Economic Risk within the Household and Voting for the Radical Right

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Abstract

This article investigates how unemployment risk within households affects voting for the radical right. We contribute to recent advances in the literature that have highlighted the role of economic threat for understanding the support of radical right parties. In contrast to existing work, we do not treat voters as atomistic individuals but investigate households as a crucial site of preference formation. Combining large-scale labor market data with comparative survey data, we confirm the expectations of our "latent economic risk-in-context" framework by demonstrating that the impact of occupational unemployment risk on radical right support is strongly conditioned by household risk constellations. Voting for the radical right is not only a function of a voters' own but also their partner's risk. We provide additional evidence on the extent to which these effects are gendered and on the mechanisms linking household risk and party choice. Our results imply that much of the existing literature on individual risk exposure potentially underestimates the impact on political behavior due to the neglect of multiplier effects within households.

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1 Introduction

The current success of populist radical right parties has led to a wave of public attention as well as renewed academic interest in this development. The literature on the main driving forces behind the vote for radical right parties has long been dominated by non-economic explanations based on anti-immigration attitudes and racial resentment. However, widespread political dissatisfaction in the aftermath of the Great Recession, whose adverse impact on labor markets has been aggravated by additional economic pressure from international trade and automation, has put some of the spotlight back on economic roots of right-wing populism.

In contrast to pioneering studies with a narrow focus on individuals' immediate material circumstances, more recent work has recognized the need for a more nuanced understanding of economic anxiety. We advance this burgeoning literature by systematically integrating two important conceptual extensions into a comprehensive analysis of the structural economic roots of radical right support. The first extension follows from the realization that common indicators of objective hardship leave us well short of understanding the main motivation behind political dissatisfaction and its manifestation in the electoral arena. Economic shocks resulting from job loss or substantial income drops are understood to have predictable but transient influence on political attitudes and even more limited impact on voting behavior in general (Margalit 2019b) and populist support in particular (Margalit 2019a). Instead, somewhat richer conceptualizations of *latent economic risk* may be more promising to explain radical right support (Rovny & Rovny 2017; Cohen 2018; Gidron & Hall 2017; Mutz 2018; Kurer 2020). The second crucial extension builds on the intuition that an individualistic perspective on voters' economic circumstances might be misleading. Building on long-standing insights of social psychology research, various recent studies in different subfields of the social sciences have adopted the understanding that perceptions and political preferences depend on the *context conditions* in which individuals form opinions and against which they juxtapose their own economic situation (Incantalupo 2011; Western et al. 2012; Aytaç 2017; Burgoon & Rooduijn 2017).

Our approach systematically integrates these theoretical and empirical insights by examining the explanatory power of *latent economic risk-in-context* to explain radical right support. On the one hand, we take latent threats seriously by studying uncertainty about economic conditions rather than socio-economic endowment (e.g. income) or materialized hardship (e.g. unemployment). More specifically, adding to recent studies that have started to look into various forms of a looming threat of economic decline, we examine whether occupational unemployment risk is systematically related to supporting radical right parties. On the other hand, we take context seriously by taking into account individuals' family and household situation, thereby integrating a key premise of the work-family role system (e.g. Pleck 1977; Shelton & John 1996; Western et al. 2012) into the often individualistic study of electoral behavior. Most voters do not live on their own but cohabit with a partner or share their home with a family. And since most contemporary households no longer fit the traditional image of a single (male) breadwinner responsible for a family's standard of living, an individualistic perspective is in danger of missing important aspects of the societal consequences of economic risk and household mobility (DiPrete & McManus 2000). The household may be an important site of preference formation because individuals cognitively pool economic resources so that they build their political preferences based on household risk rather than personal risk alone (Becker 1974, 1991).

In order to test our theoretical expectations, we calculate economic risks for disaggregated occupational groups on the basis of large-scale labor survey data (EU-SILC) in 16 West European countries. We then combine this indicator of labor market vulnerability with the European Social Survey (ESS). In contrast to most other comparative social science surveys, the ESS provides detailed information not only on respondents' own but also on other household members' occupational situation. This allows us to merge the indicators of unemployment risk on respondents as well as on their spouses, which yields the crucial information on within-household constellations of economic vulnerability.

Our analysis provides strong evidence for the relevance of the household-insecurity frame-

work. We first provide consistent evidence for a positive link between individual economic risk and vote choice. Occupational unemployment risk is systematically related to supporting radical right parties (while current unemployment status is not). This link is then put into perspective by taking into account different household constellations. We find significant household effects that substantially improve our understanding of the link between economic conditions and party choice. We provide evidence that support for the radical right is a function not only of individual economic risk but of household risk more generally: voters incorporate their partner's economic conditions in their vote calculus and adjust their own political behavior accordingly. Importantly, our findings indicate that voters do not pool economic risks in a way that a low-risk spouse can compensate for a high-risk partner. Instead, we find that one high-risk individual per household is sufficient to significantly increase the probability of supporting the radical right among all household members. Finally, we also assess gender-asymmetric effects and find — in line with previous sociological work on household income dynamics (e.g. DiPrete & McManus 2000) — that individual risk plays a more important risk for men.

Our findings have far-reaching implications. They provide a comprehensive analysis of economic risk as a determinant of electoral behavior. We show that – adequately conceptualized – economic circumstances need to be taken seriously for understanding patterns of radical right support (cf. Margalit 2019a). Importantly, political parties may channel such anxieties in a programmatic direction that resonates with their electorate and radical right parties have successfully mobilized a sense of collective status threat among national ethnic majority groups (Bonikowski 2017). The crucial implication is that fundamentally economic shocks may result in non-economic (or not purely economic) political manifestations (Rodrik 2018; Pardos-Prado & Xena 2019). In addition, our findings demonstrate that household composition, often ignored in research on electoral behavior, plays a substantial role in individual preference formation. Crucially, ignoring material and non-material spillover effects within households may result in considerable underestimation of the role that economic risk plays in voting for the radical right and for political behavior more generally.

2 Socio-Economic Conditions and the Radical Right

2.1 The Role of Latent Threat: Economic Risk

Traditional approaches to explain right-wing populism based on economic grounds exist in two flavors. A first interpretation is concerned with increasingly insecure labor market prospects in times of globalization and has focused on economic nationalism as a an appealing offer for those who feel threatened by cheap foreign labor (e.g. Scheve & Slaughter 2004; Mughan et al. 2003; Colantone & Stanig 2018). The second channel through which economic concerns could translate into support for the radical right is the welfare state. Rather than competition on labor markets, voters might fear distributional conflicts between natives and immigrants when it comes to public spending (Lefkofridi & Michel 2014; Cavaille & Ferwerda 2019). However, many studies that rely on these traditional economic approaches and investigate the political implications of economic hardship in absolute terms do not find a relationship between, for example, unemployment and radical right voting (Norris 2005; Ivarsflaten 2007).

In contrast, our focus here is on economic risk, i.e. uncertainty related to a latent threat of adverse economic shocks in the future rather than currently materialized economic conditions. Risk-based approaches have attracted a lot of interest especially in the welfare literature and have proved their explanatory power with respect to social policy preferences (Rehm 2009; Burgoon & Dekker 2010; Häusermann et al. 2015; Rehm 2016). However, much more rarely have these measures been used to explain political behavior. The scarcity of evidence results in an ongoing scholarly debate about the role of labor market risk in shaping vote choice in general and support for radical right parties in particular. The few existing studies that have argued for a link between labor market risk and radical right voting (Rovny & Rovny 2017; Cohen 2018) have been challenged in a recent symposium on the political repercussions of labor market inequality (Häusermann et al. 2020). Essentially, "labor market outsiders", who are particularly prevalent in the service sector, should not be mistaken for the working-

class supporters of right-wing populist parties typically found in routine and manufacturing occupations (Häusermann 2020).

