"The rise of populism in Europe can be traced through online behaviour..."

THE NEW FACE OF DIGITAL POPULISM

Jamie Bartlett
Jonathan Birdwell
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DEMOS

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All errors and omissions remain our own.

Jamie Bartlett
Jonathan Birdwell
Mark Littler
November 2011

Disclaimer

It is important to set out a number of disclaimers at the outset of this paper. The research is based on an online survey of Facebook fans of populist parties across Europe. The results, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the views of the parties or groups mentioned in this paper. All references in this paper to 'supporters' of populist groups refer to our sample of social media supporters. How far our sample represents these parties' offline supporter base is something we discuss in detail.

This paper is an attempt to get a clearer understanding of the motivations, concerns and attitudes of online supporters of populist parties across Europe, and to understand the relationship between offline and online activism. Given the growing importance and significance of social media as a tool of organisation, recruitment and proselytising, we believe this sample alone is of unique value and significance.

Finally, it must be recognised that this paper is a preliminary investigation, and not a definitive work. It is based on an innovative method of data collection, which has both strengths and weaknesses. These are acknowledged, and are discussed at length, but should be borne in mind when interpreting any findings. Given the collapsing response rates of traditional survey mediums, and the inherent problems of representativeness in any social survey, the generation of new data sets through social media is likely to be an important area of methodological innovation in the years to come. We welcome the chance to contribute to the debate around this new method of inquiry, and embrace any comment, critique and debate capable of improving the methodology applied here.

Demos is an independent think-tank that is committed to undertaking innovative research in areas of public interest. We are non-party political. Our results are set out objectively

and accurately, without normative judgement, something that is often lacking when discussing this subject.

We would like to thank those who took the time to respond to our survey. We hope this work fairly and honestly reflects their views.

Executive summary

Over the last decade, populist parties have been growing in strength across Western Europe. These parties are defined by their opposition to immigration and concern for protecting national and European culture, sometimes using the language of human rights and freedom. On economic policy, they are often critical of globalisation and the effects of international capitalism on workers' rights. This is combined with 'anti-establishment' rhetoric and language. Often called 'populist extremist parties' or 'the new right', these parties do not fit easily into the traditional political divides.

Their growth over the past decade has been remarkable. Formerly on the political fringes, these parties now command significant political weight in the parliaments of Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden, Latvia and Slovakia, as well as the European Parliament. In some countries, they are the second or third largest party and are seen as necessary members of many conservative coalition governments.

The growth of these movements is mirrored online. Populist parties are adept at using social media to amplify their message, recruit and organise. Indeed, the online social media following on Facebook and elsewhere for many of these groups often dwarfs their formal membership, consisting of tens of thousands of sympathisers and supporters. This mélange of virtual and real-world political activity is the way millions of people—especially young people—relate to politics in the twenty-first century. This nascent, messy and more ephemeral form of politics is becoming the norm for a younger, digital generation.

Yet despite their growth and obvious importance no one has ever investigated these online supporters. This is the

first quantitative investigation into these digital populists, based on over 10,000 survey responses from 11 countries and includes data on who they are, what they think, and what motivates them to shift from virtual to real-world activism. It also provides new insight into how populism—and politics and political engagement more generally—is changing as a result of social media.

Methodology

The survey data presented in this report were collected by targeting the Facebook fans of each of the following groups: Bloc Identitaire ('Identity Block'; France), the British National Party (UK), CasaPound Italia (Italy), the Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party'; Denmark), the English Defence League (UK), the Front National ('National Front'; France), the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Party for Freedom'; the Netherlands), Die Freiheit ('Freedom'; Germany), Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO or 'Austrian Freedom Party'; Austria), the Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party'; Norway), Lega Nord ('Northern League'; Italy), Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns'; Finland), Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats'; Sweden) and Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest'; Belgium). A short description of each of these groups is provided in annex 2 at the back of this report.

The Jobbik movement in Hungary was also surveyed, but the results are not included in the current data set for reasons of comparability. A report on this data is forthcoming.

Facebook was selected because it is the most widespread and popular social media site in Western Europe; populist parties have a sizeable presence on this site; and it allows for precise and highly targeted advertising. For three months in the summer of 2011 we targeted adverts at individuals who were supporters of these groups on Facebook. On clicking the advert, individuals were redirected to a survey that they were invited to complete. The survey and adverts were presented in the appropriate language, and were then translated back into English for the purposes of this report.

In total, 12,320 people responded to our survey, ranging from 143 returns from the supporters of the Bloc Identitaire to 2,564 from supporters of the Austrian Freedom Party. Following the removal of data that were either corrupt, intentionally misleading, or incomplete, a final data set of 10,667 survey responses was produced.

The results were weighted against the groups' online demographics available through Facebook's advertising tool. This was done in order to improve the validity and accuracy of any inferences made in respect of the online population. Although online recruitment in social research is widespread, self-select recruitment via social network sites brings novel challenges. Because this is an innovative research method with both strengths and weaknesses, we have included an in-depth discussion of the methodology in annex 1.

In chapter 1, we present a brief background to the emergence of populist parties and movements (henceforth PPAMs) across Europe. While often described as 'far right', the ideology of many of these groups represents a mixture of leftwing and rightwing political and economic beliefs with populist rhetoric and policy.

In chapter 2, we outline the demographic makeup of the PPAMs under investigation. This includes members' gender, age, education level and employment status. We also explore the extent to which online supporters vote for these parties (where applicable), consider themselves formal members or attend demonstrations.

In chapter 3, we present supporters' reasons for joining a PPAM. This is based on over 5,000 open text responses from supporters explaining, in their own words, their reasons and motivations for membership. The results are discussed in the context of existing academic literature on the subject.

In chapters 4 and 5, we present the social and political views of online supporters, and their levels of trust in political and social institutions including the national government, the media and the EU. Comparisons are made against national averages using data available from other surveys.

Finally, in chapter 6 we present the results of our logistic regression models exploring the relationship between online support and offline activities. We examine the extent to which online supporters vote (where applicable) for these parties, are formal members, or participate in demonstrations and street marches. We also examine which background characteristics and attitudes are correlated with increased likelihood of offline engagement. Because of their size, the full regression outputs are not included in this paper but are available to download from the Demos website (www.demos.co.uk).

Results

The results reveal new insights into the social media world of these groups:

- *Online supporters are primarily young men: an average of 63 per cent are under 30, and 75 per cent are male.* In no country do females make up more than 36 per cent of online supporters. Even when compared against the national demographics of Facebook users in each country, supporters of PPAMs are younger, and more likely to be male.
- *Online supporters are slightly more likely to be unemployed*. On average, 14 per cent are unemployed, compared with an aggregate national average of around 7 per cent. However, given the young age demographic of our sample, this is probably not much higher than average. Nearly a third (30 per cent) of online supporters are students.
- *Online supporters are not just armchair activists: many are party members and voters and they are more likely to demonstrate than the national average.* For political parties, 67 per cent of online supporters voted for the party at the last general or national election, although only 32 per cent define themselves as formal members. Although only a minority report having been involved in protests or demonstrations (26 per cent), this is significantly higher than the EU average, which is under 10 per cent.
- *Supporters are motivated by positive identification with the party's values and the desire to protect national and cultural identity.* Many join or support PPAMs because they fear that immigration and multiculturalism are destroying national (and sometimes European) values and culture. There are high levels of disillusionment with mainstream politics, and greater trust in PPAM leaders who speak their mind. Our research finds little evidence of economics being a driving factor of support, contrary to previous research and common explanations in public discourse.
- *Younger supporters are more likely to cite immigration than older supporters as a reason for joining.* Twenty per cent of those aged 16-20 cite immigration as the reason they join or support populist groups, compared with 10 per cent of over 50s. This is contrary to the common perception that older people tend to be more opposed to immigration.
- *Supporters display low levels of trust in both national and European political institutions compared with national population averages.* While online supporters have only slightly lower levels of 'generalised trust' (trust in other people) than the national average, they are much more distrustful of national and European political institutions. Only 20 per cent online supporters trust the national government (compared with 43 per cent across Europe); and only 14 per cent trust the European Union (compared with 44 per cent overall).
- *Compared with national population averages, supporters of PPAMs have low levels of trust in the justice system, but average levels of trust in the police and army.* Online supporters display shockingly low levels of trust in their own country's judicial system. An average of only 30 per cent trust the justice system, compared with 60 per cent nationally. However, PPAM supporters are just as likely to express trust in the police and army as the rest of the country's population.
- *Online supporters are disgruntled democrats: they overwhelmingly believe that voting matters, and disavow violence, but do not believe that politics is an effective way to respond to their concerns.* On average, only 16 per cent of respondents agreed that 'it does not matter who you vote for'. While supporters of

street-based groups in the UK and Italy were more likely to express disillusionment in the act of voting, the pattern does not hold in France. However, only just over a third of online supporters felt that politics was an effective way to respond to their concerns. On average, 26 per cent of online supporters agreed that 'violence is acceptable if it leads to the right ends'. This does not, of course, necessarily mean that this quarter of supporters will undertake violence, and comparisons with the general population are not possible.

- *Online supporters display average levels of personal optimism, but very low levels of optimism about their country's future.* Considering their rhetoric and concerns over immigration, crime and the loss of culture, it is surprising that online populist supporters tend to be optimistic when it comes to their own personal lives: 27 per cent thought their lives would improve in the next 12 months compared with a European average of 26 per cent. However, only 10 per cent of online supporters thought that their country was 'on the right track', compared with an average of 28 per cent across EU countries.
- *Online populist supporters are highly critical of the European Union, with many blaming it for a loss of control over borders and the erosion of cultural identity.* Compared with European population averages, PPAM supporters are far more likely to associate the EU with 'not enough control over external borders' and 'loss of cultural identity'.
- *The shift from online activism to voting is motivated by concerns over immigration, and Islamic extremism.* Supporters who listed immigration as a top concern were 109 per cent more likely to vote for a populist party than those who did not list immigration, while those who listed Islamic extremism as a top concern were 85 per cent more likely to vote for a populist party than those who did not. Women supporters were 52 per cent more likely to vote for populist political parties, when other demographic and attitudinal characteristics were held constant.
- *The shift from online activism to becoming a party member is motivated by concerns over multiculturalism and the belief that politics is an effective way to respond to their concerns.* Supporters who listed multiculturalism as a top concern were 32 per cent more likely to 'formally' join a populist political party than those who did not list it. Supporters who thought that politics was an effective way to respond to their concerns were 42 per cent more likely to be 'formal' members. Men and women were equally likely to be a 'formal' member.
- *The shift from online activism to street protesting is motivated by concerns over corruption, and correlated with gender, as well as views on politics and violence.* Corruption appears to be more of a motivating factor than either immigration or Islamic extremism when it comes to online supporters taking to the streets in protest. Those who cited corruption as a top concern were 38 per cent more likely to demonstrate than those who did not. Men are 16 per cent more likely to participate in a street demonstration. Interestingly, those who think politics is an effective form of redress were 23 per cent more likely to demonstrate, while those who thought that violence was acceptable if it leads to the right outcome were 37 per cent more likely to demonstrate.

Implications

Given the pan-European nature of our results and the importance of the national and local context, specific recommendations are not possible. This is an interim paper, so we limit our implications section to a small number of general comments. Country-specific papers will be released in the coming weeks with greater detail and nuance.

It is clear that a significant number of Europeans are concerned about the erosion of their national culture in the face of immigration, the growth of Islam in Europe, and the blurring of national borders as a result of European integration and globalisation. These concerns are likely to remain, if not grow, in the coming years.

Similarly, the influence of social media will continue to change our understanding of social and political movements. In the past, attempts to understand emerging political movements were limited to the pronouncements of party leaders and formal party members. Little attention has been

paid to the role of online activists. This needs to change. Online supporters of populist movements represent a whole new generation of predominantly young activists, who far outnumber the formal members of these parties. And their involvement extends offline: they tend to vote for the parties they like, and are far more likely to get involved in political activism compared with the general public. Understanding who these people are, their background and activities, will be key to understanding new political movements, and whether they are likely to grow or fade.

This work was commissioned before the terrorist attacks in Norway in July 2011; and the majority of the research was undertaken before then. Norway was added to the sample following the attacks. Whether or not these terrible events will have a modifying effect on European populism is not clear. It is to be noted, however, that in many respects the responses from supporters of the Norwegian Progress Party were the most moderate of all groups surveyed.

This tragic event underscored the fact that a tiny number of people are prepared to pursue some of the arguments of populist groups to violent extremes. This does not mean that supporters of populist parties are inclined to violence: our research shows they are not. Nor is this a problem that is limited to populist or nationalist groups. However, the attacks highlight the potential for extreme rhetoric to lead some individuals to conclude that violence is the only answer. Certainly, some populist groups convey a sense that the existence of Europe itself is at stake (often citing demographics and high immigrant birth rates), and that mainstream society, politicians and the media are either ignorant to the threat or complicit. Mainstream politicians need to respond: addressing concerns over immigration and cultural identity, without succumbing to xenophobic solutions. Not shutting these parties or their supporters out as beyond the pale, but engaging and debating forcefully with them.

Finally, the research suggests that many supporters of populist parties have extremely low levels of trust and confidence in mainstream political institutions—for them politics is not currently seen as an effective way to respond to their needs. Populist supporters have lost faith in national governments, the European Union, and the justice system. In this, they shadow the general trend of falling confidence across the public as a whole in political institutions. Restoring confidence in civic institutions must be part of any response. Importantly, those online activists who are also involved in offline activism—voting, demonstrating, or being part of a political party—appear to be more democratic, have more faith in politics, and are more likely to disavow violence. This is powerful evidence that encouraging more people to become actively involved in political and civic life, whatever their political persuasion, is an important way forward.

1 Background: the new European populists

In June 2009, an unknown group calling itself the English Defence League (EDL) organised a protest march in the town of Luton, just outside London. The march was in response to the planned demonstration of a now-banned radical Muslim group—Al Muhajiroun—against the Afghan war and the British Armed Forces. The EDL members, many draped in the cross of St George, claimed to be defending England and English culture against 'Sharia law' and 'radical Muslims'. The following year, Geert Wilders of the Dutch Freedom party took 16 per cent of the vote in the Dutch national elections, and the Swedish Democrats entered Swedish parliament for the first time.

These seemingly unrelated events are emblematic of a seismic shift in European politics—the emergence of a growing cast of activists, street groups and political parties which are often grouped together under the label 'populist extremist parties',[1] 'far-right' parties[2] or the 'new right'. These groups now number at least several distinct parties and movements,[3] and while most are not formally aligned, there appears to be a growing trend towards informal alliances between them, including expressions of mutual support and the sharing of electoral tactics.

