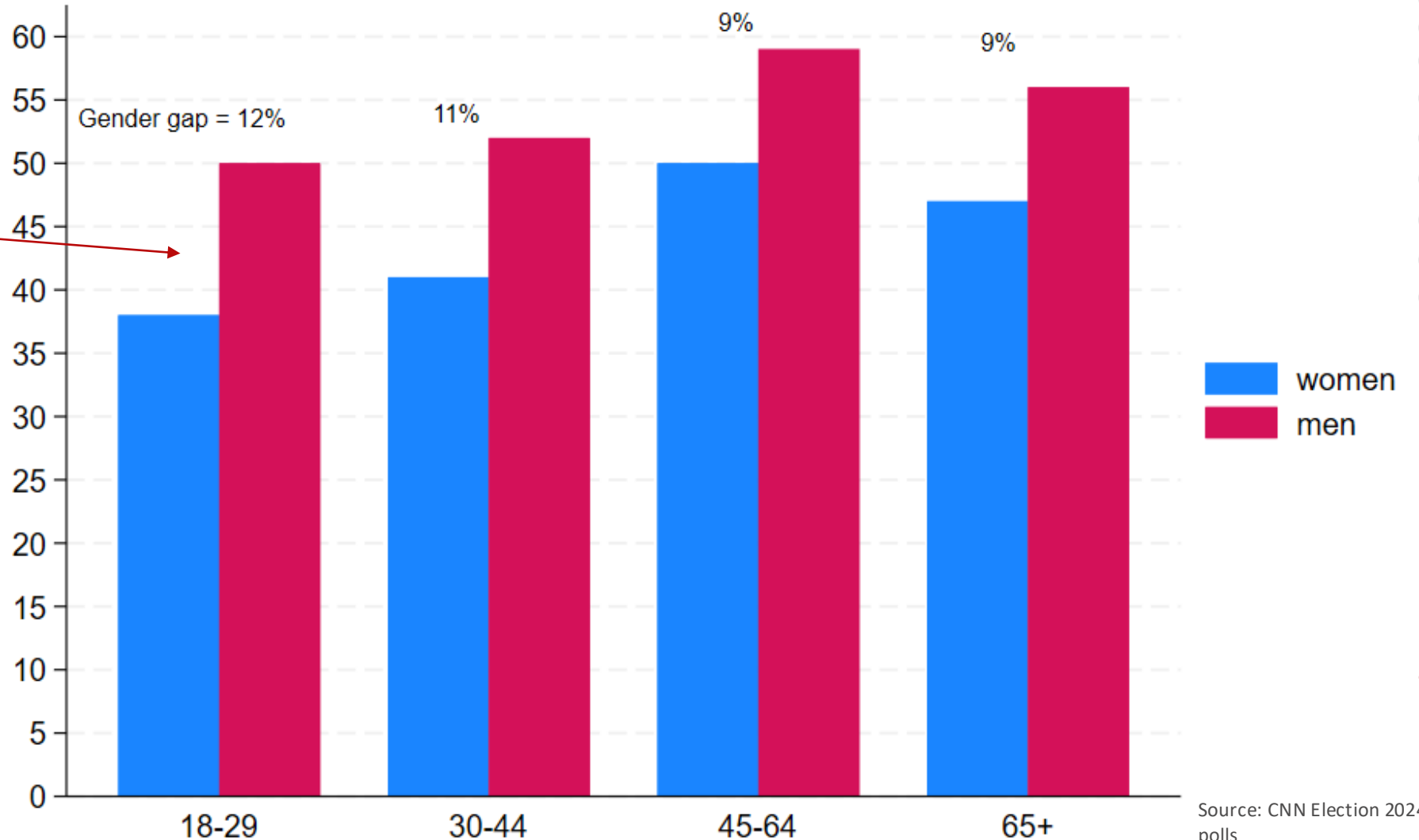


# Young gender divide in elections: US 2024 exit poll in vote for Trump

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The largest gender gap among the young in Trump support



Source: CNN Election 2024, Exit polls

# Young gender divide in elections: German 2025 exit poll in vote for AfD & Die Linke

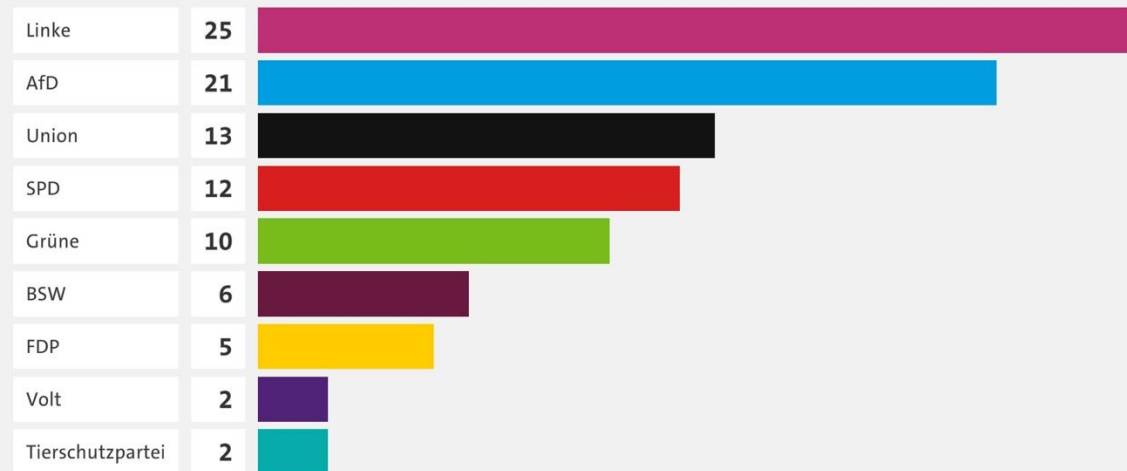


## Younger German voters are turning to the Left and AfD

Vote share among 18 to 24-year-olds, %

Bundestagswahl 2025

### Stimmanteile bei 18-24-Jährigen



Stand: 24.02.2025, 02:36 Uhr

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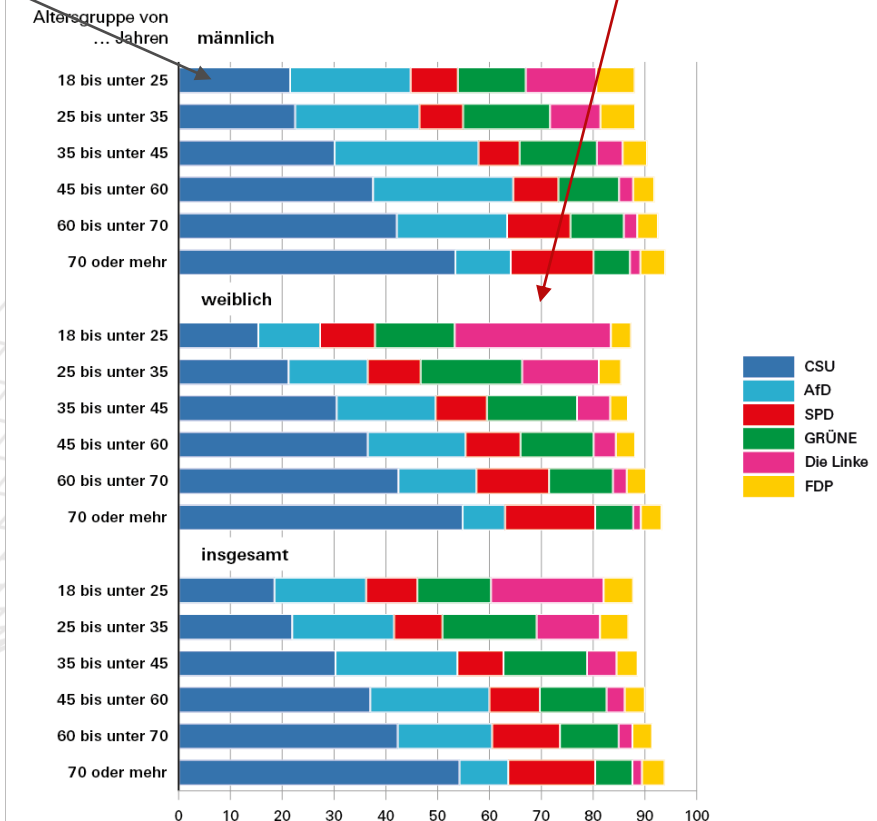


AfD most popular  
among young men,

Die Linke by far most popular among  
young women

**BUT** – a clear  
gender gap in  
which party  
young people  
preferred!

### Abgabe der Zweitstimmen nach Geschlecht und Altersgruppen bei der Bundestagswahl 2025 in Bayern in Prozent



Bayerisches Landesamt für Statistik, Fürth 2025

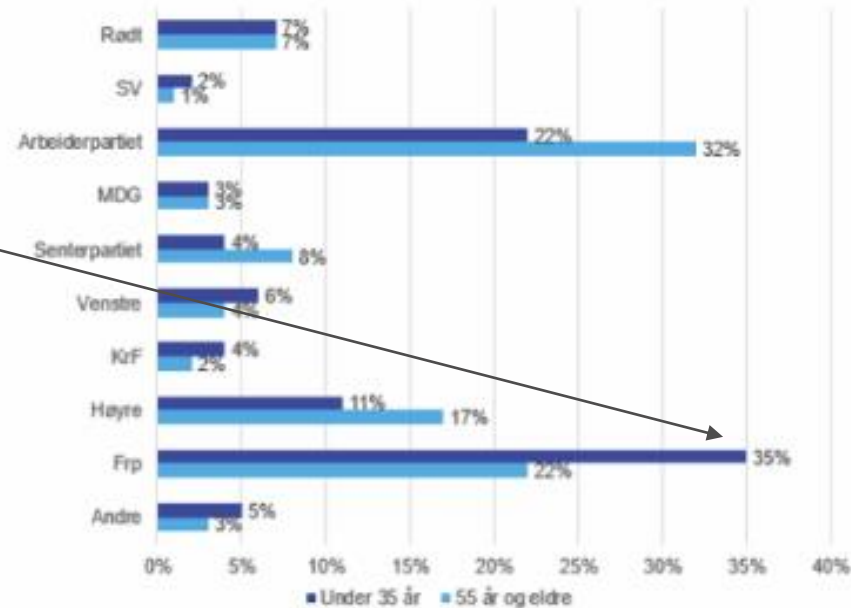
Source: Bayrisches Landesamt für Statistik 2025

