

Democracy as Truism?

A Latent Class Analysis of Europeans' Conceptions of Democracy

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(Declared) Democratic Support Is **Not** in Decline

Conclusion

A closer look reveals **no evidence** that people in consolidated democracies **have soured on democracy** and have become more likely to accept authoritarian institutions as a way to run

Figure 1: Voeten (2017)

ations in legitimacy over time within countries. At the same time, **it is clear that the current data do not provide evidence of an overall legitimacy crisis.**

Figure 2: Thomassen & van Ham (2017)

The most consistent finding throughout the entire sample of advanced Europe indicates **strong and continuing support for the democratic system of government.**

Figure 3: Wuttke et al. (2022)

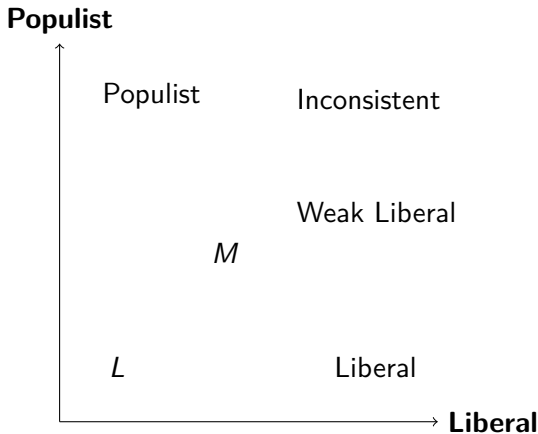
So, Is Democratic Support Just a Truism?

*“Standard questionnaire items that ask directly and abstractly about attitudes towards democracy suffer from fundamental problems of validity.” — **Schedler and Sarsfield (2007)***

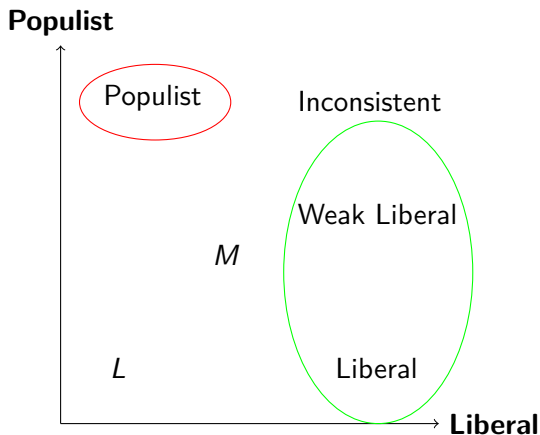
*“[g]eneric support for the abstract notion of democracy is strong but substantive support for its underlying components is weak.” — **Wuttke (2022)***

Latent Class Analysis: Conceptions of Democracy

- LCA allows us to identify population subgroups



Latent Class Analysis: Conceptions of Democracy



Variables Capturing Conceptions of Democracy

Table 1: **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (ESS Round 10)**

Items	Wording	Loading
Liberal LV		
<i>lib1</i>	The media are free to criticise the government	0.689
<i>lib2</i>	The rights of minority groups are protected	0.635
<i>lib3</i>	The courts treat everyone the same	0.648
Populist LV		
<i>pop1</i>	Citizens have the final say voting in referendums	0.613
<i>pop2</i>	The views of ordinary people prevail over the views of the political elite	0.695
<i>pop3</i>	The will of the people cannot be stopped	0.728

Note: Respondents are asked about the “importance for democracy” of each item. CFA analysis using the lavaan package in R (Rosseel 2012): ML estimator, CFI = 0.975, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.066, SRMR = 0.033, $\omega = 0.80$ (unweighted sample of 28 countries, $n = 44,691$).

