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Who Votes Right-Wing Populist?
Geographical and Individual Factors
in Seven German State Elections

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Heiko Giebler and Sven Regel

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FOREWORD

Recent years have seen the rise of right-wing populist parties and movements in the Netherlands, the UK and France. Germany, too, has experienced a sharp uptick in popular support for the right-wing populist spectrum. The right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) entered the German Bundestag in 2017, and is now represented in fourteen state legislatures.

Various explanations are offered for these developments. Sometimes it is argued that voters turn to right-wing populist parties to express their frustration with the established political parties. Or they are dissatisfied with their government, especially over its handling of the refugee question. Or they feel their own worries and concerns are not being taken seriously. Sometimes it is also argued that support for right-wing populism is concentrated in depopulating, structurally weak regions with high unemployment. And that authoritarian, chauvinistic and xenophobic attitudes are now finding expression at the polling station. But how much of this stands the test of empirical scrutiny? And which aspects contribute most to explaining the phenomenon?

In the research presented here, Dr. Heiko Giebler and Sven Regel from WZB Berlin Social Science Center present answers to these questions based on their analysis of the results of recent state elections. They include socio-economic and demographic data in order to arrive at a complete picture of the social and economic situation of the right-wing populist support base, and compare these findings with survey data on individual political attitudes.

Their most important conclusion is that we should be wary of generalisations. Right-wing populist voters are not in fact "poor, uneducated, male eastern Germans", nor is this the "revenge of the left-behinds". Instead the reasons driving the phenomenon are more complex.

This presents our democratic culture with a double challenge: On the one hand to deepen the dialogue between the public and politicians and intensify political education work. On the other, new structural responses need to be developed, aiming both to improve the social and economic situation and to strengthen social cohesion on the ground.

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SUMMARY

–   In all German state elections held since the European Parliament election in 2014 the right-wing populist AfD has passed the electoral threshold and won seats. The same applies to the Bundestag election in 2017. This study investigates the influence of socio-demographics, attitudes and evaluations on the party's success in seven state elections between 2014 and 2016, using both state-level survey data and aggregated socio-economic data at district level.

–   At district level systematic associations are found between certain socio-demographic characteristics and electoral support for the AfD. Higher unemployment, a low proportion of foreign nationals and a smaller proportion of highly educated persons are all associated with greater support for the AfD.

–   In relation to individual vote choice, attitudes and opinions are in general more relevant than socio-demographic characteristics. The strongest effects are found for dissatisfaction with the performance of the (state) government and for right-wing socio-cultural attitudes. Moreover, socio-demographic factors are also significant: women are less likely to vote for the AfD, as are the highly educated.

–   Clearer patterns can be identified for state elections held in 2016 than for earlier elections. This suggests that a degree of structuring of the political competition has occurred and a homogenisation of the AfD's voters. This development coincided with a period where political debate has been dominated by socio-cultural issues, first and foremost the so-called refugee question.

–   Relevant spatial differences are also identified at both levels of analysis. Taken as a whole, support for the AfD is rooted in complex and context-dependent patterns. Simplifications like "male, poor, uneducated and politically disillusioned" fail to do the issue justice in the context of Germany as a whole.

1

INTRODUCTION

Within just a few years the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has carved itself a space in Germany's party-political spectrum. Founded in 2013, it quickly achieved respectable showings, and has passed the 5 percent threshold in all national and state elections since 2014. The party's greatest success to date was undoubtedly the September 2017 Bundestag election: A national list vote of 12.6 percent and three seats won directly have made the AfD a force to be reckoned with at national level. If we are to find the best strategy for dealing with the AfD's success, we need to identify which sections of the population feel attracted to its right-wing populism and what it is that motivates them.

In the present study we explore these questions in relation to seven state elections held between 2014 and 2016. As well as allowing us to retrace the party's development in the lead-up to the 2017 Bundestag election, this approach also opens a perspective on geographical differences – which were also very striking in the Bundestag election. Our investigation is based on data pertaining to the level of administrative districts, supplemented by opinion surveys. We take account of political attitudes and the influence of socio-demographic realities on voters' decisions to support or oppose the AfD. The research objectives also encompass identifying possible similarities and differences between the state elections. The central finding is this: simplifications like "poor, male, uneducated and politically disillusioned" fail to do the issue justice in the context of Germany as a whole. A more differentiated perspective is required.

Before we turn to the factors influencing vote choice for the AfD, Chapter 2 briefly summarises the current phenomenon of right-wing populism and outlines the concrete objectives of this study. The integrative approach upon which the explanatory model is based is described in Chapter 3, while the empirical methodology is addressed in Chapter 4.

Chapters 5 and 6 go into detail on the multitude of factors that influence vote choice for or against the AfD. Chapter 5 analyses socio-demographic and socio-economic factors in two steps. After first identifying regional differences in AfD support and regional socio-demographic and socio-economic disparities, we use multivariate analysis to explore the connection between these contextual conditions and the AfD's vote. Chapter 6 turns to individual voting behaviour, examining the question of whether general patterns can be identified across all seven state elections, and what these might be. Subsequently, we analyse the state elections individually and discuss the differences between them. Chapter 7 summarises the findings and draws conclusions.

2

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The British referendum vote to leave the European Union and Donald Trump's election as 45th President of the United States represent the most important and globally most significant recent successes of right-wing populist parties and movements. But they are only the most obvious of a series of massive shifts across many (established) democracies. Right-wing populist parties have become established forces in Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, while Hungary's Viktor Orbán is forging ahead with measures designed to undermine democracy. And in Germany a right-wing populist party appears to be establishing itself in the Bundestag and the state parliaments. As the 2017 Bundestag election demonstrated, the AfD is now capable of gaining seats at the national level. Never since the appearance of the green parties in the 1980s has a new party-political current risen to such prominence so rapidly.

To a certain extent right-wing populism reflects a zeitgeist – at least among parts of the population – of opposition to the open society and the existing form of representative democracy. Differences naturally exist between the different right-wing populist parties and movements in terms of their specific orientation (Taggart 2000: 5), not least through the inherent logic of their self-definition as champions and defenders of "the people" against internal and external threats (Mudde 2007; Zick et al. 2016). The definitions of both the homogeneous collective and the threats to it are context-related, with space for relevant differences between right-wing populist parties. But in essence they share a "thin ideology" (Mudde 2007) dedicated to generating identity through exclusion. They purport to defend "the people" against " the establishment" (political elites, the media, the courts and supranational institutions) and against "outsiders" (such as migrants, other religions and sexual minorities) (Lewandowsky et al. 2016). Vertical exclusion represents the populist dimension, while horizontal exclusion corresponds to a right-wing socio-cultural belief system. While there are intersections between the (political) opponents of right-wing populist parties, these are ultimately strongly determined by the concrete context of each country.
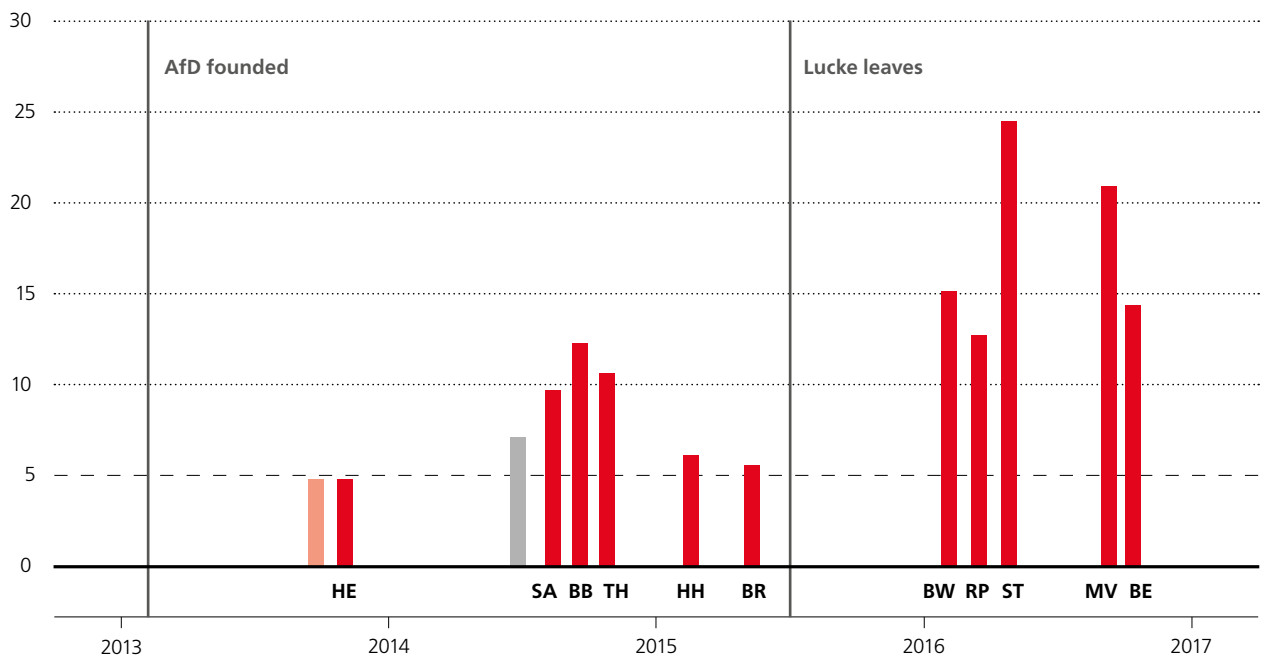
Right-wing populism was slow to take hold in Germany, undoubtedly on account of the country's experience with Nazi rule (Arzheimer 2015). Although right-wing parties have appeared at intervals throughout the post-war period, and scored short-lived successes in individual states, the trajectory of the AfD – as matters currently stand – appears to represent a new and different quality. Just a few months after its creation the AfD was achieving comparatively strong results for a new party (see Figure 1).

