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A revolt of the distrustful? Political trust, political protest and the democratic deficit

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A Revolt of the Distrustful? Political Trust, Political Protest and the Democratic Deficit

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Abstract

A Revolt of the Distrustful? Political Trust, Political Protest and the Democratic Deficit

by Edgar Grande and Daniel Saldivia Gonzatti

During recent crises in Europe, new heterogeneous protest movements have emerged that are difficult to label and classify. Existing studies suggest that the common denominator of these protesters is primarily the lack of political trust. Therefore, these new protest movements offer favorable conditions for investigating the relationship between political trust and protest, and the consequences of political distrust for the stability of democracy. Do these protests represent a revolt of the distrustful which intensifies the frequently invoked crisis of democracy? Our study answers this question by focusing on two recent protest movements, the COVID-19 protest and the so-called 'energy protest', which have been an important part of the German protest landscape in recent years. Based on new survey data, our results reveal a considerable lack of trust in the core institutions of representative democracy in Germany and that political distrust increases the readiness for protest and the acceptance of political violence. The consequences of distrust for democracy are ambiguous, however. The distrustful citizens are strong supporters of direct democracy but hold illiberal and restrictive attitudes towards minorities and migrants. Hence, there are good reasons to be distrustful towards the distrustful citizens on the streets.

Keywords: protest, political trust, political violence, democratic deficit, social movements

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I. Introduction

The starting point of our study is the recent protest movements that have emerged during the long decade of multiple crises in Europe. Both the overall picture of the ‘new new social movements’ (Cammaerts, 2021), as well as specific protest movements, such as the Gilets Jaunes in France or the protest against governmental containment measures during the COVID-19 pandemic in a large number of European countries (Kriesi & Oana, 2023; Borbáth et al. 2021), exhibit significant heterogeneity (Daphi et al., 2023). This applies to the protest topics, the political orientation of participants, the organization of protest, and the social composition of movements. Consequently, categorizing these protests into conventional labels of ‘left’ and ‘right’, ‘progressive’ and ‘regressive’ proves challenging. The various crises have not only strengthened progressive protest movements that combine the fight for social justice with the defence of political freedom (della Porta, 2022). At the same time, regressive movements have also emerged, characterized by conspiracy theories, anti-democratic sentiments, and demands for the exclusion of social minorities (della Porta, 2023). Existing studies, including those on the COVID-19 protest (Grande et al., 2021), suggest that the common denominator of this protest, alongside the significant role of social media and their discontinuity, is primarily the lack of political trust. Not the least, these accounts suggest that the new protest movements are a revolt of distrustful citizens.

The political significance of these new protest movements is a matter of debate, however. For many, this protest is another symptom of the decline in political trust in Western democracies and of the pervasive ‘crisis of democracy’. Amlinger and Nachtwey (2023), for example, argue that the ‘anti-democratic’ nature is precisely the characteristic of the ‘libertarian authoritarianism’ of the new protest movements in Germany. Della Porta (2022, p. 4), in her analysis of the protest movements during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizes their progressive side, however, as they focused not only on legitimate social concerns such as housing, income, and

education but also on deepening democracy, demands for participation, and opposition to repression.

All this suggests that the recent protest movements in Europe are not only an interesting object of study for social movement scholars. They also allow examining the consequences of the much-lamented decline in political trust in Western democracies. What are the political consequences of political distrust? Does it lead to greater willingness to protest and a greater tolerance for political violence? And what are the effects of distrust on the stability of democracy? Is this distrust in political institutions an expression of progressive reform potential, as optimistic assessments of ‘critical citizens’ assume (e.g., Norris, 1999, 2011) or a symptom of regressive democratic decline?

With our article, we want to make an empirical contribution to answering these questions on the basis of new survey data. Our study focuses on two very recent protest movements in Germany, the COVID-19 protest and the so-called ‘energy protest’, which have been an important part of the German protest landscape in recent years. The empirical analysis is carried out in four steps. In the first step, we determine the current extent of the political trust deficit in Germany. We show that there is a sizeable group of citizens who distrust the core institutions of representative democracy, namely government and parliament. In the second step, we examine the effects of the lack of political trust on the willingness to protest and the acceptance of political violence. In the third step, we examine in detail the socio-demographic characteristics and political orientations of distrustful citizens; and in last step, we analyse consequences of the trust deficit for the existing representative democracy. Our findings suggest that low trust in government and parliament does not mean a fundamental rejection of democracy. On the contrary, the group of distrustful citizens is in favour of a deepening of democracy through the introduction of direct-democratic participation opportunities, rather than its replacement by a non-democratic political system. However, a nuanced analysis of their

political attitudes reveals that they combine calls for ‘more democracy’ and restrictive views on immigration and minority issues.

II. State of Research and Theory

The extensive literature on political trust does not provide a uniform and clear picture of the causes and consequences of the frequently stated decline in trust (for summaries see Levy & Stoker, 2000; and van der Meer, 2017). One focus of political science research is the measurement of attitudes towards trust in political institutions in particular and towards satisfaction with democracy in general (for Germany, most recently Best et al., 2023; Decker et al., 2022; Zick et al., 2023). This research has been confronted with several problems, however, two of which are of particular importance in our context (see van der Meer, 2017).

On the one hand, it is stated that it has not yet been possible to convincingly establish a causal connection between political attitudes and political behaviour. Whether a low level of political trust actually has consequences for political action, be it in elections or in protests, has still not been sufficiently clarified empirically. In the case of political protest, Dalton (2004, pp. 173-177) found that low-trusting citizens are more likely to endorse direct political action. This has been supported by several studies. Hooghe and Marien (2013, p. 131) show that while political trust is positively associated with institutionalised participation, it is negatively associated with non-institutionalised participation. Braun and Hutter (2016) demonstrate with a multi-level analysis of 22 European democracies that citizens who distrust representative institutions are more likely to engage in extra-representational participation. However, van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2018), analysing data on about 9,000 demonstrators spread over seven European countries, find that demonstrators’ trust in their parliaments varies widely and that they also differ considerably in terms of motivation. Among others, they show

that ‘distrusting demonstrators are stronger motivated to demonstrate than trusting.’ (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2018, p. 775). Daphi et al. (2023, p. 440), in their analysis of German protest on the basis of protest surveys collected between 2003 and 2020, identified ‘two clusters of demonstrations, differing most prominently regarding participants’ political trust, satisfaction with democracy, and perceptions of self-efficacy’ – what they call the ‘disenchanted critics’ with low trust and the ‘confident critics’ with high trust. Summing up, in his review of the extensive research literature, van der Meer (2017, p. 1, p. 20) stated: ‘While scholars have made great headway in understanding the sources of political trust [...] knowledge about its consequences has remained remarkably scarce’. He concluded that ‘the biggest gaps in our knowledge are about the institutional and behavioral consequences of political trust. Whether and how political trust crises affect the stability and quality of democracy remains, 40 years after the report for the Trilateral Committee, an open empirical question’.

This is related to a second problem of research on trust, namely the ambiguity of political distrust. In large parts of trust research, a lack of trust is equated with distrust and has negative connotations. Lenard (2008) distinguishes ‘distrust’ from ‘mistrust’ and argues that ‘distrust is inimical to democracy’. Consequently, we are ‘right to worry about widespread reports of trust’s decline’. In a similar vein, Bertou (2019, p. 213), concludes ‘that citizen distrust of government and political institutions poses a threat for democratic politics’. However, there are strong counter-arguments challenging this dominant view. As Rosanvallon (2008) emphasizes, distrust (‘defiance’) toward political authority is an indispensable resource in democracies. He distinguishes between ‘liberal’ and ‘democratic’ distrust. Liberal distrust pertains to skepticism in state authority in general; while democratic distrust refers to the effectiveness of

political institutions and the control mechanisms established in modern democracies to oversee political authority. Consequently, ‘healthy skepticism’ towards state authority is indispensable even in modern democracies (Mishler & Rose, 1997).

In this context, following Inglehart's work on post-materialist value change (Inglehart, 1977; 1990; 2008), a strand of research has emerged that links the development of political trust in Western democracies with the rise of the so-called ‘critical citizen’ (see in particular the work of Norris, 1999; 2011; cf. also Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995). The ‘critical citizen’ combines skepticism and distance towards political authorities and institutions with strong support for democratic values. At the core of his criticism is the ‘democratic deficit’ in Western democracies, i.e. the gap between the democratic ideal and the actual performance of democracy in his own country (Norris, 2011, p. 5). For authors such as Norris (2011, 2022), della Porta (2013, 2020) and Rosanvallon (2008), it is precisely this ‘critical citizen’ who is the key actor for a progressive advancement of democracy.

Against this background, van der Meer (2017, p. 19) concludes ‘that lack of trust in political authorities and institutions need not be detrimental to democracy. Rather, mistrust may well be inherent to vibrant democratic societies, as long as it takes the shape of vigilant skepticism rather than numbing cynicism’. However, this can by no means be taken for granted. Following Norris et al. (2005), Christensen (2016) identifies three distinct types of political dissatisfaction. Among them are the ‘disenchanted citizens’ who combine low political support with low subjective empowerment; and he concludes that ‘this type of political dissatisfaction is the most serious threat because it can erode democratic legitimacy’ (Christensen, 2016, p. 5). For Amlinger and Nachtwey (2023, p. 321, p. 338), the main protagonists of the new protest movements are ‘regressive rebels’ who ‘tend to be dominated by destructiveness and cynicism’ rather than by constructive scepticism.

In the light of this debate, we ask: How does the lack of political trust associated with the current protest movements in Germany fit into this research context? Are they a symptom of the decline of democracy or do they reveal forms of a progressive ‘counter-democracy’, as envisioned by Rosanvallon (2008)?

In answering these questions, two further strands of research must be taken into account: research on the significance of contextual factors for political behaviour and political trust on the one hand; and current research on the political consequences of ‘multiple crises’, from the global financial crisis of 2008 to the consequences of the war in Ukraine, on the other (cf. e.g. Kriesi et al., 2020; della Porta, 2022).

Prior research has demonstrated that the relationship between political trust and political behaviour is decisively influenced by a myriad of contextual factors. This research has been particularly interested in political and institutional context factors, not least the political opportunity structures for political protest. Vrábliková (2014) showed that the willingness to engage in non-electoral participation is generally higher in decentralized political systems with more competitive veto points. Braun and Hutter (2016) found that the cultural and institutional openness of political systems significantly influences whether low political trust actually leads to an increased readiness for protest.

A second research strand in this context examines the political consequences of crises, that is, of disruptive changes in societies. Crises and the state measures taken to address them can have diverse effects on political trust and the readiness for political protest (della Porta, 2022), ranging from solidarity with the national government to political polarization and a loss of trust in the case of ‘state failure’ (Kritzinger et al. 2021). Thus, crises are another important intervening variable in the already complex relationship between political attitudes, political trust, and political behaviour.

III. Research Design, Data and Methods

Comparative Research Design: Two German Protest Movements in 2022 and 2023

As our review of the scholarly literature and the state of the art suggests, studying the consequences of low levels of political trust on political behaviour is very challenging. In previous research scholars mainly relied on large N research designs in order to control for the large number of variables which could possibly play a role. In this study, we follow a different research strategy by combining a single country case study with a small comparative analysis. We compare two different crises and protest movements in one country, namely Germany, that are very close in time. More specifically, we study two protest movements in two different crisis contexts, the COVID-19 protests, which started in 2020 and had a final peak in the Winter 2021/2022, and the ‘energy protests’, which emerged in 2022 as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. This research design allows (1) for studying protest in a country which offers favourable conditions for political protest; (2) for controlling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; while (3) keeping as many other contextual factors as possible constant.

Germany can be considered a critical case for studying the consequences of political distrust for several reasons. First, Germany is among the North-West European countries whose political systems have benefitted from relatively high levels of political trust and political satisfaction and a strong civil society in the last two decades when compared to other European democracies (Enste & Suling, 2020; Kriesi, Häusermann & Lorenzini, 2020, pp. 17ff.), even if satisfaction with democracy has been declining since the mid-2010s (Decker et al. 2019). In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, survey data show a similar ‘rally around the flag effect’ as Kritzinger et al. (2021) observe in Austria). The average level of trust in the Federal government was exceptionally high in 2020; in the following years however, it has been steadily decreasing (see *Figure 5* in the Appendix). Second, the German protest arena has

been very volatile since the foundation of the Federal Republic, always allowing new thematic claims and social movements to enter the protest arena. The 2000s have been characterized by a great variety of issues and the co-existence of two different types of protest movements, characterized by different levels of political trust (Daphi et al., 2023; Hutter et al., 2023).

For these reasons, we selected two different crisis contexts to study how political trust is related to political protest. Our analysis is based on two surveys, which, while closely timed (02/2022 and 12/2022-01/2023), capture two entirely different protest movements that emerged from two very different crisis situations: the COVID-19 pandemic on the one hand and the Russian war on Ukraine on the other. Both crises have triggered protest movements, albeit with different mobilization strategies and strengths (see Hutter et al., 2023). Following Cammaerts (2021), both protest movements can be categorized as ‘new new social movements’.

