

Supplementary Material for the article:

Weaponizing Wedge Issues: Strategies of Populism and Illiberalism in European Election Campaigning on Facebook

Table A1. Overview of countries under investigation.

Country	Geographical region	Governmental system ^a	Joined EU in ^a	Seats in the 2019-24 EP, outgoing parliament ^b	Trust in the EU, spring 2024 (%) ^c	Media system	Facebook use, 2024 (%) ^f
Austria	Central Europe	Federal parliamentary republic	1995	19	46	Democratic Corporatist ^d	49
Cyprus	Southern Europe	Presidential republic	2004	6	40	Not classified	n.a.
Czech Republic	Central and Eastern Europe	Parliamentary republic	2004	21	43	Hybrid liberal ^e	67
Denmark	Northern Europe	Parliamentary monarchy	1973	14	69	Democratic Corporatist ^d	70
France	Western Europe	Semi-presidential republic	1958	79	34	Polarised Pluralist ^d	55
Germany	Central Europe	Federal parliamentary republic	1958	96	47	Democratic Corporatist ^d	37
Greece	Southern Europe	Parliamentary republic	1981	21	45	Polarised Pluralist ^d	64
Hungary	Central and Eastern Europe	Parliamentary republic	2004	21	53	Politicised Media ^e	70

Latvia	Central and Eastern Europe	Parliamentary republic	2004	8	50	Hybrid liberal ^e	n.a.
Poland	Central and Eastern Europe	Parliamentary republic	2004	52	52	Hybrid liberal ^e	66
Portugal	Southern Europe	Semi-presidential republic	1986	21	68	Polarised Pluralist ^d	64
Romania	Central and Eastern Europe	Semi-presidential republic	2007	33	58	Politicised Media ^e	64
Spain	Southern Europe	Parliamentary monarchy	1986	59	50	Polarised Pluralist ^d	52

^a European Union (n.d.). EU countries. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-countries_en?page=0

^b European Union (2024). Seats by political group and country - 2019-2024. Outgoing Parliament. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/seats-political-group-country/2019-2024/outgoing-parliament/>

^c European Commission (2024). Standard Eurobarometer 101. Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results Report, April-May 2024. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3216>

^d Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

^e Dobek-Ostrowska, B. (2015). 25 years after communism: four models of media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe. In B. Dobek-Ostrowska, & M. Głowacki, M. (Eds.), *Democracy and media in Central and Eastern Europe 25 years on* (pp. 11–46). Peter Lang.

^f Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Arguedas, A. R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2024). *The Reuters Institute digital news report 2024*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-vy6n-4v57>

Table A2. Investigation periods per country and total number of posts per country.

Country	No. of coders	Start date	End date	No. of posts
at	3	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	389
cy	4	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	363
cz	3	2024-05-11	2024-06-08	1,264
de	4	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	484
dk	3	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	355
es	4	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	485
fr	3	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	1,195
gr	4	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	623
hu (50% sample)	3	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	651
lv	3	2024-05-11	2024-06-08	448
pl	3	2024-05-12	2024-06-09	802
pt	2	2024-05-11	2024-06-09	615
ro	5	2024-05-11	2024-06-09	1,074
TOTAL				8,748

Table A3. Overview of categories, operationalizations and reliability.

	Category	Operationalization	Holsti ^a	Brennan- &- Prediger's Kappa ^a	Lotus ^a
Wedge Issues	Issue: War in Ukraine	e.g., situation in Ukraine, arms deliveries to Ukraine, support of Ukraine by European countries, threat to other European countries by Russia	.98	.88	.99
	Issue: Immigration	e.g., refugee distribution among and within European countries, naturalization tests	.97	.87	.98
	Issue: Environment	e.g., climate change, safety of endangered species, policy to save forests, animal rights	.91	.67	.93
Populism	Criticism of Elites	Blaming the elite (from any sector) as a group in general for problems and grievances that the people suffer. This category applies when elites are held responsible for anything undesirable from the people's perspective. Questioning the legitimacy of the decision-making power exercised by the elite and asking for direct democracy (e.g., referenda; "A change of government can't be a Tory stitch-up, the people must decide!") Calling for resistance against the elite call for resistance against the ideas/ideology of the establishment Accusing the elite of betraying the people or acting against the people's interest, accusing the elite of being corrupt, (e.g., "The media are the enemy of the people", "The media are	.94	.62	.96

		dishonest, and journalists are liars")			
	References to the people	References to "We, the people" not included or included	.88	.33	.93
	Definition of outgroups	Ethnic or cultural "others" are addressed	.99	.94	1.00
Illiberalism	Protection of national values (against EU)	Promotion of national identity, national independence and sovereignty of the national state	.98	.87	.99
	Attacks or infringement on the rule of law	Arguing that certain policy needs to change regardless of whether it conflicts with EU charters, or that the parliament should rule over the courts, that the respect for human rights should not always be upheld.	1.00	.95	1.00
	(Anti-) Militarism	Belief or ideology that emphasizes the importance of military power, strength, and preparedness, often glorifying war and the military as essential elements of a society or state. In some cases there is a thin line between arguing for and against militarism (e.g., arms supplies to Ukraine). In such cases, this category is to be coded as present.	1.00	.95	1.00
	Anti-Immigration	Xenophobia, the scarcity of welfare, illegal immigration, immigration as an economic burden	.99	.94	1.00
	Against open borders within Europe	The post argues that national borders should and/or will be reestablished within the EU. Arguments for national borders are brought forward.	1.00	.99	1.00