Against the backdrop of this unresolved debate, we first wish to discuss the theoretical channels that may connect economic risk to voters' propensity to support the radical right. The traditional insurance logic in the political economy literature (e.g. Cusack et al. 2006) suggests that voters react similarly to risk exposure as to the experience of absolute economic hardship. As an insurance against potential future job or income loss, voters demand policies that guarantee social protection. Such demands could either result in support for left parties who are the most credible providers of a generous welfare state or in support for radical right parties who promise authoritarian solutions to reduce competition by immigrants regarding both labor markets and welfare states (Rovny & Rovny 2017; Pardos-Prado & Xena 2019; Cavaille & Ferwerda 2019).

A recent strand in the literature has brought up a different explanation that suggests a somewhat different mechanism. Various studies have examined the role of nostalgia (Gest et al. 2017), social pessimism (Steenvoorden & Harteveld 2018), recognition gaps (Lamont 2018) or status threat and fear of societal regression (Gidron & Hall 2017; Kurer 2020) as important drivers behind radical right voting. These contributions share the understanding that populist radical right parties thrive on a program that emphasizes an idealized past rather than attracting voters with concrete policy remedies against perceived disadvantages. Economic risk would thus lead to support for the radical right as a form of protest against the vagaries of economic modernization and mainstream parties' continued support for the politics of liberal and globally-integrated advanced capitalist societies.

2.2 The Role of Context Conditions: Household Constellation

We argue that the inclusion of the household is necessary in order to arrive at a more encompassing understanding of the relationship between economic risk and support for the radical right. While the overwhelming majority of social science research studies political attitudes as attitudes of atomistic individuals, there is strong reason to expect that voters do not form preferences in isolation but depending on a multitude of context conditions and reference points (Incantalupo 2011; Western et al. 2012; Aytaç 2017; Burgoon & Rooduijn 2017; Kurer et al. 2018; Burgoon et al. 2018). In particular, persons who share a household budget and interact frequently will influence each other's political preferences (e.g. Ahlquist et al. 2015; Häusermann et al. 2016; Foos & de Rooij 2017; Daenekindt et al. 2020). Structural economic pressure is not only experienced directly but often in mediated form, which manifests itself in concern for one's social group and results in grievances that are at least as much sociotropic as individual (Bonikowski 2017). Of all social units, such influence is most likely to characterize households and, especially, partner relationships because of their simple structure and their economic interdependence (e.g. Becker 1974, 1991; Zuckerman & Kotler-Berkowitz 1998; Zuckerman et al. 2005; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006).

Beyond the widespread expectation that persons within social units tend to align political preferences over time, existing sociological work on household and couple effects has primarily assessed the mutual impact of income, education and class position on household members' political behavior (De Graaf & Heath 1992; Kan & Heath 2006; Strøm 2014; Daenekindt et al. 2020). We propose that labor market risks follow a comparable spillover logic within the household. Our first expectation hence is that individual vote choice does not only depend on voters' own vulnerability but that it also reacts sensitively to labor market risks affecting other members within their intimate social network.

However, going beyond this baseline expectation of mutually interdependent preference formation, we contend that exactly *how* individual risks interact within households is less ob-

vious. Scrutinizing the different ways in which partners affect voting patterns is important because the precise channel of influence might provide valuable insights about underlying mechanisms. Hence, we will derive observable implications of competing theoretical expectations about how individuals do (or do not) adjust party preferences given their own and their partner's economic risk.

Traditional bargaining models of the family focus on the distribution of economic resources and the division of labor between spouses (Becker 1974, 1991; Lundberg & Pollak 1996; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006). Even though we are concerned with a different core concept, namely labor market vulnerability, this literature is insightful for our purpose as one might think of risk exposure as uncertainty about future income (Rehm 2009). In such a relatively narrow economic interpretation of unemployment risk, traditional resource *pooling* as proposed in the seminal Becker framework (Becker 1974, 1991) appears as a rational household strategy. Both spouses' levels of risk have similar weight and reinforce each other's political preferences, resulting in what might be seen as averaging of attitudes within households. The economic safety of one spouse can help to remedy the risk of the other.

Conversely, we could also think of a situation in which one spouse's economic circumstances dominate the joint household preference formation. Rather than "averaging out" heterogeneous risk exposure, a *dominance* framework suggests that household members align preferences around a particular influential actor within the social network. For example, Erikson (1984) highlighted the difficulty of ascribing a single class position to modern dual-earner families and proposed to derive the family's class position from the family member who carries the economic responsibility of the household, irrespective of gender. We can think of a similar logic of dominance regarding the link between economic risk and radical right voting, although most likely with a reversed logic: Given that we do not study the distribution of economic gains but a situation of potential income loss, we have good reasons to expect that, if anything, a high-risk spouse will dominate the household's preference formation. Experimental research in social psychology and behavioral economics has provided abundant evidence

that losses and disadvantages have greater impact on preferences than gains and advantages (Kahneman & Tversky 1979; Tversky & Kahneman 1991). Hence, instead of pooling economic risks, household preferences might converge based on the predominant risk situation. In this scenario, spouses primarily respond to their worse-off partner so that their own (lower) risk becomes relatively less important. A vulnerable position of one household member could thus be sufficient to shape household voting behavior independent of the risk the other.

We provide stylized visualizations of these expectations in Figure 1. The main explanatory variable is an individual's economic risk on the x-axis and the dependent variable is the probability of this individual to support a populist radical right party (y-axis). In line with the arguments discussed in the above, we generally expect a positive relationship between these two variables. We are now interested in how household effects or, more precisely, the economic situation of the individual's partner, affects the respondent's own party choice. Thus, each panel in Figure 1 displays the relationship between risk and support for a radical right party for a situation in which the individual has a partner with low economic risk (dotted line) and for a situation in which the individual's partner suffers from high economic risk (dashed line).

For the sake of completeness, we also visualize the two different kinds of null hypotheses, i.e. expected patterns in the absence of preference alignment within households, where a partner's risk either has no effect on an individual's voting propensity or is simply added to the individual's own risk perception. The lower panels illustrate conditional effects of economic risks within households that indicate one of the two discussed scenarios. The lower left panel shows how lower risk of the partner can reduce the effect of an individual's own risk on voting for the radical right. When partners can provide a safety net, demand for the radical right decreases. The lower right panel shows the scenario in which one high-risk person in a household is sufficient to increase the probability of radical right voting.