After narrowly failing to pass the 5 percent threshold in the 2013 Bundestag election (and the simultaneous state election in Hesse), the AfD has won seats in all subsequent state and national elections. In seven of the eleven elections held between 2014 and 2016 it returned more than 10 percent. Almost all these contests took place after the political reorientation marked by the departure of Bernd Lucke in July 2015. Since then the AfD has further increased its share of the vote, twice exceeding 20 percent. Although momentum was certainly a factor, the principal driver of electoral success was the intense political and media discussion of the "refugee question" triggered by the sharp rise in refugee numbers in 2015. This rapidly propelled the AfD into a position of political relevance in Germany – further reinforced by its media presence and its central role in setting the political agenda. This culminated not least in the dubious prioritisation of issues in the televised debate held before the Bundestag election.

In this study we seek to identify the factors responsible for the electoral success of the AfD. Ours is naturally not the first piece of research to pursue that question. But our approach introduces a number of novel aspects. Firstly we examine the party's vote across a number of state elections, providing both geographical and temporal comparisons. Secondly we present analyses at both the aggregate level (concretely administrative districts),[1] and at the level of individual vote choice. In other words, the spatial perspective is complemented by the perspective of survey research. Thirdly, our study takes account of the observation that vote choices are shaped by a multitude of different factors. Alongside socio-demographic influences, we therefore also take account of attitudes and opinions that may mitigate for or against voting for the AfD. This new and more comprehensive approach also permits us to identify and evaluate the geographical disparities. We believe this represents a significant contribution to understanding the success of the AfD.

Figure 1
AfD vote share 2013–2016 (percent)

Explanation of Figure 1:
– AfD achieves success comparatively quickly, winning seats
  in all elections since 2014.
– After founder Bernd Lucke's departure leads to a political
  reorientation in the party and the refugee debate occurs, the now
  clearly right-wing populist party strongly increases its vote share.

Note: Height of bars represents AfD vote share (in elections with more than one ballot paper, the share of the party list vote). State abbreviations: Hesse (HE), Saxony (SA), Brandenburg (BB), Thuringia (TH), Hamburg (HH), Bremen (BR), Baden-Württemberg (BW), Rhineland-Palatinate (RP), Saxony-Anhalt (ST), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV) and Berlin (BE). To assist legibility elections occurring simultaneously are slightly separated in the depiction.

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1 In this study the term "district" also includes
urban municipalities (kreisfreie Städte).

3

VOTING BEHAVIOUR MODELS AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM

Election research is one of the oldest disciplines of (political) behavioural research. So it is unsurprising that we find ourselves confronted today with a historical accumulation of theories and competing assumptions concerning the motivations driving vote choice. Chronologically speaking, the approaches span the sociological, the (social) psychological and rationalistic.[2] Recent years have seen attention returning to contextual factors, for example in the form of the institutions of the election system or of the campaigns (Stone/Buttice 2010).

As society becomes increasingly differentiated and individualisation intensifies, a growing heterogenisation of voter motivations can be observed (Weßels et al. 2014). Not only do motivations differ between individuals; even for a single person, voter choice is no longer monocausal. In the overall picture, factors that once strongly influenced voters – like party identification trade union membership and religion – are less important today. Like the historical political divides they reflect, they have faded or at least lost their defining power. Space for a new and more individualised agenda has emerged.

Election research was quick to respond to this trend, with various proposals for an integrative approach to explain voting behaviour (Miller/Shanks 1996: Chapter 8; Weßels et al. 2014). The present study hews to that strategy, not least because the reasons for voting for right-wing populist parties in general and the AfD in particular are associated with a multitude of factors. The funnel of causality for voter choice, as one integrative approach, is presented in Figure 2. This model assumes that various factors that influence voter choice also influence one another, but may be brought into some kind of order. The further one moves from the narrow end of the funnel, the closer the factors are to actual vote choice. In this model "upstream" factors such as socio-demographics influence voting behaviour to a smaller extent directly and to a greater extent indirectly – in the sense that they influence other factors further to the right in the funnel, which then have an effect on vote choice. The decision model is thus em-

bedded in a specific context that is created by typical political conditions such as election campaigns or coalition promises and in turn influences individual factors within the model (above all attitudes and opinions).

The central questions in this study are the role played by socio-demographic factors and political attitudes, and the extent to which regional differences can be identified. For theoretical and practical reasons, a number of factors named in Figure 2 are omitted from our analyses. For theoretical reasons it did not appear very useful to include historical patterns and long-term partisanship when dealing with a party as young as the AfD. And valid, comparable data on value orientations, campaign activities and media reporting during the lead-up to state elections is simply not available for all seven states. Nevertheless, we do take account of the widest possible range of explanations; these are indicated in bold in Figure 2.
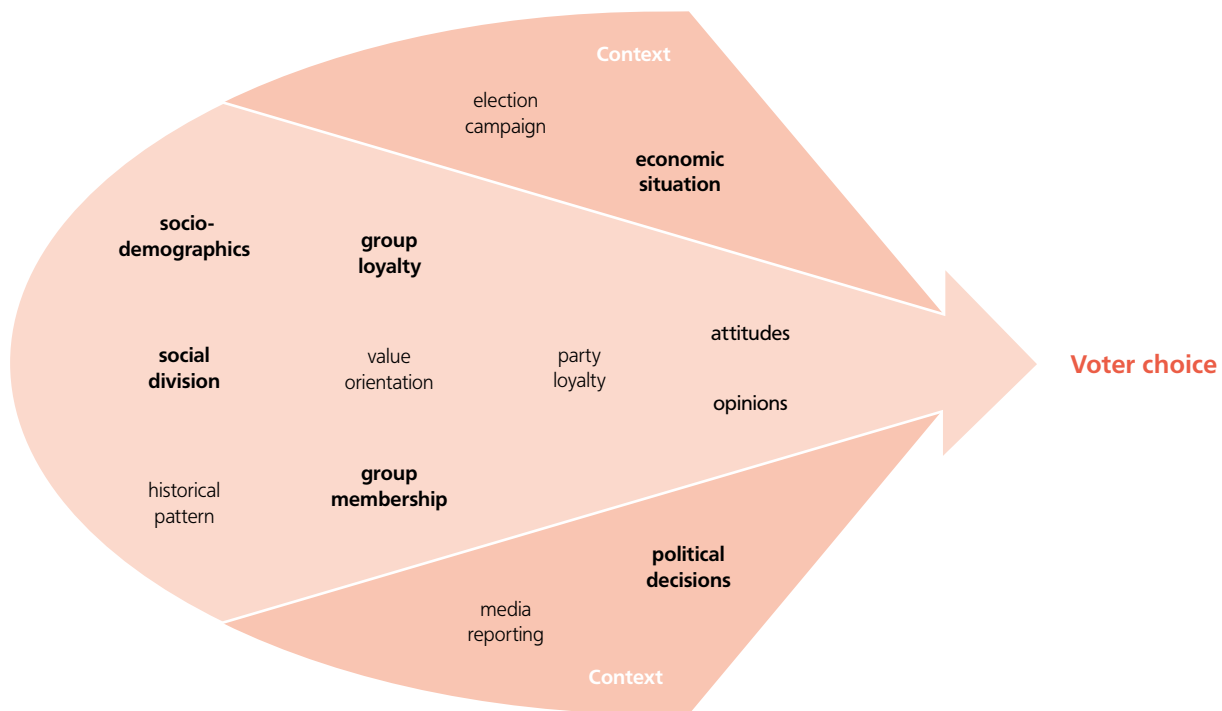
Socio-demographics is located on the left-hand side of the funnel of causality, and relates to both the micro- and the macro-sociological explanatory approaches: the influences on "downstream" factors – and on actual vote choice – can be attributed to individual socio-demographic factors, such as age, education or economic situation, while demographic structures and environments at the macro level play a role too. In essence we assume that individual characteristics and contextual disparities come together in deciding the success or failure of the AfD.

Voting behaviour theories take into account politicians' attitudes and opinions, as well as political issues, acts and events. These approaches are based on the assumption that citizens possess particular preferences and vote in representative democracies with the objective of realising these to the greatest possible extent. At the same time the cyclical nature of elections creates the possibility to judge the work of political actors and reward or punish them on election day. The effects of attitudes and opinions on vote choice for the AfD are undisputed, so they flow into the analyses below. But, in a typical case of indirect influence, the origination of attitudes and opinions is also heavily affected by socio-demographic factors.

So which socio-demographic factors, attitudes and opinions are of relevance to right-wing populist electoral support?

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2 For further detail see the standard works of election research such as Falter and Schoen (2014), which offers a deeper discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

Figure 2
Funnel of causality of vote choice

Context

election campaign

economic situation

socio-demographics

group loyalty

social division

value orientation

party loyalty

attitudes

Voter choice

opinions

historical pattern

group membership

political decisions

media reporting

Context

Explanation of Figure 2:
– Vote choices are the outcome of many different factors and are influenced by context.
– Socio-economic and socio-demographic factors in particular influence attitudes and opinions, which are closer to vote choice in the funnel of causality.
– Socio-economic and socio-demographic factors thus exert both direct and indirect influence.

Source: based on Weßels et al. (2014). Elements included in this study are indicated in bold.

Out of the broad existing literature (including Decker/Lewandowsky 2011; Häusler 2013; Schmitt-Beck 2014; Arzheimer 2015; Bebnowski 2015; Berbuir et al. 2015; Lewandowsky 2015; Wagner et al. 2015; Giebler/Regel 2016; Leininger 2016) we identify a number of central explanatory factors for investigation. In relation to socio-demographics it is widely noted that women and older people are less likely to vote for the AfD, while the party gains disproportionate support among the less educated and in rural areas. There are various arguments for the influence of socio-economic situation: on the one side it is argued that precarity (low income, insecure employment or unemployment) makes it more likely that a person will vote for a right-wing populist party. On the other, the fear of loss of social status can also increase the likelihood of voting AfD; in other words, the middle class could support the party for that reason. Finally, the AfD appears to be most successful in eastern Germany, likely on the basis of an uneven east/west distribution of these characteristics. Uneven distribution of underlying characteristics has already been shown to explain the difference in xenophobic attitudes (Müller 2016). The proportion of the population with a migration background plays a prominent role in the difference between eastern and western Germany: the AfD is especially successful where the

so-called autochthonous population has little possibility for contact with persons with a migration background (Asbrock et al. 2012).

