

Forthcoming in Journal of European Public Policy.

Accepted manuscript version, 07th February 2020 (after review).

The threat of social decline: Income inequality and radical right support

Sarah Engler^a

David Weisstanner^b

^a Department of Political Science, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland. sarah.engler@uzh.ch.

^b Department of Social Policy and Intervention, Institute for New Economic Thinking, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. david.weisstanner@spi.ox.ac.uk.

Abstract

Income inequality and radical right parties have both been on the rise in Western democracies, yet few studies explore the linkages between the two – despite prominent arguments about voters feeling ‘left behind’. We argue that rising inequality not only intensifies relative deprivation, but also signals a potential threat of social decline, as gaps in the social hierarchy widen. Hence, voters higher up in the social hierarchy may turn to the radical right to defend existing social boundaries. Using International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data from 14 OECD countries over three decades, we find that rising income inequality increases the likelihood of radical right support – most pronouncedly among individuals with high subjective social status and lower-middle incomes. Adding to evidence that the threat of decline, rather than actual deprivation, pushes voters towards the radical right, we highlight income inequality as the crucial factor conditioning perceived threats from a widening social hierarchy.

Keywords

Radical right, income inequality, relative deprivation, social status, social decline

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Klaus Armingeon, Denis Cohen, Thomas Kurer, Lucas Leeman, Tim Vlandas, and audiences at University of Oxford seminars (Social Inequality Research Group, October 2018; INET Researcher Seminar, November 2018; WEALTHPOL Reading Group, March 2019), the annual conference of the Swiss Political Science Association (Zurich, February 2019), the 26th International Conference of Europeanists (Madrid, June 2019), and the ECPR General Conference (Wroclaw, September 2019) for valuable comments.

Introduction

Radical right parties have become successful political actors in many Western democracies. Several theories explain their success with a growing group of people who feel ‘left behind’ in the processes of globalisation and economic modernisation over the past several decades (Kitschelt 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008). Feeling threatened by increasing economic, cultural and political openness, they sympathize with radical right parties that promise to put the nation and its people first. Income inequality can be treated as a summary indicator for the social and economic divides following the structural macroeconomic developments in advanced democracies, but only few studies take into account the role of income inequality for radical right support (Jesuit, Paradowski, and Mahler 2009; Han 2016; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Burgoon et al. 2019; Engler and Weisstanner 2020). Moreover, the link between income inequality as a macro-level indicator and electoral outcomes is complex; there are several possible ways how changes in inequality affect different voters at the individual level, depending on their position in society or their income, and how this in turn might influence their voting behaviour. Some evidence suggests that income inequality may have an impact not only through material self-interest but also through feelings of social marginalization (Gidron and Hall 2019), yet there is a lack of theoretical framework combining these different impacts of inequality with respect to voting. In this paper, we address this gap by examining how the long-term trend towards rising income inequality affects support for radical right parties among different voter groups.

We argue that rising income inequality is an important indicator not only of the extent to which some groups have *fallen behind* compared to others, but also of the *potential decline* in society that people higher up in the social hierarchy could face. The first logic is based on theories of ‘relative deprivation’ (Runciman 1966) and implies that low-income groups, being the main losers of rising inequality, become more likely to support the radical right in societies that grow more unequal over time. The second logic is premised upon risk theories (Moene and Wallerstein 2001; Rehm 2016) and maintains that middle-income individuals face potentially large income losses in unequal societies and turn to the radical right, which promises to address anxieties about decline by opposing globalisation and open labour markets. The latter hypothesis has received attention in recent studies showing that what explains protest behaviour and the rising support for the radical right is not an actual labour market disadvantage

but the threatening decline of those who still have income and prestige to lose (Rovny and Rovny 2017; Kurer 2019; Kurer and Palier 2019; Kurer et al. 2019; Im et al. 2019).

Following Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019), we stay out of the debate about whether the rise of the radical right is rooted in economic or cultural changes, and argue that income inequality not only worsens the relative position of the less well-off in material terms, but also entails the deterioration of their perceived subjective social status. Subjective social status, defined as the ‘level of social respect or esteem people believe is accorded them within the social order’ (Gidron and Hall 2017, : S61), is key in understanding how poor economic conditions lead to support for a party family that puts most emphasis on cultural, rather than economic, issues (Mudde 2007). When social status is kept out of consideration, radical right parties, just like their radical left counterparts, are simply an attractive alternative to mainstream parties because of the former’s outsider status, anti-establishment claims and opposition to international trade and globalisation that might attract those who are dissatisfied with their personal financial situation (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018). When subjective social status is taken into account, the radical right becomes even more attractive because of its claims to restore the dignity of those left behind by cultivating nativism and therewith providing non-economic criteria of social status (Lipset 1955, 1959; Gidron and Hall 2017; Gest, Reny, and Mayer 2018).¹

The ‘relative deprivation’ logic leads us to expect that low-income and low-status individuals become more likely to support the radical right in societies that grow more unequal. In contrast, following the ‘threat of social decline’ logic, we hypothesize that individuals higher up in the income and status hierarchy increasingly support the radical right as inequality increases and these individuals fear the possibility of a steep social decline. We test both claims using an encompassing individual-level dataset from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and comparing 14 OECD countries between 1987 and 2017. We find that rising income inequality increases the likelihood of radical right support and that this effect is most pronounced among individuals with high subjective social status and lower-middle incomes. In increasingly unequal societies, therefore, anxieties about social decline seem to matter more for radical right choice than does actual deprivation. Threats of decline are especially relevant with respect to subjective social status, which emerges as a crucial link

¹ In this paper, we focus on the varying effects of macroeconomic developments on the voting behaviour of different income and status groups. We are aware that political attitudes such as anti-immigration attitudes or the position towards the EU play a significant role in explaining populist radical right voting (Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2000; Werts, Scheepers, and Lubbers 2013). It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess how increasing income inequality changes political attitudes separately from its overall effect on voting behaviour. To avoid the risk of post-treatment bias in our results, we abstain from including individual attitudes in our empirical model.

between structural economic changes and the non-economic stances of the radical right. However, unlike Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019) we find that in societies that have grown more unequal, the radical right has a substantial electoral potential among high-status individuals and not those whose subjective status has declined the most. For the most deprived groups with lowest social status, income inequality is more plausibly associated with radical left party support, which promote strongly redistributive platforms (Rooduijn et al. 2017; Burgoon et al. 2019). Yet for voters higher up in the social hierarchy, supporting the radical right could be seen as a reaction to perceived threats of decline from widening social hierarchies associated with rising income inequality.

We proceed as follows. The next section elaborates on our theoretical framework, in which we conceptualize the impact of income inequality for different income groups and different levels of subjective social status at the individual level, based on two theories: relative deprivation and the threat of social decline. We then describe our dataset and modelling strategy, after which we discuss our empirical findings. The final section concludes.

Theory

We develop our argument in two steps. Building on existing literature, we argue that support for radical right parties is related to two individual-level indicators for social stratification: income and subjective social status. Our own theoretical contribution then highlights how the context of rising income inequality affects the association between these socio-economic indicators and radical right support. We derive one set of hypotheses based on the ‘relative deprivation’ logic and another based on a ‘threat of social decline’ logic.

Income, social status and radical right voting

Radical right parties are characterized by their anti-establishment discourse, authoritarian values and nativist ideology (Mudde 2007). Because these parties strongly emphasize cultural issues, it is difficult to conceptualise the impact of rising income inequality in purely economic terms (Inglehart and Norris 2017). However, we know from existing research that radical right voters are distinct not only in terms of their underlying socio-economic profiles (Rooduijn et al. 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018), but also in how they perceive their social status (Lipset 1955, 1959; Gidron and Hall 2017, 2019). Both socio-economic characteristics and subjective social status are important indicators of social stratification, and therefore are likely to be affected by rising income inequality (Ridgeway 2014). Most obviously, rising inequality

implies that the gap between different income groups increases. Less obviously, rising inequality also implies that the subjective status hierarchy among different groups in society changes (Ridgeway 2014; Gidron and Hall 2019). Our theoretical framework thus disentangles the impact of income inequality on radical right support at the individual level through its effects on different *income* and *status* groups. Before formulating our hypotheses about the effects of rising inequality, we first summarize existing research that shows how radical right support tends to be higher not only among low-income groups but also among groups with lower subjective social status.

Many studies show that individual-level *income* is an important determinant of voting for the radical right (Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002; Rooduijn et al. 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Burgoon et al. 2019). Although the strength of the income effect is often weaker compared to that of other socio-economic characteristics like education, class or unemployment (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013), there are several theoretical mechanisms linking low income to radical right support. Arguably, those at the bottom of the income distribution use retrospective voting to punish mainstream parties and turn to radical right parties, which present themselves as outsiders using anti-establishment rhetoric (Betz 1993; Bergh 2004). In addition, the nativism of the radical right speaks to those who think that immigration and international trade flows pose a stronger threat to their incomes than to those of high-skilled, high-income workers (see the literature on labour market competition, e.g. Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Bearce and Roosevelt 2019). This leads us to assume that there is a negative association between income and radical right support.

Following Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019), however, we do not think that the rise of radical right parties should be discussed in a solely economic framework. Radical right parties mainly politicise issues on the cultural dimension (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013) and therewith another criterion of social stratification is important for us to understand how economic changes translate into support for radical right parties: *subjective social status*. Scholars as early as Weber (1968) stated that, next to class and power, social status is a separate category of social stratification. Defined as a ‘person’s position within a hierarchy of social prestige’ (Gidron and Hall 2017, : S61), social status correlates with income or class, but is seen as a conceptually distinct form of stratification that can vary within income groups (Chan

and Goldthorpe 2007).² There is also a clear link between income inequality and social status. As higher income inequality indicates steeper hierarchies in society, status differences become more pronounced in unequal societies (Ridgeway 2014; Layte and Whelan 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett 2018). When testing whether those who feel ‘left behind’ are more likely to vote for the radical right independent from their actual income, we need to take into account subjective social status in addition to income.