A priori, we consider these expectations similarly plausible, which is why we treat the pat-

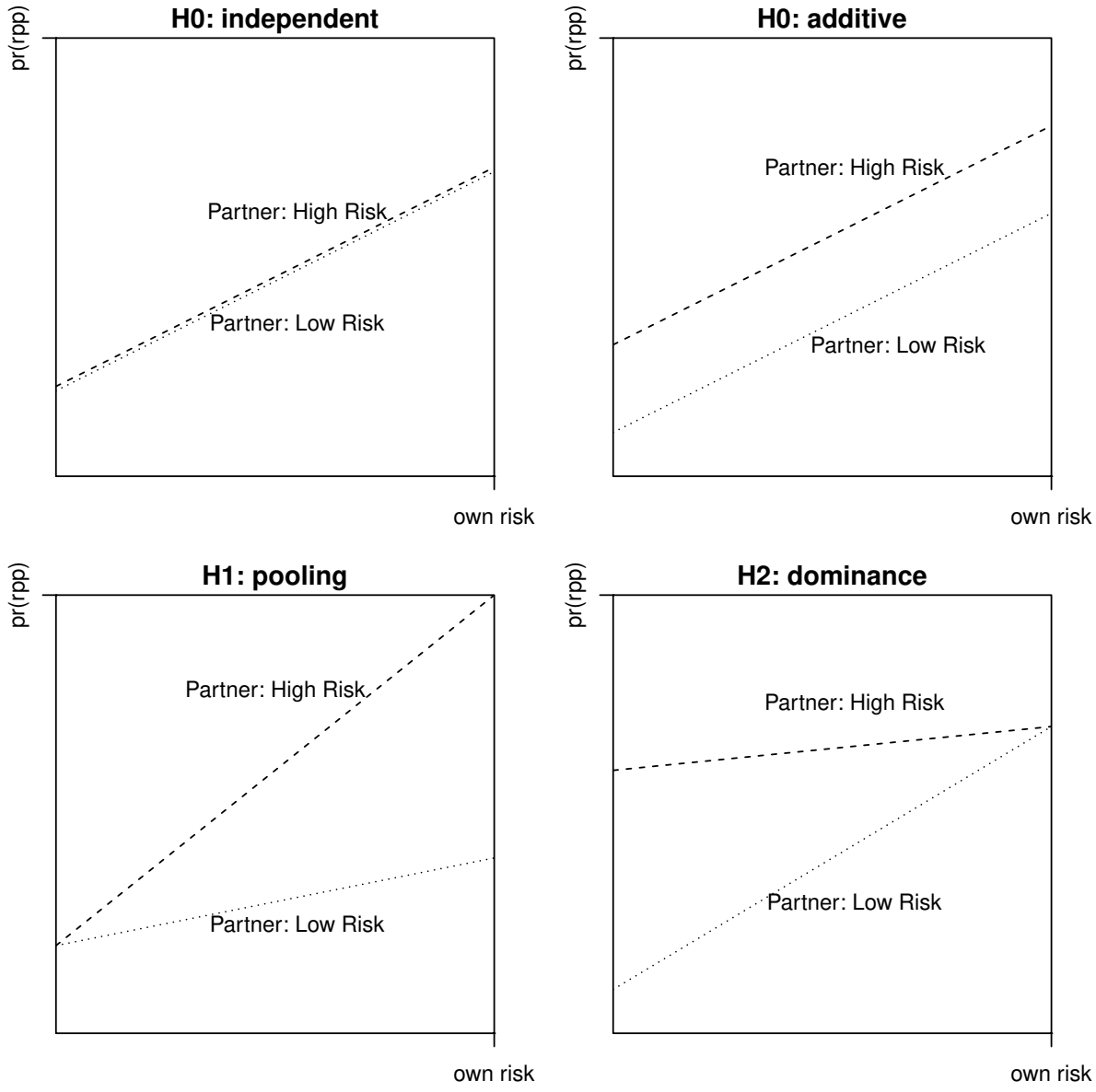


Figure 1: Stylized Effects of Household Risk Composition

tern of the interaction of economic risks within households as an empirical question. Beyond their explicit effect, these empirical patterns likely suggest different underlying mechanisms connecting unemployment risk and radical right support. Risk pooling follows a strongly economic logic, in which the combined – or averaged – level of vulnerability determines household members' vote choice. Such an averaging of risk suggests that household members rationally calculate their joint need for insurance against potential future job loss and accordingly adjust their demand for policy remedies to help achieve this goal. Indeed, Häusermann et al. (2016) provide evidence for household risk pooling when it comes to social policy preferences. A less vulnerable partner serves as a kind of private safety net and reduces the demand for social protection for both spouses. While left parties are commonly considered the most credible supplier of such polices, radical right parties have offered economic nationalism, immigration control and welfare chauvinism as their alternative response to perceived labor market vulnerability.

In contrast, the empirical pattern related to dominance scenario suggests a less strictly policy-based explanation. The overly dominant impact of one vulnerable actor within an otherwise perhaps relatively well-off household does not square well with a calculated demand for concrete policy remedy. Rather, this pattern seems to pick up a more general sense of disillusionment (Kriesi 2014) and perhaps anger (Guillem et al. 2017; Magni 2017) at the workings of the current system and the political actors behind it. Here, support for radical right parties does not follow a clear bread-and-butter logic but entails stronger elements of protesting against a political system that is not perceived as responsive toward latent threats of economic vulnerability. By implication, while a fundamentally economic challenge (unemployment risk) fuels radical right support, its ultimate appearance in the political arena (dissatisfaction with the political status quo) might not manifest itself in purely economic terms.

Finally, any discussion of household effects on political preferences would remain incomplete without addressing potentially asymmetric effects between men and women. Even though economic position and "outside options" of women have improved over time (Iversen

& Rosenbluth 2006) and female students now largely outperform male students at all levels of school (DiPrete & Buchmann 2013), structural differences in labor market chances remain. In line with most existing research taking into account potentially asymmetric household effects (De Graaf & Heath 1992; DiPrete & McManus 2000; Kan & Heath 2006; Strøm 2014; Häusermann et al. 2016), we expect preference alignment within the household to be more pronounced among women than among men.[1]

3 Empirical Approach

In order to test our argument, we need an empirical measure of individual economic risk exposure. We focus on the risk of job loss, which is certainly one of the most consequential threats in terms of both its material and psychological implications (Jahoda 1979). Following Rehm (2009; 2016), we propose that an individual's probability of losing their job is a reasonable objective proxy for risk exposure. The probability of job loss is approximated by objective occupational unemployment rates, that is the share of unemployed workers in a respondent's occupational environment. Measuring risk exposure at the group level makes sense since risk, i.e. the probability of a bad event, cannot meaningfully be derived without a reference group (see Rehm 2016: p. 40). An objectively calculated measure of risk is desirable for our cause because it is arguably exogenous to political attitudes and electoral preferences. That said, we would certainly want our objective measure of risk to reasonably well predict subjective assessments of risk perceptions. Previous research has indeed empirically demonstrated this correlation (Rehm 2016; Kurer et al. 2018).

[1]Note that our analysis neglects the role of divorce, which has featured prominently in bargaining models of the family. While the divorce option is especially relevant with regards to the division of labor (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006), its role is more contested when it comes to the structuration of political preferences (Finseraas et al. 2012). We have decided not to prominently engage with the divorce question for two reasons. First, our sample consists of "double-occupation households", i.e. of (female) respondents who have already been incentivized by paid work and hence have made use of the "outside options" provided by labor markets. A second more pragmatic reason is data availability. The individual risk of divorce is typically operationalized on the basis of a direct question asking respondents whether they have considered ending their present relationship or more indirect questions about the experience of serious problems in their relationship over the last years (Finseraas et al. 2012). Unfortunately, our primary data source, the European Social Survey, does not provide these items.

We rely on large-scale labor market data provided by EU-SILC to obtain reliable estimates of the group-specific prevalence of job loss. To do so, we calculate unemployment rates within occupational groups as defined by the International Labor Organization, that is, according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). Closely following Philipp Rehm's (2009) influential work on occupational unemployment and redistribution preferences, the main models rely on the prevalence of unemployment within major occupational groups (ISCO 1-digit). In the robustness section, we show that our results also hold when we calculate unemployment risk based on a more fine-grained disaggregation of occupations into sub-major groups (ISCO 2-digit).

In a second step, we combine this objective group-specific indicator of risk exposure with individual-level survey data from the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS contains the necessary dependent variables on political behavior as well as detailed information on occupation and other socio-demographics. Most importantly, the same information is also available for other household members. This exceptionally rich data set thus allows us to create identical occupational groups as in EU-SILC for ESS respondents as well as their partners, which makes merging of the two data sources a straightforward task.

