



Winter School

18-20 February 2025

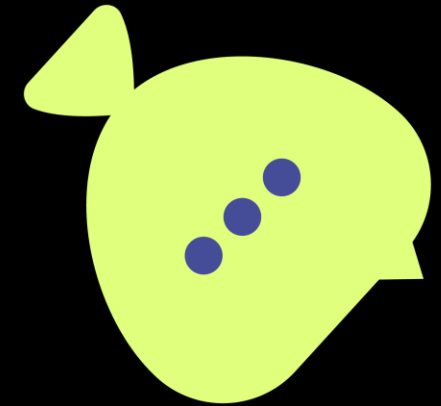
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Mistrust

Evolution of Trust in the European Union: An empirical approach





Evolution of Trust in the European Union: An empirical approach

What is Mistrust?

- Trust is a big factor in building and maintaining support for political institutions.
- If people lose trust in politics, it could lead to a full-blown crisis of representative democracy.
- However, issues like corruption, lack of transparency, sustainability and accountability affect the pact and the core values of the social contract.



Euroscepticism vs Mistrust in the EU

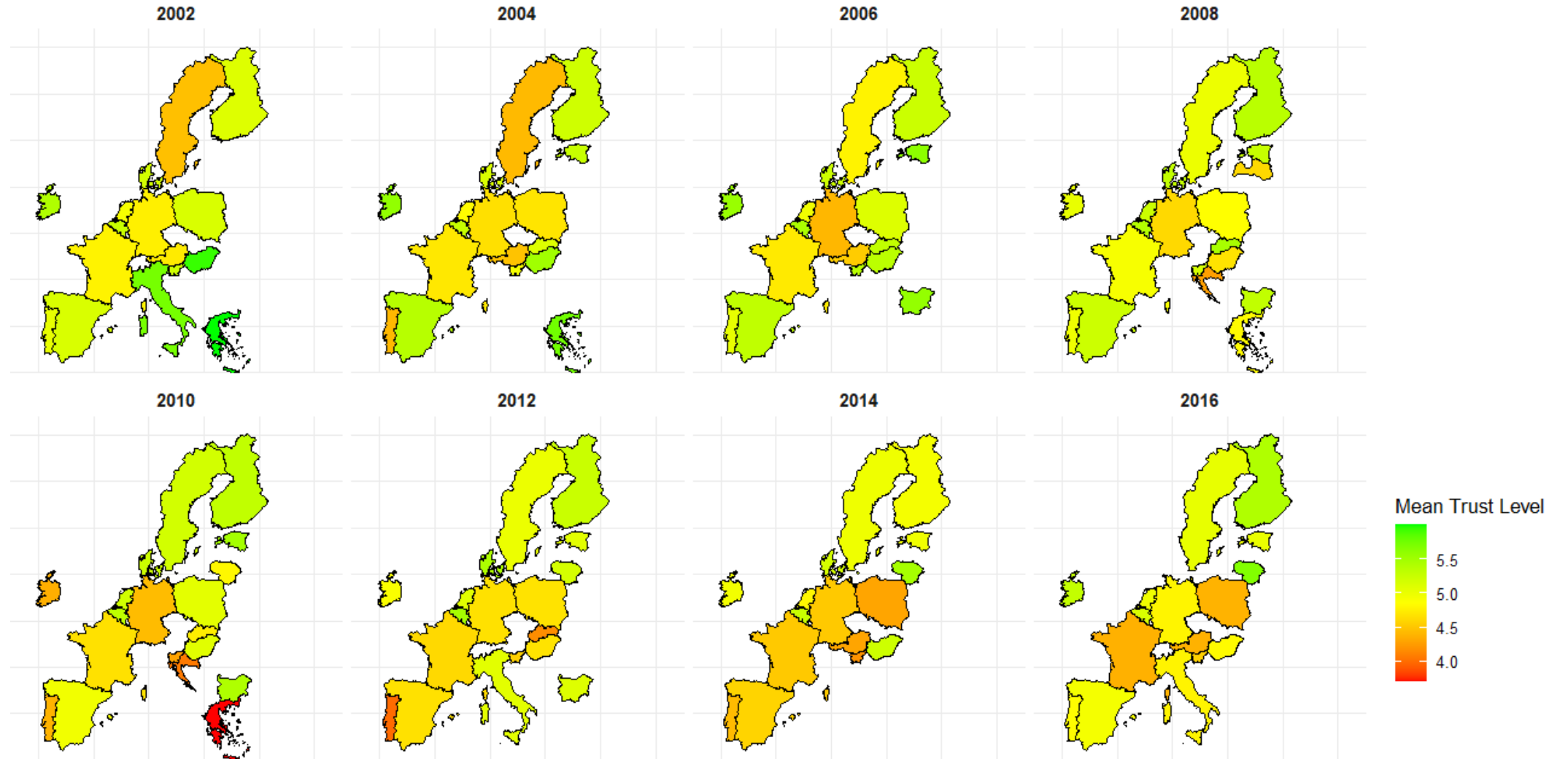
- Euroscepticism refers to a broader skepticism or opposition to the European Union as a political and economic project. It ranges from soft euroscepticism to hard euroscepticism.
- Mistrust in the EU, on the other hand, is a more institutional and performance-related issue. This means one could be pro-EU but still distrust the EP due to concerns about transparency, democratic deficit, lobbying influence, or political fragmentation.



