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Partisanship at Odds with Democracy?

How Populist Partisanship Influences Support for Democracy



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MSc thesis by Kevin Terzi exploring the research question:

“Does partisanship with populist and populist radical right parties differently affect partisans’ support for democracy, and, if so, how?”

MS programme Democracy & Representation

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Abstract:

This thesis examines how partisanship with populist parties (PPs) and populist radical right (PRR) parties (PRRPs) influences support for democracy over time, using longitudinal panel data from the Netherlands (LISS) and within-between regression analysis. Parties are categorised along a nativist-authoritarian dimension, ranging from “thin” PPs to “thick” PRRPs. Focusing on partisanship—measured through high party ratings (PRs)—it explores two key questions: (1) Do initial levels of support for democracy vary by partisanship? (2) How does partisanship affect support for democracy differently over time? It is hypothesised that support for democracy decreases along the nativist-authoritarian dimension, with lower levels of support both initially and longitudinally as a party adopts more pronounced nativist-authoritarian traits. The findings show that initial levels of support for democracy are lower among populist partisans and lowest among PRR partisans when compared to mainstream partisans. Over time, the effects diverge: populist partisans are associated with a gradual increase, while PRR partisans exhibit a significant decrease in support for democracy. These contrasting trends underscore the corrosive influence of PRR partisanship on support for democracy and the potential for “thin” populism to positively re-engage disaffected citizens. By highlighting the dynamic and party-specific effects of partisanship, this thesis contributes to broader debates on the relationship between populism and democracy, offering a nuanced perspective on how different partisanships influence support for democracy over time.

1 Introduction

“The fundamental paradox of democracy is [...] that empowerment undermines transparency. Attempts to give a political voice to the population at large tend to produce institutions that separate people and power in the very process of mediating between them.” (Canovan, 2002, p. 28).

Events such as the representational "void", increased party-voter distance (Mair, 2013), combined with partisan dealignment (Van Biezen et al., 2012; Wattenberg et al., 2002) and rising affective polarisation (Wagner, 2021), have contributed to what many scholars describe as a "crisis of democracy" (Przeworski, 2019; Foa & Mounk, 2016). As a result, new political parties have emerged, challenging established party systems (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020; Urbinati, 2019).

Many of these parties are populist (PPs) and populist radical right (PRR) parties (PRRPs). To date, PRRPs have become key actors in contemporary European party systems (Zulianello, 2019; Mudde, 2019). Their electoral success has spurred extensive research into the link between PRRP supporters and the implications for democracy (Immerzeel & Pickup, 2015), raising questions about the relationship between party and constituents, particularly regarding the alleged pro-democratic effects of partisanship (Dalton, 2016) in today's evolving political landscape.

Arzheimer (2024), who operationalised partisanship through party identification, has shown that partisanship with an "anti-system" PRRP, Germany's

AfD, intensifies disaffection with democracy among AfD partisans over time, such as distrust in Germany's Federal Constitutional Court. Similar patterns have been observed in the United States (Graham & Svulik, 2020). Yet, the broader question of whether and how partisanship with different PPs, including PRRPs, shapes support for democracy remains unanswered.

This thesis addresses the research question: *“Does partisanship with populist and populist radical right parties differently affect partisans’ support for democracy, and, if so, how?”* Specifically, it examines support for democracy (Norris, 1999) by distinguishing between populist and PRR partisans in the Netherlands (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2020), utilising longitudinal panel data from the LISS (Scherpenzeel, 2010) and applying a within-between regression analysis (Long, 2020). By focusing on the Dutch case, this study selects three PPs classified along Mudde’s (2007) PRRP framework and one mainstream party, serving as a baseline comparison. This research adds to Arzheimer’s (2024) analysis by broadening the scope of analysed parties while adopting party ratings (PRs) as an alternative operationalisation of partisanship (Thomassen & Rosema 2009).

This thesis finds that initial levels of support for democracy are lower among populist partisans and lowest among PRR partisans compared to mainstream partisans. Over time, these effects diverge: persistent partisanship with “thin” populist parties is linked to a gradual increase in support for democracy, while PRR partisans experience a marked decline, highlighting the distinct and enduring negative impact

of PRR partisanship on support for democracy, which does not hold for populist partisans.

Following this introduction, the thesis lays out its theoretical foundation, defining the key concepts of support for democracy, partisanship, and PRRPs, which form the basis for the formulation of hypotheses. The selected case is then introduced and justified, followed by a discussion of the methodology, where the dependent (DVs) and independent variables (IVs) are presented. Robustness checks are applied to ensure the validity of the methodology and subsequent results. The thesis concludes by summarising the findings, discussing theoretical choices, reflecting on limitations, highlighting the thesis's relevance, and proposing avenues for future research.

2 Theoretical Reasoning

To address the research question, several key concepts must be introduced. First, the concept of support for democracy is outlined. Next, the notion of partisanship is discussed. Finally, the characteristics of populist parties are explored.

2.1 Support for Democracy

Easton's (1965) work on support for democracy emphasises the reciprocal relationship between democracies and their citizens. Citizens' support for democracy as a political regime and its institutions, as well as their satisfaction with both, are critical to its survival (Claassen, 2020). Norris (1999) refined Easton's (1965, 1975) framework by distinguishing between two dimensions of support: diffuse and specific. Diffuse support refers to democracy as a political regime and its institutions, such as the legislative, the judiciary, and the executive. Survey questions like, "How much trust or confidence do you have in [*regime or institution*]?" are commonly used to measure diffuse support.

Specific support relates to the perceived performance of the regime, institutions and authorities, including the government, parliament, courts, political parties, politicians, and the military or police. Measurements usually use satisfaction scores to determine specific support: "How satisfied are you with the way in which [*institution*] operates?"

Generally, citizens report high levels of diffuse support but lower levels of specific support, often influenced by short-term political developments (Wuttke et al.,

2022; Norris, 1999). Established mainstream parties and their partisans are typically committed to upholding democratic norms (Wuttke et al., 2020) and, therefore, bolster support for democracy (Dalton, 2004; Foa & Mounk, 2016). Historically, they have demonstrated a consistent dedication to liberal democratic values and principles (Sartori, 1976; Norris, 1999; Mair, 2013).

Yet, Western democracies face growing challenges due to the electoral success of populist parties (Waldner & Lust, 2018) and their “erosion of the liberal consensus” (Albertazzi and Mueller 2016, p. 520), creating a paradox. While citizens generally express support for democracy, they simultaneously support PPs that actively challenge the political regime and its liberal-democratic principles (Mudde, 2007 & 2019; Wuttke et al., 2022).

2.2 Partisanship

Partisanship—a long-term psychological attachment to a political party—has been regarded as one of the cornerstones of representative democracy (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2020) since it “creates a basis of political identity” (Dalton, 2016, p. 9). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that the societal context in which individuals live exposes them to shared values and norms, including party identification cues (Dalton, 2016, p. 5; Rosema & Mayer, 2020, pp. 124-125). Once established, partisanship tends to be strong and persistent, rarely changing over time. Usually, partisanship is formed before the age of 30, however, this can also happen later in life (Dalton, 2016). It plays a crucial role in shaping political perceptions, as it

is “causally prior to political participation” (McAllister, 2020, p. 267), offering cognitive shortcuts that influence political attitudes and voting behaviour by fostering a reciprocal relationship between party and partisan (Harteveld et al., 2017; Wattenberg et al., 2002, p. 21; McAllister, 2020, p. 275). Partisanship largely determines party choice (Dalton, 2016), leading to higher turn-out rates among partisans compared to non-partisans (McAllister, 2020, p. 269). Therefore, partisanship is believed to have a positive impact on citizens' perceptions of democracy, specifically their support for it (Holmber, 2003; McAllister, 2020). Additionally, partisans often surround themselves with like-minded co-partisans, favouring ingroup over outgroup preferences, which serves to reinforce their beliefs (Hrbková et al., 2024).

Considering the pivotal role of partisanship in sustaining representative democracy, it is essential to understand why psychological attachments are forged based on the unique appeal of PPs, attracting broader segments of European electorates.

2.3 Populist and Populist Radical Right Parties

Mudde's (2007) conceptual framework offers a foundation for classifying and distinguishing between PPs and PRRPs. PPs are characterised by “thin” ideologies centred on populism, while PRRPs adopt “thick” ideologies by combining populism with nativism, authoritarianism, or a blend of both. Yet, distinguishing between nativism and authoritarianism can be conceptually complex (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021). Therefore, this thesis combines these dimensions into a single construct: nativist-

authoritarianism. This streamlined categorisation simplifies an analysis of how partisanship with different PPs shapes support for democracy in distinct ways.

2.3.1 Populism

At its core, populist ideology is “thin”, positing that society is divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” while putting at its core, the *volonté générale* (general will) (Mudde, 2004, p. 543; Canovan 2002, p. 27). Through electoral success, the all-encompassing idea behind the general will is legitimised, therefore concluding that political power must be given to the “pure people” by promoting plebiscitary politics. “Populism in power is an extreme majoritarianism” (Urbinati, 2019, p 113), centring in its core the “will and decision rather than accommodation and compromise” (Canovan, 2002, p. 34). The populist approach is in opposition to representational principles. Pitkin (1967, p. 8) defines representation as “making present again”. The intention is to “making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in public policy-making processes”, serving as a “kind of political assistance” (Dovi, 2018, p. 1). Consequently, populist ideology over-simplifies peoples’ inherent diversity both descriptively and ideationally into a “monolithic certainty” (Canovan, 2002, p. 30) of ‘Us’, and subsequently, subordinates everything else to selective-majoritarian rule (Urbinati, 2019, p. 123). “A regime *of*, rather than *by* the majority”¹ (Urbinati, 2019, p. 123).

¹ The original quotation reads: “A regime of rather than by the majority.” A comma has been added to clarify the syntactical structure of the sentence, and italics have been used to emphasise the distinction between the two contrasting forms of governance.

Peculiarly, populist parties stress the importance of a political leader immediately representing the pure people and their will against the “corrupt elite” by enabling one of “them” to get to power (Urbinati, 2019, p. 119). Once in power, such a leader functions as a megaphone to its people’s alleged universal preferences, therefore, legitimised to “act unilaterally [...] without meaningful institutional consultation or mediations” (Urbinati, 2019, p. 120).