A range of different attitude- and opinion-related motivations are also reported to be associated with electoral support for right-wing populist parties. These factors can be divided into two main groups, each of which includes elements of the aforementioned aspects of vertical and horizontal exclusion inherent to right-wing populism. Firstly, a vote for a right-wing populist party represents an (expressive) protest against established political actors, their activities, or the political system itself. In this respect the theory of second-order elections (Reif/Schmitt 1980; Giebler 2014) may be of relevance. In second-order elections – meaning all elections not involving the highest offices of a political system – protest materialises as the influence of first-order factors in the voters' decision on how to vote in the second-order election. If voters in a state election make their choice on the basis of the situation at the national rather than the state level, it can be assumed that the AfD will profit from a protest vote. Negative attitudes towards the democratic system itself, and negative opinions about that system, future economic prospects or the work of the government also play an important role in

motivating vote choice. Secondly, support for right-wing popu-list parties may be based on concrete policy issues (Wagner et al. 2015) in the sense of an expectation that they will tend to represent particular political preferences better than the other parties. This applies principally to right-wing socio-cultural attitudes: rejection of people with migration background and sexual minorities, strong nationalism and scepticism towards the European Union. Finally, socio-economic attitudes – typically concerning redistribution by means of welfare benefits and tax rates – also play an important role in elections. But in this respect the AfD is difficult to classify (Franzmann 2014): While it poses as the champion of ordinary people and glo-balisation losers, its political programme still bears neoliberal traits dating from the era of Bernd Lucke's leadership. But before we explore how these diverse factors diversely influ-ence vote choice for the AfD, we first outline our concrete empirical methodology.

4

METHODOLOGY

In this study we explore the factors behind the AfD's electoral success from two different perspectives. Firstly we investigate potential influence in the context of spatial units, concretely at the level of administrative districts. This allows us to isolate the influence of different settings on the level of support for right-wing populist parties. This type of election research, known as "election geography" or "political ecology", has a very long history dating back to before the First World War (Falter/Winkler 2014).

As we show in Chapter 5, relevant differences in vote share are found not only between the seven states, but also between districts within a state. This is not surprising, given that – as outlined above – factors that may positively or negatively influence the AfD's vote are very unevenly distributed among the investigated units. Alongside socio-demographic factors, these are principally socio-economic disparities – as outlined for example in FES's 2015 Disparities Report (Albrech et al. 2016). In light of the findings of the Disparities Report one could argue that it would be astonishing if major electoral differences between regions were not found.

Secondly we draw on survey data relating to the seven state elections to examine individual behaviour. This perspective allows statements pertaining to causality to be made while avoiding ecological misconceptions, and permits inclusion of other factors that play a central role in election research (above and beyond socio-demographics). In this study we concentrate on attitudes and opinions about politics. So we are analysing not only differences between geographical units – the seven states – but also the relative importance of socio-demographic factors compared to attitudes and opinions. In the funnel of causality presented in Chapter 2 socio-demographic factors clearly precede attitudes and opinions; in other words they influence them. For that reason we apply a specific statistical technique to measure the actual effect of socio-demographic factors.[3]

What both perspectives share is that they permit the identification of general patterns and trends across all geographical units and all seven elections, as well as specific differences between units and elections. This opens the door to new and fuller insights into the reasons for the AfD's electoral success in Germany, and can also serve as a starting point for future research on the 2017 Bundestag election where similar geographical differences were observed.

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[3]　The method is described in the appendix.

5

REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND THE AFD VOTE AT DISTRICT LEVEL

The socio-demographic and socio-economic contextual conditions of the AfD's support at district level are analysed in two stages. We begin by examining district-level geographical differences in AfD vote share and socio-demographic and socio-economic indicators. The second stage centres on a multivariate analysis of the links between these contextual conditions and the AfD vote. The study investigates the state elections in seven states: Saxony, Brandenburg, Thuringia, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Together they account for 156 of the total of 402 districts in Germany. Districts (Kreise) are administrative entities that generally contain several municipalities. Because their boundaries are drawn by the state in which they lie, the districts investigated here exhibit a very broad range of geographical area and population. The populations of the 82 rural and 74 urban districts range from 34,084 (Zweibrücken) to 604,297 (Stuttgart); the mean is about 150,000. The largest by area is Mecklenburgische Seenplatte with about 5,500 square kilometres – more than one hundred times the size of the smallest, Speyer. The districts permit a much finer geographical analysis than states, but are still often large and internally heterogeneous units. As Figure 1 shows, the AfD achieved varying degrees of success in past state elections, although the overall trend is clearly upward. The AfD vote in the elections covered by this study ranged between 9.7 percent in Saxony 2014 and 24.3 percent in Saxony-Anhalt 2016.

5.1 REGIONAL DISPARITIES AT DISTRICT LEVEL

The AfD vote obviously differs between states. Figure 3 offers a more granular perspective at district level. Although the underlying differences between the state elections are clearly reflected at the level of the districts, relevant differences between districts within each state are also found. The maximum difference between districts within a state ranges between 6 percentage points in Saxony and 16.5 percentage points in Baden-Württemberg. The lowest vote for the AfD was in Leipzig with 7.3 percent, the highest in Burgenlandkreis in Saxony-Anhalt with 29.4 percent. Eight of the ten districts
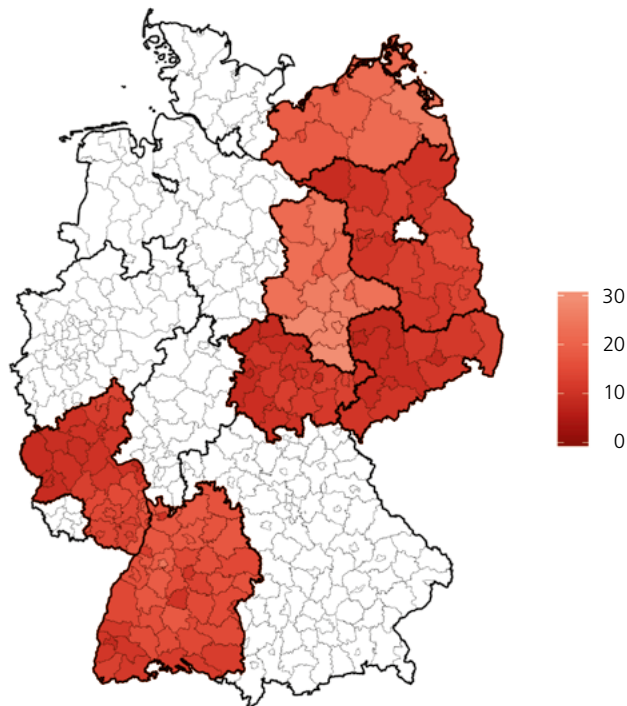
with the highest vote for AfD were in Saxony-Anhalt, the exceptions being Vorpommern-Greifswald in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Pforzheim in Baden-Württemberg. Within the states no coherent geographical pattern can be identified in terms of region or size of district. High vote shares in cities like Pforzheim, Ludwigshafen and Frankfurt (Oder) and comparatively low (but nonetheless significant) shares in cities like Freiburg (8.7 percent) and Tübingen (10.6 percent) suggest that we are not dealing with a simple urban/rural dichotomy. That impression is confirmed by the heterogeneity of vote share figures in rural districts.

As a step towards explaining the spatial variation in the success of the AfD, we conducted an analysis of the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the districts. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, a multitude of factors potentially contribute to explaining the AfD vote share. The macro-analysis at district level concentrates on four factors: unemployment rate, proportion of foreign nationals, proportion highly educated, and household income.[4]

All the indicators comprised 2014 data. High unemployment is frequently associated with an elevated vote share for right-wing populist parties. Firstly, high unemployment may have a direct influence through the larger number (and proportion) of unemployed persons who may potentially themselves vote for the AfD. But it may also have indirect contextual effects as an indicator of economic disadvantage. The contact hypothesis predicts that attitudes towards foreign nationals will be more positive where the proportion of foreigners and migrants is higher (Zick et al. 2016). That should mean poorer prospects for parties like the AfD. This is not a linear effect however, so for the purpose of our analysis we converted the proportion of foreign nationals into an indicator for "low proportion of non-Germans", given the value 1 where the proportion of foreign nationals is smaller than 3 percent.[5] People with more education are known to be less likely to

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4   Other potential micro-level factors (such as proportion of women, political attitudes and age) had to be excluded for reasons including: lack of variance at district level; lack of data (for example on political attitudes); and a methodologically driven concentration on the most plausible influencing factors, because the small number of cases at district level limits the number of influencing factors included in the analysis.

Figure 3
AfD vote share in selected state elections 2014–2016 (percent)

Explanation of Figure 3:
– AfD vote share differs widely strongly between and within
  the seven states.
– At district level AfD vote share ranges between 7.3 percent (Leipzig)
  and 29.4 percent (Burgenlandkreis).
– No clear geographical pattern or urban/rural distinction.

Note: The map shows districts within states. The lighter the colour of the district, the higher AfD vote share at the last state election (in elections with more than
one ballot paper, the share of the party list vote).

vote for right-wing parties. Here we used the proportion of
the economically active population with university entrance
qualifications (Fachabitur or higher), because education data
for the population in general is not available at district level.
In the case of income, two contradictory theories can be pro-
posed. On the one hand, right-wing populist parties are fre-
quently supported by people with low incomes. But income
could also have the opposite effect: namely, if the AfD is
supported in particular by those who fear loss of income.