Trust in the European Union

- Trust in the European Union → Trust in the European Parliament
- Trust in institutions has been deemed necessary to secure the functioning of modern democracies and the maintenance of institutional arrangements (Dalton 2004; Van der Meer 2010; Roth, Nowak-Lehmann & Otter 2013).
- Then, what happened with trust in the European Parliament in the last years?
 - Citizens' confidence on the European Parliament has sharply decline after the economic crisis of 2008 in almost all EU countries (Armingeon and Ceka 2014; Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Cramme and Hobolt 2014; Dotti Sani and Magistro 2016; and it goes on and on...).

Evolution of Trust in the European Union (2002-2016)



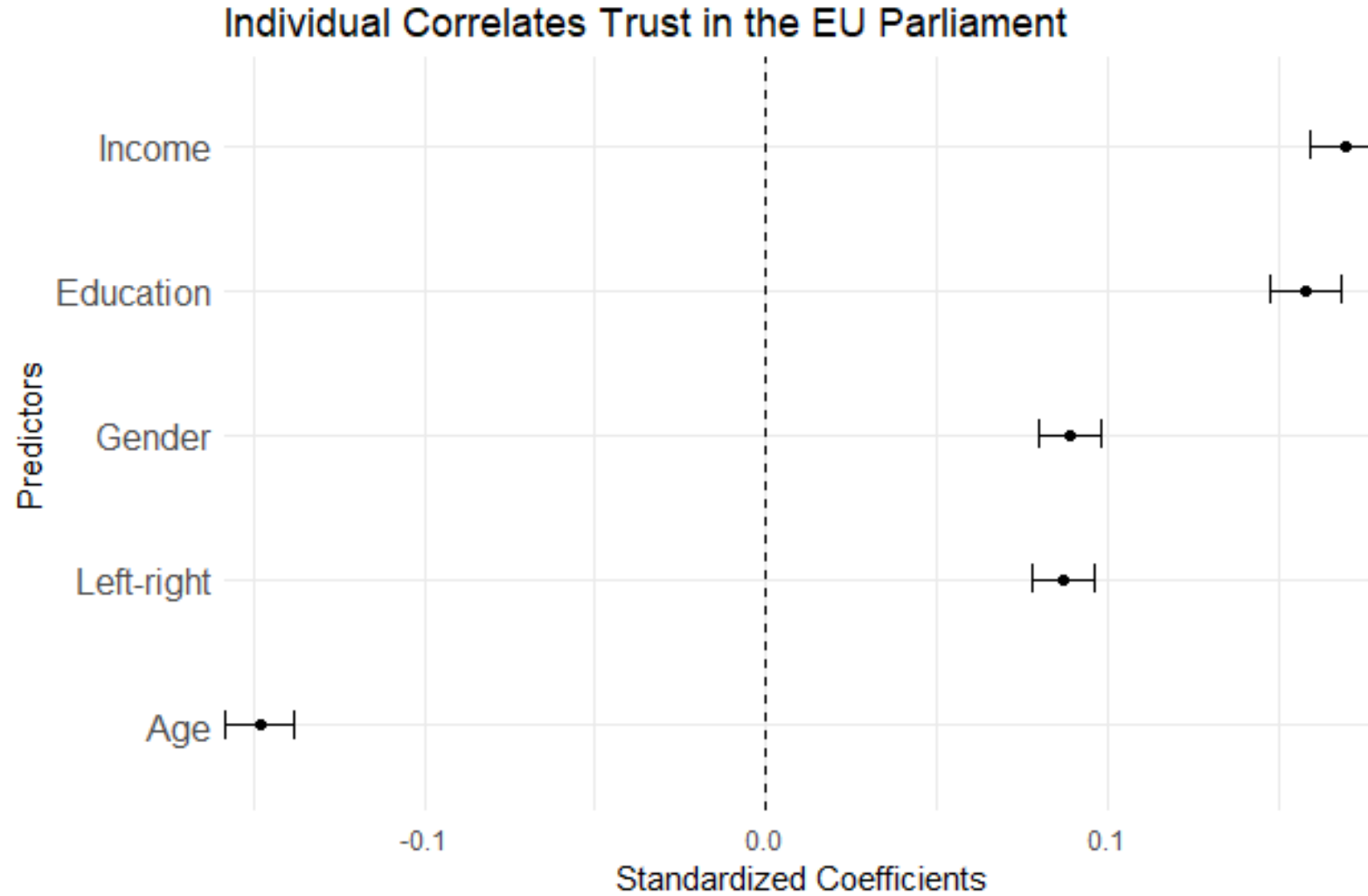
Trust in the European Union

- Main reasons for this decline
 1. Austerity measures and Troika interventions (Armingeon & Guthman 2014; Torcal 2014).
 2. Lack of trust in national governments (de Vries 2018; Harteveld et al. 2013; Muñoz et al 2011).
 3. In countries where austerity measures were implemented, citizens from lower positions in the social ladder – especially those with low education and unemployed – lost more trust in the EU (Dotti Sani and Magistro, 2016).
 4. Regional inequality. Hence, while integration facilitated slow economic convergence across member states, the wealth gap between regions within countries has widened (Cappelen et al. 2003; Heidenreich and Wunder 2008; Lipps and Schraff 2021).

