

**A SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL?
EXPLORING POPULIST ATTITUDES IN CROATIA**

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Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate the correlates of individual level populism in Croatia. Starting from the ideational definition of populism, this study tests how much economic grievances, socio-cultural backlash and ideational explanations of populism contribute to the description of the populist citizen in Croatia. The analysis was made using linear regressions based on survey data from 2018 and 2020 (n=1993). Results show that populism is mostly associated with authoritarianism, ideological extremism, conspiratorial thinking and institutional and interpersonal (dis)trust. In addition, the paper emphasizes the importance of operationalizing populism in accordance with the assumed structure of the concept. If we do not do this with caution, populism on an individual level will always elude us.

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1.Introduction

One should not spend a lot of words on proving that populism is one of the central research interests of political science. From the pioneering studies of populism (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969; Canovan 1981), over the intensive development of the research tradition in the 2000s (Taggart, 2000; Mudde, 2004; 2007), up to recent advances primarily characterized by the evolution of various attitudinal populist scales aiming to measure phenomenon at the individual level, the study of populism has gradually become part of the disciplinary *mainstream*.

However, the intensity of this development in populism studies is not the same everywhere. In Croatia, as elsewhere, most studies have focused on research of the political supply side, analyzing populist parties and actors. Recently, however, this field has been increasingly marked by supply-side phenomenon analysis, with an emphasis on attitudes at the individual level. This development is mostly based on an ideational approach that allows the study of populist attitudes of citizens (Hawkins et al., 2019). This type of analysis has not yet been made in Croatia, and it seems necessary given that populism in Croatian society is an omnipresent part of political discourse and media narratives (Grbeša and Volarević, 2021). As Šalaj and Grbeša (2018) put it, the analysis of populism in Croatia is mostly placed in the framework of daily political comments, with a more serious study yet to be done.

This study seeks to fill this gap by settling into an ideational tradition, with an emphasis on the analysis of the correlates of populism at the micro-level. Since the previous scholarly work on populism on an individual level has not covered this country, this broadens the reach of the ideational approach and thus the extent of populist studies in general. Also, the added value of the study is that it addresses certain in-field conceptual and measurement pitfalls, that is, additional attention is paid to the operationalization of populism as a dependent variable. On that basis, some common wisdom on populism is being challenged; as studies of populism have developed rapidly, this has sometimes implied conceptual ambiguity, leading to populism being inferred from measures that do not reflect the phenomenon and its nature. As populism is a phenomenon that accompanies democracies as its own shadow, appearing at every step, its proper conceptualization and measurement should be imperative.

Therefore, this study processes as follows. First, populism and its components are defined, after which the perspectives on its predictors are explained. Subsequently, the framework narrows to

the Croatian context, from which the hypotheses are derived. In the next step, a significant part of the paper is dedicated to the operationalization of populism and the creation of an adequate model for its measurement. After that, independent variables are described, the grouping of which reflects the dominant explanandums. Finally, the results of linear regressions based on data from two surveys from Croatia are presented and interpreted.

2. Populism and its components

Although much ink has been spilled in attempts to define it, populism remains an essentially contested concept (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). From pioneering (s. Ionescu and Gellner, 1969) to contemporary studies, notions about slipperiness and impalpability of populism (Taggart, 2000) seem axiomatic. This elusiveness of populism is reflected in the number of its conceptions, that is, to name only some of them, populism is understood as a thin-centered ideology (Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008), discourse (Laclau, 2005; Hawkins, 2009), distinctive political rhetoric (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007), form of mobilization (Jansen, 2011) and political strategy (Weyland, 2017). At a more general level, these conceptions mostly fit into ideational (Hawkins et al., 2018), political-strategic (Weyland, 2001) and socio-cultural or relational approaches (Ostiguy, 2017; 2020).¹

Whilst no conceptualization is completely dominant in the study of populism, the ideational approach has become increasingly prominent over time. This perspective, to paraphrase Dostoevsky's well-known claim of Gogol's importance, stemmed substantially from Mudde's *Overcoat*, and is mainly characterized by his benchmark definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology that sees society as divided into two homogeneous but antagonistic groups of pure people on one side and a corrupt elite on the other side, which, in addition, believes that politics needs to be an expression of *volonté générale* (Mudde, 2004: 543-544). However, it should be emphasized that for the ideational camp the key element of this definition is not in treating populism as an ideology. More precisely, the pivotal segment of this understanding is that it acknowledges a distinctive but rather limited morphology of the concept. Therefore, the decisive moment in Mudde's definition is the reference to the ideational thinness of the concept; the substance of

¹ For more details on the similarities and differences between approaches and conceptions see Grbeša and Šalaj, 2018: 30-38; Skenderovic, 2017; Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013; Moffit, 2016, ch.2.

populism is the *unique albeit minimalist body of normative ideas* (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017: 6; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019: 3), with secondary importance being given to whether the phenomenon is conceived as a discourse frame (s. Aslanidis, 2016), outlook or ideology. In a word, a specific set of ideas makes up the nucleus of populism while the forms of its appearance can be understood variously. But what set of ideas are we talking about, that is, what elements make up this minimalist conceptual baggage?

As indicated, the first key component in the ideational conceptualization of populism is *people-centrism* as its core feature (Canovan, 1981; Mény and Surel, 2002). People are here understood in an essentially pure sense of an idealized community (Taggart, 2004). To put it differently, ordinary folk is perceived as a homogeneous entity that embodies democratic virtues (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017) which is why its sovereignty should constitute the basis of the political system. In the populist imaginary, all differences between people have been reconciled (Muller, 2016) which is why the expression of a common will is uniform and thus easily identifiable.²

However, in populist mind, the underlying reason for this is the fact that pure people are in struggle with a contrasting entity- the elites, i.e., their primary adversaries in the political landscape. This juxtaposition makes *anti-elitism* second key concept in the ideational notion of populism. In populist interpretation, the elite corrupted the system and institutions by subordinating them to their interests at the expense of the benefits of ordinary people. This crystallized homogeneous groups on both sides and created an antagonistic relationship between them, although the embodiment of these groups is contextually conditioned (ergo, people and elites can be defined economically, politically, culturally, etc., s. Roodujin, 2014).

What is most important, however, is that the distinction between entities is primarily of a moral nature (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; 2013). From this follows how the essence of the ideational conceptualization is the *Manichaeian worldview* which divides people and the elite in the monistic and ethical sense; the people are classified as pure because they are morally virtuous, while elites are categorized as corrupt because they embody moral deficiency and monopolize vice (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Castanho Silva et al., 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). In

² To be precise, Mudde (2004) makes a theoretical distinction between people-centrism and popular sovereignty. However, later studies show that at the empirical level it is not possible to clearly differentiate between these concepts (Castanho Silva et al., 2019)

other words, this is an essentialist political cosmology according to which politics is a struggle between good and evil, whereby, in populist imaginary, the nature of all opponents is interpreted as diabolical (s. Hawkins, 2009).³ Based on the above, it can be said that populism is a set of ideas whose distinctiveness hinges on the interplay or "simultaneous co-occurrence" (Erisen et al., 2021: 165) of Manichaeism outlook, anti-elitism, and people-centrism i.e., its specificity rests on the interaction of these subcomponents which form an idiosyncratic interpretation of political and especially democratic reality (Van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azavedo, 2020: 5).

If we conceive populism as a set of ideas, it is implied that the construct can manifest itself on an individual level and, consequently, that it can be measured (van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azevedo, 2019). On this basis, a research line that analyzes the demand side of populism was developed, which is a novelty in the hitherto supply-oriented tradition of populism studies (van Hauwaert and van Kessel, 2018; Rooduijn, 2019). More precisely, there has been a proliferation of what is often called the study of populist attitudes at the individual level which in effect testifies to the empirical utilization of the ideational approach (Stanley, 2011; Hawkins, Ridding and Mudde, 2012; Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove, 2014; Spruyt, Keppens and van Droogenbroeck, 2016; Castanho Silva, Veggetti and Littvay, 2017; Jacobs, Akkerman and Zaslove, 2018; Castanho Silva et al., 2019; van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azavedo, 2020). However, it should be noted that populism should not be perceived as a full-fledged attitude - it is more of a latent disposition whose activation depends on the context (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019: 7). This means that the populist predisposition, if prevalent on an individual level, remains quiescent until credible populist discourse and rhetoric trigger it (Ardag et al., 2019).

The previously presented conceptual map and definition of populism form the theoretical starting point of this study; that is, paper builds on the settings of the ideational tradition according to which populism is understood as a latently present set of ideas whose core consists of the simultaneous presence of people-centrism, anti-elitism, and Manichaeism. This kind of elaboration is crucial because ideational conceptualization is widely used without being properly reflected in terms of measurement. However, this shortcoming will be addressed more closely in

³ But, at the same time, this does not mean how this pejoration of the elite is without its limits - most populists treat the elite primarily as greedy and selfish, without necessarily portraying them as comic book level villains (Castanho Silva, Veggetti and Littvay, 2017).

the methodological part of the text, which comes after an overview of theories about the causes of populism and an explanation of the context and relevance of Croatia.

3. Studying the demand side of populism

As an omnipresent part of today's political reality, populism has been explained in several ways. If we are to make a classification of explanandums that have gained significant momentum in the clarification of the characteristics of a populist citizen, two positions seem unavoidable. That is, scholars emphasize that most studies start from an economic grievances perspective or viewpoint that highlights socio-cultural backlash (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017; Castanho Silva, 2017; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Berman, 2021). In effect, both explanations point to changes associated with globalization, modernization, and urbanization, just with an emphasis on different elements; the first perspective emphasizes changed material living conditions, while the second stresses the importance of changed values and social norms.