# Young gender divide in elections: Norwegian 2025 exit poll in vote for left parties & Frp

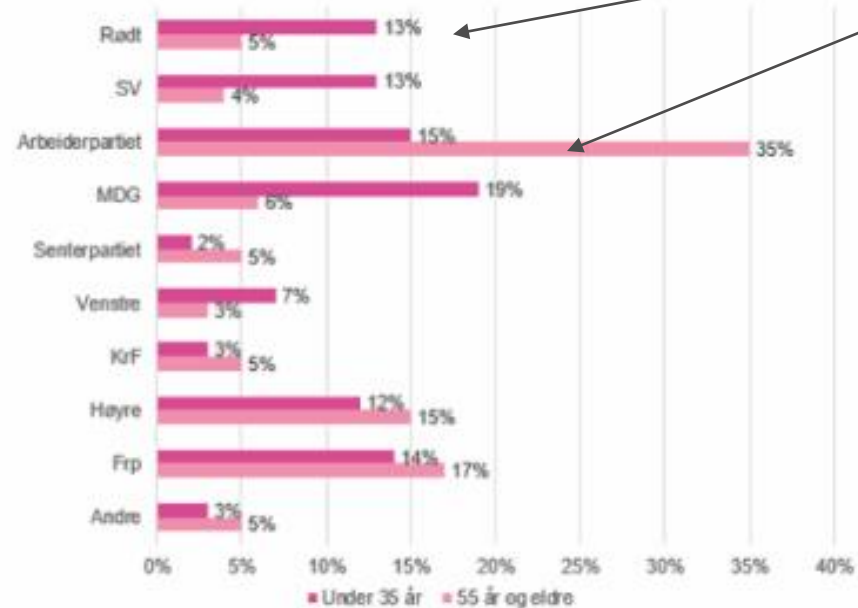


## Partifordeling – Unge og eldre, menn og kvinner

### Menn



### Kvinner

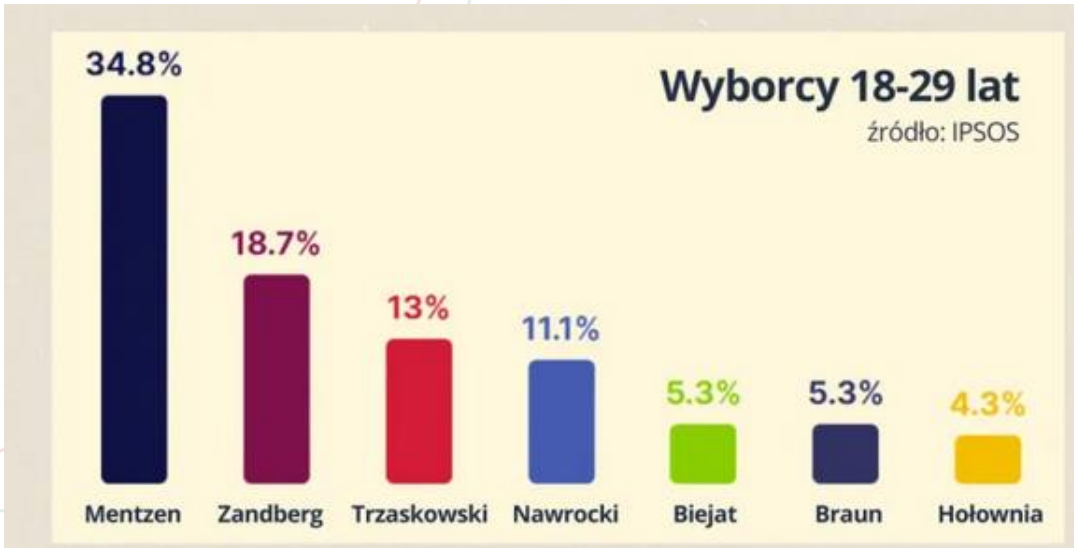


Compared with younger women, Younger men far more likely to vote Progress party (Frp)

& likewise, Younger women are far more likely to vote Rødt, SV, MDG



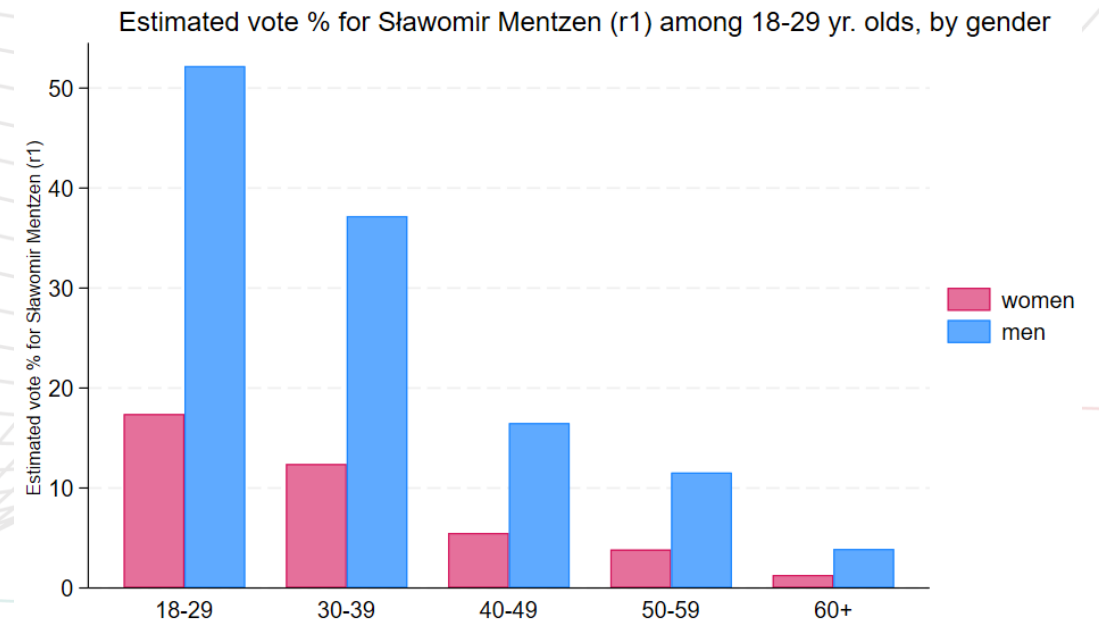
# Young gender divide in elections: Polish 2025 exit poll in vote for Sławomir Mentzen (Konfed.)



Turnout under 30 with a record high (>73%), a demographic Mentzen won during the election (also those under 30-39), particularly men

\*(extrapolated estimates from IPSOS exit poll)

Source: IPSOS 2025



# In sum

- Recent exit poll evidence shows a **Gen Z gender divide in voting behaviour, with young men more likely to prefer the far right and young women more likely to pick the far left.**
  - In the UK (2024), young men are twice as likely to vote 'Reform', and young women are nearly twice as likely to vote Green.
  - In the US (2024), the largest gender gap among the young is in Trump support.
  - In Germany (2025), young men prefer AfD, and young women prefer Die Linke.
  - Norway (2025) compared with younger women, Younger men are far more likely to vote for the Progress Party (Frp).
  - Poland (2025) young men preferred Mentzen.