Despite being referred to as 'far-right', many of these groups are not easily placed according to traditional political categories, often combining elements of leftwing and rightwing philosophy, mixed with populist language and rhetoric.

What they share in common is a deep concern about maintaining national (and sometimes European) identity, which they see as under threat from high levels of immigration—especially from Muslim majority countries. They tend to agree that multiculturalism has been an

unmitigated failure and argue for restrictions on new immigrants, greater emphasis on integration and assimilation and, in some cases, repatriation of immigrants who 'refuse to integrate' or whose cultures are seen as in conflict with Western European values. Some have shifted from traditional far-right concerns about race to more nuanced positions relating to values and culture. Many find common cause in opposing a perceived Islamification of secular liberal and Christian societies. These groups lay claim to the mantle of the Enlightenment, espousing support for the fundamentally liberal values of free speech, democracy and equality, which they seek to defend from the threat of Islam.

On economic policy, however, the current economic climate has also heightened rhetoric beyond national cultural protection to include national economic interests, and workers' rights—typically the language of the left. These groups are increasingly critical of the European Union, international capitalism and globalisation.

They are also, indubitably, populists with a broad distrust of 'elites' and 'the establishment', which they believe have allowed immigration to flourish and national cultures to be threatened. Banker bailouts, as well as media and political scandals, have left many Europeans hostile to the status quo and desiring significant changes. They present themselves as the voice of 'the people' against 'the elites', as outsiders brave enough to say the uncomfortable, politically incorrect truth.

These groups defy simple categorisation. We refer to them throughout as populist parties and movements (PPAMs).

Populist political parties

Populist political parties are enjoying unprecedented electoral success and growing membership. In the last decade, many have moved from the fringes of society to become integral members of coalition governments and important political forces, capable of shifting mainstream political debate.

In France, Marine Le Pen is reforming the French Front National party, styling herself as a defender of the republic and

the welfare state and strenuously denying anti-Semitism.[4] She describes her position on immigration in France as 'nothing to do with racism, it's an economic problem'. She protests at the 'Islamification' of France and says that she wants to defend republican values, feminism and secularism from Muslim extremists. Opinion polls suggest that these messages are resonating. A March 2011 opinion poll put Marine Le Pen at 23 per cent, two points ahead of President Sarkozy, suggesting that she could win the first round of the 2012 presidential election.

There have also been significant gains for anti-immigrant parties in Italy, the Netherlands and Austria. Italy's leading anti-immigration party, Lega Nord ('the Northern League'), has seen its support more than double since 2005, polling at 12.7 per cent in 2010; it is now seen as a crucial member of Silvio Berlusconi's ruling coalition. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilder's 'Freedom Party', founded in 2004, now holds 24 out of 150 seats in the Dutch Parliament and received 16 per cent of the vote in 2010. Wilders has called for a ban on the Koran, describing it as the 'Islamic Mein Kampf'.[5] He styles his critique of Islam as a defence of human rights, questioning Islam's stance on women's and gay rights, and saying that he is only 'intolerant of the intolerant'.[6] Although it is not a formal member of the current coalition, the Dutch Government relies on the Freedom Party for support. In Austria, in early 2011 the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), led by Heinz Christian Strache, evidenced support through opinion polls of around 24–29 per cent, on a par with the two major mainstream parties.

Similarly, the rise of anti-immigrant, nationalist parties has been pronounced in Scandinavian countries, typically seen as bastions of leftwing and liberal social policy. Indeed, the terrorist attacks in Norway this summer have led to a good deal of introspection about the rise of 'far right' anti-immigrant groups, largely as Anders Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist, was a member of the Norwegian Progress Party before becoming disillusioned with their moderate approach.

In Denmark, the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) claims to defend the independence of Denmark, both

from the threats of foreign cultures and what it takes to be the sovereignty-eroding aspirations of the European Union. It explicitly renounces the idea of Denmark as a multiethnic society: 'Denmark is not an immigrant country and never has been.'[7] While support for immigration is higher in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats in 2010 achieved enough votes—5.7 per cent—to gain representation in the Swedish parliament for the first time. The Sweden Democrats advocate heavy restrictions on immigration and incentives for current immigrants to return to their home countries. They claim that their slogan—'Keep Sweden Swedish' –is not about racism but the rejection of multiculturalism. The 'True Finns', who recently renamed themselves 'The Finns', are less outspoken on issues of immigration and Islam, but nonetheless are proudly nationalistic, tough on immigration and highly sceptical of the European Union. The Eurozone crisis has buoyed their electoral support, with a recent Taloustutkimus opinion poll (conducted in April 2011) giving them 15.4 per cent of the vote compared with 6.8 per cent support in March 2010.

Moreover, national opinion polls obscure the fact that these groups and political parties are cultivating pockets of even higher levels of support in certain parts of their respective countries. For example, until last year, the British National Party was the official opposition in the council in the outer London borough of Barking and Dagenham. Other research suggests that support for European populist parties and groups is higher in areas that are adjacent to large Muslim communities.[8] As a result, the tactics of many of these groups is to focus on achieving success in local and regional elections, and then seeking to build a stronger national profile from the ground up—as is the case with the National Democratic Party (NPD) party in Germany, the Sweden Democrats, and a new Danish party called the Danskerne's Parti.[9]

Populist street movements

In addition to the rise of populist political parties, street protest movements have also appeared and are growing, advocating similar policies. The most notable and active of these groups in Western Europe include the English Defence League in the UK, Bloc Identitaire in France, and CasaPound Italia in Italy. These groups prefer organising protests, street marches and other modes of direct activism over formal political engagement. They rely heavily on the internet and social media to convey their message, build their following and organise events. Many of their demonstrations are marked by violence, often provoked by counterdemonstrations of anti-fascist groups.

The English Defence League (EDL) is the largest and most well-known populist street-based group, but it is relatively new, having been founded only in 2009. The EDL's mission statement specifies the group's fundamental aim is to uphold a commitment to human rights, support for democracy, opposition to Sharia law, the creation of an 'open and honest' discussion about the threats posed by Islamism, maintenance of traditional English culture, and solidarity with similarly minded governments of foreign countries which are united against the 'global Jihad'. While the organisation increasingly casts its objectives in the language of human rights, its critics have consistently asserted that the group is racist and Islamophobic.

France's Bloc Identitaire and Italy's CasaPound Italia both emerged much earlier than the EDL, in 2003. Founded by Fabrice Roberts, a former member of the dissolved Unité Radicale party, Bloc Identitaire campaigns against the Islamisation of Europe, illegal immigration and 'anti-white' racism.[10] One of their major initiatives was the launch of a brand of soupe au cochon (pork soup) at a Parisian soup kitchen, aimed at excluding Muslims.[11] The group calls itself 'identitarian', not nationalist, as it defends regional and European identity as well as national identity, and distinguishes itself from other PPAMs through its pro-Europe stance and its focus on non-electoral political campaigning.

CasaPound Italia is a prominent far-right youth street organisation in Italy that takes its name from the American expatriate and prolific author Ezra Pound, a defender of fascism and supporter of his resident Italy during the Second World War. It began in 2003 with the occupation of a state-owned building in Rome by student right-wingers. CasaPound Italia's occupied spaces have been, and continue to be, sites of communal engagement—for political discussion, sports and musical performance, prominently centred around the band ZetaZeroAlfa, which features CasaPound Italia's leader, Gianluca Iannone. Their policy positions and rhetoric are grounded in economic populism—being sceptical of the free market when it does not work in the best interest of Italian workers. This is infused with rebellious anti-statist contrarianism, all alongside traditional family values. CasaPound Italia has been extremely successful at mobilising poor, angry, white Italians. Casting themselves as 'Third Millenium Fascists', members emphasise their ties to Mussolini's ideology while simultaneously presenting themselves as serious contributors to contemporary political discourse and policy reform.

Populism in a digital age

Our research presented in this report adds to the emerging picture of European populist supporters, with a particular focus on the type of person who expresses their support for these groups through social media sites. The internet is deeply ingrained in the strategy and identity of these new PPAMs. They use it to promote and disseminate their ideology, recruit new members, organise events and present 'facts' about immigration and Islam, among other topics. Until now, social science research has ignored the distinct category of online supporters of groups such as these when trying to understand new political movements. This is the new face of politics and political expression, and will increasingly become an object of interest and research to social scientists.

2 Who are the online populists?

Support for populist parties and movements (PPAMs) has been growing online as well as offline.

In many cases, the Facebook membership of these organisations is larger than the formal membership. For example, the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), or Austrian Freedom Party, claims approximately 40,000 formal members — but has twice as many Facebook fans. Similarly, the British National Party (BNP) has just under 15,000 formal members and over 80,000 Facebook fans. Yet to date, no systematic study has been undertaken to investigate who these online populists are.

The rise of social media has created a novel way of expressing allegiance to a person, organisation or idea. Individuals can show support or become a 'member' of any one of thousands of groups with just the click of a mouse. This raises a host of questions about the strength of affinity to online groups, and the relationship between online and offline involvement.

Offline, previous research has shown that arguments by PPAMs are resonating with men — both very young and very old — those with few educational qualifications, and the lower middle and working classes.[12] According to Mathew Goodwin, it was the mix of appealing to both the lower middle classes, as well as skilled and unskilled workers that has resulted in the growth and electoral success of these movements across Europe. These are the segments of society that are most likely to feel economically insecure in the current climate and threatened by the perceived economic and cultural impact of immigration. Yet, there has been very little research if any that analyses the distinct category of online supporters of these groups.

In this chapter, we set out some of the background demographic data on who online PPAM supporters are and the extent of their offline activity.

Demographics

It is possible to identify the makeup of a group's Facebook membership by total size, age and gender by using Facebook's own (publicly available) advertising tool (see methodology in annex 1 for details). By way of comparison, in table 1 we show the gender and age breakdown of the total population of Facebook users for the countries containing the groups targeted, which are presented in brackets.

Table 1 **Size, age and gender of members of PPAMs who use Facebook in countries investigated**

	Size of group	Males (country total) (%)	Females (country total) (%)	Ages 16–20 (country total) (%)	Ages 21–25 (country total) (%)
Bloc Identitaire	2,340	78 (49)	22 (51)	33 (21)	18 (19)
British National Party	82,700	79 (49)	21 (51)	39 (19)	23 (18)
CasaPound Italia	16,200	87 (54)	13 (46)	25 (18)	22 (17)
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	15,640	64 (49)	36 (51)	24 (18)	17 (14)
Die Freiheit	4,280	79 (52)	21 (48)	13 (22)	13 (21)
English Defence League	38,200	81 (49)	19 (51)	36 (19)	24 (18)
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	84,700	69 (52)	31 (48)	37 (23)	25 (20)
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	64,860	64 (50)	36 (50)	13 (17)	13 (15)
Front National	34,960	79 (49)	21 (51)	47 (21)	21 (19)
Lega Nord	45,740	78 (54)	22 (46)	45 (18)	24 (17)
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	7,140	77 (49)	23 (51)	19 (18)	18 (17)
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	15,640	74 (47)	26 (53)	21 (19)	16 (17)
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	16,660	74 (49)	26 (51)	63 (18)	14 (16)
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	6,970	75 (51)	25 (49)	29 (19)	20 (17)
Total group numbers	436,030				
Total averages		**75 (50)**	**25 (50)**	**32 (19)**	**19 (17)**

	Ages 26–30 (country total) (%)	Ages 31–40 (country total) (%)	Ages 41–50 (country total) (%)	Ages 51+ (country total) (%)
Bloc Identitaire	15 (15)	15 (21)	9 (12)	9 (12)
British National Party	11 (14)	13 (21)	10 (15)	4 (13)
CasaPound Italia	15 (14)	20 (25)	11 (16)	6 (10)
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	10 (11)	19 (21)	17 (17)	13 (17)
Die Freiheit	14 (16)	24 (20)	21 (14)	15 (8)
English Defence League	12 (14)	14 (21)	10 (15)	4 (13)
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	15 (16)	14 (20)	6 (13)	3 (8)
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	10 (13)	21 (22)	23 (17)	20 (16)
Front National	9 (15)	10 (21)	6 (12)	7 (12)
Lega Nord	10 (14)	12 (25)	5 (16)	3 (10)
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	13 (14)	22 (21)	18 (16)	10 (15)
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	17 (15)	23 (22)	13 (14)	10 (13)
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	6 (12)	9 (21)	4 (16)	5 (17)
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	14 (14)	15 (22)	12 (15)	11 (13)
Total averages	**12 (14)**	**17 (21)**	**12 (15)**	**8 (13)**

There are a number of factors that lead to variation in the size of the online presence of these groups, which do not necessarily reflect their size in the real world. For example, overall internet and social media use varies from country to country, as does the uptake of Facebook usage by age. There are also issues inherent in our method and approach that could lead to variation, which are covered in full in the methodology section to this report.

Nevertheless, some interesting trends emerge. While across Facebook there is an even gender split, supporters of PPAMs are overwhelmingly male (75 per cent compared with 25 per cent). Given the even national split on Facebook, the disproportionate number of men cannot be claimed to be a result of men being more active online in general.

CasaPound Italia experiences the lowest proportion of female support — only 13 per cent of online supporters were women (n=16,200). At the opposite end of the scale, both the Norwegian Progress Party (n=64,860) and the Danish People's Party (n=15,640) registered 36 per cent female support.

Interestingly, gender imbalances appear to be more pronounced among online supporters when compared with other data on support for populist parties. According to the European Social Survey, females account for 36 per cent of Vlaams Belang voters (compared with 25 per cent in our sample); 37 per cent of True Finns voters (compared with 26 per cent of our sample); and 43 per cent of Danish People's Party voters (compared with 36 per cent of our sample).[13]

In respect of age, PPAM supporters are also younger: overall 63 per cent are under 30, compared with 51 per cent of Facebook users overall. The Sweden Democrats have the youngest online supporters: 63 per cent are below 21, which is particularly noteworthy given that Swedish Facebook users in general tend to be older than in the other countries surveyed — 54 per cent are over 30 (n= 4,032,420). In contrast, 64 per cent of Norwegian Progress Party supporters are over 30 (n=64,860), compared with a national figure of 55 per cent (n= 2,250,240).

The older online support-base of the Norwegian Progress Party is perhaps unsurprising given that the party was founded in 1973 and holds an established position within mainstream Norwegian politics. However, Die Freiheit, which was established barely a year ago, also appears to attract older online supporters — 60 per cent are over 30 (n=4,280), compared with a national figure of 42 per cent (n=19,491,360). This indicates that the factors driving variations in the average age of online supporters go beyond the longevity and relative establishment of a given organisation.

Education and employment

Education-related data cannot be accessed using Facebook's open access advertising tool. We therefore asked respondents to specify their highest level of educational achievement. While the results are complicated by the varying education systems across the countries surveyed, they do provide some insight into the educational achievement of PPAM supporters.