Our first case is the COVID-19 protest, initially a critique of containment measures during the early stages of the pandemic which evolved into a broader anti-systemic mobilization, targeting the political elites and the political system altogether. The COVID-19 mobilisation peaked in the winter 2021/2022 (during our first survey field phase) with many informal walk-arounds (‘Spaziergänge’) due to containment protest restrictions, when an intense political conflict over the introduction of compulsory vaccination was taking place. Our second case is the so-called ‘energy crisis’ in winter 2022/2023. By contrast to the ‘Corona crisis’, the energy protests comprehended a broad mix of issues with conflicts over rising prices (in particular for oil and gas) as a consequence of the Russian war in Ukraine and the Western economic sanctions against Russia.

Moreover, although the pandemic began in the final phase of the Merkel government formed by CDU/CSU and SPD, our two surveys – from February 2022 and December 2022 – both

fall within the term of the newly elected ‘Ampel coalition’ formed by SPD, the Green Party and the liberal FDP (in government since December 2021). Hence, differences between the two crises cannot be attributed to variations in the political composition of government. As both surveys were conducted in the first year of the ‘Ampel coalition’, our results on political trust cannot be seen as an expression of the subsequent loss of political support of the Scholz government either. In short, in methodological terms, we benefit from a within-country and within-government comparison in which many characteristics are hold constant across the two crisis contexts.

Data and Methods

To study the micro-level relationship between political trust and the different dimensions of political behaviour, we make use of two cross-sectional survey studies conducted in Germany in February and December 2022 ($N_1 = 2,035$; $N_2 = 2,818$; $N_{TOTAL} = 4,853$). The surveys were conducted by a survey company [anonymous] using an online access panel. The sampling strategy was based on census quotas on gender, age groups, and educational levels. The survey questionnaire included further question items on social cohesion, political participation, and the role of political parties in Germany.¹

In these surveys, political trust is measured through the survey item ‘We are interested in how much personal trust you have in each of the following public institutions, organizations, or groups. How much do you trust the Federal government?’.² The respondents were not presented a few predefined response alternatives (e.g., ‘very high’, ‘high’, ‘low’, ‘none at all’); rather, they had the opportunity to respond in a nuanced manner using an 11-point scale. This

¹ The survey studies were ethically approved by the IRB at our institution, the WZB Ethics Committee: approval numbers 2022-1-139 and 2022-11-186.

² Appendix A.1 shows a more detailed description of the survey items, their operationalisation and some additional descriptive statistics.

approach allows us to identify the group of distrustful citizens, i.e., those who have no political trust (equalling 1 in the item scale), more precisely than in other studies. We use the same formulation to ask for political trust in other public institutions, the national parliament in particular.

To study the behavioural consequences of political trust, we are interested in how trust in government determines sympathy with protest as well as the willingness to participate in such protest. The survey question on sympathy asked ‘How much sympathy do you have for the people who participated in demonstrations against the government's COVID-19 measures (‘rising energy and living costs’, respectively)?’ To capture willingness to participate in such protests we asked ‘Would you participate in a demonstration against the government's COVID-19 measures (‘against rising energy and living costs’, respectively) if one were organized in your vicinity?’. To measure acceptance of violence, two item questions asked the approval of the statements ‘I am quite willing to use physical violence in certain situations to assert my interests’ and ‘I would never use violence myself. But it's good that there are people who let their fists do the talking when there's no other way forward’ using a 7-likert scale. We created an average index of both items.

We make use of the following established sets of variables to study the socio-demographic determinants of political trust: *gender*, which is operationalised as a dummy-variable for female and diverse respondents; *age* as a continuous variable as well as its second polynomial for non-linear trends; *education* level covering low (benchmark), middle, and high education as a categorical variable; *current economic situation of the respondents* as a 5-point scale, with the lowest value indicating a ‘very bad’ and the highest value indicating ‘very good’; and two dummies for individuals *with children* (= 1) and *living in Eastern Germany* (= 1).

Furthermore, we analyse the political positions and ideological dispositions in a nuanced way by using three different measures. First, the respondents’ ideological position is captured

through a standard 11-point scale question on left-right self-positioning. Second, we aim at positioning the respondents' ideological profiles in the two-dimensional political space identified by Kriesi et al. (2008, 2012) in North-West European countries. For this purpose, we make use of three preference items, which represent those issues which are constitutive for the two dimensions of political conflict, the cultural-identitarian and the socio-economic dimension. The 'cultural-identitarian' cleavage is covered by two issues, namely (limiting) 'immigration' and 'new cultural liberalism' (more specifically, the approval of homosexual life and lifestyle); the 'socio-economic' cleavage is captured by the issue of 'economic liberalism', which refers to limiting the intervening role of the state in the national economy (for an exact wording of the questions see the Appendix A.1). Third, we use the respondents' party vote intention for the six parties represented in the national parliament to relate the respondents' ideological dispositions to established political parties and to their electoral behaviour.

Finally, we use three indicators to examine how trust relates to democracy: political deprivation, preferences for direct democracy, and satisfaction with democracy. Political deprivation is measured through an average scale using three items that ask survey respondents on the agreement level with the statements: 'People like me don't have any influence on what the government does anyway'; 'My rights only exist on paper'; and 'I feel powerless in dealing with authorities' (7-point scale each). We capture preferences for direct democracy by the approval to the statement 'Citizens should be able to initiate a binding national referendum at the federal level' (7-point scale); and we use the answer to the question 'Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy functions in Germany?' (7-point scale) to measure individual's satisfaction with democracy.

We analyse the survey data by employing a two-fold strategy: partly we present descriptive statistics and partly regression analyses. We illustrate many of the different analyses by presenting absolute differences of the *distrustful* group of individuals (no trust) compared with

two other groups with low trust and high trust. These three groups were formed on the basis of the following values on our political trust scale: the distrustful group (no trust) = 1; the 'low trust' group = 2-6; and the 'high trust' group = 7-11. For regression analyses on continuous variables, we implement an OLS specification and present predicted values of political trust based on different independent variables. When examining the determinants of reported protest behaviour, we implement logit regressions, as previous protest scholars have done (Rüdiger & Karyotis, 2014). In these cases, we present predicted probabilities.

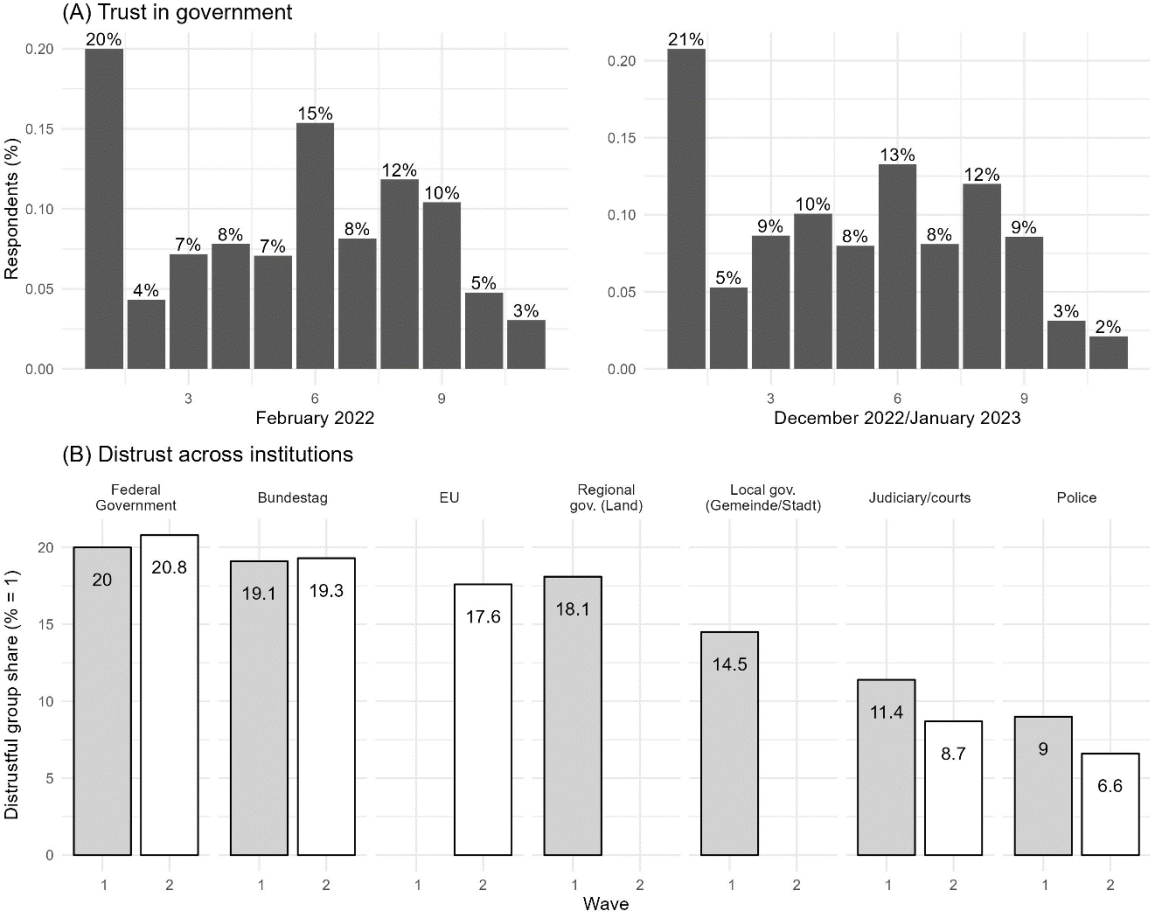
IV. Empirical Results

The Size of the Trust Deficit

Is there a deficit in political trust in Germany? The comparative survey data available suggests that political trust in Germany is rather high, although it has been declining in recent years. In the following, we show descriptive data on trust in government, in parliament, and in other public institutions from our own surveys.

Figure 1 (Panel A) shows the distribution of trust in government in the two crises on a 11-point scale. Our data reveals a very peculiar and unexpected distribution of respondents. We find the by far largest group not in the centre but at the extreme end of the spectrum. These are what we call in the following the *distrustful citizens*, i.e. those who have no trust at all in the Federal government. During the two crises, 20 percent (Corona) and 21 percent (energy) of the respondents have no confidence in government (=1). When including those with very low trust (≤ 2), the percentage of respondents lacking political trust even rises to 25 percent and 26 percent, respectively. These figures are clear evidence that there is a sizable group of ‘distrustful citizens’ in Germany. They also indicate that average values for the entire population systematically underestimate the trust deficit within the German political system (see *Table 5* in the Appendix A.2). The comparison of both crises shows an almost identical pattern of distribution. In both cases, a group of respondents with no trust of more or less the same size stands out. This supports our assumption that our study includes two protest movements which both mobilize ‘disenchanted citizens’ (Daphi et al., 2023).

Figure 1: Trust in the German government and across institutions during two crises, 2022 and 2023



Note: Panel B shows the share of ‘no trust’ respondents, namely respondents indicating the lowest level of trust in the item-scale (= 1). The scales encompass values from 1 to 11. Table 5 in the Appendix A.2 includes size groups, means and, additionally, trust in media and political parties.

A comparison with trust in the national parliament (‘Bundestag’) reveals a very similar pattern (Figure 1, Panel B). Although distrust in parliament is slightly lower than in government, the difference is very small, and the distribution of trust levels is virtually the same as for trust in government (see Figure 4 in Appendix A.2). In both crises, 19 percent of the respondents have no trust at all in the national parliament. Apparently, the lack of political trust affects the

two core institutions of representative democracy, parliament and government, to the same extent.

Both comparisons are instructive. On the one hand, they confirm our presumption that the current trust deficit is not a direct consequence of the ‘Corona crisis’ and would disappear after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, trust in the national parliament, a multi-partisan institution, remains consistently at similar levels over time as trust in the government. This suggests that the lack of political trust is not primarily dependent on ideological, i.e., partisan factors, as both institutions are shaped by party politics in distinctly different ways.³ Not the least, the comparison with trust levels in 2020 and 2021 (see *Figures 5 and 6* in the Appendix A.2) reveals that the trust deficit cannot be attributed to the change in government in December 2021 either. In the course of the pandemic, the Merkel government suffered from a massive decline in trust already. During the first half of 2021, in the last months of the CDU/CSU-SPD government led by Merkel, we find similar values as in 2022: 18.5 percent of the respondents expressed no trust in government. Whether it pertains to government measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic or to energy policy, whether the object of distrust is government or parliament, whether the government is led by the SPD or the CDU, there is a distinct and sizeable group of citizens with extremely negative attitudes, while the rest of the respondents exhibit a normal distribution across the scale.

Our analysis also indicates that citizens have lost trust in *political* institutions more generally. Both the EU and regional governments have similar distrust levels among the citizenry (*Figure 1*, Panel B). The fact that distrust in other levels of government is only marginally lower than that of the Federal government (and the national parliament) supports our assumption

³ Furthermore, the main analyses are replicated with a focus on political trust in the national parliament (*‘Bundestag’*) in Appendix A.6. The results for trust in parliament reflect the same dynamics and inferences as for trust in government.

that neither partisan motives nor the performance of a specific government are decisive factors in the assessment of political trust. Citizens are, however, capable of differentiating democratically accountable institutions from other state institutions. Full distrust in state institutions such as the judiciary and the police is significantly lower (on average, 10 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively) than for the different levels of government and the national parliament (see also *Table 5* in the Appendix A.2).

In sum, it is primarily the core institutions of representative democracy that are affected by citizens' lack of trust. In 2022, every fifth German citizen had no trust whatsoever in the Federal government and in the national parliament. Should this be a cause for concern?