Against competitive market and/or against globalization	Arguments are brought forward that the competitive social market economy as proposed by the EU is to be abolished. European regulations such as the free movement of workers, uniform product standards or tax rules are rejected in the post. Alternatives, like planned economy or more libertarian unregulated forms of markets, could be proposed in posts.	1.00	.94	1.00
Positioning against the EURO	Arguing the country should return to its own currency.	1.00	NA	1.00
Anti-Environmentalism	Denial of environmental problems, resistance to environmental regulations, criticizing environmental activism, skepticism of environmental science, lack of environmental awareness	1.00	.99	1.00
Countering Academic Freedom	Actions or policies that restrict or undermine the principles of academic freedom and the pursuit of scientific inquiry. This can take various forms, such as government censorship, systematically not funding research in certain areas, suppression of research findings, intimidation of scientists, or interference with the dissemination of knowledge.	1.00	.99	1.00
Ageism	Ageism is discrimination or prejudice against individuals or groups based on their age, typically directed towards older adults. It can manifest in various ways, such as assumptions about abilities, stereotypes, or discriminatory practices in	1.00	.99	1.00

	employment, healthcare, and social interactions.			
Attacking or arguing against cultural and linguistic diversity	e.g., promoting policies against regional languages or regional traditions; “We have to fight against the Islamization of Europe.”; “If people live in our country, they must speak our language also at home.”; “This minority is part of our country, why should their children be taught in their minority language at school?”; “No one understands this regional dialect. They should talk like decent people.”	1.00	.96	1.00
Anti-Feminism	Male supremacy ideologies, advocating for the subjugation of women, men possessing women, men are higher in the social hierarchy than women, hostility for modern liberal feminism	1.00	.98	1.00
Anti-LGBTQ+-Equality	Arguing against equality between hetero- and “cis”-people and lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer... people	1.00	.97	1.00
Attacking other Minority Values	Attacks on minority values (regardless of what the minority is) that are not covered by any of the categories on “Rejection of EU values” above. For example, arguing that the “voice of the people should prevail”, which implicitly means that the majority rules over the minority. The attacks can refer to minorities in general or to specific minorities as long as these are not covered by any of the categories on “Rejection of EU values” above	1.00	.92	1.00

Campaigning for exiting the EU (in the sense of Brexit)	Arguing the country should leave the EU	1.00	NA	1.00
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^a: For the three indicators of reliability we considered values >.7 to be good and values >.6 as sufficient. The closer to 1 (perfect agreement) the better. Variables were used for analysis when two or more indicators reached sufficient values.

See also:

Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content Analysis in Mass Communication: Assessment and Reporting of Inter-coder Reliability. *Human Communication Research*, 28(4), 587–604.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00826.x>

Neuendorf, K. A. (2011). Content Analysis—A Methodological Primer for Gender Research. *Sex Roles*, 64(3-4), 276–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9893-0>

Quarfoot, D., & Levine, R. A. (2016). How Robust Are Multirater Interrater Reliability Indices to Changes in Frequency Distribution? *The American Statistician*, 70(4), 373–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00031305.2016.1141708>

Table A4. Overview of parties, categorizations and number of posts.

Country	Party Name	anti_elite_salience (CHES)	Popu-List	Our categorization	No. of posts
at	Die Grünen - Die Grüne Alternative	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	45
at	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	anti-elite	1	Populist	104
at	NEOS - Das neue Österreich	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	69
at	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	mid	NA	Not Populist	43
at	Österreichische Volkspartei	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	128
cy	Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou	mid	1	Populist	70
cy	Dimokratiko Komma	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	136
cy	Dimokratikos Synagermos	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	157
cz	ANO, bude líp!	anti-elite	1	Populist	109
cz	KSČM - Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy	anti-elite	0	Populist	42
cz	Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	129
cz	Občanská demokratická strana	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	382

cz	Starostové a nezávislí	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	106
cz	Svoboda a přímá demokracie	anti-elite	1	Populist	282
cz	Tradice Odpovědnost Prosperita 09	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	144
cz	Česká pirátská strana	mid	NA	Not Populist	70
de	Alternative für Deutschland	anti-elite	1	Populist	94
de	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	28
de	Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht	anti-elite	NA	Populist	63
de	Christlich Demokratische Union	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	70
de	Christlich-Soziale Union	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	123
de	Freie Demokratische Partei	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	73
de	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	33
dk	Danmarksdemokraterne	anti-elite	NA	Populist	51
dk	Dansk Folkeparti	anti-elite	1	Populist	55
dk	Det Konservative Folkeparti	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	20
dk	Det Radikale Venstre	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	14
dk	Enhedslisten - De rød-grønne	mid	0	Not Populist	44
dk	Liberal Alliance	mid	NA	Not Populist	17
dk	Moderaterne	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	54
dk	Socialdemokraterne	mid	NA	Not Populist	22
dk	Socialistisk Folkeparti	mid	0	Not Populist	34
dk	Venstre	mid	NA	Not Populist	44
es	Partido Popular	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	117
es	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	147
es	VOX	anti-elite	1	Populist	221

fr	L'Avenir français	NA	NA	Not Categorized	14
fr	La France insoumise	anti-elite	1	Populist	236
fr	Les Républicains	mid	NA	Not Populist	15
fr	Les Écologistes	mid	NA	Not Populist	112
fr	Mouvement conservateur	NA	NA	Not Categorized	25
fr	Mouvement démocrate	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	64
fr	Parti socialiste	mid	NA	Not Populist	79
fr	Place publique	NA	NA	Not Categorized	82
fr	Rassemblement National	anti-elite	1	Populist	421
fr	Reconquête	anti-elite	1	Populist	63
fr	Renaissance	mid	NA	Not Populist	71
fr	Union des démocrates et indépendants	NA	NA	Not Categorized	13
gr	Elliniki Lysi	anti-elite	1	Populist	129
gr	Nea Dimokratia	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	25
gr	Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima	mid	NA	Not Populist	130
gr	Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras	anti-elite	1	Populist	339
hu	Demokratikus Koalíció	mid	NA	Not Populist	50
hu	Fidesz	mid	1	Populist	240
hu	KDNP és Frakciója	mid	NA	Not Populist	136
hu	Magyar Szocialista Párt	mid	NA	Not Populist	93
hu	Mi Hazánk Mozgalom	anti-elite	0	Populist	33
hu	Párbeszéd – ZÖLDEK	NA	NA	Not Categorized	99
lv	Apvienotais saraksts	NA	NA	Not Categorized	115
lv	Jaunā Vienotība	NA	NA	Not Categorized	113