The perspective to which economic grievances and demands are the focal point essentially echoes the Downsian polit-economic outlook. According to this interpretation, human behavior is mostly conditioned by our self-interested nature. In a time of post-industrialization characterized by the increasing importance of the service and information sector and the decline of the industrial sector, this means that populism occurs as response to the increased vulnerability and insecurity of a part of citizens whose skill set is not flexible enough to meet these changes. Increased competition in the labor market and growing liberalization of national economies have benefited managers and professional classes, investors, multinational companies, and banks, whilst workers and the middle class found themselves in a less favorable position (Rodrik, 2018). This dichotomy is further intensified by growing inequalities (s. Milanović, 2016) which swell economic anxiety to those whose social and economic mobility is increasingly hampered. Thus, this social stratum that did not cope well with the ever-increasing technological and organizational innovations caused by the general shift from mass to specialized production and consumption has found the defense and vent mechanism in populism whose actors represent a departure from established parties that have implemented such, at least from their perspective, disadvantageous policies.⁴ In a word, it is argued how this brave new world does not suit the pockets of the less educated, unskilled, older and those

⁴ For a more detailed description of the characteristics of "flexible postmodernism" see Harvey, 1989.

who come from rural areas; more specifically, all those commonly placed under the syntagm of globalization losers (Betz, 1994; Kriesi et al., 2006; Iversen and Soskice, 2019).

The other side does not speak the language of employment, wages, and salaries, but puts the value dimension of the previously mentioned changes in the spotlight. It is argued that increased access to education (Bovens and Wille, 2017), intergenerational change (Inglehart, 1997) and the increasingly urban population structure (Norris and Inglehart, 2019) have led to proliferation of post-materialist, multicultural and liberal values that have begun to dominate over socially conservative outlook. The changed understanding of gender roles and the increasing emphasis on the values of self-expression and individual autonomy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) have triggered a reaction in the part of the population that does not look at the world through similar lenses. In a context where the importance of a common identity and norms is eroding, certain sections of the population are turning to populism because it, through the notion of an idealized community of pure people, gives them meaningful placement in a rapidly changing world. This counter-response is most often characterized by authoritarianism (Oesch, 2008; Inglehart and Norris, 2017; s. Kitschelt, 1994) and, from a right-wing populist parties' perspective, by an anti-migration stance (Iversflaten, 2007; Roodujin, 2015; Akkerman, Zaslove and Spruyt, 2017). For authoritarians, populism is a natural ally because, under the guise of unlimited general will, it opens up space for legitimizing attacks on all those perceived as a threat to alleged homogeneity (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Or, to put in a more psychological perspective, populism sits well with authoritarians because populist pro-people and anti-elitist rhetoric directly triggers a sense of normative threat that has a stimulating effect on an otherwise dormant authoritarian predisposition (s. Aguilar and Carlin, 2019). For right-wingers, populists represents a new point of convergence for the restoration of national identity whose demise has been fueled by minority rights and a growing share of the non-native population.

However, both perspectives based their contributions mostly on the confusion between the populist voter and the populist citizen (Rovira Kaltwasser and van Hauwaert, 2020). More precisely, populism is here most often operationalized through the vote for the populist radical right parties. Still, it is shown how even though populist dispositions may be widespread (Hawkins and Littvay, 2019; Rico and Anduiza, 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser and van Hauwaert, 2019; van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018), this does not mean that these sentiments transfer to votes for populists. As noted, populist potential must be activated (s. Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser and Andreadis, 2020).

Also, in these studies, populism was usually part of a broader conceptual package; it was mostly associated with right-wing imaginary phenomena such as nativism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Therefore, it can be said how these were proxy measures of populism that included other attitudinal constructs.

In response to this, the aforementioned ideational approach emerged, which, by defining the construct as a unique set of ideas, established the study of populism as a distinctive phenomenon. This approach, in addition to emphasizing the ideational foundations of populism, also pinpointed the importance of normative ideas in understanding its emergence (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). In other words, a fundamental objection to existing explanations is that they do not leave enough room for normative concerns that are indicated by the very definition of populism; that is, the question of how to interpret populism in the context of democracy, institutions, norms, and fundamental ideas of the regime has been neglected. From the perspective of the socio-cultural approach, in addition to the problematic wrapping of populism with nativism and reactionary discourse, it is further unclear why the reconstruction of popular identity should assume the Manichean form that is essential to populism - namely, it is very easy to imagine a renewal of popular identity on pluralistic grounds (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017). Moreover, in the context of an approach that emphasizes economic anxiety, the non-material part of explanation is missing. More precisely, this viewpoint ignores how economic grievances can have a normative tone. Grievances are not only material - they are also objections to the erosion of democratic norms, i.e., inequality undermines economic well-being, but it also weakens the quality of democracy. Populism is a reaction to both, more precisely, for an ideational camp, it is more of a reaction to the latter.

Furthermore, ideationalists have articulated some other explanations about demand for populism. As this stance is strongly anti-elitist, then it is logical that populists are characterized by distrust of institutions as objects of elite habitat. Given that institutions rest on a set of rules whose role is to protect the normative ideas of their founding (Warren, 1999), it is reasonable to assume that populists do not trust institutions since normative democratic ideas are largely circumvented in their perspective. Hence, this relationship is well documented; the negative correlation between trust in institutions and populism is one of the most salient findings when it comes to the correlates of populism (Doyle, 2011; Castanho Silva, 2017; Erisen et al., 2021; s. van der Waal and de Koster, 2018). Along with political trust, the ideational approach has opened space for discussion about

interpersonal trust as a predictor of populism. On that note, several studies have found that low trust in others is negatively correlated with voting for populist parties (Koivula, Saarinen and Räsänen; 2017; Berning and Ziller, 2017; Staerklé and Green 2018; s. Giuliano and Wacziarg, 2020). Oliver and Wood (2014) are on the same track in terms of the Manichaeic outlook, i.e., it is shown that lower interpersonal trust is associated with Manicheism. From an ideational perspective, this would mean that the Manichean struggle of good and evil is projected onto the understanding of other people in the populist imaginary.

Additionally, treating populism as a distinctive set of ideas enabled an analysis of whether populism is associated with other beliefs. One such set of beliefs is the conspiratorial mindset whose reasoning structure coincides with a populist worldview. Namely, conspiratorial thinking and populism are characterized by simple dualistic narratives that separate groups on a moral basis (Castanho Silva, Veggetti and Littvay, 2017). Moreover, conspiracy theories are often commonplace in terms of skepticism about politics, most often resulting in beliefs about the global malevolent conspiracy of a handful of politicians (Fenster, 1999), which has a strong anti-elitist note and is thus close to populism. What is more, populist discourse can also take on a conspiratorial tone in which political opponents are portrayed as morally corrupt or evil (Chavez, 2009). In addition, conspiracies can be a coping mechanism in conditions of insecurity and lack of control, with which populism, as a politics of hope (Spruyt, Keppens and van Droogenbroeck, 2016) resonates significantly, especially in its people-centrist dimension.

However, the ideational approach provided a different perspective in the context of some hitherto established insights on populism. Ergo, once populism began to be treated independently of other “neighboring” concepts, it quickly became apparent that it was not reserved only for radical right-wing or conservative ideologies at the individual level. In a sense, it is shown how populism is ideologically ambivalent; some studies show that left-wing people are more prone to populism (Rico, Guinjoan and Anduiza, 2017; Tsatsanis, Andreadis and Teperoglu, 2018; Rovira Kaltwasser and van Hauwaert, 2020) while others show that right-wing people are characterized by higher levels of populism (Bernhard and Hänggli, 2018; Wehrkamp and Wratil, 2018). However, there is increasing evidence that populism is associated with extremism at both ideological ends, ergo, so called extremity hypothesis is becoming more resonant. Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde (2012) found how stronger self-identifications on both ideological poles go hand in hand with populism which was corroborated by other findings (Wettstein et al., 2020). This should come as no surprise,

as many supply-level studies have shown that populism is associated with extremism on both the left and the right (van Kessel, 2015; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017; Castanho Silva, 2017).

This overview covers most of the soil, as it takes into account perspectives of *economic grievances*, *socio-cultural backlash* and *ideational approach* thus merging the research line of new populism scholars and the somewhat older comparative tradition (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). All in all, this body of comparative literature provides the contours of a populist citizen, and thus a rough sketch of the hypotheses of this text. However, before explicitly stating expectations, it is necessary to describe the Croatian context, i.e., the characteristics of the party system, the determinants of electoral preferences and the conditions for the emergence of populism. This will provide a better insight into what findings can be expected in Croatia regarding populism at the individual level.

4. Croatian context

The twentieth century in Croatia, to paraphrase Hobsbawm, was indeed an age of extremes (Cipek, 2007). In this century, Croatia was part of several state communities, from the First Yugoslavia, the fascist Independent State of Croatia (fascist Ustasha regime), the Socialist (second) Yugoslavia to the democratic Republic of Croatia, where the key events were certainly the Second World War and the Homeland War (1991-1995). In Croatian context, the Second World War represents historical fracture (s. Sulejman, Cipek and Milosavljević, 2008; Sulejman and Cipek, 2009) that formed central reference point in the culture of memory and, consequently, an important feature of mass politics in Croatia. What is important is that, during World War II, the only two organized and relevant political forces were the fascist Ustashes and the anti-fascist Partisans. The idea of statehood of the former rested on proto-fascist national exclusivism characterized by racial laws and genocide against Serbs (Payne, 2009; s. Bartulin, 2007), while the latter, after winning the war, sought to introduce the Soviet type of government and eliminate and marginalize political opponents who had ties to the Ustasha regime (Henjak, Zakošek and Čular, 2013). Although the socialist regime was oppressive and tried to suppress political divisions based on conflicting interpretations of World War II and the post-war period, these continued to exist on a latent level. Specifically, although there were no permanent mechanisms of political mobilization in the socialist regime, divisions continued to exist at the dormant level through intergenerational

transmission, activities of Catholic Church, and reformist events such as the Croatian Spring (Henjak, 2011).