The Behavioural Consequences of Political Distrust

In the following analysis of the behavioural consequences of political distrust we focus on the group of 'distrustful citizens', which we identified in the first step. We define this group in the most restrictive way by including only those respondents which have no trust at all in government (=1 on our scale). Is this group of distrustful citizens distinct in its political behaviour? Are distrustful citizens more likely to endorse and engage in political protest; and are they more likely to tolerate political violence? We explore the behavioural consequences of political distrust on the basis of our surveys on the two protest movements. Was this protest a 'revolt of the distrustful'?

It is important to emphasize that the object of our analysis is not the demonstrator in the street, but the protest potential more broadly, which we assess in our surveys. To determine the magnitude of this protest potential, we use two measures: (1) the respondents' sympathy for the concerns and objectives of protest, namely the COVID-19 protest and the energy protests; and (2) their general willingness to participate in this protest. Moreover, we investigate the acceptance of political violence to identify the potential for radicalization in this protest.

We proceed in two steps. First, we inspect how political trust determines these three behavioural dimensions on average with logit and OLS regression models and plot predicted probabilities and predicted values. Second, we compare more specifically how individuals with ‘no trust’ compare with the groups of respondents with ‘low’ and ‘high’ trust.

Our data reveals that there was a significant protest potential in both crises, even if the two crises differ markedly in the size of this potential. In absolute terms, public support for the energy protest was substantively higher than for the COVID-19 protest. In February 2022, at the peak of the political controversy over mandatory vaccination, 23 percent of the respondents had ‘a lot’ or ‘some’ sympathy for the COVID-19 protest, and 16 percent were ‘(very) likely’ to participate in such protest. By contrast, 68 percent strongly sympathized with the energy protests in December 2022; and 35 percent were willing to participate (see *Figures 7 and 8* in the Appendix A.3).⁴

Figure 2 shows how trust in the Federal government relates to protest behaviour and the acceptance of political violence across the two crises. We also present estimates for the interaction with political orientations by distinguishing ‘left-wing’, ‘centrist’ and ‘right-wing’ individuals based on the respondents self-positioning on the standard ‘left-right’ scale. Our analysis clearly shows that distrust matters, but we also find remarkable differences between the two crises. Apparently, context matters as well.

In the case of the COVID-19 protest, trust in government largely determines sympathy for the protest as well as the willingness to participate. The predicted probability of politically centrist individuals with ‘no trust’ in government to express sympathy for the COVID-19 protest is 0.50, whereas centrist individuals with high levels of trust are almost certainly unlikely to

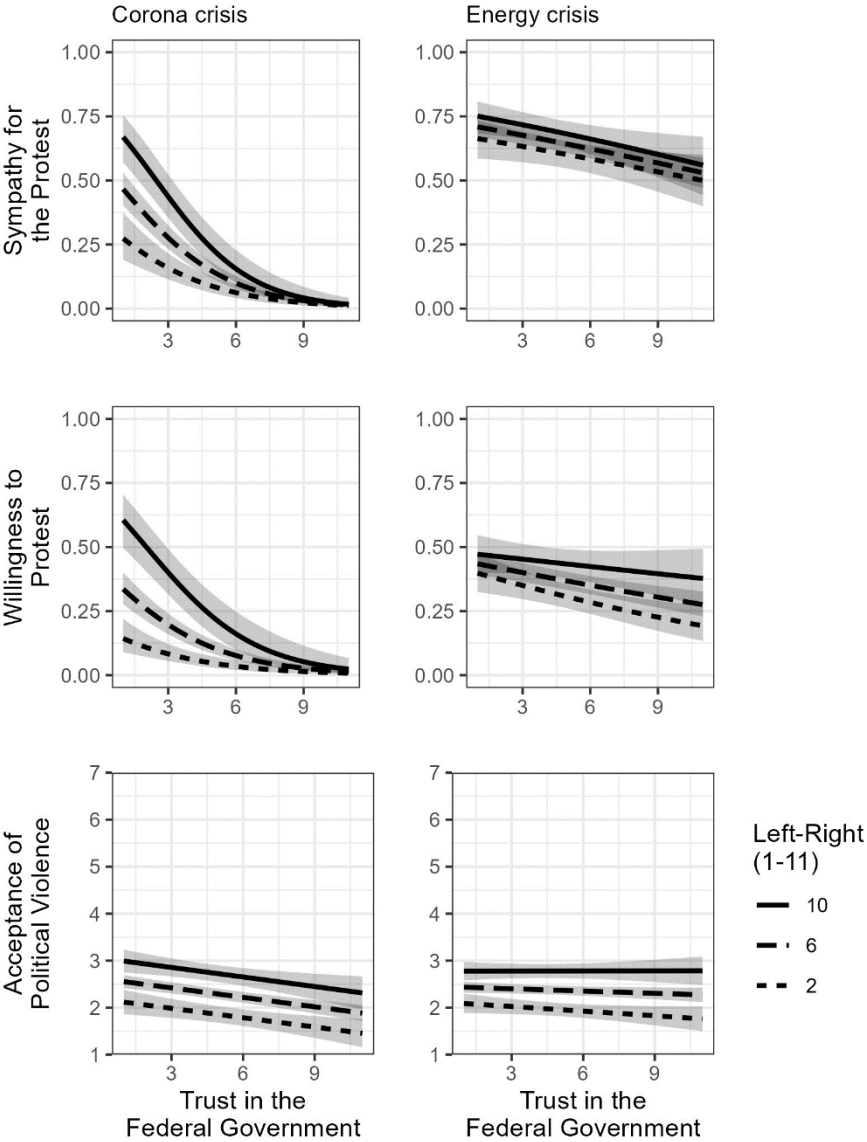
⁴ In the light of these figures, it is quite remarkable that the protest movement in the energy crisis has not succeeded to exploit this potential and to massively mobilise protesters, although politicians and mass media predicted a ‘hot fall of protest’ (*heißer Herbst*) and a ‘winter of rage’ (*Wutwinter*). However, ‘energy protests’ accounted for only 9 percent of the protest events in the German protest landscape in 2022 (Hutter et al., 2023).

sympathize with the protest. Similarly, very distrustful centrist individuals are more willing to protest (predicted probability of 0.30), whereas very trustful centrist individuals are certainly not willing to protest. The results also highlight that ideological orientations make no difference here. Left-wing and right-wing individuals behave very similarly, although they exert differences in absolute levels of sympathy and willingness to participate in the COVID-19 protests.

Protest during the energy crisis shows a different picture. In the case of energy protest, trust in government is not as important for determining sympathy with or willingness to participate as for the COVID-19 protests. In this case, distrust matters as well. Very distrustful individuals are 1.5 times more likely to sympathize with the energy protest than very trustful individuals (predicted probabilities: 0.75 vs 0.50, respectively). On average, distrustful individuals are also two times more likely to be willing to participate at energy protests than very trustful individuals (0.50 vs 0.25). These differences are, however, not significant between all (ideological) groups and they are substantially less relevant as for the COVID-19 protests. For the behaviour towards the energy protests, the ideological positioning of the individuals does not represent a relevant explanatory factor, as different ideological orientations behave similarly.

The analysis of acceptance of political violence unveils a different picture. As we would have expected, during the COVID-19 pandemic, higher levels of trust in government show a significantly lower tolerance towards political violence. This is, however, not the case for protest during the energy crisis if we distinguish between the different ideological groups. In the energy crisis, higher levels of trust in government do not translate in less acceptance of political violence. On average, ideological positioning seems to more strongly determine the acceptance of political violence than the level of trust.

Figure 2: Behavioural consequences of political distrust



Note: Upper and middle graphs depict predicted probabilities based on logit models; lower graphs depict predicted values based on linear regression with OLS specification (the acceptance of political violence scale ranges from 1 to 7). Models control for gender (female/diverse), age, age², education level (categorical), current economic situation, children (dummy), and Eastern Germany; see full models in Appendix A.3.

Finally, we examine whether the group of distrustful citizens is substantially different from individuals with low trust and individuals with high trust. In the analysis, we do not focus on linear trends, but we rather inspect descriptive statistics. The results clearly support our previous findings. In the case of the COVID-19 protest, 59 percent of the ‘no trust’ group had ‘some’ or ‘a lot’ of sympathy for the protests. In the other two groups, sympathy was clearly lower with 20 percent for the ‘low trust’ and 7.5 percent for the ‘high trust’ group. Similarly, 42 percent of the individuals with ‘no trust’ were willing to participate (‘low trust’: 13 percent; ‘high trust’: 5 percent) (see *Tables 6 and 7* in Appendix A.3). These are remarkable differences even between the ‘no trust’ and ‘low trust’ groups. As could already be expected on the basis of *Figure 2*, in the case of energy protests the differences between the three groups are not quite as contrasting. Most importantly, 46 percent of the respondents with ‘no trust’ were willing to participate in the energy protests, as compared to 34 percent and 30 percent of the individuals with ‘low trust’ and ‘high trust’ in government, respectively.

In the case of the COVID-19 protests, a clear correlation is evident between lacking political trust and understanding of the protests. From this perspective, the COVID-19 protests could definitely be interpreted as a ‘revolt of the distrustful’: respondents with less trust in the government were more likely to sympathize with and to participate in the protests. In the energy crisis, political trust was not a main determinant of protest behaviour since there was an equally large mobilization potential across different trust levels. Moreover, ideological positioning seems to be more relevant for political violence across both crisis contexts.

Who are the Distrustful Citizens?

The findings so far have shown how large the group of ‘distrustful citizens’ is, and that distrust in political institutions is clearly related to unconventional political behaviour and

greater tolerance for political violence. Is this evidence of the existence of a large potential for progressive political reforms driven by ‘critical citizens’ or a sign of democratic decline? In the next step of our analysis, we aim at answering this question by examining in detail the distrustful citizens, their socio-demographic characteristics and, most importantly, their political orientations. We inspect these attributes in the regression analyses with OLS specifications in *Table 1*.

What are the socio-demographic characteristics of ‘distrustful citizens’? Overall, and across the four models presented in *Table 1*, we find that gender and age matter: female and diverse individuals trust the Federal government less; whereas older individuals trust the government more – all else equal. In terms of education, individuals with lower and middle levels of education are not significantly different from each other; individuals with higher education, however, express higher levels of trust in government. Apparently, education matters for political trust, but in our case the group of the ‘distrustful’ is not composed of the well-educated ‘critical citizens’ who are at the centre of societal modernisation theories; rather, it is the less educated that trust the government the least. Furthermore, a positive current economic situation is significantly associated with higher levels of trust; yet, living in Eastern Germany is negatively associated with political trust. These patterns are surprisingly consistent across crisis contexts (compare models 1 and 2, and 3 and 4). In a nutshell, these findings suggest that it is the ‘losers’ of societal modernisation and transformation (individualisation, globalisation) in particular who distrust the government (cf. Kriesi et al., 2008, 2012; Marks et al., 2021).

Table 1: Socio-demographic and political determinants of trust in government

	<i>Dependent variable: Trust in the Federal Government</i>			
	Corona crisis	Energy crisis	Corona crisis	Energy crisis
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female/diverse	-0.24* (0.13)	-0.37*** (0.11)	-0.26** (0.13)	-0.45*** (0.10)
Age	12.00*** (3.20)	8.90*** (3.10)	16.00*** (3.10)	12.00*** (2.90)
Age 2	6.00** (2.90)	11.00*** (2.80)	3.70 (2.80)	7.60*** (2.70)
Education high	1.00*** (0.17)	0.91*** (0.14)	0.77*** (0.17)	0.52*** (0.13)
Education middle	-0.04 (0.16)	0.18 (0.13)	-0.11 (0.16)	0.03 (0.12)
Cur. economic situation	0.69*** (0.07)	0.76*** (0.06)	0.61*** (0.07)	0.69*** (0.05)
Children	0.01 (0.14)	0.13 (0.12)	0.04 (0.13)	0.16 (0.11)
Eastern Germany	-0.43*** (0.16)	-0.47*** (0.13)	-0.30** (0.15)	-0.28** (0.12)
Left-right	-26.00*** (2.90)	-26.00*** (2.80)		
Left-right 2	-9.00*** (2.90)	-9.40*** (2.80)		
Immigration			-0.38*** (0.03)	-0.42*** (0.03)
New cultural liberalism			0.28*** (0.07)	0.33*** (0.05)
Economic liberalism			-0.49*** (0.06)	-0.44*** (0.05)
Constant	3.20*** (0.33)	2.90*** (0.25)	5.40*** (0.37)	5.40*** (0.28)
Observations	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.14	0.15	0.20	0.24
Adjusted R ²	0.14	0.14	0.20	0.24
Residual Std. Error	2.80 (df = 2024)	2.70 (df = 2807)	2.70 (df = 2023)	2.60 (df = 2806)
F Statistic	33.00*** (df = 10; 2024)	48.00*** (df = 10; 2807)	47.00*** (df = 11; 2023)	81.00*** (df = 11; 2806)

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

In the next step, we examine the basic political orientation of those who have no trust in political institutions. Again, we are especially interested in the political positioning of the group of distrustful citizens. Our data allows an in-depth analysis of their ideological orientations and political positions by using three different measuring instruments.

First, we locate their *positioning on the left-right scale*. How politically extreme are the distrustful citizens? Are we dealing with a ‘distrustful political middle ground’ (*misstrauische Mitte*)? Or is the lack of political trust linked to political extremism?