According to Gidron and Hall (2017) and going back to the ‘status politics’ thesis by Lipset (1955, 1959), subjective social status is key in understanding support for the radical right. While poor personal economic conditions can lead people to support both the radical right and the radical left (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018), those experiencing a decline in social status are more likely to respond to the appeals of the radical right. The radical right promises to restore the status of those who feel left behind and provides a criterion of status – being native – that is independent from economic prosperity. Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019) provide comparative empirical evidence for the claim that the decreasing subjective status of low-educated men correlates with support for the radical right. In addition, there is evidence that lower social status leads to support for authoritarian values that are also most prominently promoted by radical right parties (in contrast to libertarian values, see Chan and Goldthorpe 2007; Bornschier 2010). As a result, we assume that there is a negative association between subjective social status and support for the radical right.

In sum, previous studies have shown that two important features of social stratification – income and social status – matter for radical right voting. The aim of this paper is to understand how the macroeconomic trend towards rising income inequality influences the effect of these individual-level features of social stratification.³ We expect that increasing income inequality reinforces the effects of income and social status for two reasons. First, following the theory of relative deprivation, individuals with low income and low status should become even more likely to support the radical right when their position deteriorates in relative terms. Second, the higher income inequality is, the larger the potential decline of those who fear social decline is. The effect of income inequality on the likelihood of different groups voting for the radical right

² Online Appendix 1 shows that subjective social status is significantly associated with income, education and class, but these factors explain only a small fraction of the variance in subjective social status ($R^2=0.24$ in a full model with fixed effects).

³ We focus on short-run, medium-run and long-run trends, but expect an effect of income inequality predominantly of long-term changes that reflect structural trends that are likely to be noticed by voters as permanent changes of the social structure (Piketty and Saez 2014). Short-term changes, on the other hand, capture the cyclical component of inequality shocks during economic downturns (Pontusson and Weisstanner 2018).

varies depending on whether the *actual* status and income position, the *fear* of decline, or both, matters.

Income inequality and relative deprivation

The first of our mechanisms is based on the theory of *relative deprivation* (Runciman 1966). Put briefly, this theory argues that individuals with low relative incomes might feel deprived relative to individuals who are relatively better off – irrespective of the absolute level of income and the consumption possibilities associated with given income levels (Hastings 2019). A summary measure of relative income, rising income inequality, implies a larger number of people who are left behind in relative terms. The structure of inequality differs across countries (Lupu and Pontusson 2011), and rising inequality could imply that deprivation is concentrated among low-income individuals or that deprivation extends into the middle of the distribution. Irrespective of the structure of inequality, however, relative deprivation theory generally expects that low-income individuals are even more deprived compared to the middle and the top when inequality increases and the distance between poor and better-off individuals increases. An important feature of the relative deprivation theory is that it does not stop at identifying that certain individuals are objectively deprived. It also expects that this relative deprivation invokes feelings of angry resentment at being less well-off than one deserves (Pettigrew 2016), which in turn makes the cultural positions of the radical right seem attractive (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012; Spruyt, Keppens, and Van Droogenbroeck 2016). These dynamics lead to our first deprivation hypothesis:

H1a: As inequality increases, the likelihood of low-income respondents to support radical right parties increases.

As discussed above, the consequences of income inequality may not be limited to increasing income disparities but extend to other indicators of social stratification. A large body of research shows that rising income inequality is likely to magnify disparities in social status perceptions, as inequality affects the hierarchy among individuals who are more or less esteemed in society (Pichler and Wallace 2009; Ridgeway 2014; Paskov, Gërxhani, and van de Werfhorst 2017; Wilkinson and Pickett 2018). Empirical studies confirm that rising inequality is associated with status decline, particularly among low-income groups (Lindemann and Saar 2014; Gidron and Hall 2019). In the framework of relative deprivation, we therefore expect that as inequality increases and status disparities grow, those with the lowest status levels feel even more deprived compared to individuals with higher status levels. In a context of high

inequality, deprived individuals with a sense of low social status are likely to find an alternative in the radical right because it promises to restore their lost sense of social identity (Spruyt, Keppens, and Van Droogenbroeck 2016; Gidron and Hall 2019).

H1b: As inequality increases, the likelihood of low-status respondents to support radical right parties increases.

Income inequality and the threat of social decline

Our second theoretical channel focuses on the *threat of social decline*, rather than on actual deprivation. Major strands in the recent literature cast doubt on the role of material and social deprivation in explaining radical right support (Oesch 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013; Im et al. 2019; Kurer and Palier 2019). While these critiques do not refute the usefulness of economic explanations of radical right voting per se, they point to a lack of dynamics in simple applications of the relative deprivation theory on political outcomes. Few studies consider the possibility of a *future* decline in material and non-material conditions. We argue that based on risk theories, even individuals with higher incomes and high status can feel threatened by social decline if income inequality increases the extent of the potential downfall. In turn, the radical right could benefit from these anxieties associated with the threat of social decline.

In principle, rising income inequality implies larger *potential income losses* for high-income groups, as the gap between the upper and lower parts of the distribution increases. However, risk is not equally distributed across income groups: the probability of being exposed to income losses decreases as income rises (Rehm, Hacker, and Schlesinger 2012). Most models along these lines in the social insurance literature assume that demand for insurance against economic risk becomes a powerful motivation among higher-income groups facing large potential losses (see e.g. Iversen and Soskice 2001; Moene and Wallerstein 2001; Rehm 2016). The implication of combining risk and potential income loss is that middle-income groups are unique in being exposed to both large potential income losses (like the rich) and high probabilities of income loss (like the poor). Hence, the threat of income decline is likely to be especially pervasive among middle-income individuals since their position brings together these two vulnerabilities.

The connection between inequality and labour market changes further supports the claim that threats of income decline particularly concern middle-income groups. It is well documented that many Western democracies have witnessed widespread ‘job polarisation’ with a decline in medium-skilled jobs as technological change replaces labour in routine tasks

(Autor, Levy, and Murnane 2003; Goos, Manning, and Salomons 2009, 2014). These structural labour market changes, along with increasing economic inequality, generate strong insecurities and a sense of endangerment among workers in the middle of the skills and income distributions (Mau 2015). Unlike their left-wing counterparts who have traditionally turned to the welfare state to respond to economic insecurity, radical right parties subsume addressing these perceived threats of decline into a broader framework of opposition to the changes that globalisation and modernisation entail (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013; Kurer and Palier 2019). This leads to our ‘threat of social decline’ hypothesis with respect to income:

H2a: As inequality increases, the likelihood of middle-income respondents to support radical right parties increases.

A similar ‘threat of decline’ mechanism applies to individuals’ subjective social status. While empirical research clearly shows that rising inequality affects status levels in society, it appears that inequality reduces status levels relatively uniformly across different groups (Layte and Whelan 2014; Lindemann and Saar 2014; Gidron and Hall 2019). Given these effects of inequality on the status hierarchy among both low- and high-status groups, we expect that individuals higher up in the status hierarchy become particularly concerned about a potential loss of status. On the one hand, this is because when it comes to subjective perceptions of one’s position in a hierarchy, people have a ‘last place aversion’ (Kuziemko et al. 2014). The latter makes it important for them to avoid falling to the bottom. On the other hand, a high status does not necessarily make its holders less likely to experience a decline in their status. In contrast to the risk of income loss, there is no objective risk function with respect to subjective social status loss. Although social status correlates with income and class, it is an independent dimension of social stratification (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007) and the feeling of status decline might affect many different groups in society. As income inequality increases, the perceived threat of status decline gains importance for high-status individuals.

Our predictions are in line with Gidron and Hall’s argument that people ‘a few rungs up’ the status hierarchy are most likely to be worried about status decline (Gidron and Hall 2017, : S66), but it is also possible that status anxiety affects even those people with the highest status levels, because there is no objective risk function attached to status decline. Hence, as income inequality increases, groups with middle and high status might be threatened by the concomitant increases in status disparities and drawn to the radical right that offers to protect traditional social boundaries. This leads to our ‘threat of social decline’ hypothesis for subjective social status:

H2b: As inequality increases, the likelihood of middle- and high-status respondents to support radical right parties increases.

In sum, our hypotheses generate a set of competing predictions about the groups that are most likely to shift their support towards the radical right as income inequality increases. If a mechanism based on the logic of *relative deprivation* applies, low-income and low-status individuals would be drawn to the radical right because they are the main losers of rising inequality, as these groups have experienced a real deterioration in their income and status hierarchy. If, on the other hand, the mechanism associated with the *threat of social decline* applies, rising inequality would create income and status anxieties among individuals higher up the distribution, who would then turn to the radical right to defend their position in the income and status hierarchy. Based on the anti-establishment nature of the radical right and its cultural emphasis on restoring or defending existing social boundaries, we think that both mechanisms could apply at the same time. In addition, the effect of income inequality could also depend on the combination of status *and* income group. This is why we test all four hypotheses with an additional model relying on a three-way interaction.

It is important to consider that with respect to the relative deprivation argument, the radical right is by far not the only or even the most obvious electoral option. Many studies show that the most deprived individuals – for example, the unemployed or the workers in precarious employment – find a valuable alternative in the radical left or simply abstain from voting (Emmenegger, Marx, and Schraff 2015; Rovny and Rovny 2017; Hooghe and Marks 2018). Since in this paper we focus on the radical right, we are unable to fully test the implications of our argument for support for the radical left and vote abstention. Hence, it is important to note that our theory is not a full test of the relative deprivation and threat of decline theories, but, rather, a test of how well these theories can explain radical right support in different macroeconomic contexts.