2.3.2 Nativism

Nativism, a common feature of PRRPs, aligns with the populist “Us versus Them” narrative. Nativist ideology asserts that only members of the native group (‘Us’) belong to the nation-state, while non-natives (‘Them’) are perceived as existential threats (Mudde, 2007, pp. 138-145). This is commonly shared among party and respective voters, who hold xenophobic ideals (Ivarsflaten et al., 2019, p. 816). The populist perception of society and its inherent call for majoritarian rule based on electoral success not only legitimises the underlying dichotomous narrative but also provides a “democratic shield” (Ivarsflaten et al., 2019, p. 824) against oppositional claims that nativist ideologies were outright racist. With that, populism lends nativism a democratic veneer and makes respective claims seem less right-wing extremist. This circular reasoning paves the way for an anti-immigration and xenophobic party stance. Additionally, nativist ideals emphasise the need to protect and prioritise the nativist culture, often framing it as a “Leitkultur” (dominant culture) that must be preserved. This results in the exclusion of other cultures and a subsequent hostility toward

multiculturalism, which is perceived as a threat to the nativist culture. Today, alleged threats to nativist society particularly target Muslims or persons perceived as Arab due to the claim that Islam was “incompatible with [...] European civilisation” (Mudde, 2007, p. 145 & Mudde, 2019).

2.3.3 Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism refers to a style of governance characterised by highly centralised and concentrated power. In its pure form, Linz (1964) defines authoritarianism as power exercised by a dominant political entity, whether a party, movement, or organisation. The legitimacy of such authority is rooted in the belief that an existing social order requires unwavering protection. Additionally, authoritarian political systems are distinguished by limited political pluralism and minimal or non-existent checks on power.

In the context of Western European liberal democracies, Mudde (2007, pp. 145–150) conceptualises authoritarianism similarly to Linz (1964), as governance centred on an “extensive focus on law and order,” designed to significantly enhance the power of the executive. This approach often entails the implementation of draconian laws that profoundly undermine fundamental democratic and liberal principles, including the protection of minorities, freedom of speech and the press, the right to political opposition, judicial independence, and, ultimately, the separation of powers. To enforce such laws, police and military capabilities are expanded, targeting both internal and external threats to the social order—or, in the context of nativist parties,

the preservation of the "Leitkultur." The ideal PRR governance model manifests as a "Sicherheitsstaat" (state of security), legitimised by an appeal to majoritarian democracy (Mudde, 2007, p. 155).

2.4 Hypotheses

To analyse the effects of partisanship, individuals adhering to mainstream, populist, and PRR parties are compared to one another. The pivotal role of partisanship in shaping and conveying political cues and the above distinction between party types form the foundation for hypothesis development and subsequent analysis. The theoretical framework outlined earlier suggests that contestation of democratic norms intensifies as parties adopt increasingly populist and/or nativist-authoritarian traits. By contrast, mainstream party supporters are presumed to uphold a consistently pro-democratic stance. This leads to the following assumptions.

It is hypothesised that partisans of different party types will exhibit varying initial levels of support for democracy (intercept), with PRR partisans expected to show the lowest levels compared to populist and mainstream partisans.

Furthermore, it is hypothesised that the rate of change in support for democracy (slope) is expected to show the steepest decline for PRR partisans, followed by a moderate decline for populist partisans. In contrast, the slope for mainstream partisans is anticipated to be either stable or show a slight positive trend over time.

H₀: Null hypothesis

Partisanship does not influence support for democracy compared to non-partisanship.

H₁: Initial Effect of Partisanship on Support for Democracy

Individuals with populist partisanship are expected to exhibit lower initial levels of support for democracy, with populist radical right partisans showing the lowest levels compared to mainstream partisans.

H₂: Longitudinal Effect of Populist Partisanship on Support for Democracy

Over time, individuals with populist partisanship will exhibit a moderate decline in support for democracy compared to mainstream partisans.

H₃: Longitudinal Effect of PRR Partisanship on Support for Democracy

Over time, individuals with populist radical right partisanship will exhibit a steeper decline in support for democracy compared to populist partisans.

3 Case Selection

The Netherlands presents a uniquely adequate fit to answer the research question: *“Does partisanship with populist and populist radical right parties differently affect partisans’ support for democracy, and, if so, how?”* The Dutch political system is a liberal and consensus democracy with a strong tradition of pluralism, separation of powers, and coalition-based political power-sharing (Lijphart, 1999). The Netherlands ranks among the highest in Europe on the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index, reflecting its high level of political inclusiveness. Furthermore, the country’s low electoral threshold (0.67%) enables niche parties to gain representation, fostering an environment where a diverse range of voter demands can be addressed by a wide party supply. In this context, partisanship with Dutch PPs indicates disaffection towards democracy and its institutions.

This thesis makes use of data from the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet studies for the Social Sciences), which is administered and managed by the non-profit research institute Centerdata (Tilburg University, the Netherlands) (Scherpenzeel, 2010). It offers high-quality panel data, which is collected annually, making it ideal for measuring intra-individual developments over time.

The analysis focuses on waves 9 to 16 (2016–2023), selected based on the inclusion years of PPs in the LISS panel. This approach isolates the treatment effect of continuous partisanship with PPs by examining individuals whose partisanship developed during this timeframe and persisted longer than one wave.

Party classification follows Mudde's (2007) framework, emphasising the dimensions of populism and nativist-authoritarianism. To ensure validity, Rooduijn et al.'s (2023) PopuList is used to identify Dutch parties classified as PPs or PRRPs. The PopuList categorises five Dutch parties as populist, with three of these identified as far-right.

The analysis focuses on three parties: *Forum for Democracy* (FvD, founded in 2016), *BoerBurgerBeweging* (BBB, founded in 2019), and *JA21* (founded in 2020). The BBB, while a borderline case of far-right populism, primarily appeals to agrarian interests and advocates rural values over cosmopolitan urban policies (Otjes & Voerman, 2022; Otjes & De Lang, 2024). It is therefore classified as a populist party. In contrast, FvD and JA21 are categorized as PRRPs due to their strong opposition to multiculturalism and immigration. Initially aligned with the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) (Otjes, 2021), FvD became increasingly radical during the COVID-19 pandemic, adopting conspiracy theories and positioning itself as the most nativist-authoritarian of the selected parties (Jonge, 2021; Otjes & De Lang, 2024; Segers, 2024). JA21, founded by former FvD members dissatisfied with FvD's extreme rightward shift, aims to occupy a space between the centre-right and PRRPs, offering a more moderate alternative to FvD (Otjes & Voerman, 2022; Otjes & De Lang, 2024). Consequently, BBB is considered the least nativist-authoritarian of the three, followed by JA21, with FvD being the most extreme. Together, these parties represent a sufficient spectrum of populism, from "thin" populist appeals to nativist-authoritarian ideologies, providing valuable points of comparison for this analysis.

PPs existing before waves 1 to 9 (2007–2016) are omitted to avoid confounding the analysis with long-standing partisanship patterns rooted in pre-timeframe contexts. Therefore, *the Socialistische Partij* (SP, founded in 1971) and the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, founded in 2006) are excluded due to their early origins.

For a baseline comparison, the analysis includes partisans of mainstream parties. Major Dutch mainstream parties, such as the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD), *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA), and *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA), were founded well before 2016 and would typically be excluded under the timeframe selection criterion. However, selecting a mainstream party as a baseline is essential for comparing the effects of populist and PRR partisanship on both the initial and longitudinal levels of support for democracy. Among mainstream parties, the VVD is chosen. Its consistent presence in government ensures that partisanship with the VVD is shaped by contemporary political dynamics, aligning well with the chosen timeframe. Moreover, correlation relationships among mainstream partisans and between mainstream and populist partisans, support VVD's choice further (see 4.2).

Founded in 1948, the VVD is a centre-right liberal party and has been the dominant mainstream political force in the Netherlands in recent years. Since 2010, it has consistently been part of governing coalitions, often leading them. Its longevity in power reflects its stable mainstream appeal, making it an ideal baseline for examining persistent partisanship towards a centrist force. Moreover, the VVD's centre-right policy stance (Otjes & De Jonge, 2024) aligns more closely with the ideological positions of PPs and PRRPs compared to other mainstream parties. This proximity

makes the decision to support parties further to the right of the VVD more significant, as the VVD already accommodates concerns and preferences that might otherwise attract support for more extreme parties (Figure 6, Appendix).

4 Methodology

This methodology section outlines the approach taken to address the research question: *“Does partisanship with populist and populist radical right parties differently affect partisans’ support for democracy, and, if so, how?”* The section begins by detailing how the concepts of support for democracy and partisanship are operationalised. It then explains the execution of the descriptive analysis and the application of regression analysis using within-between models.

4.1 Support for Democracy

To measure support for democracy, this thesis uses Norris’ (1999) adaptation of Easton’s (1965, 1975) framework, which conceptualises support for democracy along a “diffuse-specific” continuum. Based on Norris’s conceptualisation, six corresponding measures are represented in the LISS panel. Diffuse support is assessed using a 0–10 scale (0 = “no trust/confidence at all,” 10 = “full trust/confidence”) to evaluate trust in democracy (1), the Dutch parliament (2), and the Dutch government (3). Similarly, the specific support dimension measures levels of dissatisfaction or satisfaction with democracy (1), the Dutch parliament (2), and the Dutch government (3), also using a 0–10 scale (0 = “very dissatisfied,” 10 = “very satisfied”).

This thesis employs trust in and satisfaction with democracy as the primary dependent variables. These democracy-related measures are considered more abstract and less susceptible to short-term preferences due to current affairs, as they reflect long-term perceptions of respondent’s democratic ideals (Norris, 1999; Wuttke et al.,

2022). Consequently, significant differences between mainstream and populist partisans within these measures are particularly salient, offering insights into the relation of partisans and their support for democracy across different party types.

The correlation between trust in and satisfaction with democracy is strong and positive, with a rating of 0.87 (Figure 5, Appendix).

4.2 Partisanship

Three distinct approaches to measuring partisanship are considered: party identification, party rating, and a multi-item scale (Rosema & Mayer, 2020). Due to data limitations, the latter operationalisation is not applicable.

Traditionally, party identification has been assessed through a standard question format, asking respondents whether they identify with a political party. In the Dutch context, Thomassen (1996, p. 428) demonstrated that the traditional conceptualisation of partisanship—as a stable and long-term affiliation—was indistinguishable from short-term party choice. He suggests: *“Party identification is not causally prior to vote, but simply a reflection of the vote and therefore causally posterior to the vote”*, losing its defining characteristics of stability and continuity. Thomassen and Rosema (2009) revisited and reaffirmed these claims, advocating for the measurement of partisanship through party ratings (PRs) instead. They demonstrated that respondents are more likely to provide PRs than identifications.