Across our research sample, an average of 45 per cent of supporters cited a school qualification (eg GCSE or A-level) as their highest level of education (sd=18). Meanwhile, 53 per cent indicated that they were educated to college or university level or had attained a vocational qualification (sd=19).

The Sweden Democrats had the highest proportion of supporters with only a school qualification (82 per cent; n=567). This is likely to be at least partially explained by the relative youth of Sweden Democrats supporters (63 per cent were below 21; n=567). By way of comparison, Norwegian Progress Party supporters, on average the oldest group surveyed, were far less likely to specify a school qualification as their highest educational achievement (21 per cent; n=909). Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) online supporters had the lowest propensity to have achieved only a school qualification — only 19 per cent had done so — while 80 per cent had been either educated to university or college level, or had attained a vocational qualification (n=335). This was the case despite the fact that online PVV supporters did not tend to be particularly young — 50 per cent were over 30 (n=7,140).

We also asked respondents whether they were employed, unemployed or a student (table 2). On average, 54 per cent of supporters classified themselves as employed (sd=12) while 14 per cent described themselves as unemployed (sd=5) and 30 per cent described themselves as students (sd=11). BNP online supporters reported the highest level of unemployment — 22 per cent (n=283). At the other end of the scale, FPÖ supporters were the most likely to be in work — 70 per cent (n=2,333) described themselves as employed.

Table 2 **Employment figures for members of PPAMs in countries investigated**

	National unemployment rate (%)	Unemployed (%)	Employed (%)	Student (%)
Bloc Identitaire	9.9	13	60	28
British National Party	8.1	22	32	46
CasaPound Italia	7.9	11	58	29
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	7.1	17	48	33
Die Freiheit	6.0	5	69	22
English Defence League	8.1	22	57	20
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	3.7	9	70	20
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	3.2	16	62	16
Front National	9.9	15	38	45
Lega Nord	7.9	14	38	46
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	4.5	11	66	22
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	7.8	19	54	24
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	7.2	11	42	45
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	6.8	11	61	26
Average	**7**	**14**	**54**	**30**
Standard deviation		*5*	*12*	*11*

Membership and involvement

The relationship between what people do online and their activity offline is one of the key questions of our research. We asked whether the respondents considered themselves 'formal members' of the group in question; whether they voted for them at the last election (if the group in question was a political party); and whether they were involved in a political demonstration or march in the last six months (table 3).

Table 3 **Extent of offline involvement of members of PPAMs in countries investigated**

	Members of the party or group (%)	Voted for the party last election (%)	Had taken part in a march or demo protest last 6 months (%)	National average taken part in public demo last 12 months[15]
Bloc Identitaire	32		47	18
British National Party	18	44	15	2
CasaPound Italia	20		43	
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	24	48	19	8
Die Freiheit	29		20	8
English Defence League	76		55	2
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	39	83	15	
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	38	80	14	10
Front National	19	65	25	18
Lega Nord	30	43	43	
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	13	84	11	3
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	28	81	9	1
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	46	62	20	5
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	42	83	31	6
Average	**32**	**67**	**26**	**6**
Standard deviation	*16*	*17*	*15*	

Across all groups only a minority of Facebook fans considered themselves to be 'formal' members. While this varied from country to country, only among EDL supporters did expressions of 'formal' membership exceed 50 per cent. Particularly low levels of 'formal' membership were evident for PVV supporters (13 per cent), but this is likely to be because the PVV has no official party structure or norms of membership.[16]

As one might expect, a far higher proportion of online supporters actually voted for the party they supported

on Facebook. Five of the parties surveyed scored over 80 per cent on this measure, while three scored under 50 per cent. One possible explanation for this is that support for some of these groups has increased since the last election. However, it could also be that this variation suggests that some populist parties are more successful than others in converting their online support into votes.

It could be that supporters of particular parties are more reluctant to take the 'extra step' between articulating virtual support and taking an action that could have a real-world consequence. It also suggests that parties such as the BNP (where only 44 per cent of supporters translated that support into votes) are presenting ideas that resonate with a wider group than their current electoral results would suggest. In other words, the parties with low scores on this measure have a significant pool of supporters who do not at present vote for the party, but who may do so in the future.

The final measure of offline activism considered was whether or not the respondent had taken part in a protest, march or demonstration in the past six months. Table 3 includes results from the European Social Survey, in which respondents were asked a similar question, and provides some baseline of comparison.

Although there is considerable transnational variation, online members of PPAMs are shown to be more likely to demonstrate than the general public in all countries for which data is available—this suggests that Facebook membership acts as a bridge to offline activism, rather than a replacement for it. True Finn supporters are the least likely to take part in demonstrations, possibly reflecting the general reluctance of the Finnish public to take to the streets. At the opposite end of the scale, CasaPound Italia, Bloc Identitaire and the EDL scored highest on this measure. This is unsurprising given the street-based nature of these groups.

The results suggest that the relationship between social media membership and 'real world' support is varied. Overall, significant numbers of online supporters are also active offline: many are party members and voters and a significant proportion takes to the streets. The figures also suggest that many supporters do not reject the political system entirely. They take politics seriously enough to vote, join political groups and attend demonstrations.

3 Why do people join?

By Jack Benfield, Jeff Howard and Marley Morris

Our study examined what motivated people to support a populist political party and movement (PPAM). Respondents were asked in an open-response question why they supported the group. In total, 5,125 PPAM supporters responded to the question. We had all the responses translated into English, and devised nine broad categories into which the majority of responses could be placed. We have included some of the quotes from respondents below, with the original language quotation provided in the endnotes. The responses were weighted, and European averages produced based on a multi-data set average (see methodology in annex 1 for a full explanation).

Existing literature

Although there have been no previous studies aimed at understanding why people join PPAM social media groups, there is an expansive body of research examining why people in general vote for populist parties in Western Europe.

Most explanations emphasise one of three different sets of grievances that motivate citizens: economic grievances, disillusionment grievances and immigration grievances.[17]

The economic explanation of populism contends that economic frustration is the prime motivator of populists. This view has two components: first, that most supporters of PPAMs are blue-collar workers ('victims' of globalisation and outsourcing); and second, that these workers are motivated to join by financial concerns. Both views are disputed, however. Evidence of high numbers of middle-class supporters for certain PPAMs has raised doubts about the socioeconomic homogeneity of populist supporters.[18] Meanwhile, a study

by Elisabeth Ivarsflaten found that populist parties have failed to mobilise those voters who are unhappy with their nation's economy any better than the mainstream parties.[19] Another study has shown that cultural determinants are far more influential than economic determinants in establishing working class support for populist parties.[20]

The second set of grievances concerns voters' disillusionment with prevailing political parties and institutions. One argument advanced by scholars is that this disenchantment has led citizens to vote for populist political parties or join street groups out of protest. According to this 'protest vote' model, supporters of populist parties are not necessarily ideologically committed to the principles and policies of PPAMs, but support them to vent frustration.

The literature is conflicted on the importance of protest sentiment. While many studies report disillusionment among PPAM supporters,[21] there is considerable national variation in the importance of such sentiment as a mobilising factor.[22] Moreover, scholars have questioned the accuracy of characterising votes for populist parties as protest votes. Ideological and policy commitment have, for example, been shown to be crucial motivators for such groups as Vlaams Blok and the FPÖ.[23]

The final category of grievances concerns immigration.[24] Some studies have demonstrated that concern, worry or antipathy toward immigrants is the feature that unifies populist groups.[25] For example, one detailed study demonstrated that immigration scepticism, rather than racism, is the galvanising force behind the BNP.[26] Until recently, much of the academic literature on this point suggested that a large degree of concern relating to immigration was economic in nature—people were fearful about jobs or housing. However, more recent research suggests that immigration is seen as a threat to cultural identity. As highlighted by Matthew Goodwin's recent report, *Right Response*, this is an increasingly favoured view.[27]

Our data set provides a unique opportunity to test how far the results from our online sample match the findings of

studies concerning offline supporters. Below, we present the most common results according to category type, including a small number of illustrative responses. At the end of the chapter, we discuss how our findings relate to the existing literature.

Reasons for joining a PPAM

Group values

While it is not discussed specifically in the literature, one typical explanation for a person joining an organisation is because they have a broad identification with its values. Respondents classified in this category were those who cited, in general terms, the values, principles, norms, beliefs, aspirations or ideas of a PPAM as reasons for joining it.

On average 38 per cent (sd=18) of respondents provided reasons that fell within this category. There was, however, very high variation across countries. The proportion of respondents citing such reasons ranged from 81 per cent of Norwegian Progress Party respondents (n=909) to 15 per cent of both English Defence League (EDL) (n=804) and British National Party (BNP) respondents (n=283). Females were more likely than males to refer to group values within their answers—an average of 46 per cent (sd=23) of women did so, compared with an average of 34 per cent (sd=17) of men. There was no clear correlation between the tendency to refer to group values and age.

Identity

As noted above, recent studies have favoured identity-based theories in explaining support for PPAMs. Respondents were classified in the identity category when they referred to a love of their country, commitment to preservation of traditional national and cultural values, or representation of the interests of 'real' countrymen as reasons for supporting or joining the organisation.

An average of 17 per cent (sd=9) of respondents gave reasons that fell within the identity category. The proportion

of those providing such reasons ranged from 31 per cent of EDL respondents (n=804) to 3 per cent of Norwegian Progress Party respondents (n=909). There was little variation between the propensity of men and women to cite identity reasons — a pan-European average of 18 per cent (sd=9) of men did so, compared with 15 per cent (sd=13) of women. There was no correlation between a respondent's age and their likelihood of referring to identity.

Although it is often believed that members of PPAMs join because they dislike non-members of their ethnic group, the reality appears more nuanced, with many citing positive defence of liberal Western values, albeit often in juxtaposition to the threat of Islam:

Every countryman has their right to speak their thoughts! For hundreds of years the monarchy has stood for its people and their freedom! No way can a Muslim race bring their rules to our country! I believe the leader of EDL is a true Englishman doing something for the honour of England and its people! (UK — EDL)

Human rights… against Islamisation of Europe and intolerance by Turkish and Arabic immigrants towards Gays and Jews… Preservation of the cultural values of our European democracies. (Germany — Die Freiheit)[28]

While large number of respondents identified immigrants as the salient threat to their national identity and culture, not all those responding within the identity category also included anti-immigration or anti-minority sentiments. Some respondents considered PPAMs to be positive promoters of traditional national values:

Because it respects identities and it believes in the preservation of the history and culture of popular traditions. (Italy — Lega Nord)[29]

Interestingly, it was not only the indigenous population that responded in this manner:

Because despite the fact that I'm Brazilian I have felt accepted by CasaPound Italia… I am Italian, I even have an identity card and I love this country for which I would die. (Italy — CasaPound Italia)[30]

Anti-immigration

Recent studies have shown that concern over immigration is a key predictor of support for PPAMs. Respondents were classified as being in the anti-immigration category when they explicitly professed concern or anger about rising immigration and its effects.

An average of 17 per cent (sd=10) of respondents included immigration scepticism as a reason for joining a PPAM. The proportion of respondents expressing anti-immigration sentiment ranged from 36 per cent of Sweden Democrats respondents (n=568) to 1 per cent of CasaPound Italia respondents (n=424). Women were slightly less likely to cite anti-immigration reasons than men — on average 15 per cent (sd=10) of women respondents compared with 19 per cent (sd=13) of men did so. Interestingly, younger respondents were more likely to specify anti-immigration reasons — on average, 20 per cent (sd=12) of 16–20-year-olds cited it, while just 10 per cent (sd=11) of those aged 51 or over did.

Fear of a bleak future in which immigrants will outnumber nationals was a common theme:

The foreigners are slowly suffocating our lovely country. They have all these children and raise them so badly that in three or four generations time there'll be no decent behaviour or well behaved children at all. (Denmark — Dansk Folkeparti)[31]

The perceived criminality of immigrants also featured frequently:

I am sick of seeing my homeland being ripped apart and the crime rate and rapes going through the roof with this scum coming into my country and ripping it apart and no one is doing a thing to stop it. (UK—BNP)

A number of respondents lamented immigrants' supposed abuse of the welfare system as well as criticising them for obtaining employment at the expense of nationals:

I would like to send them back to their homes, rather than having to maintain them and give them jobs… It would be better if they gave Italians a job first, for example to me, since I am unemployed. (Italy—Lega Nord)[32]

Immigrants were also viewed by many as posing a threat to national or Western cultural values. One young French respondent wrote that he had joined the Front National because he was worred about:

The loss of French customs, traditions. There are so many foreigners and we are almost struck with shame to be white and love our country. (France—Front National)[33]

Although many respondents expressed a desire for an outright ban on immigration or the removal of immigrants to their countries of origin, others stressed the need for integration and assimilation:

My ancestry is from Eastern Europe but my parents taught me that you go with the practice of the place you move to and respect the country and integrate. Suddenly other parties want something completely different. It doesn't work in the long run. I want to live in Sweden, not a multicultural fiasco. (Sweden—Sverigedemokraterna)[34]

Disillusionment

As noted above, disillusionment with mainstream institutions—the 'protest vote'—is posited as a factor in driving support for PPAMs. Respondents were placed into the disillusionment category when they expressed disenchantment with major political institutions, with the political elite or with the direction of their country.

An average of 13 per cent (sd=7) of respondents referred to disillusionment in their answers. The proportion ranged from 27 per cent of Die Freiheit respondents (n=427) to 1 per cent of Bloc Identitaire respondents (n=128). The difference between men and women was marginal—on average 12 per cent (sd=7) of male respondents and 15 per cent (sd=15) of female respondents cited such reasons. The tendency to cite disillusionment did not vary with age.

In their responses, some respondents referred to particular parties that they felt let down by:

The desperate lies of the MPs, the comfortable way in which they live whilst the French face a multitude of problems such as insecurity, mass immigration and the middle class, who always pay the price. (France—Front National)[35]

One Italian respondent suggested how disillusionment with the political class manifested as support for Lega Nord:

I hate politicians; they are all disgusting, especially when they get to the armchair of power. Since they are all the same, I choose the ones that defend my homeland. (Italy—Lega Nord)[36]

Anti-Islam

Increasingly, commentators discuss European populists' growing hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Respondents were classified in the anti-Islam category when they criticised Islam, Muslims or Arabs. An average of 10 per cent (sd=11) of respondents made such criticisms. By far the highest proportion of anti-Islam responses were given by EDL

respondents (41 per cent; n=804) while no CasaPound Italia respondents (n=424) included anti-Islam comments. Men were slightly more likely to provide anti-Islam responses — on average 11 per cent (sd=12) did so compared with 8 per cent (sd=10) of women. In contrast to anti-immigration responses, there was little variation with age.