The historical episode shown here is crucial because the described cleavage and with it associated values, after the fall of socialism and the establishment of democracy, became the fundamental axis of party competition. This shaped a relatively stable and enduring bipolar party system in which the dominant parties have a strong symbolic and expressive function. More precisely, the HDZ (*Christian Democratic Union*) is a champion of center-right political identity, which mainly represents a more rural, traditionalist, religious part of the electorate, which in historical context is more associated with the struggle for state independence and negative evaluation of the socialist period, while the SDP (*Social Democratic Party*), although with a somewhat weaker symbolic capital, represents a more urban, less religious and more progressively oriented part of the population that values the socialist era and anti-fascist tradition more positively. The intensity and durability of this historical-identitarian cleavage has been confirmed by a series of studies of voter behavior over the past 25 years (Šiber, 1997; Henjak, 2005; 2007; Jou, 2010; Henjak, Zakošek and Čular, 2013; Grdešić, 2013; Raos, 2020). At the same time, research shows that party competition and voter mobilization on economic grounds in Croatia is lacking (Šiber, 2001; Henjak, 2005; Nikić Čakar and Čular, 2012); moreover, the relationship between socio-economic mobilization and party identification is shown to be somewhat inverse, with party identification shaping attitudes about economic issues such as property taxes (Henjak, 2007).

However, this hitherto solid bipolar party system in which HDZ and SDP alternated in power was challenged in the 2015 and 2016 elections, in which newly formed populist parties gained significant voter support (Grbeša and Šalaj, 2019). In more detail, the biggest success of these new kids on the block was achieved by MOST (*The Bridge*), which in the 2015 elections, in a situation where HDZ and SDP with their usual coalition partners could not form a majority, was a pivotal post-election actor. In the end, MOST formed a coalition with HDZ, but this coalition was short-lived, which led to early elections in 2016. However, these elections also led to a new post-election coalition of HDZ and MOST, which again quickly crashed, although HDZ managed to stay in power this time. In this elections, second most prominent populist actor, namely, Živi Zid (*The Human Shield*), also achieved significant electoral success.

This has led to a mild growth of populism studies, where the most comprehensive study of populism is certainly Grbeša's and Šalaj's (2018), which concluded that Ivan Vilibor Sinčić, leader

of Živi zid is a strong populist, while MOST is described as a party of moderate reformist populism. It is also worth noting how this study concluded that there is practically no right-wing populism in Croatia, that is, it turns out that right-wing political projects are primarily manifested in nationalist narratives and ideas, which are not particularly mixed with populism (Grbeša and Šalaj, 2018: 233). But, these findings have been only partially confirmed in comparative studies; although most studies confirm that MOST and Živi zid are populist parties, there are differences in terms of left-right ideological labelling when it comes to MOST. Namely, some studies characterize MOST as center-right (Meijers and Zaslove, 2021) or conservative populist party (Norris, 2020). However, scholarly work is not unequivocal here either, as other research shows that MOST and Živi zid belong to the sub-type of valence populism which is characterized by non-positional competition, or, in other words, these parties are classified as cases of pure or unaltered populism (Zulianello, 2020).⁵ But, individual level research on voters of MOST and Živi zid shows a more nuanced picture. More specifically, it turns out that while MOST and Živi zid voters are closer to the ideological center, younger and more distant from historical divisions, there are indications that those who vote for Živi zid are closer to the center-left, while those who vote for MOST are closer to the center-right position, especially in the context of the 2016 elections when these parties took clearer positions in the Croatian ideological space (Henjak, 2017).

Other research focused on the political communication of populist actors on social media (Albertini and Vozab, 2017) or on the descriptive evaluations of certain politicians who are then labeled as populists (Kasapović, 2010; Zakošek, 2010). However, what most studies of populism in Croatia have in common is that they have predominantly focused on populism as a supply-side phenomenon, while those that analyze populism on an individual level mainly approach it from a voter behavior perspective where populism was a less important concept in the analysis. More precisely, almost no study has thematized populism as such on an individual level, which means that the description of average populism subscriber in Croatia is still missing. Raos (2020) and Vuksan-Ćusa and Raos (2021) came close to this, however, in these studies populism was not operationalized as a multi-dimensional concept involving the Manichean outlook. A valuable contribution is the mixed-methods study by Derado, Dergić and Međugorac (2016), but here too

⁵ But it should be noted here that some studies do not characterize *The Bridge* as a populist party, while at the same time classifying *Human Shield* as populists (Taggart and Pirro, 2021).

populism is treated via nativism, preference for a strong leader and authoritarianism, which are concepts that are much closer to the radical right-wing variant of populism and that do not correspond to populism understood as a set of predispositions that can exist without borrowing concepts from host ideologies. From a comparative perspective, work by Norris and Inglehart (2019) found high levels of populism in Croatia at the micro-level. Yet, in this study, populism was measured as the sum of the distrust in politicians, parties, and parliament, meaning that institutional distrust is equated with populism. Although there are definitions according to which the core of the populist nexus is in its anti-institutionalism (Pappas, 2019), meeting this condition is not enough to label someone as a populist. Namely, populism and distrust in institutions are associated, but they are still distinctive concepts as those who do not trust institutions are not necessarily Manichaeans or anti-pluralists (s. Schäfer, 2021). On the whole, while the populist citizen in Croatia is certainly insufficiently sketched, these studies have helped to identify relevant concepts that, along with party system characteristics and insights from comparative studies, can serve as a basis for formulating hypotheses. Therefore, although the horizon is hazy, some roadsign guiding signs can still be seen. These signs are more clearly elaborated in the next chapter, in which hypotheses are fully deducted.

5.Hypotheses

When it comes to economic grievances, one may argue that populism is a reaction to the absence of socio-economic cleavage in Croatia. More precisely, one can assume that populism is an expression of the restructuration of the party system that has so far been shaped along the historical-identitarian axis. However, this outcome is unlikely given that populist parties in Croatia have emerged primarily as anti-establishment actors, thus reacting to the existing model of governance in which economic issues did not play a significant role. In addition, it is shown that in Croatia preferences for what could be described as economic populism are not related to more permanent elements of socio-economic position such as education, occupation and property ownership (Henjak and Vuksan-Ćusa, 2019), which is at odds with the economic grievances perspective. Therefore, the first hypothesis is that *variables that measure an individual's economic position will have no effect on the level of populist attitudes* (H1). Nevertheless, a small addition to this needs to be done. One should remember that populism, as an ideational approach would put

it, is primarily a matter of ideas about the world. This implies that sociotropic evaluations of society may have a greater effect on political ideas than egotropic ones (Anduiza, Guinjoan and Rico, 2018) especially when it comes to retrospective evaluations in which eventual resentment can be stated in clearer manner (Rico and Anduiza, 2019). This is also related to findings about how perceptions of relative deprivation and anomie can effect populist attitudes (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016), given that these measures tap into the feeling of shared grievances of community. Therefore, the next hypothesis is that *negative sociotropic evaluations of the economic situation are associated with higher levels of populism at the individual level* (H1a).

Contrary to that, majority of the socio-cultural backlash indicators is expected to have a significant positive association with populist attitudes. Firstly, authoritarianism is empirically linked to all three sub-components of populism (Castanho Silva et al., 2019). In addition, authoritarianism is an important feature of Croatian citizens as studies show that Croatian democracy functions with a noticeable share of the population that is prone to authoritarian political leadership (Čular and Šalaj, 2019) which tends to increase over time (Nikodem, 2019). Although this is not a place to enter a debate on the causes of authoritarianism in Croatia, the “heroic code” theory seems indicative; this perspective stresses how there is a set of latent authoritarian values which are caused by political-historical turbulences and can be activated in times of crisis (Županov, 2011). If we assume that populist rhetoric can trigger this disposition, then populism and authoritarianism can be expected to go hand in hand. The same can be said for the link of conspiracy theories and populist attitudes, as these are shown to be correlated in both domestic and international literature.⁶ In the same vein, extreme ideological values are also expected to correlate positively with populism. In more detail, ideologically extreme individuals are expected to be more prone to populism because populism on an individual level is not reserved for any ideology. From the extreme left position, populism can be an expression of the negation of the entire political and economic establishment, while on the right it can resonate with nativism, thus portraying the unity of the national community (Hameelers et al., 2021). In the context of Croatia, this effect could be further stressed by the fact that extreme parties from both ideological ends have not been represented in power for many years, which could reinforce anti-elitist sentiment among their

⁶ Namely, Blanuša (2013) shows how conspiracy theories are highly associated with a concept called “simulated democracy”, whose content is quite close to populism (e.g., items like “politicians are looking only for their own interests” etc.).