In the LISS panel, PR questions are consistently phrased across waves as: *“What do you think of the [Party Name]?”* using an 11-point scale from 0 (“very unsympathetic”)

to 10 ("very sympathetic"). The proportion of LISS-respondents expressing PRs above a threshold of 5 ($PR \geq 6$) is 81.9%. For ratings above 6 ($PR \geq 7$), the proportion drops to 73.1%, and for ratings above 7 ($PR \geq 8$), it is 49.7% per wave. In contrast, party identification is expressed, on average, by merely 16.61% of respondents.

Furthermore, Thomassen and Rosema (2009) acknowledge that the decision to establish a PR threshold is somewhat arbitrary, basing their choice on the predictive value of PRs for voting behaviour. In this thesis, a longitudinal analysis using binomial within-between regression models (see Section 4.4 for details on this statistical approach) was conducted to predict vote choice based on PR thresholds ranging from four to nine. According to the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), the optimal threshold was seven for VVD, JA21, and FvD, while a threshold of eight yielded the lowest AIC values for BBB (Table 3, Appendix).

Moreover, the choice of PR thresholds influences the size of both the control and treatment groups. Raising the threshold increases the number of observations in the control group ($PR < \text{threshold}$) while simultaneously decreasing the sample size in the treatment group ($PR \geq \text{threshold}$) and vice versa. For example, VVD's group 8 count, comprising respondents who continuously rate $VVD \geq \text{threshold}$ across waves 9 to 16, decreases from 347 ($PR \geq 6$, Table 4, Appendix) to 143 ($PR \geq 7$, Table 1), and ultimately 44 ($PR \geq 8$, Table 5, Appendix), while the control group ("Never") increases from 57 to 109 to 377 over the same period (wave 9 to wave 16). Consequently, this thesis adopts a threshold of $PR \geq 7$.

The correlation among party ratings is particularly strong within party families, with a notable positive correlation between VVD and CDA (0.62), reflecting their alignment within the centre-right. PvdA shows weaker positive correlations with CDA (0.29) and VVD (0.23), indicating limited overlap with centre-right preferences. Within the PPs, ratings for BBB and JA21 are moderately correlated (0.48), while correlations between BBB and FvD (0.28) and between JA21 and FvD (0.31) suggest partial alignment with populist radical right preferences. Across party families, correlations between VVD and BBB or PRR party ratings (JA21, FvD) remain positive but weak, ranging from 0.09 to 0.29 (Figure 6, Appendix).

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

The data management process for the descriptive analysis in this thesis involves several key steps. Waves 9, 10, or 14 (2016, 2017, or 2021) are designated as the starting points for analysis depending on the date when FvD, BBB and JA21 (waves 10 and 14, respectively) were first administered. The analysis incorporates all available data up to wave 16 (2023), the most recent wave administered.

First, respondents are filtered to include only those with consistent participation across survey waves. Second, participants are filtered based on their persistent PR for specific parties. Those meeting the PR threshold ($PR \geq 7$) are assigned to treatment groups based on their consistency in meeting this threshold across waves. This categorisation process results in up to eight groups, depending on a party's starting wave. The first group includes participants who reported $PR \geq 7$ in wave = starting

wave. Subsequent groups (2–8) are formed by retaining participants from the previous group who continue to meet the PR threshold in consecutive waves. For example, the second group consists of participants from the first group who also meet the threshold in the next wave, and so on. This categorisation enables a systematic comparison between individuals with consistently high PR and those who consistently lack high PR, thereby aligning the data structure with the testing of the research hypotheses.

A potential limitation of this methodology is the lack of verification regarding whether respondents altered their rating behaviour across parties (mixed treatment) prior to the selected timeframe (waves 9 to 16). While incorporating earlier waves could address this bias, doing so would significantly reduce the number of participants with persistently high PR by wave 9, or, in some cases, leave no eligible participants for certain parties.

However, this thesis mitigates concerns about earlier PR statuses by monitoring PR persistence over an eight-year period (2016 to 2023), during which waves were administered annually. The extended observation period ensures that the analysis captures enduring patterns of PR rather than temporary fluctuations. Furthermore, the focus on PPs introduced after 2016 (wave 9) guarantees that respondents categorised within the respective treatment groups formed their partisanship with these parties during the chosen observation period. This approach enhances the reliability of the findings by focusing on the development of consistent partisanship over time.

Merging data from LISS waves 9 to 16 yields a total of 48,838 observations. Of these, 92% include valid data for trust in democracy and 91% for satisfaction with democracy. The mean attrition rate across all waves is approximately 12%.

4.4 Within-Between Regression Models

The within-between (w-b) modelling framework used in the `panelr` package's `wbm()` function integrates the strengths of both fixed and random effects approaches by decomposing time-varying predictors into an entity-specific mean (between-entity component) and deviations from that mean (within-entity component) (Long, 2020). This decomposition allows the model to capture stable differences across individuals (between effects) and changes within individuals over time (within effects), with the within effects controlling for unobserved, time-invariant factors by treating each individual as their own counterfactual. The inclusion of control variables was considered unnecessary, given the predominantly time-invariant nature of the available background variables in the LISS panel (LISS, n.d.). Of the 11 potential control variables, only income exhibits meaningful time variance.²

Decomposing is particularly useful for analysing “reversible treatments” in which both the outcome (e.g., trust in or satisfaction with democracy) and the predictor (partisanship) vary over time because it detects how entering or exiting a high-rating

² For an overview of socio-economic, socio-cultural, and emotional predictors driving constituencies towards populism, see Abadi et al. (2024).

category (binary operationalisation: $PR \geq 7$, reference category: $PR < 7$) is associated with shifts in each person's outcome. At the between-entity level, individuals who consistently rate a party above $PR \geq 7$ reveal whether partisanship correlates with higher or lower trust in or satisfaction with democracy. At the within-entity level, a respondent's transition into or out of high ratings in any given wave is examined for any associated rise or fall in that individual's DV score, assuming a constant within effect across time.

Formally, a within-between model can be represented as:

$$\gamma_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\chi_{it} - \bar{\chi}_i) + \beta_2\bar{\chi}_i + \gamma z_i + u_{0i} + \epsilon_{it}$$

In this equation, γ_{it} denotes the dependent variable for individual i at time t . The term $\bar{\chi}_i$ is the entity-specific mean of the time-varying predictor χ_{it} , and $(\chi_{it} - \bar{\chi}_i)$ is the within-entity deviation from that mean. The coefficient β_1 captures the within-entity effect. The coefficient β_2 captures the between-entity effect. Time-invariant predictors are represented by z_i and their effects are given by γ . The term u_{0i} is a random intercept capturing time-invariant unobserved heterogeneity, while ϵ_{it} is the time-specific error term.

Within-between models can also include interactions, formally, represented as:

$$\chi\omega_{it} = (\chi_{it} - \bar{\chi}_i) \times (\omega_{it} - \bar{\omega}_i)$$

The `wbm()` function applies a double-demeaning procedure for time-varying interactions. By utilising decomposition, each time-varying predictor is separated into within- and between-entity components and then constructs the interaction on the within-entity residualised terms, ensuring that the interaction captures pure within-

unit variation rather than introducing biases associated with less appropriate transformations. These interaction terms allow the estimation of how the slope of γ_{it} changes marginally over time t (wave) in response to changes in χ_{it} . This ensures that any estimated interaction reflects purely within-unit variation, enabling more precise insights into whether the influence of partisanship on DVs changes as respondents move through different waves.

To test the hypothesis within-between regression models are constructed using binary rating variables ($7 < PR \leq 7$) for each party predicting trust in and satisfaction with democracy (Table 2). Concerning H1: Initial Effect of Partisanship on Support for Democracy —specifically, whether partisanship influences trust in and satisfaction with democracy across different parties and respondents—between-entity effects (BE) are of primary interest. Significant BEs indicate that intercepts differ at the inter-individual level, reflecting different effects of party-specific partisanship across respondents.

To examine the hypotheses regarding H2: Longitudinal Effect of Populist Partisanship on Support for Democracy and H3: Longitudinal Effect of PRR Partisanship on Support for Democracy, within-entity effects (WE) are the focus. Significant WEs reveal how an individual's fluctuating support for a party influences their trust in or satisfaction with democracy over time. Comparing WEs specific to parties indicates whether slopes differ at the intra-individual level across parties.

A step-by-step development of the primary models for trust in and satisfaction with democracy, by adding predictors incrementally, is detailed in the appendix (Table 6, Table 7).

Additionally, interaction terms are incorporated into alternative models, based on the above primary models, to estimate how the slopes of predicted DV outcomes marginally change over time due to variations in PR (Table 8, Appendix). None of the interactions are significant, indicating stable between-entity and within-entity effects of partisanship over time and across parties.

Regarding model fit, the primary model is preferred over the interaction model, as indicated by lower AIC (37440.85 vs 37463.60) and BIC (37534.28 vs 37585.77) values, while maintaining the same Pseudo- R^2 of 0.15, fixed effects variance of 0.73 and an intraclass correlation (ICC) of 0.68, which posits that 68% of the variance is between individuals and 32% is within-individual over time.

5 Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Figure 1, Figure 2 and Table 1 demonstrate that VVD partisans exhibit the highest levels of support for democracy across both dependent variables (DVs) and groups. Their average scores consistently exceed the midpoint of the 11-point scale. Specifically, VVD partisans report an average trust in democracy (TiD) score of 7.35 and an average satisfaction with democracy (SwD) score of 7.15 across waves. In comparison, the control group labelled “never” — comprising respondents who never rated any party higher than seven across waves — shows significantly lower scores. The VVD group 8 mean TiD is 2.81 points higher, while their mean SwD is 2.79 points higher.

No discernible pattern of increase or decrease in support for democracy is observed over time or across PR-continuity groups. Differences across waves average approximately 0.04 for TiD and 0.05 for SwD, indicating minimal positive variation over time, aligning with the expected stable relationship between mainstream party partisanship and support for democracy. Statistical significance is consistent for $p < 0.1$.

