

# Two of a kind? Populism and political cynicism compared.

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# Overview

- Populism and cynicism, close but not equal
- Our proposal:
  - ▶ Distinction between the concepts → actual fuzziness
  - ▶ Measurement model
  - ▶ Can they be explained by the same predictors?

# Distinction between the concepts

- Populism
  - ▶ Monist vision of society
  - ▶ Society is divided in two groups
  - ▶ Popular sovereignty
- Cynicism
  - ▶ Disdain for politicians and their actions
  - ▶ Distrust not based on knowledge, lack of reflexivity
  - ▶ Does not lead to political action, but to inactivity

# Populism and Cynicism

- What do they share?
  - ▶ Sense of corruption and unresponsiveness of the system and politicians
  - ▶ Both argue that politicians and the political system cannot deal with problems effectively
- They propose different solutions
  - ▶ Populism proposes bringing power to the people and implementing mechanisms of direct democracy.
  - ▶ Populism wants to mobilize the existing discontent
  - ▶ Populists do believe that their political actions could make an impact, and – supposedly – their reasoning is more informed
  - ▶ For cynics the solution is unclear. They are systematically distrustful and refuse to do anything about it.

We will use data from the Belgian National Study of 2014 (N=1403)

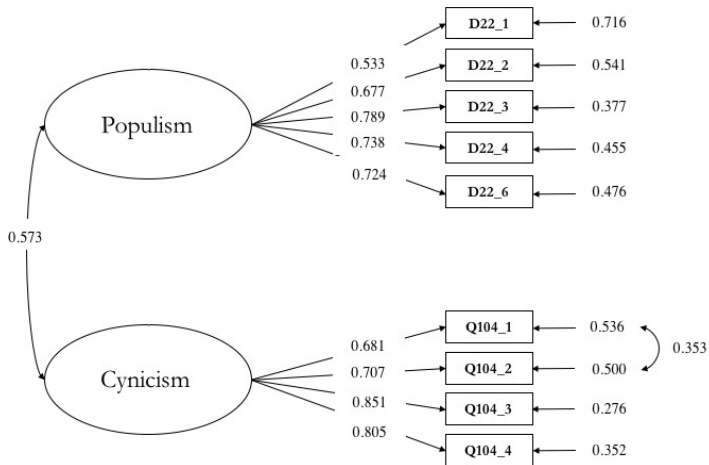
# Measurement model

We use Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), comparing models.

Model	Description	$\chi^2$	d.f.	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI
1	Single factor model	1400.024	27	0.190	0.103	0.740	0.654
2	Two factor model	228.143	26	0.074	0.033	0.962	0.947
3	Two factor model with correlated errors	107.088	25	0.048	0.028	0.984	0.978
N=1403							

Table: Fit indexes of CFA models

# Loadings of the final model



## Regression results on populist and cynical attitudes

	Populism		Cynicism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sex (ref=male)				
Female	0.10*	0.04	0.11**	0.03
Age (st)	-0.02	0.02	0.05*	0.08***
Education level (ref= lower secondary)				
None & lower	-0.01	-0.07	0.17*	0.06
High & University	-0.57***	-0.38***	-0.67***	-0.38***
Oesch scale (ref= production workers)				
Self employed & large employers	-0.28	-0.16	-0.34**	-0.20
Assoc. managers	-0.36***	-0.26**	-0.30***	-0.20**
Clerks	-0.35***	-0.29***	-0.31***	-0.24***
Socio cultural professionals	-0.26**	-0.18*	-0.24**	-0.09
Region (ref=Flanders)				
Wallonia	0.12**	0.06	0.27***	0.30***
L-R (st)		-0.06***		0.04*
Know (st)		-0.06**		0.03
Interest (st)		-0.05		-0.12***

## Regression results on populist and cynical attitudes

Sat government (ref= Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)				
Dissatisfied & very dissatisfied		0.03		0.11**
Sat democracy (ref= Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)				
Not/rather satisfied		0.27***		0.32***
Satisfied/very satisfied		-0.20***		-0.25***
Would vote if not compulsory (ref= always)				
Would vote generally		0.22***		0.42***
Would vote never		0.34***		0.71***
Constant	0.36***	0.18*	0.31***	-0.09
Observations	1,181	1,181	1,191	1,191
R-squared	0.14	0.23	0.20	0.43



# Conclusions

- In Belgium, populism and cynicism can be distinguished methodologically in a reliable way
- Our explanatory models predict considerably better cynical attitudes than populist attitudes

# Findings

Hypothesis	Description	Expectation	A/R
H1	More cynical and populist	Older individuals	Partially accepted
H2	More cynical and populist	Lower educated	Rejected
H3	More cynical and populist	Manual workers	Partially accepted
H4	More cynical	Less pol interest	Accepted
H5	More cynical	Less pol knowledge	Rejected
H6	More cynical	Less sat with gov	Accepted
H7	More cynical	Less sat with dem	Accepted
H8	More cynical	Less inclined to vote	Accepted
H9	More populist	Less sat with gov	Rejected

Table: Findings

## Conclusions on voting behaviour

- Less inclined to vote are more populist and cynical.
- Compared to VB voters, the rest of the voters – except SP.A – are less populist.
- Only blank or invalid vote are less populist than MR voters in Wallonia.
- VB voters do not stand out for being especially cynical.
- In Wallonia, cynical voters are distributed in all parties, leaving some open opportunities to political entrepreneurs.

Thanks for your attention