Data and operationalisation

To test our hypotheses in cross-national perspective using individual-level survey data, we face a trade-off between (a) data with a wide coverage back in time but limited in the scope of variables, and (b) data with a wide range of covariates but limited in time scope. In this paper, we opt to maximize the number of countries and time periods to be compared, as our argument predicts changes in voting behaviour following the rise of income inequality, a process which

started in the 1980s in many OECD countries. We rely on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which allows us to cover the time period from 1987 to 2017, significantly expanding the time period covered compared to related studies using data from the European Social Survey from 2002 onwards (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Burgoon et al. 2019). We selected advanced capitalist democracies in which survey respondents could select a radical right party, as defined below. We excluded Eastern European countries, where inequality is closely linked with the transition to the market economy and not easily comparable with the transformations in Western democracies. Our final dataset consists of 14 OECD countries, 151 country-years, and 158,454 individuals for the period from 1987 to 2017.⁴

Radical right support

The dependent variable is the respondent's *support for a radical right party (RRP)* measured as a binary variable (RRP=1, non-RRP=0). The ISSP contains two variables that we use for radical right support. A first question asks the respondent for which party he/she has voted for in the last election. A second question asks about vote intention/general support (labelled party affiliation). We combine these two variables, replacing party vote with party affiliation when party vote is missing.⁵ We define radical right parties following Mudde (2007, : 22f.) as those parties that promote a nativist and authoritarian political platform combined with a populist discourse dividing the society into 'the corrupt elite' and 'the pure people'. Armingeon *et al.* (2018) provide an updated version of Mudde's original list of radical right parties according to which we coded the answers in ISSP.⁶

Income (individual-level)

Our income measures are based on household income, which is more widely available in the ISSP than individual earnings (the latter is often missing for the non-employed population). A general issue is that income data in the ISSP are not directly comparable across countries and time. In a majority of cases, income is measured in interval categories. We assign midpoints to each income bracket and follow the approach in Donnelly and Pop-Eleches (2018) for the top

⁴ The 14 countries in our sample are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

⁵ The correlation between radical right vote and affiliation is 0.52 (N=46,223) for those cases where both measurements are available. Our findings are substantially unaltered if we include a dummy for party affiliation.

⁶ Armingeon *et al.* (2018) deviate from Mudde's original classification of some (borderline) cases, such as the Swiss People's Party (radical right from 1995 on), the Italian National Alliance, as well as the List Pim Fortuyn. In addition, we deviate from Mudde (2007) and Armingeon *et al.* (2018) by classifying the Norwegian Progress Party as radical right, due to its turn from a pure anti-tax populist platform to an anti-immigrant platform (visible already since the mid-1980s) and following other recent literature (Oesch and Rennwald 2018).

category. Next, we standardize income into annual household incomes and account for differences in household size, dividing income by the square root of the number of household members. Finally, we generate five income quintiles from these harmonized income data. The quintile measure groups respondents into five equal-sized categories of income rank and allows us to distinguish non-linear differences among low-, lower-middle-, middle-, upper-middle- and top-income groups.

Income inequality (macro-level)

Income inequality is measured at the macro-level, using Gini indicators from the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID) (Solt 2016). Our inequality measures are based on market household income (before taxes and transfers). Relying on disposable income (e.g. Burgoon et al. 2019) assumes that individuals derive the same value for income derived from the labour market and public transfer income. Instead, we have reasons to expect that compensation by government transfers may not fully offset the feelings of deprivation and social marginalisation if people lose their labour market income, mainly because individuals attach strong societal value from their occupations (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). We use short-run, medium-run and long-run measures of income inequality trends, assessing the change in the market income Gini across a four-year, eight-year and twelve-year window. All three measures are coded such as to reduce single-year fluctuations.⁷ Theoretically, we expect that the long-run measure (twelve-year window) best captures the structural component towards a long-run increase in inequality and is least influenced by cyclical swings driven by macroeconomic upturns and downturns (Pontusson and Weisstanner 2018).

Subjective social status

Subjective social status is measured with the top-bottom self-placement item in the ISSP, where respondents indicate their position in society on a scale from 1 (bottom) to 10 (top). The original wording of the question is as follows: *In our society, there are groups which tend to be towards the top and groups which tend to be towards the bottom. Below is a scale that runs from the top to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on this scale?* This question on subjective social status has been validated and extensively used in existing research (Gidron and Hall 2017; Lindemann and Saar 2014).

⁷ Specifically, the short-run trend measure is coded as: $\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=0}^1 Gini_{t-i} - \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=2}^3 Gini_{t-i}$; the medium-term measure as: $\frac{1}{4} \sum_{i=0}^3 Gini_{t-i} - \frac{1}{4} \sum_{i=4}^7 Gini_{t-i}$; and the long-term measure as: $\frac{1}{4} \sum_{i=0}^3 Gini_{t-i} - \frac{1}{4} \sum_{i=8}^{11} Gini_{t-i}$.

Control variables

Within the limits given by data availability in the ISSP, we include a standard set of individual-level control variables. We control for *age* (in years) and include binary variables for *education* (tertiary education=1), *gender* (male=1) and *unemployment* (unemployed=1). We further control for *social class* using the scheme by Oesch (2006).⁸ Finally, our models add a linear *time trend*, as we explain below in the model specification. The final models do not include potentially important contextual variables – immigration, trade openness, unemployment, GDP growth or welfare state expenditure – since neither is statistically significant and they do not substantively alter our findings (Online Appendix 4). Importantly, the results hardly change if we include immigration as a macro-level variable; we can reject the possibility that the conditional effects of inequality actually pick up the effects of immigration.

Methods

The empirical analysis is based on logistic regression models of whether a respondent supports a party of the radical right, measured as a binary variable (RRP=1, non-RRP=0). Most of our models exclude respondents voting for radical left parties or abstaining.⁹ This is the default strategy in previous research on radical parties (Rooduijn et al. 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018), because to some extent, there are similar underlying socio-economic determinants of radical right support, radical left support and vote abstention, which could cancel each other out. We present some additional models that include radical left and abstention in the reference category, which indeed show that the explanatory power of any of our socio-economic variables is weaker in these models since low socio-economic resources also tend to benefit the radical left and vote abstention. However, our main results are not affected by this decision (see Online Appendix 3).

To account for heterogeneity between countries (not explained by our model), we include country fixed effects and use robust standard errors clustered by country. The inclusion of fixed effects has both methodological and substantive reasons: Fixed effects ensure that our models indeed pick up changes over time (within-country changes) and they are necessary because we

⁸ The following class categories were used: Technicians, production workers, managers, clerks, socio-cultural professionals and service workers. The reference group is a combination of self-employed professionals and business owners.

⁹ Radical left was coded according to March (2011, : 8) as parties that criticize the market economy, promote strong interventionist policies and, similar to the radical right, cultivate anti-establishment sentiments.

are unable to control for a variety of other factors that likely account for radical right strength (e.g. supply-side factors). As there are reasons to suspect that both income inequality and radical right support similarly share an upward trend over time in many countries, we follow Kuhn et al. (2016) and add a time counter (measured in years, 1987=1) to account for this shared trend.¹⁰ As shown in Online Appendix 3, our results are not influenced by these methodological choices and are robust to a variety of alternative specifications.¹¹

Findings

Table 1 presents average marginal effects from our main logistic regression models of radical right party (RRP) support. Model 1 measures RRP support as a binary variable compared to all other vote choices (including radical left and abstaining), while Models 2 to 5 exclude all respondents that support the radical left or abstain from party support. The models generally reveal that both income and status explain differences in radical right voting, but their effects are not overly strong. The results only partially correspond with the assumption of a negative association between income and radical right support, as we find a non-linear effect of income. The probability for RRP support is significantly higher among the lower-middle income quintile compared to the bottom quintile. Even the middle quintile tends to have a higher propensity of RRP support than the lowest income group, although the difference is not statistically significant. In substantive terms, however, the effects of income are rather modest. The difference in the probability for RRP support between the most RRP-supportive income group (lower-middle quintile) and the least RRP-supportive income group (the top quintile) is only 0.99 percentage points in Model 1. These effects are more modest compared to education (3.32 percentage point difference between tertiary and non-tertiary educated respondents) or social class (4.24 percentage points difference between socio-cultural professionals and production workers).

¹⁰ We hasten to add that the increase in market inequality is not linear over time; inequality is particularly prone to jump in economic crises but can also decrease in other years (Pontusson and Weisstanner 2018). Hence, our results do not simply indicate a spurious relationship with a linear upward trend (that could be based on any unobserved variable). Our findings are substantively unaltered with country-specific time trends, without any time trend, or with quadratic or cubic polynomial time trends (see Online Appendix 3).

¹¹ We obtain similar results using multilevel logistic regressions, although the effects of inequality changes are estimated with slightly less precision. The interaction estimates, however, are substantially similar to our main specifications (see Online Appendix 3).