## ii. European Social Survey

- Round 11 - Available EU countries + UK + Norway + Switzerland = 25 countries
- N = 42,805
- Published in November 2024, latest version in June 2025
- We also use the full ESS time series in some cases to check trends.
- Young age group: 15-29 ('Gen Z')

\*regression models control for mother's tertiary education



# Available sample in ESS 2024 & 5 select countries for deep dive



# Variables of interest

## Left-right ideology (0-10)

### *What's driving this divide?*

#### For all countries

We check attitudes on

- Immigration
- the environment
- same-sex marriage
- redistribution

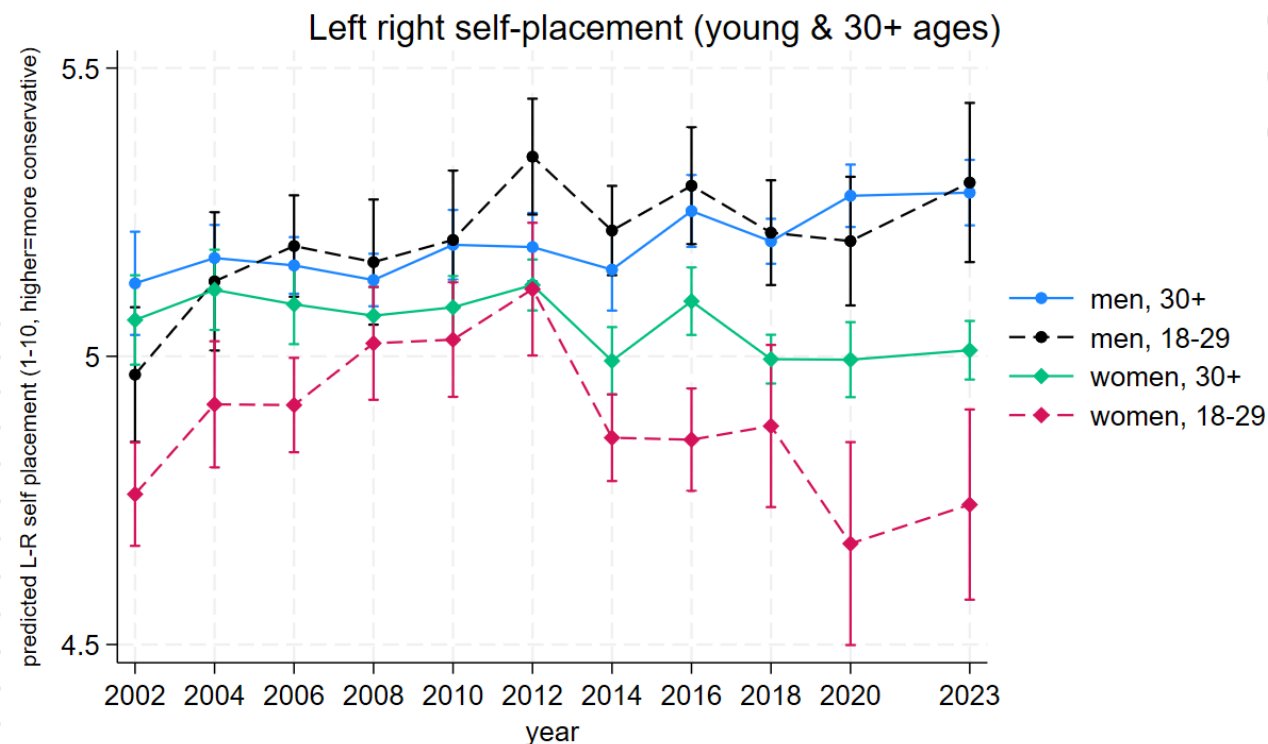
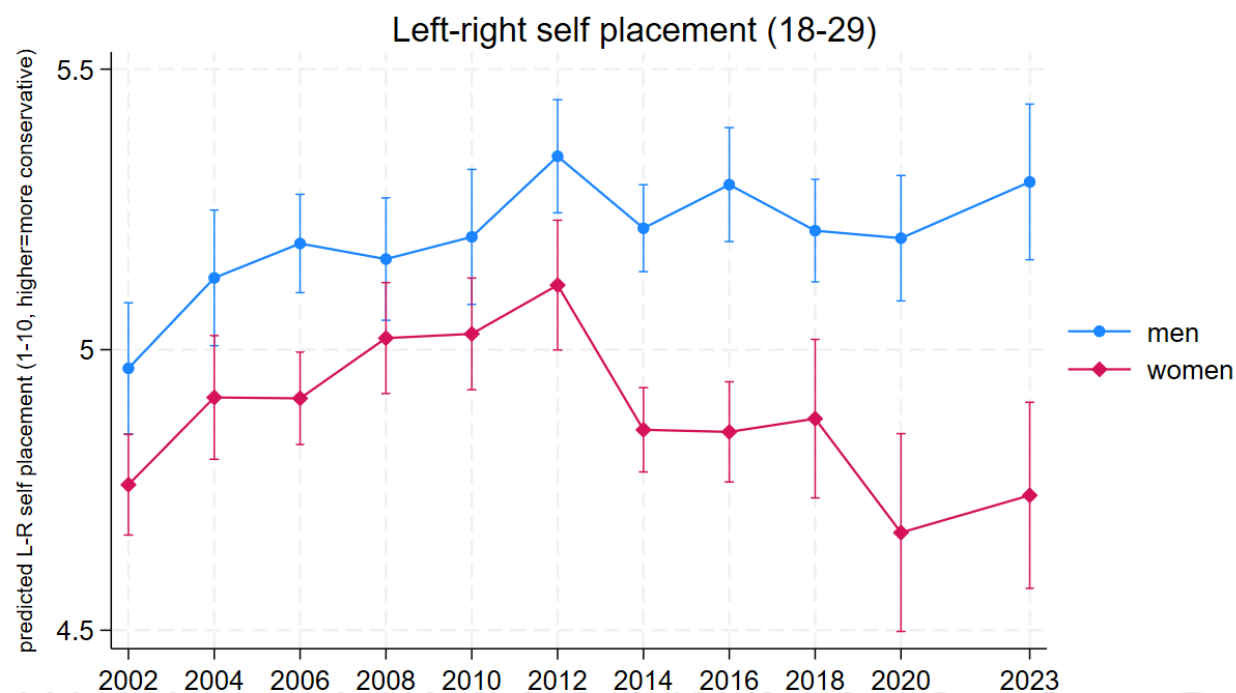
#### Gender equality attitudes

- Agreement: Women are treated unfairly in hiring/pay/promotions
- In favour vs. against: Dividing parliamentary seats equally by gender
- How often do women exaggerate sexual harassment claims
- In favour vs. against: Dividing parental leave equally

#### In select five countries:

- Far-right voting
- Green/left voting
- Social democrat voting
- Centre-right voting

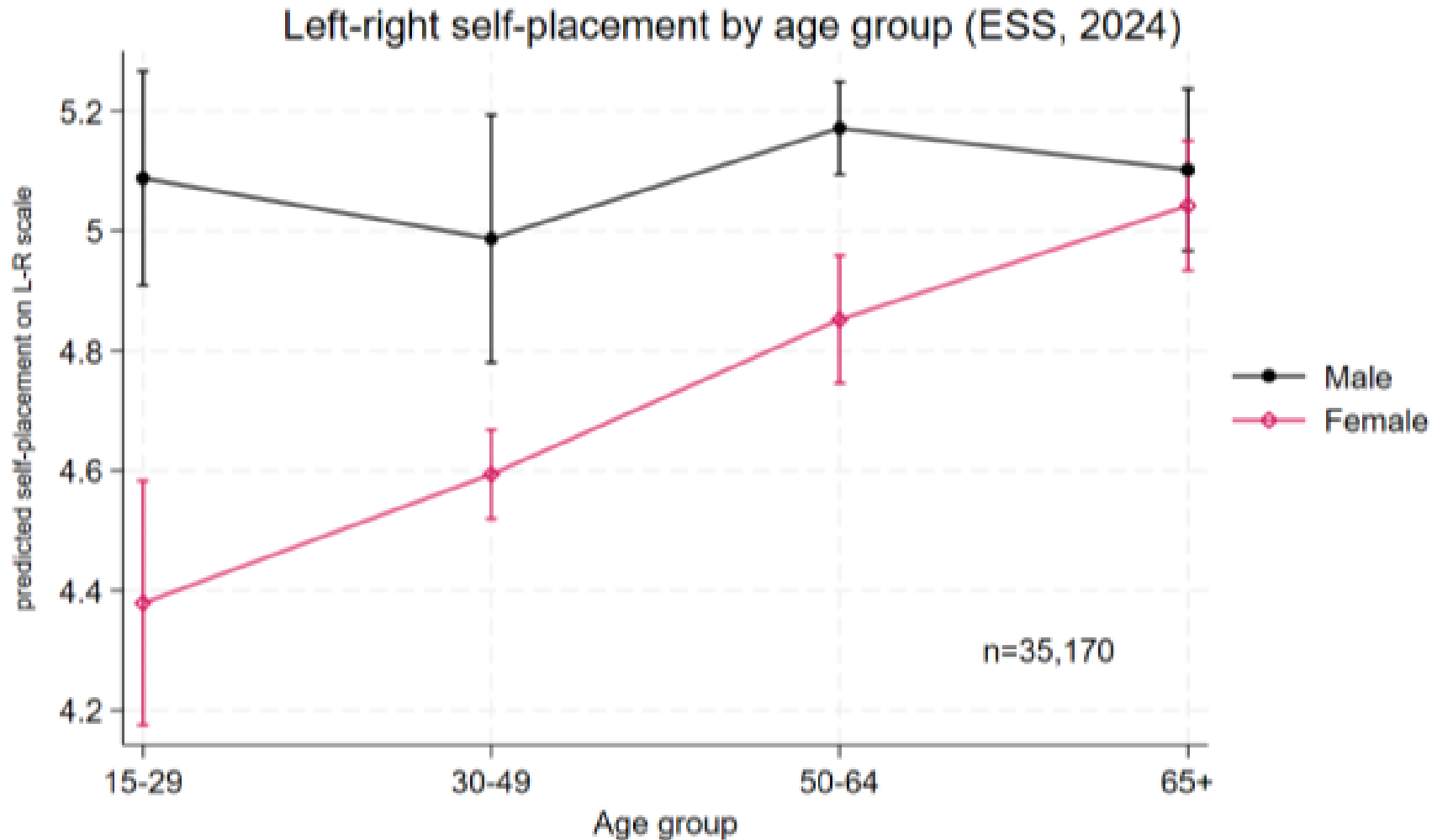
# Trends in Europe on a whole: left-right self placement (ESS data, 2002-2023)