Most apparent: The distrustful citizens predominantly locate themselves in the political centre. Around 75 percent of them position themselves in the middle of the left-right scale. Hence, a lack of political trust is not necessarily a manifestation of politically extreme positions. This is not to say, however, that there are no important differences between the three groups. As outlined in models 1 and 2 of *Table 1*, individuals with a right-leaning orientation exhibit a tendency to have lower trust in the government. Upon revisiting the group with ‘no trust’, 14 percent expressed right-wing positions during the Corona crisis, and 15 percent did so during the energy crisis.⁵ In the ‘low trust’ category, only 4 and 5 percent, respectively, held right-wing views. Notably, only 3 and 6 percent of individuals classified under ‘high trust’ reported right-wing positions during the respective crises (see full distributions in *Table 12 and Figure 13* in the Appendix A.4). Among individuals with no trust, the ideological distribution is rather skewed to the right as compared to the two other groups.

Second, we identify the *positioning of the distrustful citizens in the two-dimensional political space*. As shown by several scholars (Kriesi et al., 2008, 2012; Marks et al., 2021), political conflict in North-West European countries, including Germany, has been characterized by two main cleavages since the 1990s. As a result, the political conflict in these countries takes place in a two-dimensional competitive space in which the old ‘left’ and ‘right’ categories lose some of their meaningfulness. Our questions on the most important ‘cleavage issues’ (including immigration) allow us to locate the respondents in the new conflict space that has emerged as a consequence of economic, political and cultural de-nationalization. In our context, the question then is how the distrustful citizens situate themselves in this conflict space and whether they form a clearly identifiable group there? Turning our attention to models 3 and 4 in *Table 1*, we explore how the two dimensions of political conflict relate to political

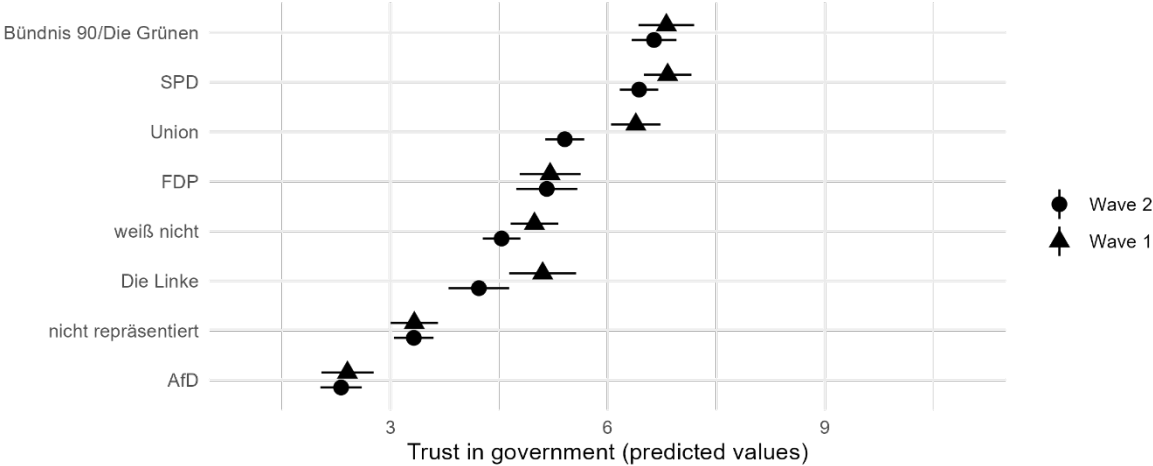
⁵ In the ideological scale ranging from 1 to 11, we categorize responses ranging from 1 to 3 as left-wing positions, and responses from 9 to 11 as right-wing positions. Individuals positioning themselves between 4 and 8 in the scale are categorized as centrist or ‘in the middle’ (see full distributions in *Figure 13* in the Appendix A.4).

trust. The results show that both culturally restrictive positions as well as economically liberal stances are negatively related to political trust. In other words, individuals that favour the restrictions and limitation of immigration, on the one hand, and that oppose state interventions in economic matters, on the other, are less likely to trust the Federal government. Furthermore, new cultural-liberal positions (e.g., on homosexual rights) are positively and significantly associated with trust in government. That is, individuals supporting a homosexual lifestyle as part of society are more likely to trust government. In short, by combining traditional and nationalist attitudes, the distrustful citizens seem to be predominantly located in what has been labelled the ‘TAN’ sector of the political space (cf. Marks et al., 2021).

Third, we investigate how political trust is related to *party affiliation*. Do ‘distrustful citizens’ express clear preferences for an established political party? *Figure 3* depicts the predicted level of trust by partisan group. The predicted point estimates are based on analogue models as in *Table 1*, in which we substitute the ideological determinants with party preferences. The results show that there are clear differences across partisan groups in terms of political trust in government. Most important, political trust is especially low among supporters of the radical-right populist AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) and in the group of politically ‘not-represented’ individuals, which includes especially non-voters, but also voters of small parties without seats in the national parliament. Taken together, these are the ‘disenchanted citizens’ who are alienated from mainstream parties (Norris, Walgrave & van Aalst, 2005). Their lack of political trust is consequential with regard to voting behaviour, but it can lead to both, a vote for a radical or outsider party and to political abstention, to ‘voice’ as well as to ‘exit’. On the opposite side of the Figure, we find that political trust is exceptionally high among the supporters of the Green Party and the social-democratic SPD, with above-average predicted levels of trust of almost 7 points. Green Party voters in particular are distinct from the supporters of

other parties due to their high trust in government.⁶ Not the least, *Figure 3* reveals that the relationship between political trust and party affiliation does not differ between crises (waves 1 and 2). Only supporters of the Left Party and the Christian-Democratic parties had greater trust in the government in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3: Political trust in government across partisan groups



Note: Point estimates reflect predicted values based on OLS regression as in the models of *Table 1* by replacing political determinants by categorical party vote (see full regression models in *Table 11* in Appendix A.4). Error bars represent 0.95 confidence intervals; descending order of trust across partisan groups based on predicted trust levels during wave 1.

Political Distrust and the Democratic Deficit

Is the mobilization of distrustful citizens in recent German protest movements a cause for concern? Are they a symptom of the decline of democracy? In the final step of our empirical analysis, we address these questions with the help of three indicators which represent different

⁶ This is consistent with the findings of Daphi et al. (2023). In their analysis of protest in Germany they predominantly found participants with very high levels of political trust, as their sample of protest events includes a number of issues (e.g., peace, environment) on which new social movements, which have tended to green parties in the past, mobilize.

dimensions of political dissatisfaction (Christensen 2016): political deprivation, satisfaction with democracy, and support for direct democracy.

In *Table 2*, we examine the association between political trust as independent variable and these three indicators. The coefficients are comparable across models since the dependent variables have equivalent 7-point scales. First, models 1 and 2 show that there is a strong relationship between trust in government and political deprivation. Respondents with no trust in government, specifically, also have a strong sense of political deprivation. We find this association in both crises and regardless of the respondents' political positioning. Furthermore, in our descriptive analysis we find that in both crises a group of approximately 28 percent denounce an insufficient political influence (>5; see *Figure 14* in Appendix A.5).

Table 2: Attitudinal correlates of political trust

<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Dependent variables:</i>					
	Political Deprivation		Satisfaction with Democracy		Pro Direct Democracy	
	Corona (1)	Energy (2)	Corona (3)	Energy (4)	Corona (5)	Energy (6)
Left-Right	0.11*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Trust Federal Gov.	- 0.22*** (0.01)	- 0.19*** (0.01)	0.38*** (0.01)	0.35*** (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)
Socio-demographics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eastern Germany	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constant	6.20*** (0.22)	5.90*** (0.18)	1.70*** (0.20)	2.00*** (0.16)	4.70*** (0.26)	5.20*** (0.22)
Obs.	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.35	0.29	0.55	0.49	0.13	0.08
Adjusted R ²	0.35	0.28	0.54	0.48	0.13	0.08
Residual Std. Error	1.30 (df = 2025)	1.30 (df = 2730)	1.10 (df = 2025)	1.20 (df = 2808)	1.50 (df = 2025)	1.60 (df = 2818)
F Statistic	123.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	130.00*** (df = 9; 2730)	271.00*** (df=9; 2025)	296.00*** (df=9; 2808)	33.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	29.00*** (df = 9; 2818)

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Full model in Table 13 in Appendix A.5.

The feeling of political deprivation goes along with low satisfaction with democracy, as portrayed in models 3 and 4. By comparing the coefficient sizes, it is clear that the association between political trust and satisfaction with democracy is the strongest one. In both crises, an absolute average of 13 percent of the respondents were completely unsatisfied with how democracy works (=1 on the 7-point scale). Hence, the problem of trust which motivates protest results from a combination of lacking trust in the core institutions of representative democracy on the one hand and the complaint about insufficient political influence and a lack of satisfac-

tion with democracy on the other hand. This is in line with the diagnosis of a perceived ‘democratic deficit’, i.e. a ‘gap between aspirations and satisfaction’ (Norris, 2011, p. 5) by ‘critical citizens’. According to Norris (2011, p. 5), the group of ‘critical citizens’ ‘aspires to democracy as their ideal form of government, at the same time they remain deeply sceptical when evaluating how democracy works in their own country’.

Such an interpretation is supported by our last finding on the respondents’ attitude towards direct democracy (models 5 and 6 in *Table 2*). Our analysis clearly indicates that the respondents see the solution to the perceived ‘democratic deficit’ in the introduction or strengthening of a direct, participatory democracy. The less individuals trust in the Federal government, the more they support the implementation of direct democracy as an alternative to parliamentary democracy. With regard to the future of democracy, the main political objective of the distrustful citizens is not the replacement of democracy with an authoritarian system, but a different form of democracy.

This seems to align well with the progressive image of the ‘critical citizen’, for whom, in line with Inglehart’s theory of post-materialist value change, the primary focus is on self-efficacy and the expansion of opportunities for political participation beyond the electoral arena (Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 2008; Norris, 1999, 2011; Norris, Walgrave, & van der Aalst, 2005). In the light of this theory, low political trust and the existence of a large group of distrustful citizens would primarily indicate significant potential for progressive political reforms in Germany rather than a symptom of a crisis in democracy.

However, our analysis of the political orientations of the group of distrustful citizens suggests caution against such optimism. As we have seen, political trust is particularly low among supporters of the radical-right populist AfD and politically not yet represented individuals (non-voters, among others). This contradicts the common notion that the introduction of ‘participatory democracy’ is primarily a goal of left-wing parties and progressive political movements

(exemplified by della Porta, 2013; 2020). Demands for a ‘real democracy’ cannot only be found in left-wing and radical left protest movements as, for example, the Indignados and Occupy (della Porta & Reiter, 2012); they are shared by radical right movements, e.g. the ‘alternative right’ in Sweden, who call for a ‘true democracy’ (Ranstorp & Ahlin, 2019). In Germany, the slogan ‘More democracy!’ (*‘Mehr Demokratie wagen!’*), which has been the motto of left-wing reform politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been hijacked by the radical-right populist AfD in election campaigns meanwhile.

V. Conclusion: Political Trust, Protest, and Democracy

In our empirical analysis, we identified a sizeable group of distrustful citizens, that is, of citizens with no trust at all in core institutions of representative democracy. In the most conservative interpretation of our data, about 20 percent of German citizens have no trust at all in government and parliament. This is clear indication that there is a substantial trust deficit in the German political system. Our analysis also shows that this distrust matters with regard to political behaviour. Distrust does not lead to civic disengagement and political apathy. Rather, the distrustful citizens exhibit an above-average readiness for protest and a greater acceptance of political violence. Against this background, the most recent protest movements in Germany can well be interpreted as a ‘revolt of the distrustful’. This does not imply that these protest movements were solely driven by distrustful citizens. The protest potential in the energy crisis illustrates that the understanding of this protest extends far beyond the group of distrustful individuals. This aligns with the findings of surveys conducted by Daphi et al. (2023) who show that in the German protest movements of the past two decades, protesters with high political trust are also present.

Distrust and protest in the most recent German protest movements can be interpreted as manifestations of the ‘democratic deficit’ in contemporary democracies. They clearly reflect the growing disparity between democratic principles and ideals and the democratic reality. This disparity is particularly pronounced in states of emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Honig 2009; Griglio 2020). Hence, it is quite plausible that the relationship between distrust and readiness for protest was strong during this crisis.

However, the distrustful citizens are not against democracy as such. They criticize political deprivation, the lack of political influence, and advocate an alternative democracy based on direct democratic participation opportunities. At first glance, the identified distrustful citizens appear to be nothing else than a variety of the ‘critical citizen’ as portrayed in the literature (Norris 1999; 2011; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995), who has been viewed as the main proponent of progressive reform movements.

Our empirical findings give reason to doubt such an optimistic assessment, however. Both the socio-demographic characteristics of the distrustful citizens and their political orientations are clearly distinct from the attributes of enlightened post-materialists. Rather, they exhibit socio-demographic features and political properties reminiscent of voters of radical-right populist parties (Kriesi et al., 2012). Therefore, it is not coincidental that the distrustful citizens in Germany are overrepresented among AfD voters (and among non-voters), even if they do not self-identify to the extreme poles of the political spectrum.

Hence, the ‘distrustful citizens’ which we identified in the most recent German protest movements are divided personalities. They neither represent the ‘disenchanted citizens’ nor the ‘resourceful strategists’, which have been identified in previous studies on political protest (see in particular van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2018). They are politically active beyond the electoral arena and they support a different, more demanding democracy, akin to what is typical for progressive political movements (see, e.g., della Porta 2020; Ouattara & van der Meer

2023). At the same time, however, they hold illiberal and restrictive attitudes towards minorities and migrants, characteristic of regressive political movements. In a sense, they represent a regressive variant of the ‘critical citizens’.