PR \geq 7					Trust in Democracy				Satisfaction in Democracy			
Party	Group	Wave	Year	N	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value
VVD	1	9	2016	1266	7,10		0,04	0,00	6,93		0,04	0,00
VVD	2	9:10	16:17	789	7,40	0,31	0,05	0,00	7,15	0,22	0,05	0,00
VVD	3	9:11	16:18	565	7,31	-0,10	0,06	0,00	7,11	-0,04	0,06	0,00
VVD	4	9:12	16:19	434	7,41	0,10	0,06	0,00	7,21	0,10	0,06	0,00
VVD	5	9:13	16:20	379	7,61	0,20	0,06	0,00	7,41	0,20	0,06	0,00
VVD	6	9:14	16:21	293	7,30	-0,31	0,08	0,00	7,05	-0,36	0,08	0,00
VVD	7	9:15	16:22	213	7,31	0,01	0,10	0,00	7,05	-0,01	0,09	0,00
VVD	8	9:16	16:23	143	7,40	0,08	0,10	0,00	7,26	0,21	0,11	0,00
Never	0	9:16	16:23	109	4,59	2,81	0,23	0,00	4,47	2,79	0,24	0,00
BBB	1	14	2021	711	5,60		0,10	0,00	5,35		0,09	0,00
BBB	2	14:15	21:22	407	5,25	-0,35	0,13	0,00	5,04	-0,31	0,13	0,00
BBB	3	14:16	21:23	261	5,34	0,09	0,15	0,00	5,25	0,21	0,15	0,00
Never	0	14:16	21:23	449	5,29	0,05	0,10	0,00	5,16	0,09	0,10	0,00
JA21	1	14	2021	441	5,80		0,11	0,00	5,57		0,11	0,00
JA21	2	14:15	21:22	235	5,37	-0,44	0,17	0,00	5,13	-0,44	0,16	0,00
JA21	3	14:16	21:23	103	5,78	0,41	0,25	0,00	5,73	0,60	0,25	0,00
Never	0	14:16	21:23	449	5,29	0,49	0,10	0,00	5,16	0,57	0,10	0,00
FvD	1	10	2017	830	6,05		0,08	0,00	5,91		0,08	0,00
FvD	2	10:11	17:18	325	5,51	-0,55	0,14	0,00	5,34	-0,57	0,14	0,00
FvD	3	10:12	17:19	187	5,67	0,17	0,17	0,00	5,36	0,02	0,19	0,00
FvD	4	10:13	17:20	62	5,76	0,08	0,33	0,00	5,52	0,16	0,33	0,00
FvD	5	10:14	17:21	18	5,06	-0,70	0,76	0,00	4,61	-0,91	0,71	0,00
FvD	6	10:15	17:22	12	3,83	-1,22	0,87	0,00	3,25	-1,36	0,79	0,00
FvD	7	10:16	17:23	7	3,00	-0,83	0,62	0,00	3,29	0,04	0,75	0,00
Never	0	10:16	17:23	147	4,77	-1,77	0,19	0,00	4,60	-1,31	0,20	0,00

Table 1: Party rating threshold \geq 7; descriptive analysis of PR continuity depicted by group counts across parties, waves and years, showing: mean DV, diff.: subtracting the mean score in row wave - 1 from the mean score in row wave, standard error of Mean-DV, and p-value. 'Never' holds respondents for PR < threshold across the respective period (depending on a party's starting wave).

Trust in Democracy Across Party Rating and Waves

Boxplots with Jitter for Trust in Democracy

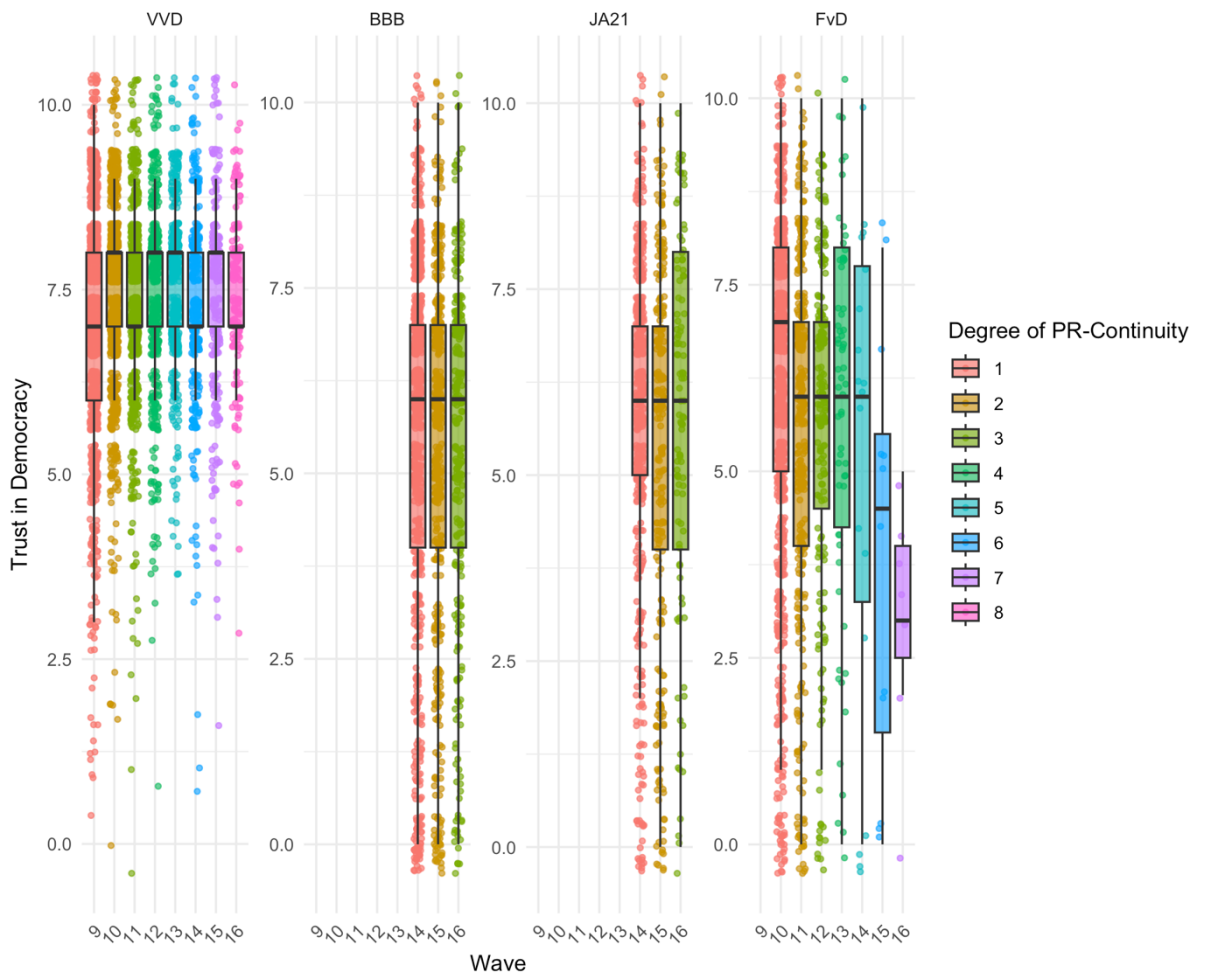


Figure 1: Boxplot with jitter for Trust in Democracy across waves, parties and party-rating-continuity (groups).

Satisfaction with Democracy Across Party Rating and Waves
 Boxplots with Jitter for Satisfaction with Democracy

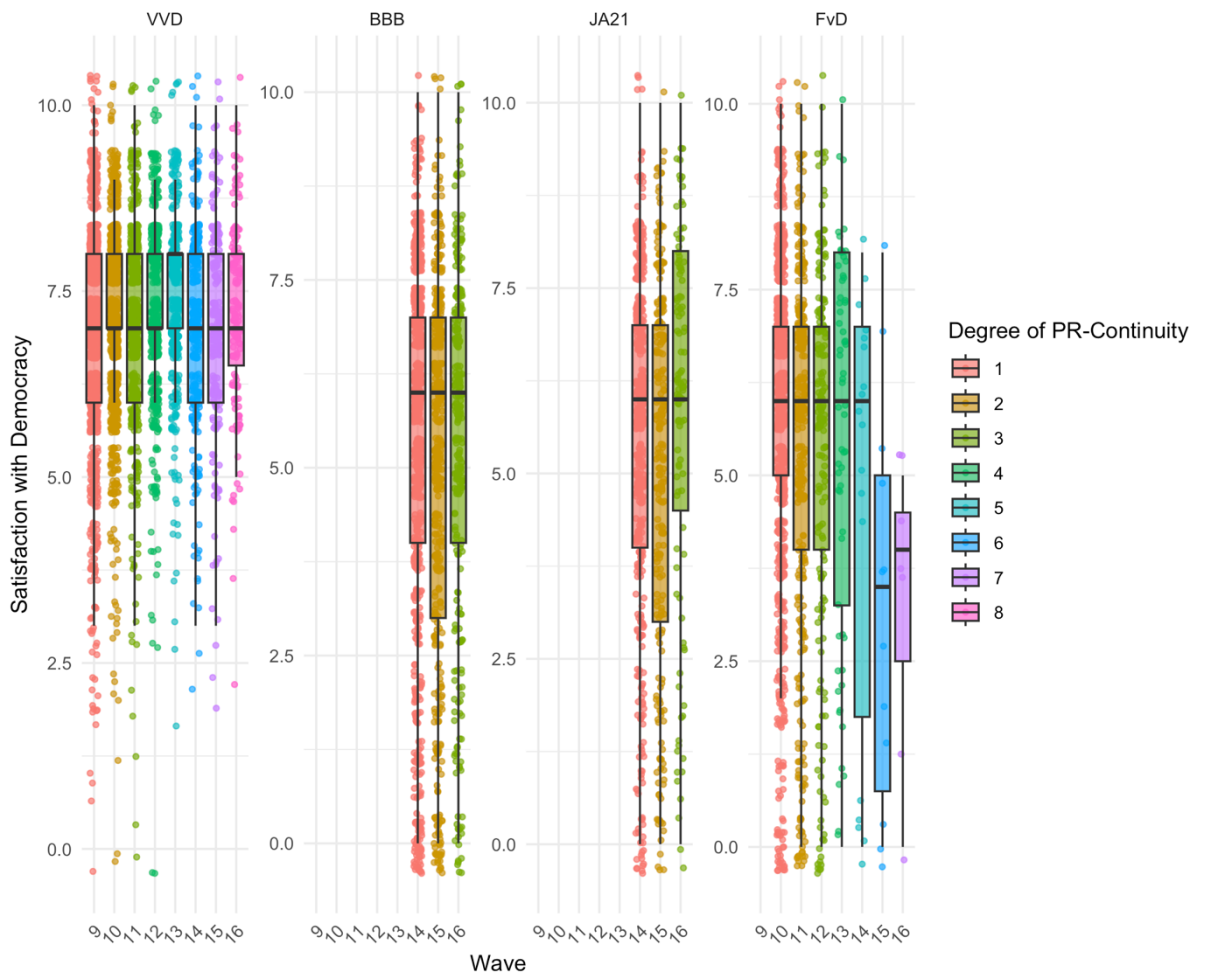


Figure 2: Boxplot with jitter for Satisfaction with Democracy across waves, parties and party-rating-continuity (groups).