Like the AfD's election results, the district-level socio-demo-
graphic factors are regionally heterogeneous, with consider-
able geographical disparities both between and within states
(Albrech et al. 2016). Figure 4 shows the state-level means
and standard deviations of the indicators used in the study
(standard deviations as a measure of heterogeneity within
states).[6] Although the unemployment rate has fallen nation-

ally in recent years, there is considerable geographical variation,
with the state average ranging between 4 percent in Baden-
Württemberg and 11 percent in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.
Generally it is higher in the eastern than in the western states,
although the difference between Rhineland-Palatinate and
Thuringia – 2.1 percentage points – is not huge. The differ-
ences between individual districts are larger. While the lowest
district unemployment rate was just 2.6 percent (Biberach), the
highest was 15.4 percent (Uckermark). Only Pirmasens, Kaisers-
lautern, Ludwigshafen and Worms in Rhineland-Palatinate join
the mass of eastern districts in the top third of the unemploy-
ment statistics. An opposite east/west trend is found for pro-
portion of foreign nationals. At state level the average for
eastern states is between 2.5 and 2.7 percent, while Rhineland-
Palatinate has 8 percent and Baden-Württemberg more than
12 percent foreign nationals. The latter two states also exhibit
great heterogeneity between individual districts, with differ-
ences of up to 19.1 percentage points: in Südwestpfalz only
3.1 percent of the population are foreign nationals, while the
figure for Ludwigshafen is 22.2 percent. In the eastern states
only a handful of the larger cities exceed 5 percent.

The east-west differences are smaller in relation to educa-
tion. All the states contain districts with high and low values,

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5 Lack of availability of up-to-date data on the proportion of the popu-
lation with a migration background forces us to use instead the propor-
tion of foreign nationals in this study.

6 For the mean proportions of foreign nationals in Figure 4 we used
not the final binary operationalisation but the more intuitive and continu-
ous original scale.

with the widest differences found in Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg and Saxony-Anhalt. Household income, on the other hand, exhibits strong east-west differences: there is no eastern district in the top third and only one western district (Ludwigshafen) in the bottom third. The states exhibit different degrees of internal disparity: in the eastern states the household income of the lowest-ranked district represents between 82 and 88 percent of the figure for the highest-ranked in the same state; the equivalent figure for Rhineland-Palatinate is 70 percent and Baden-Württemberg just 48 percent.
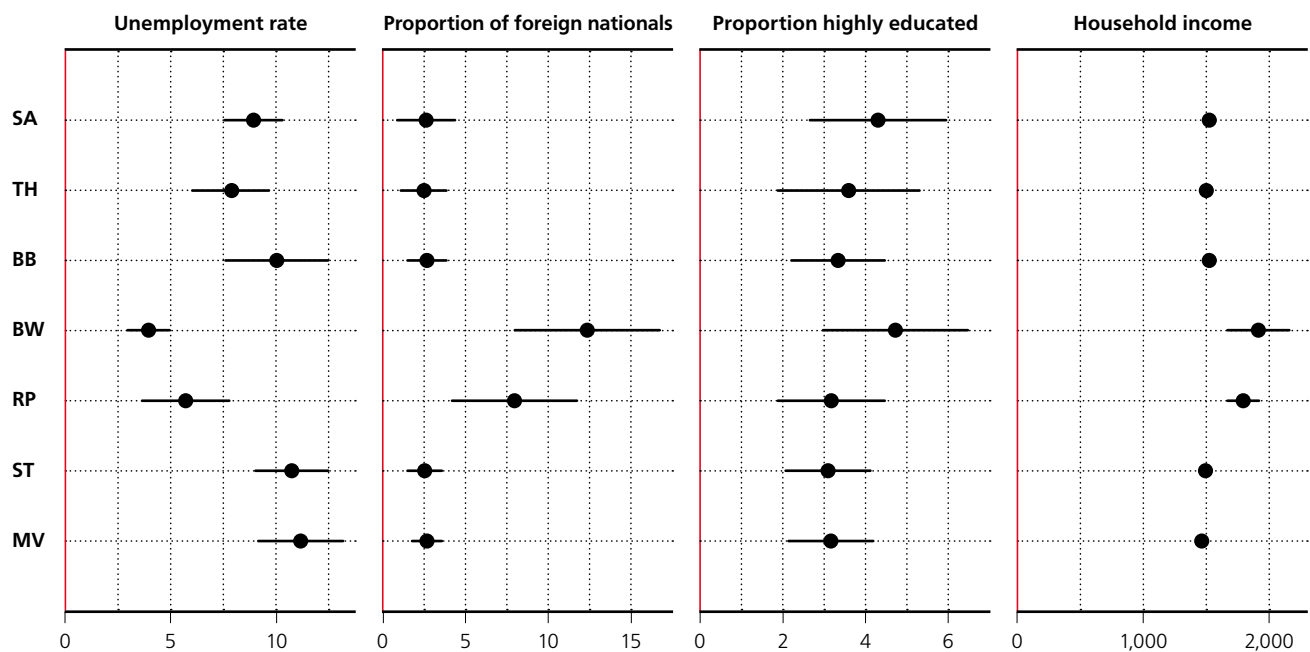
5.2 EXPLAINING THE AFD VOTE AT DISTRICT LEVEL

So how well do these district-level socio-demographic and socio-economic factors explain the AfD vote in state elections? As the funnel of causality shows (Figure 2), vote choices are not made on the basis of a single factor. Figure 5 therefore presents the results of a multivariate model that integrates all four investigated factors, and also controls for state. The latter ensures that we can also measure differences between states that are not covered by the four factors. Unemploy-

ment, "low proportion of non-Germans" and proportion highly educated are all significant at 10 percent level or better. These three indicators thus exhibit a small probability of error and their influence on the AfD vote share can be described as robust and systematic.

The effect of the individual variables represents the percentage point change in the AfD vote share when the respective factor increases by one unit. For both unemployment rate and proportion highly educated, that means an increase by 1 percentage point. For "low proportion of non-Germans" it means a change from more than 3 percent proportion of foreign nationals to less than 3 percent, and for household income an increase of €1,000/month. Out of the four indicators, the strongest effects are found for unemployment rate and "low proportion of non-Germans". If the unemployment rate increases by 1 percentage point the AfD vote share increases by 0.4 percentage points. A "low proportion of non-Germans" increases the AfD vote share by 1.4 percentage points, which would appear to confirm the contact hypothesis. These two identified effects support the findings of other spatial macro-analyses of the AfD vote in Berlin (Giebler/Regel 2016) and Hamburg (Leininger 2016). As in other investigations of the characteristics of AfD voters (Niedermayer/

Figure 4
Socio-demographic factors at state level

Explanation of Figure 4:
– As with AfD vote share, considerable regional disparities are found both between and within states.
– Clear (and expected) east/west differences in unemployment rate, proportion of foreign nationals and household income.

Note: Dots indicate mean for district figures within state. Lines represent standard deviation, indicating size of span within state. State abbreviations: Saxony (SA), Thuringia (TH), Brandenburg (BB), Baden-Württemberg (BW), Rhineland-Palatinate (RP), Saxony-Anhalt (ST) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV).

Hofrichter 2016), a higher proportion of highly educated persons corresponds with a smaller AfD vote share. If the proportion of highly educated increases by 1 percentage point, the AfD vote share decreases by 0.4 percentage points. As suggested by the loss of status theory, household income has a positive effect on the AfD result. An increase of €1,000 in household income increases the AfD vote share by 1.7 percentage points. After controlling for other factors, the AfD tends to be more successful in regions that are better off in terms of income, although the effect is not statistically significant.
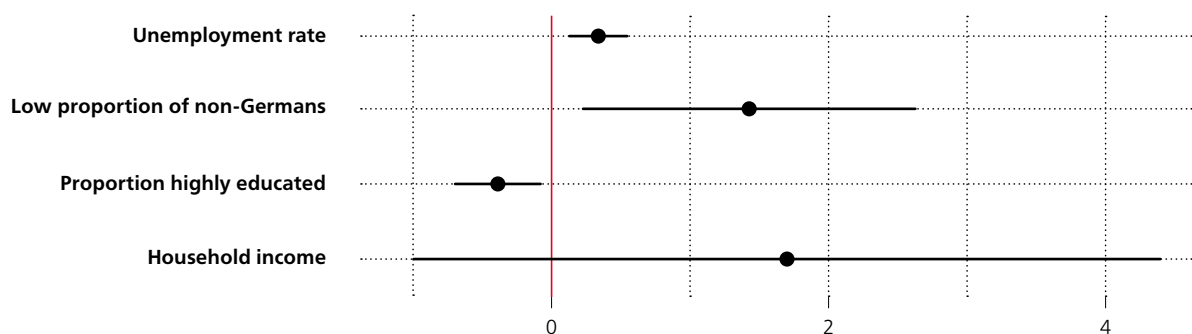
The effects of the control variables for the states indicate additional state-specific patterns. The model shows that the AfD vote share in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was significantly higher than in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg. This difference is amplified if separate models are calculated for the state elections in 2014 and in 2016. The results reported above are clearly confirmed for the state elections in 2016, while for the state elections in 2014 the factors are not significant and the explanatory power of the model as a whole is dramatically reduced.[7] What this suggests is that AfD voting behaviour appears to have evolved within the space of two years from a diffuse support that is not attributable to the four socio-demographic indicators into a systematic pattern.

With the small number of cases and indicators – and especially the latter being exclusively socio-demographic and socio-economic in nature – the model is naturally unable to explain all cases perfectly. But its fundamental explanatory power is good. For various reasons the model's ability to explain district results varies. Figure 6 shows the geographical distribution of the model's explanatory power, with darker red indicating larger absolute deviation. All the states include cases where the model performs especially well or especially badly. The two extreme cases are Pforzheim and Frankfurt (Oder), where the gap exceeds 7.5 percentage points. In both cases the AfD vote is underestimated. The reasons for such differences include patterns of political attitudes that elude the indicators and changes in the political supply (such as major policy shifts and candidate effects) of the AfD or its rivals. There are also regional peculiarities that cannot be captured by the indicators used. Moreover, while districts represent a much finer geographical unit than states, they still sometimes exhibit considerable internal variation in their socio-demographics, socio-economics and AfD vote share.