lv	Latvija pirmajā vietā!	anti-elite	1	Populist	80
lv	Latvijas attīstībai	mid	NA	Not Populist	23
lv	Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!" - "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"	mid	0	Not Populist	39
lv	Progresīvie	mid	NA	Not Populist	65
lv	Sociāldemokrātiskā partija "Saskaņa"	mid	NA	Not Populist	13
pl	Nowa Lewica	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	76
pl	Nowoczesna	NA	NA	Not Categorized	6
pl	Platforma Obywatelska	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	275
pl	Polska 2050 Szymona Hołowni	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	71
pl	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	mid	NA	Not Populist	38
pl	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	anti-elite	1	Populist	258
pl	Razem	mid	NA	Not Populist	48
pl	Zieloni	NA	NA	Not Categorized	30
pt	Aliança Democrática	NA	NA	Not Categorized	125
pt	CHEGA	anti-elite	1	Populist	290
pt	Iniciativa Liberal	mid	NA	Not Populist	35
pt	Partido Socialista	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	165
ro	Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor	anti-elite	1	Populist	74
ro	Forța Dreptei	NA	NA	Not Categorized	37
ro	Partidul Mișcarea Populară	NA	1	Populist	40
ro	Partidul Național Liberal	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	177
ro	Partidul Social Democrat	not anti-elite	1	Populist	154
ro	SOS România	anti-elite	NA	Populist	244

ro	Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România	not anti-elite	NA	Not Populist	151
ro	Uniunea Salvați România	mid	NA	Not Populist	197
TOTAL					8,748

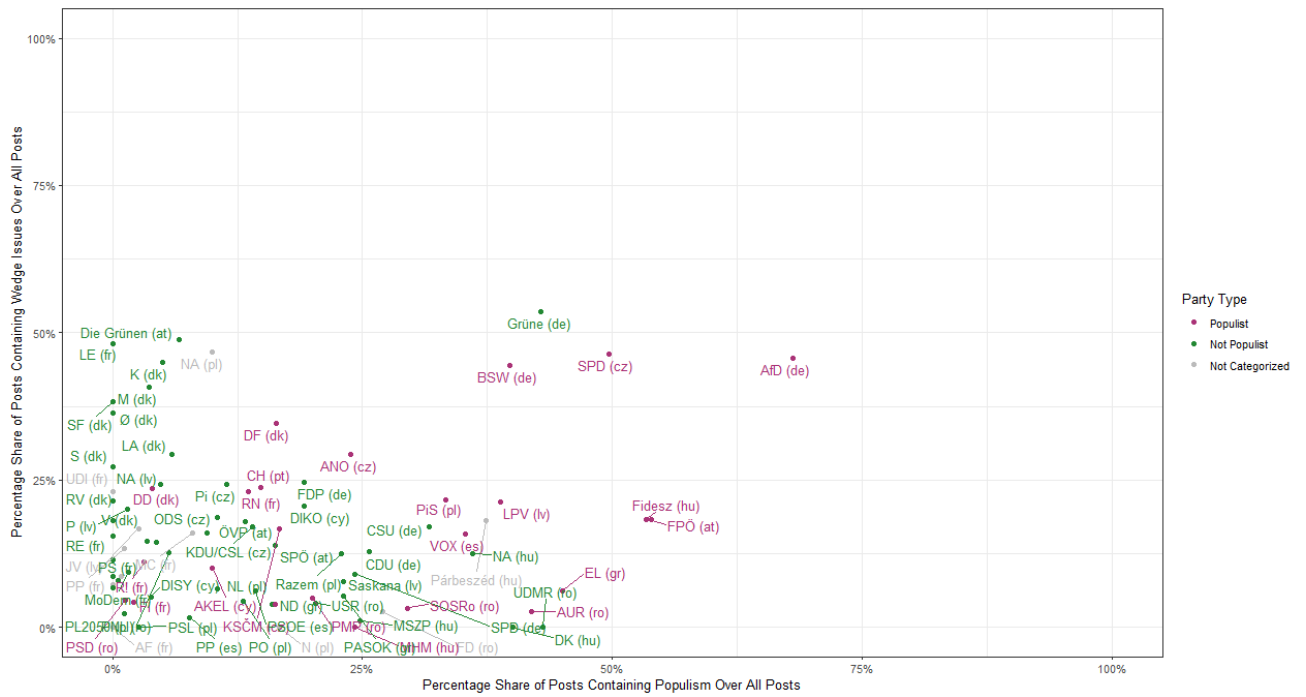


Figure A1. Percentage share of wedge issues (Y-Axis) and populism (X-Axis) over all posts per party. $n = 8,748$ Facebook posts.

