

Appendix

How political elites think about democracy: evidence from Europe

May 15, 2026

Sample details

Table 1: Level of election of the sample

Level of election	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Belgium (Brussels Regional Parliament)	18	3.79	3.79
Belgium (EP)	1	0.21	4.00
Belgium (Flemish Regional Parliament)	3	0.63	4.63
Belgium (Lower Chamber)	22	4.63	9.26
Belgium (Wallonia Regional Parliament)	2	0.42	9.68
France (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes)	9	1.89	11.58
France (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté)	1	0.21	11.79
France (Brittany)	2	0.42	12.21
France (Centre-Val de Loire)	1	0.21	12.42
France (Corsica)	1	0.21	12.63
France (EP)	3	0.63	13.26
France (Grand Est)	6	1.26	14.53
France (Guadelupe)	1	0.21	14.74
France (Lower Chamber)	35	7.37	22.11
France (Nouvelle-Aquitaine)	7	1.47	23.58
France (Occitania)	9	1.89	25.47
France (Pays de la Loire)	6	1.26	26.74
Germany (Baden-Württemberg)	9	1.89	28.63
Germany (Bayern)	6	1.26	29.89
Germany (Berlin)	8	1.68	31.58
Germany (Brandenburg)	1	0.21	31.79
Germany (Bremen)	1	0.21	32.00
Germany (EP)	6	1.26	33.26
Germany (Hamburg)	5	1.05	34.32
Germany (Hesse)	6	1.26	35.58
Germany (Lower Chamber)	30	6.32	41.89
Germany (Lower Chamber) 2025	18	3.79	45.68
Germany (Lower Saxony)	4	0.84	46.53
Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)	2	0.42	46.95
Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia)	8	1.68	48.63
Germany (Rhineland-Palatinate)	2	0.42	49.05
Germany (Saarland)	1	0.21	49.26
Germany (Saxony)	5	1.05	50.32
Germany (Saxony-Anhalt)	6	1.26	51.58

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Level of election	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Germany (Schleswig-Holstein)	3	0.63	52.21
Germany (Thuringia)	6	1.26	53.47
Hungary (EP)	1	0.21	53.68
Hungary (Lower Chamber)	14	2.95	56.63
Italy (Aosta Regional Council)	9	1.89	58.53
Italy (Calabria Regional Council)	1	0.21	58.74
Italy (EP)	11	2.32	61.05
Italy (Emilia Regional Council)	3	0.63	61.68
Italy (Friuli Regional Council)	1	0.21	61.89
Italy (Higher Chamber)	21	4.42	66.32
Italy (Lazio Regional Council)	3	0.63	66.95
Italy (Lombardy Regional Council)	7	1.47	68.42
Italy (Lower Chamber)	24	5.05	73.47
Italy (Marche Regional Council)	1	0.21	73.68
Italy (Molise Regional Council)	1	0.21	73.89
Italy (Piedmont Regional Council)	6	1.26	75.16
Italy (Sicilian Regional Assembly)	2	0.42	75.58
Italy (South Tyrol Regional Council)	5	1.05	76.63
Italy (Tuscany Regional Council)	10	2.11	78.74
Norway (Lower Chamber)	6	1.26	80.00
Poland (Higher Chamber)	3	0.63	80.63
Poland (Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship)	1	0.21	80.84
Poland (Lesser Poland)	6	1.26	82.11
Poland (Lower Chamber)	15	3.16	85.26
Poland (Lower Silesian)	1	0.21	85.47
Poland (Lubusz)	5	1.05	86.53
Poland (Masovian)	2	0.42	86.95
Poland (Opole)	1	0.21	87.16
Poland (Podlaskie)	3	0.63	87.79
Poland (Silesian)	1	0.21	88.00
Poland (Warmian-Masurian)	1	0.21	88.21
Poland (West Pomeranian)	3	0.63	88.84
United Kingdom (Cambridgeshire)	3	0.63	89.47
United Kingdom (Cornwall)	1	0.21	89.68
United Kingdom (East Sussex)	1	0.21	89.89
United Kingdom (GLA)	3	0.63	90.53
United Kingdom (Lancashire)	1	0.21	90.74
United Kingdom (Leicestershire)	1	0.21	90.95
United Kingdom (Lower Chamber)	35	7.37	98.32
United Kingdom (Norfolk)	1	0.21	98.53
United Kingdom (Oxfordshire)	1	0.21	98.74
United Kingdom (Scotland)	1	0.21	98.95
United Kingdom (Staffordshire)	1	0.21	99.16
United Kingdom (Wales)	1	0.21	99.37
United Kingdom (West Sussex)	1	0.21	99.58
United Kingdom (Wiltshire)	2	0.42	100.00
Total	475	100.00	