# Left-right self-placement, all countries



# A caveat: significant under-sampling of far-right voters in many countries

Sweden's SD voters under-sampled by roughly 3-fold

Party voted for in last national election, Sweden	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Centern	103	9.55	9.55
Kristdemokraterna	61	5.66	15.21
Liberalerna	48	4.45	19.67
Miljöpartiet de gröna	67	6.22	25.88
Moderata samlingspartiet	210	19.48	45.36
Socialdemokraterna	381	35.34	80.71
Sverigedemokraterna	86	7.98	88.68
Vänsterpartiet	108	10.02	98.70
Annat parti	14	1.30	100.00
Total	1,078	100.00	

Spain's Vox voters under-sampled by roughly 2-fold

Party voted for in last national election, Spain	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
PP	319	29.21	29.21
PSOE	414	37.91	67.12
VOX	74	6.78	73.90
SUMAR	117	10.71	84.62
ERC	25	2.29	86.90

Germany AfD voters under-sampled by roughly 4-fold (i.e. compared with 21% in election)

Party voted for in last national election 2, Germany	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Christian Democratic Union/Christian So	434	26.58	26.58
Social Democratic Party (SPD)	399	24.43	51.01
The Left (Die Linke)	90	5.51	56.52
Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die	396	24.25	80.77
Free Democratic Party (FDP)	165	10.10	90.88
Alternative for Germany (AfD)	88	5.39	96.26
Free Voters (Freie Wähler)	21	1.29	97.55
Grassroots Democratic Party of Germany	4	0.24	97.80
Party for Labour, Rule of Law, Animal P	12	0.73	98.53
Other	24	1.47	100.00
Total	1,633	100.00	

**\*\*\*to adjust for this in our select-5 country sample, we add partisan weights to the ESS analytical weights\*\*\***



# What's driving this divide?

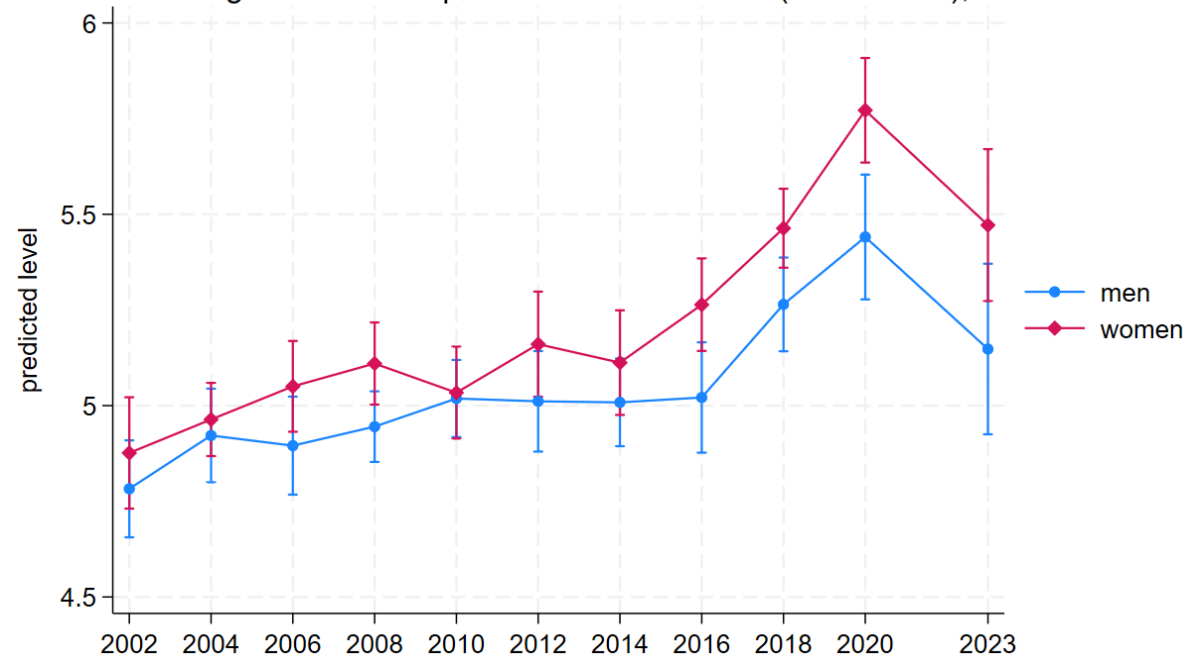
- **Political attitudes in general?**

e.g. Immigration, environment, same-sex marriage, tax/redistribution, etc.

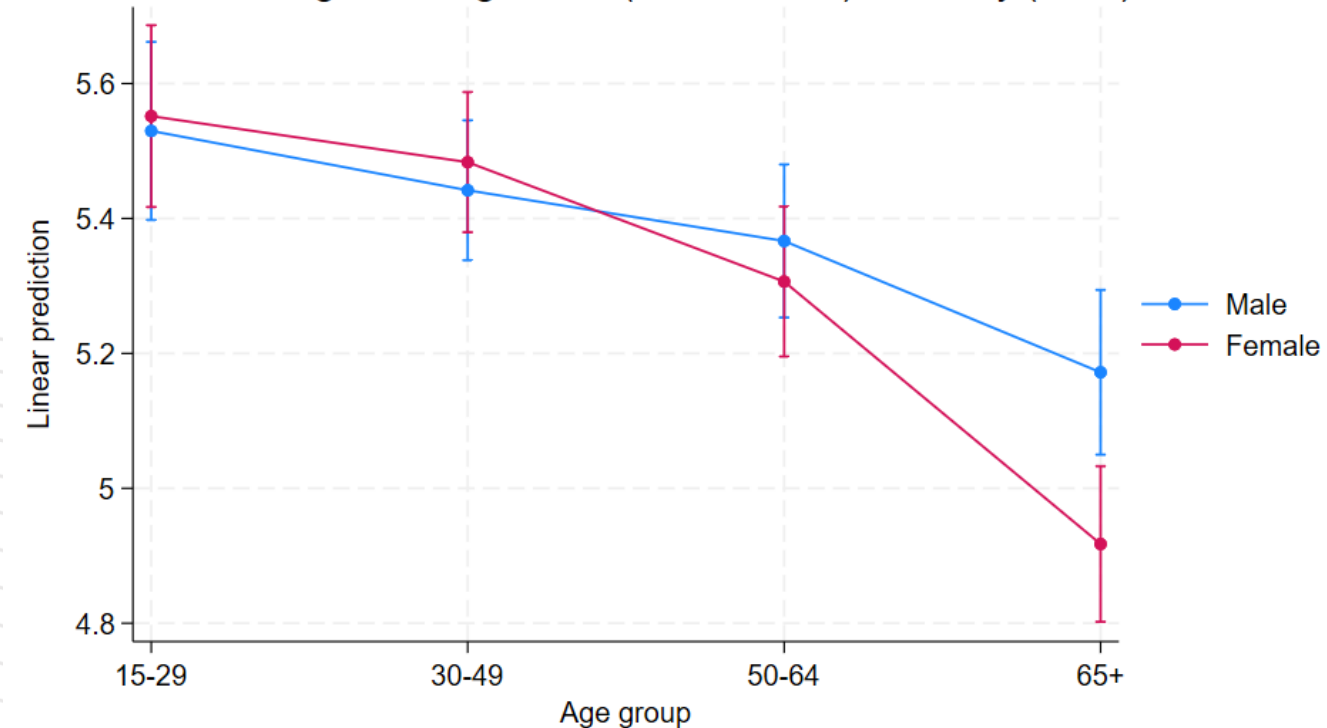
- **Gender issues?**

# Immigration? Full sample

Immigrants make a positive contribution to (COUNTRY), 18-29



Immigration is good for (COUNTRY's) economy (2024)

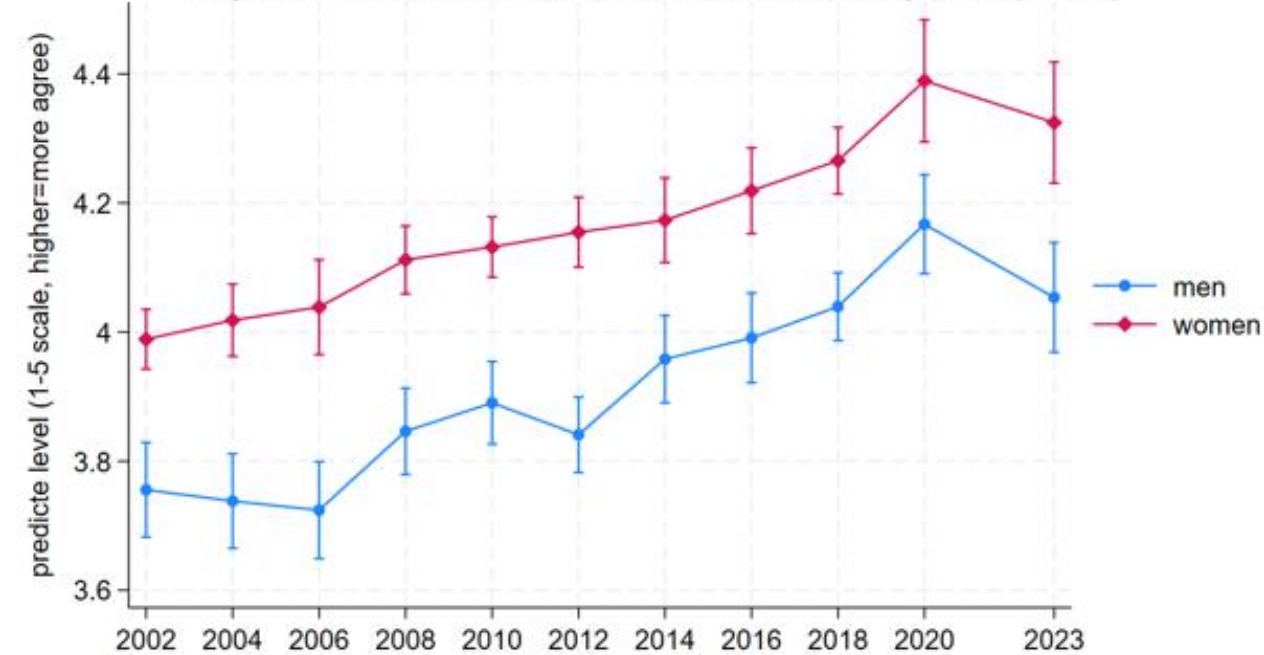


OLS regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.