Our final sample consists of respondents who are (1) in a (heterosexual) relationship, (2) have an occupational code assigned and (3) have a partner who also has an occupational code. It is important to emphasize that the universe of cases we examine in our analysis reaches far beyond double-income households with two partners in the active labor market. The European Social Survey asks respondent's about their current *or previous* occupation ("What is/was the name or title of your main job?"). The attribution of structural unemployment risks is therefore not contingent on current employment status ("main activity during the last 7 days", see Table A2). Even if respondents or, similarly important, their partners have not been in paid work most recently, their economic vulnerability can be estimated based on their last job. Our sample thus includes household members who are at the moment not in paid work (e.g. in education or doing housework) but have at disposal a given set of occupational skills from a

previous employment spell. Since most workers remain in a similar job environment, experiences in previous occupations provide a natural approximation of their economic vulnerability once they decide to re-enter the labor market. We limit our sample to the working-age population (between 18 and 65) and our analyses are necessarily limited to people in households. We restrict any inference from our analysis to this population.

The main dependent variable — support of radical right parties — is based on country-specific ESS items asking respondents about the party they voted for in the last general election. We grouped support by party into party families and classified populist radical right parties on Mudde's (2007) conceptual foundation of (see Table A4 for details). Our main dependent variable is a dummy capturing voting for populist radical right parties (1) versus all other parties. All our findings hold if we use a variable for radical right vs. the mainstream left and right parties in a country that makes the 0 category more homogenous. We show our main findings for this in the Appendix. Note that we match the labor market risk information based on the year the election took place and not based on the year the ESS round was released to ensure a close connection between risk exposure and electoral behavior.

We analyze our data set with country- and wave-fixed effect logit regression models and standard errors clustered by country-wave to correct for non-independent observations.[2] All our findings are robust against excluding any single country from our analysis. We control for age, education, gender, children and income. We also include controls for unemployment status and partner's unemployment. We refrain from including more specific attitudinal variables as they are clearly post-treatment to our structural variables and would thus bring with them the risk of post-treatment bias. Our approach employing country fixed effects leads to

[2]Some debate exists around the use of fixed effects in logit models. The main issue for estimation stems from the fact that group-mean centering is not a solution for non-linear models and thus potentially a lot of different parameters have to be estimated. This is, however, less of a problem in our case as we do not employ actual unit-fixed effects (such as individual respondents in true panel data or countries in time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data), but group-specific intercepts. Simply put, our fixed effects represent countries (and waves) and not individual respondents that represent the level of analysis. As a consequence, the number of parameters that needs to be estimated for our fixed-effect model does not increase with N. Hence, in our case, we do not face the incidental parameters problem that is often associated with the application of fixed effects in logit specifications. For a detailed discussion of this see (Beck 2020).

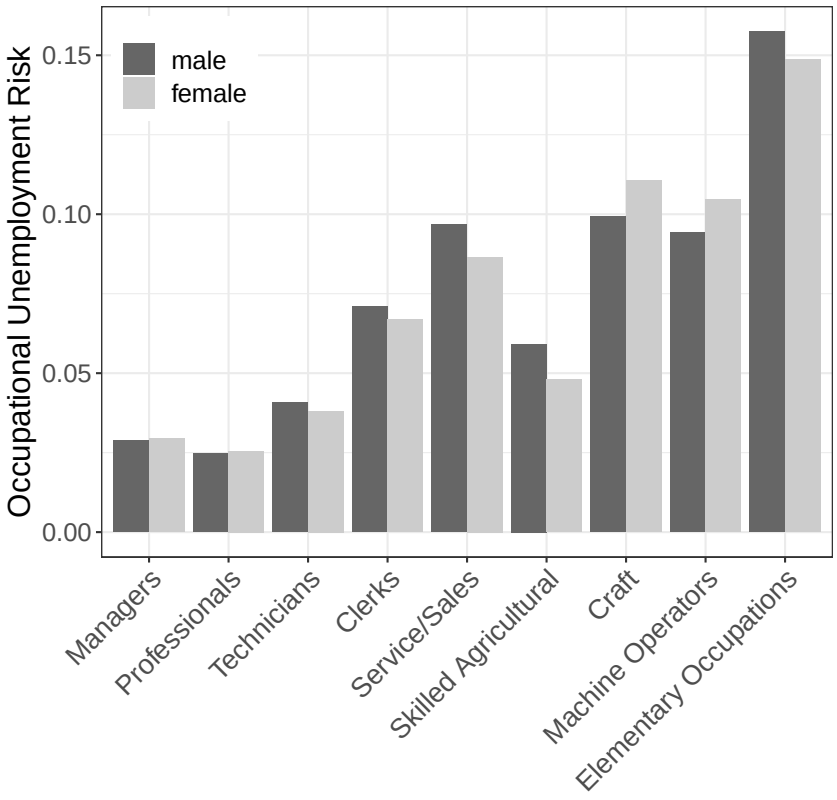
an exclusion of all countries that do not have a radical right party successful enough to meaningfully show up in survey responses. This problem of potentially inducing selection bias, has been widely discussed in the literature on radical right voting. We thus additionally show that our findings do not change if we use a linear probability model instead that does not exclude these cases. We also show our main findings for a multilevel model with random effects at the study level.

4 Descriptives

Figure 2 provides a broad overview over average risk exposure by occupational group and gender, pooled over time and space. Remember that risk exposure is proxied with an individual's occupational unemployment risk, which is calculated as a group-specific analogue of the national unemployment rate. There is considerable variation between the nine occupational groups. Workers in low-skilled elementary occupations (e.g. cleaning, construction, food preparation) suffer from highest risk levels (15.2% on average within a large cross-sectional bandwidth). Craft and related trade workers, plant and machine operators/assemblers and workers in services and sales are exposed to medium levels of risk around 10%, followed by clerical workers with slightly lower risk exposure (6.8% on average). More high-skilled managerial, professional and technical jobs are characterized by a lower prevalence of unemployment. Unemployment in the classical sense is also less frequent in the agricultural sector. One important observation that will be confirmed later is that unemployment risk is less strongly gendered than one might expect, certainly less gendered than broader concepts of labor market vulnerability like "outsiderness" that also include (involuntary) part-time employment (see Häusermann et al. 2016). While female workers face higher unemployment risks than their male counterparts in craft and manufacturing occupations where they represent a clear numerical minority, this is not the case in other occupations. To the contrary, male workers face higher risks in clerical, sales and elementary occupations. However, due to compositional effects, i.e. a higher proportion of female workers in high-risk occupations (e.g. 60% female in

elementary occupations vs. 32% female in managerial jobs), the average risk of female respondents is slightly higher than that of male respondents in our sample.

Figure 2: Unemployment Risk by Occupational Group and Gender



Our data on spouse's occupation allows us to go one step further and examine within-household constellations of unemployment risk. To facilitate a compact visualization, we have aggregated individual risk exposure into country-specific deciles and then calculated risk-decile combinations for individual households. The left panel in Figure 3 displays respondent's own risk on the x-axis and their partner's risk on the y-axis for the full sample. In line with the extensive sociological literature on achievement-oriented homogamy (e.g. Kalmijn 1991), individuals tend to look for partners with similar educational attainment and similar occupational status, resulting in a clearly positive correlation between their own and their spouses' unemployment risk (Pearson's r = 0.62). The heatmap's density is highest around the diagonal, i.e. where respondent and partner risk is in the same or a very close risk decile. However, the plots also demonstrate that there is considerable variation of risk distribution within households that allows us to examine the political implications of different and, also,

heterogeneous patterns of risk exposure.