Table 1: Logistic regression models of radical right voting (average marginal effects)

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>					
Lower-middle quintile	0.58** (0.23)	0.57** (0.23)	0.57** (0.23)	0.56** (0.23)	0.55** (0.23)
Middle income quintile	0.27 (0.19)	0.03 (0.20)	0.03 (0.20)	0.02 (0.20)	0.00 (0.19)
Upper-middle quintile	-0.09 (0.23)	-0.46 (0.32)	-0.45 (0.32)	-0.45 (0.32)	-0.46 (0.32)
Top income quintile	-0.41 (0.30)	-0.82** (0.40)	-0.81** (0.40)	-0.83** (0.40)	-0.83** (0.40)
Subjective social status	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.23** (0.11)	-0.24** (0.10)	-0.23** (0.10)	-0.25*** (0.07)
Gini market short-term change			-0.51 (0.42)		
Gini market medium-term change				0.48** (0.21)	
Gini market long-term change					1.12*** (0.35)
Tertiary education	-3.32*** (0.42)	-3.82*** (0.49)	-3.82*** (0.49)	-3.86*** (0.46)	-3.83*** (0.36)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>					
Technicians	-0.50 (0.44)	-0.49 (0.50)	-0.48 (0.49)	-0.48 (0.50)	-0.41 (0.48)
Production workers	1.51*** (0.58)	2.20*** (0.70)	2.19*** (0.69)	2.19*** (0.70)	2.20*** (0.71)
Managers	-1.12*** (0.31)	-1.33*** (0.37)	-1.34*** (0.36)	-1.32*** (0.37)	-1.29*** (0.35)
Clerks	-0.40 (0.38)	-0.32 (0.48)	-0.32 (0.48)	-0.33 (0.48)	-0.34 (0.46)
Socio-cultural professionals	-2.73*** (0.37)	-2.92*** (0.43)	-2.92*** (0.43)	-2.90*** (0.43)	-2.84*** (0.41)
Service workers	1.03* (0.58)	1.64** (0.68)	1.62** (0.68)	1.63** (0.68)	1.58** (0.70)
Age	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Male	2.40*** (0.16)	2.75*** (0.22)	2.75*** (0.22)	2.75*** (0.23)	2.73*** (0.24)
Unemployed	0.35 (0.47)	0.84 (0.58)	0.85 (0.60)	0.82 (0.56)	0.80 (0.54)
Time trend	0.27** (0.11)	0.29** (0.14)	0.29** (0.14)	0.31** (0.13)	0.38*** (0.10)
Country fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Abstain & radical left excluded	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
N individuals	158,454	129,694	129,694	129,694	129,694
N country-years	151	151	151	151	151
N countries	14	14	14	14	14
Pseudo R ²	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are average marginal effects, indicating the percentage point change in the probability to vote RRP. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

We also find a significant negative effect of subjective social status on RRP support (as expected theoretically), but only in those models that exclude the options to vote radical left or abstain from the sample. The effect of subjective social status is rather small as well. In Model 1, the predicted probability of RRP support only increases by 0.51 percentage points when switching from lowest to highest status. These small effect sizes for income and status are not surprising given that the reference category in these models includes radical left supporters and abstaining voters, both of which have electorates with lower incomes and lower levels of subjective social status. Consequently, both the significance and the substantive magnitude of the effects of income and subjective social status increase when we exclude radical left voters and abstainers from the sample in Model 2.

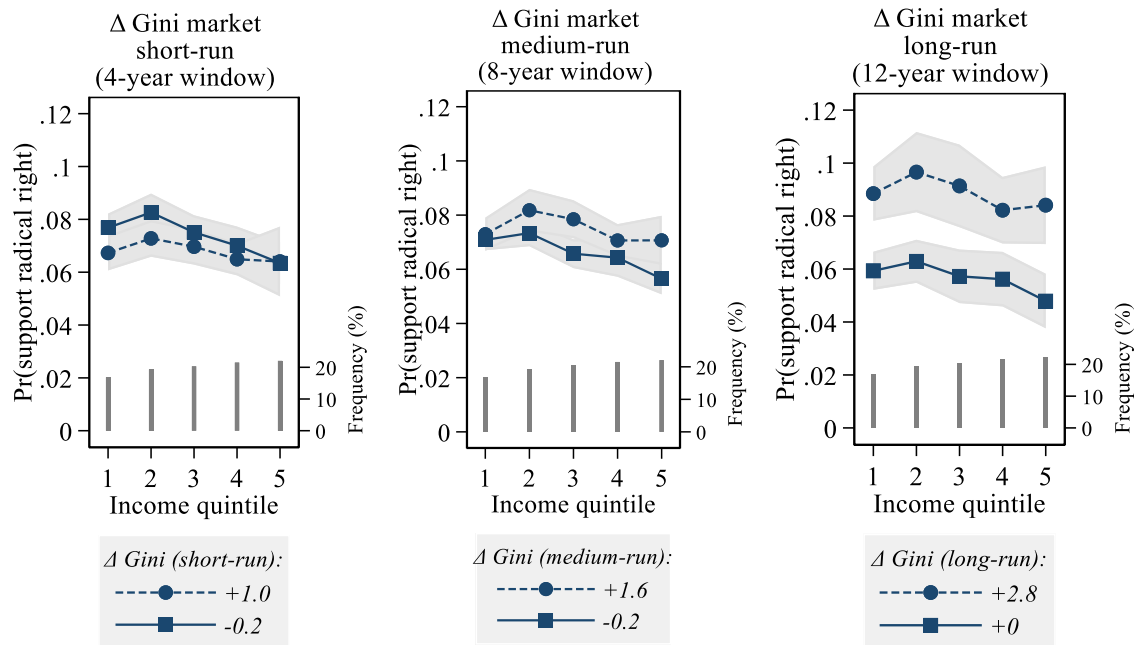
The remaining Models 3-5 in Table 1 introduce our measures for income inequality trends in the short-, medium- and long-run. Changes in income inequality turn out to increase the individual probability to support the radical right, but only in the medium and long run. This is consistent with our assumption that the latter indicate structural trends towards rising inequality, while short-term changes (measured over a four-year period) contain some cyclical variation and might be reversed. Short-run inequality changes are not statistically significantly related to RRP support and even have the opposite sign. In contrast, inequality changes measured over an 8-year or 12-year period significantly increase the likelihood for RRP support. The long-run effect of inequality (Model 5) is large in substantive terms; a change from one standard deviation below the mean to one above the mean increases the predicted probability for RRP support by more than 3 percentage points. It should be noted that all other explanatory variables remain unchanged by the inclusion of inequality variables.

This baseline effect of inequality is difficult to interpret as evidence for one of our theoretical approaches, because inequality as a macro-level indicator comprises both winners and losers of stratification. Therefore, we move on to explore how the effect of inequality trends varies among different income and status groups.

Figure 1 presents predicted probabilities from interaction models between inequality and income quintile dummies (see Online Appendix 2 for the full results). The relative deprivation mechanism predicts a stronger effect of income inequality among low-income groups who experience a relative deterioration of their financial situation as inequality increases (H1a). If the threat mechanism proves to be true, we should observe a stronger effect of rising income inequality among middle-income quintiles (H2a). The interaction terms are jointly significant at the 99 percent level for medium- and long-run inequality trends and not significant for short-run Gini changes, but since they reveal little about the conditional relationships (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006), we focus on the predicted probability plots with 95 percent confidence intervals. We find that rising income inequality in the medium-run and especially in the long-run significantly pushes up the probability of RRP support for any income group. In the right-hand panel of Figure 1, we see that a rise in market inequality one standard deviation above the mean (an increase of 2.8 Gini points over the 12-year window) has a slightly stronger effect on lower-middle, middle and top-income quintiles. However, the individual differences in the inequality effect do not differ statistically significantly between the income groups. Figure 1 bears out a clear pattern that rising inequality in the long-term significantly increases RRP support for all income groups – both the winners and losers – which

could be consistent with both theoretical mechanisms that we proposed, namely the deprivation and the threat mechanism. Only the rising support among the top income group remains puzzling and contradicts both expected mechanisms.

Figure 1: Inequality trends and probability of radical right support (by income quintile)

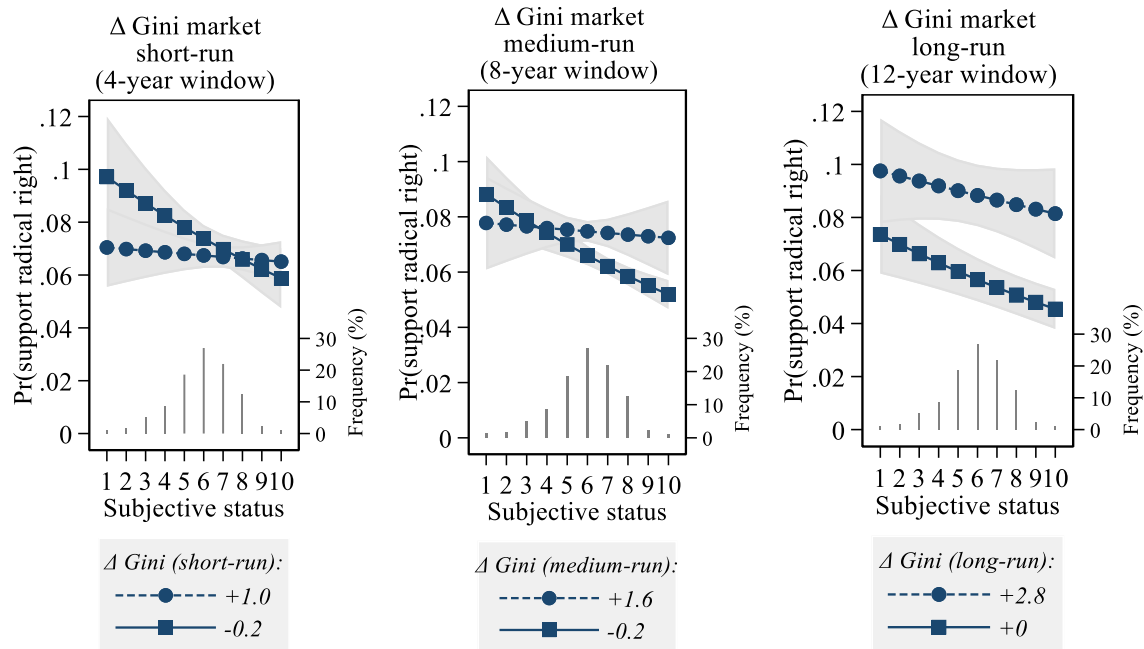


Note: Δ Gini values = mean plus/minus one standard deviation. Full model results: Online Appendix 2.