Some responses attacked Muslims directly:

We have to do something about all these Muslims who are taking over our country… [I] would happily talk to you about the massive Muslim problem that our whole world is experiencing. (Denmark — Dansk Folkeparti)[37]

Others held somewhat more nuanced views on Islam — for example criticising certain aspects of Islamic law or tradition, while denying racist sentiments:

I want to stop the Islamisation of Sweden… Prevent the oppression of Islamic women by banning the burqa in public places. (Sweden — Sverigedemokraterna)[38]

Above all I have joined Die Freiheit because this party fights against the Islamic ideology and the linked Islamisation without being racist, meaning that they are not against Muslims, if they are not criminals and if they do integrate themselves. (Germany — Die Freiheit)

Integrity

It is often thought that populists' disillusionment with mainstream institutions is tied to a belief that their organisation is in comparison honourable and trustworthy. The integrity category covered those respondents who spoke admiringly of the honest, straight-talking and courageous approach of the group and those who believed they were consistent in their convictions. This category differed from the disillusionment category in that it required respondents

to speak of the PPAM in a positive light, instead of merely displaying a lack of faith in other organisations.

On average 9 per cent (sd=5) of respondents mentioned integrity in their answers. Nearly one-fifth (17 per cent) of responses from CasaPound Italia (n=424) were classified under integrity, the highest of any group, whereas only 2 per cent of EDL responses (n=909) were so classified. The figures did not differ significantly across gender — for men there was a pan-European figure of 8 per cent (sd=6) while for women it was 11 per cent (sd=10).

Of course, many responses fell under both the integrity and disillusionment categories and those who talked of the group's integrity often contrasted this with the failure of others:

It's the only honest party — whether you agree or not with what is said, they tell the truth, not just what you want to hear like other parties. (UK — British National Party)

Because True Finns are honestly for [the] Finnish cause, and don't conform [to] other parties' consensus policies. True Finns can discuss about hard issues, take sides and look for solutions. (Finland — Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns'))

Some described the courageousness of their group with reference to the tediousness of mainstream politics:

CasaPound Italia is the only revolutionary answer to the political dullness of these days. It's life in a land of dead people! (Italy — CasaPound Italia)

Economics

Economic concerns are found by most contemporary researchers to account for a minority of support for PPAMs. Respondents were classified in the economics category when they concerned such matters as tax policy, unemployment, poverty, government bailouts, trade policy, globalisation and income redistribution.

An average of just 4 per cent (sd=2) of respondents mentioned economic motivations for joining a PPAM: 6 per cent of respondents across a third of PPAMs cited economics while less than 1 per cent of CasaPound Italia (n=424) and Bloc Identitaire (n=128) respondents did so. There were negligible differences between men and women—an average of 4 per cent (sd=2) of male respondents cited economic reasons for joining PPAMs, compared with 3 per cent (sd=3) of women. As might be expected, economic motivations were specified most frequently by 21–25-year-olds (although the pan-European average was still only 7 per cent (sd=7) for that age category).

Where economic concerns were given as a reason for joining a PPAM, they were diverse in content, with high taxation, personal indebtedness and the inability of the state to provide for working people all featured within the responses:

The rise in prices, the incapacity to pay our debts, despite my husband and me working. No perspective on the future as long as the state continues to take the little money we earn from us. The incapacity of the state to look after the honest people who work and despite all don't have enough to eat and feed our children at the end of each month. (France—Front National)[39]

There's too much interference in people's private lives. Everything has high taxes and people should be more free to choose and do their own thing. (Norway—Norwegian Progress Party)

Respondents also expressed their opposition to government cuts and their impact on families:

Where is the concern for our children, who are the people who have to carry our Danish society forward? I don't understand how there can be so many cuts around children. We all want to live in a welfare state but no one thinks about how the people who have to carry the society forward are being dropped on the floor. (Denmark—Dansk Folkeparti)[40]

Economic concerns were often combined with opposition to immigration, with some respondents viewing immigrants as a drain on the state's resources:

Frustration and desire for change for durability and stability in employment, finance; and especially put a halt on immigration and stop the social aid which badly affects the wallets of the French with centuries-old French origin. Put a stop to immigration, benefits, exaggerated payouts to the foreigners. And give me a job. Thank you very much. (France—Front National)[41]

Anti-EU

With many populist groups campaigning on anti-EU platforms, it is possible that hostility to the EU is a factor in explaining populist support. Respondents were classified in the anti-EU category when they criticised the EU and/or the decisions made by EU institutions.

Only 3 per cent (sd=4) of respondents on average gave their opposition to the EU as a motivation for joining PPAMs. Finnish respondents were most likely to express anti-EU sentiments, with 13 per cent doing so (n=692). However, anti-EU sentiment was expressed by less than 1 per cent of CasaPound Italia (n=424), Lega Nord (n=841), Vlaams Belang (n=464) and Norwegian Progress Party respondents (n=909). Women and men differed little in this category—an average of 3 per cent of male respondents (sd=5) and 2 per cent of female respondents (sd=3) cited it in their responses. There was no clear correlation between age and anti-EU sentiment.

Concern about the loss of national sovereignty as a result of increased European integration was one of the key sentiments expressed by respondents falling within this category.

Secessionism/federalism

Respondents were classified in the secessionism/federalism category when they stated that they supported a PPAM because of its commitment to secessionist or federalist objectives. An average of 3 per cent of respondents (sd=6) provided responses within this category. Such responses were

provided almost exclusively by those from Vlaams Belang (18 per cent of total responses; n=464) and Lega Nord (17 per cent of total responses; n=841)—parties that campaign respectively on platforms of Flemish independence and Northern Italian autonomy.

Other

Some 10 per cent (sd=7) of responses on average included content that could not be classified within the aforementioned categories. Respondents who solely included content of this kind were classified in the category 'other'. Some of the issues raised in these responses included safety, pensions and animal rights.

Discussion

It is clear from the range of results within each category that national context matters greatly. For example, given widespread corruption in Italy, it is not surprising that 17 per cent of responses from the Italian street organisation CasaPound Italia fell under 'integrity', the highest of any group for this category. Nor is it surprising that the responses from the Norwegian Progress Party, as the second-largest party in Norway and part of the mainstream political establishment, featured so few responses in this category—only 4 per cent.

Our research suggests that online PPAM supporters cannot be accurately characterised as 'protest voters', who support PPAMs to shock and voice discontent with elites, rather than to advance ideological or policy aims. While many online PPAM sympathisers are disillusioned with the political status quo, they do not appear to be primarily motivated by a desire to protest. Although on average 13 per cent of respondents expressed disillusionment with mainstream political parties and organisations, an average of 38 per cent registered broad ideological agreement with the values, principles or aims of their respective organisation. In addition to this general alignment of values, numerous respondents identified specific PPAM policy goals as reasons for joining.

These results suggest that the vast majority of respondents support PPAMs because they identify with their policy offerings rather than because they desire to shock or protest.

This does not mean, of course, that online members are satisfied with mainstream organisations. A substantial proportion of respondents (a pan-European figure of 9 per cent) saw PPAMs as honest and straight-talking, a fresh alternative to the stale status quo. Many lauded PPAMs for speaking out about issues that mainstream organisations are unwilling or unable to address. These responses often emphasised PPAMs' commitment to action, to working hard to accomplish change 'on the ground'. This suggests that PPAMs are successfully portraying themselves as credible alternatives to political elites who have lost touch with the people they are supposed to represent.

Our findings also offer some illumination on immigration. An average of 17 per cent of responses was classified as anti-immigration, a significant but not overwhelming proportion. This suggests that a successful explanation of the support for PPAMs must invoke more than just negative attitudes towards immigration. Indeed, although some academic literature suggests that the economic threat of immigration is driving people into these groups, only a very low proportion of respondents mentioned economic grievances or preferences of any sort (an average of 4 per cent). Why younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to cite concerns about immigration as a reason for joining a PPAM is not something our data can fully answer, but this is certainly worthy of further investigation.

An alternative explanation of the underlying causes of hostility towards immigration is found in the pan-European average of 17 per cent of responses classified in the identity category—the joint second highest rated category alongside anti-immigration. The considerable number of respondents placed in this category suggests that a desire to protect national and cultural identity is a more important factor in explaining PPAM support than economic grievances, and is perhaps the principal driving force behind concerns about immigration.

The desire to promote and protect national identity, however, did not merely contribute to immigration grievances. Concerns over identity were often articulated alongside opposition to Islam rather than immigration: some respondents expressed fear of Muslims, because of their perceived extremist views, in terms which suggested that their national origin was unimportant.[42] In addition, a significant number of respondents spoke of upholding their countries' values without expressing hostility to any minority group. While some of these responses seemed to be euphemistic attacks on minority groups, numerous responses emphasised the central importance of celebrating respondents' own culture, rather than denigrating that of others. It seems that joining a PPAM provided a way for some people to reassert their intra-cultural ties and find a sense of belonging within their own communities.

Importantly, a concern with identity need not be understood solely in terms of traditional conservative values. While there are vague invocations of 'French values' or 'the British way of life', in a number of groups many of the more specific responses referred to values such as freedom, democracy and human rights. This suggests that, for some, defending liberal values is an integral part of protecting one's identity.

Overall, our results suggest that online respondents do not see themselves as primarily motivated by economic concerns; nor do they support PPAMs out of protest. Rather, a large proportion supports PPAMs because they are concerned about immigration; concerns which appear to be driven more by a desire to preserve and protect cultural identity than by any perceived economic threat.

The importance that supporters place on the protection of this identity also goes some way to explaining both their anti-Islamic sentiment and the desire to promote traditional values for their own sake.

4 Social and political views

As part of the survey we asked respondents a number of questions regarding their social and political views, which were modelled where possible on Eurobarometer or European Values Survey questions to provide a baseline of comparison.

Top two biggest concerns

We asked PPAM supporters to rank their biggest social and political concerns, taken from a list of 18 current issues, including immigration, climate change, unemployment and out of touch politicians, among others.

Across our sample, over a third of PPAM supporters put immigration in the top two most important issues, followed by a quarter who cited Islamic extremism (table 4). Respondents also recorded concern about crime (17 per cent), the economic situation (16 per cent), rising prices (14 per cent), unemployment (13 per cent), multiculturalism (12 per cent) and 'out of touch' politicians (11 per cent). Comparing these responses to the Eurobarometer survey we find that populist parties and movement (PPAM) supporters are significantly more likely to cite immigration and crime. Direct comparisons with concerns over Islamic extremism are not possible as this is not included in the Eurobarometer survey. In contrast to PPAM supporters, the most pressing issues for respondents to the Eurobarometer survey are all economic in nature—with rising prices and inflation (46 per cent), the economic situation (20 per cent) and unemployment (19 per cent) being the top three concerns.

Table 4 **Proportion of supporters of PPAMs and respondents to Eurobarometer survey who rated immigration, Islamic extremism and crime as one of their top two concerns**[43]

	Rated immigration in top 2 (%)		Rated Islamic extremism in top 2 (%)		Rated crime in top 2 (%)	
	PPAM	Eurobarometer (country %)	PPAM	N/A	PPAM	Eurobarometer (country %)
Bloc Identitaire	67	3	31		8	10
British National Party	45	6	21		8	8
CasaPound Italia	26	8	6		9	8
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	36	5	21		15	9
Die Freiheit	17	1	40		15	3
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	21	6	18		21	7
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	36		17		28	
Front National	56	3	17		17	10
Lega Nord	25	8	16		9	8
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	28	3	48		25	5
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	33	4	15		9	4
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	48	6	32		24	7
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	38	8	39		26	14
Pan-European average	**37**	**4** (EU average)	**25**		**17**	**6** (EU average)
Standard deviation	*14*		*12*		*8*	

Across the countries, however, there was significant variation in the priority given to certain issues. Concerns over immigration were highest in France, with 67 per cent of Bloc Identitaire respondents and 56 per cent of Front National respondents citing immigration as a top two concern. By contrast, concerns over Islamic extremism were highest among respondents from the Netherlands (48 per cent), Germany (40 per cent) and Belgium (39 per cent), and lowest among CasaPound Italia (6 per cent) and True Finn supporters (15 per cent).

Other parties revealed specific worries. German respondents were significantly more likely (32 per cent) to cite 'out of touch politicians' as a top two concern. The next closest were True Finn respondents (14 per cent) and BNP respondents (13 per cent). There was significant concern over unemployment among Italian respondents in particular, with 24 per cent of CasaPound Italia supporters and 23 per cent of Lega Nord supporters citing it as a top two concern. On average, PPAM supporters are less likely to be concerned about the economic situation (16 per cent compared with 20 per cent for the Eurobarometer survey) and unemployment (13 per cent compared with 19 per cent for the Eurobarometer survey).

Politics and voting

In addition to specific social and political issues, we asked supporters about their general views on the efficacy of democratic politics, the future of their country and attitudes to violence in pursuit of political ends (table 5).

Table 5 **Proportion of supporters of PPAMs who agreed with statements about voting, the effectiveness of politics and whether violence is acceptable to achieve the right outcome**

	Agree that it does not matter who you vote for (%)	Agree that politics is an effective way to respond to my concerns (%)	Agree that violence is acceptable to achieve the right outcome (%)
Bloc Identitaire	19	20	43
British National Party	21	40	37
CasaPound Italia	16	43	47
Danish People's Party	10	41	15
Die Freiheit	26	3	12
English Defence League	33	35	34
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	8	14	17
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	13	70	14
Front National	21	28	29
Lega Nord	9	45	32
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	13	29	25
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	6	55	21
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	9	61	14
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	12	10	23
Average	**16**	**35**	**26**
Standard deviation	*8*	*19*	*11*

The majority of respondents did not agree with the statement 'it does not matter who you vote for', suggesting that those drawn to PPAMs are not completely disillusioned with democratic choices. On average, 16 per cent of PPAM supporters agreed with the above statement, expressing disillusionment with the act of voting.

While support for voting was high, this was mixed with dissatisfaction with current politics: only 34 per cent agreed with the statement 'politics is an effective way to respond to my concerns'. The most pessimistic were German Die Freiheit supporters (3 per cent) and Belgian Vlaams Belang supporters (10 per cent). The most optimistic, on the other hand, were supporters of the Norwegian Progress Party (70 per cent) and the Sweden Democrats (61 per cent).

We also asked respondents whether they agreed with the statement 'violence is acceptable to ensure the right outcome'. It is important to stress that agreeing that violence is acceptable to ensure the right outcome does not necessarily imply that the group itself or its supporters are violent or are likely to engage in violence. It could, for example, also encompass agreement with British military action overseas—as in Libya, for which there was significant support across the country. While comparisons between the groups on this question are interesting, there is no baseline Europe-wide data on this question, making inferences about the relevance of this question difficult.