voters. Simply put, both ends can associate their ideological positions with the key ideas of populism as its nature is chameleonic (Taggart, 2004); from perspective of the ideological spectrum, almost everybody can make some heuristic towards populism. Furthermore, given that historical-identitarian cleavage is extremely dominant in Croatia (see previous chapter), it seems unlikely that this is not reflected in the context of micro-level populism. The importance of symbolic identifications with historical positions and thus based values cannot be overemphasized in Croatia, as evidenced by practically all studies of voter behavior. As the anti-fascist struggle forms the foundation of this historical backbone, the assumption is that identification with it will influence populism. Specifically, identification with the anti-fascist struggle is expected to be positively associated with populism for at least two reasons. First, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) point out, it is possible that left-wing imaginary also reflects some forms of populist nostalgic deprivation that is otherwise considered a feature of right-wing populists. The focal point of this nostalgia can be the socialist era, which is a very plausible outcome in the Croatian context. The second reason is contextual and rather simple; it is possible that people who identify more with the anti-fascist struggle, which is a proxy for left-wing political identity in Croatia, will be more inclined to populism because the government was center-right at the time of the analysis. All things considered, the second hypothesis is that *authoritarians, conspiratorial thinkers, ideological extremists and those who identify with the anti-fascist struggle will be more prone to populism* (H2). But, as with the first hypothesis, a small addition should be considered. Although the anti-migration attitude is associated with right-wing populism (Zhirkov, 2014), this does not mean that the same is true of populism as such. As noted, these findings are largely based on the operationalization of populism as a vote for radical right-wing parties, which represents a broader conceptual set in which populism is perhaps not the driving force behind the mobilization of anti-migrant sentiment. Specifically, in the context of Croatia where the migrant crisis was not a particularly relevant political issue (Henjak, 2018a), it is reasonable to assume that populism is not linked to an anti-migration stance. Thus, the hypothesis is that *the anti-migrant attitude is not related to populism at the individual level* (H2a).

The last hypothesis refers to expectations related to the ideational perspective. The key concept of this approach is political (institutional) trust, i.e., its negative relationship with populism. The same association can be expected in Croatia, otherwise characterized by low levels of institutional trust (Newton, 2007; Rose i Mishler, 2010), which is usually a fertile ground for the emergence of

populist sentiment. In addition to that, it is assumed that interpersonal trust is also negatively associated with populism, as signaled in previous chapters. Also, this is indirectly indicated by findings confirming that interpersonal trust is associated with satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions (Newton, Stolle and Zmerli, 2018; Zmerli, Newton and Montero, 2007), which is not a position that populists would take. Therefore, the hypothesis is that *institutional and interpersonal trust are negatively associated with populist attitudes* (H3). In the next section, the operationalization of the concepts listed here is described, followed by an empirical test of the hypotheses set.

6. Data and methods

The analysis is based on two nationally representative probability sample surveys conducted by the Faculty of Political Science. These surveys are part of a research series called the *Croatian Election Studies* that are running since 1990. Surveys from 2018 and 2020 are used here because their questionnaires are the only ones to include populism scales in the context of Croatia. In more detail, these are field surveys with samples of 1,014 and 979 respondents, respectively. The 2018 survey was conducted in June in collaboration with the *Hendal* agency and the 2020 survey was carried out in February and March by the *Ipsos*, i.e., data collection was completed just before the introduction of public health measures caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Only respondents over the age of 18 participated in the surveys.

6.1. Dependent variable: measurement of populist attitudes

Before displaying the items and scale used, one should recall the introductory remark about measurement shortcomings in empirical studies whose theoretical backbones mostly consist of the ideational approach. As said, this tradition understands populism as an ideational construct that sits at the intersection of several distinctive subcomponents that exist independently of each other. That is, for example, a certain part of the population may think the worst of the elites, but that does not mean how these citizens at the same time interpret the political world as a moral struggle between good and evil. What is more, studies show that Manichaeism is weakly (Castanho Silva et al., 2019) and even negatively correlated with other subcomponents (Erisen et al., 2021; Castanho Silva, Vegetti and Littvay, 2017). The point here is that components of populism in the individual mind often do not occur together, which is why measuring instruments should consider for core concepts separately, i.e., the scales should not be unidimensional as this does not reflect the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon (s. Schulz et al., 2018). In a nutshell, we need a scale whose structure mirrors this conceptual setting; only in this way can we check whether someone is at the same time people-centric, anti-elitist, and prone to Manichaeism, that is, if someone is a populist or not.

Scale by Castanho Silva et al (2019) was developed as an attempt to transcend these and other in-field conceptual and methodological pitfalls; starting with a large pool of items (145) by which

various conceptually close constructs were measured, the authors inductively developed a three-subcomponent battery of populism that follows the ideational theory and that is cross-nationally validated.⁷ Although research on populism is growing rapidly, as far as is known, this is the only scale whose development has been described and tested in detail and which performs well in terms of psychometric properties (Castanho Silva et al., 2020). To be more precise, scale by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014), which is probably the most used instrument, also performs well, but its construction does not depict the multi-dimensional nature of populism (Huber, Fesenfeld and Bernauer, 2020) as it uses double-barreled items that relate to more than one sub-component (Wuttke, Schimpf and Schoen, 2020).

This study uses items that Castanho Silva and coauthors have incorporated into a longer (9-item) scale, more specifically, two items are used to capture each sub-component of populism. Items *Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people* (PC1) and *The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics* (PC2) measure people-centrism while *The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves* (AE1) and *A few of the people running the government are crooked* (AE2) are items that indicate anti-elitism.⁸ Manichaeian outlook is measured by *You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics* (MAN1) and *The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed* (MAN2) items. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 stands for complete disagreement and 5 for complete agreement with the statement. But first it is necessary to see whether the data from both surveys corresponds to the assumed conceptualization of populism.

⁷ Of course, there are studies that have measured populism as a multidimensional construct. Of these, Stanley (2011) measured sub-components without operationalizing the scale altogether, while Oliver and Rahn (2016) treated populism with anti-elitism, national affiliation, and mistrust in experts, which does not correspond to the nucleus of the phenomenon. More recent scales developed by Schulz et al (2018), Mohrenberg, Huber, and Freyburg (2019) and Wettstein et al (2020) have not incorporated items that tap into the Manichaeian dimension which makes their instruments conceptually incomprehensive from ideational perspective.

⁸ The second item indicating the Manichaeian outlook in the original scale goes as *Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked*, which has the opposite direction from the item used here. That is, in the original scale this item is not negatively worded, while in this battery it is, which is the result of an error that occurred in translating the scale from English to Croatian.

Since this scale in this form is being tested for the first time in Croatia, exploratory factor analysis has been conducted for this purpose.⁹ Given that the items were taken from Castanho Silva et al scale which has, as said, a three-factor structure, the number of retained factors was fixed at 3. In addition, direct oblimin (oblique) rotation was used because the dimensions were expected to correlate with each other (Castanho Silva et al., 2019; s. Thompson, 2004: 42-44).

Table 1. Results of exploratory factor analysis

Items	2018			2020		
Dimensions	1	2	3	1	2	3
	(PC)	(MAN)	(AE)	(PC)	(MAN)	(AE)
PC1 Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people.	.865	-.152	-.002	.847	-.038	.002
PC2 The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics.	.843	.009	.027	.861	-.036	-.038
AE1 The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.	.407	.304	.660	.365	.153	.567
AE2 A few of the people running the government are crooked.	-.099	-.324	.792	-.143	-.140	.892
MAN1 You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics.	-.250	.813	.093	-.059	.861	.051
MAN2 The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed.	.102	.710	-.202	-.005	.806	-.100
Variance explained (%)	36.19	22.62	13.32	31.07	25.61	13.67
Eigenvalue	2.17	1.36	0.80	1.86	1.54	0.82

The EFA (exploratory factor analysis) results show quite similar values of factor loadings on dimensions for both surveys. For example, the level of loading of first-dimensional items is practically the same in both years. But what is most important is that most items have quite high loading values on the assumed dimensions (above 0.7 and 0.8). The only item whose loading is below this threshold is AE1 variable, although it still exhibits a strong factor loading (i.e., above 0.5, s. Costello and Osborne, 2005). In addition, this item is somewhat problematic because it also loads on other dimensions, albeit on a minimally accepted level. Nevertheless, the data shows how

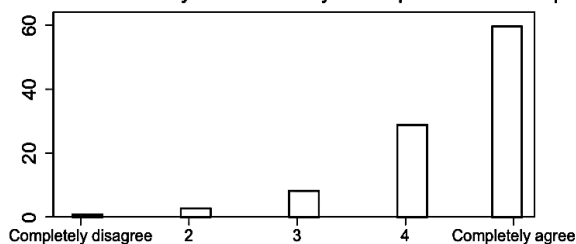
⁹ Scale by Castanho Silva and co-authors, among other countries, was developed on a sample from Croatia, but it was tested in a different form and the data was collected on a convenient student sample.

the items load well and identical on the proposed sub-components, thus indicating the assumed structure of the construct in both surveys.¹⁰ Therefore, it was decided to merge the data from both years into a single dataset.

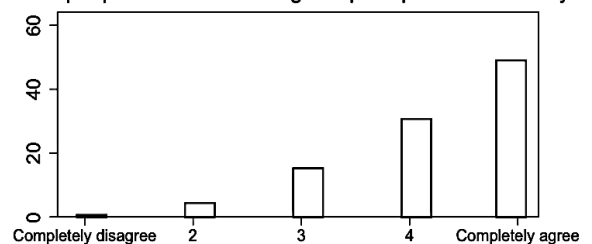
Since this is the first study to analyze populist dispositions at the individual level in Croatia, the distribution of each variable from merged dataset is shown in Figure 1 to gain a more detailed insight into the prevalence of populism.