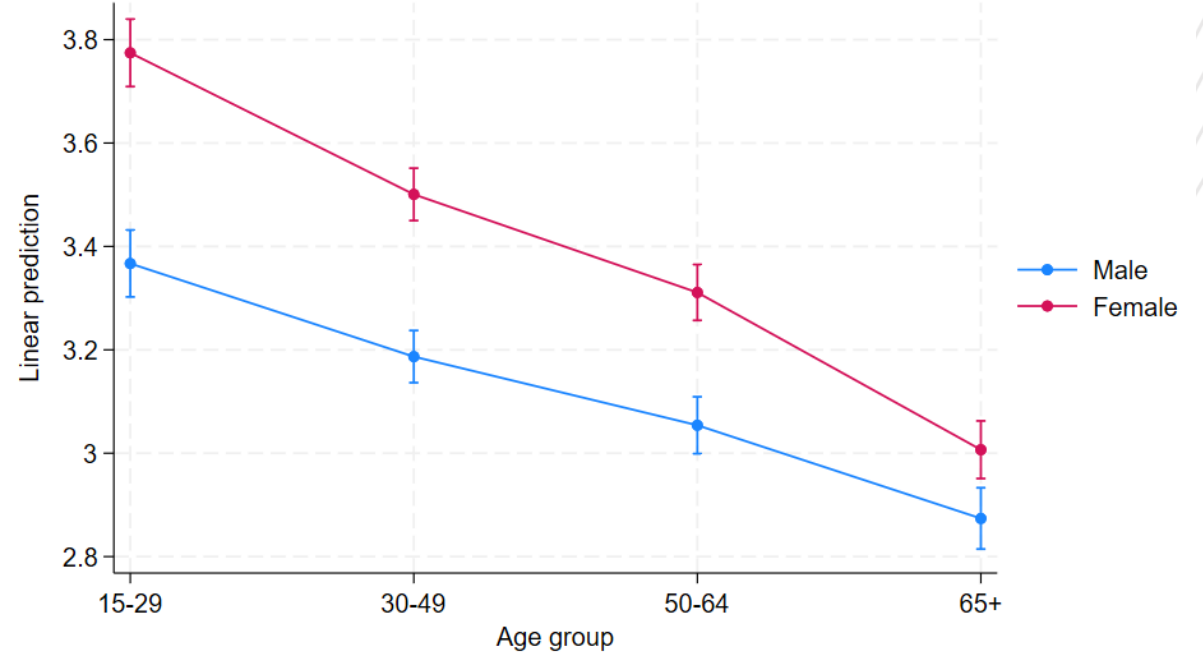


# Same-sex marriage

Gays and lesbians should be free to live as they wish (18-29)



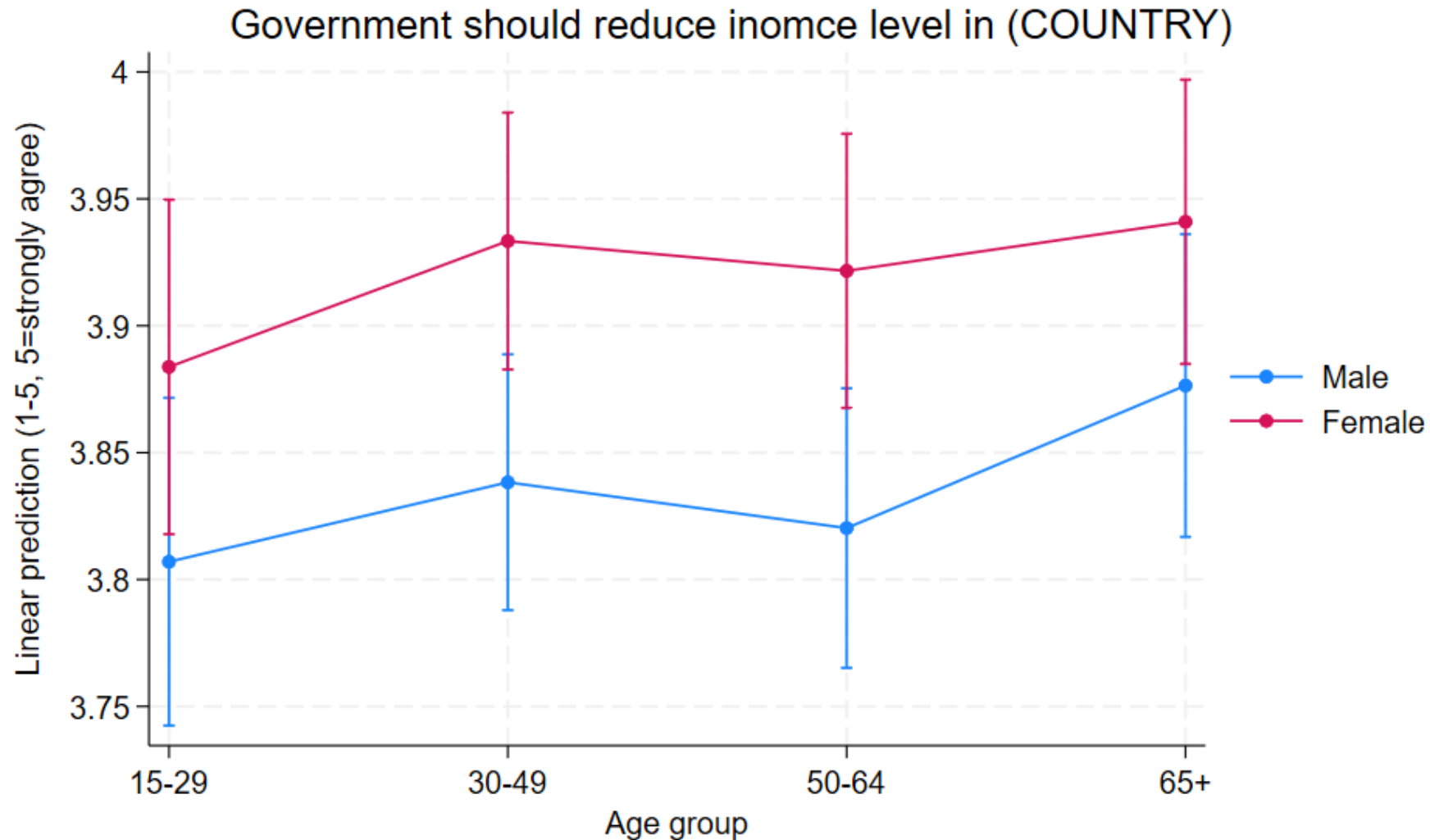
Gay and Lesbian couples should be legally allowed to adopt kids



OLS regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.