Table 1 reports the institutional distribution of respondents across national, regional, and

European levels of representation. The sample primarily consists of members of national parliaments, complemented by representatives from regional assemblies and the European Parliament. This institutional diversity reflects the multi-level nature of political representation in Europe and allows us to capture elite democratic views across different arenas of representative governance. While the distribution varies across countries and institutional levels, all observations refer to elected political elites operating within formally democratic representative institutions.

Response rates

Table 2: Response rates by country and level

Country	National/European level		Regional level	
	Interviews	Response %	Interviews	Response %
Belgium	23	13.4%	23	8.0%
France	38	5.8%	56	2.4%
Germany	54	4.9%	80	4.3%
Hungary	15	6.8%	–	–
Italy	56	8.2%	49	5.1%
Norway	6	3.6%	–	–
Poland	18	2.8%	20	5.7%
United Kingdom	43	5.3%	2	0.8%
Total	245	5.8%	230	3.1%

Table 3: Interview status

Interview status	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
50–75% completed	34	7.16	7.16
75–99% completed	19	4.00	11.16
Completed	422	88.84	100.00
Total	475	100.00	

Most interviews used in the study were fully completed, with only a limited proportion of partially completed questionnaires (see Table 3). Response rates were calculated by considering as valid interviews those completed and those partially completed if having least 50% completion of the questionnaire. This led to 245 valid interviews at the national level, corresponding to an overall response rate of 5.8%, and 230 valid interviews at the regional level, corresponding to a response rate of 3.1%. As reported in Table 2, response rates varied across countries and institutional levels. Such variation likely reflects differences in institutional accessibility, survey salience, and broader cross-national differences in willingness to participate in elite surveys. In some cases, technical issues related to institutional e-mail filtering and delivery systems may also have reduced effective contact with potential respondents. This appeared particularly relevant in the United Kingdom regional module. Norway and Hungary were deliberately excluded from the regional module for data collection constraints: Norway due to the poor response pattern observed in the first module; Hungary because constructing a reliable sampling frame proved difficult due to lack of comparable regional councils.

Education

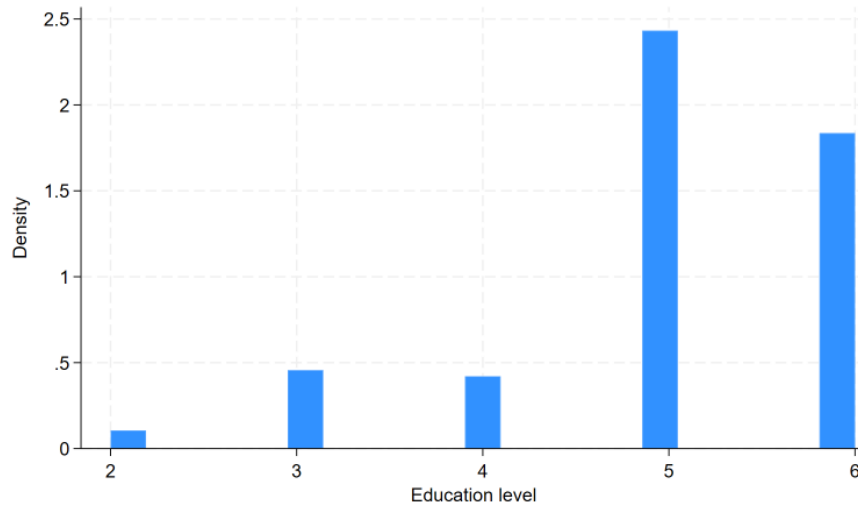


Figure 1: Education level across the elite sample

Note: 2 = Some high (secondary) school education; 3 = Graduation from high (secondary) school; 4 = Some college; 5 = Graduation from college or university; 6 = Post-graduate degree (Master's or PhD).