Figure 1. Distribution of populism scale items

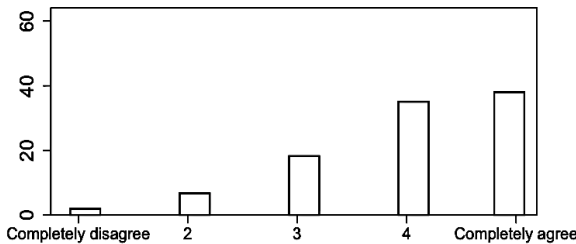
Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people.



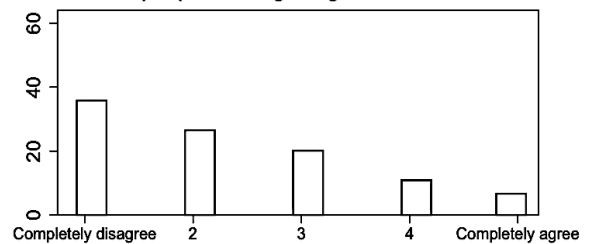
The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics.



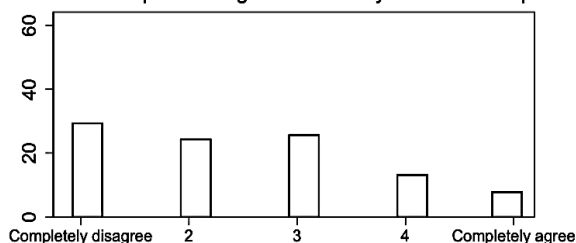
The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.



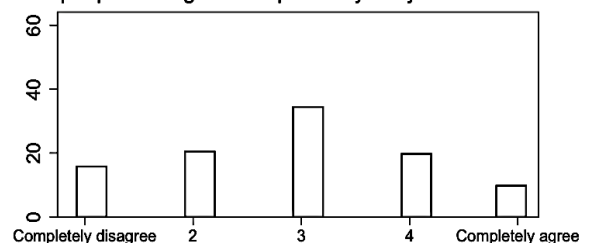
A few of the people running the government are crooked.



You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics.



The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed.



Distributions show that agreement with the people-centrism statements is highest, that is, between 70 and 80 percent of respondents mostly or completely agree that politicians should always listen

¹⁰ Furthermore, the percentages of explained variance are 72.13 and 70.35, respectively, which is relatively high for social science criteria (Hair et al., 2019: 142).

to people's problems and that the will of the people should be the highest principle in country politics ($\bar{x} = 4.44$ and 4.23). Also, it is evident that anti-elitist sentiment is prevalent among respondents, more precisely, most respondents agree with the statement that the government is run by big interests that look only for themselves ($\bar{x} = 4.00$). In addition, most respondents mainly disagree that only a few people in government are crooked, meaning that the anti-elitist stance is also confirmed on the distribution of responses of the negative worded item ($\bar{x} = 2.26$). This should come as no surprise, as other studies have shown that people-centrism and anti-elitism are the most prevalent dimensions of populist attitudes (Erisen et al., 2021; Huber, Fesenfeld and Bernauer, 2020; Kefford, Moffit and Werner, 2021; Galais and Rico, 2021). However, most of the same research shows that the Manichaeian outlook is the least prevalent dimension of populist attitudes among the public. The same is true for Croatia, where the agreement with the two items that measure this subcomponent is significantly lower than the average agreement with the first four statements. That is, a relative majority of respondents disagree with the essentialist claim that posits how people's morality can be judged based on their politics ($\bar{x} = 2.46$) while the distribution of answers on the sixth item is closest to the normal distribution, i.e., roughly the same segment of people (dis)agrees with the statement that people with whom they disagree are just misinformed ($\bar{x} = 2.87$). This explains why previous studies done in Croatia reported high levels of populism (Raos, 2020; Vuksan-Ćusa and Raos, 2021); as said, this research operationalized populism only as a mixture of people-centrism and anti-elitism, with items measuring the Manichaeian dimension being excluded from the analysis.

Nonetheless, to be able to use this battery as a dependent variable, it should be shown that the proposed model from the merged dataset fits the data, i.e., the robustness of the factor structure needs to be further tested. To meet this, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, with populism modeled as a second-order factor with three sub-components. Also, since this is a dimensionalized structure, items were allowed to load only on latent constructs (sub-components) that they are expected to measure (s. Schulz et al., 2018). However, the model designed in this way did not have a satisfactory fit. As shown in Table 2., majority of goodness-of-fit indicators are below recommended levels; CFI (comparative fit index) is 0.89 which is below the suggested point of 0.95, TLI (Tucker-Lewis index) is also lower than the recommended value ($0.72 < 0.90$) and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) is 0.125 which indicates misfit (Castanho Silva, Bosancianu and Littvay, 2020), i.e., its well above 0.06. Only SRMR (standardized root

mean square residual) value is satisfactory at 0.07, that is, it is below advocated cut-off value of 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis results (three-factor populism model)

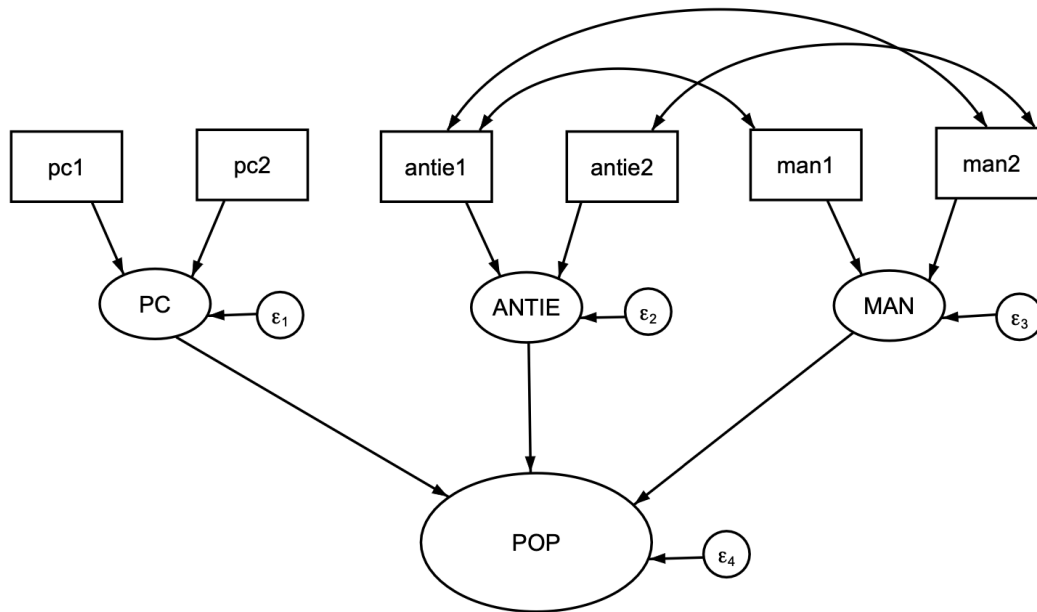
Component/Item	Baseline model	Modified model
<i>People-centrism</i>		
PC1	0.766	0.774
PC2	0.696	0.688
<i>Anti-elitism</i>		
AE1	0.568	0.710
AE2	0.414	0.331
<i>Manichaean outlook</i>		
MAN1	0.539	0.931
MAN2	0.668	0.386
Covariances		
AE1-MAN1	n/a.	1.948
AE1-MAN2	n/a.	0.263
AE2- MAN2	n/a.	-0.197
Fit indices		
χ^2	169.66 (0.000)	10.71 (0.013)
RMSEA	0.125	0.038
CFI	0.887	0.995
TLI	0.719	0.973
SRMR	0.066	0.012

This means that the initial model needs re-specification. This is probably because the items used, although taken from the scale developed by Castanho Silva et al (2019), do not correspond to it fully. Namely, the original scale has 9 items, and the shorter version has 6, with one positive worded and negative worded item on each factor, which is not reflected in the scale that is part of the *Croatian Election Studies* surveys. In addition, the fourth item (AE2), as noted in footnote 5,

was mistranslated when compiling the questionnaire. Therefore, for purposes of model specification, Modification Indices have been calculated; they show how much the overall fit of the model would increase if certain parameters were freely estimated, that is, this tells which path restrictions should be removed from the initial model (Kline, 2011). However, this maneuver is purely data-driven, which is why the theoretical and conceptual reasonableness of eventual modifications should be considered. The modification indices with the highest values (45,28 and 54) refer to the covariances between items AE1-MAN1, AE1-MAN2 and AE2-MAN2. This could be expected given that, as evident in Table 1, EFA results show that item AE1 marginally taps into Manichaeism outlook in 2018 survey. Moreover, covariances between the anti-elitist item and items of the Manichaeism dimension make sense from a theoretical perspective; item AE1 postulates that the government is run by few big interests looking out for themselves, which, through the pivotal prism of anti-elitism, expresses a Manichaeism struggle that transcends the governmental level. More precisely, this claim can be understood in a way that the government is also controlled by the unidentified interests of Evil, which reflects the wider Manichaeism cosmology. Although elites in populist worldview are identified with evil (Hawkins, 2009), this does not mean that these elites come from the government level or that government itself is not perceived to be controlled by major behind-the-scenes forces. When these adjustments are made, the fit of the model improves.¹¹ Now all the indices show an acceptable fit; RMSEA is 0.038 and SRMR is 0.012 while CFI and TLI have values of 1.00 and 0.97. Modified model is illustrated in Figure 2.

¹¹ Although these are different scales, the model used in the study by Spruyt, Rooduijn and Zaslove (2021) demonstrates a similar logic. In this paper, an item that more clearly indicates the Manichaeism dimension was added to the scale of Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014). To gain an acceptable fit, the authors had to adjust the model and allow covariance between the added Manichaeism item and one anti-elitist item.