In the light of these ambiguities, it would be premature to speak of a political trust crisis and to consider our results as further evidence of the widely lamented decline of democracy in Germany. However, there are good reasons to be distrustful towards the distrustful citizens. Not the least, our findings should stimulate further research on the ‘new new’ protest movements. On the one hand, it would be important delving more deeply into the group of distrustful citizens that we have identified to learn more about their political attitudes and motivations; on the other hand, our understanding of distrustful citizens and their political behaviour would certainly benefit from comparative analyses of more recent protest movements across Europe.

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A Revolt of the Distrustful?
Political Trust, Political Protest and the Democratic Deficit

Edgar Grande and Daniel Saldivia Gonzatti

Appendix

A.1 Survey questionnaire and descriptive statistics

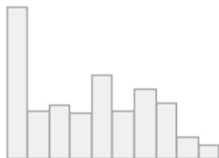
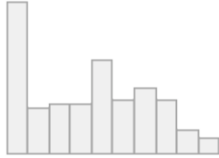




Table 3: Survey questionnaire: wording and scales

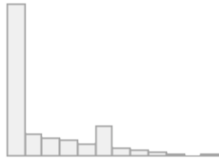

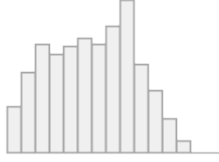
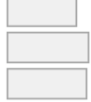



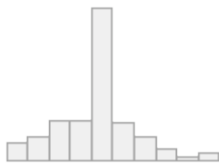
Variable	Survey item wording	Scale
Political trust	<p><u>February 2022:</u> Inwieweit haben Sie Vertrauen darin, dass nachfolgende Institutionen und Behörden in der Coronakrise im Interesse der Bürger Deutschlands handeln? Die Bundesregierung; Der Bundestag; Die Landesregierung; Die Regierung meiner Gemeinde oder meines Stadtbezirks; Die Gerichte; Wissenschaftliche Expertenkommissionen; Medizinische Einrichtungen; Die Polizei; Medien. <i>(February 2022: To what extent do you trust that the following institutions and authorities are acting in the interest of the citizens of Germany in the COVID-19 crisis? The Federal Government; The Bundestag (Federal Diet); The State Government; The government of my municipality or district; The courts; Scientific expert commissions; Medical institutions; The police; Media.)</i></p> <p><u>December 2022/January 2023:</u> Im nächsten Schritt interessieren wir uns dafür, wie sehr Sie persönlich jeder einzelnen der folgenden öffentlichen Einrichtungen, Organisationen oder Personengruppen vertrauen. Wie sehr vertrauen Sie...? Der Bundesregierung; Dem Bundestag; Den politischen Parteien; Der Polizei; Den Gerichten/der Justiz; Der Wissenschaft; Den Medien; Der Europäischen Union. <i>(December 2022/January 2023: In the next step, we are interested in how much you personally trust each of the following public institutions, organizations, or groups of people. How much do you trust...? The Federal Government; The Bundestag; Political parties; The police; The courts/judiciary; Science; Media; The European Union.)</i></p>	Continuous and categorical: 1 (No trust whatsoever) – 11 (Trust fully). Transformed to “no trust” (0), “low trust” (2-6), “high trust” (7-11).
Sympathy for the protest	<p><u>COVID-19:</u> Wie viel Verständnis haben Sie für die Menschen, die gegen die staatlichen Corona-Maßnahmen an Demonstrationen teilgenommen haben? <i>(How much sympathy do you have for the people who participated in demonstrations against the government's COVID-19 measures?)</i></p> <p><u>Energy:</u> Wie viel Verständnis haben Sie für die Menschen, die gegen die steigenden Energie- und Lebenshaltungskosten an Demonstrationen teilgenommen haben? <i>(How much sympathy do you have for the people who participated in demonstrations against the rising energy and living costs?)</i></p>	Binary: None (0), some (0), a lot (1), very much (1). Transformed to 0 – 1.

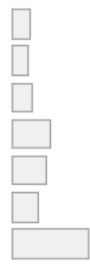

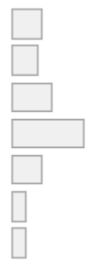
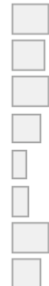
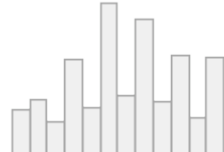
Willingness to protest	<p><u>COVID-19</u>: Würden Sie an einer Demonstration gegen die staatlichen Corona-Maßnahmen teilnehmen, wenn eine in Ihrer Umgebung organisiert würde? (<i>Would you participate in a demonstration against the government's COVID-19 measures if one were organized in your vicinity?</i>)</p> <p><u>Energy</u>: Würden Sie selbst an einer Demonstration gegen die steigenden Energie- und Lebenshaltungskosten teilnehmen, wenn eine in Ihrer Umgebung organisiert würde? (<i>Would you personally participate in a demonstration against the rising energy and living costs if one were organized in your vicinity?</i>)</p>	Binary: Surely not (0), probably not (0), probably (1), surely (1). Transformed to 0 – 1.
Acceptance of political violence	(1) Ich bin in bestimmten Situationen durchaus bereit, auch körperliche Gewalt anzuwenden, um meine Interessen durchzusetzen. (2) Selber würde ich nie Gewalt anwenden. Aber es ist schon gut, dass es Leute gibt, die mal ihre Fäuste sprechen lassen, wenn's anders nicht mehr weitergeht. ((1) <i>"I am willing to use physical violence in certain situations to assert my interests."</i> (2) <i>"Personally, I would never use violence. But it's good that there are people who let their fists do the talking when there's no other way forward."</i>)	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully). Mean average index based on both items (1-7).
Female/diverse	Bitte nennen Sie uns Ihre persönlichen Informationen. Geschlecht: - Männlich; - Weiblich; - Divers. (<i>Please provide us with your personal information. Gender: - Male; - Female; - Diverse.</i>)	Binary: 0 (male), 1 (female, diverse).
Age	Alter: __ (<i>Age: __</i>)	Continuous variable, >= 18. For certain models also 2 nd polynomial.
Education level	Ihr höchster Schulabschluss: (1) Schule beendet ohne Abschluss; (2) Hauptschulabschluss/Volksschulabschluss; (3) Realschulabschluss/Mittlere Reife; (4) Abitur /Fachabitur; (5) noch in schulischer Ausbildung. (<i>"Your highest level of education: (1) Completed school without a degree; (2) Basic secondary school certificate; (3) Intermediate secondary school certificate; (4) High school diploma / Vocational diploma; (5) Still in school."</i>)	Categorical: 1, 2, 5 = low; 3 = middle; 4 = high.
Current economic situation	Wie beurteilen Sie Ihre eigene wirtschaftliche/finanzielle Situation heutzutage? (<i>How do you assess your own economic/financial situation nowadays?</i>)	Continuous: 1-5 (very bad, bad, partially bad/partially good, good, very good).
Children	Haben Sie Kinder? (<i>Do you have kids?</i>)	Binary: 0 (No), 1 (Yes, 1 kid; Yes, 2 kids; Yes, 3 kids; Yes, 4 kids or more).
Eastern Germany	In welchem Bundesland leben Sie? __ (<i>In which state do you live? __</i>)	Binary: 0 – 1 based on state selection.
Left-right	Man spricht in der Politik manchmal von „links“ und „rechts“. Wo würden Sie sich auf einer Skala von 0 bis 10 einordnen? 0: links, 10: rechts. (<i>In politics, there is sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right.' Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10? 0: Left, 10: Right</i>)	Continuous and categorical: 1 (left) – 11 (right) (re-scaled). Categories: 1-3 (left-wing); 4-8 (political centrist); 9-11 (right-wing). For certain models also 2 nd polynomial.



Immigration	<u>Pro limiting migration:</u> Zu weiteren politischen Themen gibt es ebenfalls unterschiedliche Meinungen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Was halten Sie von folgenden Aussagen? Bitte antworten Sie anhand der Liste. „Deutschland sollte die Zuwanderung begrenzen.“ (Regarding other political topics, there are also different opinions. What about you? What do you think about the following statements? Please respond using the list. 'Germany should limit immigration.')	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully).
New cultural liberalism	<u>Pro homosexual life/lifestyle:</u> Es gibt zu verschiedenen politischen Themen unterschiedliche Meinungen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Was halten Sie von folgenden Aussagen? Bitte antworten Sie anhand der Liste. „Schwule und Lesben sollten ihr Leben so führen dürfen, wie sie es wollen.“ (There are different opinions on various political topics. How about you: What do you think about the following statements? Please respond based on the list. 'Gay and lesbian individuals should be allowed to live their lives as they want.')	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully).
Economic liberalism	<u>Pro-free economy:</u> Es gibt zu verschiedenen politischen Themen unterschiedliche Meinungen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Was halten Sie von folgenden Aussagen? Bitte antworten Sie anhand der Liste. „Der Staat sollte sich aus der Wirtschaft heraushalten.“ (There are different opinions on various political topics. How about you: What do you think about the following statement? Please respond based on the list. 'The state should stay out of the economy.')	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully).
Party vote intention	Wenn am nächsten Sonntag Bundestagswahl wäre, welche Partei würden Sie dann wählen? CDU/CSU; SPD; AfD; FDP; Die Linke; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen; Andere Partei; Weiß nicht/Ich würde nicht wählen gehen. (If the federal election were next Sunday, which party would you vote for? CDU/CSU; SPD; AfD; FDP; Die Linke; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen; Other party; Don't know/I would not go to vote.)	Categorical, based on party selection.
Political deprivation	Zu weiteren politischen Themen herrschen unterschiedliche Meinungen. Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu? (1) Leute wie ich haben sowieso keinen Einfluss darauf, was die Regierung tut; (2) Meine Rechte bestehen nur auf dem Papier; (3) Ich fühle mich im Umgang mit den Behörden ausgeliefert. (On other political topics, there are different opinions. How much do you agree with the following statements? (1) People like me have no influence on what the government does; (2) My rights exist only on paper; (3) I feel helpless in dealing with authorities.)	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully). Mean average index based on the three items: 1-7.
Satisfaction with democracy	Wie zufrieden sind Sie - alles in allem - mit der Art und Weise, wie die Demokratie in Deutschland funktioniert? (How satisfied are you overall with the way democracy functions in Germany?)	Continuous: 1 (Not satisfied at all) – 7 (Very satisfied).
Pro Direct Democracy	Zu weiteren politischen Themen gibt es ebenfalls unterschiedliche Meinungen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Was halten Sie von folgenden Aussagen? Bitte antworten Sie anhand der Liste. “Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollten einen bindenden Volksentscheid auf Bundesebene herbeiführen können.” (On other political topics, there are different opinions. How much do you agree with the following statements? 'Citizens should be able to initiate a binding national referendum at the federal level.')	Continuous: 1 (Fully disapprove) – 7 (Approve fully).

Table 4: Dataset distributions

Variable	Statistics/ Values	Frequencies	Distribution
Trust in government	Mean (sd): 5.1 (3) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 5 ≤ 11	11 distinct values	
Trust in parliament	Mean (sd): 5.2 (3) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 6 ≤ 11	11 distinct values	
COVID-19 protest –sympathy	Mean (sd): 3.1 (1) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 3 ≤ 4	1 : 273 (13.4%) 2 : 192 (9.4%) 3 : 623 (30.6%) 4 : 947 (46.5%) Binary transformation	
COVID-19 protest–willingness to participate	Mean (sd): 3.5 (0.9) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 4 ≤ 4	1 : 107 (5.3%) 2 : 210 (10.3%) 3 : 343 (16.9%) 4 : 1375 (67.6%) Binary transformation	
Energy protest–sympathy	Mean (sd): 2 (0.9) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 2 ≤ 4 IQR (CV) : 2 (0.5)	1 : 1025 (36.4%) 2 : 899 (31.9%) 3 : 704 (25.0%) 4 : 190 (6.7%) Binary transformation	
Energy protest–willingness to participate	Mean (sd): 2.9 (0.9) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 3 ≤ 4	1 : 251 (8.9%) 2 : 743 (26.4%) 3 : 999 (35.5%) 4 : 825 (29.3%) Binary transformation	

Variable	Statistics/ Values	Frequencies	Distribution
Acceptance of political violence (average)	Mean (sd): 2.1 (1.4) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 1.5 ≤ 7	13 distinct values	
Female/diverse	Min.: 1 Mean: 1.5 Max : 2	1 : 2382 (49.1%) 2 : 2471 (50.9%)	
Age	Mean (sd): 46 (15) min ≤ med ≤ max: 18 ≤ 46 ≤ 87	65 distinct values	
Education level (cat.)	1. low 2. middle 3. high	1469 (30.3%) 1702 (35.1%) 1682 (34.7%)	
Current economic situation	Mean (sd): 3.1 (0.9) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 3 ≤ 5	1 : 297 (6.1%) 2 : 763 (15.7%) 3 : 1997 (41.1%) 4 : 1588 (32.7%) 5 : 208 (4.3%)	
Children (dummy)	Min.: 0 Mean: 0.6 Max: 1	0 : 2181 (44.9%) 1 : 2672 (55.1%)	
Eastern Germany	Min: 0 Mean: 0.2 Max : 1	0 : 3857 (79.5%) 1 : 996 (20.5%)	
Left-right	Mean (sd): 5.7 (1.9) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 6 ≤ 11	11 distinct values	