In Figure 2, we estimate an interaction term between inequality trends and subjective social status (SSS). Again, we would expect a rising support of RRP among respondents with low SSS according to the relative deprivation theory (H1b), and rising support among mid- and high-status respondents in case threat of social decline weighs more than the actual status (H2b). The interaction terms of change in income inequality and SSS are on the borderline of statistical significance ($p=0.103$ in the short-run, $p=0.028$ in the medium-run, $p=0.226$ in the long-run). However, the graphical inspection of the conditional effects in Figure 2 reveal telling patterns. As we move to contexts of rising inequality (in the short-, medium- or long-run), the likelihood to support RRP increases more strongly among respondents with *higher* subjective social status. In addition, inequality trends affect the relationship between SSS and RRP support. In situations where inequality did not rise strongly, subjective social status is statistically significant and negatively associated with RRP support. Rising inequality reverses this trend. Where inequality has been rising at above-average levels, the relationship between status and RRP support disappears. In other words, inequality increases RRP support more

strongly among high-status respondents than among low-status respondents. This finding speaks strongly in favour of the claim that not those at the bottom tend to support RRP when inequality rises, but those that still have a higher position in society they fear to lose.

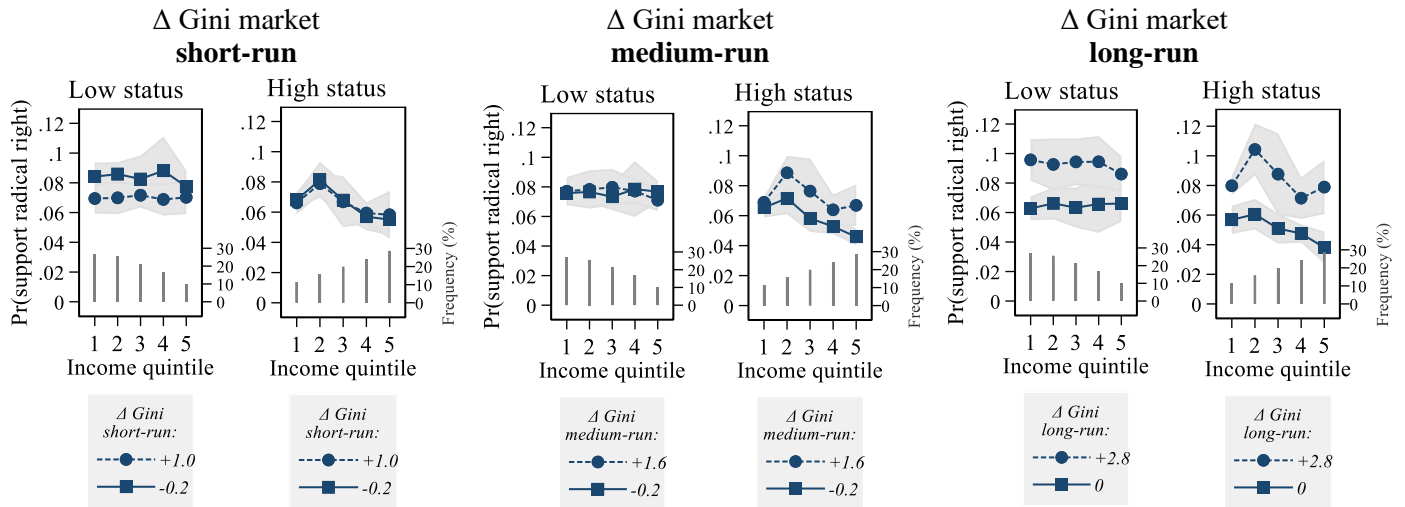
Figure 2: Inequality trends and probability of radical right support (by subjective status)



Note: Δ Gini values = mean plus/minus one standard deviation. Full model results: Online Appendix 2.

This is also confirmed when looking at the effects of inequality trends conditional on both income and subjective social status (SSS), based on three-way interaction models. Figure 3 estimates the conditional effect of Gini changes for each income quintile separately for representative values of ‘low status’ (4) and ‘high status’ (8). As in the previous models, we find that rising income inequality in the long-term perspective increases the likelihood of RRP support among all income groups. Other than we would expect from the relative deprivation theory, in a context of rising inequality, the largest increase in radical right support derives from individuals whose subjective social status is high and that do not belong to the lowest income group. Among those with high SSS, individuals in the lower-middle and middle income quintiles stand out to have the highest probability of RRP support as inequality increases. Lower-middle income groups with high status perceptions are hardly individuals that count themselves to the group of people that already experienced social decline. The rising likelihood of voting radical right among this group, however, suggests that they belong to the group of people that due to rising income inequality fear a decline in social and financial terms most.

Figure 3: Inequality trends and probability of radical right support (by income and subjective status interacted)



Note: Δ Gini values = mean plus/minus one standard deviation. Low status=4, high status=8 (representing the bottom and top deciles in the status distribution). Full model results: Online Appendix 2.

Our analysis leaves the question of how the *most deprived* citizens respond to rising inequality, given that they do not move in large numbers to the radical right, as our analysis showed. The most straightforward expectation is that the citizens with lowest income and status levels find a more valuable alternative in *radical left parties* (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018). Radical left parties combine an anti-establishment discourse with demand for extensive state intervention and antipathy against market outcomes. Being at the bottom of the social hierarchy, these individuals would benefit from redistribution and might be dependent on public transfers for a living. A full test of this argument is beyond the scope of this paper, but in Online Appendix 5 we find strong preliminary evidence that the deprivation mechanism is indeed more likely to apply for radical left parties than their radical right counterparts. Income inequality significantly increases radical left support, but this effect is most pronounced among low-income individuals (rather than middle- or high-income individuals), and radical left support is much stronger among low-status individuals (rather than high-status individuals). These preliminary findings point to fruitful avenues for further research, by examining how income inequality affects the full set of vote choices, including abstention and political alienation.

Conclusion

In this paper, we shed light on the interplay of two recent phenomena affecting Western democracies: rising income inequality and the simultaneous increase in support for radical right parties. Studies explaining the rise in radical right support over the last several decades often conclude that the people who feel ‘left behind’ in the processes of globalisation and economic modernisation are more likely to turn to the radical right. Income inequality allows us to measure to what extent people are left behind in relative terms. Therewith our study contributes to the debate about the economic sources of radical right support, whose effect, in the past, has mainly been tested in individual-level studies focusing on socio-economic characteristics and occupational patterns (Rooduijn et al. 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Oesch and Rennwald 2018). Nevertheless, we argue that rising income inequality does not only bear implications for the economic approach to radical right support. Income inequality also manifests hierarchies based on social status that builds an own category of social stratification (Ridgeway 2014). Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019) argue that subjective social status is an important factor in understanding how economic conditions translate into support for radical right parties that mainly politicize the cultural dimension. By cultivating nativism, the latter promise to restore the status of those ‘left behind’ and deliver voters a non-economic source of prestige. Both income and social status have been shown to negatively correlate with radical right support. In this paper, we then analysed how rising inequality affects the probability of supporting radical right parties among different income groups and status groups.

We argued that there are two possible ways for rising income inequality to affect radical right support. First, rising income inequality strengthens the effect of income on radical right voting through the logic of relative deprivation (Runciman 1966). When inequality is increasing, people at the lower end of the income and status hierarchy might feel relatively more deprived and strive for change that the radical right promises in its anti-establishment claims. Second, rising income inequality increases the potential ‘height of fall’ for those who fear social decline. The effect of rising income inequality is then less pronounced among those already ‘left behind’ and reaches into the ranks of those who have more left to lose – the middle-income and high-status groups.

Our analyses of across 14 OECD countries over the period between 1987 and 2017 confirms the reinforcing effect of rising income inequality on the probability of voting for the radical right among certain groups of income and status. This effect is strongest among

individuals with middle incomes and high status. The general growth of radical right support in increasingly unequal societies should therefore not be traced back solely to those who have experienced an *actual decline* in income and social status. Rather, our results suggest that the voting behaviour of individuals higher up in the social hierarchy is even more crucial to understanding how income inequality fuels radical right support. We make the theoretical claim that this group is most likely to *fear social decline* and therewith turns towards the radical right. The two main thrusts of our argument are the radical right's stance against globalisation, which speaks to economic insecurities of middle-income workers, and its discourse to provide non-economic criteria of social status that pits natives against immigrants, which speaks to those worried about protecting their status in the social hierarchy. In contrast, the radical right's anti-elitist stances are not enough to gain support among the most deprived voters, who are likely to have a material interest in more redistributive platforms than the radical right offers. To confirm these causal claims, future research should try to measure how income inequality affects the perceived anxiety of social decline among different groups in society, particularly the middle class, and test how this affects voting behaviour.

These results contribute to the literature on radical right support in several ways. First, the paper links the debate about support for radical right parties among socio-economically weak constituents with one significant macroeconomic change observable over the past decades and shows that increasing income inequality is important in explaining patterns of support. Second, the results give further evidence to Gidron and Hall's (2017, 2019) claim that radical right support is not about *either* the economy *or* culture. Rather, we have good reasons to believe that features of social hierarchies, such as subjective social status, function as an important link between economic well-being and support for radical parties. However, the relationship is less straightforward than Gidron and Hall suggest, as in our analysis, anxiety about losing subjective social status proves to be more important than actual decline.