In France and Italy, supporters of street-based movements were more likely to agree that violence is acceptable to ensure the right outcome. Supporters of CasaPound Italia were the most likely of all the groups surveyed to agree with this statement (47 per cent), with Bloc Identitaire supporters a close second at 43 per cent. However, in the UK, there was little difference between EDL and BNP responses to this question. This may be because of the high number of BNP respondents who agreed violence is acceptable. In fact, among political parties, BNP supporters were most inclined to agree with this statement (37 per cent), followed by Lega Nord supporters (32 per cent) and Front National supporters (29 per cent). On average, one in four PPAM supporters agreed with the above statement.

Personal and national optimism

We also wanted to explore whether PPAM supporters were optimistic or pessimistic about their own future prospects, as well as the future of their country (table 6).

Table 6 **Proportion of supporters of PPAMs and respondents to Eurobarometer survey who thought their country was on the right track and that the next 12 months would be better than the last for them personally**

	Is [your country] on the right track?[44]		Will the next 12 months be better than the last for you personally?[45]	
	PPAM agree (%)	Eurobarometer agree (%)	PPAM agree (%)	Eurobarometer agree (%)
Bloc Identitaire	4	17	10	33
British National Party	12	35	27	34
CasaPound Italia	8	17	30	23
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	27	44	46	34
English Defence League	5	41	21	21
Die Freiheit	8	35	23	34
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	11	47	21	19
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	12		31	
Front National	4	17	10	33
Lega Nord	11	17	21	23
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	19	35	26	32
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	16	49	27	32
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	14	56	38	49
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	3	26	53	33
Average	**10**	**28** (EU average)	**27**	**26** (EU average)
Standard deviation	*7*		*12*	

In the latest Eurobarometer survey in spring 2011, 26 per cent on average were optimistic that their life would be better in the next 12 months, 14 per cent thought it would be worse and 57 per cent thought it would stay the same. Using this as a baseline measure we found that, interestingly, PPAM supporters seemed to be more optimistic about their own personal lives than their compatriots in a number of countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Italy (CasaPound Italia supporters). The least optimistic respondents by a significant margin were French respondents—with only 10 per cent of Bloc Identitaire and Front National respondents expressing optimism about their lives compared to a national average of 33 per cent.

That optimism, however, dropped significantly when it came to their views about the future of their respective countries as a whole. When asked if they agreed that their nation was 'on the right track' (see table 6), only an average of 10 per cent of supporters said they agreed. Danish People's Party supporters were the most optimistic for their country with 27 per cent agreeing with the statement. The least optimistic were Vlaams Belang supporters, which had only 3 per cent of respondents believing their nation was on the right track, followed by 4 per cent of Bloc Identitaire supporters.

Table 7 **Proportion of PPAM supporters and Eurobarometer respondents who thought the EU was a waste of money, did not exert enough control over external borders and had led to a loss of cultural identity**[46]

	Mentioned waste of money (%)		Mentioned not enough control over external borders (%)		Mentioned loss of cultural identity (%)	
	PPAM	Euro-barometer (country %)	PPAM	Euro-barometer (country %)	PPAM	Euro-barometer (country %)
Bloc Identitaire	46	31	70	24	58	11
British National Party	64	28	60	22	64	19
CasaPound Italia	48	12	46	14	63	11
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	55	17	53	37	48	14
Die Freiheit	80	43	70	24	69	9
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	84	48	77	40	72	22
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	48		47		38	
Front National	52	31	55	24	55	11
Lega Nord	32	12	33	14	29	11
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	68	21	56	21	52	12
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	74	27	62	13	69	8
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	63	34	58	17	57	9
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	57	27	69	22	58	7
Average	**59**	**24** (EU avg.)	**58**	**18** (EU avg.)	**56**	**11** (EU avg.)
Standard deviation	*15*		*12*		*12*	

Particularly given the current political climate, it is perhaps no surprise that PPAM supporters were likely to be negative towards the EU (table 7). When asked to select what the EU meant to them personally, the most common response was 'waste of money' (59 per cent), followed by 'not enough control over external borders' (58 per cent), 'loss of our cultural identity' (56 per cent), 'more crime' (46 per cent) and 'bureaucracy' (36 per cent).

Comparing these responses with those of the Eurobarometer survey we find that PPAM supporters are significantly more likely than the general population in their respective countries to have negative feelings towards the European Union. When asked what the European Union meant to respondents, the top three answers from the Eurobarometer survey were 'freedom to travel, work and study' at 45 per cent, the euro currency at 38 per cent and 'waste of money' at 24 per cent. Compared with the answers above, only 21 per cent cited 'bureaucracy', 18 per cent cited 'not enough control over external borders', 13 per cent cited 'more crime' and only 11 per cent cited 'loss of cultural identity'.

It is clear, therefore, that despite some significant variation among the different countries and group supporters, on the whole PPAM supporters are significantly more concerned about immigration, Islamic extremism, crime and cultural erosion than the Eurobarometer survey responses suggest is common of the average European.

5 Trust in institutions

Our survey also asked about levels of generalised and institutional trust. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a statement suggesting that 'in general, people cannot be trusted', as well as indicating whether, in general, they were inclined to 'trust' or 'distrust' a range of civic institutions.

Generalised trust

Generalised trust has long been accepted by academics as an essential component of 'social capital'[47]—a concept that refers to the ability of an individual or group to participate in society successfully, mostly as a result of involvement in social networks.[48] Academics like Robert Putnam suggest that an individual's ability to trust those unlike themselves is core to the establishment of 'norms of reciprocity' within wider society, without which individual civic engagement is impossible.[49] Consequently, those with low levels of generalised trust tend to remain on the fringes of society.

The results of the analysis of the generalised trust question are presented in table 8, and compared against the most recent wave of the European Values Survey, which asks a similar question.

Table 8 **Whether PPAM supporters and respondents to the European Values Survey agree that other people, in general, can be trusted**

	PPAM agree (%)	European Values Survey[50] agree (%)
Bloc Identitaire	14	19
British National Party	32	31
CasaPound Italia	26	31
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	38	
Die Freiheit	35	37
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	21	
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	54	74
Front National	27	19
Lega Nord	31	31
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	30	
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	41	59
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	32	68
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	24	
Average	**33**	**41**
Standard Deviation	10	

All groups except one (the Norwegian Progress Party) evidenced low levels of generalised trust, with a majority of research participants agreeing with the question either a little or entirely. When compared against a baseline measure, the most recent wave of the European Values Survey, populist parties and movement (PPAM) supporters exhibited slightly lower levels of generalised trust than the general population in their country but in most cases the difference was marginal. Exceptions can be seen in the Scandinavian countries. In general, Scandinavians displayed higher levels of generalised trust—for example, 74 per cent in Norway, 68 per cent in Sweden and 58 per cent in Finland compared with 30 per cent in the UK, 30 per cent in Italy and only 18 per cent in France. Interestingly, in three cases (Lega Nord, British National Party and Front National) PPAM supporters actually reported higher levels of generalised trust than the national average—though again the difference was by a relatively small number of percentage points.

While it is interesting that PPAM supporters report mostly lower levels of generalised trust, it is not overly significant. The slightly lower levels of trust evidenced by PPAM supporters may result from their disproportionate experience of unemployment—as some academics have argued that economic marginalisation may reduce social capital, civic engagement and generalised trust.[51]

Institutional trust

In addition, we asked respondents a range of questions about how far they trusted various institutions (table 9).

Table 9 **Whether PPAM supporters and respondents to the European Values Survey trust the police, the army and the judiciary**

	Trust the police[52]		Trust the army		Trust the judiciary	
	PPAM	European Values Survey (country %)	PPAM	European Values Survey (country %)	PPAM	European Values Survey (country %)
Bloc Identitaire	65	71	84	68	21	40
British National Party	46	72	83	79	23	60
CasaPound Italia	49	78	73	68	11	52
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	75		67		48	
Die Freiheit	76	74	63	50	37	58
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	64		54		33	
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	66	87	70	65	49	86
Front National	59	71	80	68	24	40
Lega Nord	63	78	62	68	30	52
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	48		70		38	
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	80	92	79	88	40	82
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	61	78	69	47	28	74
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	48		58		14	
Average	**62**	**78** (European avg.)	**65**	**67** (European avg.)	**30**	**60** (European avg.)
Standard deviation	*11*		*17*		*12*	

The figures on confidence in the police and armed forces are broadly in line with the available data on national confidence levels taken from the European Values Survey, although slightly lower. However, the figures on trust in the judiciary differ significantly, with PPAM supporters significantly less likely to trust them than the general population in their respective countries: 30 per cent versus 60 per cent, with some notable variations, such as CasaPound Italia, which is even more pronounced.

Similarly, data on trust in overtly political institutions (European Union, the government) shows there is a significant gap between group members and their national compatriots. Overall levels of trust in the EU and government were low for group members, with robust majorities in all groups reporting a tendency to distrust (table 10).

Table 10 **Whether PPAM supporters and respondents to the European Values Survey trust the government and the European Union**

	Trust government[53]		Trust the European Union	
	PPAM	European Values Survey (%)	PPAM	European Values Survey (%)
Bloc Identitaire	11	28	9	39
British National Party	5	32	11	24
CasaPound Italia	11	24	15	42
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	46	53	18	52
Die Freiheit	8	40	5	35
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	5	62	4	45
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	14		17	
Front National	17	28	12	39
Lega Nord	24	24	43	42
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	36	57	13	50
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	19	62	3	53
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	19	65	13	46
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	44	39	15	61
Average	**20**	**43** (European avg.)	**14**	**44** (European avg.)
Standard deviation	*14*		*10*	

There was significant variation between the groups in the strength of distrust they showed toward the mainstream media. Results showing levels of trust in trade unions were less clear—while a majority of groups reported high levels of distrust, results from groups in the Danish People's Party and the True Finns presented an opposing picture (table 11).

Table 11 **Whether PPAM supporters and respondents to the European Values Survey trust trade unions and the mainstream media**

	Trust trade unions[54]		Trust mainstream media	
	PPAM	Eurobarometer (country %)	PPAM	Eurobarometer (country %)
Bloc Identitaire	14	39	8	39
British National Party	30	30	6	14
CasaPound Italia	7	34	6	25
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	51		12	
Die Freiheit	16	32	4	29
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	31		11	
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	36	66	17	36
Front National	20	39	10	39
Lega Nord	28	34	18	25
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	37		31	
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	53	63	10	33
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	30	52	7	33
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	27		15	
Average	**29**	**43** (EU avg.)	**12**	**30** (EU avg.)
Standard deviation	*13*		*7*	

6 What is the relationship between online and offline activism?

By collecting large amounts of data and asking questions about offline activity, we can better understand the relationship between virtual and real-life involvement. To do this, we ran logistic regressions to analyse the impact of a range of attitudinal and demographic factors on supporters' involvement with the party or movement in question.

Regressions were run against three separate dependent variables, all of which related to offline activity. These were: first, whether a supporter voted for the party in question (where applicable); second, whether the supporter considered themselves a formal member of the group; and finally, whether the supporter had been involved in a street demonstration or march in the previous six months.

Logistic regression allowed us to hold certain demographic characteristics constant (age, gender, employment, educational levels, city) while showing whether other attitudinal measures affected the likelihood that a supporter would be involved in offline activity. Regressions were run iteratively against all the attitudinal measures (full regression results are available at www.demos.co.uk). Below, we present only those that had achieved a significant change in the odds ratio, combined with some degree of statistical significance. The results presented here are based on the entire sample (n=8,889) and may mask interesting variations across countries.[55] These will be examined more closely in forthcoming papers.

It is important to stress that such an approach cannot let us reliably infer causation about what drives people to shift from online to offline involvement, but it does indicate significant correlations that may be a fruitful starting point for future research.

Voters versus non-voters

Across the data set of political parties, 67 per cent of online supporters reported to have voted for the populist political party at the most recent national election. As noted in chapter 4, this could be because support for these parties has increased since the previous election. However, it also suggests that a significant number of Facebook fans of political groups — one in three — are generally interested or supportive — but not to the extent of actually voting for the party.

We asked supporters of the political parties if they had voted for the party they supported on Facebook in the last general election; and compared their replies against those of the Facebook supporters who had not.

The regressions revealed some interesting attitudinal differences between those who were voters and those who were not, which illustrates what sort of issues are most likely to drive people to the polls.

When controlling for attitudinal and demographic factors, being female increased the likelihood that a respondent would vote for the party by 52 per cent (p=.001). Similarly, being employed increased the likelihood that a respondent would be a voter by 93 per cent (p=.001).

The attitudinal factors that supporters listed as concerns appeared to make a major difference to their likelihood of voting. Most important of all was immigration. Supporters who listed immigration as one of their top three concerns were 109 per cent more likely to vote for the party than supporters who did not;[56] supporters who listed Islamic extremism as one of their top three concerns were 85 per cent more likely to vote for the party than supporters who did not;[57] while supporters who listed crime as well as supporters who listed multiculturalism were both 54 per cent more likely to vote for the party than supporters who did not.[58]

Other attitudinal measures related to trust in democracy and political institutions also demonstrated significant change. As might be expected, those who disagreed with the statement 'it does not matter who you vote for' were 89 per cent more likely to vote for the party than those who did not (p=0.001). Interestingly, people who agreed with the statement that the national government cannot be trusted were also slightly more likely to vote for the party than those who did not.[59] These results suggest that a lack of faith in current institutions is important in predicting a shift from online to offline involvement, especially if mixed with concerns about immigration.

Members versus non-members

Voting for a political party is in some senses a relatively passive form of political involvement. A stronger indicator of party or group engagement is whether the person considers themselves to be a formal member of the party or group in question. Nearly one-third (32 per cent) of Facebook supporters considered themselves to be formal members of the party in question.

When attitudinal variables are controlled, men and women are equally likely to be members of PPAMs, in contrast with their likelihood of voting as discussed above. However, similar to voting, being employed is correlated with more active involvement in a PPAM: being employed is associated with a 31 per cent increase in the likelihood of being a formal member of a PPAM.[60]

Interestingly, the motivations that appear to drive people to join a PPAM formally are not quite the same as those that encourage them to vote. Above all, formal members appear to have more confidence in politics, and are more likely to disavow violence. Supporters who agree with the statement 'politics is an effective way to respond to my concerns' are 42 per cent more likely to be formal members than supporters who don't.[61] Supporters who disagree with the statement 'violence is acceptable to ensure the right outcome' are 18 per cent more likely to be members than supporters who agree with it.[62]

It appears that multiculturalism is a particularly important concern for participants. People who list 'multiculturalism' as one of their top three concerns are 32 per cent more likely to be members than people who don't.[63]

Demonstrators versus non-demonstrators

Perhaps the strongest indicator of offline involvement is whether an individual has been involved in a march or demonstration in the previous six months. As might be expected, across the total data set this number is lower than the number of voters and members. Only 26 per cent of supporters have taken part in this sort of activity, and a significant amount of this activity takes the form of street-based movements.