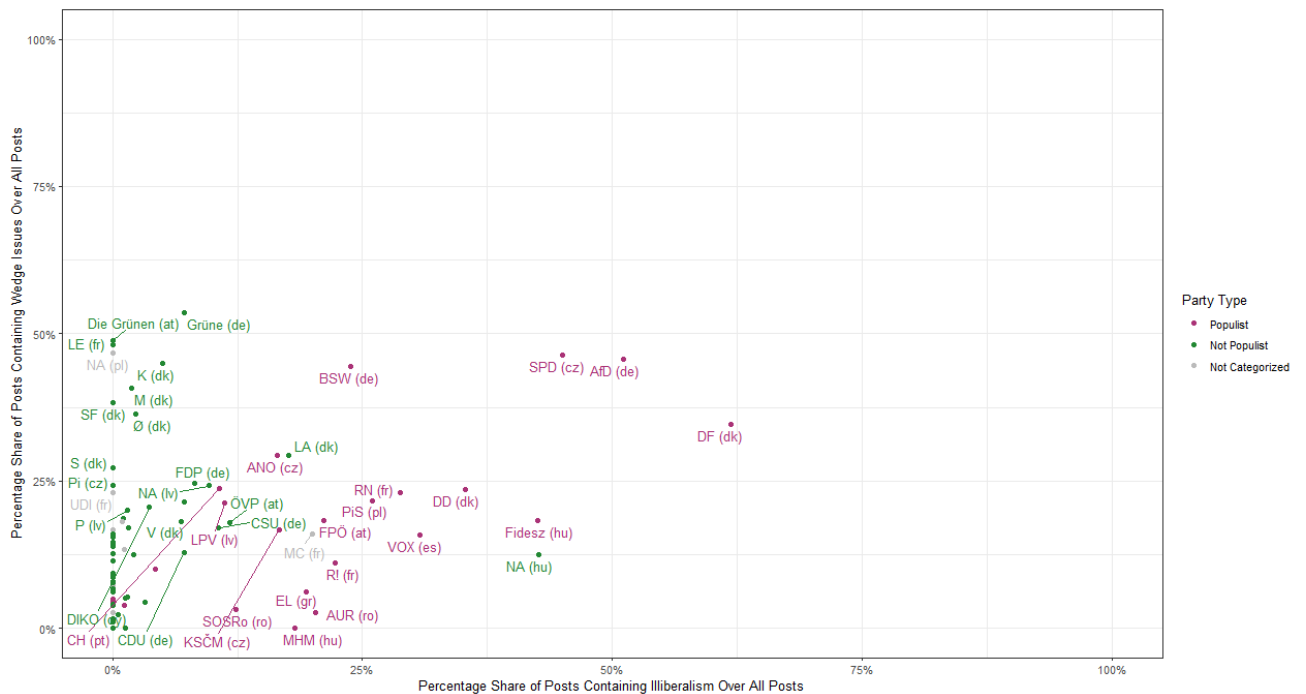


Figure A2. Percentage share of wedge issues (Y-Axis) and illiberalism (X-Axis) over all posts per party. $n = 8,748$ Facebook posts.

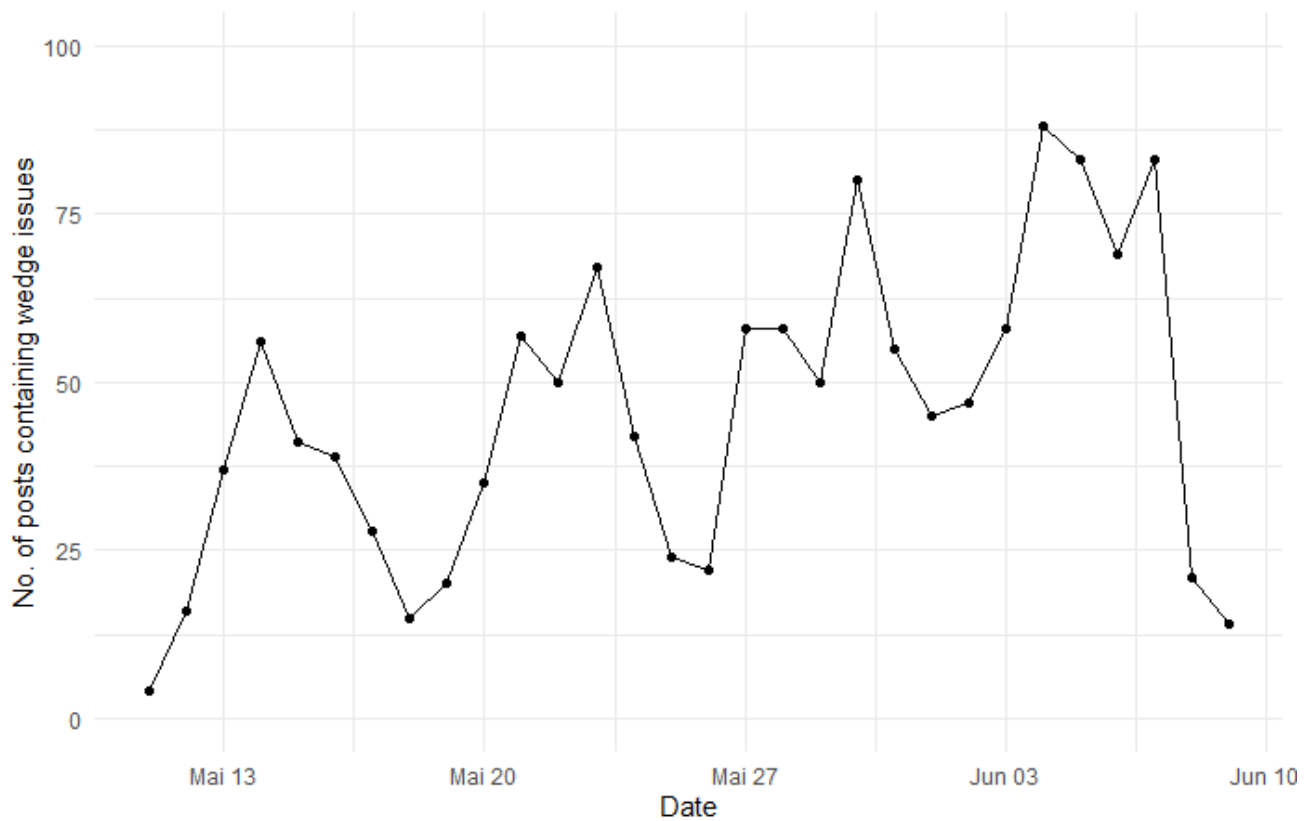


Figure A3. Number of posts containing wedge issues over time. $n = 1,362$ Facebook posts containing wedge issues.