Altogether we find strong geographical differences between and within states – in socio-demographics, in socio-economics and in AfD vote share. We also find that higher unemployment, a low proportion of foreign nationals and a lower proportion of highly educated people are all associated with a larger AfD vote share. This finding is confirmed when the 2016 state elections are modelled individually, but the associations are weaker and less systematic for the 2014 state elections. The identification of regional disparities (Albrech et al. 2016) thus supplies useful instruments for understanding – and in principle also predicting – election results.

7　The explanatory power of statistical models represents the extent to which the explanatory factors can actually explain the differences in the dependent variables. If the explanatory power is small, this suggests that important explanatory factors have been omitted or that differences in the variables are random rather than systematic.

Figure 5
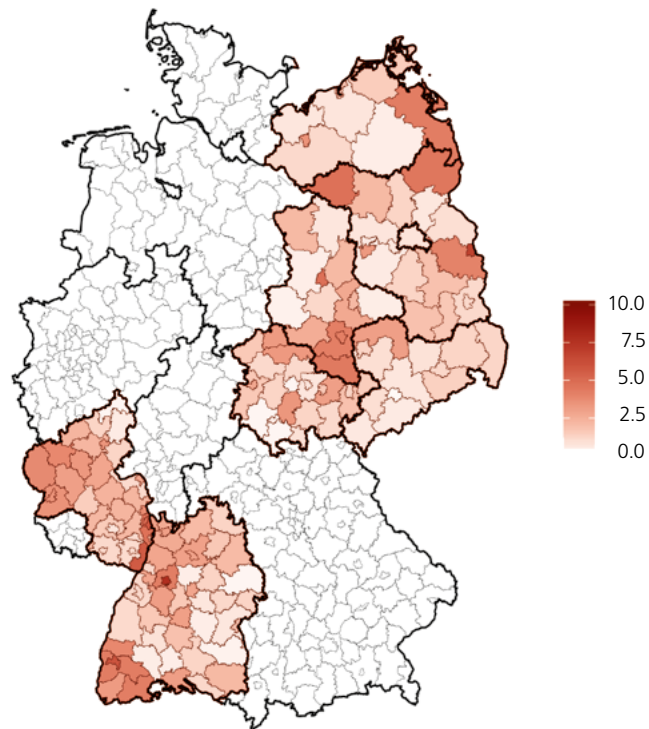**Socio-demographic factors and AfD vote share at district level**

Explanation of Figure 5:
– Higher unemployment is associated with higher AfD vote share; "low proportion of non-Germans" is associated with a 1.4 percentage point increase in AfD vote share.
– Higher proportion of highly educated is associated with lower AfD vote share.
– No robust relationship is found for household income.

Note: The dots indicate the calculated effect of the indicators on AfD vote share; the lines indicate 90 percent confidence intervals. If the confidence interval crosses the vertical red line (null) the probability of error is high and it cannot be excluded that the observed effect is merely random.

Figure 6
Explanatory power of model at district level (percent)

Explanation of Figure 6:
– The model is fundamentally good, but the quality of its predictions
  varies between districts.
– No clear geographical pattern; districts with larger deviations are
  found in all states.
– This suggests an effect of specific local factors.

Note: The map shows the difference between model and real value for each district. The darker the red, the larger the absolute deviation between the actual AfD vote share and the predicted share. The figure shows absolute deviation, without distinguishing between underestimation and overestimation of the AfD vote share.

6

DETERMINANTS OF INDIVIDUAL VOTE CHOICE

Examination of district-level socio-demographic and socio-economic data revealed significant differences that explain part of the differences in AfD vote in the seven state elections. Having identified relevant patterns in our exploration of the electoral geography, we now turn to an analysis of individual voting behaviour. Our data originates from surveys prepared for the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). These representative online surveys conducted in the run-up to state elections cover a multitude of relevant factors and thus offer the possibility to investigate political attitudes and opinions – in addition to socio-demographic characteristics – and as such to better represent the funnel of causality.

6.1 GENERAL PATTERN OF INDIVIDUAL VOTE CHOICE

What general patterns can be identified across all seven state elections? To answer this question we calculate two regression models predicting vote choice in a cumulative dataset of the seven surveys. Details of the models and results in table form can be found in the Appendix.

　　If one only considers the influence of socio-demographic factors, few robust effects on vote choice are found.[8] These are shown in Figure 7 as change in probability of voting AfD. The expected direction of influence is found for gender, household income (in €1,000/month) and age (although none are statistically significant). On the other hand more education (university entrance qualification) reduces the probability of voting AfD by almost 11 percentage points (significant). As well as representing a strong effect in its own right, this also echoes the findings of the district analysis. Interestingly settlement type also plays a role, with residents of towns (but not of cities) less likely to vote AfD than those living in rural areas.
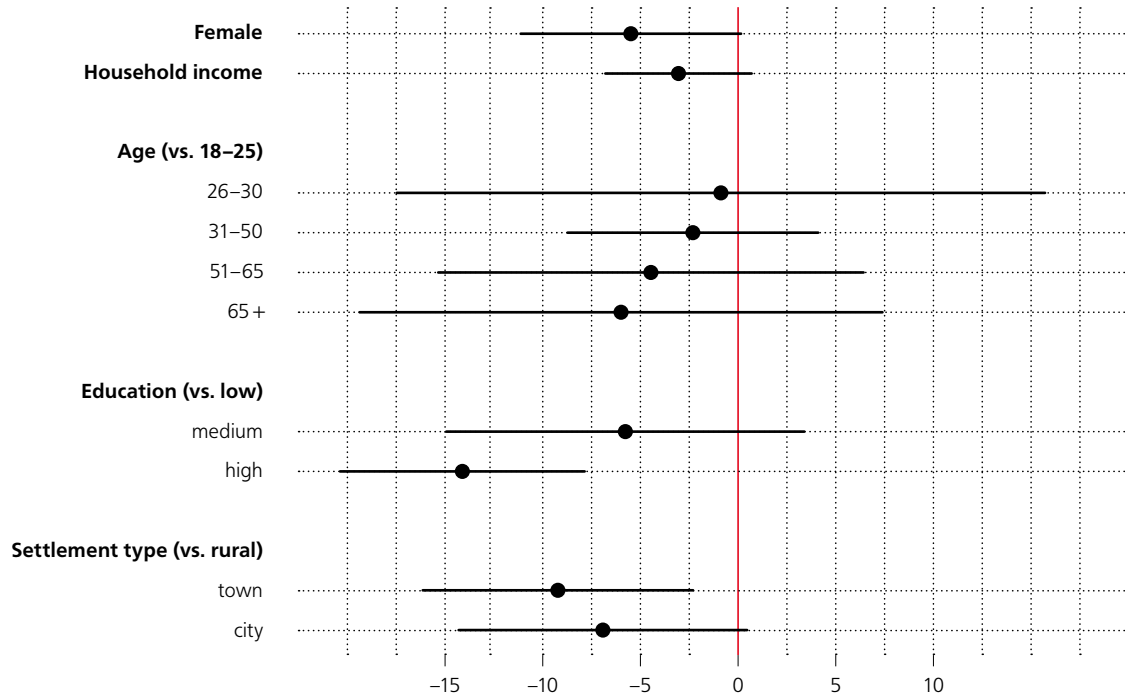
Altogether, however, the explanatory power of the model is rather small. All the factors examined trend as expected, but are only reliably generalisable in the cases of education and settlement type town. This suggests that additional factors need to be included if the AfD vote is to be explained systematically.

　　A second model adds attitudes and opinions that are known to affect voting for right-wing populists (see Chapter 3). In order to avoid underestimating the actual influence of socio-demographic factors, the indicators for measuring attitudes and opinions are corrected. This is necessary because, as well as influencing vote choice directly, socio-demographic factors themselves also influence attitudes and opinions. If a regression model estimates this set of factors simultaneously, a part of the effect of socio-demographics will be incorrectly attributed. For example conservative and right-wing socio-cultural attitudes are more likely to be found among older people and less likely among those with more education (Zick et al. 2016: Chapter 3). If one neglects to correct the socio-cultural attitudes, a lack of significant influence of age or education could result solely from an inadequate understanding of the funnel of causality of vote choice (Figure 2).

　　The model depicted in Figure 8 is considerably better able to predict individual vote choice for the AfD. The explanatory power is five times greater than in the version using only socio-demographic factors. We find clear evidence that – even after the correction of socio-demographic effects on attitudes – the determinism of statements like "uneducated young men vote AfD" are oversimplifications.

　　Two socio-demographic factors do exhibit robust influence, however. More education still clearly reduces the likelihood of voting AfD. While the effect of settlement size found when socio-demographic factors were considered exclusively is no longer significant after controlling attitudes and opinions, we now find a (modest) gender effect. Women are less likely to vote for the AfD than men, with the difference amounting to almost 4 percentage points. Right-wing socio-cultural attitudes and dissatisfaction with the state government are of greater relevance. Those who are completely dissatisfied with the work of the state government are about 14 percentage points more likely to vote AfD than those with a neutral position. The equivalent change in socio-cultural attitudes from

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8　　Regrettably it was not possible to include unemployment. The absolute number of unemployed persons in the survey sample is relatively small, corresponding to the proportion of the total electorate who are unemployed (about 4.3 percent). The number of usable cases is further reduced by the generally demobilising effect of unemployment (Faas 2010: ch. VI.3), which means that in this group vote choices are less likely to be supplied, and therefore fewer are available for analysis.

Figure 7
Socio-demographic model for all states

Note: The dots represent the effects of the indicators on the AfD vote as percentage point change. The lines represent 95-percent confidence intervals. If the confidence interval crosses the vertical red line (null) the probability of error is high and it cannot be excluded that the observed effect is merely random.