The cells above and below the diagonal are quite symmetrically populated with decreasing density towards the off-diagonal corners. Of course, heterogeneous combinations are less frequent but it is important to note that the gray shading in the off-diagonal corners implies that the full range of combinations is present in our sample (empty cells would be white). To be more specific, let us define household-risk combinations with at least 5 risk deciles difference (i.e. one household with one member in risk decile 8 and one member in risk decile 3 and lower) as extreme off-diagonal cases. These are the two sets of 9 cells (3x3) each in the upper left and lower right corner in Figure 3. The share of our respondents that are located within these corners is 12.1% across the full sample, ranging from 9.6% in Germany to 15.7% in Switzerland and the Netherlands (see Appendix Table A3). We consider this a sizable share of our sample that justifies closer scrutiny not only to household effects within homogamous relationships but also those with more unequal risk distribution.

The middle and right panel display the patterns for male and female respondents separately and demonstrate that a somewhat gendered pattern lies below the apparent symmetry in the overall sample. As one would expect, male respondents are on average in a slightly more secure position than their female partners, illustrated by darker shading above the diagonal (and vice versa for female respondents). However, in line with the previously discussed evidence, the distribution of unemployment risk is not extremely unbalanced between male and female respondents.

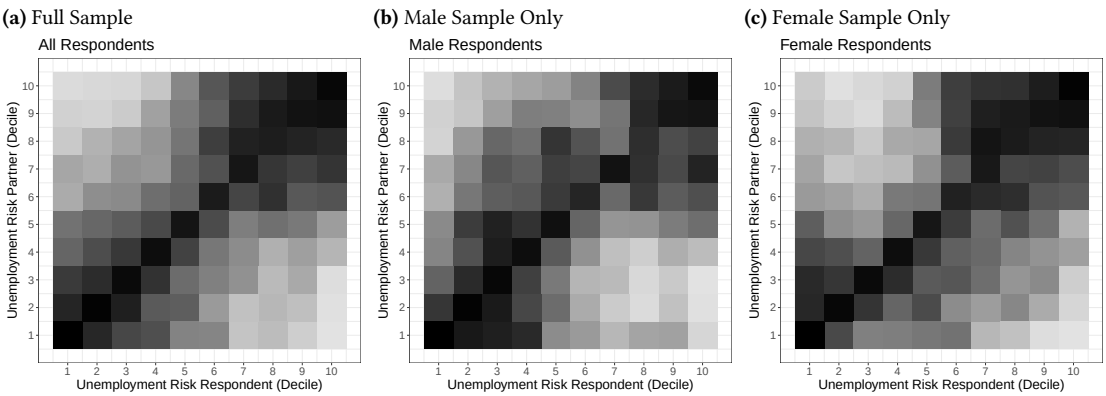


Figure 3: Household Risk Constellations

5 Results

Table 1 shows our findings for the direct effect of unemployment risk on voting for the radical right. All models are limited to people who cohabit with a partner in order to have a comparable sample. Column 1 includes the effects of individuals' own risk and column 2 adds partner's risk to the model. The first model in Table 1 provides some interesting pieces of information. First, unemployment risk is a strong and significantly positive predictor of support for radical right parties. Second, we do not find any significant effect for unemployment status or partner's unemployment status. This confirms the general idea within the growing literature on economic effects on radical right voting that not material hardship per se but latent economic threat constitutes a driver behind voting for the radical right.

In Model 2 we add unemployment risk of the partner, which has an independent effect of comparable magnitude as the respondent's own economic risk and is also statistically significant. This first set of results thus provide strong evidence for our presumption that the household is an important site of preference formation that affects political preferences of household members net of their own socio-economic conditions.

What about the magnitude of these effects? Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities of voting for a radical right party conditional on their own and their partners' risk based on Model 2 in Table 1. (All other variables are held at their observed values.) We can see substantively

Table 1: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unemployment Risk	7.957**	6.467**	9.423**
	(1.194)	(1.075)	(1.995)
Unemployment Risk - Partner		5.101**	8.214**
		(1.069)	(1.737)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner			-38.743*
			(17.754)
Unemployed	0.148	0.137	0.131
	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.133)
Partner Unemployed	-0.006	-0.058	-0.078
	(0.353)	(0.353)	(0.349)
Income	-0.004	0.003	0.003
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)
No Children	0.100	0.096	0.096
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Education	-0.539**	-0.530**	-0.520**
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)
Age	-0.020**	-0.020**	-0.020**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	-0.358**	-0.349**	-0.349**
[1em] Constant	-0.331	-0.622	-0.846
	(0.395)	(0.411)	(0.452)
Observations	31312	31312	31312
Pseudo R^2	0.134	0.136	0.136