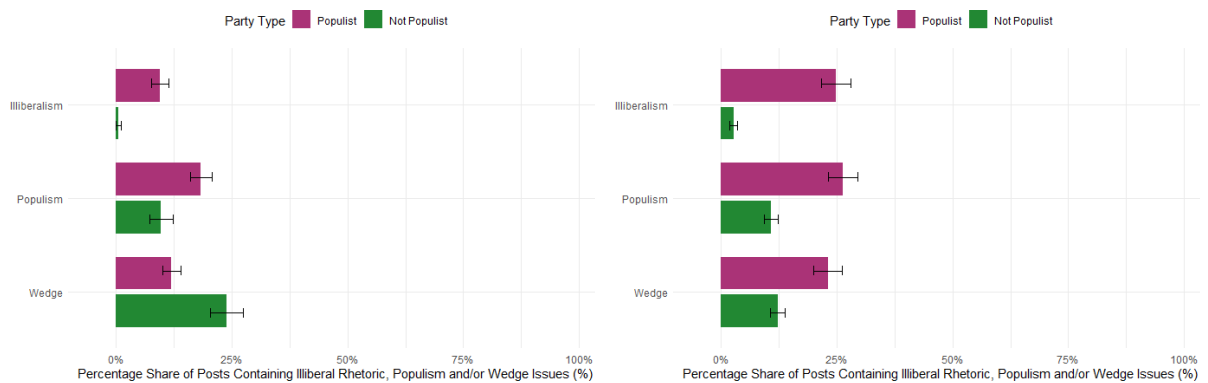


Figure A4. Percentage share of posts containing illiberal rhetoric, populism and/or wedge issues for left parties (left panel) and right parties (right panel) on the Irecon variable in the CHES data set (Rovny et al., 2025). $n = 1,581$ Facebook posts of left parties. $n = 2,398$ Facebook posts of right parties.

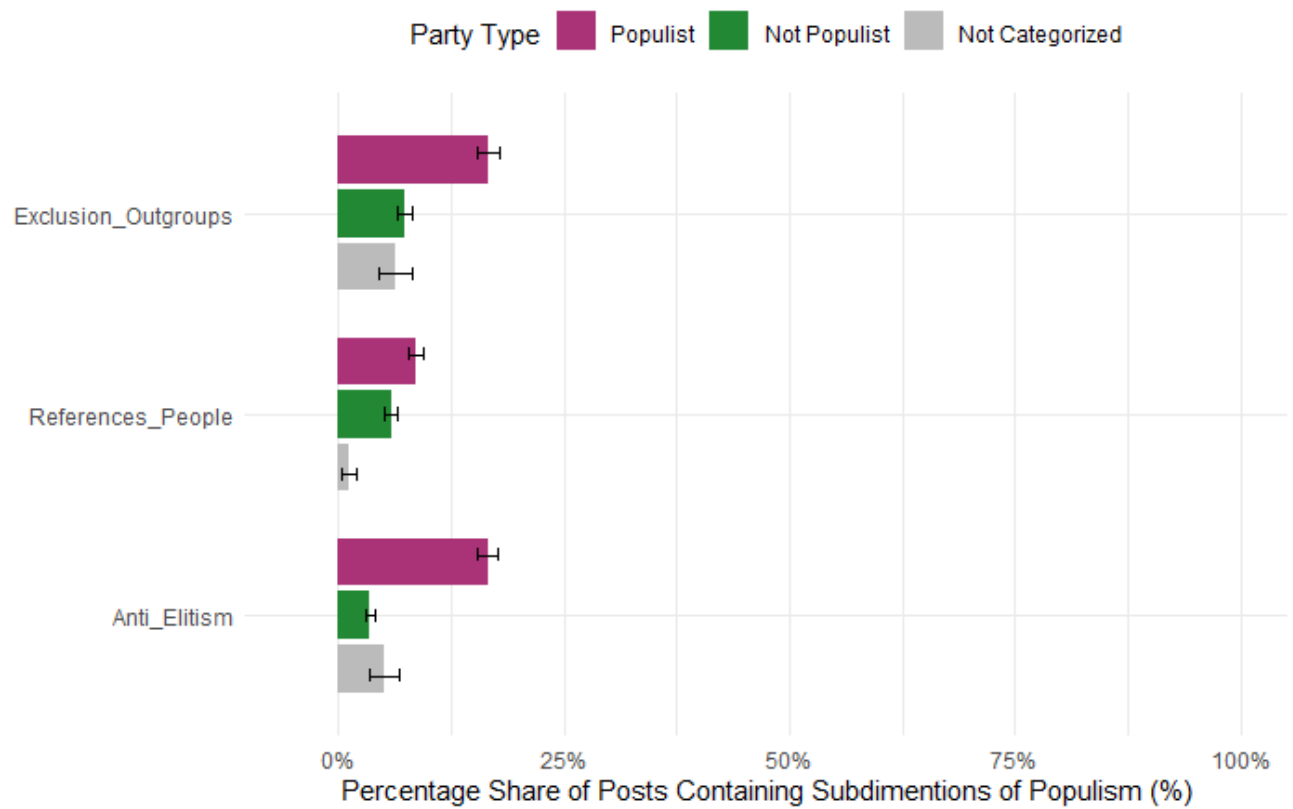


Figure A5. Percentage share of posts containing the different subdimensions of populism. $n = 8,748$ Facebook posts.

Robustness Checks

For the following robustness checks, all analyses of the main article that used the variable “populism” were re-calculated excluding the sub-dimension “references to the people” to check for the robustness of the results.