Explanation of Figure 7:
– Socio-demographic factors play only a small role in individual choices to vote AfD.
– Nonetheless, across the seven state elections education and settlement type are found to play a role; more education and living in a town or a city are associated with smaller probability of voting AfD.

the lowest to the highest possible score produces an increase of more than 20 percentage points. One may thus generalise that typical AfD voters tend to be male and less educated, dissatisfied with their state government and right-wing in their socio-cultural attitudes. If one combines this finding with the observation that central socio-cultural issues such as immigration, Islam and treatment of refugees were especially hot topics in 2015 and 2016, and the way they were handled therefore played a large part in assessments of the work of the state governments, then neither the results nor the rising trend in AfD election results comes as any surprise.

Interestingly, the analysis combining all seven states finds no significant effect for various other attitudes and opinions that are generally held to be associated with support for right-wing populism. Neither socio-economic factors nor attitudes generally associated with protest voting (dissatisfaction with democracy and supporting extremist parties to send a message in second-order elections) play any role.

The same applies, incidentally, to weak attachment to the European Union – although the importance of European politics within the party has receded noticeably since the depar-
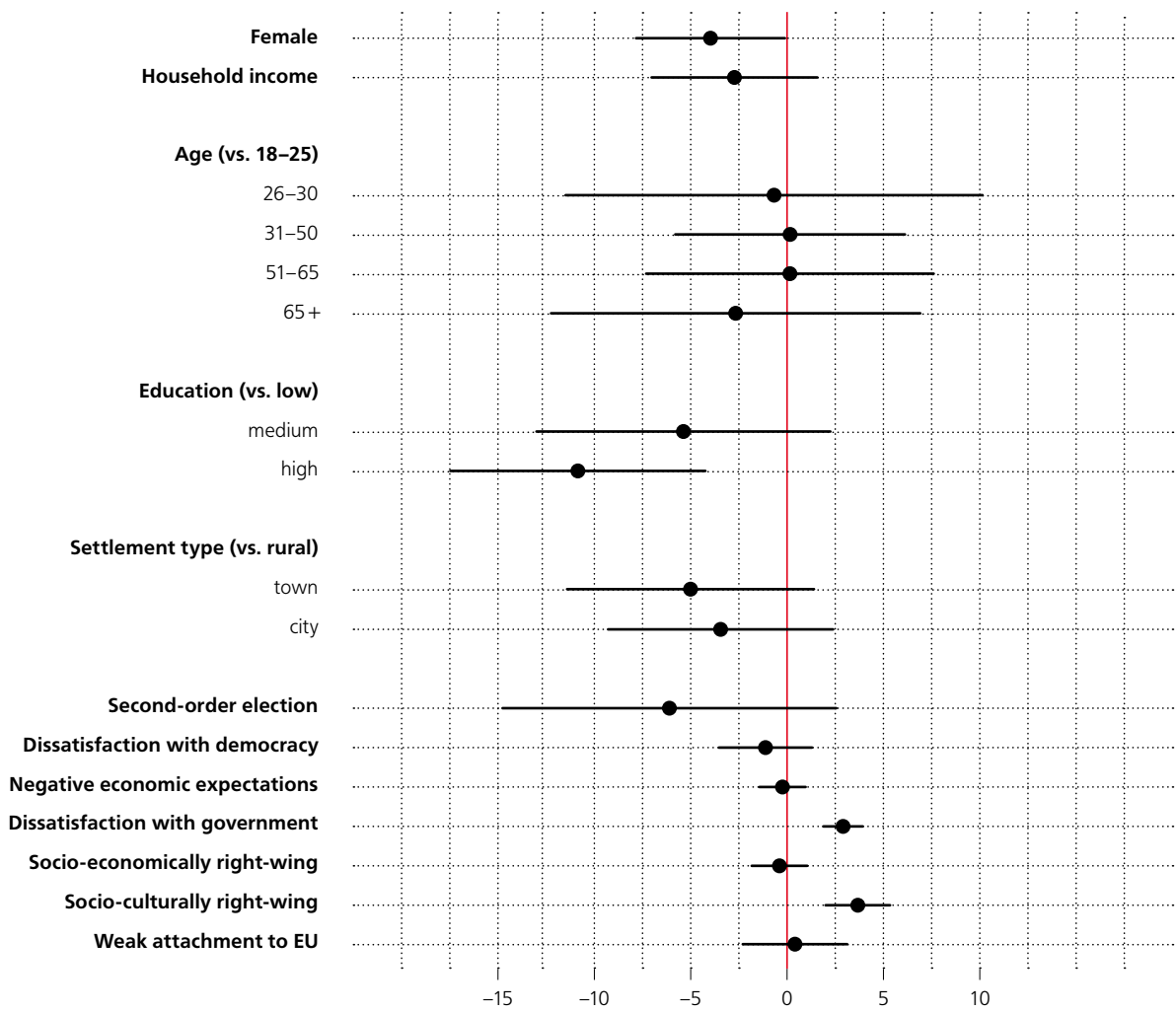
ture of Bernd Lucke. It must be assumed that the diverging results in the present study are a direct consequence of the application of the funnel of causality. We must therefore reiterate the importance of a theoretically grounded analysis of influencing factors taking into account the direct and indirect effects of socio-demographic factors.

6.2 SPECIFIC PATTERNS OF VOTE CHOICE IN THE STATES

After revealing general patterns of voting behaviours at the individual level, we conclude by examining the individual state elections separately. Comparative studies on state elections show that there may be differences in voting behaviour (Völkl et al. 2008; Giebler 2017), and the concrete context in which an election takes place is naturally of general significance. It can be assumed that such differences will also be found in the AfD vote.

Table 1 shows the results of a state-by-state analysis – in comparison to the general pattern – across all seven elections

Figure 8
Combined model for all states

Explanation of Figure 8:
– Including attitudes and opinions greatly improves the explanation of
vote choice for the AfD.
– Women and the highly educated are considerably less likely to vote
AfD, but dissatisfaction with the state government and a socio-cultural
right-wing attitude are found to be considerably more relevant.

Note: The dots represent the effects of the indicators on the AfD vote as percentage point change. The lines represent 95-percent confidence intervals. If the confidence interval
crosses the vertical red line (null) the probability of error is high and it cannot be excluded that the observed effect is merely random.

in simplified form. The changes in probability of voting AfD
are indicated in percentage points.[9] Significant factors are
identified by background colour, with blue representing reduc-
tion and red increase. The state elections are listed chrono-
logically from left to right.

Three things are obvious at first glance. Firstly the four
identified general influencing factors also play an identifiable
role in many of the seven state elections, although the effect
is limited in the case of the socio-demographic indicators.

Table 1
Socio-demographic factors, attitudes and voting intention

	SA	TH	BB	ST	BW	RP	MV	All
Female	−0.05	5.46	−0.34	−9.84	−4.55	−10.02	−9.10	−3.95
Household income	−7.54	1.03	1.81	−6.30	−8.07	−2.69	2.51	−2.75
Age (vs. 18–25)								
26–30	12.66	−14.28	−16.93	22.93	−8.24	−9.55	−9.36	−0.69
31–50	9.48	−11.34	−5.14	5.21	2.57	−16.89	−7.76	0.14
51–65	3.72	−7.79	0.51	12.46	−11.09	−15.64	−6.96	0.12
65 +	19.74	−20.31	−15.86	24.03	−11.70	−20.11	−5.37	−2.69
Education (vs. low)								
medium	−6.80	0.48	−6.80	−4.97	−14.15	0.84	−3.04	−5.35
high	−9.65	−12.39	−13.81	−38.75	−18.91	−0.68	−0.98	−10.83
Settlement type (vs. rural)								
town	−19.57	−2.97	−13.03	−14.19	−4.78	8.92	6.19	−5.11
city	−13.45	6.42	−2.76	−43.81	2.04	10.22	1.41	−3.55
Second-order election	4.16	−1.60	2.59	−92.80	1.95	8.46	0.79	−6.16
Dissatisfaction with democracy	−1.07	9.98	5.37	−2.00	3.91	13.58	−14.18	−1.26
Negative economic expectations	−4.67	−5.91	−8.01	5.12	5.10	6.30	−5.38	−0.29
Dissatisfaction with government	2.61	2.64	1.09	3.85	0.15	0.66	3.80	2.76
Socio-economically right-wing	−4.06	0.00	−0.38	0.11	−0.04	−3.00	1.63	−0.55
Socio-culturally right-wing	2.23	1.36	1.77	5.48	5.15	1.88	5.21	3.50
Weak attachment to EU	0.73	−3.80	5.50	10.61	16.31	4.19	−0.25	0.32
Explanatory power (pseudo-R2)	0.31	0.32	0.16	0.60	0.58	0.55	0.54	0.24

Explanation of Table 1:
– Considerable differences in explanatory factors for vote choice are found between states.
– Attitudes and opinions are much more important overall, in particular right-wing socio-cultural attitudes.
– Clear patterns of AfD voter choice are found for elections in 2016, after Bernd Lucke left; this is not the case for elections in 2014.

Note: The figures represent the effects of the indicators on the AfD vote as percentage point change. For the overall model the 95 percent level was used to determine significance; for the individual state models 90 percent. The difference results from the different sample sizes. State abbreviations: Saxony (SA), Thuringia (TH), Brandenburg (BB), Saxony-Anhalt (ST), Baden-Württemberg (BW), Rhineland-Palatinate (RP) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV).

Brandenburg stands out: here none of the four factors were really relevant for vote choice; Saxony-Anhalt is closest to the general pattern. Secondly all the investigated factors have a significant effect on the AfD vote in at least one case. It is, however, striking that certain indicators have a positive effect in certain states, but a negative effect in others. For example in Baden-Württemberg weak attachment to the European Union is associated with a stronger vote for the AfD, in Thuringia a weaker. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern the likelihood of voting AfD increases with household income, while the opposite is observed in two other state elections. Contradictory effects of this type are also responsible for the very limited number of factors identified as truly and generally relevant across all seven elections. If effects are positive in certain elections but negative in others they cancel each other out and are in a sense treated as non-existent.