BBB partisans exhibit lower levels of support for democracy across both DVs and groups compared to VVD partisans. Their average scores exceed the midpoint of the 11-point scale across waves (14 to 16)—averaging 5.40 for TiD and 5.21 for SwD. In comparison, the control group labelled “never” demonstrates marginally lower scores, with the BBB group 3 mean TiD being 0.05 points higher and mean SwD 0.09 points higher. This trend partially aligns with the expected negative relationship between PP partisanship and support for democracy, as BBB partisans initially express lower levels of support for democracy compared to VVD partisans but higher levels than respondents in group “never”.

A pattern of decreasing support for democracy emerges across PR-continuity groups. Differences across waves average approximately -0.13 for TiD and -0.05 for SwD, indicating a weak change in trust and satisfaction with democracy over time. Statistical significance remains consistent at $p < 0.1$.

JA21 partisans exhibit lower levels of support for democracy across both DVs and groups compared to VVD partisans. Their average scores exceed the midpoint of the 11-point scale across waves (14 to 16)—averaging 5.65 for TiD and 5.48 for SwD. In comparison, the control group labelled “never” demonstrates marginally lower scores, with the JA21 group 3 mean TiD being 0.49 points higher and mean SwD 0.57 points higher. This trend partially aligns with the expected negative relationship between PRR partisanship and support for democracy, as JA21 partisans initially express lower levels of support for democracy compared to VVD partisans but higher levels than respondents in group “never”.

Furthermore, no pattern of decreasing support for democracy emerges across PR-continuity groups. Differences across waves average approximately -0.01 for TiD and +0.08 for SwD, indicating an insubstantial change in trust and satisfaction with democracy over time. Statistical significance remains consistent at $p < 0.1$.

FvD partisans exhibit lower levels of support for democracy for both DVs and groups compared to VVD partisans. While their average scores exceed the midpoint of the 11-point scale between waves 10 and 14—averaging 5.61 for TiD and 5.35 for SwD—by wave 15, their scores significantly drop below the midpoint, averaging 3.42 and 3.27 for TiD and SwD, respectively. Across waves (10-16), FvD partisans report an average TiD score of 4.98 and an average SwD score of 4.75. In comparison, the control group labelled “never” demonstrates significantly higher scores, with the FvD group 7 mean TiD being 1.77 points lower and mean SwD 1.31 points lower.

A clear pattern of decreasing support for democracy emerges starting with wave 13 and persists across PR-continuity groups. Differences across waves average approximately -0.51 for TiD and -0.44 for SwD, indicating substantial declines in trust and satisfaction with democracy over time. This trend aligns with the expected negative relationship between PRR partisanship and support for democracy, both initially and over time. Statistical significance remains consistent at $p < 0.1$.

One notable observation for VVD and FvD is the spike in support for democracy measures in 2020, likely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, support was positively associated with fear of infection and approval of containment

policies (van der Meer, 2023). By 2021, this trend reversed, with significant drops in support for democracy measures for VVD, especially among FvD partisans.

In summary, partisanship appears to influence TiD and SwD, rejecting the null hypothesis. However, definitive conclusions cannot yet be drawn. The limitations of descriptive analysis stem from its inability to account for the temporal dynamics inherent in longitudinal data and to estimate treatment effects. Furthermore, data filtering—excluding non-participants and cases with missing values for both the independent and dependent variables—further narrows the scope of significance and generalisability.

5.2 Within-Between Regression Analysis

The constant represents the baseline mean scores of the DV, holding all other factors constant (*ceteris paribus*). Constants serve as a foundation for comparison.

Table 2: Regression Results for Within-Between Mixed Effects Model: VVD/BBB/JA21/FvD

	Trust in Democracy	Satisfaction with Democracy
Constant	5.954*** (0.426)	5.488*** (0.421)
BE: Mean Wave	0.012 (0.031)	0.026 (0.031)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 VVD	1.748*** (0.087)	1.789*** (0.086)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 BBB	-0.885*** (0.098)	-0.815*** (0.097)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 JA21	0.117 (0.135)	0.141 (0.133)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 FvD	-2.749*** (0.194)	-2.727*** (0.191)
WE: Wave	-0.062*** (0.016)	-0.036* (0.016)
WE: PR \geq 7 VVD	0.181*** (0.052)	0.161** (0.052)
WE: PR \geq 7 BBB	0.115* (0.047)	-0.005 (0.047)
WE: PR \geq 7 JA21	-0.170** (0.065)	-0.080 (0.065)
WE: PR \geq 7 FvD	-0.368** (0.113)	-0.195+ (0.112)
N	3774	3744
Pseudo-R ² (fixed effects)	0.149	0.153
Pseudo-R ² (total)	0.729	0.727

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; reference category for PR-variables: PR < 7; WE = within-entity effects; BE = between-entity effects.

The model estimates both between-entity and within-entity effects while accounting for time (Table 2). The results indicate significant differences in trust and satisfaction with democracy based on consistent partisanship. Individuals who consistently rate VVD highly exhibit substantially higher levels of TiD overall ($b = 1.748, p < 0.001$), while those consistently rating BBB highly, show notably lower trust ($b = -0.885, p < 0.001$). Similar patterns are observed for SwD, where VVD partisans report significantly higher satisfaction ($b = 1.789, p < 0.001$), and BBB partisans report lower satisfaction ($b = -0.815, p < 0.001$).

For individuals consistently rating FvD highly, the association is strongly negative for both trust ($b = -2.749, p < 0.001$) and satisfaction ($b = -2.727, p < 0.001$), indicating the most pronounced decline among partisans examined. Conversely, consistent ratings of JA21 do not show significant effects on either trust ($b = 0.117, p = 0.38$) or satisfaction ($b = 0.141, p = 0.29$), suggesting no robust between-person relationship between JA21 partisanship and attitudes towards democracy.

The mean wave at which individuals are observed does not yield any substantive effects on trust ($b = 0.012, p = 0.70$) or satisfaction ($b = 0.026, p = 0.39$), indicating stability of DVs over time at the between-person level.

Concerning panel-time effects, there is a slight but significant decline in TiD across waves and partisanships ($b = -0.062, p < 0.001$). Similarly, SwD decreases marginally ($b = -0.036, p = 0.02$), reflecting an overall downward trend of support for democracy within individuals across the regression sample.

The within-entity effects of PRs, depicted in Figure 3 and Figure 4, reveal how fluctuations in PRs over time are associated with changes in trust and satisfaction within individuals. Rating VVD or BBB highly in a particular wave corresponds to a significant increase in TiD for that wave ($b = 0.181, p < 0.001$; $b = 0.115, p = 0.01$). SwD also increases for VVD partisans ($b = 0.161, p < 0.001$) but remains stable for BBB partisans ($b = 0.005, p = 0.92$).

In contrast, switching to high ratings of JA21 or FvD in a given wave is associated with decreased TiD ($b = -0.17, p = 0.01$; $b = -0.368, p < 0.001$). For satisfaction, FvD partisanship shows a marginally negative association ($b = -0.195, p = 0.10$), while JA21 partisanship remains stable ($b = -0.080, p = 0.21$).

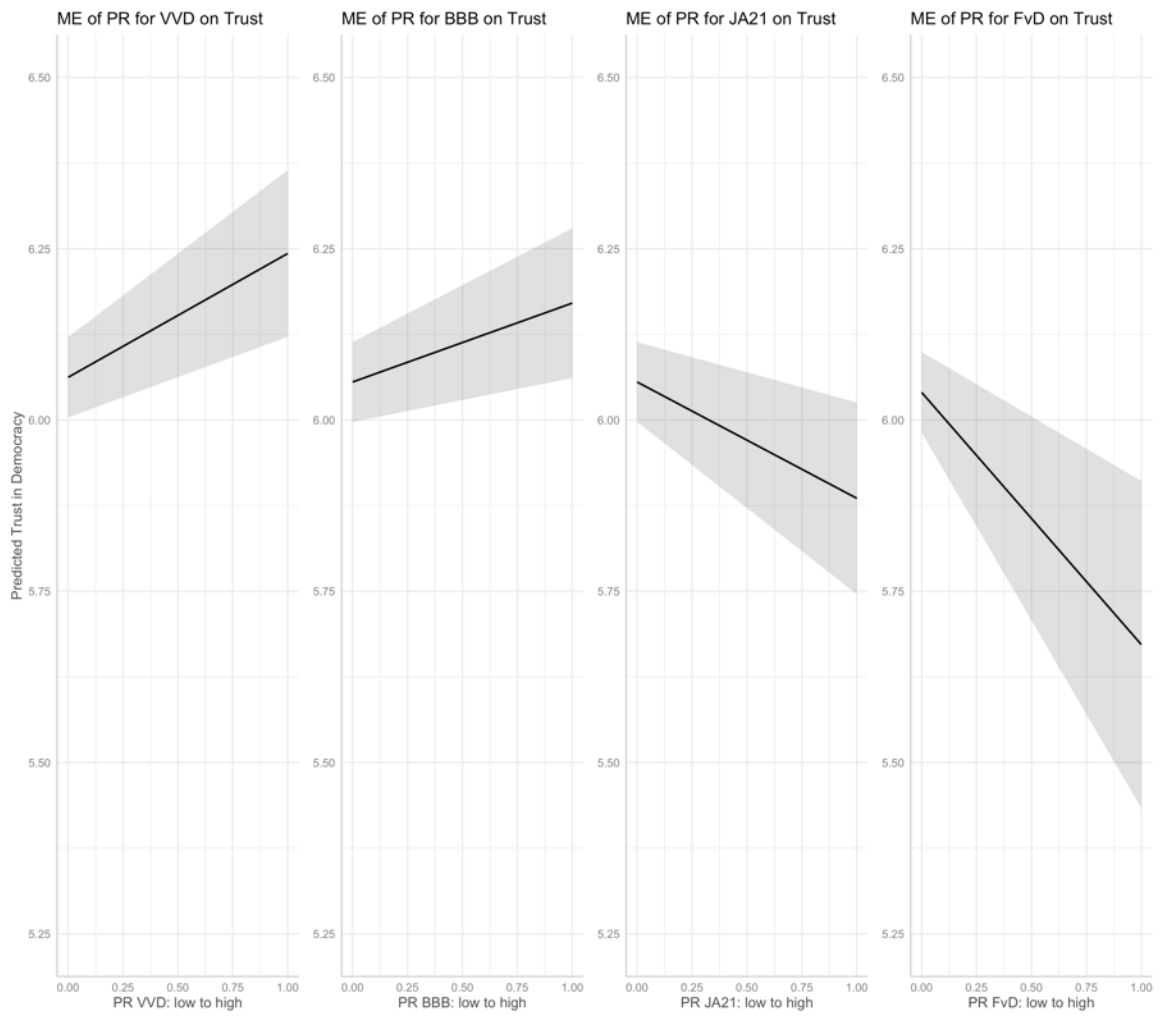


Figure 3: Marginal effects (ME) of PR (0 = PR < 7 to 1 = PR ≥ 7) on trust in democracy across parties, depicting WEs respectively.