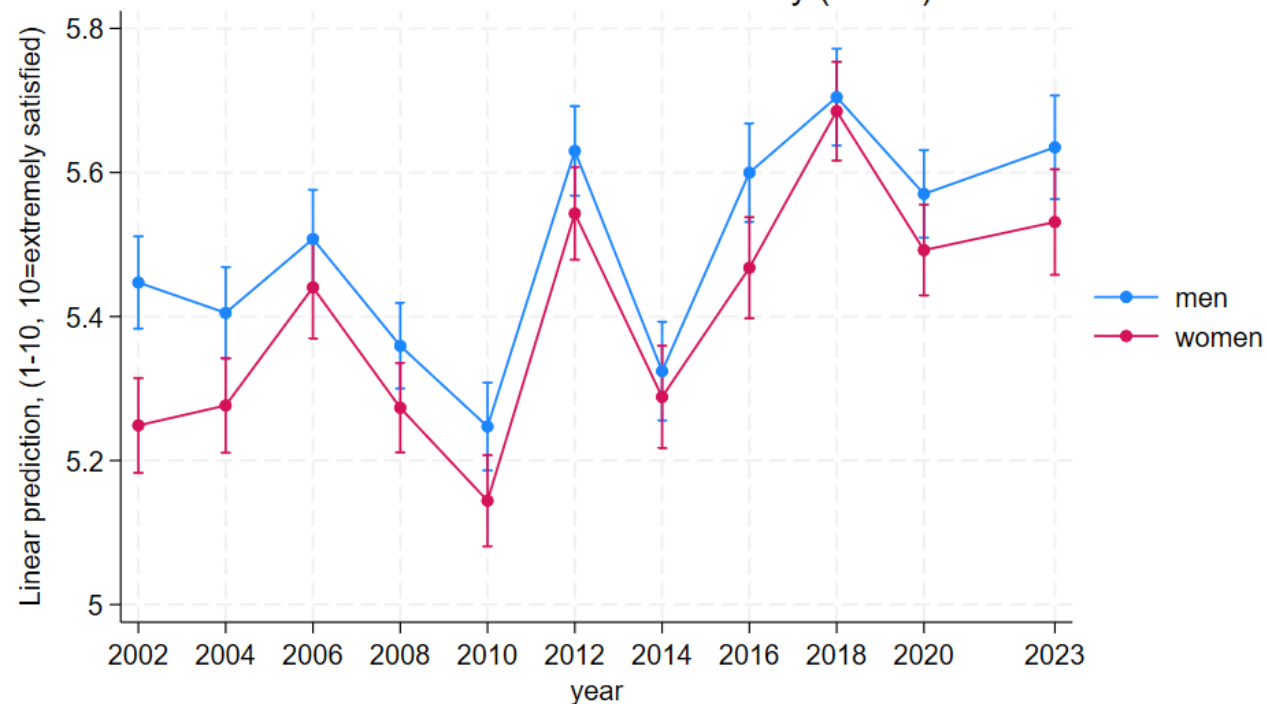


# Government redistribution

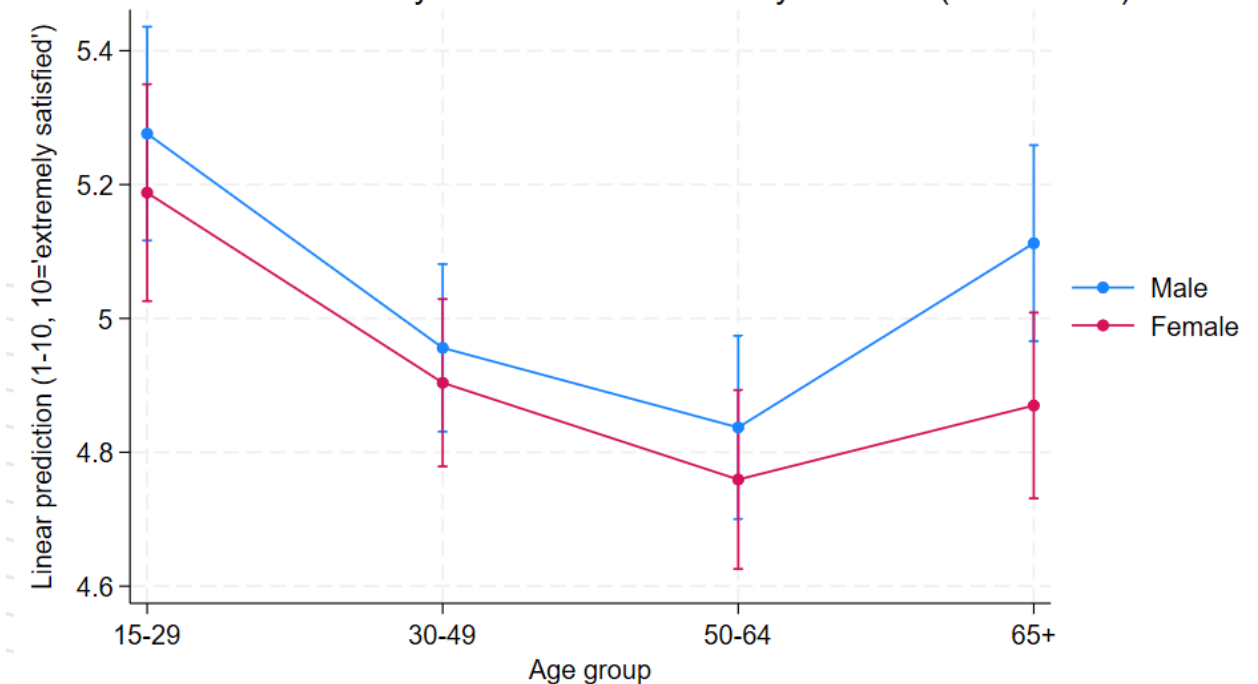


# Satisfaction with democracy

Satisfaction with democracy (15-29)



How satisfied are you with how democracy works in (COUNTRY)?



OLS regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.



# In sum

- Current/growing left-right & voting divide among young does not seem to be explained by attitudes on:
- immigration,
- same-sex marriage,
- redistribution
- satisfaction with democracy