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

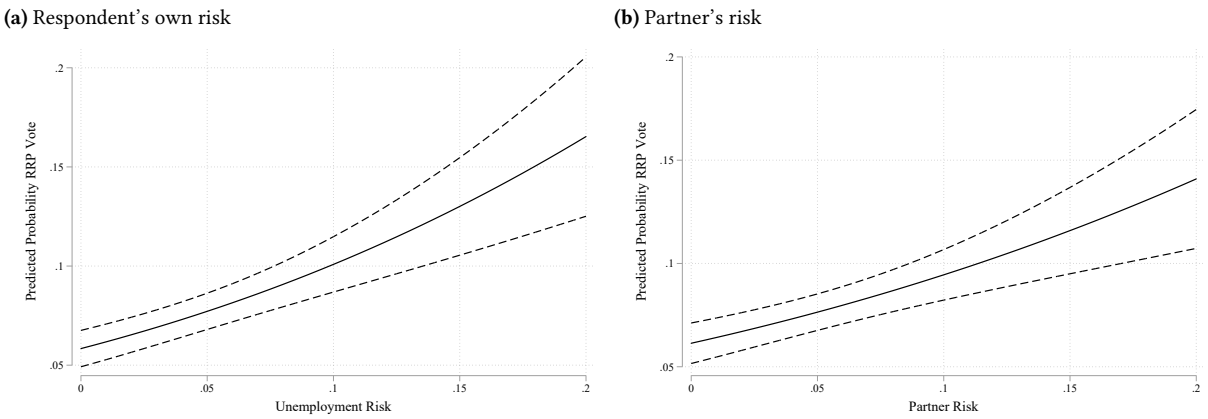


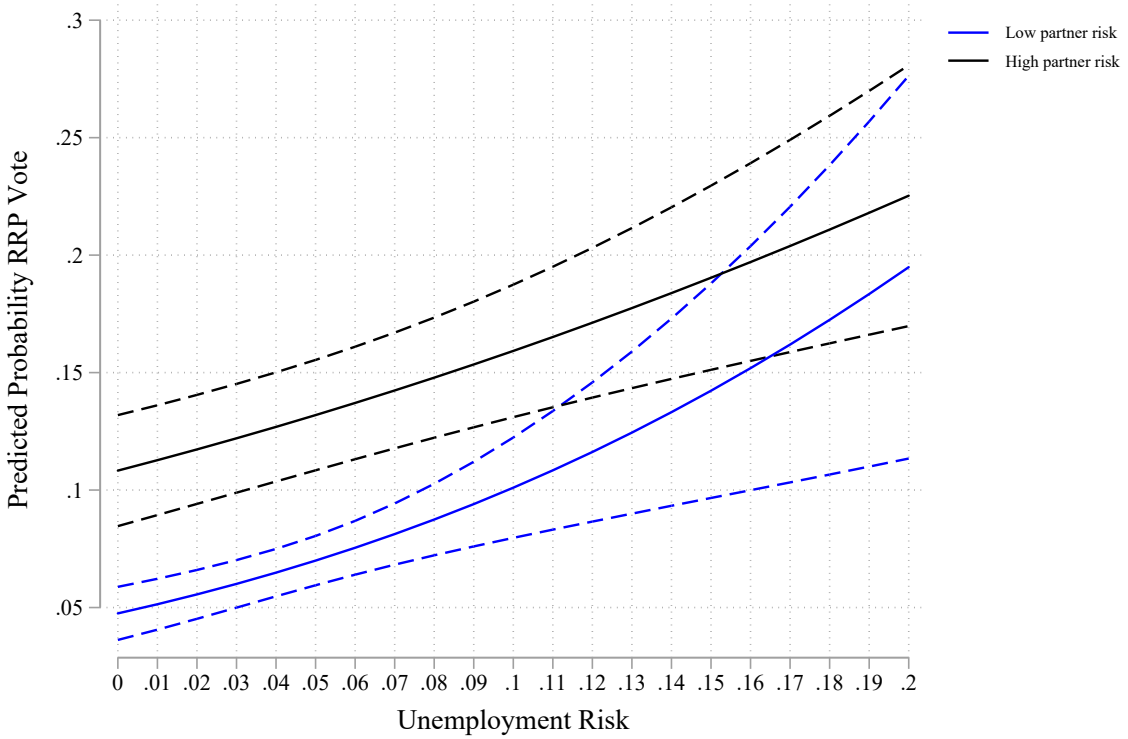
Figure 4: Direct Effect of Unemployment Risk

meaningful effects for both variables. While individuals with a low risk of unemployment have a predicted probability of voting for the radical right of about 0.06, for higher levels of risk this increases to over 0.17. Considering the baseline probability to vote for a radical right party, this is a substantial increase. Similarly, for partners' unemployment risk we find an increase from 0.06 to about 0.15. Figure 4 thus demonstrates that unemployment risk significantly affects the probability to vote for the radical right. It's important to emphasize that this is the effect of a partner's unemployment risk controlling for the respondent's own risk. Contagion effects exist within the household and economic risks of other household members do indeed influence respondent's voting behavior.

Model 3 in Table 1 interacts respondent and partner risk in order to scrutinize how exactly economic vulnerabilities within households interdependently affect voting for the radical right. Since we are dealing with a non-linear logit model, we cannot directly interpret the coefficient of the interaction term (Ai & Norton 2003). We thus visualize the interaction effects in the form of conditional predicted probabilities. Figure 5 shows how the effect of an individual's unemployment risk is conditional on their partners' risk. We display the predicted probability of voting for the radical right for increasing values of unemployment risk conditional on low (1st decile) and high (9th decile) risk of their partners.

The simulations provide a clear picture of how the distribution of unemployment risk within households affects radical right voting. First, the illustration demonstrates that re-

Figure 5: Predicted Probabilities - Risk & Risk Partner



spondents' own risk and their partners' risks interact. Second, we see that the probability of voting for the radical right strongly increases with higher levels of risk for individuals whose partners have a very low risk of unemployment. This speaks against a logic where partners can provide a household safety net that mitigates or "averages out" the effect of risk on radical right support through resource pooling. If partners' low risk could compensate for individuals' own risk we should see a nearly flat line when partner risk is low - this is clearly not the case. Similarly, Figure 5 shows a clear effect of a partner's unemployment risk even when individuals have a low risk themselves - at an individual's unemployment risk of nearly 0 the probability of voting for the radical right is more than twice as high when the partner has high risk (black line) rather than low risk of unemployment (blue line).

Third, we see that partner's unemployment risk has a higher effect on voting for the radical right when a person's own unemployment risk is low than when it is high. Again from a logic of risk pooling we should expect the opposite effect – if a respondent's unemployment

risk is low, the partner's risk should matter less. These findings thus do not only underscore the importance of economic risk and its distribution within households for explaining the success of the radical right. They also point to a potential factor of why studies of individual economic determinants of radical right voting have only found unstable and often weak effects. If one individual at risk of losing their job is enough to substantially increase the household's probability to vote for the radical right, then only looking at individuals and not taking their context situation into account could significantly underestimate the overall effect of economic risk on radical right support.

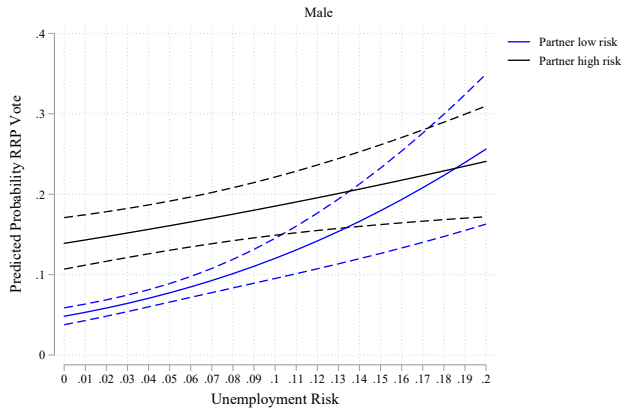
With respect to the different channels linking risk and radical right support discussed above, the empirical pattern lends support to the dominance mechanism, i.e. the idea that voters' preferences within households converge towards the highest level of risk exposure. Partners do not seem to be pooling risks in a way that the low risk of one partner can work as a remedy to the risk of the other. Instead, a high risk of one person in the household is enough to substantially increase radical right voting. In contrast to social policy preferences (Häusermann et al. 2016), support for radical right parties does not follow a simple bread-and-butter logic. The findings indeed more speak for a logic of protesting in response to latent threats of economic vulnerability.

5.1 Gender-specific Household Effects

In a next step we investigate how unemployment risk within the household potentially affects men and women differently. We thus estimate our models for a split sample of men and women. We show these results in Figure 6, the regression table can be found in the Appendix.

The left panel of Figure 6 shows the effect of unemployment risk on voting for the radical right for men, the right panel for women. First, we can see that both men and women show

(a) Male Respondents



(b) Female Respondents

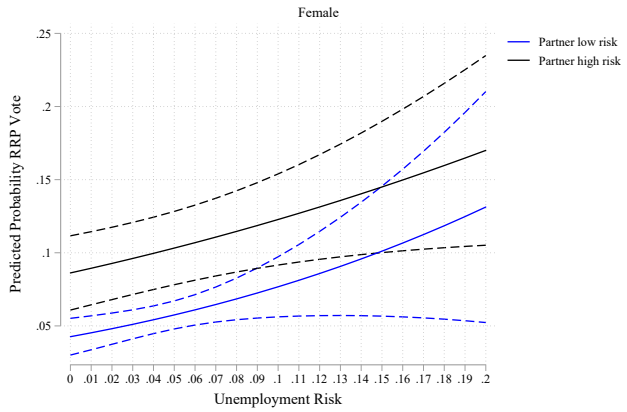


Figure 6: Effekt of Unemployment Risk by Gender

the same general pattern of dominance. In both cases, for individuals with a low unemployment risk partner's unemployment risk increases the probability to vote for the radical right. However, Figure 6 also demonstrates some pronounced differences between men and women. This is most clearly visible for individuals whose partners have a low risk of unemployment. For men, we see a strong increase in the likelihood of voting for a radical right party with increasing level of risk. This increase is only moderate for women. Nevertheless, here too, we do not see a safety net effect. Overall, individual risk seems to have a stronger effect for men than for women. In addition, while at lower levels of unemployment risk we do not see a difference in the likelihood of voting for the radical right between men and women, this difference becomes more pronounced as unemployment risk increases.