Figure 2. Modified model

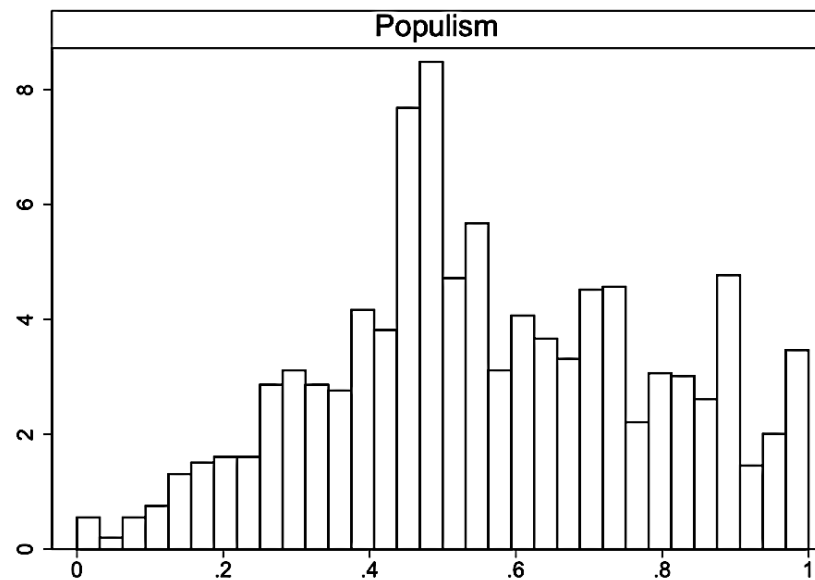


The final step in the construction of the dependent variable concerns the aggregation of the sub-components. To label someone as a populist, one needs to be a people-centrist, anti-elitist and Manichaeist at the same time. In a word, populism has a non-compensatory nature which should also be reflected in its operationalization (Wuttke, Schimpf and Schoen, 2020). Therefore, factor scores were taken for each sub-component after which the three results were rescaled from 0 to 1 and then multiplied (s. Castanho Silva et al. 2020; Erisen et al., 2021; Mohrenberg, Huber and Freyburg, 2019).¹² This ensures that only individuals with high scores on all three sub-components can obtain high scores on the final populism scale. The distribution of this scale is shown in Figure 3 below. From there it can be seen how the distribution of populism in Croatia is a bit skewed to the right and to some extent leptokurtic. Mean is 0.56, median 0.54 and mode 0.46, indicating that populism is present at the individual level, although it is not as prevalent as in other countries. Namely, as stated before, demand level populism studies have so far regularly reported high levels

¹² Distributions of factor scores can be seen in the Appendix (Figure 4.)

of populism practically wherever it has been researched.¹³ Norris and Inglehart (2019: 154) reported the same for Croatia, but, as said, they operationalized populism only as institutional distrust, which does not correspond to the above-mentioned studies that conceptualize populism as a multidimensional attitude. All in all, these results show that populism at the individual level in Croatia is noticeable, although, at least from a comparative perspective, it's not that widespread.

Figure 3. Distribution of dependent variable



6.2. Independent variables

To test the set hypotheses, the main explanatory variables are categorized into three groups that reflect the dominant theoretical explanations of populism at the individual level. The first category of variables refers to economic grievances, that is, indicators measuring education, household income, assets, unemployment, and sociotropic evaluation of the economy are included in analysis. Education was measured on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means that the respondent has not completed primary school and 7 stands for a completed master or doctoral level of study. Income was measured with the question on monthly household income in October of the corresponding year,

¹³ This “widespread hypothesis” (Van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azevedo, 2019) may be due to the high prevalence of populism in effect, but it may also be because most of the research tradition has not measured populism with scales that fully reflect its nature (Wuttke, Schimpf and Schoen, 2020)

where respondents were free to write response. As is often done, to reduce the effect of outlier values (Warner, 2013), the logarithmic value of this measure was used in the analysis. Assets is a composite measure created by taking the mean values of variables that ask whether a respondent has a house or flat, a property that can be rented, stocks or bonds, and savings. This measure has already been used as an indicator of the socio-economic position of the individual in Croatia (Henjak, 2017a). Unemployment is operationalized as a dummy variable (1-unemployed, 0-everything else), whilst the variable measuring sociotropic evaluation asks respondents whether the economic situation in the country has improved or deteriorated (on a 5-item scale where higher values indicate the perception of worsening). This item was added as an indicator of subjective perception, in contrast to previous measures that are impartial indicators of an individual's economic hardship.

The next category of variables refers to socio-cultural indicators. Authoritarianism is operationalized with the 5-item scale developed by Šiber (1998), which treats this concept as a one-dimensional syndrome characterized by a combination of submissiveness and conformism (Čular and Šalaj, 2019). More precisely, the scale measures agreement with the following statements: the opinion of the majority is always the best, more than laws and programs the state needs a couple of brave and dedicated people in whom the people can trust, one does not need to express one's own opinion because person never knows they may suffer from, authorities and powerful people should not be opposed, young people need strict discipline, dedication and willingness to work and to fight for family and homeland. Items that measure authoritarian submissiveness (2 and 5) are taken from the well-known F scale (Adorno et al., 1950, 230-231). Cronbach's α coefficient for this scale is 0.63 and the average inter-item correlation is 0.25 which is consistent with interpretations that state how the mean correlation of in-scale items should be above 0.15 or 0.2 (Clark and Watson, 1995; Briggs and Cheek, 1986).¹⁴ The attitude towards immigrants is operationalized using Bogardus' social distance scale (s. Wark and Galliher, 2007)

¹⁴ Although the value of the Cronbach's α coefficient is not at the recommended level of 0.7 or 0.8 (Nunnally, 1975; Corbetta, 2003; Hair et al., 2019), it should be borne in mind that there is no universal cut-off value when it comes to Cronbach's α coefficient (Hoekstra et al., 2019), that is, there are suggestions that note how coefficient above 0.5 can be considered reliable (Hinton et al., 2004: 364; Schmitt, 1996). Results of exploratory factor analysis for this scale can be seen in Appendix (Table 4.)

which measures what kind of social relationship one is willing to enter into with Muslims from the Middle East. The scale represents a continuum with 7 answers, where 1 labels the will for the closest type of interaction (kinship) and 7 indicates the greatest distance (ban on entering Croatia) towards members of the group. Extreme ideology is measured by the classical left-right scale in which 1 represents the left and 10 the right pole of the scale. The variable was recoded so that the extreme values (1 and 10) were given a value of 1 and other values were coded as 0. The anti-fascist political biography was operationalized by questioning the position of the respondent's family during World War II. This variable was recoded in such a way that 1 labels the anti-fascist position of the family and 0 marks all other categories of answers. The last indicator in this set of independent variables refers to the propensity for conspiracy theories. It was created by taking the mean of five Likert-type variables that measure agreement with claims such as: large pharmaceutical companies deliberately spread various diseases to increase drug sales, global elites seek to control population growth through genetically modified food, Jews manage major world events, the Illuminati significantly influence government decisions in many states, there is a secret organization that aims to destroy nation-states and impose a "New World Order".¹⁵ The first two items refer to the personal well-being sub-dimension of conspiratorial thinking that taps into concerns over individual health, and the remaining three ask about the malevolent global conspiracy component which relates to small groups controlling the course of events in the world (Brotherton, French and Pickering, 2013). This scale has Cronbach's α of 0.84 and the average inter-item correlation of in-scale items is 0.51.

The last category of variables refers to institutional and interpersonal trust as indicators of ideational theory (Castanho Silva, 2017). Institutional trust is created by taking the mean value of the respondent's answers on trust in the Government, Parliament, courts, and public administration where higher values indicate more trust. Cronbach's alpha of this battery of items is 0.85 and the average inter-item correlation is 0.59. Interpersonal trust is measured by the question of whether

¹⁵ These variables are originally part of a larger scale that is composed of 12 items. However, exploratory factor analysis showed a structure with two latent factors, the first of which has a higher Eigenvalue and explains a significantly higher share of variance (see Appendix, Table 5.). EFA shows that the first factor consists of 7 items; that is, of the five items listed in the text and two other (items 2 and 10). However, only the five above-mentioned items were retained because item 2 loads slightly higher on second dimension while the tenth item has 790 missing values (e.g., 40% of the sample).

most people can be trusted which, as an indicator of social capital, is one of the instruments present for decades in comparative research (Zmerli and Newton, 2008). This variable is dichotomous; 1 indicates the stance that most people can be trusted, whilst 0 stands for the opinion that one should be careful in dealing with other people. Finally, a group of control variables including gender, age, settlement size, and year when the survey was conducted were also added to the analysis. Descriptive statistics and structure of independent variables is shown in detail in Appendix (Tables 6., 7., and 8).