Perhaps unsurprisingly—and in contrast to the voters—men are more likely to be demonstrators than women—being male increased the likelihood that a supporter will demonstrate by 16 per cent. When we removed street-based movements from the regression, the effect was lost. Employment, however, was not positively correlated with active engagement in demonstrations, as is the case with voting and being a formal party member. Our regression revealed that unemployed respondents were 14 per cent more likely to demonstrate than employed participants, although this did not attain statistical significance.[64]

Interestingly, demonstrators are more likely to believe in politics as a channel to respond to concerns than non-demonstrators. Those who agree with the statement 'politics is an effective way to respond to my concerns' are 23 per cent more likely to demonstrate than those who disagree.[65] Without the street-based movements this figure is 21 per cent.[66] However, agreeing with the statement 'violence is acceptable to achieve the right outcome' increased the likelihood that someone would demonstrate by 37 per cent. When we removed street-based movements from the regression, agreeing with the statement increased the likelihood of a respondent demonstrating by 26 per cent.[67]

It appears that slightly different concerns are important in convincing people to demonstrate than to vote. Supporters who listed corruption as one of their top three concerns were 38 per cent more likely to demonstrate than those who did not, while immigration, Islamic extremism, multiculturalism and crime were not considered very important.[68] Supporters concerned about corruption were 31 per cent more likely to demonstrate when street-based movements were not included.[69] It also appears that general trust levels are a strong indicator of intention to demonstrate: supporters who disagree with the statement 'in general people cannot be trusted' are 30 per cent more likely to demonstrate than people who don't.[70] This figure is 34 per cent when street-based movements are removed.[71]

Annex 1
Methodology

Our research represents a first attempt to collect quantitative data on populist parties and movements (PPAMs) at an international level, and is the first large-scale and empirically rigorous quantitative study ever undertaken on online supporters of these groups and parties.

Data collection

To collect the data, we selected groups which:

- were either political or street-based protest movements that could legitimately be described as populist (based on a review of academic literature)
- were based in Western Europe
- had a sizeable Facebook presence (at least 2,000 fans for either the party's official Facebook fan page and/or the leader).

Before starting the survey the research team discussed the literature on factors predisposing involvement in nationalist-populism groups and produced a shortlist of possible questions capable of measuring these factors.

After further discussion, we produced a final survey of 20 questions, including items measuring participants' demographic profiles, social and family backgrounds, level of confidence in public institutions, group involvement and national policy concerns. For each country, we translated the questionnaire into the required language and — where appropriate — adapted measurements to the specific country context (as for the questions on educational attainment).

Where possible, we used measurement scales employed by the 2010/11 Eurobarometer poll or European Values Study to allow for a direct comparison with national level data.

We ran a Facebook advert targeted at fans of all parties and/or party leader's Facebook pages over the summer of 2011. Each advert invited Facebook fans of the group in question to click on a link which redirected them to our online survey. As table 12 shows, our campaign ran over a three-month period, with no single advert being available for more than six weeks. On clicking the advert, participants were redirected to a digital survey page, which set out the details and purpose of the survey along with an invitation to take part. The size of target population varied from country to country, depending on the size of the Facebook membership of the group in question.

Table 12 **Data collected for survey on PPAMs**

	Dates of survey	No of specific Facebook interest groups targeted[72]	Size of population targeted[73]	No of unique impressions[74]	Total Facebook link clicks[75]	Total survey responses[76]	Final data set
Bloc Identitaire	Jul–Aug 2011	1	2,340	383,013	313	143	128
British National Party	Aug–Sep 2011	2 (3)	82,700 (226,180)	1,209,679	1,120	343	283
CasaPound Italia	Jul–Aug 2011	3	16,200	2,203,079	1,803	478	423
Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party')	Jul–Aug 2011	2 (3)	15,640 (33,040)	2,222,395	2,109	626	542
Die Freiheit	Jul–Aug 2011	2	4,280	831,704	940	465	427
English Defence League	Aug–Sep 2011	4 (5)	38,200 (65,740)	985,649	2,739	1,137	804
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ; 'Austrian Freedom Party')	Jul–Aug 2011	5	84,700	4,756,196	5,713	2,564	2,333
Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party')	Aug–Sep 2011	3	64,860	1,392,293	2,181	1,091	909
Front National	Jul 2011	6 (9)	34,960 (88,740)	3,767,272	5,452	2,174	1,927
Lega Nord	Jul–Aug 2011	5 (6)	45,740 (204,480)	5,525,754	4,628	1,073	838
Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV or 'Dutch Freedom Party)	Jul–Aug 2011	3	7,140	1,102,927	892	355	331
Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns')	Jul–Aug 2011	3	15,640	1,571,670	1,431	750	691
Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats')	Jul–Aug 2011	3	16,660	2,191,724	1,954	620	567
Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest')	Jul–Aug 2011	2	6,960	1,820,295	1,181	501	464
Total			436,020 (836,960)	29,963,650	32,456	12,320	10,667

These cross country variations require clarification. The 'unique impressions' column lists the number of unique occasions the advert was displayed on the target audience's Facebook sidebar. The variation in these figures is a result of both the target population size and the number of adverts from other companies that may have been running simultaneously. The click per impressions ratio was relatively stable, at around 1 per cent. There are some outliers, such as the EDL, which may be explained by a specific 'trolling' campaign (see below).

The click to survey completion ratio also stabilised at between 40 per cent and 50 per cent. This non-response rate may be the result of some respondents deciding not to take part in the survey on reading the consent form. Our method to correct for non-response rates is discussed below. The size of the final data was lower than the number of surveys completed because we removed troll responses and incomplete surveys.

Data analysis and limitations

We decided to use Facebook principally because the site is a popular mode of communication for supporters of many of the groups and parties we surveyed. However, the use of a sample recruited through a social media site leads to a number of significant (and sometimes entirely novel) difficulties, most notably:

- problems relating to the reliability of online data, principally regarding whether respondents answered accurately and truthfully
- problems relating to 'trolls' or bogus individuals who completed the survey intentionally to corrupt the results
- how well our online sample represents the total online population of each Facebook group
- how well the sample represents the members of the group or party that are not on Facebook.

We address each issue in turn below.

Reliability

It is possible that participants may have given 'sanitised' responses in our survey in order to present a more favourable public image of the group. However, the level of consistency across participant responses, alongside answers which may be considered detrimental to the group's image, suggests that this did not occur to a significant degree. We also guaranteed the anonymity of all participants, thus removing incentives to provide inaccurate feedback. Finally, we intentionally limited the time the advert ran in order to reduce the chance of a concerted campaign on the part of respondents.

Trolling

Because participation in the survey was, in some respects, 'public' (available to anyone who clicked the link—although it was only viewed by the target population), there was a risk that people who were members of the Facebook group but not genuine supporters might complete the survey. A related risk arose from the 'trolls' (individuals who are expressly opposed to the group in question, and join in order to cause discord) filling in the survey with excessively negative responses to prejudice our results. It is well known that Facebook groups often contain these 'trolls', especially groups of a controversial nature.

On analysis of the survey returns, some responses were found to be from individuals who stated openly they were not part of the group, but did not appear to be intentionally trying to corrupt the results. These were removed from the sample. In addition, there was a small number of responses that were clearly from individuals who strongly disliked the group in question, evidenced primarily by their response to the open text questions, or by responding to every single question with the highest positive scores. These were removed. In one instance, we were alerted to a concerted campaign by an anti-EDL group on Facebook whose members were filling the surveys in with the express intention

of destroying the results. Once we collected the data we identified a number of responses which we believed to be from these individuals, mainly as they had explicitly stated in their answers to the open-response questions that they were anti-EDL. These were easy to identify and we removed them.

In total, we removed just over (13 per cent, n=1,655) of all responses for these reasons.

Online validity

In order to increase the predictive validity of our results, we decided to apply a post-stratification weight, using the known demographics of the online population to correct the sample's balance of gender and age in line with the makeup of the group as a whole. To do this, we gathered background data on the composition of each surveyed group's membership using Facebook's advertising tool (which is freely available for any user to access).[77] We gave each participant a weighted value on the basis of the prevalence of their demographic profile (age and gender) in the population at large. This follows the procedure for making statistical inferences from non-random web data outlined by Jelke Bethlehem.[78] This allowed for greater confidence that our results were more broadly representative of our Facebook population.

Although we achieved demographic representativeness — which can correct for systematic age or gender-related bias — it is possible there exist certain attitudinal self-selection biases, because this was a self-select survey. For example, it might be the case that the more frustrated or active supporters were more likely to respond. The risk of attitudinal bias in self-selection panels is well established, although the extent to which this takes place in Facebook recruitment surveys is not known given the newness of this methodology, and the resulting lack of comparable datasets with which to draw firm conclusions. It is with caveat that the results are presented.

Offline validity

While the use of a post-stratification weight is an improvement on the use of unweighted data, it cannot be automatically claimed as a reliable basis for making inferences about the offline group.[79] The use of social network surveys is subject to a well-known technical and methodological critique focusing on the nature of self-entry interest classification on Facebook, the lack of content reliability on social networking sites, and the lack of internet access and usage in the broader population, all of which are capable of irreparably biasing the results of the survey.

Therefore, we take care not to claim, at any point in the text, that our sample represents or reflects the official views of the group, or indeed of its offline membership.

Presentation of the data

Unless otherwise stated, the results provided are the result of analysis undertaken using the weighted data. Throughout, we present pan-European averages, which are based on the average of results from each country. This is intended to give a very broad overview of the European level picture. These results are constructed by taking the percentage scores of each of the countries' weighted data percentages and creating an aggregate average. This is acceptable practice when dealing with multi-level data sets, and protects against the danger that national averages are skewed by particularly large individual country data sets as would be the case if the European averages were based on a single analysis of the entire data set.

However, these European level averages mask very important variations across countries and groups. Therefore, alongside all pan-European averages, we also present the standard deviation, which shows the extent to which individual country or group results deviate from the norm. We also provide examples of those variations where they are sizeable.

Each chapter applies slightly different methodologies, and we discuss each in turn.

In chapter 2, the gender and age of each of the groups in question were collected directly from the publicly available Facebook group level data using the advertising tool mentioned above. This provides the most accurate results on the Facebook membership for each group. Results related to education, employment and involvement in the group are based on our weighted results.

Chapter 3 is based on the analysis of an open text question about why individuals joined the group in question. This open question allowed respondents to answer as they wished. A team of translators then coded the responses. We reviewed the content of the responses and created nine categories that were able to capture the content of most of the responses, together with a category 'other'. Responses could fall into multiple categories. We removed data relating to respondents who were non-supporters of a PPAM, as we did with the rest of the survey results.[80]

In chapter 4 and 5 we give weighted results. In both of these chapters we provide comparative data where it is available from either the 2010/11 Eurobarometer survey or the European and World Values Survey. Where the questions are not worded identically, or there were additional answer options, this is expressly identified.

Finally, in chapter 6, we ran three sets of logistic regressions in order to understand the difference between offline and online activism. For the regressions, we recoded data following a process of iterative dichotomisations in order to produce a model of best fit. Dependent variables included whether or not respondents:

- voted for the party they were a fan of
- had protested or marched in the previous six months
- defined themselves as party members.

We ran regressions using demographic variables as controls (age, gender, education level and employment status). Independent variables included the whole suite of political and attitudinal responses.

Ethical considerations

As this research focused on adolescents over the age of 16, no Criminal Records Bureau check was necessary; consequently, none was sought. Similarly, it was not necessary for us to obtain informed consent from participant parents or guardians as Social Research Association ethics guidelines suggest such clearance should not be sought and is not required when investigating participants aged over 16. We sought and gained individual informed consent from all participants, who agreed to a consent statement presented at the start of the survey—failure to sign acceptance of this statement prevented them from participating further in the research. Although we targeted the survey only at people aged over 16, a small number of individuals stated they were under 16 when responding to the question about age. We immediately deleted data relating to these people.

We stated on the Facebook advert that we were representing Demos, and were undertaking a survey of Facebook members of the group in question. On clicking, the participant was redirected to the survey landing page. On that page we pointed out that leaders of each group had been informed about the survey. Before running the survey, Demos emailed each of the groups in question to let them know about the survey. On the landing page we also stated that we would be letting the party in question know about the results before they were made public. Before release, we emailed the parties and groups in question with the results where it pertained to their members.

We did not brief participants fully on the study's aims before completing the survey in order to avoid the exhibition of demand characteristics. We provided only a broad overview of the research at the start of the survey, and gave more detailed information on the project's aims only after the last question had been completed. We provided the contact details of the lead researcher to all participants to cover the eventuality that they had questions not covered by the debrief notes, but few participants made use of it.

We told participants that they could withdraw from the research at any time before completion as part of a preface presented alongside the consent statement. Later we reminded them of this right when they completed the survey via a paragraph in the debrief notes, offering the possibility of immediate withdrawal via a check box. No participants opted to withdraw in this way.

We observed ethical and legal considerations relevant to the storage and handling of data; all data were kept digitally encoded in an anonymous format, and we didn't store any data capable of identifying any participants.

We prepared for the eventuality that the research uncovered information with serious security implications, particularly relating to participant support for violence; we took precautions to absolve the researcher of moral responsibility towards the disclosure of information to agents of the criminal justice system by ensuring that the survey did not ask for precise details of acts of violence or illegal political protest. In order to preserve participant confidentiality (the deliberate exclusion by data capture systems of IP addresses) we removed from the researcher the means to identify and incriminate individual participants.