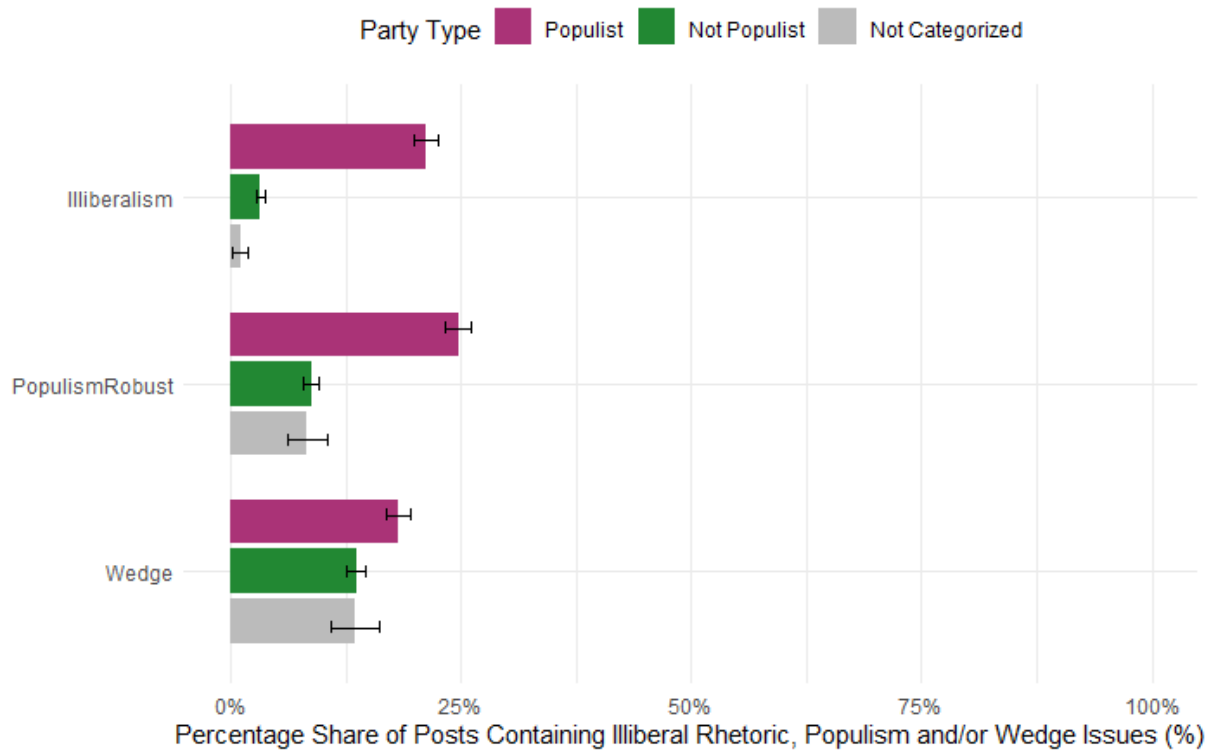


Figure Robust1 (Figure 2 in the original manuscript). Content categories by party types with confidence intervals. $n = 8,748$ Facebook posts.

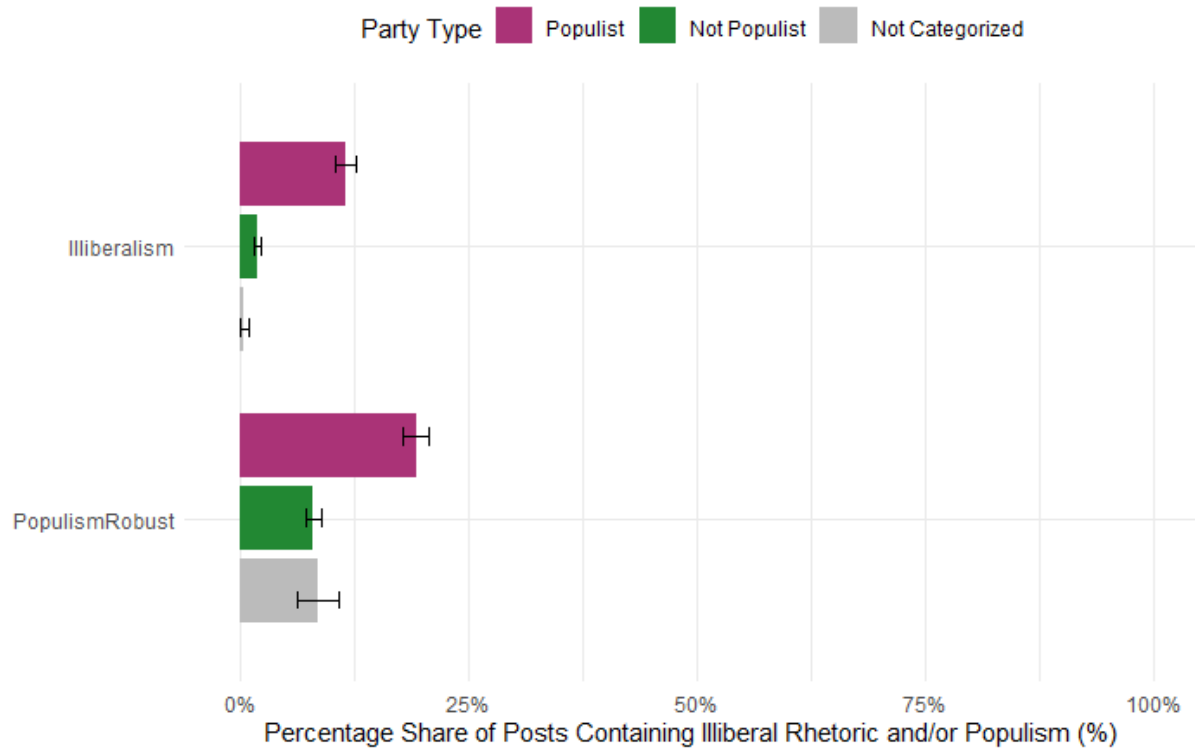


Figure Robust2 (Figure 3 in the original manuscript). Content categories in posts not addressing the analyzed wedge issues by party types with confidence intervals. $n = 7,386$ Facebook posts not containing wedge issues.