7. Results

Since the included variables relate to different perspectives, four separate linear regression models have been created that reflect this; Model 1 consists of variables that measure economic grievances, Model 2 of variables that cover socio-cultural backlash indicators, and Model 3 of ideational theory variables, with controls added in each model. This approach makes it possible to see how much each perspective contributes to the explanation of the variance of populism. Model 4 consists of all variables included, and ultimately tells which independent variables are most significant when controlled for measures of all perspectives involved. The results of linear regressions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlates of populist attitudes (OLS regressions)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender (1-female)	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.010)
Age	0.001 (0.000) *	0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000) **	-0.000 (0.000)
Settlement size	0.008 (0.004)	0.009 (0.004) *	0.003 (0.004)	0.010 (0.004) *
Survey year	0.036 (0.011)	0.026 (0.010) *	0.022 (0.010) *	0.017 (0.011)
	**			
<i>Economic grievances</i>				
Education	-0.007 (0.005)			-0.003 (0.005)
Income	-0.000 (0.009)			-0.001 (0.009)
Assets	-0.003 (0.006)			0.002 (0.006)
Unemployed	0.029 (0.019)			0.025 (0.019)
Sociotropic evaluation	0.016 (0.006)			0.010 (0.006)
	**			
<i>Socio-cultural backlash</i>				

Authoritarianism		0.060 (0.007) ***		0.063 (0.007) ***
Distance towards immigrants		-0.004 (0.003)		-0.005 (0.003)
Extreme ideology		0.046 (0.015) **		0.051 (0.016) ***
Anti-fascist political biography		0.045 (0.015) **		0.044 (0.015) **
Conspiratorial thinking		0.027 (0.005) ***		0.026 (0.006) ***
<i>Ideational approach</i>				
Trust in institutions			-0.031 (0.006) ***	-0.031 (0.006) ***
Interpersonal trust			-0.047 (0.013) ***	-0.041 (0.013) **
Constant	0.440 (0.052)	0.220 (0.034)	0.555 (0.027)	0.289 (0.066)
Observations	1,818	1,903	1,933	1,715
R squared	0.019	0.076	0.036	0.109
F statistic	3.94***	17.40***	11.87***	12.95***

Note: significance levels are .05*, .01**, .001***. Multicollinearity statistics are shown in Appendix (Table 9.)

The results of the first model of linear regression show that the perspective emphasizing economic grievances in explaining populism is not particularly relevant in Croatia. Namely, this model explains only 2 percent of the variance, which is in line with the findings showing the weak explanatory power of the economic vulnerability based approach (s. Margalit, 2019). No variable that measures the individual economic hardship is significant, indicating that populism is not a reaction of the losers of globalization or, to put it somewhat closer to the Croatian context, this shows how there is no indication that populism outlines the hitherto absent socio-economic cleavage. Dolenec (2012) argued how this absence is a sign of failure of representative democracy in Croatia in which parties do not mobilize existing economical grievances, but, as populism is a symptom of dysfunctions of representative democracies, this finding makes that explanation questionable. The only variable that is significant in this set is the one that measures sociotropic evaluation, showing how those who feel that the state of the economy has deteriorated in the past four years are more prone to populism. This shows that, in the context of the economic vulnerability of the individual, populism in Croatia is more a matter of holistic perception than personal hardship; it is more about general feeling than egotropic calculation. Therefore, the results of the first model confirmed hypotheses H1 and H1a. Furthermore, it should be noted that the control variable survey year has a statistically significant positive effect on populism, which indicates that populism in Croatia increased slightly from 2018 to 2020.

On the other hand, results show that model 2, which measures socio-cultural backlash, explains the higher percentage of variance in populist attitudes (around 8%), although this still remains in

the domain of relatively low explanatory strength. As expected, the variables that measure authoritarianism and propensity for conspiratorial thinking have a statistically significant positive effect on populist attitudes, meaning that higher values on these scales are associated with higher levels of populism. Given that authoritarianism and conspiratorial thinking are correlated among respondents in Croatia (Tonković et al., 2021), this nexus should certainly be further investigated. This is even more relevant in the context of the current pandemic which, as a period of increased uncertainty and unpredictability, is characterized by greater propensity for conspiracy theories (Douglas, 2021). However, in the context of comparative research on populism, more interesting is the finding of the association of ideological extremity and anti-fascist political biography with populism. Specifically, both variables are statistically significant, showing that self-positioning at ideological extremes and having an anti-fascist political biography are associated with higher levels of populism. This shows that populism should not be equated with populism of the radical right, as has often been the case so far, especially in the European context. In other words, when populism is treated as a distinctive set of predispositions, i.e., without blending it with concepts of radical right-wing ideological folklore, then its pure ideational potential appears (s. Carlin et al., 2019). Thus, populist heartland represents an open call - just because right-wing parties have exploited this potential more does not mean that populism is innate to that side of the ideological continuum. This is corroborated by the lack of a statistically significant association between anti-migrant attitudes and populism, as was expected. All things considered, although Taggart (2002: 70) spoke primarily about populist movements, the same seems to be true for the analysis of micro-level populism: "insofar as it [populism] is chameleonic, the study of populism needs to be aware of this as we study it". Moreover, these results show that the second set of hypotheses was also confirmed.

The results of Model 3 show that institutional and interpersonal trust are significantly related to populism, ergo, it is evident that higher levels of trust in institutions and other people are negatively associated with populism at the individual level. If we are to generalize, this implies that populism is the attitude of the distrustful in Croatia. Still, this in no way implies that mistrust causes populism. As Castanho Silva (2017) demonstrates, populism and mistrust are rather a manifesto of the same background factors of dissatisfaction that drive them. Unfortunately, the quest for finding these factors goes beyond the scope of this study and the type of research design used here; the contribution of this analysis is in providing a portrait of a populist citizen for the first time in

the case of Croatia, not in giving an answer to what causes the image in front of us to be as it is. In the same vein, one should not be too quick about generalizing these results as Model 3 explains only 4 percent of the variance in populist attitudes. Also, this model shows how age is significantly associated with populism, that is, results indicate that older people are more associated with populism.

The last model in which all variables were introduced confirmed the main findings and hypotheses, with the only notable difference being that the variable measuring sociotropic evaluation of the state of the economy is no longer significant. This means that hypothesis H1a is only partially confirmed in the end. Also, age is no longer statistically significant, meaning that sociocultural variables have a stronger association with populism than age. This can probably be explained by the fact that age is associated with populism, but at the same time older people in Croatia are also more authoritarian and more inclined to identify with anti-fascist historical biography (Vuksan-Ćusa and Raos, 2021), which are factors that are more related to populism than age itself.

On the whole, we can say that in Croatia there is no homogeneity in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of populist citizens. On the other hand, in terms of socio-cultural attitudes, it is shown that the variables that measure this type of backlash are significantly associated with micro-level populism, outlining a profile of somewhat more authoritarian, ideologically extreme, and prone to conspiracy theories as those citizens who are more associated with populism. As for the anti-fascist political biography, this result is probably an expression of the situational effect; since the center-right government was in power at the time of the surveys, it is possible that this is primarily a manifestation of opposition sentiment. Nevertheless, it still testifies that populism is a set of dispositions that are not inbred to any part of the ideological spectrum. In ideational terms, the profile of the populist citizen is also clear - the distrustful are more associated with populism.

8. Conclusion

This study set out to analyze, for the first time, populism in Croatia on an individual level. Since previous studies have focused exclusively on the demand side, this has emerged as a research vacuum to be filled. The study starts from the ideational approach and defines populism as a latent set of ideas consisting of three sub components: anti-elitism, people-centrism and Manichean outlook. Although most studies invoke the ideational tradition and enumerated elements, populism generally remains incomprehensibly conceptualized and measured. Thus, one of the study's contributions is that the operationalization of populism reflects background theory; although there are many studies out there on populism at the individual level, most cover only some of its elements (Van Hauwaert, Schimpf and Azevedo, 2019) and/or do not adequately treat its non-compensatory nature (Wuttke, Schimpf and Schoen, 2020). An even bigger mistake is that the phenomenon is often equated with a mixture of conceptual baggage of the radical right, whereby the characteristics of nativism, xenophobia and anti-immigration become features of populism, against which the findings of this paper testify. In addition, it turns out that, once the measuring instrument mirrors the internal structure of the concept, the hypothesis of the widespread prevalence of populism in the population may not be justified, at least in the context of Croatia. Future research should certainly go in the direction of analyzing the sub-components of populism as their distribution is relatively different; people-centrism is quite widespread, anti-elitism somewhat less, and the Manichean outlook is much less prevalent.

As far as Croatia is concerned, linear regressions show that populism is not linked to the profile of the economic losers of globalization, but with socio-cultural backlash and (dis)trust. However, when we talk about socio-cultural backlash, it should be borne in mind that this is a contextually shaped reaction; anti-immigration attitude is not relevant to populism at the individual level, while factors related to fundamental cleavage in society are. Research on populism often sacrifices contextual factors on the altar of affirming the profile of a universal populist citizen. Besides, populism has been shown to be associated with ideological extremism, suggesting that populism is a feast that feeds individuals on both ends. However, the common findings on the association of populism with authoritarianism and conspiratorial thinking have been confirmed - Croatia is no exception in this regard. In that sense, along with findings on trust, the study confirmed common findings in populism studies. In doing so, the study contributes by providing a reference point for future research on populist attitudes in Croatia. This means that the analysis of populism here is

no longer doomed to the framework of daily political comments, ad hoc analyzes and media headlines.