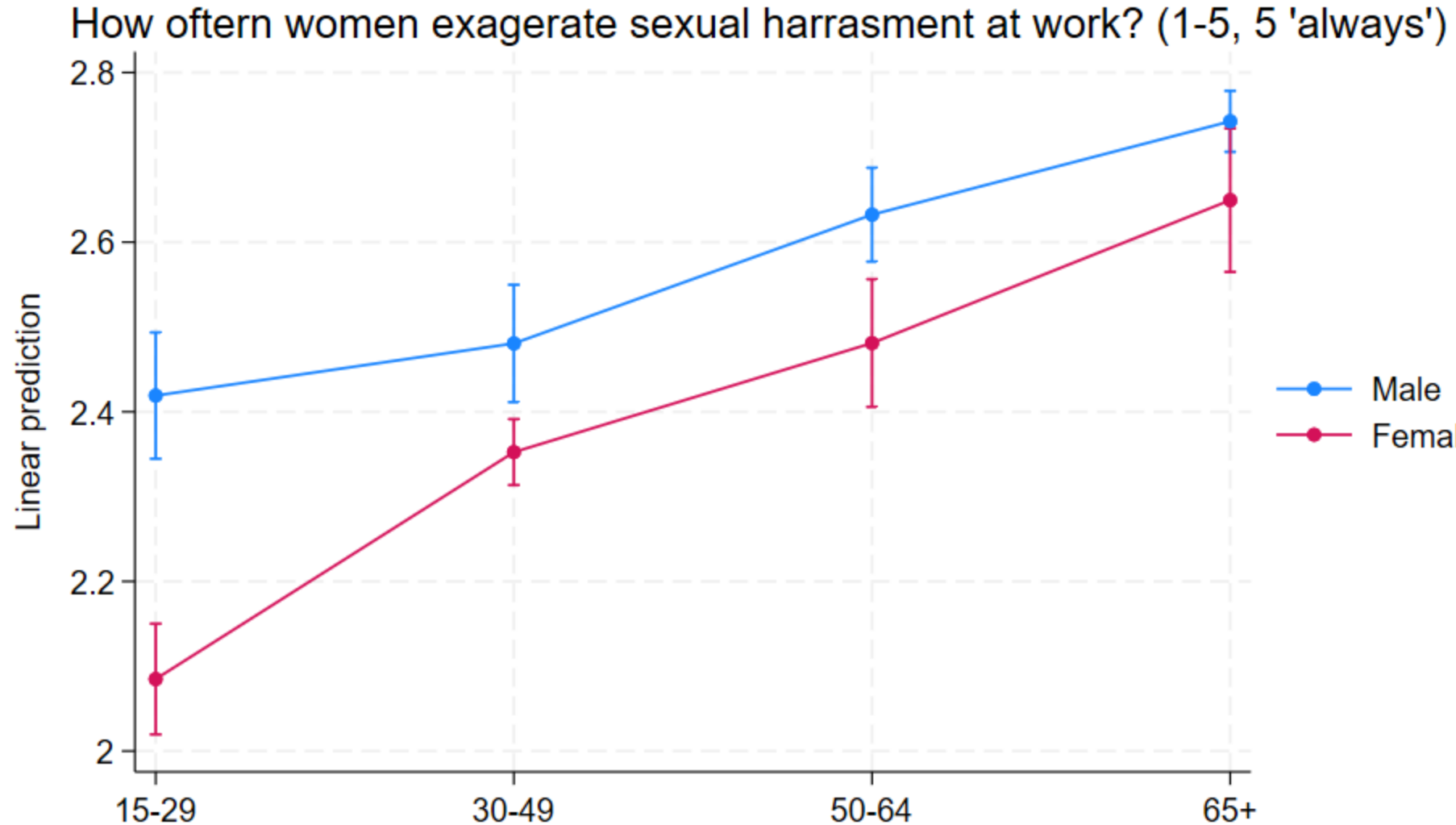
# Gender equality attitudes

# All countries: Gender equality (workplace)



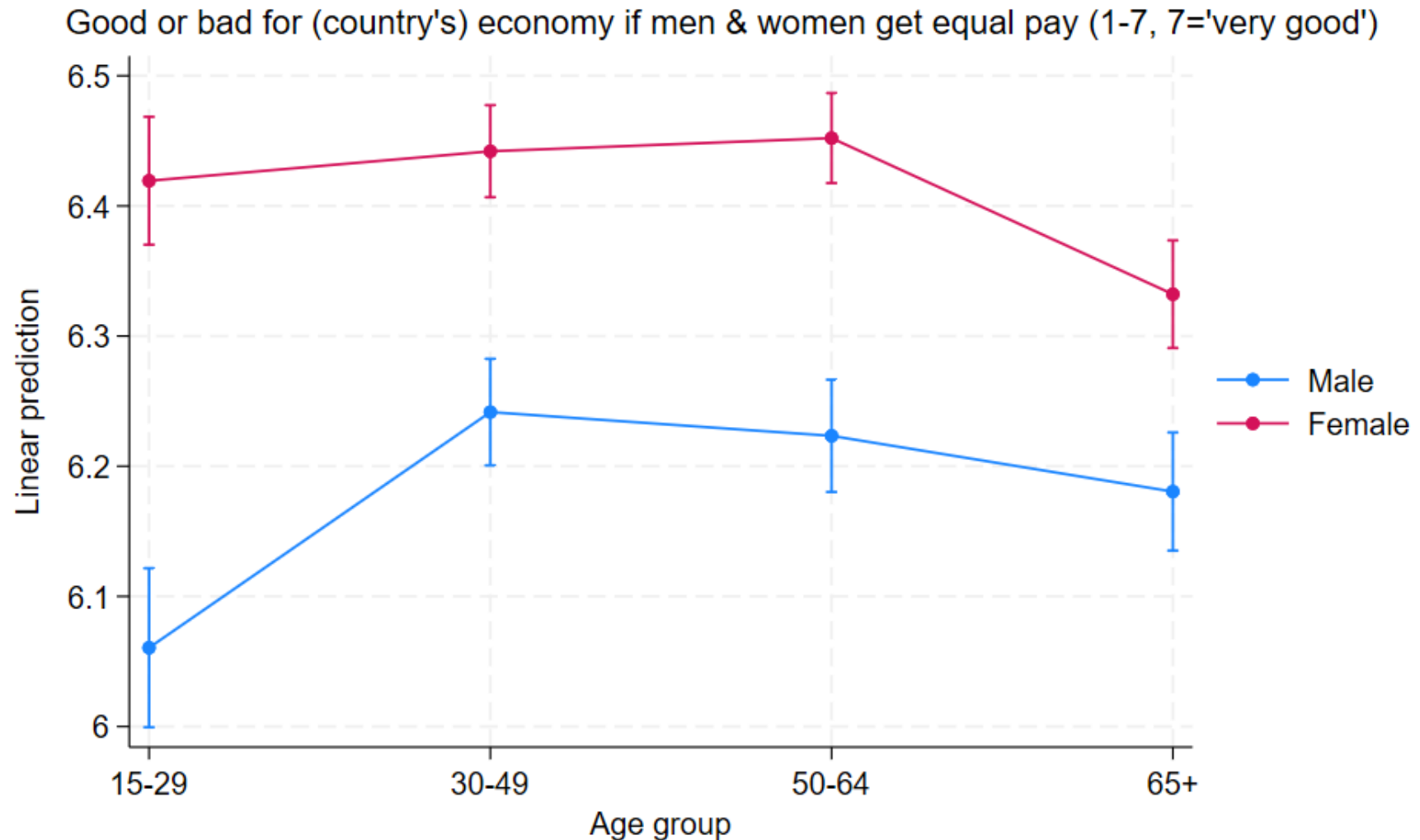
Probit regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.

# All countries: Gender equality (sexual harrasment)



OLS regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.

# All countries: Gender equality (equal pay)



OLS regression, country fixed effects, mother's education control, survey weights, standard errors clustered at the country level.





# In sum

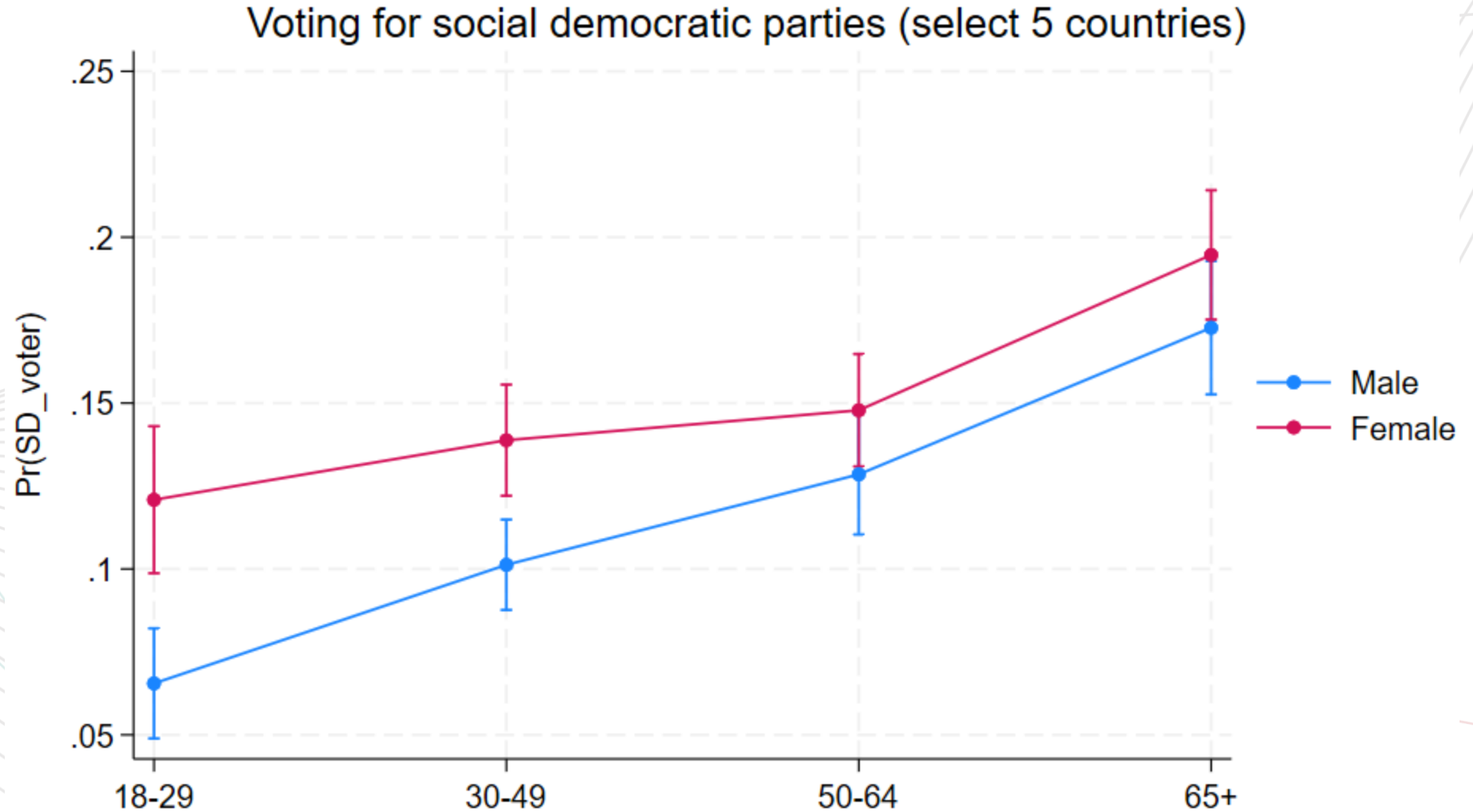
- Data from the ESS suggest that young men are less likely to acknowledge that women are treated unfairly in hiring and promotion, women experience sexual harassment at work, and it is good for their country's economy if women receive equal pay.
- To the contrary, young women are more likely to acknowledge all of this.

# Voting Patterns (sample 18+)

# 5 country cases: voting for social democratic parties



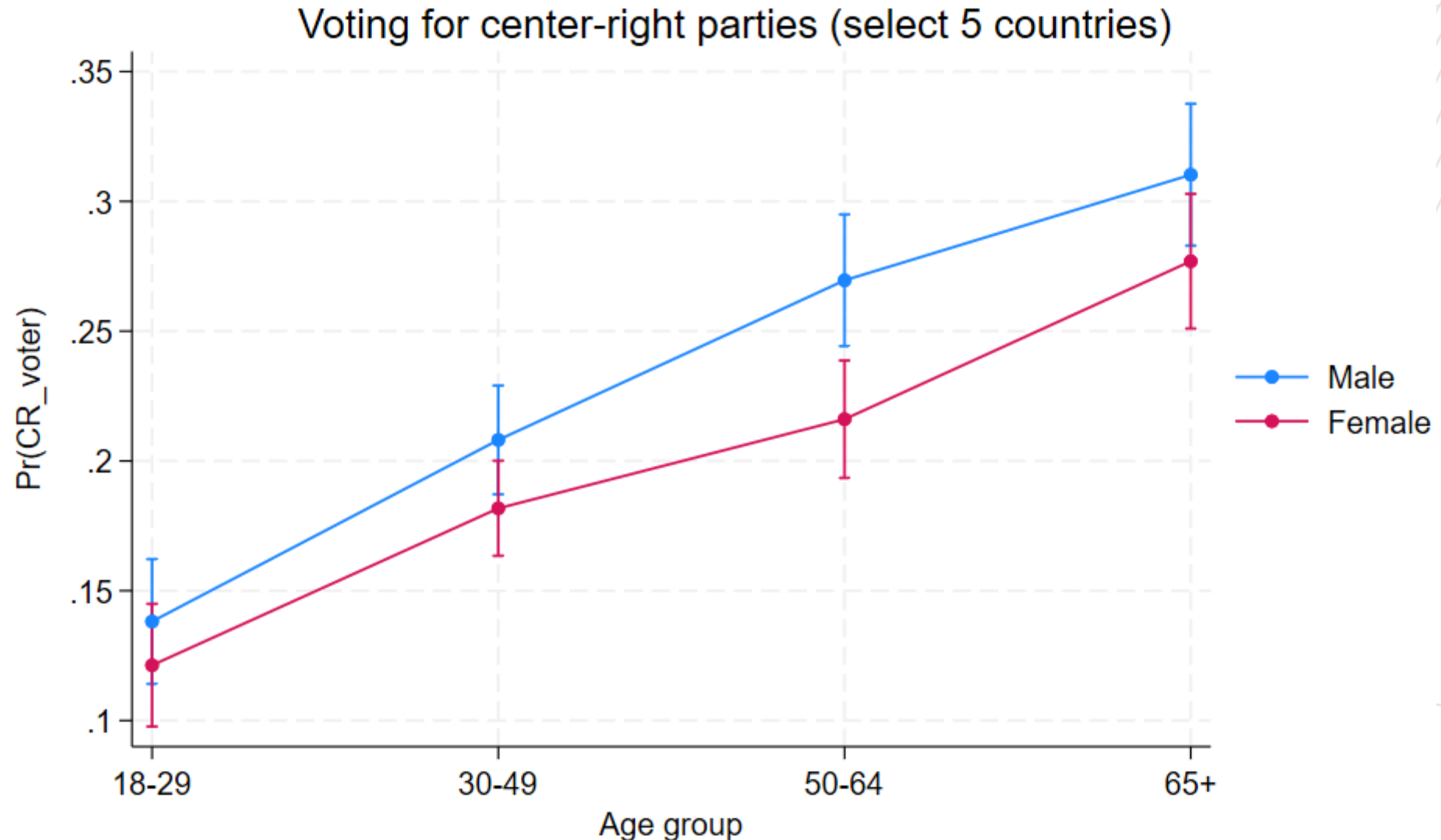
- \*Party coded as 'social democrat' if it belongs to *Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)* in EP parliament