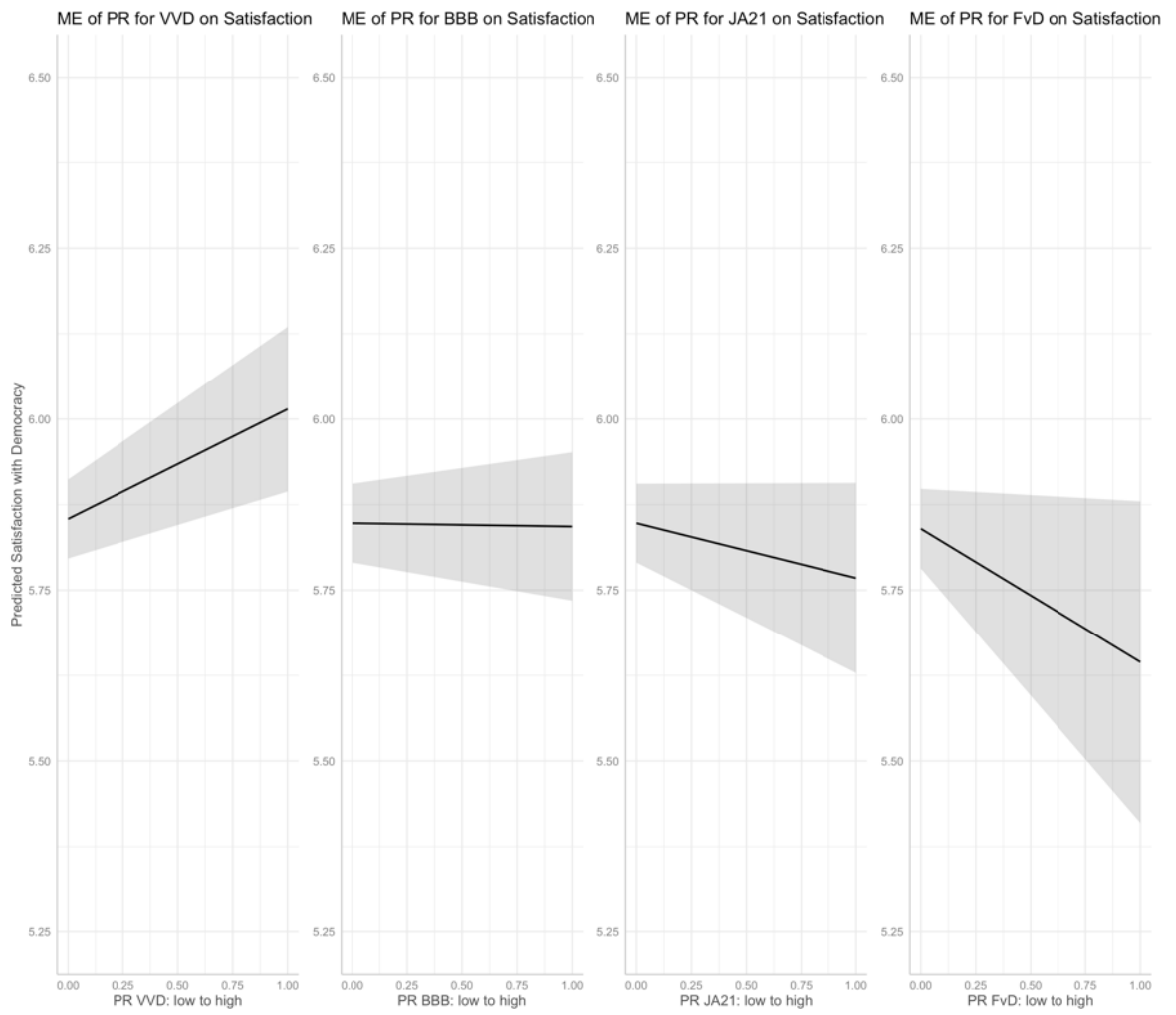


Figure 4: Marginal effects (ME) of PR (0 = PR < 7 to 1 = PR ≥ 7) on satisfaction with democracy across parties, depicting WEs respectively.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate the differing effects of partisanship on support for democracy over time, focusing on three Dutch populist parties categorised along a nativist-authoritarian dimension, ranging from “thin” populist to “thick” populist radical right parties (Mudde, 2007). It was hypothesised that support for democracy decreases along this dimension, with lower levels of support both initially and longitudinally as a party adopts more pronounced nativist-authoritarian traits.

In this framework, BBB is classified as a populist party, while JA21 and FvD are categorised as PRRPs. Among these, BBB represents the least nativist-authoritarian, JA21 occupies an intermediate position, and FvD is the most extreme. VVD, a mainstream party, serves as a baseline for comparison.

In summary, the analysis of between-entity effects supports the expected influence of partisanship, rejecting the null hypothesis. The findings reveal significant variations in initial trust in and satisfaction with democracy (between-entity effects) along the nativist-authoritarian trajectory. More nativist-authoritarian partisans score lower than moderate nativist-authoritarian partisans. The intercepts, ranked from highest to lowest, are VVD, BBB, and FvD. Between-entity effects for JA21 are statistically insignificant for both trust in and satisfaction with democracy, allowing H1: Initial Effect of Partisanship on Support for Democracy to be largely confirmed.

The longitudinal results indicate that within-entity effects of partisanship on support for democracy also vary over time and by nativist-authoritarian traits, albeit in ways that deviate from initial expectations. For BBB partisans, trust in democracy increases over time, attributable to their partisanship while their satisfaction with democracy remains stable. Similarly, VVD partisans show increasing scores in trust in and satisfaction with democracy, suggesting a positive trend of support for democracy among these partisan groups.

These findings are unexpected, given that populist party rhetoric typically frames society as divided into two antagonistic groups—“the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”—a narrative in tension with the representational principles of Dutch democracy (Mudde, 2013; Lijphart, 1999; Pitkin 1967). However, scholarly work suggests that the rise of populism in Europe, including the Netherlands, has in fact not led to an overarching decline in support for democracy across countries (Turner & D’Art, 2024). Instead, “thin” populism—distinct from radical right populism—can help disaffected citizens regain trust in democracy by addressing previously unrepresented preferences (Brause & Kinski, 2024), which often results in an initial loss of trust in representative democracy (Zaslove & Meijers, 2024). This thesis’s results suggest similar trends. Once populist partisanship is formed and persists, populist partisans’ support for democracy tends to increase, even counteracting the broader panel-time trend of declining support for democracy across time. Therefore, H2: Longitudinal Effect of Populist Partisanship on Support for Democracy is rejected.

Conversely, trust in democracy declines within PRR partisans (JA21 and FvD). FvD partisans exhibit stronger negative effects compared to JA21 partisans, while satisfaction with democracy decreases for FvD partisans but remains statistically insignificant for JA21 partisans. Therefore, H3: Longitudinal Effect of PRR Partisanship on Support for Democracy can largely be confirmed. These findings confirm the expectation that more pronounced nativist-authoritarian traits in parties correspond to progressively lower support for democracy over time among their partisans in contrast to the dynamics observed with “thin” populist partisans.

This thesis adds to Arzheimer’s (2024) analysis by demonstrating that the negative effects of partisanship on support for democracy over time are not limited to “anti-system” party supporters but extend to PRR partisans. This highlights the distinct and enduring negative impact of PRR partisanship on support for democracy, which does not hold for populist partisans.

6.2 Theoretical Implications and Societal Relevance

The findings of this thesis hold significant theoretical and societal relevance, particularly in light of the growing influence of populist and PRRPs in Europe. They highlight the need to distinguish between “thin” populism, which can positively re-engage disaffected citizens and restore trust in democracy, and PRRPs, whose pronounced nativist-authoritarian traits consistently undermine and erode support for democracy among their partisans.

As Claassen (2020) emphasises, citizen support for democracy is critical for its survival. However, this thesis shows that partisanship does not uniformly bolster support for democracy, as earlier studies suggested (Holmberg, 2003; McAllister, 2020). PRR partisans experience a continuous decline in support for democracy over time, shedding light on how PRR-led democratic erosion (Waldner & Lust, 2018) maintains electoral success through a subset of their constituency: their partisans. Although the precise dynamics between parties and partisans remain unclear (Arzheimer, 2024), evidence suggests a reciprocal radicalisation process (Harteveld et al., 2017) that progressively disfavours democracy as a regime type. As Albertazzi and Mueller (2016, p. 521) aptly state: “Populists both thrive on this [democratic] erosion and further contribute to it.” Addressing the roots of such dissatisfaction and understanding the interplay between party and partisan is crucial for developing targeted strategies to counteract the disfavours of democracy.

Finally, this thesis contributes to public discourse by challenging overly simplistic narratives about the uniform threat of populism to democracy. While PRRPs pose a clear risk, “thin” populist parties can, constructively engage alienated citizens. This nuanced perspective offers a more balanced understanding of the relationship between populism and democracy, fostering informed debate and evidence-based responses to democratic backsliding.

6.3 Limitations

This thesis acknowledges several limitations. While it identifies relationships between partisanship and support for democracy, it does not establish causality. Pre-existing unfavourable attitudes towards democracy may lead individuals to self-select into parties that align with their views, potentially inflating the estimated magnitude of partisanship's effects, particularly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could address this by incorporating lagged variables for support for democracy to disentangle confounding attitudes from the effects of partisanship.

The within-between models employed (Long, 2020) also have constraints, particularly in estimating between-entity effects. While within-entity variance provides robust estimates by treating individuals as their own counterfactual—effectively controlling for time-invariant characteristics—between-entity effects lack the same precision due to decomposition limitations.

Overall, the methodological limitations discussed are expected to influence the magnitude of the estimated effects rather than their direction (positive or negative), thereby minimising the risk of substantial changes to the overall conclusions.

Additionally, the categorisation of populist parties along the nativist-authoritarian dimension presents challenges (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021), particularly as the selected parties are relatively new and remain understudied. As more scholarly work emerges, these party classifications can be refined, further improving the validity of analyses.

6.4 Relevance of the Dutch Case

The selection of the Netherlands as the case study for this research has proven both relevant and methodologically robust. The Netherlands' liberal and consensus-oriented political system, provides a fertile ground for examining the interplay between partisanship with populist and PRRs and support for democracy. The country's highly diversified party system allows for meaningful analysis of partisan effects across a broad ideological spectrum.