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10. Appendix

Figure 4. Distribution of factor scores of sub-components of populism

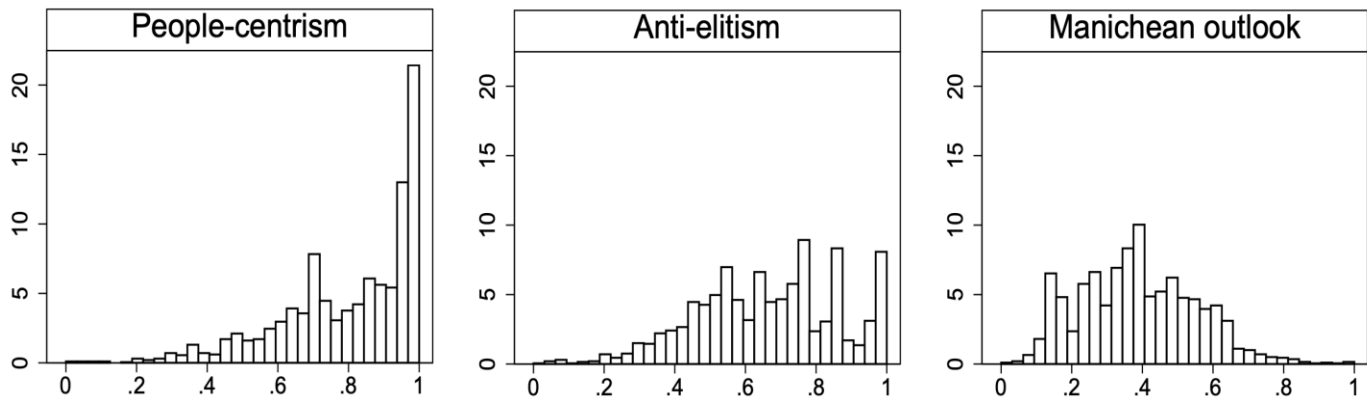


Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis of authoritarianism scale

Items/Dimension	1
The opinion of the majority is always the best.	0.577
More than laws and programs the state needs a couple of brave and dedicated people in whom the people can trust.	0.485
One does not need to express one's own opinion because person never knows they may suffer from.	0.704
Authorities and powerful people should not be opposed.	0.733
Young people need strict discipline, dedication and willingness to work and to fight for family and homeland.	0.651
Variance explained (%)	40.5
Eigenvalue	2.03

Table 5. Exploratory factor analysis of conspiratorial thinking scale

Items/Dimensions	1	2	N (missing values)
It is hidden from the public that vaccines are harmful to health.	0.445	<u>0.460</u>	180
Large pharmaceutical companies are deliberately spreading various diseases to increase drug sales.	0.728	0.224	145
Global elites seek to control population growth on Earth through genetically modified food (GMO) that shortens human life.	0.591	0.403	292
Global warming is a fabrication of corrupt scientists who want to continue spending public money on their research.	0.143	0.728	177
The white stripes on the net that remain behind the plane are actually chemicals used to perform experiments on humans.	0.252	0.735	340
Anyone who has a computer connected to the Internet is constantly monitored	0.389	0.489	235
Jews manage the world's most important events.	0.740	0.182	370
Masons and Illuminati have long significantly influenced government decisions in many states.	0.820	0.145	394
There is a secret organization in the world that aims to destroy nation-states and impose a "New World Order".	0.753	0.319	465
George Soros, through funded organizations, only spies and undermines the states in which he operates.	0.669	0.373	<u>790</u>
Demolition of the World Trade Center in New York 11.9.2001. organized by the U.S. Secret Service.	0.286	0.645	496
Evidence of contact with aliens is hidden from the public.	0.165	0.650	380
Variance explained (%)	45.14	9.21	Total N=1993
Eigenvalue	5.42	1.11	

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of non-dichotomous independent variables

Predictors	Min	Max	N	M	SD	0,25	0,75
Age	18	99	1993	46,98	16,93	32,00	61,00
Settlement size	1	4	1993	2,41	1,24	1,00	4,00
Education	1	7	1989	4,00	1,21	2,00	4,00
Household income	1	250000	1773	9722,36	14948,26	5000	11000
Assets	0	4	1993	1,46	0,90	1,00	2,00
Sociotropic evaluations	1	5	1958	3,21	0,90	3,00	4,00
Dis. towards immigrants	1	7	1993	5,34	1,83	4,00	7,00
Authoritarianism	1	5	1983	3,30	0,78	2,80	3,80
Conspiratorial thinking	1	5	1905	3,43	0,97	3,00	4,00
Institutional trust	1	5	1980	2,20	0,89	1,50	2,75

Table 7. Contingency table of dichotomous predictors

Gender		Year		Unemployed		Extreme ideology		Antifa pol. biography		Interp. trust	
1(F)	0(M)	2018	2020	Yes	Other	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
53%	47%	51%	49%	9%	91%	13%	87%	14%	86%	20%	80%

Table 8. Structure of independent variables

Variables	Items
Gender	<i>Your gender?</i> Male (1) Female (2)
Age	<i>How old are you?</i>
Settlement size	<i>What is the size of your settlement?</i> Up to 2000 inhabitants (1) From 2001 to 10000 inhabitants (2) From 10001 to 100000 inhabitants (3) Over 100,000 inhabitants (4)

Education	<p><i>Your school education?</i></p> <p>Unfinished primary school (1)</p> <p>Elementary school (2)</p> <p>Craft, three-year vocational school (3)</p> <p>Four-year high school (4)</p> <p>Higher school (5)</p> <p>Faculty (BA) (6)</p> <p>Master, PhD (7)</p>
Income	<p><i>Please indicate the total monthly income of your household in October this year</i></p> <p><i>(INCLUDE ALL SOURCES OF INCOME OF ALL MEMBERS)</i></p>
Assets	<p><i>Do you or anyone in your household own any of the above?</i></p> <p>House or flat (1)</p> <p>Business place, apartment for rent, agricultural property (2)</p> <p>Stocks or bonds (3)</p> <p>Savings (4)</p>
Unemployed	<p><i>Your employment status?</i></p> <p>Permanently employed indefinitely (1)</p> <p>Permanently employed (2)</p> <p>Part-time staff (3)</p> <p>Self-employed (4)</p> <p>Pensioner (5)</p> <p>Unemployed (lost his job) (6)</p> <p>Unemployed (not yet employed) (7)</p> <p>Housewife (8)</p> <p>Student (9)</p>
Sociotropic evaluation of economy	<p><i>Generally speaking, has the economic situation in Croatia improved, got worse or remained the same compared to 4 years ago?</i></p> <p>It improved greatly (1)</p> <p>It improved somewhat (2)</p> <p>It remained the same (3)</p> <p>It got a little worse (4)</p> <p>It got much worse (5)</p>
Authoritarianism	<p><i>Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the statements</i></p> <p>(1- I do not agree at all, 5- I completely agree)</p> <p>The opinion of the majority is always the best.</p>

<p>What this country need more than laws and political programs are a few brave and determined people in whom the people can trust</p> <p>One should not express one's own opinion, because one never knows what person may suffer from.</p> <p>Authorities and powerful people should not be opposed.</p> <p>What young people need most is strict discipline, determination, and the will to work and fight for family and homeland.</p>	
Cronbach's α (mean r)	0.63 (0.25)
Distance towards immigrants	<p><i>For different reasons, members of various nations come into mutual relations. Please choose from the relationships listen in the table the closest type of bond you would be willing to accept with member of each of the following groups.</i></p> <p><i>(Muslim immigrants from the Middle East)</i></p> <p>To enter a kinship (1)</p> <p>To be friends (2)</p> <p>To be neighbors (3)</p> <p>To work together (4)</p> <p>To live permanently in Croatia (5)</p> <p>To temporarily reside in Croatia (6)</p> <p>Ban them from coming to Croatia (7)</p>
Extreme ideology	<p><i>When talking about politics, the terms "left" and "right" are usually used. Where would you place yourself on that scale?</i></p> <p>1- Far left, 10- Far right</p>
Anti-fascist political biography	<p><i>How would you rate your family's predominant position during World War II?</i></p> <p>They acted within the anti-fascist partisan movement (1)</p> <p>They acted in the Ustasha units of the NDH (2)</p> <p>They acted in the Home Guard units of the NDH (3)</p> <p>They acted on several military-political parties (4)</p> <p>They were outside the conflicting parties (5)</p>
Conspiratorial thinking	<p><i>The following is a series of statements describing some controversial events and happenings on a global scale. How much do you agree or disagree with the interpretations presented?</i></p> <p>(1 - I do not agree at all, 5- I completely agree)</p> <p>Large pharmaceutical companies are deliberately spreading various diseases to increase drug sales.</p>

<p>The global elite seeks to control population growth on earth through genetically modified food that shortens life.</p> <p>Jews manage the world's most important events.</p> <p>Masons and Illuminati have long influenced government decisions in many states.</p> <p>There is a secret organization in the world that aims to destroy nation-states and impose a "New World Order".</p>	
Cronbach's α (mean r)	0.84 (0.51)
Trust in institutions	<p><i>Please rate your confidence in each of the listed political and social institutions on a scale of 1 (no trust) to 5 (complete trust).</i></p> <p>Parliament, Government, Judiciary, Public administration</p>
Cronbach's α (mean r)	0.85 (0.59)
Interpersonal trust	<p>In general, are you saying that most people can be trusted, or do you think that you should be careful with other people?</p> <p>Most people can be trusted (1)</p> <p>You must be careful when dealing with other people (2)</p>

Table 9. Multicollinearity statistics (VIF)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender (1-female)	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.02
Age	1.12	1.11	1.01	1.21
Settlement size	1.04	1.02	1.01	1.06
Survey year	1.06	1.03	1.05	1.13
<i>Economy</i>				
Education	1.19			1.23
Income	1.12			1.14
Assets	1.08			1.14
Unemployed	1.03			1.03
Sociotropic evaluation	1.02			1.11
<i>Socio-cultural</i>				
Authoritarianism		1.17		1.21
Distance towards immigrants		1.14		1.19
Extreme ideology		1.03		1.05
Anti-fascist political biography		1.07		1.10
Conspiratorial thinking		1.06		1.08
<i>Ideational</i>				

Trust in institutions	1.05	1.20
Interpersonal trust	1.08	1.10