In sum, our findings show that especially for individuals with low unemployment risk we potentially misinterpret their political leanings if we do not take into account their household situation. Our findings indicate that for constellations where both partners have a similar level of unemployment risk, predictions based on one of them should be pretty accurate. However, in constellations where there is a bigger difference (the off-diagonal in our heat maps), partner risk should have a strong, potentially unobserved, effect with low risk individuals. The specific magnitude of this effect will vary by country and will depend on the amount of households that include partners with strongly differing risks.

Let us illustrate the magnitude of this with an example based on the calculations above. Based on the distribution of partners' unemployment risk for men with very low own unemployment risk (0.001) we can estimate the prevalence of a dominance effect. For the third quartile of a partner's unemployment risk we see an increase in the predicted probability of voting for a radical right party from 5 percent to 7.5%. This means that for 25% of the cases for men with low unemployment risk their predicted probability of voting for the radical right is 50% higher than estimated just based on their own unemployment risk. As can be seen in Figure 6 this difference becomes smaller as own unemployment risk increases. Overall, this means that bias resulting from not observing partners' risk can lead to substantial bias, but for a rather small but non-negligible share of the population – those where someone with low risk lives with someone with high risk (see Appendix Table A3 for country-specific shares).

5.2 Robustness

We run some additional analyses to demonstrate the robustness of our findings to alternative specifications and measures. We also address issues of causality with some additional analyses. Table A5 in the Appendix summarizes the findings for these additional analyses. First we replicate our main analysis using a measure of unemployment risk based on 2-digit ISCO codes. We thus use more fine-grained occupational class groups to estimate an individual's risk of becoming unemployed. Again, we find that unemployment risk as well as a partner's unemployment risk have a significant positive effect on voting for a radical right party. We also establish the same pattern of interaction between an individual's risk and their partner's risk in determining the propensity to support the radical right.

Our original models do not include attitudinal variables as these might introduce post-treatment bias. In Models 3 and 4 in Table A5 we show that our main findings remain unaffected by the inclusion of variables controlling for attitudes generally associated with voting behavior in a post-industrial political space (left-right self-placement, redistribution, immigra-

tion). Interestingly, including these variables does not reduce the effect size of unemployment risk and partner's risk. While this does not constitute a comprehensive mediation analysis (which would be beyond the scope of this paper), it is another indication, in line with our tentative interpretation of the pooling vs. dominance channel, that the effect of unemployment risk may not run through policy attitudes. If individuals instrumentally used their vote for the radical right as a potential policy remedy against their economic risk, we should see that reflected in a mechanism that goes through their policy attitudes.

In our observational set up we cannot fully rule out that people select into couples based on similar socio-economic context conditions which would result in potential problems based on selection and endogeneity. In order to strengthen our claim for a causal direction, we additionally run our analysis including class group fixed effects for respondents and partners. We construct these occupational class groups following Oesch (2006). His class scheme has explicitly been developed to describe contemporary post-industrial societies.[3] We thus limit our analysis to variation in unemployment risk within occupational class groups. This means that to a large degree we only exploit over time variation in these models.[4] While we think that it is certainly possible that people select into relationships based on membership in a specific class group, we assume that it is highly unlikely that people select into relationships based on fine-grained variation in unemployment risks. Including these class-fixed effects and leveraging within-class variation, we find that unemployment risk and partner's risk significantly affect voting for the radical right. They do so in the same pattern as outlined in our main analysis.

[3]Self-employed professionals and large employers, Small business owners, (Associate) managers and administrators, Office clerks, Technical professionals and technicians, Production workers, Socio-cultural (semi-)professionals, Service workers

[4]We thus do not include year fixed effects in these models as they would absorb almost all of the remaining variation left in this approach

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we examine the economic roots of right-wing populism. We show that economic pressure might well result in not purely economic reactions in the electoral arena. We suggest that the relatively weak explanatory power of economic variables in previous empirical analyses is due to the neglect of two key insights of a literature that has recently taken a decidedly relational perspective to political behavior. First, radical right support might be motivated much more by latent economic threats rather than by current material conditions (Gidron & Hall 2017; Kurer 2020). Second, the study of economic insecurity should not focus on individuals but on households to adequately capture overall risks to economic well-being (Western et al. 2012).

Our analysis systematically incorporates these two aspects into a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between economic risk and radical right support. Based on large-scale labor market data and cross-national survey data, we demonstrate that households are important sites of preference formation that moderate the electoral effects of economic risks. In contrast to the idea of risk pooling, households do not seem to provide "private safety nets" when it comes to voting for the radical right. Rather respondents react to the vagaries of economic modernization affecting anyone in the household. In fact, one high-risk person in a household may be a sufficient condition to significantly increase all other household members' probability to vote for the radical right.

While we have focused on the arguably most important contextual condition with regard to human interactions, our results are likely to travel beyond voters' homes. The dominance mechanism suggested by our analysis implies that interactions with other family members, friends or colleagues who are adversely affected by latent labor market risks might also increase support for the radical right among voters who are less exposed themselves but react empathetically to the well-being of relevant peers. Granted that such interactions might happen on a lower level of intensity compared to households, multiplier effects might be some-

what weaker but we have no reason to expect fundamentally different patterns of preference alignment within voters' broader personal network. More generally, further research should investigate how latent economic threats to people's in-groups affect their support for the radical right. While our analysis has mostly focused on economic threats to social status, this should not indicate that no other such threats exist. In addition, future research should also dive deeper into the dynamics that play out in partnerships or within a household. The fact alone that people live with or without a partner should affect their risk perceptions as well as their propensity to support the radical right. Combined with "traditional" gender roles, differences in risk, income, or education within households might affect perceptions of social status and could in turn determine voting for the radical right.

Our findings have important implications for empirical studies of radical right support in all social science disciplines. As we can demonstrate the crucial role that households play in moderating the effect of economic risks, our study points to the high risk of omitted variable bias when not taking contextual effects seriously. More precisely, studies estimating the effects of individuals' economic risk on voting for the radical right, might underestimate these effects as one risk-exposed individual within the close personal network might be sufficient to increase support for the radical right even among less vulnerable voters. The strength of this potential bias will be determined by the share of people that live in households with mixed levels of economic risk.

In line with other recent studies, the findings presented here point to the important role that socio-economic transformations play for the success of the radical right. Changes in economic risks are mainly the result of big social, economic and demographic transformations. Since these insecurities have become politically associated with support for a group of parties that successfully channels this dissatisfaction, it is unlikely that the recent success of the radical is short-lived. While there is an ongoing scholarly and especially public debate about how party positions and policy solutions concerning the issue of immigration may dampen the support for the radical right, our findings indicate that determinants of radical right sup-

port might be more deeply rooted in the socio-economic transformations of our time. This casts doubt on the idea that governments can successfully counter-act the recent surge of the radical right through simple economic and social policy changes.

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Appendix

Table A1: Sample (Merged ESS and EU-SILC)

Country	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
AT	999	795	1051			781	1050	
CH	700	768	603	560	477	469	465	
DE	1289	1086	1129	1075	1045	1152	1365	1218
DK	967	901	923	914	881	858	760	
FI	875	928	923	1007	851	1064	984	922
FR	491	679	694	809	576	907	708	742
GB	982	801	1081	1060	1042	958	999	1017
GR	938	956		812	772			
NL	1360	1018	1020	907	888	905	789	725
NO	1019	938	951	868	883	920	835	896
SE	833	876	905	904	774	952	862	833

Table A2: Employment Status and Occupation

Main activity last 7 days	Share with ISCO code
Paid work	.987
Education	.543
Unemployed, looking for job	.895
Unemployed, not looking for job	.848
Permanently sick or disabled	.890
Retired	.927
Community or military service	.767
Housework, looking after children, other	.740
Other	.735

Note: Share among sample of analysis, i.e. voters in countries with a RPP.