The selected Dutch parties, BBB, JA21, and FvD exemplify the variation of populist appeals, ranging from moderate "thin" populism to more extreme nativist-authoritarian ideologies. The inclusion of VVD, a centre-right party, contextualises the degree of disaffection among populist partisans relative to mainstream partisans. These partisans effectively capture the nuanced dynamics of partisanship in shaping support for democracy. The use of longitudinal data from the LISS panel, combined with within-between models, enhances the scholarly contribution by presenting inter- and intra-individual changes over time, substantiating partisanship effects.

The findings extend beyond the Dutch context, as most Western European parliamentary democracies face similar challenges from parties adopting comparable populist and nativist-authoritarian narratives (Mudde, 2013; Albertazzi and Mueller, 2016).

6.5 Future Research

Future research should continue leveraging the LISS panel to track support for democracy among populist partisans, particularly as BBB participates in the newly formed Schoof cabinet under PVV's leadership. This provides an opportunity to extend research on incumbency effects into longitudinal frameworks, currently dominated by cross-sectional studies (Van Der Brug, 2021; Juen, 2024).

Such studies could also explore how governance responsibilities influence populist rhetoric and its subsequent effects on partisans' support for democracy over time, offering valuable insights into rhetorical shifts within the same party. Additionally, this would help clarify the reciprocal relationship between parties and partisans. Specifically, it remains an open question whether partisanship effects primarily stem from top-down party persuasion or from individuals self-selecting into parties that align with their pre-existing views, potentially reflecting peer-group-centred communication dynamics (Arzheimer, 2024).

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Appendix

Binomial Mixed-Effects Models (AIC)

Example model:

```
model_PR4_Vote <- wbm(voted_party ~ PR4_party, data = data, family = binomial)
```

Party	AIC for PR \geq 4	AIC for PR \geq 5	AIC for PR \geq 6	AIC for PR \geq 7	AIC for PR \geq 8	Lowest AIC
VVD	15983.74	15598.52	14982.16	14338.85	14448.96	7
BBB	1210.96	1211.69	1187.64	1177.29	1157.74	8
JA21	1236.91	1225.67	1198.89	1159.69	1174.14	7
FvD	4231.04	4199.74	4194.27	4190.26	4202.81	7

Table 3: Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) results through employing the above binomial mixed-effects model example respective to party and PR threshold (4 to 8).

PR ≥ 6					Trust in Democracy				Satisfaction with Democracy			
Party	Group	Wave	Year	N	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value
VVD	1	9	2016	2137	6,94		0,03	0,00	6,75		0,03	0,00
VVD	2	9:10	16:17	1390	7,26	0,32	0,04	0,00	7,03	0,28	0,04	0,00
VVD	3	9:11	16:18	994	7,23	-0,03	0,04	0,00	7,02	-0,01	0,04	0,00
VVD	4	9:12	16:19	807	7,35	0,12	0,05	0,00	7,12	0,10	0,05	0,00
VVD	5	9:13	16:20	724	7,44	0,09	0,05	0,00	7,27	0,16	0,05	0,00
VVD	6	9:14	16:21	587	7,18	-0,27	0,06	0,00	6,95	-0,32	0,05	0,00
VVD	7	9:15	16:22	480	7,06	-0,12	0,06	0,00	6,88	-0,07	0,06	0,00
VVD	8	9:16	16:23	347	7,15	0,09	0,07	0,00	6,97	0,09	0,07	0,00
Never	0	9:16	16:23	57	4,36	2,79	0,33	0,00	4,37	2,61	0,33	0,00
BBB	1	14	2021	1350	5,91		0,06	0,00	5,68		0,06	0,00
BBB	2	14:15	21:22	854	5,55	-0,36	0,08	0,00	5,41	-0,27	0,08	0,00
BBB	3	14:16	21:23	616	5,71	0,16	0,09	0,00	5,54	0,14	0,09	0,00
Never	0	14:16	21:23	246	4,83	0,88	0,15	0,00	4,77	0,77	0,15	0,00
JA21	1	14	2021	800	6,09		0,08	0,00	5,87		0,08	0,00
JA21	2	14:15	21:22	465	5,76	-0,33	0,11	0,00	5,59	-0,28	0,10	0,00
JA21	3	14:16	21:23	257	6,00	0,24	0,14	0,00	5,86	0,27	0,14	0,00
Never	0	14:16	21:23	246	4,83	1,17	0,15	0,00	4,77	1,09	0,15	0,00
FvD	1	10	2017	1300	6,16		0,06	0,00	6,02		0,06	0,00
FvD	2	10:11	17:18	545	5,83	-0,33	0,10	0,00	5,66	-0,36	0,10	0,00
FvD	3	10:12	17:19	336	5,83	0,00	0,12	0,00	5,54	-0,12	0,13	0,00
FvD	4	10:13	17:20	124	5,84	0,01	0,23	0,00	5,67	0,13	0,22	0,00
FvD	5	10:14	17:21	38	5,39	-0,44	0,46	0,00	5,24	-0,43	0,46	0,00
FvD	6	10:15	17:22	23	4,74	-0,66	0,64	0,00	4,26	-0,98	0,61	0,00
FvD	7	10:16	17:23	17	4,47	-0,27	0,59	0,00	4,53	0,27	0,56	0,00
Never	0	10:16	17:23	84	4,56	-0,09	0,26	0,00	4,43	0,10	0,27	0,00

Table 4: Party rating threshold ≥ 6 ; descriptive analysis of PR continuity depicted by group counts across parties, waves and years, showing: mean DV, diff.: subtracting the mean score in row wave - 1 from the mean score in row wave, standard error of Mean-DV, and p-value. 'Never' holds respondents for PR < threshold across the respective period (depending on a party's starting wave).

PR ≥ 8					Trust in Democracy				Satisfaction with Democracy			
Party	Group	Wave	Year	N	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value	Mean	Diff.	Mean-SE	P-Value
VVD	1	9	2016	502	7,22		0,07	0,00	7,09		0,06	0,00
VVD	2	9:10	16:17	278	7,63	0,41	0,08	0,00	7,42	0,32	0,08	0,00
VVD	3	9:11	16:18	171	7,51	-0,12	0,10	0,00	7,37	-0,04	0,10	0,00
VVD	4	9:12	16:19	123	7,69	0,18	0,13	0,00	7,42	0,05	0,13	0,00
VVD	5	9:13	16:20	107	8,02	0,33	0,10	0,00	7,79	0,36	0,11	0,00
VVD	6	9:14	16:21	86	7,72	-0,30	0,14	0,00	7,41	-0,38	0,14	0,00
VVD	7	9:15	16:22	64	7,69	-0,03	0,17	0,00	7,34	-0,06	0,15	0,00
VVD	8	9:16	16:23	44	7,77	0,09	0,18	0,00	7,64	0,29	0,20	0,00
Never	0	9:16	16:23	377	5,48	2,29	0,11	0,00	5,26	2,37	0,10	0,00
BBB	1	14	2021	289	4,92		0,16	0,00	4,64		0,16	0,00
BBB	2	14:15	21:22	159	4,60	-0,31	0,22	0,00	4,44	-0,20	0,22	0,00
BBB	3	14:16	21:23	85	4,60	0,00	0,28	0,00	4,54	0,10	0,29	0,00
Never		14:16	21:23	1255	5,92	-1,32	0,06		5,74	-1,20	0,55	
JA21	1	14	2021	190	5,43		0,19	0,00	5,12		0,18	0,00
JA21	2	14:15	21:22	93	4,99	-0,44	0,29	0,00	4,81	-0,31	0,28	0,00
JA21	3	14:16	21:23	31	5,35	0,37	0,57	0,00	4,77	-0,03	0,59	0,00
Never	0	14:16	21:23	1255	5,92	-0,57	0,06		5,74	-0,96	0,55	
FvD	1	10	2017	499	5,81		0,11	0,00	5,64		0,11	0,00
FvD	2	10:11	17:18	168	5,08	-0,73	0,20	0,00	5,01	-0,64	0,20	0,00
FvD	3	10:12	17:19	98	5,38	0,30	0,25	0,00	4,99	-0,02	0,28	0,00
FvD	4	10:13	17:20	26	5,54	0,16	0,48	0,00	5,50	0,51	0,50	0,00
FvD	5	10:14	17:21	3	6,67	1,13	1,33		6,67	1,17	0,88	
FvD	6	10:15	17:22	2	1,00	-5,67	1,00		1,00	-5,67	1,00	
FvD	7	10:16	17:23	1	3,00	2,00			5,00	4,00		
Never	0	10:16	17:23	497	5,60	-2,60	0,09		5,43	-0,43	0,09	

Table 5: Party rating threshold ≥ 8 ; descriptive analysis of PR continuity depicted by group counts across parties, waves and years, showing: mean DV, diff.: subtracting the mean score in row wave - 1 from the mean score in row wave, standard error of Mean-DV, and p-value. 'Never' holds respondents for PR < threshold across the respective period (depending on a party's starting wave).

Table 6: Model Build-Up (Trust in Democracy): VVD/BBB/JA21/FvD

	Model + Wave	+ VVD	+ BBB	+ JA21	+ FvD
Constant	6.417*** (0.176)	5.982*** (0.181)	5.433*** (0.389)	5.345*** (0.431)	5.954*** (0.426)
BE: Mean Wave	-0.015 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.014)	0.044 (0.028)	0.053+ (0.031)	0.012 (0.031)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 VVD		1.569*** (0.056)	1.773*** (0.081)	1.797*** (0.089)	1.748*** (0.087)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 BBB			-1.237*** (0.082)	-1.214*** (0.098)	-0.885*** (0.098)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 JA21				-0.345** (0.132)	0.117 (0.135)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 FvD					-2.749*** (0.194)
WE: Wave	-0.061*** (0.003)	-0.058*** (0.003)	-0.064*** (0.014)	-0.060*** (0.016)	-0.062*** (0.016)
WE: PR ≥ 7 VVD		0.349*** (0.023)	0.181*** (0.048)	0.175*** (0.053)	0.181*** (0.052)
WE: PR ≥ 7 BBB			0.081+ (0.043)	0.106* (0.047)	0.115* (0.047)
WE: PR ≥ 7 JA21				-0.168** (0.064)	-0.170** (0.065)
WE: PR ≥ 7 FvD					-0.368** (0.113)
N	8007	7247	4396	3786	3774
Pseudo-R ² (fixed effects)	0.003	0.077	0.11	0.113	0.149
Pseudo-R ² (total)	0.653	0.656	0.72	0.728	0.729

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; reference category for PR-variables: PR < 7; WE = within-entity effects; BE = between-entity effects.