References

- Armington, K., et al. (2018) *Comparative Political Data Set 1960-2016*, 2018: Institute of Political Science, University of Bern.
- Autor, D.H., Levy, F., and Murnane, R.J. (2003) 'The Skill Content of Recent Technological Change: An Empirical Exploration', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118(4): 1279-333.
- Bearce, D.H. and Roosevelt, M. (2019) 'A Sometimes Hidden Economic Dimension to Individual Immigration Preferences: Cross-National Evidence in Support of the Labor Competition Hypothesis', *Political Research Quarterly* 72(4): 894-909.
- Bergh, J. (2004) 'Protest Voting in Austria, Denmark, and Norway', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(4): 367-89.
- Betz, H.-G. (1993) 'The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe', *Comparative Politics* 25(4): 413-27.
- Bornschier, S. (2010) *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bornschier, S. and Kriesi, H. (2013) 'The Populist Right, the Working Class, and the Changing Face of Class Politics', in J. Rydgren (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 10-29.
- Brambor, T., Clark, W.R., and Golder, M. (2006) 'Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses', *Political Analysis* 14(1): 63-82.
- Burgoon, B., van Noort, S., Rooduijn, M., and Underhill, G. (2019) 'Positional deprivation and support for radical right and radical left parties', *Economic Policy* 34(97): 49-93.
- Chan, T.W. and Goldthorpe, J.H. (2007) 'Class and Status: The Conceptual Distinction and its Empirical Relevance', *American Sociological Review* 72(4): 512-32.
- Donnelly, M.J. and Pop-Eleches, G. (2018) 'Income Measures in Cross-National Surveys: Problems and Solutions', *Political Science Research and Methods* 6(2): 355-63.
- Elchardus, M. and Spruyt, B. (2012) 'The contemporary contradictions of egalitarianism: an empirical analysis of the relationship between the old and new left/right alignments', *European Political Science Review* 4(2): 217-39.
- Emmenegger, P., Marx, P., and Schraff, D. (2015) 'Labour market disadvantage, political orientations and voting: how adverse labour market experiences translate into electoral behaviour', *Socio-Economic Review* 13(2): 189-213.
- Engler, S. and Weisstanner, D. (2020) 'Income inequality, status decline and support for the radical right', in R. Careja, P. Emmenegger and N. Giger (eds.), *The European Social Model under Pressure*. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 383-400.
- Gest, J., Reny, T., and Mayer, J. (2018) 'Roots of the Radical Right: Nostalgic Deprivation in the United States and Britain', *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13): 1694-719.
- Gidron, N. and Hall, P.A. (2017) 'The politics of social status: economic and cultural roots of the populist right', *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): S57-S84.
- Gidron, N. and Hall, P.A. (2019) 'Populism as a Problem of Social Integration', *Comparative Political Studies* Online first.
- Goos, M., Manning, A., and Salomons, A. (2009) 'Job Polarization in Europe', *American Economic Review* 99(2): 58-63.
- Goos, M., Manning, A., and Salomons, A. (2014) 'Explaining Job Polarization: Routine-Biased Technological Change and Offshoring', *American Economic Review* 104(8): 2509-26.
- Han, K.J. (2016) 'Income inequality and voting for radical right-wing parties', *Electoral Studies* 42: 54-64.
- Hastings, O.P. (2019) 'Who feels it? Income inequality, relative deprivation, and financial satisfaction in U.S. states, 1973-2012', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 60(April): 1-15.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018) 'Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage', *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(1): 109-35.
- Im, Z.J., Mayer, N., Palier, B., and Rovny, J. (2019) 'The "losers of automation": A reservoir of votes for the radical right?', *Research & Politics* 6(1): 2053168018822395.

- Inglehart, R. and Norris, P. (2017) 'Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse', *Perspectives on Politics* 15(2): 443-54.
- Iversen, T. and Soskice, D. (2001) 'An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences', *American Political Science Review* 95(4): 875-93.
- Jesuit, D.K., Paradowski, P.R., and Mahler, V.A. (2009) 'Electoral support for extreme right-wing parties: A sub-national analysis of western European elections', *Electoral Studies* 28(2): 279-90.
- Kitschelt, H. (1995) *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kitschelt, H. and Rehm, P. (2014) 'Occupations as a Site of Political Preference Formation', *Comparative Political Studies* 47(12): 1670-706.
- Kriesi, H., et al. (2008) *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuhn, T., van Elsas, E., Hakhverdian, A., and van der Brug, W. (2016) 'An ever wider gap in an ever closer union: Rising inequalities and euroscepticism in 12 West European democracies, 1975–2009', *Socio-Economic Review* 14(1): 27-45.
- Kurer, T. (2019) 'The Declining Middle: Political Reactions to Occupational Change', in: Conference paper, version May 2019.
- Kurer, T., Häusermann, S., Wüest, B., and Enggist, M. (2019) 'Economic grievances and political protest', *European Journal of Political Research* 58(3): 866-92.
- Kurer, T. and Palier, B. (2019) 'Shrinking and shouting: the political revolt of the declining middle in times of employment polarization', *Research & Politics* 6(1): 2053168019831164.
- Kuziemko, I., Buell, R.W., Reich, T., and Norton, M.I. (2014) "Last-Place Aversion": Evidence and Redistributive Implications', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129(1): 105-49.
- Layte, R. and Whelan, C.T. (2014) 'Who Feels Inferior? A Test of the Status Anxiety Hypothesis of Social Inequalities in Health', *European Sociological Review* 30(4): 525-35.
- Lindemann, K. and Saar, E. (2014) 'Contextual effects on subjective social position: Evidence from European countries', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 55(1): 3-23.
- Lipset, S.M. (1955) 'The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy', *The British Journal of Sociology* 6(2): 176-209.
- Lipset, S.M. (1959) 'Democracy and working-class authoritarianism', *American Sociological Review* 24: 482-501.
- Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M., and Scheepers, P. (2002) 'Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research* 41(3): 345-78.
- Lupu, N. and Pontusson, J. (2011) 'The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution', *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 316-36.
- March, L. (2011) *Radical Left Parties in Europe*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mau, S. (2015) *Inequality, Marketization and the Majority Class. Why Did the European Middle Classes Accept Neo-Liberalism?*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moene, K.O. and Wallerstein, M. (2001) 'Inequality, Social Insurance, and Redistribution', *American Political Science Review* 95(4): 859-74.
- Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oesch, D. (2006) 'Coming to Grips with a Changing Class Structure. An Analysis of Employment Stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland', *International Sociology* 21(2): 263-88.
- Oesch, D. (2008) 'Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland', *International Political Science Review* 29(3): 349-73.
- Oesch, D. and Rennwald, L. (2018) 'Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right', *European Journal of Political Research* 57(4): 783-807.
- Paskov, M., Gërzhani, K., and van de Werfhorst, H.G. (2017) 'Giving Up on the Joneses? The Relationship between Income Inequality and Status-seeking', *European Sociological Review* 33(1): 112-23.
- Pettigrew, T.F. (2016) 'In Pursuit of Three Theories: Authoritarianism, Relative Deprivation, and Intergroup Contact', *Annual Review of Psychology* 67(1): 1-21.

- Pichler, F. and Wallace, C. (2009) 'Social Capital and Social Class in Europe: The Role of Social Networks in Social Stratification', *European Sociological Review* 25(3): 319-32.
- Piketty, T. and Saez, E. (2014) 'Inequality in the long run', *Science* 344(6186): 838-43.
- Pontusson, J. and Weisstanner, D. (2018) 'Macroeconomic conditions, inequality shocks and the politics of redistribution, 1990–2013', *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(1): 31-58.
- Rehm, P. (2016) *Risk Inequality and Welfare States: Social Policy Preferences, Development, and Dynamics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rehm, P., Hacker, J.S., and Schlesinger, M. (2012) 'Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State', *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 386-406.
- Ridgeway, C.L. (2014) 'Why Status Matters for Inequality', *American Sociological Review* 79(1): 1-16.
- Rooduijn, M. and Burgoon, B. (2018) 'The Paradox of Well-being: Do Unfavorable Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Contexts Deepen or Dampen Radical Left and Right Voting Among the Less Well-Off?', *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13): 1720-53.
- Rooduijn, M., Burgoon, B., van Elsas, E.J., and van de Werfhorst, H.G. (2017) 'Radical distinction: Support for radical left and radical right parties in Europe', *European Union Politics* 18(4): 536-59.
- Rovny, A.E. and Rovny, J. (2017) 'Outsiders at the ballot box: operationalizations and political consequences of the insider–outsider dualism', *Socio-Economic Review* 15(1): 161-85.
- Runciman, W.G. (1966) *Relative deprivation and social justice: A study of attitudes to social inequality in twentieth-century England*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Scheve, K.F. and Slaughter, M.J. (2001) 'Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy', *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1): 133-45.
- Solt, F. (2016) 'The Standardized World Income Inequality Database', *Social Science Quarterly* 97(5): 1267-81.
- Spruyt, B., Keppens, G., and Van Droogenbroeck, F. (2016) 'Who Supports Populism and What Attracts People to It?', *Political Research Quarterly* 69(2): 335-46.
- Van Der Brug, W., Fennema, M., and Tillie, J. (2000) 'Anti-immigrant Parties in Europe: Ideological or Protest Vote?', *European Journal of Political Research* 37(1): 77-102.
- Weber, M. (1968) *Economy and Society*. Edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich. Translated by E. Frischoff, New York: Bedminster Press.
- Werts, H., Scheepers, P., and Lubbers, M. (2013) 'Euro-scepticism and radical right-wing voting in Europe, 2002–2008: Social cleavages, socio-political attitudes and contextual characteristics determining voting for the radical right', *European Union Politics* 14(2): 183-205.
- Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2018) *The Inner Level. How More Equal Societies Reduce Stress, Restore Sanity and Improve Everyone's Well-being*, London: Allen Lane.