Variable	Statistics/ Values	Frequencies	Distribution
Immigration (pro-limiting immigration)	Mean (sd): 4.9 (2) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 5 ≤ 7	1 : 374 (7.7%) 2 : 351 (7.2%) 3 : 427 (8.8%) 4 : 803 (16.5%) 5 : 717 (14.8%) 6 : 560 (11.5%) 7 : 1621 (33.4%)	
New cultural liberalism (pro-homosexual life/lifestyle)	Mean (sd): 5.9 (1.6) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 7 ≤ 7	1 : 157 (3.2%) 2 : 94 (1.9%) 3 : 177 (3.6%) 4 : 530 (10.9%) 5 : 391 (8.1%) 6 : 631 (13.0%) 7 : 2873 (59.2%)	
Economic liberalism (pro limiting intervention in the economy/free economy)	Mean (sd): 3.6 (1.6) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 4 ≤ 7	1 : 639 (13.2%) 2 : 555 (11.4%) 3 : 880 (18.1%) 4 : 1533 (31.6%) 5 : 661 (13.6%) 6 : 296 (6.1%) 7 : 289 (6.0%)	
Party vote intention	1. SPD 2. nicht repräsentiert 3. weiß nicht 4. AfD 5. Die Linke 6. FDP 7. Union 8. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	783 (16.1%) 697 (14.4%) 787 (16.2%) 593 (12.2%) 289 (6.0%) 336 (6.9%) 777 (16.0%) 591 (12.2%)	
Political deprivation (average)	Mean (sd): 4.3 (1.6) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 4.3 ≤ 7	19 distinct values	

Variable	Statistics/ Values	Frequencies	Distribution
Satisfaction with democracy	Mean (sd): 4 (1.7) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 4 ≤ 7	1 : 642 (13.2%) 2 : 391 (8.1%) 3 : 638 (13.1%) 4 : 1137 (23.4%) 5 : 1148 (23.7%) 6 : 680 (14.0%) 7 : 217 (4.5%)	
Pro Direct Democracy	Mean (sd): 5 (1.7) min ≤ med ≤ max: 1 ≤ 5 ≤ 7	1 : 222 (4.6%) 2 : 185 (3.8%) 3 : 350 (7.2%) 4 : 1202 (24.8%) 5 : 937 (19.3%) 6 : 664 (13.7%) 7 : 1293 (26.6%)	

A.2 Descriptive statistics of political trust

Figure 4: Trust in the German national parliament during two crises, 2022 and 2023

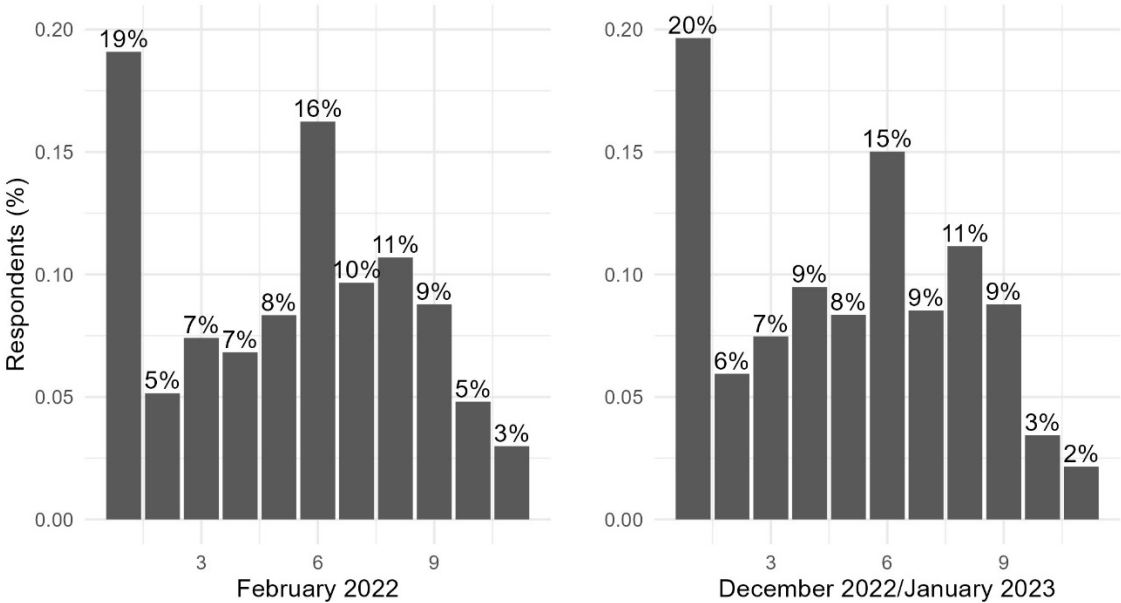
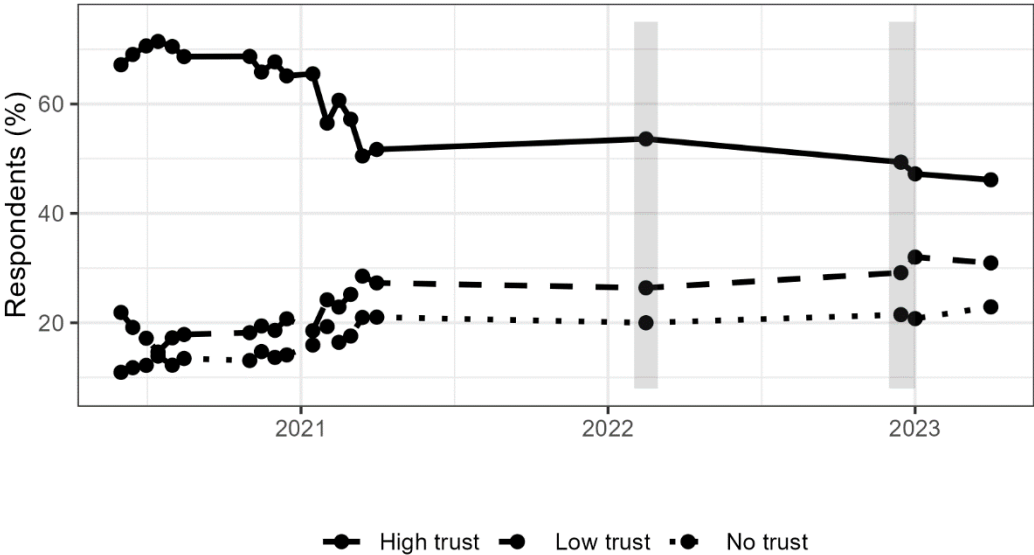
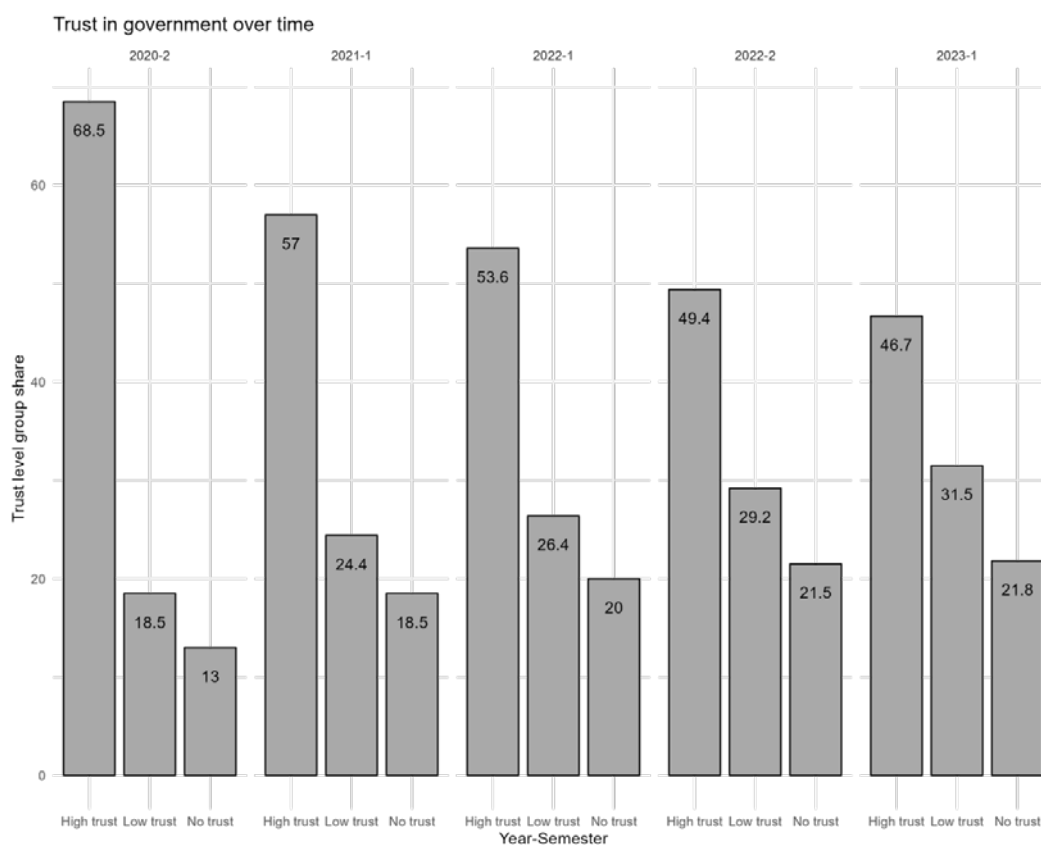


Figure 5: Development of trust in the German Federal government, 2020-2023



Note: Share of respondents within each survey wave for the three different trust levels. Survey question: ‘How much do you trust the Federal government?’ (No trust: 1; Low trust: 2-6; High trust: 7-11). N = 23,705 across 20 cross-sectional survey waves between June 2020 and April 2023. Shaded areas in the Figure indicate the timing of the two cases of our study: waves around February 15, 2022 and January 1, 2023.

Figure 6: Aggregated trust in government levels of year-semester



Note: N = 23,705 across 20 cross-sectional survey waves between June 2020 and April 2023.

Table 5: Political trust across institutions and across crises

Institution	February 2022			December 2022		
	Mean	N	Distrustful %	Mean	N	Distrustful %
Federal government	5.4	407	20.0	5.0	594	21
National parliament (Bundestag)	5.3	389	19.1	5.1	553	20
Regional government (<i>Land</i>)	5.4	368	18.1	-	-	-
Local government (<i>Gemeinde/Stadt</i>)	5.8	296	14.5	-	-	-
European Union	-	-	-	5.1	502	18
Political parties	-	-	-	4.6	564	20
Judiciary/courts	6.3	232	11.4	6.6	254	9
Police	6.9	183	9.0	6.9	197	7
Media	4.8	433	21.3	4.9	473	17
Medicine	7.4	133	6.5	-	-	-
Scientific committees	6.6	232	11.4	-	-	-
Science	-	-	-	7.3	170	6

A.3 Behavioural consequences: descriptive statistics and models

Figure 7: Distribution of sympathy with the protest, February 2022 and December 2022/January 2023

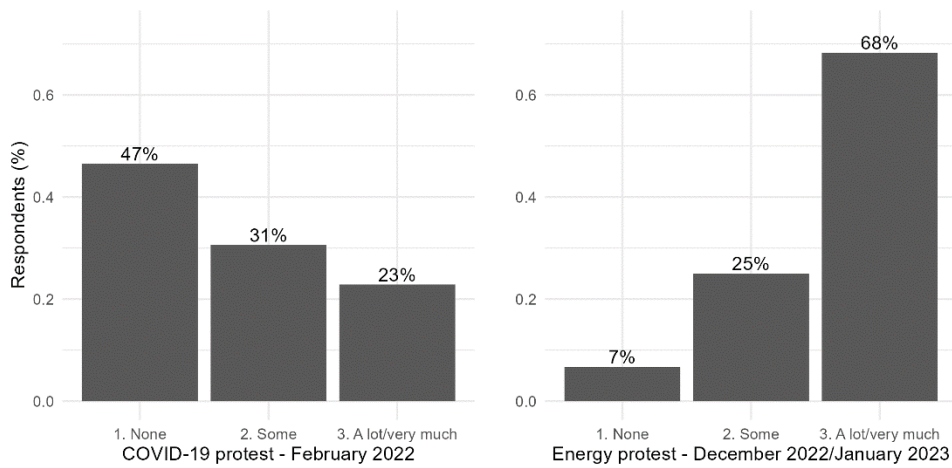


Figure 8: Distribution of willingness to protest, February 2022 and December 2022/January 2023