Table 7: Model Build-Up (Satisfaction with Democracy): VVD/BBB/JA21/FvD

	Model + Wave	+ VVD	+ BBB	+ JA21	+ FvD
Constant	6.231*** (0.175)	5.720*** (0.179)	4.744*** (0.386)	4.860*** (0.426)	5.488*** (0.421)
BE: Mean Wave	-0.015 (0.014)	-0.004 (0.014)	0.075** (0.028)	0.068* (0.031)	0.026 (0.031)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 VVD		1.598*** (0.055)	1.780*** (0.080)	1.831*** (0.088)	1.789*** (0.086)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 BBB			-1.177*** (0.081)	-1.155*** (0.096)	-0.815*** (0.097)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 JA21				-0.362** (0.131)	0.141 (0.133)
BE: Mean PR ≥ 7 FvD					-2.727*** (0.191)
WE: Wave	-0.057*** (0.003)	-0.052*** (0.003)	-0.032* (0.014)	-0.035* (0.016)	-0.036* (0.016)
WE: PR ≥ 7 VVD		0.385*** (0.023)	0.169*** (0.047)	0.164** (0.052)	0.161** (0.052)
WE: PR ≥ 7 BBB			0.009 (0.043)	-0.007 (0.047)	-0.005 (0.047)
WE: PR ≥ 7 JA21				-0.081 (0.064)	-0.080 (0.065)
WE: PR ≥ 7 FvD					-0.195+ (0.112)
N	7897	7180	4350	3757	3744
Pseudo-R ² (fixed effects)	0.003	0.082	0.11	0.115	0.153
Pseudo-R ² (total)	0.646	0.649	0.72	0.727	0.727

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; reference category for PR-variables: PR < 7; WE = within-entity effects; BE = between-entity effects.

Table 8: Regression Results for Within-Between Mixed Effects Model with Interactions:
VVD/BBB/JA21/FvD

	Trust in Democracy	Satisfaction with Democracy
Constant	5.924*** (0.430)	5.489*** (0.425)
BE: Mean Wave	0.014 (0.031)	0.026 (0.031)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 VVD	1.747*** (0.087)	1.789*** (0.086)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 BBB	-0.885*** (0.098)	-0.815*** (0.097)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 JA21	0.113 (0.135)	0.139 (0.134)
BE: Mean PR \geq 7 FvD	-2.759*** (0.195)	-2.731*** (0.192)
WE: Wave	-0.060*** (0.016)	-0.037* (0.016)
WE: PR \geq 7 VVD	0.201* (0.101)	0.259** (0.100)
WE: PR \geq 7 BBB	0.183+ (0.103)	-0.072 (0.103)
WE: PR \geq 7 JA21	-0.218 (0.140)	-0.105 (0.139)
WE: PR \geq 7 FvD	-0.432* (0.169)	-0.231 (0.167)
WE: Wave \times PR \geq 7 VVD	-0.011 (0.043)	-0.049 (0.043)
WE: Wave \times PR \geq 7 BBB	-0.034 (0.046)	0.033 (0.046)
WE: Wave \times PR \geq 7 JA21	0.023 (0.062)	0.012 (0.062)

	Trust in Democracy	Satisfaction with Democracy
WE: Wave × PR ≥ 7 FvD	0.041 (0.077)	0.022 (0.077)
N	3774	3744
Pseudo-R ² (fixed effects)	0.15	0.153
Pseudo-R ² (total)	0.728	0.727

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; reference category for PR-variables: PR < 7; WE = within-entity effects; BE = between-entity effects.

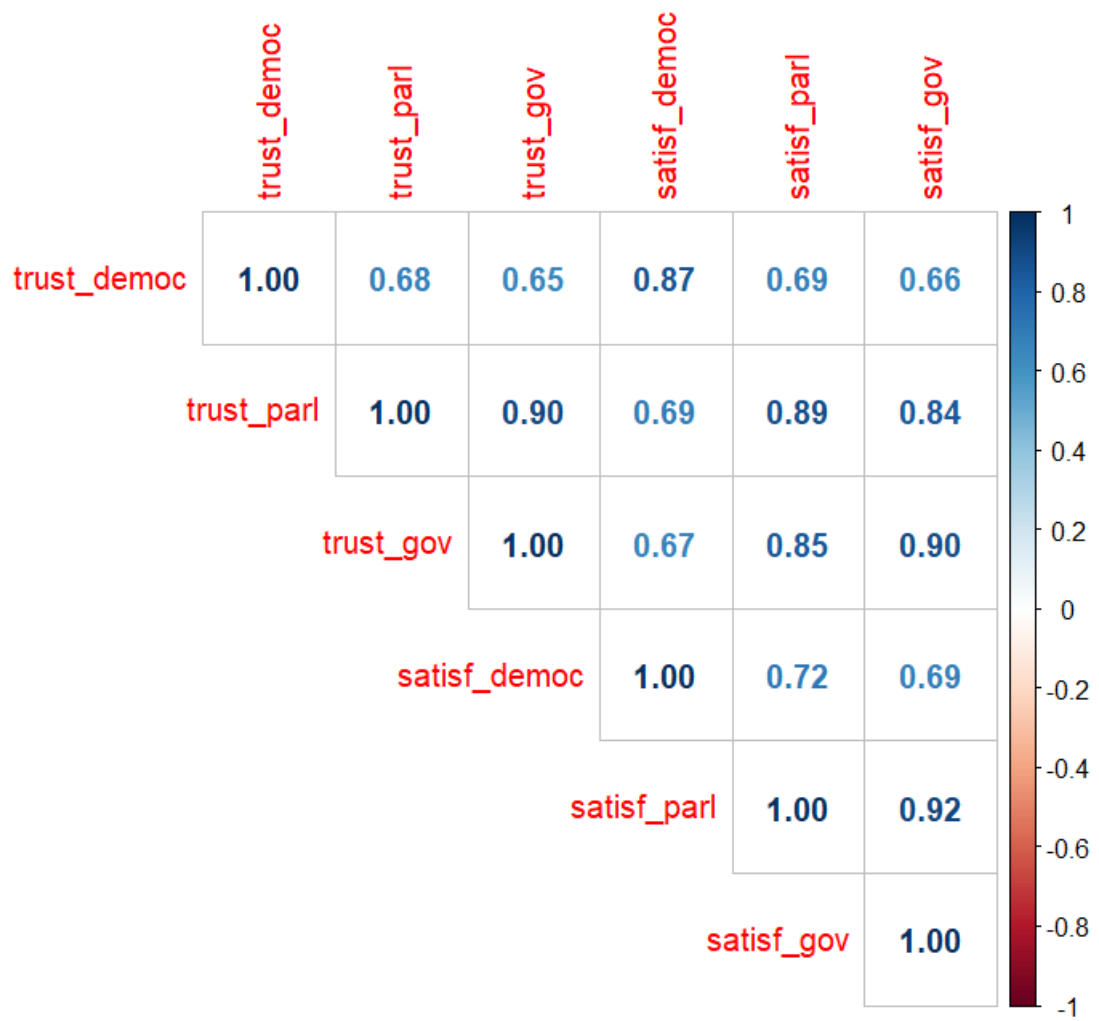


Figure 5: Correlation plot for support for democracy measures.

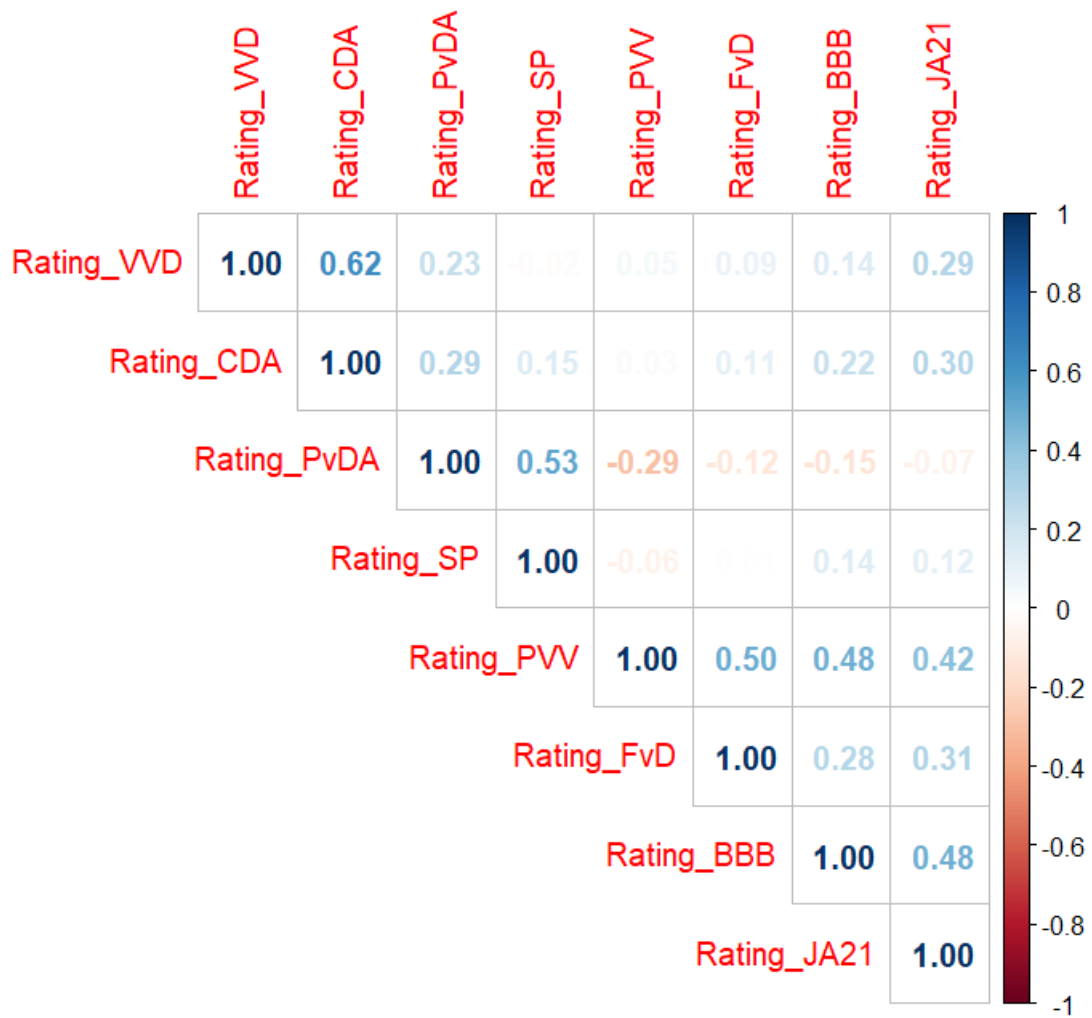


Figure 6: Correlation plot for rating variables.