Thirdly there are conspicuous differences between the three state elections held in 2014 (in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg) and the four held in 2016. The AfD vote in the earlier elections is much harder to systematically characterise. This is reflected not only in the smaller number of significant influencing factors, but also in the clearly weaker explanatory power of the models. This is for Saxony and Thuringia only half – and for Brandenburg less than one third – of the figures for the other state elections. Interestingly this also echoes the findings of the analysis at district level, where major differences between earlier and later state elections were identified. This probably reflects the typical processes experienced by new parties. Shortly after their founding their support is often still relatively heterogeneous and may also be motivated by protest voting – which is almost impossible to explain using the established models of election research. To put it another way, a certain amount of time is required to gather experience and learn what a party stands for before making an informed decision to vote. In the concrete case of the AfD moreover, the party initially adopted ambivalent positions on certain questions. Since Lucke left this has been much less the case, and the AfD is now more clearly understood to be a right-wing party with a focus on socio-cultural issues (Giebler/Meyer 2016). So the AfD is certainly increasingly supported for substantive reasons. Expressing dissatisfaction with the government by voting for the opposition is not automatically a sign of protest voting, but may also be a logical and rational expression of preferences. If one considers the prevalence of right-wing (socio-)cultural attitudes in Germany (Zick et al. 2016) and the great salience of relevant issues from 2015 on, it is no surprise if citizens follow their political preferences and vote for the party that positions itself unmistakably at the right-wing end of the political spectrum.

As well as revealing general patterns, the individual perspective also demonstrates that attitudes and opinions are better than socio-demographic factors for explaining individual vote choice and the success of the AfD. Across all seven state elections AfD voters are characterised by having less education and living in rural areas, but even more strongly by right-wing socio-cultural attitudes and negative opinions about the government. The analysis of individual elections reveals great differences in voting behaviour between the states, pointing up regional disparities that clearly suggest that – as in Chapter 5 – spatial contexts play an important role. The findings for the 2016 elections are clearer than those for 2014: a certain structuring of the AfD voting base has occurred. This study cannot go into depth, but relies on comparison. Nonetheless we are able to demonstrate where future research needs to concentrate in order to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the success of right-wing populism in Germany – also in relation to analysis of the 2017 Bundestag election.

7

CONCLUSIONS

The AfD has enjoyed considerable electoral success since its creation in 2013. It is part of an international phenomenon of right-wing populism that is reshaping the political landscape in many democracies. The AfD's vote share varies geographically, both between and within states, as do socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics and political attitudes and opinions. At the national level, the party's support was strong enough for it to easily surpass the 5 percent threshold and enter the Bundestag in 2017. Our study examined factors underlying the AfD's electoral success, on the basis of state elections in seven German states between 2014 and 2016.

Our analysis of aggregated voting behaviour at district level demonstrates the influence of socio-demographic factors on AfD vote share and identifies consistent patterns. The AfD tends to record a stronger showing in districts with higher unemployment, a smaller proportion of foreign nationals and a lower proportion of highly educated people. At the individual level, which we investigated using survey data, we also find a strong influence of political attitudes and opinions on individual vote choice. Dissatisfaction with the state government and right-wing attitudes in the socio-cultural dimension considerably increase the likelihood of a person voting for the AfD. In some cases socio-demographic characteristics have an indirect mediating influence via political attitudes. Direct influences are also found, although weaker than those of attitudes and opinions: women and the highly educated are significantly less likely to vote for the AfD. So regional socio-demographic contexts and disparities, individual political attitudes and opinions, and to a lesser extent individual socio-demographic characteristics are relevant factors explaining the AfD's electoral success.

What the regional analysis also reveals, however, is that the power of the factors explaining AfD vote share differs between districts. This geographical heterogeneity of explanatory power is confirmed at the micro level; between the states the explanatory factors vary considerably. The differences are attributable in particular to a time factor, rather than being connected exclusively to the east/west dichotomy: A systematic difference is found between state elections held in 2014 and those in 2016. While the established factors discussed in this study explain only a small part of the distribution of AfD

vote share in 2014 (both at macro and micro levels), two years later – after the departure of leader Bernd Lucke and a shift to harder-right positions – voting behaviour can be more clearly linked to socio-demographic factors and political attitudes. Apparently a homogenisation of the AfD's support base occurred during this period. Also, voters were now able to gain a clearer impression of the party's fundamental positions, simply because it had existed longer. At the same time this phase also reflected a period where socio-cultural issues dominated German political and media debates, with immigration topping the list. This created ideal preconditions for the AfD to profit.

The central finding of this study can be summed up in just a few words: There is no typical AfD voter (especially if we consider only the socio-demographic and socio-economic factors). Particular characteristics that mitigate for or against right-wing populist success can be identified at both the individual and environmental levels, but important temporal and geographical differences are also found in the relative influence of these characteristics. While few significant influences can be identified in AfD vote shares or voter motives in the 2014 elections, the 2016 elections reveal a clear picture of a right-wing populist party with a strong emphasis on factors closely associated with xenophobia and characteristics that encourage it. In light of internal developments within the AfD, this produces a coherent picture. The departure of national conservative deputies – who were "moderate" in the context of the AfD – from the party groups in the Bundestag and state parliaments continues that trend. From the perspective of political education it would therefore be apposite to concentrate primarily on these aspects – without losing sight of the spatial disparities – if the momentum of the right-wing populist AfD is to be stopped. Serious voting behaviour research has long abandoned the idea of making general statements about voters. Vote choice is the outcome of very complex personal deliberations, influenced by contextual factors. The attractions of simplification and exaggeration are obvious. But if political actors – and the media – really want to understand elections in general – and the success of right-wing populist parties in particular – then the frequency counts and bivariate relationships that are so enthusiastically

presented in election night post-mortems are insufficient and potentially actually counterproductive.

The AfD's election results in 2017 underline that we are certainly not dealing with a short-lived protest phenomenon. Following a couple of minor setbacks – unsurprisingly during a phase where the AfD's core issues were less prominent in the public debate – the 2017 Bundestag election result speaks for itself, and against the strategies pursued to date by the established parties. Of course the internal leadership fight – in connection with the conflict between populist and extremist currents – harms the party more than it helps. An even deeper split cannot be excluded, even the possibility of a new party with parliamentary representation under the leadership of Frauke Petry. Where there seems to be no doubt is that the discussion about and responses to the AfD need to change. Leaving the AfD to set the agenda itself merely plays into its hands. Instead other political actors would be well advised to force the AfD to address other issues, and to critically observe its parliamentary work. There is also a good case that the media need to reconsider their attitude. Of course it is also appropriate for the CDU/CSU and the SPD – as the biggest losers of the Bundestag election – to overhaul their programmes (and not only in relation to the AfD's core issues). They should first take a look at Austria and the Netherlands, where assimilation of right-wing positions largely backfired. To put it bluntly, they need to propose a vision for the country's future, rather than making the mistake of emulating the AfD in search of electoral success. The latter entails risks to central aspects of the open liberal society and not least the constitution.

8

APPENDIX

1 DATA, METHODOLOGY AND DETAILED FINDINGS FOR CHAPTER 5

For the analysis of voting behaviour at the macro level we use the official election district-level results of the most recent state election. The source for district-level socio-demographic and socio-economic data is the Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung (Indikatoren und Karten zur Raum- und Stadtentwicklung, INKAR). Bibliographical data is provided below. Table A1 shows all variables and their coding. All variables are measured at district level.

Table A2 presents the regression table of the multivariate model that forms the basis for Figure 6 and (indirectly) Figure 7 in Chapter 5. Seemingly Unrelated Regressions (SUR) are cal-

culated for multivariate identification of the relationships between the different factors and the AfD's party list vote. Because the AfD's party list vote is logically and mathematically connected with the results for the other parties – so a gain for one party means a loss for at least one other – regressions are calculated for all parties with seats in a majority of the investigated state parliaments, and the five regressions are linked via the respective error terms, in other words as SURs. This permits a more meaningful estimation of effects. The model includes control variables for the states, which are presented here in comparison to Saxony. The significant differences between states mentioned in Chapter 5 result from a calculation of the general influence of the seven states on the AfD vote share. Because of differences in number and

Table A1
Overview of variables (chapter 5)

Name	Description	Coding
Intention to vote AfD	The dependent variable corresponds to the AfD vote share in the respective state election (in elections with more than one ballot paper, the share of the party list vote).	in percentage points
Household income	Mean household income per resident.	in €1,000
Proportion highly educated	Proportion highly educated living in district; for reasons of data availability the figure used is university-educated as proportion of economically active weighted by the proportion of economically active in the district population.	in percentage points
Low proportion of non-Germans	Non-linear binary indicator, proportion of foreign nationals below a minimum threshold (3 percent).	0 = "foreign nationals as proportion of population in percent" ≥ 3 1 = "foreign nationals as proportion of population in percent" < 3
Unemployment rate	Unemployed as proportion of economically active population.	in percentage points

Table A2
Regression table (chapter 5)

Indicator	Regression coefficient
Household income	1.72 (1.04)
Proportion highly educated	−0.42** (−2.39)
Low proportion of non-Germans	1.45** (2.07)
Unemployment rate	0.45*** (4.00)
Constant	4.10 (1.30)
State (vs. Saxony)	
Rhineland-Palatinate	4.69*** (4.09)
Baden-Württemberg	8.17*** (6.92)
Brandenburg	1.32* (1.78)
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	9.07*** (11.68)
Saxony-Anhalt	12.97*** (16.97)
Thuringia	0.84 (1.12)
Number of cases	156
Explanatory power (pseudo-R^2)	0.82

Note: Linear regression coefficient; t-values in parentheses; * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

2 DATA, METHODOLOGY AND DETAILED FINDINGS FOR CHAPTER 6

For the analysis of voting behaviours at micro level we use seven GLES datasets. These are offline-recruited online surveys conducted during the weeks preceding the respective state election. Bibliographical data is provided below. For a detailed description of the studies and the concrete questions used please refer to the studies themselves. Table A3 shows all variables and their coding.