ONLINE APPENDIX

Contents:

- Online Appendix 1: Determinants of subjective social status
- Online Appendix 2: Full interaction models underlying Figures 1, 2, and 3
- Online Appendix 3: Robustness checks
- Online Appendix 4: Models with contextual variables
- Online Appendix 5: Radical left party support

Online Appendix 1: Determinants of subjective social status

Table A1: OLS regressions of subjective social status

	1	2	3
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>			
Lower-middle quintile	0.43*** (0.03)	0.43*** (0.03)	0.36*** (0.03)
Middle income quintile	0.80*** (0.05)	0.79*** (0.05)	0.64*** (0.04)
Upper-middle quintile	1.14*** (0.06)	1.14*** (0.05)	0.89*** (0.04)
Top income quintile	1.71*** (0.10)	1.71*** (0.09)	1.32*** (0.07)
Tertiary education			0.45*** (0.04)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>			
Technicians			-0.13*** (0.02)
Production workers			-0.59*** (0.04)
Managers			0.06* (0.03)
Clerks			-0.29*** (0.04)
Socio-cultural professionals			-0.10** (0.04)
Service workers			-0.44*** (0.03)
Age			-0.00 (0.00)
Male			0.07*** (0.02)
Unemployed			-0.57*** (0.05)
Time trend			0.01 (0.01)
Country fixed effects	no	yes	yes
N individuals	158,454	158,454	158,454
N country-years	151	151	151
N countries	14	14	14
R ²	0.12	0.19	0.24

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Based on OLS regression models with country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Online Appendix 2: Full interaction models underlying Figures 1, 2, and 3

Table A2a: Logistic regression models of radical right voting – interaction between inequality and income (see Figure 1)

	1		2		3	
	Δ Gini short-term		Δ Gini medium-term		Δ Gini long-term	
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>						
Lower-middle quintile	0.09*	(0.05)	0.05	(0.04)	0.07*	(0.04)
Middle income quintile	-0.02	(0.03)	-0.07*	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.05)
Upper-middle quintile	-0.10**	(0.05)	-0.10**	(0.05)	-0.06	(0.07)
Top income quintile	-0.19***	(0.06)	-0.23***	(0.06)	-0.24**	(0.10)
Subjective social status	-0.04**	(0.02)	-0.04**	(0.02)	-0.04***	(0.01)
Δ Gini market	-0.13*	(0.07)	0.02	(0.04)	0.17***	(0.05)
Δ Gini market*income						
*Lower-middle quintile	0.00	(0.04)	0.05***	(0.02)	0.01	(0.02)
*Middle income quintile	0.06	(0.05)	0.10***	(0.03)	0.03	(0.04)
*Upper-middle quintile	0.06	(0.06)	0.04	(0.05)	-0.01	(0.04)
*Top income quintile	0.14	(0.13)	0.12**	(0.05)	0.06	(0.05)
Tertiary education	-0.72***	(0.11)	-0.72***	(0.10)	-0.72***	(0.08)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>						
Technicians	-0.08	(0.08)	-0.08	(0.08)	-0.07	(0.08)
Production workers	0.32***	(0.10)	0.32***	(0.10)	0.32***	(0.10)
Managers	-0.24***	(0.06)	-0.24***	(0.06)	-0.23***	(0.06)
Clerks	-0.05	(0.08)	-0.05	(0.08)	-0.06	(0.08)
Socio-cultural professionals	-0.60***	(0.08)	-0.59***	(0.08)	-0.58***	(0.08)
Service workers	0.24**	(0.10)	0.24**	(0.10)	0.24**	(0.10)
Age	-0.01	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.00)
Male	0.45***	(0.04)	0.45***	(0.04)	0.45***	(0.04)
Unemployed	0.14	(0.10)	0.13	(0.09)	0.13	(0.09)
Time trend	0.05**	(0.02)	0.05**	(0.02)	0.06***	(0.02)
Country fixed effects	yes		yes		yes	
Abstain & radical left excluded	yes		yes		yes	
N individuals	129,694		129,694		129,694	
N country-years	151		151		151	
N countries	14		14		14	
Pseudo R ²	0.13		0.13		0.13	

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are log-odds coefficients. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Table A2b: Logistic regression models of radical right voting – interaction between inequality and subjective status (see Figure 2)

	1	2	3
	Δ Gini short-term	Δ Gini medium-term	Δ Gini long-term
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>			
Lower-middle quintile	0.09** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
Middle income quintile	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Upper-middle quintile	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)
Top income quintile	-0.14** (0.07)	-0.14** (0.07)	-0.14** (0.07)
Subjective social status	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)
Δ Gini market	-0.36* (0.21)	-0.12 (0.10)	0.11 (0.09)
Δ Gini market*status	0.05 (0.03)	0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Tertiary education	-0.72*** (0.11)	-0.73*** (0.10)	-0.72*** (0.08)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>			
Technicians	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.08)
Production workers	0.32*** (0.10)	0.32*** (0.10)	0.32*** (0.10)
Managers	-0.24*** (0.06)	-0.24*** (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.06)
Clerks	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)
Socio-cultural professionals	-0.60*** (0.08)	-0.59*** (0.08)	-0.58*** (0.07)
Service workers	0.24** (0.10)	0.24** (0.10)	0.24** (0.11)
Age	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
Male	0.45*** (0.04)	0.45*** (0.04)	0.45*** (0.04)
Unemployed	0.14 (0.10)	0.13 (0.09)	0.13 (0.09)
Time trend	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
Country fixed effects	yes	yes	yes
Abstain & radical left excluded	yes	yes	yes
N individuals	129,694	129,694	129,694
N country-years	151	151	151
N countries	14	14	14
Pseudo R ²	0.13	0.13	0.13

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are log-odds coefficients. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

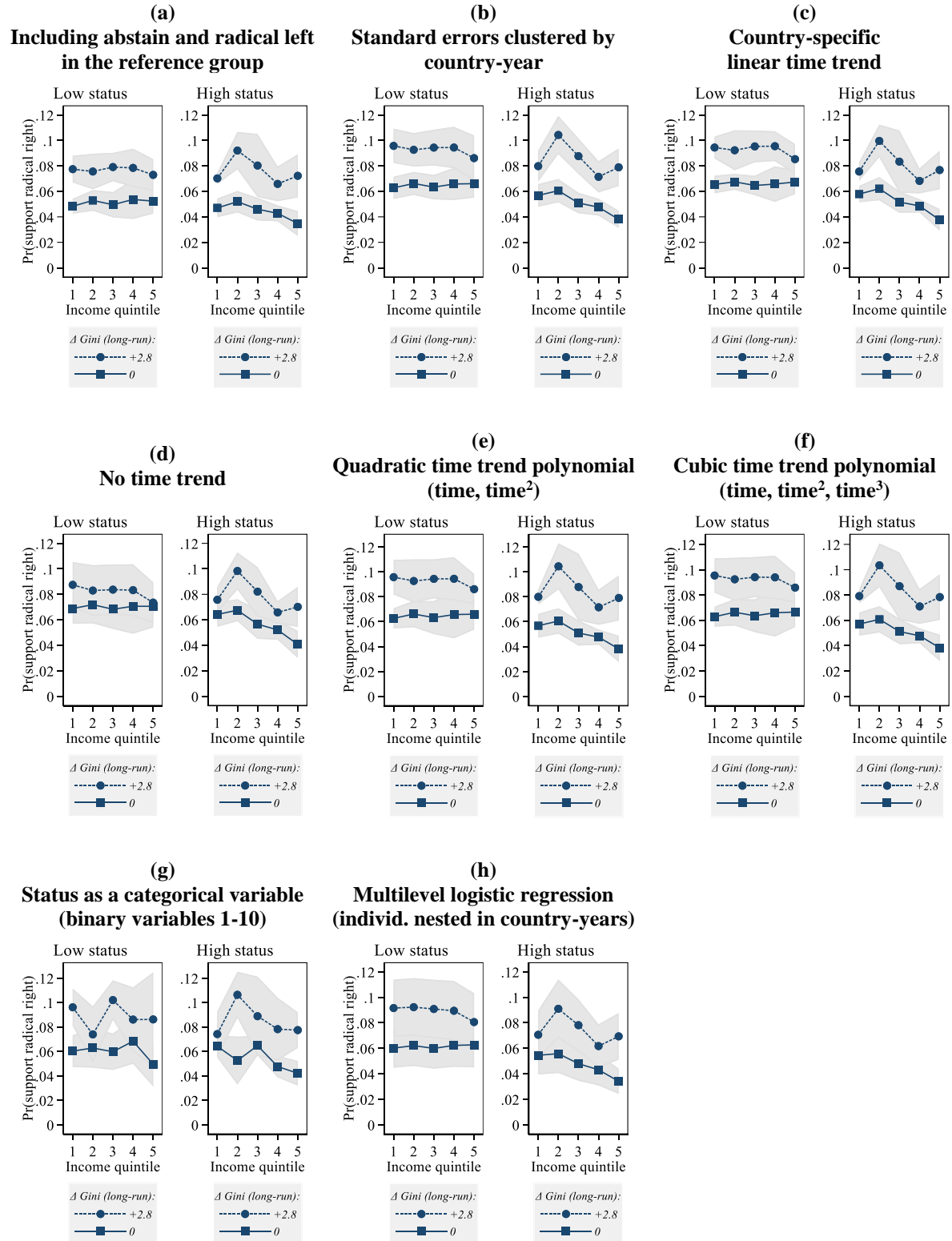
Table A2c: Logistic regression models of radical right voting – interaction between inequality, income and status (see Figure 3)