Annex 2
European populist groups surveyed

Bloc Identitaire ('Identity Block'), France

Bloc Identitaire is a street movement founded in 2003 and led by Fabrice Roberts, former member of the dissolved Unité Radicale party.[81] It is associated with a number of other French regionalist movements including Alsace d'Abord, Nissa Rebela and La Ligue du Midi. Together they call themselves the 'Identity Movement'.[82] Roberts plans to build up a local network of elected officials to wield political power, modelling the party on Italy's Lega Nord.[83] In 2009, Bloc Identitaire became a formal political party claiming to be 'left' of the Front National.[84]

The group calls itself 'identitarian', as opposed to nationalist, because it defends regional and European identity as well as national identity. It opposes consumerism and globalisation, claiming the latter causes social injustice.[85] One of the campaign's major initiatives was the launch of a brand of soupe au cochon (pork soup) at a Parisian soup kitchen, aimed at excluding Muslims.[86] The symbol of Bloc Identitaire is a black wild boar, chosen in part as a gibe at Muslims.[87]

The movement campaigns against the Islamisation of Europe, illegal immigration and 'anti-white' racism.[88] It aims to appeal to young people to get involved in their campaigns.[89] One of the campaigns was 'a soup for ours before others'.[90] One of the campaign's major initiatives was the launch of a brand of soupe au cochon (pork soup) at a Parisian soup kitchen, aimed at excluding Muslims. In 2007 a judge overturned a ban on the group's activities in Paris, saying that there was no evidence to suggest that the group refused to serve Jews and Muslims, and so the group did not discriminate against them.[91]

British National Party, UK

John Tyndall, a former founder of the National Front, founded the BNP in 1982.[92] Tyndall was a highly controversial figure in British politics, largely because of his former role as deputy leader of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement.[93] The party's most notable electoral successes came in 2006, when it won 12 out of the 13 seats it contested on the Barking and Dagenham local council, and in 2009, when two BNP politicians—including Nick Griffin, the current party leader—were elected to the European Parliament.[94] In 2010, it lost all 12 seats on the council.[95] In the same year, it changed its policy of only allowing white people to be members.[96]

The BNP's trademark issue is its staunch anti-immigration position.[97] While the party is not overtly anti-Islam, in 2009 Griffin said, 'Islam and our society don't mix.'[98] The BNP seeks to end all immigration to the UK, to deport all illegal immigrants, to deport all foreign-born criminals, to reject all asylum seekers who passed safe countries en route to Britain, and to offer resettlement grants to foreigners who are here legally.[99] The BNP claims to want Britain to 'remain—or return to—the way it has traditionally been', citing the belief that in less than 60 years, white Britons will be a minority in the UK.[100]

Griffin has also courted controversy through various appearances on current affairs programmes such as BBC's Question Time and at universities such as Trinity College Dublin. Despite polling well in some local and European elections, the BNP has yet to achieve a wider electoral breakthrough. Commentators note that a dearth of activism and money has dashed its hopes in the 2011 elections, and that the party has failed to connect with constituents beyond older, less educated voters.[101]

CasaPound Italia, Italy [102]

CasaPound Italia is a prominent far-right youth street organisation in Italy that takes its name from the American expatriate and prolific author Ezra Pound, a defender of fascism and supporter of his resident Italy during the Second World War. It began in 2003 with the occupation of a state-owned building in Rome by student right-wingers. The occupation of buildings and public spaces became central to the rise of CasaPound Italia in Rome, where its ties remain strongest, and throughout Italy, especially northern Italy. CasaPound Italia's occupied spaces have been, and continue to be, sites of communal engagement—political discussion, sports and musical performance, prominently centred around the band ZetaZeroAlfa, which features CasaPound Italia's leader, Gianluca Iannone.

Their policy positions and rhetoric are grounded in economic populism and scepticism of free markets when they do not work in the best interest of Italian workers. Invoking a complex roster of characters as diverse as JRR Tolkien and Che Guevera to justify its policy aims, CasaPound Italia infuses market-sceptical economic populism with rebellious anti-statist contrarianism, all alongside traditional family values. The seemingly paradoxical ideology hangs together through a nationalist focus on the problems of 'real' Italians. It is fitting that CasaPound Italia began as a squatters' movement, as one of its foremost concerns is housing policy; the organisation once proposed a bill that would afford a right to own property to all white Italians. One of the policy proposals that has gained the most traction would allow citizens to purchase property at cost (no one makes a profit) from the state; this 'social mortgage' programme has attracted widespread support from the current government. Other CasaPound Italia policy objectives include combating rising consumer prices, and reducing the number of mothers who have to work.

CasaPound Italia's way of doing politics remains grounded in the street, and therefore exhibits a deeply avant-garde character despite serious political organisation and influence throughout northern Italy. Squatting and building occupations have been supplemented by rallies, demonstrations and a regular radio broadcast. Supporters have hung mannequins to represent Italians strangled

by the housing crisis, and invaded the set of Big Brother to emphasise the misuse of housing resources. Casting themselves as 'Third Millenium Fascists,' members emphasise their ties to Mussolini's ideology while simultaneously presenting themselves as serious contributors to contemporary political discourse and policy reform. CasaPound Italia has been extremely successful at mobilising poor, angry, white Italians. Ties are numerous between CasaPound Italia and established party apparatuses and continue to solidify and extend; the editor of the CasaPound Italia 'fanzine' Noise 451 is the son of one of the former leaders of the far right-wing political party Terza Posicione.

Dansk Folkeparti ('Danish People's Party'), Denmark

The Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) is the third largest political party in Denmark. It was founded in 1995, with Pia Kjærsgaard elected as its leader at their first national convention in 1996, and rose to prominence in 2001 as the Conservative People's Party and Venstre (the Liberal Party) needed its support in order to form a majority government. Since that time, while not holding any cabinet-level positions, it has continued successfully to condition its support of the coalition advancement of its policy agenda. It wrote most of the immigration law endorsed by the coalition in 2002.[103] It won 13.8 per cent of the vote in the 2007 parliamentary election, and it holds two seats in the European Parliament, with one of its members winning more votes in 2009 than any other candidate.

As stated in its party programme:

The aim of the Danish People's Party is to assert Denmark's independence, to guarantee the freedom of the Danish people in their own country, and to preserve and promote representative government and the monarchy.[104]

It defends the independence of Denmark — from the threats of foreign cultures and what it takes to be

the sovereignty-eroding aspirations of the European Union — and explicitly renounces the idea of Denmark as a multiethnic society: 'Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been.'[105]

While Denmark once recognised a right to asylum on humanitarian grounds — 60 per cent of applications for which were once approved — DPP-backed immigration policy replaced that provision with the bare minimum required by the Geneva Conventions. It also cut social benefits to refugees by 30–40 per cent and imposed demanding new financial conditions on whether one could bring a non-Danish spouse into Denmark, causing many Danes to live across the border in Sweden with their foreign spouses and commute across the Oeresund Bride to Denmark each day. In response to Swedish criticism of such isolationist reforms, Danish People's Party leader and cofounder Pia Kjaersgaard responded: 'If they want to turn Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmo into a Scandinavian Beirut, with clan wars, honour killings and gang rapes, let them do it. We can always put a barrier on the Oeresund Bridge.'[106]

The party play on their anti-establishment image and their main line is that ordinary people have been abandoned by privileged, elitist politicians. The Danish People's Party favours a strong welfare state for Danes, including an equality-assuring educational system that teaches practical skills in addition to instilling appreciation for and knowledge of Danish history, culture, and language. Public financing of healthcare, especially for vulnerable members of the community such as the elderly, is considered morally essential. In this way, the Danish People's Party familiarly blends strong nationalist and social conservative positions with left-wing economic policies.

The Danish People's Party has a separate youth branch, also established in 1995, shortly after the main party was established. In 2002 it was recorded as having 688 members, but there has been no public update on this figure.[107] There has been a history of crossover in membership between DF Ungdom and other more extreme street-based movements

such as White Pride and Combat 18.[108] DF Ungdom refused a request for an interview as part of this project on the grounds that it did not want to be associated with street-based movements like the EDL.

English Defence League, UK

The English Defence League (EDL) was formed of the United Peoples of Luton, which itself was created in 2009 in response to a protest against the Royal Anglian Regiment by the Islamist group Al-Muhajiroun.[109] The key issue for the EDL, much like the BNP, is the sense that British national identity is at risk of being permanently corrupted by Islamic influence. The EDL is overtly anti-Islam and it staunchly opposes the implementation and influence of Sharia law in British society.[110] While it publicly promotes an image of liberalism, inclusion and tolerance, chants heard at its marches or language used at in its chat rooms sometimes suggests otherwise.

It bills itself as a 'human rights organisation' which stands opposed to the 'religiously-inspired intolerance and barbarity' of some segments of the Muslim community, including 'denigration and oppression of women, the molestation of young children, the committing of so-called honour killings, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and continued support for those responsible for terrorist atrocities'.[111] Two current campaigns include introducing stricter regulations for halal meat and ending the construction of mosques in England.[112]

The EDL is not a political party, though according to group leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, it apparently has some electoral aspirations.[113] It does not have strict membership guidelines, but has a formidable online presence. The EDL has divisions for Jewish, gay, Sikh and female supporters.[114] There are national, regional and local divisions, along with sister organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The EDL is no stranger to controversy, and its marches and demonstrations frequently attract a large police presence and sometimes thousands of anti-fascist counter-protestors. It has frequently been accused of using intimidating tactics; for

instance, it staged a protest outside the home of Muslim MEP Sajjad Karim, and journalists have accused EDL supporters of issuing death threats.[115] Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik is believed to have been a supporter of the EDL, having joined the group's Facebook page, though the EDL denies any and all links with Breivik and decries acts of terrorism.[116]

Front National ('National Front'), France

The Front National (FN) was founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen.[117] Le Pen was a divisive figure, infamous for his dismissive comments about the Holocaust and holding numerous convictions for racism and anti-Semitism. His support came from a mixed group of conservative Catholics, supporters of the Vichy regime and protest voters.[118] Le Pen achieved electoral success in 2002 when he beat the then Socialist prime minister to enter the second round of the French presidential elections.[119] But his support collapsed after 2002, and he came fourth in the 2007 presidential elections, receiving only 10.4 per cent of the vote.[120]

In 2010 the FN made a surprise comeback in the regional elections,[121] and gained further support when Le Pen stepped down and his daughter, Marine Le Pen, was elected as the new leader of the party earlier this year. She has embarked on a process of detoxifying the party, styling herself as a defender of the republic and the welfare state and strenuously denying anti-Semitism.[122]

Marine Le Pen has refocused the party onto the issues of immigration and Islam. She describes her position on immigration in France as 'nothing to do with racism, it's an economic problem'. She protests at the 'Islamification' of France and says that she wants to defend republican values, feminism and secularism from Muslim extremists. She argues that everyone in France should be made to adhere to French laws and principles, and claims that, while Islam is compatible with Western values, Sharia law is not. She also opposes free-market capitalism and globalisation, and wants France to pull out of the Euro.[123]

Partij voor de Vrijheid ('Dutch Party for Freedom'), The Netherlands

Charismatic leader Geert Wilders, formerly a member of the centre-right Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD; People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), founded the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) in 2004.[124] In 2006 it won nine out of 150 seats in the Dutch parliament. In 2010 it won 24 seats, more than the Christian Democrats, and, while not a formal member of the current coalition, the Dutch Government relies on the PVV for support. Recent polls show the PVV almost level with the VVD, the leading partner in the coalition.[125]

Central to the programme of the PVV is immigration policy. Wilders has claimed there is a direct connection between immigration and problems with welfare, infrastructure, housing and transport.[126] The party focuses its attacks on Muslim immigration. It wants an end to immigration from Islamic countries, all Muslim criminals deported and others paid to leave.[127] Further policies include the banning of mosques and Islamic schools[128] and the introduction of a tax on headscarves. The party opposes the EU, claiming that the European constitution undermines national sovereignty, and is against development aid.[129] On economic policy it holds a populist position, arguing for more spending but lower taxes.[130]

Wilders has achieved notoriety for his incendiary comments on Islam. He has called for a ban on the Koran, describing it as the 'Islamic Mein Kampf',[131] and has claimed that nearly all terrorists are Muslims. Wilders portrays himself as a moderate, and distances himself from the Front National, the Austrian Freedom Party and far-right groups in Italy.[132] He styles his critique of Islam as a defence of human rights, questioning Islam's stance on women's rights and gay rights, and saying that he is only 'intolerant of the intolerant'.[133] He makes a distinction between Muslims and the ideology of Islam, saying, 'I don't hate Muslims. I hate their book and their ideology.'[134] As a consequence of such statements, he was taken to court at the end of 2010 on charges of discrimination and inciting hatred against Muslims, but was found not guilty.[135]

Die Freiheit ('Freedom'), Germany

The German group Die Freiheit was founded in October 2010 and is led by René Stadtkewitz, a former member of the Christian Democrats.[136] The party's slogan is 'The party for more freedom and democracy'.[137] Stadtkewitz is an admirer of Geert Wilders, and aims to achieve with Die Freiheit what Wilders has achieved with the PVV in the Netherlands. He is described by *Der Spiegel* as 'the German Geert Wilders'.[138]

Stadtkewitz is a virulent critic of Islam. He describes his decision to lead a protest movement in 2005 against the building of a mosque in Berlin as a life-changing moment. He distinguishes between Muslims, Islam as a religion, and Islam as a political ideology; it is the latter that he attacks, describing it as dangerous.[139] The party opposes 'Islamisation' and expresses support for Israel.[140]

Die Freiheit's programme supports the introduction of a Swiss-style direct democracy, welfare reform focused on community work and lower taxes. It is critical of the EU and the Eurozone rescue. It advocates a freeze on immigration and a reform of integration policy, maintaining all immigration must be stopped until immigrants comply with liberal values such as freedom of expression.[141] In late 2010 Stadtkewitz visited Israel with representatives from the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Vlaams Belang and the Sweden Democrats.[142] There they issued the 'Jerusalem Declaration', a statement arguing for the protection of Western Judeo-Christian values from Islamic fundamentalism.[143]

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs ('Austria Freedom Party'), Austria

The Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ; Austrian Freedom Party) was founded in 1956, but rose to prominence in the 1980s as it formed a coalition government with the Social

Democratic Party. The peak of its political success was in 1999, when it won 26.9 per cent of the national vote and entered a coalition government with the Austrian People's Party. Citizens were unimpressed by FPÖ governance, however, and it won a mere 10 per cent of votes in the 2002 election. While the People's Party agreed to sustain their alliance, influential FPÖ members left the party to form their own Alliance for the Future of Austria, which took the FPÖ's place.

The FPÖ's disastrous reign in power was largely the result of a backlash from other European nations, which imposed sanctions on Austria because of the FPÖ's rabid anti-EU and anti-multicultural agenda: '[T]he admission of the FPÖ into a coalition government', announced the European Union, 'legitimises the extreme right in Europe.' Moreover, working-class supporters were unhappy that the FPÖ backtracked on some of its protectionist economic promises to support the People's Party's agenda, exacerbating fissures within the party.