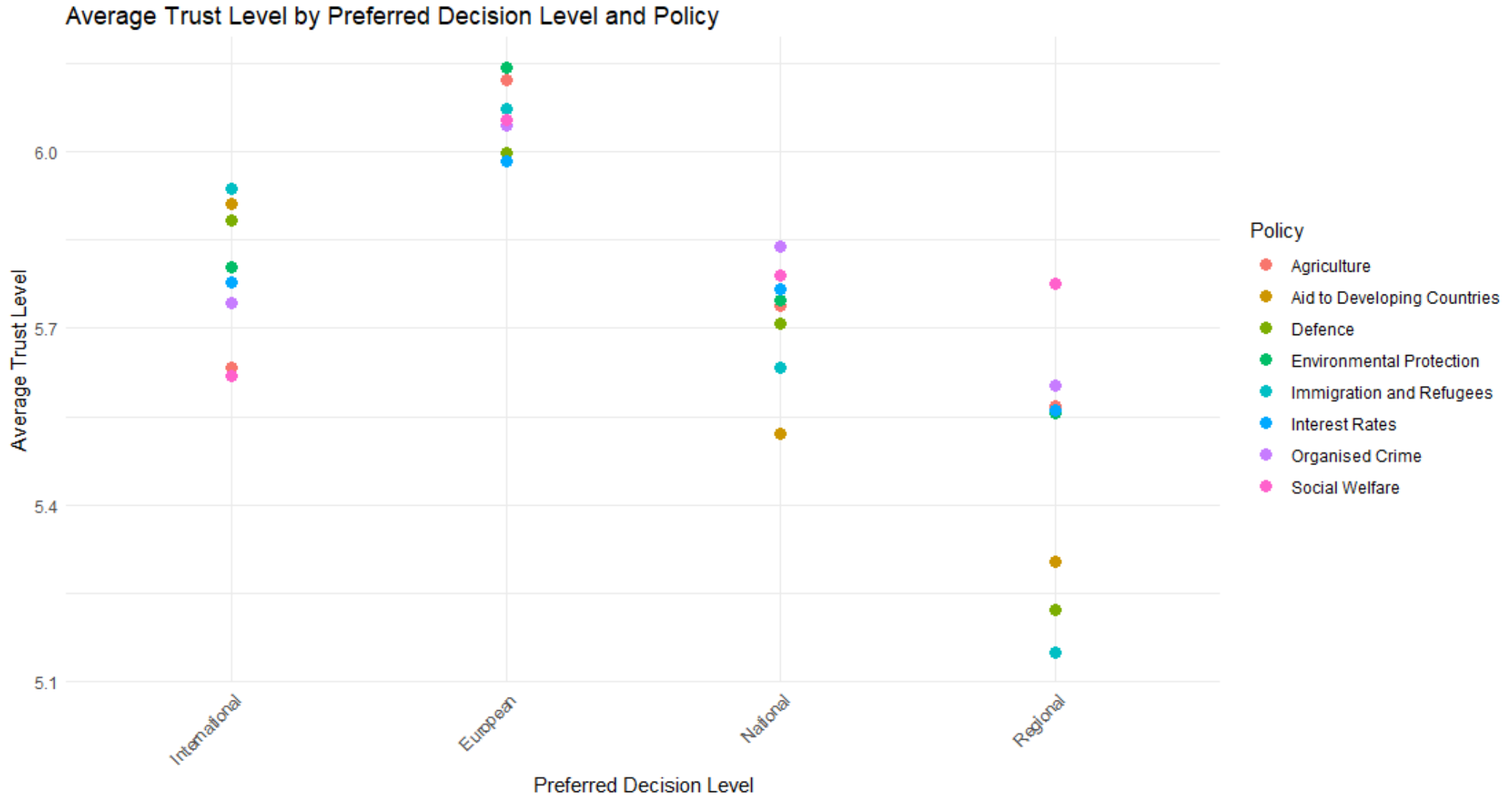
Where are we now?

- Our research objectives:
 - ❑ This study examines the current state of public trust in the European Parliament and whether trust has been restored.
 - ❑ It analyzes which groups— by age, gender, education, income and ideology— have the greatest trust in the institution.
 - ❑ It examines citizens' preferences as to which public policies should be managed by the European Union and which by national governments.
 - ❑ Finally, it examines the relationship between the rise of far-right parties and trust in the European Parliament.