# 5 country cases: voting for center right parties

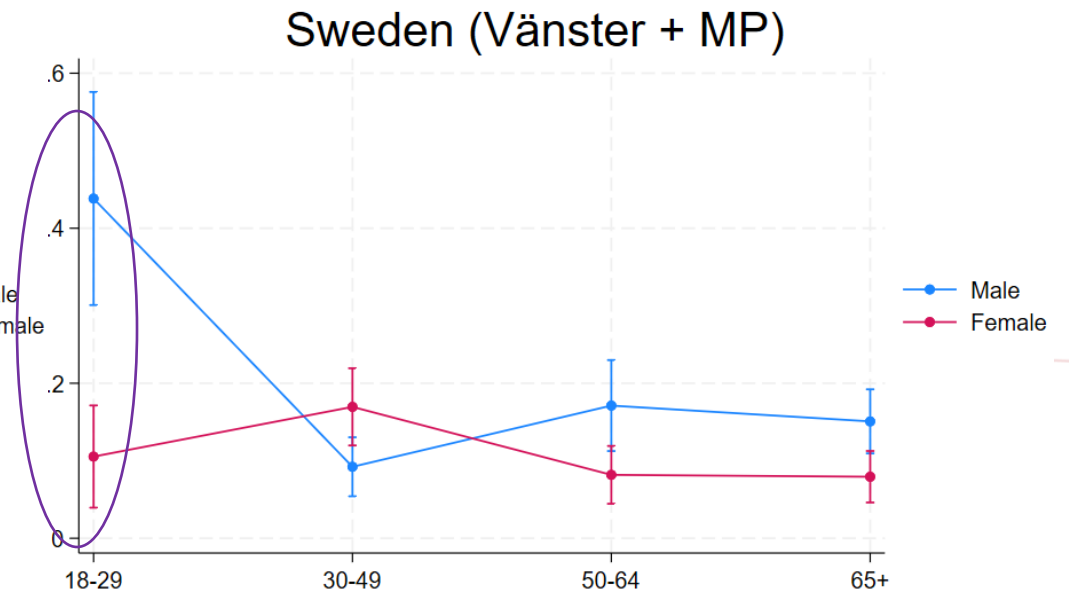
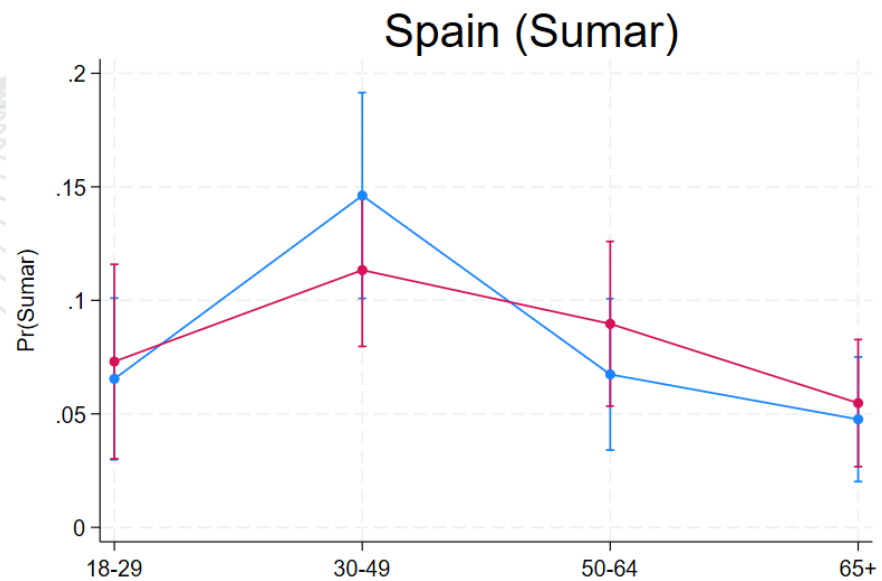
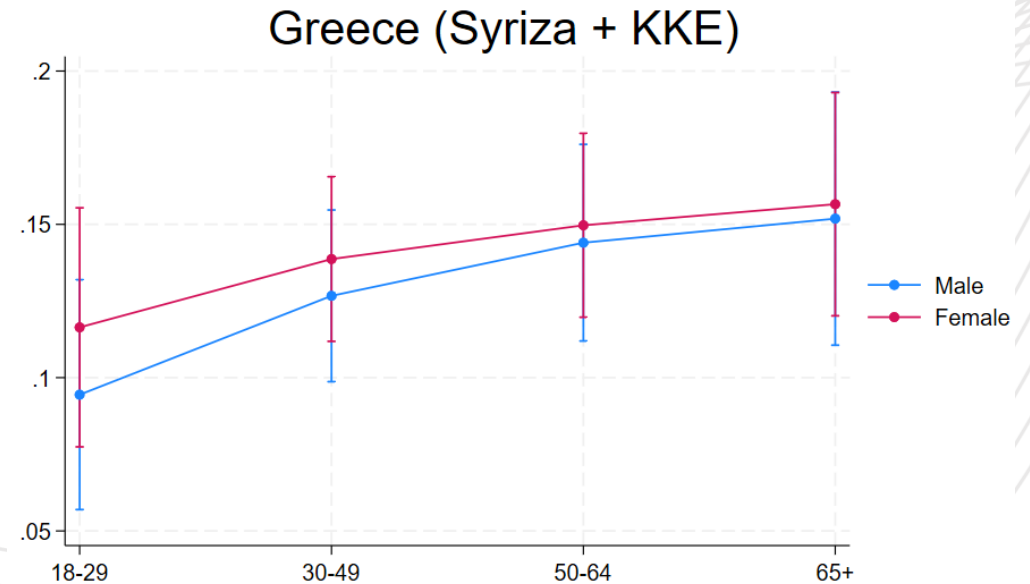
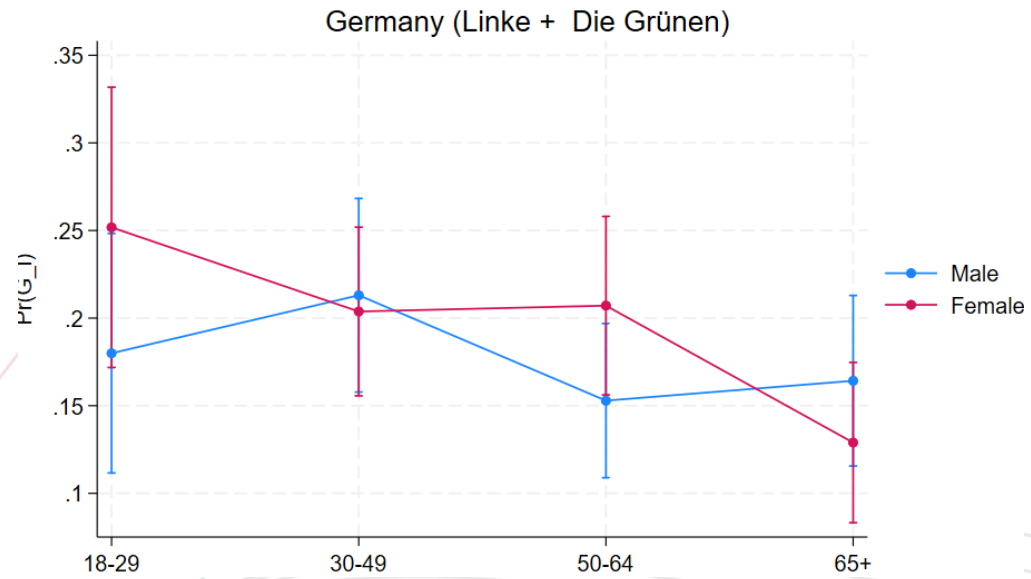


- \*Party coded as 'center right' if it belongs to *European People's Party Group (EPP)* in EP parliament





# 5 country cases: left/green voting



# Summary: A Gen Z Gender Divide?

	Left-right	Gender work- place	Gender equal pay	Gender sex. harrass.	Soc. Dem voting	Cen. Right voting	Far-left/ green voting	Far-right voting
Overall								
Germany							**	**
Greece								
Poland							n/a	
Spain								
Sweden								n/a

Gen Z gender divide: **Evident** - **Somewhat** - **Not evident**

# *Project EqualiZe is a FEPS project in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and ETERON*



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