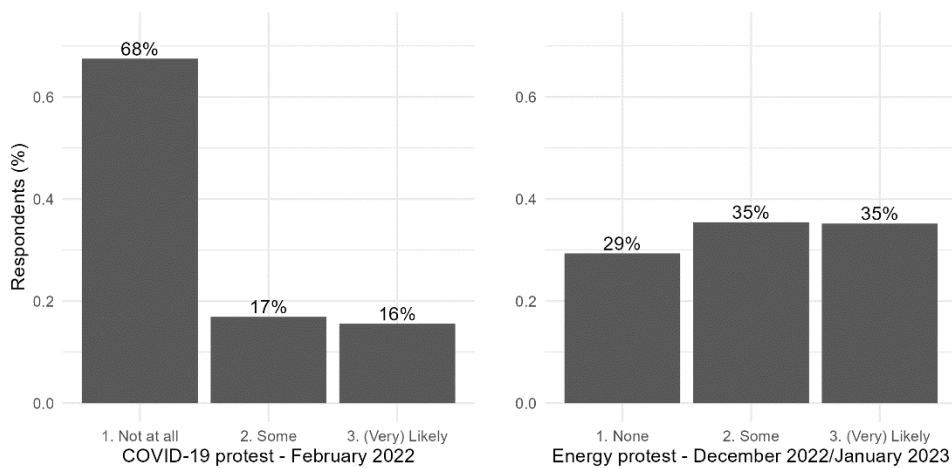


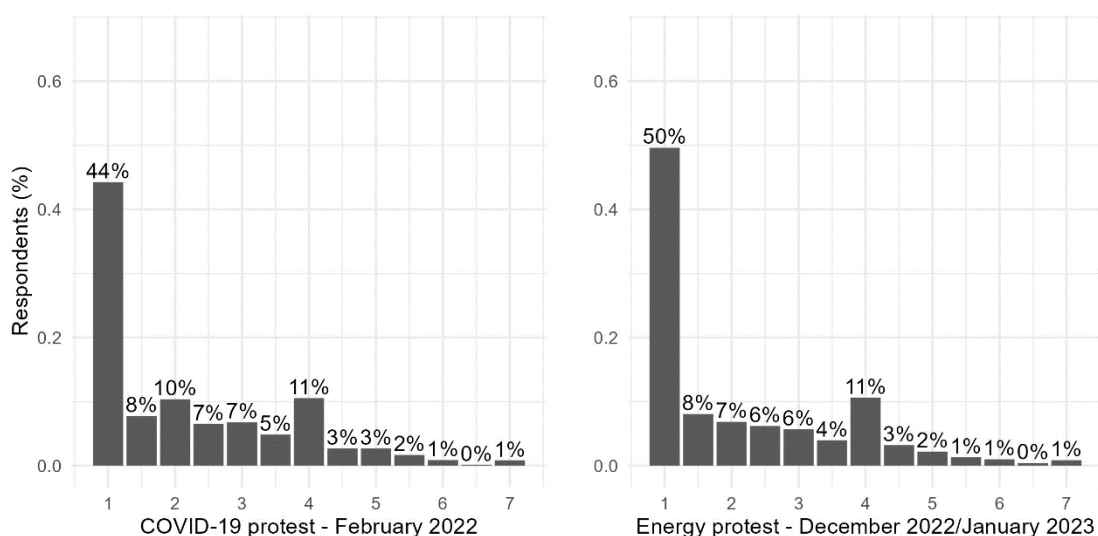
Table 6: Sympathy with the protest among trust groups

Wave	Trust group	Count n	'A lot/very much' sympathy	Share %
COVID-19 crisis	High trust	778	58	7.5
	Low trust	850	168	19.8
	No trust	407	239	58.7
Energy crisis	High trust	947	614	65
	Low trust	1277	858	67
	No trust	594	452	76

Table 7: Willingness to participate at the protest among trust groups

Wave	Trust group	Count n	"(Very) likely" to participate	Share %
COVID-19 crisis	High trust	778	36	4.6
	Low trust	850	110	12.9
	No trust	407	171	42.0
Energy crisis	High trust	947	286	30
	Low trust	1277	437	34
	No trust	594	271	46

Figure 9: Distribution of acceptance of political violence, February 2022 and December 2022/January 2023



Note: Higher values indicate more acceptance of political violence; average index.

Table 8: Regression analysis of Figure 2 (upper panel) – Sympathy with the protest

	Sympathy with the protest			
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	COVID-19 crisis (2)	Energy crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender	-0.40*** (0.13)	-0.42*** (0.13)	-0.12 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.08)
Age	-14.00*** (3.30)	-15.00*** (3.30)	-5.70** (2.50)	-5.90** (2.50)
Age2	-8.60*** (3.10)	-8.40*** (3.10)	6.40*** (2.30)	6.50*** (2.30)
Education high	0.67*** (0.17)	0.67*** (0.17)	0.35*** (0.11)	0.35*** (0.11)
Education middle	0.18 (0.16)	0.17 (0.15)	0.29*** (0.10)	0.28*** (0.10)
Cur. econ.situation	0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.17*** (0.05)	-0.17*** (0.05)
Children	0.32** (0.13)	0.36*** (0.13)	0.32*** (0.09)	0.32*** (0.09)
Eastern Germany	0.23 (0.14)	0.24* (0.14)	0.05 (0.11)	0.05 (0.11)
Left-Right	13.00*** (2.80)		4.60** (2.30)	
Left-Right2	7.10*** (2.60)		2.10 (2.30)	
Left-Right		0.23*** (0.06)		0.06 (0.04)
Trust Government	-0.41*** (0.03)	-0.31*** (0.08)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)
Left-Right x Trust		-0.02 (0.01)		-0.00 (0.01)
Constant	0.45 (0.32)	-0.80* (0.48)	1.50*** (0.21)	1.20*** (0.33)
Observations	2,035	2,035	2,818	2,818
Log Likelihood	-848.00	-850.00	-1,718.00	-1,719.00
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,719.00	1,724.00	3,461.00	3,461.00

Note:

$p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Regression analysis of Figure 2 (middle panel) – Willingness to protest

	Willingness to protest			
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	COVID-19 crisis (2)	Energy crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender	-0.21 (0.14)	-0.22 (0.14)	-0.30*** (0.08)	-0.32*** (0.08)
Age	-16.00*** (3.70)	-17.00*** (3.70)	-11.00*** (2.40)	-11.00*** (2.40)
Age2	-5.70* (3.50)	-5.60 (3.50)	2.20 (2.20)	2.20 (2.20)
Education high	0.27 (0.19)	0.26 (0.19)	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.11)
Education middle	0.01 (0.17)	-0.00 (0.17)	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.11 (0.10)
Cur. econ. situation	0.04 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.21*** (0.05)
Children	0.41*** (0.15)	0.43*** (0.15)	0.45*** (0.09)	0.46*** (0.09)
Eastern Germany	0.30* (0.16)	0.32** (0.16)	0.20** (0.10)	0.21** (0.10)
Left-Right	18.00*** (3.20)		6.50*** (2.20)	
Left-Right2	5.30* (2.90)		6.20*** (2.10)	
Left-Right		0.29*** (0.06)		0.03 (0.04)
Trust Government	-0.36*** (0.03)	-0.28*** (0.09)	-0.07*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.04)
Left-Right x Trust		-0.01 (0.01)		0.01 (0.01)
Constant	-0.50 (0.35)	-2.10*** (0.54)	0.57*** (0.20)	0.46 (0.31)
Observations	2,035	2,035	2,818	2,818
Log Likelihood	-704.00	-705.00	-1,761.00	-1,765.00
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,431.00	1,434.00	3,546.00	3,553.00

Note:

$p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Table 10: Regression analysis of Figure 2 (lower panel) – Acceptance of political violence

	Acceptance of political violence			
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	COVID-19 crisis (2)	Energy crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Si	-0.42*** (0.06)	-0.44*** (0.06)	-0.38*** (0.05)	-0.41*** (0.05)
Age	-10.00*** (1.50)	-11.00*** (1.60)	-21.00*** (1.50)	-22.00*** (1.50)
Age2	0.83 (1.40)	1.00 (1.40)	2.00 (1.40)	2.10 (1.40)
Education high	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.39*** (0.07)	-0.40*** (0.07)
Education middle	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.22*** (0.06)	-0.24*** (0.07)
Cur. econ. situation	-0.08** (0.04)	-0.09** (0.04)	0.05* (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Children	0.02 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	0.04 (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)
Eastern Germany	0.16** (0.07)	0.18** (0.07)	0.15** (0.06)	0.16** (0.07)
Left-Right	8.90*** (1.40)		10.00*** (1.40)	
Left-Right2	7.00*** (1.40)		9.30*** (1.40)	
Left-Right		0.11*** (0.03)		0.08*** (0.02)
Trust Government	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.04 (0.03)
Left-Right x Trust		-0.00 (0.01)		0.00 (0.00)
Constant	3.40*** (0.16)	2.80*** (0.25)	2.80*** (0.13)	2.40*** (0.20)
Observations	2,035	2,035	2,818	2,818
Log Likelihood	0.11	0.10	0.13	0.11
Akaike Inf. Crit.	0.11	0.09	0.12	0.11

Note:

$p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

A.4 Who are the distrustful citizens? Descriptive statistics and models

As in the main results in models 1 and 2 in Table 1 in the main article, we model the variables *age* and *left-right* with a polynomial specification (quadratic term). Since we use non-correlated orthogonal polynomials, which include coefficients that are difficult for interpretation, we show non-linear predicted values in *Figures 10* and *11*. However, as *Figure 12* shows with smoothed means, the relationship between political trust and ideology is even more nuanced and complex than a 2nd degree polynomial.

Figure 10: Predicted trust based on age 2nd polynomial, Models 1 and 3 in Table 1

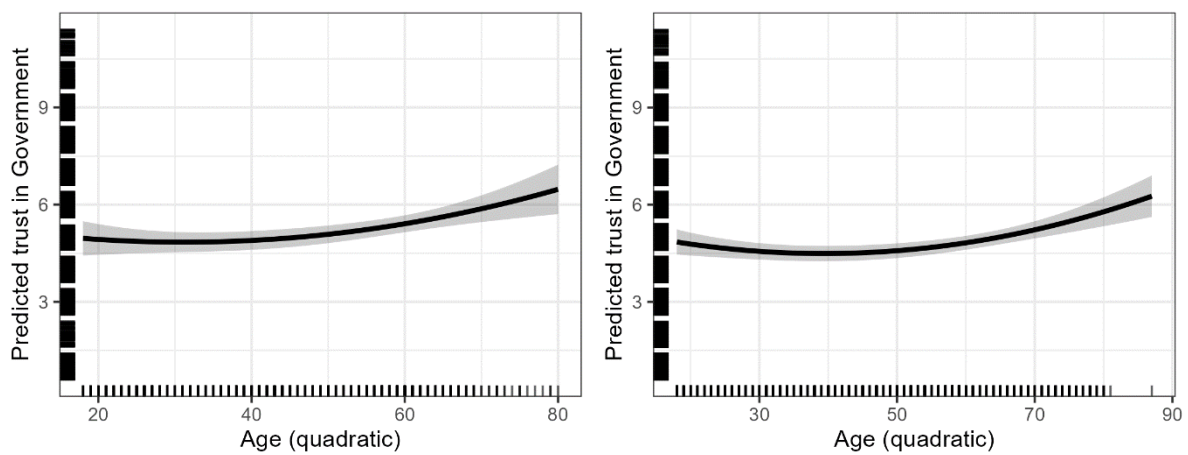


Figure 11: Predicted trust based on left-right 2nd polynomial, Models 1 and 3 in Table 1

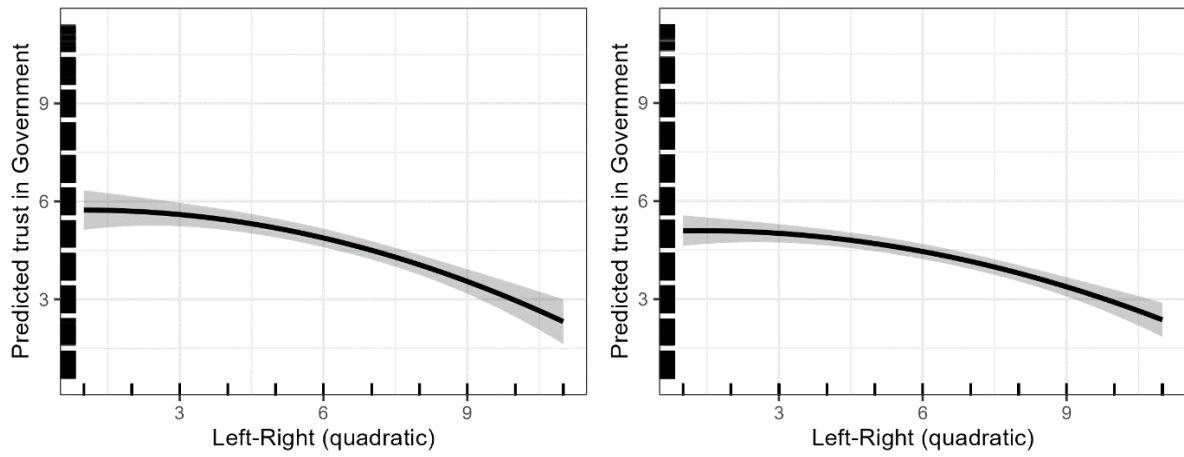


Figure 12: Trust across left-right, smoothed means

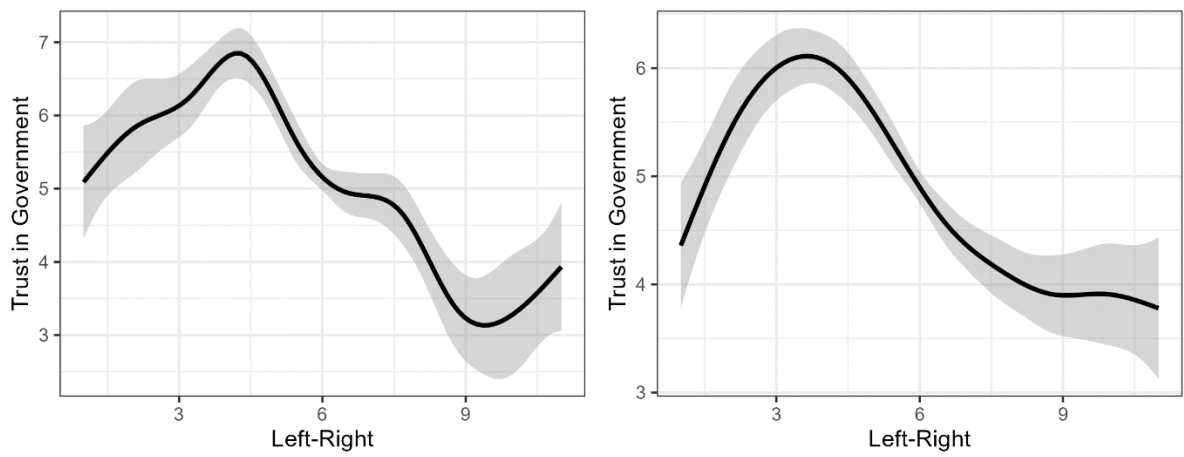


Table 11: Regression analysis of Figure 3 – Political trust in government across partisan groups