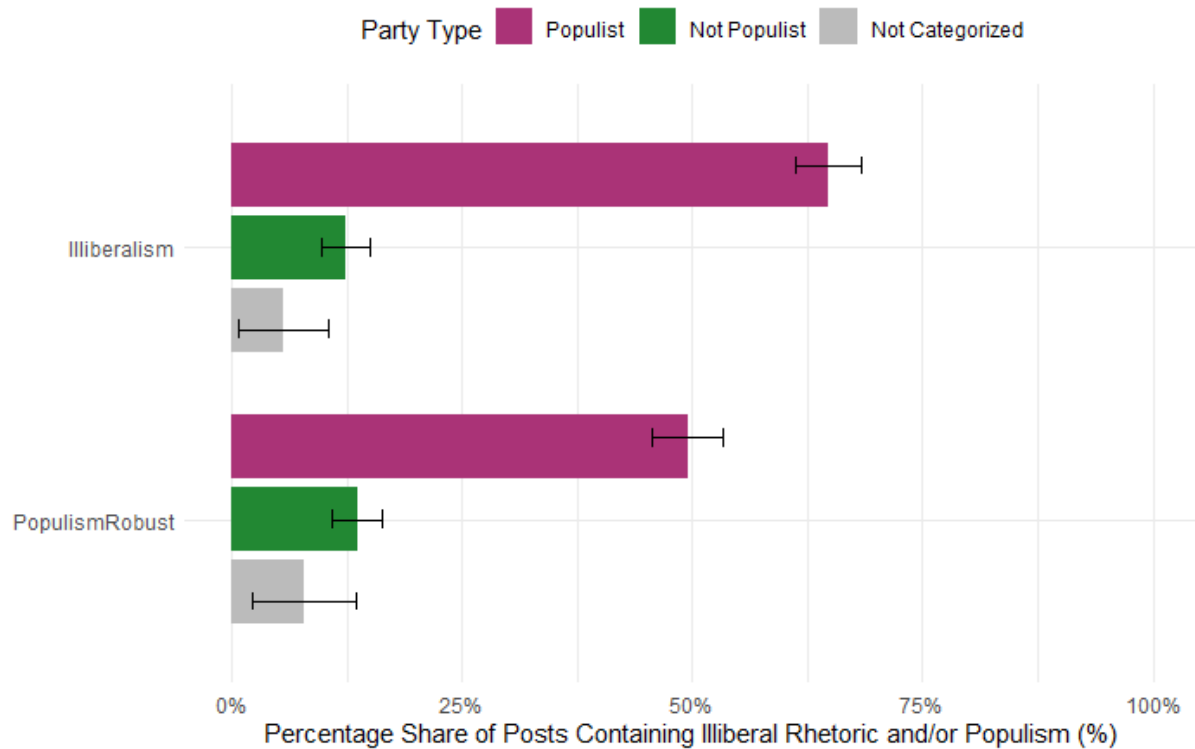


Figure Robust3 (Figure 4 in the original manuscript). Content categories in posts addressing wedge issues by party types with confidence intervals. $n = 8,748$ Facebook posts. $n = 1,362$ Facebook posts containing wedge issues.

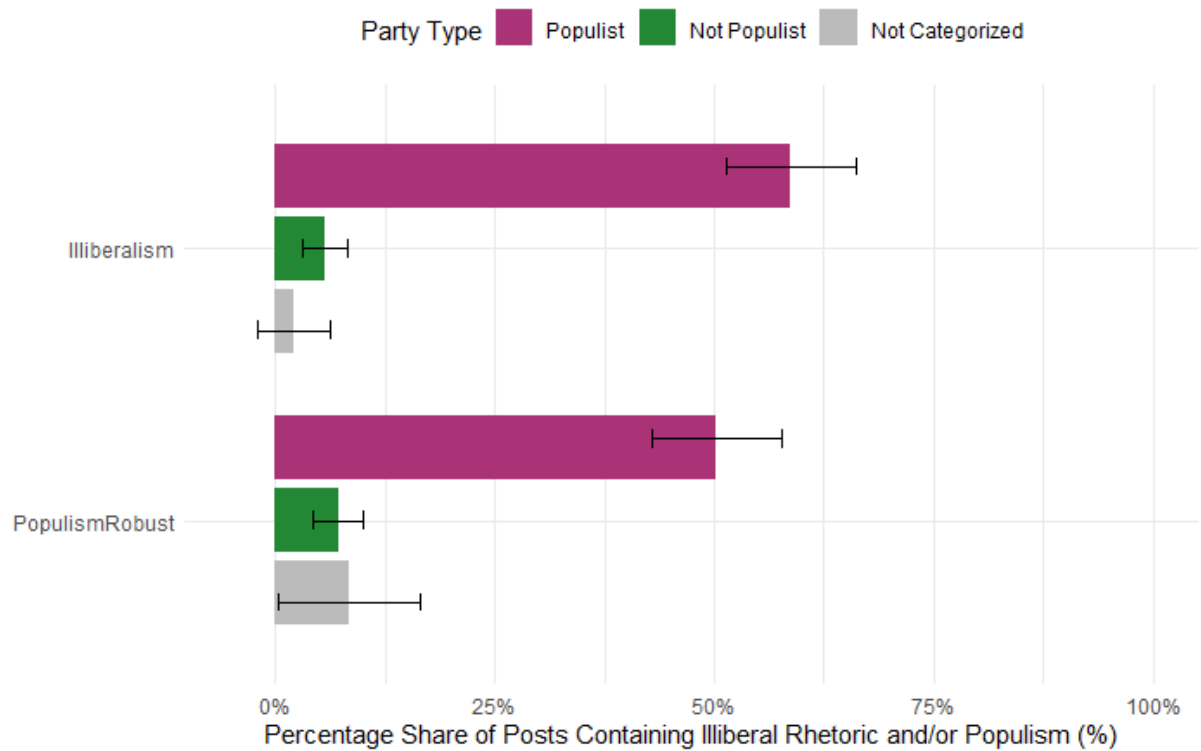


Figure Robust4 (Figure 6 in the original manuscript). Content categories in posts addressing environmental policy by party type with confidence intervals. $n = 546$ Facebook posts addressing environmental policy.