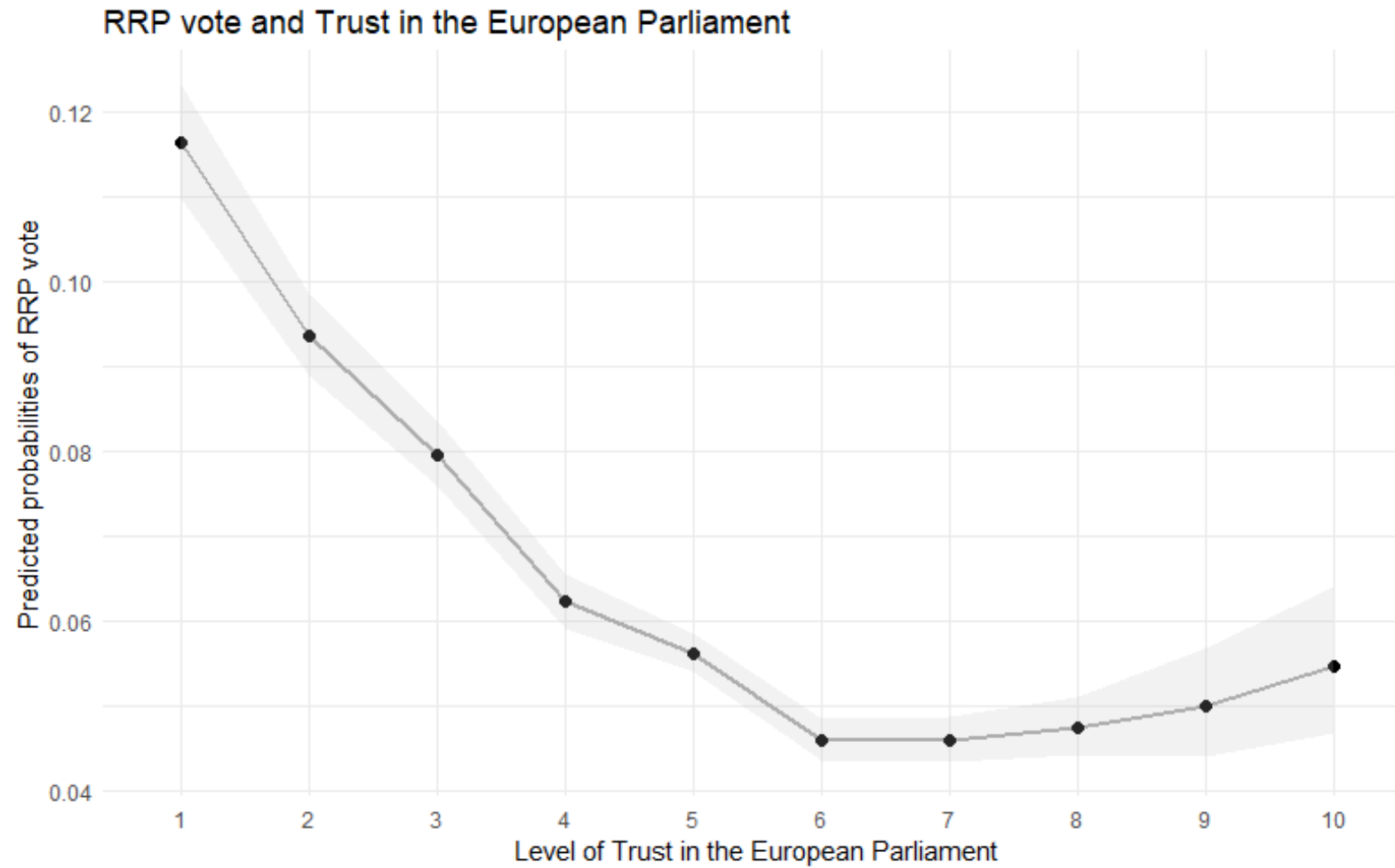
Which groups have the greatest trust in the EU?



Who should manage: EU vs. Other governments?



Who should manage: EU vs. Other governments?



Preliminary conclusions

- Trust in the European Parliament and other institutions has returned to pre-2008 economic crisis levels, but how has it evolved in the wake of COVID-19?
- Trust in the EU is higher among young people, women, individuals with higher education and income levels, and those with right-leaning political views.
- Europeans tend to place greater trust in the EU than in national governments when it comes to managing issues such as environmental protection, agriculture, and immigration.
- Trust in the EU is negatively correlated with support for far-right parties.



Thank you!

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