The FPÖ's economic policies tend to be libertarian, favouring lower taxes and privatisation, and advocating for less government intervention in the market. It emphasises citizens' control over their government by encouraging referenda and the direct election of the president. Warning against rising Islamisation, the FPÖ's slogan was once 'Austria First', advocating the importance of restricting immigration and preserving traditional Austrian culture. In autumn 2011 FPÖ is polling extremely closely to the other major parties, whom FPÖ leader Heinz Christian Strache hopes to compete against during the next election in 2013.[144]

Fremskrittspartiet ('Norwegian Progress Party'), Norway

The Fremskrittspartiet (FrP; Norwegian Progress Party) was founded by Anders Lange in 1973. Initially named Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention, it was established on a relatively narrow anti-tax and anti-bureaucracy platform. Today the FrP

advocates smaller government, economic liberalisation and individual liberty, while also placing strong emphasis on the need to address immigration.[145]

In recent years the FrP has experienced a steady growth in public support and considerable electoral success. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, it became Norway's second largest party, winning 38 out of 169 seats. In 2009, it increased its share of the vote to 22.9 per cent — its best result to date.[146] Its membership has also doubled over the past decade to reach approximately 27,000.[147]

The party and its views on immigration have recently been thrown into the media spotlight following the revelation that Anders Breivik — perpetrator of Norway's July 2011 killings — had at one time been a member.[148] Ms Siv Jensen, leader of the FrP since 2006, has been quick to distance the party from Breivik, stating that it is 'embarrassed, disgusted and truly sad that Anders Breivik was once a member'.[149] However, she has concurrently emphasised the need for continued debate on immigration, integration and radical Islam.[150]

The FrP has taken a tough stance on these issues, calling for a decrease in the number of immigrants permitted into Norway and stressing the need for their assimilation into Norwegian society.[151] It has also warned against the danger of 'sneak-Islamisation' and objected to special measures being taken to accommodate Islamic beliefs and traditions.[152] The party, however, adamantly denies that it is either anti-Islamic or that it promotes a far-right agenda.[153] It has downplayed similarities with what it considers to be extremist Nordic parties, saying of the Sweden Democrats: 'the Progress Party sees no reason to ally itself with that party, and we have very little in common with them.'[154]

Despite the FrP's insistence that it forms part of the political mainstream, Norway's other opposition parties have historically refused to cooperate with it. There are, however, indications that this attitude may be changing — increasing the likelihood that the party could form part of a coalition government after the 2013 parliamentary elections.[155]

Lega Nord ('Northern League'), Italy

The Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania (Northern League for the Independence of Padania) is a crucial coalition partner with Il Popolo della Libertà (the Party of Freedom) in the current government of Premier Silvio Berlusconi. It galvanised political support in the early 1990s through its vocal denunciation of corruption scandals in Rome. Support for Lega Nord rose from 5.7 per cent of the national vote in 2005 to 12.7 per cent in 2010.[156] It holds 85 of 945 seats in Parliament. While Lega Nord's most fundamental aim is the independence — or at least increased autonomy — of northern Italy, its initially one-issue regionalist agenda has expanded to include a broader array of political objectives. While it initially favoured same-sex marriage and legalised marijuana, it has moved rightward on social issues over the past decade and now opposes abortion, same-sex marriage, stem cell research and euthanasia. It fuses social conservatism with a moderate economic libertarianism, opposing government intervention in the free market and advocating generally for low taxes, especially for private citizens and small business entrepreneurs. Lega Nord was a vocal critic of bank bailouts in Italy.

Lega Nord is widely criticised in Italy for being racist and xenophobic. It insists that these perceptions rest on misunderstandings of its tough-on-crime policies, particularly its opposition to illegal immigration. Lega Nord has incurred the ire of human rights organisations concerned about party leader Umberto Bossi's suggestion that the Italian navy fire on all boats with illegal immigrants heading for the Italian coast.[157] (Incendiary comments from Bossi are familiar fodder for the Italian press; Bossi once suggested that violence ought be deployed against leftists in response to their alleged attempts to rig ballots in Italy.[158]) Factions in Lega Nord emphasise the significance of counterbalancing Muslim immigration by encouraging increased immigration from Christian countries in order to maintain Italy's Christian heritage. The concern for sustaining the status quo is even more parochial: Lega Nord regularly criticises southern Italian culture, disparages the unified Italian flag, and foments distrust of Rome.

Despite its reputation, the League has long officially resisted any ascription of anti-minority sentiments, rejecting vehemently an article in 1992 that classified it alongside parties like Marine le Pen's Front National and the Austrian Freedom Party.[159] The party is eager to remind Italians that the first black mayor in Italy is a member of the League, and that one of its coordinators is a Muslim-raised Tunisian immigrant.

Perussuomalaiset ('True Finns'), Finland

The True Finns, founded in 1995 as a spin-off group of the dissolved Finnish Rural Party, received 19 per cent of the votes in the most recent parliamentary elections in April 2011. While their rise was aided by an electoral scandal that sidetracked the major parties, their success is unmistakably linked to the populist attraction toward their fundamental message: why should fiscally responsible northerners be forced to subsidise the reckless budgetary antics of unscrupulous and incompetent southerners?[160] The True Finns constitute the political home of Finnish euroscepticism, railing against European integration and bailouts of southern European states. Much to the relief of Eurozone bureaucrats and supporters, eager to assure investors that populist movements weren't going to derail Europe's commitment to pay its bills once elected to government, the True Finns were excluded from the coalition that formed several months ago.[161]

Like other Scandinavian populist movements, the True Finns defy the traditional left–right dichotomy, uniting left-wing economic policies with right-wing social policies. Its support for a robust welfare state accounts for why the Finns are seated at the centre-left position in the Finnish Parliament. True Finns oppose same-sex marriage and adoption, and advocate a much more nationalist array of educational policies, wanting students to learn less Swedish and more about traditional Finnish values. Their immigration

policy, one of their showcase agendas, centres on proposals to deport immigrants who have committed crimes; to take no more refugees than required by quotas; but also to permit immigrants who have a clean criminal record, knowledge of Finnish language, and steady employment to become Finnish nationals after five years.

Timo Soini, the True Finns' leader, was the party's presidential candidate in 2006, and today is a popular member of the European Parliament—elected with the highest vote share of any candidate in Finland.

Sverigedemokraterna ('Sweden Democrats'), Sweden

The Sverigedemokraterna (SD; Sweden Democrats) were founded in 1988, but only received the requisite number of votes to receive representation in the Swedish Parliament in 2010, polling 5.7 per cent.[162] While the group was initially accused of having Nazi ties, and drew inspiration from groups like Front National, it pursued a strategy of moderation during the 1990s that widened its appeal and even persuaded a member of the Moderate Party to switch parties. Nevertheless the Swedish prime minister has refused to invite the Sweden Democrats into government, intent that the centre-right not become dependent for its political success on the polarising agenda of the far-right. The Sweden Democrats view their 2010 victory as an opportunity to make their voice heard throughout the country; many Swedes were shocked by the victory, which has forced discontent over immigration into the foreground of public discourse.

The Sweden Democrats contend that excessive immigration has crippled Swedish solidarity, straining economic and social relations among citizens. They claim that their slogan—'Keep Sweden Swedish'—is not about racism but the rejection of multiculturalism. Contending that Sweden's integration policy has failed, the Sweden Democrats advocate heavy restrictions on immigration and incentives for current immigrants to return to their home countries. They have expressed scepticism about the special group rights

granted to indigenous Sami in northern Sweden. The group is broadly socially conservative, tending to oppose adoption rights for same-sex couples, though members have invoked the welfare of sexual minorities as a reason to resist increased 'Islamisation'.

The Sweden Democrats, whom several Swedish papers have banned from advertising because of their allegedly hate-mongering agenda, have over the past few years injected themselves into the broader European discussion over Islam, immigration and multiculturalism. After the Danish cartoon crisis inspired a boycott of Danish products across the Middle East, the Sweden Democrats organised a campaign to encourage the purchase of such products. It also ran its own cartoon on its website, depicting a faceless Muhammad, which government ministers allegedly ordered the internet service provider to remove, costing one minister his job. The cartoon prompted hate speech charges against the Sweden Democrats. More recently, the Sweden Democrats received press in relation to the Norwegian massacre, as a member implied there was Muslim involvement before the revelation of the shooter's identity. After the killer's identity was revealed, the comments nevertheless continued. 'Breivik is a product of the multicultural society,' announced Sweden Democrat MP Erik Hellsborn. 'If Europe had not become multicultural then the shootings would not have happened.'[163] The Sweden Democrats have not officially endorsed these comments, which feed the perception among leftists that the party is fundamentally Islamophobic and xenophobic.

Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest'), Belgium

Led by Bruno Valkeniers, Vlaams Belang is an anti-Islam party seeking independence for Flanders. It has connections to the Front National, Lega Nord and the Austrian Freedom Party.[164] The party was established in 2004 after Belgian judges ruled its predecessor, Vlaams Bloc, was a 'racist' organisation, resulting in a loss of state funding and its subsequent reformation. It had been reported that Vlaams Bloc was a party of 'skinheads,

Nazi collaborators and white supremacists'.[165] Vlaams Belang has since moderated its rhetoric and softened its policy on immigration. In the 2007 election, it won nearly 20 per cent of the vote in Flanders. Support, however, has fallen recently on the increase in the vote for the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA; New Flemish Alliance), a more moderate pro-independence party.[166]

The party describes itself as nationalist and on the right. It advocates the dissolution of the Belgian state and the independence of Flanders, arguing that the stalemate in the Belgian government is a result of the cultural differences between Flemings and Walloons. It argues for 'Flemish money in Flemish hands', opposing the transfer of wealth from Flanders to Wallonia, which it estimates costs the Flemish people over €12 billion each year.[167]

On immigration, the party supports strict controls and the abolition of the naturalisation law.[168] It wants to transform schools with high proportions of Muslims into integration schools, where classes focus on language, European norms and values.[169] It also argues for a 're-migration' policy for those Muslims who do not accept Western values such as women's rights and freedom of speech. In other areas, Vlaams Belang has a zero tolerance approach to crime and opposes a European federal state.[170]

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29 'Perche da sempre si batte contro lo spreco del centralismo romano. Perchè si batte per la salvaguardia delle tradizioni. Del territorio e dei prodotti italiani. Perchè da sempre si batte contro la mafia e l'invasione islamica e per un integrazione con regole chiare e non a danno degli italiani.'

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31 'Fordi de fremmede stille og rolig kvæler vores dejlige land og overtager på sigt ved at de får alle de børn og familiesammenførringer og så har 3 og 4 generation endnu mindre opdragelse eller ret sagt..ingen opdragelse.'

32 'Vorrei rispedirli a casa loro,anziche mantenerli e agevolarli per un lavoro... farebbe prima comodo a noi italiani trovarlo come nel mio caso che sono disoccupato.'

33 ‘La france perd ses coutumes, tradition. Il y a beaucoup trop d'étranger et il faudrait presque avoir honte d'être blanc et d'aimer son pays.’

34 ‘Min påbrå kommer från östeuropa men mina föräldrar lärde mig att man ska ta seden dit man kommer. Respektera det land man kommit till och smälta in. Plötsligt vill andra partier något helt annat. Det funkar inte i längden. Jag vill bo i Sverige inte ett multikultifjasko.’

35 ‘Les mensonges éperdus de la caste MPS, l’otharcie dans laquelle ils vivent pendant que le peuple Français fait face à pleins de crainte comme l’insécurité, l’immigration massive et la classe moyenne qui trinque toujours.’

36 ‘Odio i politici fanno tutti schifo, specialmente quando arrivano alla poltrona del comando. Uno per l’altro scelgo qualcuno che difende i miei luoghi.’

37 ‘Vi skal have gjort noget ved alle de muslimer der har besat vores land. Det bruger jeg al min tid på, og skriver jævnligt til jeres presseansvarlig ang. Det massive muslimproblem som hele verdenen oplever.|

38 ‘Jag vill få stopp på islamiseringen av sverige… Hindra kvinnoförtryck av islamiska kvinnor genom att förbjuda burkan i offentlig miljö.’

39 ‘La hausse des prix, l’incapacité de payer nos dettes malgrès que nous travaillons mon mari et moi. Plus aucune perspective d’avenir tant que l’état continuera à nous prendre le peu d’argent que l’on gagne. L’incapacité de l’état à s’occuper des honnêtes gens qui travaillent et qui malgrès tout ont du mal à manger et à nourrir nos enfants à chaque fin de mois.’

40 ‘Det er det parti der kommer tættets på mine egne holdninger. Men hvor bliver bekymringen om vores børn af? Altså dem der skal føre det danske samfund videre. Forstår ikke at der skal spares så meget på børn og ubge området. Vi vil alle gerne leve i et velfærds samfund, men ingen tænker på at de endivider der skal føre landet vider er ved at blive tabt på gulvet pga alle basparelserne!’

41 ‘Le ras le bol et l’envie de changement pour une durabilité et une stabilité dans le système emploi, finance, et surtout mettre un frein à l’immigration et stopper le social qui fait mal aux porte-monnaies des français d’origine Français depuis de siècles. Stop à l’immigration, au social, à la ponction exagérée dans le porte monnaie pour les étrangers. Et donnez moi du travail.’

42 Interestingly, in contrast to anti-Islam sentiment, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma references were very low across all the surveyed target groups, each making up less than 1 per cent of responses.

43 The EDL is not included in this table because there are differences in the content of the question asked to that group of respondents. Eurobarometer averages are for all 27 EU countries.

44 The Eurobarometer question is worded: ‘Would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in your [country]?’

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56 p=.001

57 p=.001

58 p=.001

59 15 per cent; p=0.05

60 p=.004

61 p=.001

62 p=.005

63 p=.001

64 p=.205

65 p=.001

66 p=.002

67 p=.001

68 p=.001

69 p=.008

70 p=.001

71 p=.001

72 This refers to the total number of Facebook groups that identified with the party or movement in question. Figures in brackets relate to where a group was targeted, which included a broader interest than just the party in question.

73 This refers to the total number of individuals that were targeted. Because of Facebook's advertising system, this number is liable to fluctuate, and so we record here the numbers targeted when the survey was started. Similarly, the figures in brackets refer to the total number of group individuals. Weighting and extrapolated results were calculated only against the specific group membership.

74 This refers to the number of separate occasions on which the advert appeared on the sidebars of individuals targeted.

75 This refers to the total number of times that individuals targeted clicked the link taking them to the survey page, inviting them to take part.

76 This refers to the total number of individuals that completed the survey. The final data set only includes those that remained after the data were cleaned for trolls.

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Populist parties and movements are now a force to be reckoned with in many Western European countries. These groups are known for their opposition to immigration, their 'anti-establishment' views and their concern for protecting national culture. Their rise in popularity has gone hand-in-hand with the advent of social media, and they are adept at using new technology to amplify their message, recruit and organise.

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The New Face of Digital Populism calls on mainstream politicians to respond and address concerns over immigration and cultural identity without succumbing to xenophobic solutions. People must be encouraged to become actively involved in political and civic life, whatever their political persuasion—it is important to engage and debate forcefully with these parties and their supporters, not shut them out as beyond the pale.

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