Table 4: Multinomial logistic regression analysis of educational attainment

Medium vs High education	
Age	1.004 (0.0189)
Female	0.459 (0.229)
Left	1 (.)
Center-left	0.0806* (0.0908)
Center	1.023 (0.552)
Center-right	0.150* (0.123)
Right	0.495 (0.287)
Observations	279

Note: Coefficients are reported as relative risk ratios. Standard errors in parentheses. High education is the reference category. * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1 reports the distribution of educational attainment across the elite sample. Most respondents hold university or postgraduate degrees, confirming the highly educated profile typically associated with political elites in contemporary representative democracies. Table 4 shows limited variation in educational attainment across socio-demographic groups within the elite sample. However, some ideological differences emerge, with center-left and center-right representatives being more likely than left-wing elites to belong to the medium rather than the high education category.

Technocratic preference

Figure 2 reports predicted levels of support for expert decision-making across values of satisfaction with democracy. The confidence intervals substantially overlap and the relationship is not statistically significant.

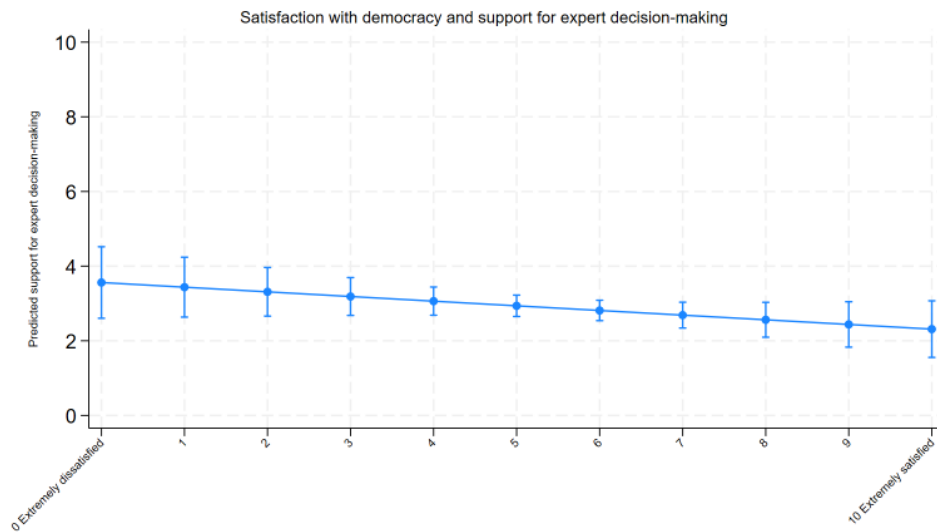


Figure 2: Technocratic preference and satisfaction with democracy among elites

Populism

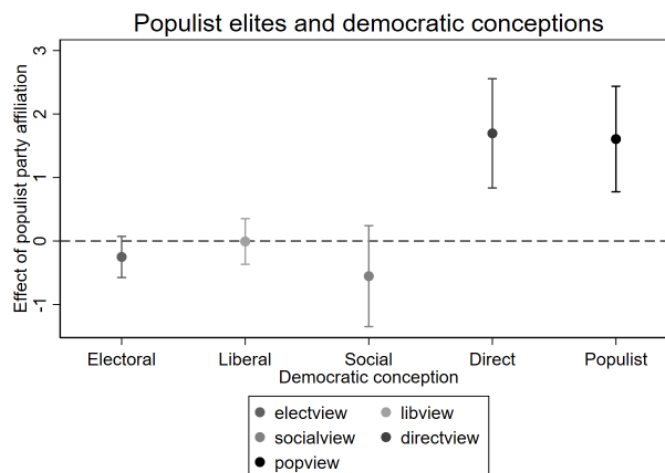


Figure 3: Populist party affiliation and democratic preferences

Figure 3 reports the estimated association between populist party affiliation and different democratic conceptions. Compared to non-populist elites, populist representatives display significantly stronger support for direct and populist conceptions of democracy, while differences for electoral, liberal, and social conceptions are limited or statistically insignificant. Parties were classified as populist or non populist based on PopuList¹.

¹Rooduijn, Matthijs, Andrea L.P. Pirro, Daphne Halikiopoulou, Caterina Froio, Stijn van Kessel, Sarah L. de Lange, Cas Mudde, and Paul Taggart (2023). *The PopuList 3.0: An Overview of Populist, Far-left and Far-right Parties in Europe*. www.popu-list.org. DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/2EWKQ.