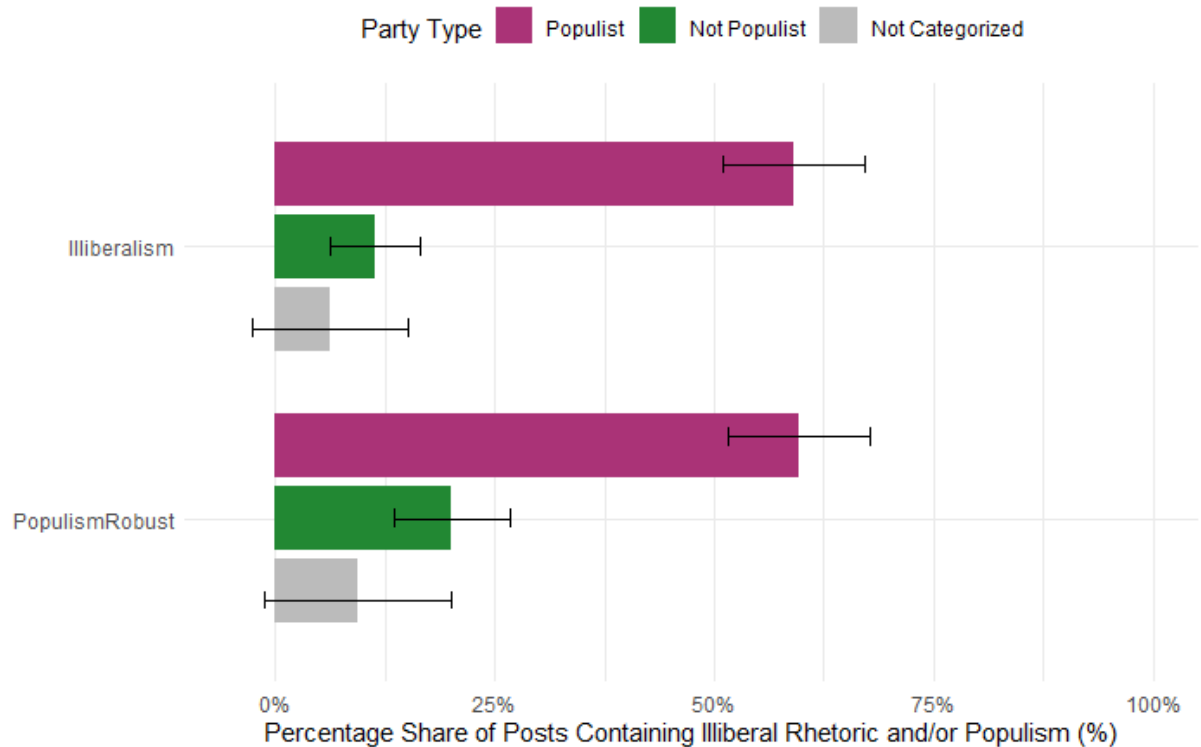


Figure Robust5 (Figure 7 in the original manuscript). Content categories in posts addressing the war in Ukraine by party type with confidence intervals. $n = 325$ Facebook posts addressing the war in Ukraine.

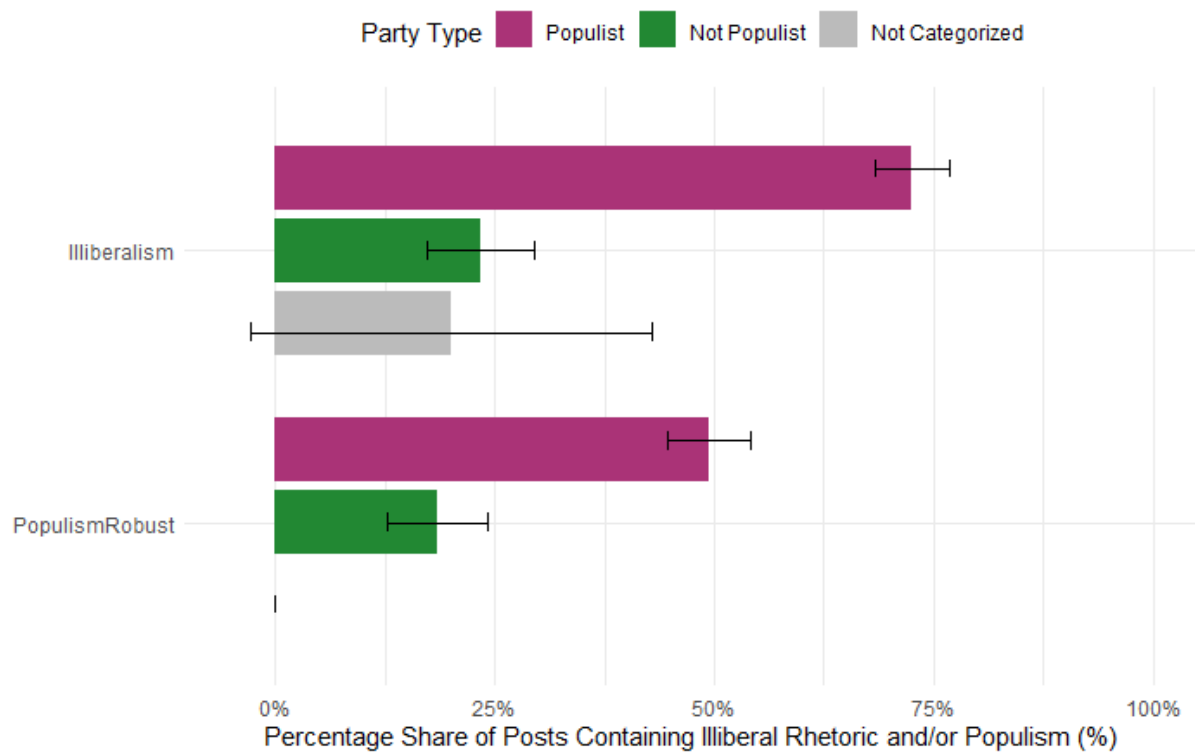


Figure Robust6 (Figure 8 in the original manuscript). Content categories in posts addressing migration by party type with confidence intervals. $n = 632$ Facebook posts addressing immigration.