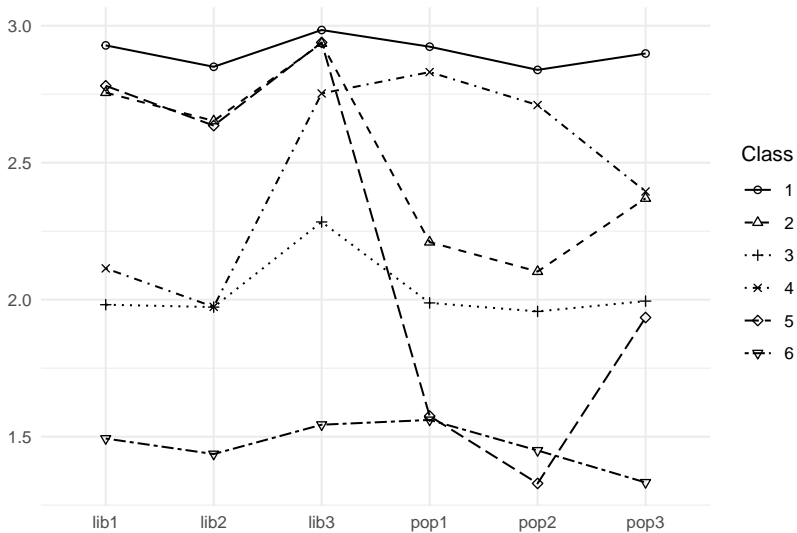


Figure 4: Mean Scores by Latent Class

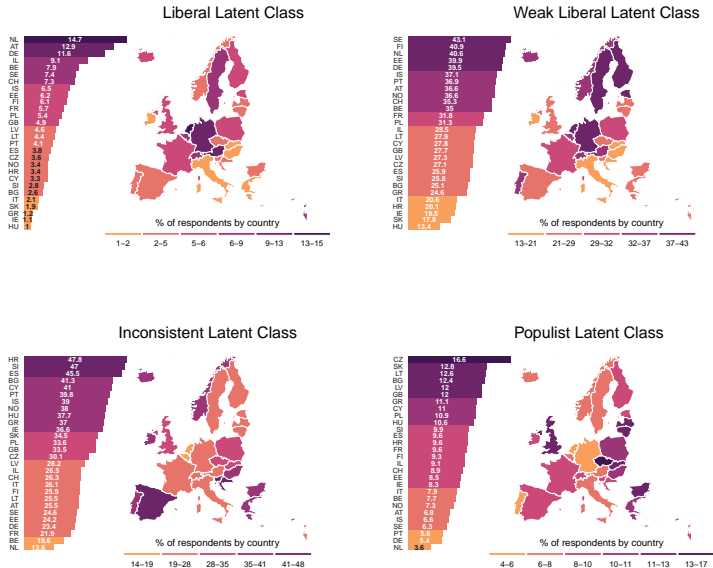
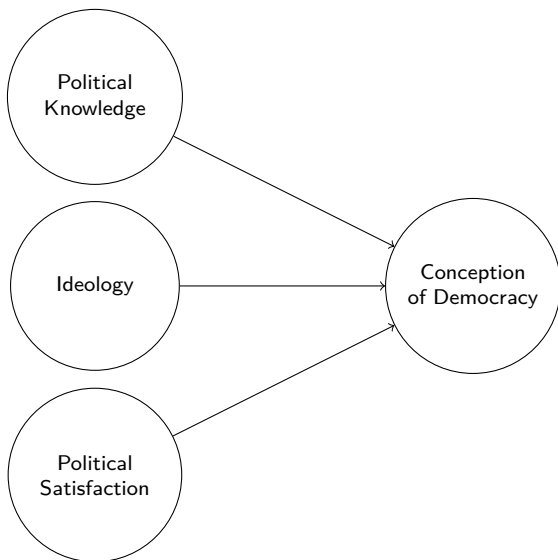


Figure 5: Share of Respondents in Each Latent Class by Country

What Explains Class Membership?



(Preliminary!) Results

Table 2: ML Multinomial Logistic Regression Models

<i>Reference: Liberal</i>	Inconsistent		Populist		Weak liberal	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Sociodemographics						
Age	0.184***	(0.028)	0.213***	(0.033)	0.109***	(0.028)
Gender (<i>male</i> = 1)	-0.381***	(0.055)	-0.408***	(0.063)	-0.281***	(0.054)
Education (<i>university</i> = 1)	-0.757***	(0.056)	-1.060***	(0.070)	-0.440***	(0.055)
Political Predictors						
Left-right ideology	-0.073**	(0.027)	0.106***	(0.032)	-0.015	(0.026)
Political interest	0.145***	(0.029)	0.338***	(0.034)	0.166***	(0.029)
Satisfaction democracy	-0.152***	(0.032)	-0.203***	(0.037)	-0.024	(0.032)
Trust politicians	-0.142***	(0.032)	-0.065	(0.037)	-0.024	(0.032)
Leader above law	0.104***	(0.032)	0.447***	(0.035)	0.141***	(0.031)

Note: Multilevel Multinomial Baseline-Category Logit Models fitted with the `mclogit` package in R. All predictors are centered within country clusters and estimates are standardized coefficients. The models include random intercepts and slopes at the country-level (28 countries, $n = 32,429$).

Thanks for your attention!

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References

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- Rosseel, Yves. 2012. "Lavaan: An r Package for Structural Equation Modeling." *Journal of Statistical Software* 48: 1–36.
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- Wuttke, Alexander. 2022. "Democratic Support as Truism: Ordinary Citizens' Vulnerability to Anti-Democratic Temptations." *OSF Pre-Print*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/xueap>.

Fit Indices of LC Models

Table 3: Pooled Sample (n = 39,984)

Model	df	logLik	BIC	Gsq	entropy	AvPP	SCS
2-class	703	-172412.9	345090.5	21257.36	0.76	93.7%	35.7%
3-class	690	-168009.2	336420.7	12449.96	0.71	87.9%	26.9%
4-class	677	-164952.8	330445.6	6337.14	0.75	85.7%	4.3%
5-class	664	-163820	328317.6	4071.52	0.72	82.1%	4.1%
6-class	651	-163242.2	327299.7	2916	0.71	80%	3.10%
7-class	638	-163091.9	327136.7	2615.34	0.69	79.6%	0.7%
8-class	625	-162915.6	326922	2262.9	0.68	76.3%	0.7%
9-class	612	-162862.8	326953.8	2157.1	0.68	75.5%	0.7%
10-class	599	-162692.9	326751.7	1817.32	0.71	71.9%	0.6%

Note: Fit indices using the glca package in R (Kim et al. 2022). 'df' = degrees of freedom, 'logLik' =

Log-Likelihood, 'BIC' = Bayesian Information Criterion, Gsq = likelihood ratio chi-square statistic, AvPP =

Average latent class posterior probability, SCS = smallest class size. Population weighted sample.