All the analyses presented here and in Chapter 6 use weighting wherever possible to improve their representativeness of the overall population. However, the analyses across all states are not corrected for the population sizes of the individual states; instead standard errors corrected by state are used for determining the probability of error. In all cases subjects who completed the survey very quickly are excluded, as it must be assumed that the survey was not completed with due care and attention. Cases where viable data was not supplied for all variables are also excluded.

Table A4 presents the usual regression tables for the individual models that form the basis for all figures and tables in Chapter 6. But because Table A4 shows logistic regression coefficients rather than marginal effects, there may be slight discrepancies in the standard errors and thus the level of significance. The interpretation in the text is based on the marginal effects. We proceed as follows to correct for strength of influence of socio-demographic factors, which is derived from the funnel of causality of vote choice: Separate regression models are calculated for each individual attitude and opinion variable, for each state, and for the complete model comprising all states. All socio-demographic characteristics are independent variables in this model. Depending on the nature of the dependent variables these are either linear or logistic "stepwise regressions": independent variables are successively removed from the model if they demonstrate no significant effect (threshold of 5 percent for the model comprising all states and 10 percent for the individual models. The residues of these models are then estimated for the further analyses in Table A4. In other words, for attitudes and opinions we use the share that cannot be explained by socio-demographic factors. The original variable is only used where no socio-demographic factor shows a significant effect.

size of districts between the states, the cases are also weighted according to their share of the total number of districts in their state. The fundamental findings of the analysis are also confirmed in the cases of alternative operationalisation of "proportion highly educated" (as proportion of school-leavers with university entrance qualifications), and use of a time-sensitive unemployment rate (2014 figures for the 2014 elections, 2016 figures for the 2016 elections). Additional calculations (using 2016 data that was partially interpolated to account for gaps) show that the effect of "low proportion of foreign nationals" remains robust to a time-sensitive application of the indicator if the threshold is raised slightly to account for the increase in the overall proportion nationally.

Table A3
Overview of variables (chapter 6)

Name	Description	Coding
Intention to vote AfD	The dependent variables include both voting intention and those who report already having voted for the AfD by postal ballot.	0 = no; 1 = yes
Socio-demographics		
Female	Is the subject female?	0 = no; 1 = yes
Household income	Net household income per person (second and further members counting as 0.5). In the original dataset income data was collected in thirteen categories. For the purposes of this study the median of each category is used, with 10,000 specified for the highest income category.	in €1,000
Age	Division of subjects into age categories	1 = 18–25; 2 = 26–30; 3 = 31–50; 4 = 51–65; 5 = older than 65
Education	School education of subject	1 = low (no qualification, Hauptschule or similar); 2 = medium (mittlere Reife or similar); 3 = high (Fachhochschulreife, Abitur or similar)
Settlement type	Self-assessment according to BIK10	1 = rural (population under 20,000); 2 = town (population 20,000–100,000); 3 = city (population more than 100,000)
Attitudes and opinions		
Second-order election	Does the subject regard national politics as important when choosing who to vote for at state level? From the originally five-point scale the categories "very important" and "important" are grouped vs. the other three.	0 = no; 1 = yes
Dissatisfaction with democracy	Is the subject dissatisfied with the way democracy functions in their state? From the originally five-point scale the categories "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" are grouped vs. the other three.	0 = no; 1 = yes
Negative economic expectations	Does the subject expect negative economic developments in their state? From the originally five-point scale the two "negative" categories are grouped vs. the other three.	0 = no; 1 = yes
Dissatisfaction with government	Dissatisfaction with state government	from 1 = completely satisfied to 11 = completely dissatisfied
Socio-economically right-wing	Position on socio-economic redistribution (taxes vs. welfare)	from 1 = more welfare to 11 = less taxation
Socio-culturally right-wing	Position on immigration law (law already too lax vs. relax restrictions)	from 1 = make easier to 11 = make more difficult
Weak attachment to EU	Does the subject feel attached to the EU?	0 = no; 1 = yes

Note: All variables from GLES datasets.

Table A4
Regression table (chapter 6)

	All states		SA	TH	BB	ST	BW	RP	MV
	only SD	complete							
Female	−0.41*	−0.38*	−0.00	0.80	−0.03	−1.36**	−0.79	−1.88**	−1.60***
	(−1.95)	(−1.92)	(−0.01)	(1.37)	(−0.06)	(−2.11)	(−1.15)	(−2.12)	(−2.62)
Household income	−0.23*	−0.26	−0.71	0.15	0.16	−0.85**	−1.39***	−0.57	0.45
	(−1.74)	(−1.28)	(−1.62)	(0.60)	(0.63)	(−2.36)	(−3.13)	(−1.63)	(1.64)
Age (vs. 18–25)									
26–30	−0.06	−0.07	1.21	−1.72	−2.34*	3.16**	−1.28	−1.34	−1.52
	(−0.10)	(−0.13)	(1.17)	(−1.23)	(−1.67)	(2.30)	(−0.79)	(−1.15)	(−1.21)
31–50	−0.16	0.01	0.95	−1.24	−0.41	0.80	0.37	−2.75**	−1.20
	(−0.70)	(0.05)	(0.90)	(−1.27)	(−0.40)	(0.60)	(0.37)	(−2.41)	(−1.19)
51–65	−0.32	0.01	0.42	−0.77	0.04	1.80	−1.79	−2.48**	−1.05
	(−0.80)	(0.03)	(0.44)	(−0.73)	(0.03)	(1.55)	(−1.63)	(−2.04)	(−1.08)
65 +	−0.44	−0.27	1.71	−3.84**	−1.98	3.30**	−1.91	−3.56***	−0.78
	(−0.84)	(−0.55)	(1.43)	(−2.34)	(−1.40)	(2.44)	(−1.29)	(−2.90)	(−0.83)
Education (vs. low)									
Medium	−0.37	−0.46	−0.58	0.06	−0.53	−0.75	−2.17***	0.17	−0.53
	(−1.21)	(−1.49)	(−1.04)	(0.05)	(−0.64)	(−1.24)	(−2.71)	(0.23)	(−0.79)
High	−1.15***	−1.06***	−0.87	−2.84*	−1.29	−9.82***	−3.13***	−0.15	−0.16
	(−5.47)	(−3.67)	(−1.43)	(−1.81)	(−1.40)	(−11.48)	(−3.60)	(−0.16)	(−0.21)
Settlement type (vs. rural)									
Town	−0.75***	−0.50	−1.90*	−0.51	−1.69**	−1.97**	−0.89	1.87**	1.00
	(−2.96)	(−1.61)	(−1.85)	(−0.68)	(−2.46)	(−2.20)	(−0.63)	(2.03)	(1.42)
City	−0.53**	−0.34	−1.13**	0.81	−0.24	−8.82***	0.35	2.07***	0.26
	(−2.11)	(−1.21)	(−2.12)	(0.96)	(−0.42)	(−11.78)	(0.47)	(3.45)	(0.35)
Second-order election		−0.59	0.39	−0.24	0.23	−12.58***	0.34	1.78*	0.14
		(−1.44)	(0.67)	(−0.20)	(1.17)	(−10.75)	(0.57)	(1.71)	(0.31)
Dissatisfaction with democracy		−0.12	−0.10	1.47*	0.48	−0.27	0.67*	2.86***	−2.55**
		(−1.01)	(−0.32)	(1.65)	(0.69)	(−0.52)	(1.69)	(2.92)	(−2.04)
Negative economic expectations		−0.03	−0.44	−0.87	−0.72	0.69***	0.88**	1.33*	−0.97
		(−0.46)	(−1.52)	(−0.80)	(−1.06)	(2.68)	(2.03)	(1.80)	(−0.91)
Dissatisfaction with government		0.26***	0.25**	0.39***	0.10	0.52***	0.03	0.14	0.68***
		(4.98)	(2.35)	(2.64)	(0.78)	(3.81)	(0.25)	(1.22)	(4.22)
Socio-economically right-wing		−0.05	−0.38***	0.00	−0.03	0.02	−0.01	−0.63***	0.29**
		(−0.77)	(−3.33)	(0.00)	(−0.24)	(0.12)	(−0.05)	(−2.68)	(2.27)
Socio-culturally right-wing		0.34***	0.21*	0.20	0.16	0.74***	0.88***	0.40***	0.94***
		(3.83)	(1.86)	(1.61)	(1.17)	(6.18)	(3.27)	(3.67)	(7.23)
Weak attachment to EU		0.03	0.07	−0.56**	0.49	1.44	2.80***	0.88	−0.04
		(0.23)	(0.31)	(−2.19)	(1.07)	(1.13)	(3.04)	(0.75)	(−0.10)
Constant	−0.17	−1.00**	−0.57	−1.87	−1.04	2.63*	−0.50	−2.07	−2.53**
	(−0.43)	(−2.52)	(−0.44)	(−1.45)	(−0.82)	(1.83)	(−0.38)	(−1.58)	(−2.34)
Number of cases	2078	2078	287	287	295	290	276	305	338
Explanatory power (pseudo-R2)	0.05	0.24	0.31	0.32	0.16	0.60	0.58	0.55	0.54

Note: Logistic regression coefficients; z-values in parentheses; * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. In the presentations in the main part of the study, only values significant at 5 percent level or better are indicated for both models including all states. State abbreviations: Saxony (SA), Thuringia (TH), Brandenburg (BB), Saxony-Anhalt (ST), Baden-Württemberg (BW), Rhineland-Palatinate (RP) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV). The states are presented in chronological order of their state elections. SD stands for socio-demographics.

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