Table A3: Off-Diagonal Population Share

	cntry	total	extreme	share
1	AT	3544	400	11.3
2	CH	4817	757	15.7
3	DE	7544	725	9.6
4	DK	4624	695	15.0
5	FI	6095	670	11.0
6	FR	4939	624	12.6
7	GB	5239	569	10.9
8	GR	2314	230	9.9
9	NL	5691	895	15.7
10	NO	5841	776	13.3
11	SE	5524	715	12.9

Table A4: Party Classification by Country

AT	FPÖ, BZÖ
CH	SVP
DE	AfD
DK	DPP, FrP
FI	True Finns
FR	FN
GB	UKIP
GR	LAOS
IT	Lega
NL	LPF, PVV
NO	FrP
SE	SD

Table A5: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting Robustness

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Unemployment Risk	4.396**	6.365**	5.829**	7.536**	5.169**	7.068**
	(1.035)	(1.559)	(1.254)	(2.141)	(1.295)	(2.293)
Unemployment Risk - Partner	3.823**	5.823**	4.745**	6.516**	3.642*	5.753*
	(0.778)	(1.207)	(1.116)	(1.851)	(1.480)	(2.476)
Unemployment Risk 2D × Unemployment Risk - Partner 2D		-25.149*		-22.529		-26.284
		(11.291)		(18.221)		(20.464)
Unemployed	0.136	0.133	0.242	0.239	0.104	0.100
	(0.138)	(0.137)	(0.157)	(0.157)	(0.136)	(0.136)
Partner Unemployed	-0.052	-0.064	0.040	0.028	-0.141	-0.150
	(0.357)	(0.355)	(0.292)	(0.289)	(0.340)	(0.339)
Income	-0.005	-0.005	0.004	0.004	-0.012	-0.011
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)
No Children	0.071	0.070	0.133**	0.133**	0.080	0.081
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Education	-0.544**	-0.537**	-0.393**	-0.388**	-0.313**	-0.313**
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Age	-0.020**	-0.020**	-0.019**	-0.019**	-0.016**	-0.016**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	-0.342**	-0.342**	-0.251**	-0.249**	-0.354**	-0.353**
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.054)	(0.053)
Attitude Redistribution			-0.122**	-0.121**		
			(0.031)	(0.031)		
Attitude Immigration			-0.361**	-0.361**		
			(0.019)	(0.019)		
LR Selfplacement			0.300**	0.300**		
			(0.031)	(0.031)		
Constant	-0.309	-0.460	-1.095*	-1.221*	-1.609**	-1.703**
	(0.407)	(0.434)	(0.453)	(0.480)	(0.445)	(0.457)
Observations	30863	30863	30370	30370	31071	31071
Pseudo R^2	0.132	0.133	0.240	0.240	0.142	0.143

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
Class and partner class FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table A6: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting - Split sample by gender

	Women	Men
Unemployment Risk	6.764*	10.951**
	(2.683)	(1.935)
Unemployment Risk - Partner	6.319**	9.922**
	(2.166)	(1.831)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner	-17.763	-53.468**
	(23.171)	(18.274)
Unemployed	0.022	0.217
	(0.207)	(0.179)
Partner Unemployed	-0.570	0.059
	(0.749)	(0.429)
No Children	0.074	0.111
	(0.075)	(0.066)
Education	-0.602**	-0.464**
	(0.045)	(0.044)
Age	-0.024**	-0.018**
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Income	-0.001	0.006
	(0.022)	(0.022)
Constant	-0.524	-1.348**
	(0.482)	(0.501)
Observations	16278	15034
Pseudo R^2	0.138	0.135

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table A7: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting - Linear probability model

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unemployment Risk	0.622**	0.033	0.296**
	(0.118)	(0.055)	(0.094)
Unemployment Risk - Partner		0.073*	0.319**
		(0.033)	(0.068)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner			-1.969**
			(0.434)
Unemployed	0.007	0.002	0.004
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Partner Unemployed	-0.003	-0.005	-0.004
	(0.026)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Income	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
No Children	0.007*	0.006*	0.005*
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Education	-0.028**	-0.023**	-0.022**
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age	-0.001**	-0.001**	-0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Female	-0.022**	-0.016**	-0.016**
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Constant	0.211**	0.212**	0.183**
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Observations	31312	42206	42206
R^2	0.065	0.073	0.075

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table A8: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting - Multilevel random effects model

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unemployment Risk	6.075**	5.300**	12.947**
	(0.865)	(0.890)	(1.435)
Unemployment Risk - Partner		4.074**	12.052**
		(0.880)	(1.461)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner			-95.531**
			(14.695)
Unemployed	0.120	0.113	0.115
	(0.136)	(0.136)	(0.135)
Partner Unemployed	0.035	-0.006	-0.036
	(0.319)	(0.320)	(0.321)
Income	-0.040**	-0.032*	-0.029*
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
No Children	0.077	0.075	0.073
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.049)
Education	-0.574**	-0.564**	-0.540**
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Age	-0.020**	-0.020**	-0.020**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	-0.375**	-0.369**	-0.367**
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)
Constant	-3.313**	-3.836**	-4.126**
	(0.457)	(0.487)	(0.474)
/			
var(_cons[ident])	18.569**	20.819**	19.184**
	(4.643)	(5.233)	(4.786)
Observations	42206	42206	42206

Multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression with study REs
Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table A9: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting - DV coding RRP vs ML & MR

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unemployment Risk	7.767**	6.372**	9.614**
	(1.263)	(1.114)	(2.034)
Unemployment Risk - Partner		4.865**	8.313**
		(1.192)	(1.720)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner			-42.789*
			(17.927)
Unemployed	0.218	0.205	0.199
	(0.138)	(0.138)	(0.137)
Partner Unemployed	0.178	0.118	0.099
	(0.373)	(0.374)	(0.369)
Income	-0.025	-0.018	-0.018
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)
No Children	0.123*	0.120*	0.120*
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Education	-0.493**	-0.486**	-0.475**
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.034)
Age	-0.024**	-0.024**	-0.024**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	-0.319**	-0.311**	-0.311**
	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Constant	-0.032	-0.313	-0.557
	(0.395)	(0.414)	(0.444)
Observations	22234	22234	22234
Pseudo R^2	0.136	0.138	0.139

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table A10: Unemployment Risk and Radical Right Voting - Respondents in paid work only

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unemployment Risk	7.951**	6.502**	10.214**
	(1.392)	(1.275)	(2.105)
Unemployment Risk - Partner		4.822**	8.683**
		(1.149)	(1.796)
Unemployment Risk × Unemployment Risk - Partner			-49.259**
			(18.077)
Partner Unemployed	0.237	0.184	0.159
	(0.406)	(0.406)	(0.398)
Income	-0.019	-0.013	-0.012
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)
No Children	0.127*	0.123*	0.124*
	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Education	-0.511**	-0.504**	-0.492**
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.039)
Age	-0.025**	-0.025**	-0.025**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	-0.348**	-0.344**	-0.344**
	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Constant	-0.077	-0.356	-0.622
	(0.391)	(0.409)	(0.450)
Observations	18117	18117	18117
Pseudo R^2	0.137	0.139	0.140

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
Country and year FE included
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$