	1		2		3	
	Δ Gini short-term		Δ Gini medium-term		Δ Gini long-term	
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>						
Lower-middle quintile	-0.16	(0.15)	-0.10	(0.17)	0.05	(0.20)
Middle income quintile	-0.02	(0.25)	0.05	(0.23)	0.14	(0.27)
Upper-middle quintile	0.28	(0.27)	0.30	(0.30)	0.31	(0.33)
Top income quintile	0.07	(0.14)	0.36***	(0.12)	0.56***	(0.19)
Subjective social status	-0.05***	(0.02)	-0.04***	(0.02)	-0.03	(0.02)
Δ Gini market	-0.35	(0.23)	-0.01	(0.10)	0.21***	(0.08)
Δ Gini market*income						
Lower-middle quintile	-0.03	(0.16)	-0.10	(0.11)	-0.16	(0.08)
*Middle income quintile	0.09	(0.16)	-0.05	(0.16)	-0.10	(0.09)
*Upper-middle quintile	-0.18	(0.15)	-0.13	(0.12)	-0.07	(0.10)
*Top income quintile	0.10	(0.14)	-0.32***	(0.09)	-0.29***	(0.08)
Δ Gini market*status	0.04	(0.03)	0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)
Income*status						
*Lower-middle quintile	0.05	(0.03)	0.03	(0.03)	0.00	(0.04)
*Middle income quintile	0.00	(0.04)	-0.02	(0.04)	-0.03	(0.04)
*Upper-middle quintile	-0.06	(0.04)	-0.07	(0.05)	-0.06	(0.05)
*Top income quintile	-0.04	(0.03)	-0.09***	(0.02)	-0.13***	(0.03)
Δ Gini market*income*status						
*Lower-middle quintile	0.00	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)	0.03**	(0.01)
*Middle income quintile	-0.01	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)	0.02	(0.02)
Upper-middle quintile	0.03	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)	0.01	(0.01)
*Top income quintile	-0.00	(0.03)	0.07***	(0.02)	0.05***	(0.02)
Tertiary education	-0.71***	(0.11)	-0.72***	(0.10)	-0.71***	(0.08)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>						
Technicians	-0.08	(0.08)	-0.08	(0.08)	-0.07	(0.08)
Production workers	0.31***	(0.10)	0.32***	(0.10)	0.32***	(0.10)
Managers	-0.24***	(0.06)	-0.23***	(0.06)	-0.23***	(0.06)
Clerks	-0.06	(0.08)	-0.06	(0.08)	-0.06	(0.08)
Socio-cultural professionals	-0.60***	(0.08)	-0.59***	(0.08)	-0.58***	(0.07)
Service workers	0.24**	(0.10)	0.24**	(0.10)	0.24**	(0.10)
Age	-0.01	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.00)
Male	0.45***	(0.04)	0.45***	(0.04)	0.45***	(0.04)
Unemployed	0.14	(0.10)	0.13	(0.09)	0.13	(0.09)
Time trend	0.05**	(0.02)	0.05**	(0.02)	0.06***	(0.02)
Country fixed effects	yes		yes		yes	
Abstain & radical left excluded	yes		yes		yes	
N individuals	129,694		129,694		129,694	
N country-years	151		151		151	
N countries	14		14		14	
Pseudo R ²	0.13		0.13		0.13	

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are log-odds coefficients. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Online Appendix 3: Robustness checks

Figure A3: Robustness checks for the interaction between long-run inequality trends (12-year window), income and subjective status (see Figure 3)



Online Appendix 4: Models with contextual variables

Table A4: Logistic regression models of radical right voting (average marginal effects)

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>					
Lower-middle quintile	0.54** (0.23)	0.55** (0.23)	0.56** (0.22)	0.56** (0.23)	0.55** (0.23)
Middle income quintile	-0.04 (0.19)	0.00 (0.19)	0.02 (0.19)	0.01 (0.19)	-0.00 (0.19)
Upper-middle quintile	-0.52* (0.31)	-0.46 (0.32)	-0.45 (0.31)	-0.46 (0.32)	-0.47 (0.32)
Top income quintile	-0.85** (0.41)	-0.84** (0.41)	-0.82** (0.40)	-0.83** (0.40)	-0.83** (0.41)
Subjective social status	-0.26*** (0.07)	-0.25*** (0.06)	-0.26*** (0.06)	-0.26*** (0.07)	-0.25*** (0.07)
Gini market long-term change	1.19*** (0.43)	1.17*** (0.36)	1.21*** (0.35)	1.13*** (0.34)	1.08*** (0.41)
Immigration (in % of total population)	1.95 (2.49)				
Trade openness (imports+exports as % of GDP)		-0.02 (0.06)			
Unemployment rate (in %)			-0.56 (0.35)		
Real GDP growth				-0.08 (0.17)	
Social expenditure (in % of GDP)					0.18 (0.39)
Tertiary education	-3.85*** (0.36)	-3.84*** (0.36)	-3.76*** (0.35)	-3.82*** (0.37)	-3.87*** (0.36)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>					
Technicians	-0.32 (0.45)	-0.41 (0.49)	-0.44 (0.48)	-0.40 (0.49)	-0.38 (0.51)
Production workers	2.26*** (0.69)	2.20*** (0.71)	2.21*** (0.70)	2.20*** (0.71)	2.20*** (0.71)
Managers	-1.19*** (0.31)	-1.29*** (0.36)	-1.33*** (0.35)	-1.29*** (0.36)	-1.27*** (0.38)
Clerks	-0.35 (0.48)	-0.34 (0.47)	-0.34 (0.45)	-0.34 (0.47)	-0.34 (0.46)
Socio-cultural professionals	-2.78*** (0.40)	-2.84*** (0.42)	-2.88*** (0.41)	-2.84*** (0.41)	-2.81*** (0.45)
Service workers	1.62** (0.71)	1.58** (0.70)	1.59** (0.70)	1.59** (0.70)	1.58** (0.70)
Age	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Male	2.75*** (0.24)	2.73*** (0.24)	2.74*** (0.24)	2.73*** (0.24)	2.72*** (0.23)
Unemployed	0.90* (0.53)	0.81 (0.53)	0.91* (0.53)	0.79 (0.53)	0.77 (0.52)
Time trend	0.32** (0.14)	0.41*** (0.14)	0.40*** (0.10)	0.38*** (0.10)	0.35*** (0.09)
Country fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Abstain & radical left excluded	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N individuals	127,732	129,694	129,694	129,694	129,694
N country-years	147	151	151	151	151
N countries	14	14	14	14	14
Pseudo R ²	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are average marginal effects, indicating the percentage point change in the probability to vote RRP. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Data source: Armingeon et al. (2018) and OECD international migration database.

Online Appendix 5: Radical left party support

Table A5: Logistic regression models of radical left support (average marginal effects)

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Income (reference: bottom)</i>					
Lower-middle quintile	-0.38 (0.37)	-0.66* (0.39)	-0.66* (0.40)	-0.66* (0.40)	-0.66* (0.39)
Middle income quintile	-0.13 (0.42)	-0.58 (0.46)	-0.58 (0.46)	-0.58 (0.46)	-0.60 (0.45)
Upper-middle quintile	-0.91*** (0.36)	-1.58*** (0.42)	-1.58*** (0.43)	-1.59*** (0.43)	-1.61*** (0.42)
Top income quintile	-1.58*** (0.42)	-2.36*** (0.51)	-2.37*** (0.51)	-2.37*** (0.51)	-2.39*** (0.51)
Subjective social status	-0.63*** (0.18)	-0.91*** (0.21)	-0.91*** (0.21)	-0.91*** (0.21)	-0.90*** (0.19)
Gini market short-term change			0.16 (0.47)		
Gini market medium-term change				0.26 (0.40)	
Gini market long-term change					0.73** (0.33)
Tertiary education	1.56*** (0.59)	1.49*** (0.67)	1.49*** (0.67)	1.44** (0.65)	1.29** (0.65)
<i>Class (reference: self-employed)</i>					
Technicians	1.47*** (0.32)	1.68*** (0.37)	1.69*** (0.38)	1.70*** (0.38)	1.78*** (0.39)
Production workers	1.38*** (0.49)	2.15*** (0.63)	2.15*** (0.63)	2.15*** (0.63)	2.16*** (0.63)
Managers	0.48* (0.26)	0.38 (0.27)	0.39 (0.28)	0.39 (0.28)	0.43 (0.29)
Clerks	1.29*** (0.38)	1.49*** (0.46)	1.49*** (0.46)	1.48*** (0.46)	1.48*** (0.47)
Socio-cultural professionals	5.46*** (0.78)	6.04*** (0.85)	6.05*** (0.86)	6.07*** (0.86)	6.16*** (0.89)
Service workers	1.63*** (0.58)	2.11*** (0.44)	2.11*** (0.44)	2.10*** (0.44)	2.06*** (0.44)
Age	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)
Male	-0.46 (0.70)	-0.37 (0.83)	-0.37 (0.83)	-0.37 (0.83)	-0.37 (0.83)
Unemployed	1.00** (0.44)	1.48*** (0.55)	1.48*** (0.55)	1.46** (0.57)	1.44** (0.58)
Time trend	0.00 (0.11)	-0.00 (0.14)	-0.00 (0.14)	0.00 (0.13)	0.03 (0.11)
Country fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Abstain & radical right excluded	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
N individuals	136,827	109,285	109,285	109,285	109,285
N country-years	129	129	129	129	129
N countries	12	12	12	12	12
Pseudo R ²	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.09

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Numbers displayed are average marginal effects, indicating the percentage point change in the probability to support radical left parties. Based on logistic regression models with country fixed effects (not shown). Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Figure A5a: Radical left support – interaction between inequality and income quintile

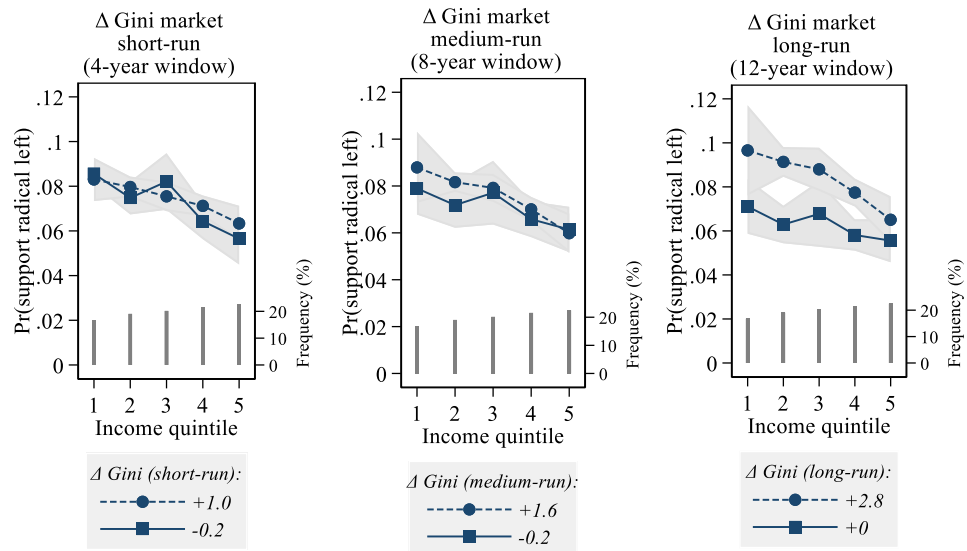


Figure A5b: Radical left support – interaction between inequality and subjective social status