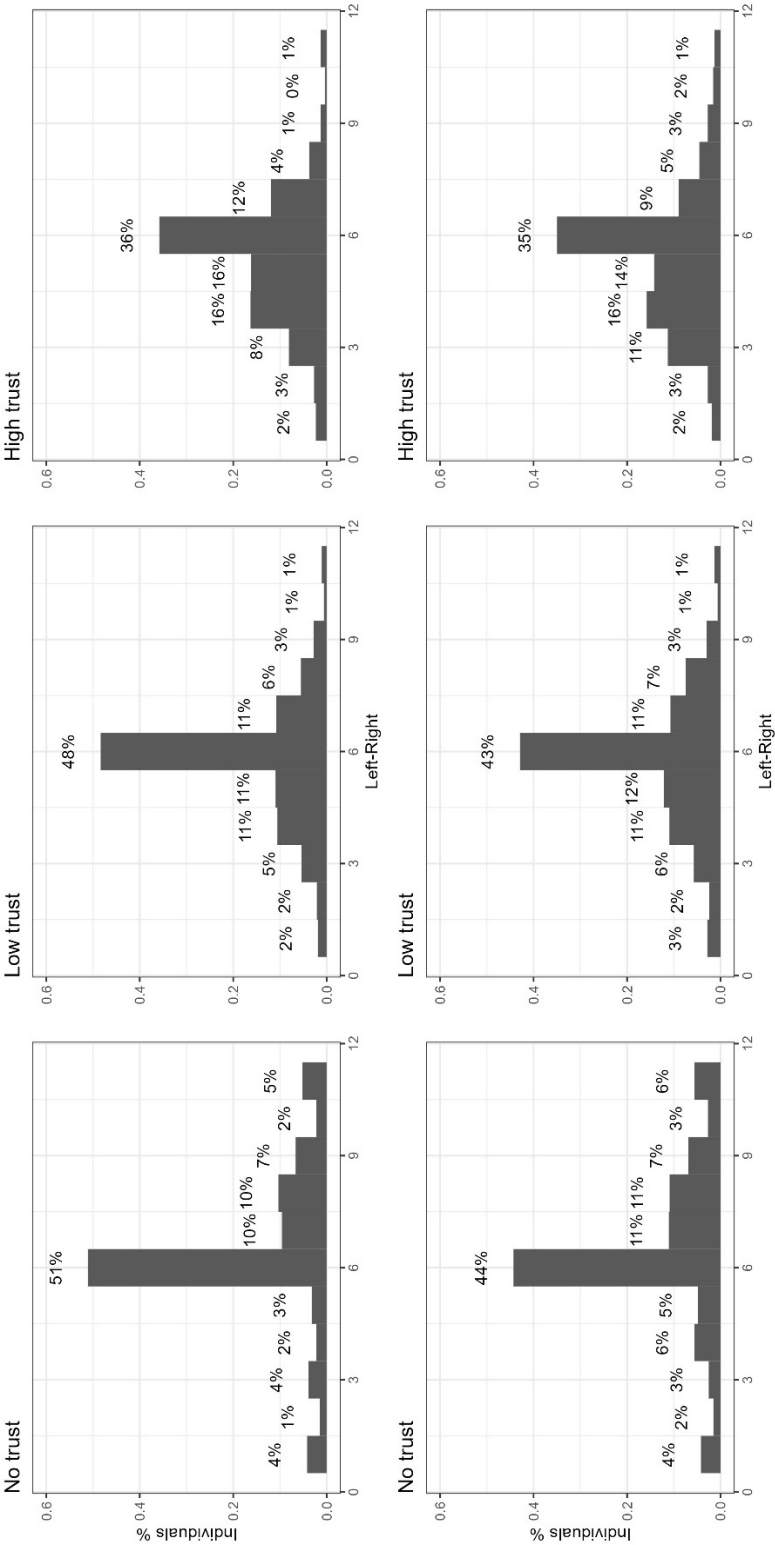
	Trust in the Federal Government	
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)
	(1)	(2)
Female/diverse	-0.14 (0.12)	-0.24** (0.10)
Age	4.10 (2.90)	4.80* (2.80)
Age2	2.40 (2.60)	5.40** (2.50)
Education high	0.53*** (0.16)	0.48*** (0.13)
Education middle	-0.03 (0.14)	0.01 (0.12)
Cur. econ. situation	0.41*** (0.07)	0.49*** (0.05)
Children	-0.07 (0.12)	0.02 (0.10)
Eastern Germany	-0.05 (0.14)	-0.15 (0.12)
Party vote intention (SPD)	ref.	ref.
not represented	-3.50*** (0.21)	-3.10*** (0.17)
don't know	-1.80*** (0.20)	-1.90*** (0.16)
AfD	-4.40*** (0.22)	-4.10*** (0.17)
Die Linke	-1.70*** (0.26)	-2.20*** (0.23)
FDP	-1.60*** (0.24)	-1.30*** (0.23)
CDU/CSU	-0.44** (0.20)	-1.00*** (0.16)
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	-0.02 (0.22)	0.21 (0.17)
Constant	5.80*** (0.33)	5.30*** (0.25)
Observations	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.33	0.33
Adjusted R ²	0.33	0.32
Residual Std. Error	2.50 (df = 2019)	2.40 (df = 2802)
F Statistic	67.00*** (df = 15; 2019)	91.00*** (df = 15; 2802)

Note: $p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Table 12: Descriptive statistics of ideological groups across trust groups

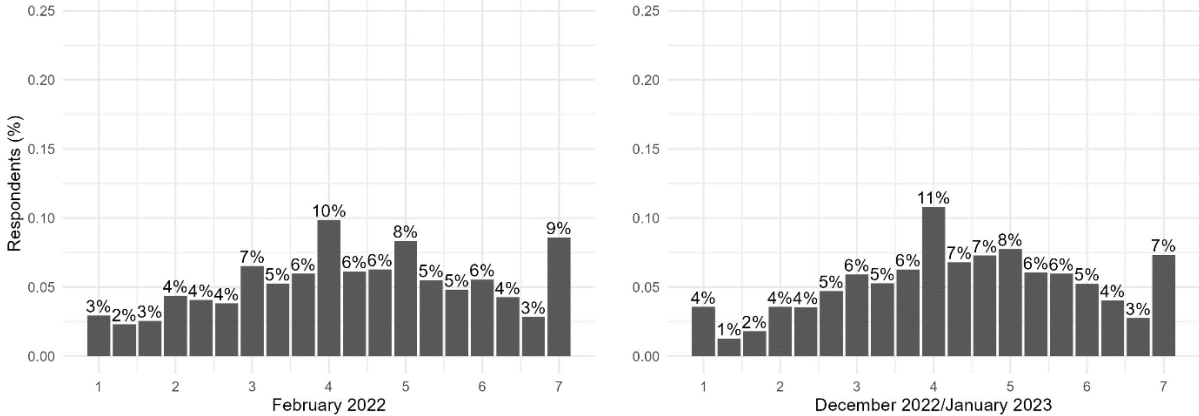
Crisis/survey wave	Political trust group	Ideology	N	Respondents share
February 2022 – COVID-19	High trust	Left	102	0.13
		Center	654	0.84
		Right	23	0.03
	Low trust	Left	80	0.09
		Center	734	0.86
		Right	38	0.04
	No trust	Left	39	0.10
		Center	311	0.76
		Right	57	0.14
December 2022/January 2023 –Energy	High trust	Left	151	0.16
		Center	745	0.79
		Right	53	0.06
	Low trust	Left	140	0.11
		Center	1076	0.84
		Right	63	0.05
	No trust	Left	49	0.08
		Center	457	0.77
		Right	90	0.15

Figure 13: Distribution of ideological positions among political trust groups, February 2022 and December 2022/January 2023



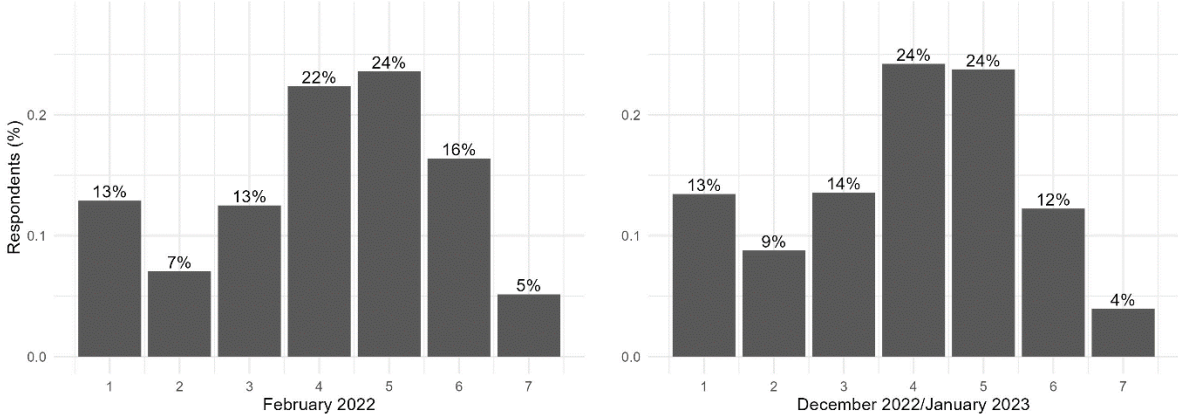
A.5 Political dimensions of political trust

Figure 14: Distribution of political deprivation across the two crises, 2022 and 2023



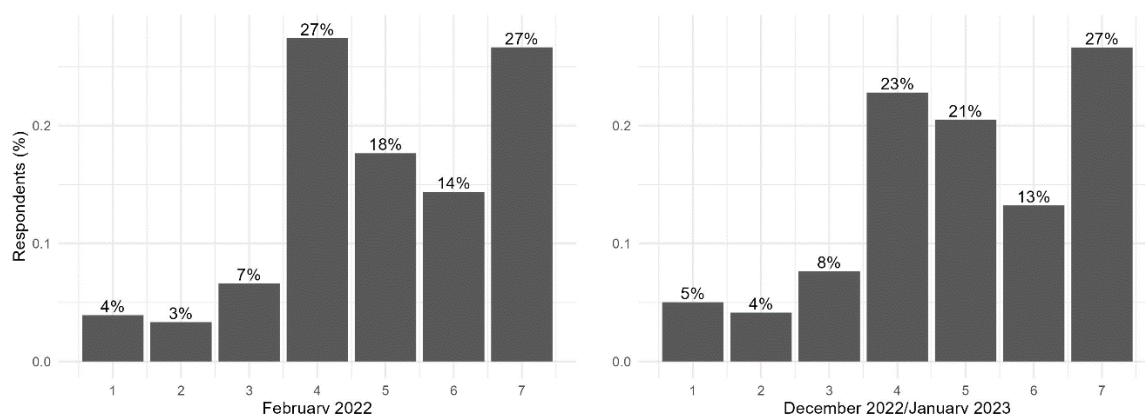
Note: Higher values indicate more political deprivation; average index.

Figure 15: Distribution of satisfaction with democracy across the two crises, 2022 and 2023



Note: Higher values indicate more satisfaction with democracy.

Figure 16: Distribution of pro-direct democracy attitudes across the two crises, 2022 and 2023



Note: Higher values indicate more support for direct democracy.

Table 13: Full regression models of Table 2 in the main manuscript

Crisis	Dependent variables:					
	Political Deprivation		Satisfaction with Democracy		Pro Direct Democracy	
	COVID-19 (1)	Energy (2)	COVID-19 (3)	Energy (4)	COVID-19 (5)	Energy (6)
Gender	0.11* (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.13** (0.05)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.16** (0.06)
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Education high	-0.64*** (0.08)	-0.46*** (0.07)	0.26*** (0.07)	0.19*** (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.08)
Education middle	-0.25*** (0.07)	-0.23*** (0.06)	0.08 (0.07)	0.10* (0.06)	0.11 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.08)
Cur. econ. situation	-0.33*** (0.04)	-0.30*** (0.03)	0.18*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.08** (0.03)
Children	0.08 (0.06)	0.18*** (0.06)	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.10* (0.05)	0.12 (0.07)	0.28*** (0.07)
Eastern Germany	0.15** (0.07)	0.12* (0.06)	-0.16*** (0.06)	-0.11* (0.06)	0.20** (0.08)	0.13 (0.08)
Left-Right	0.11*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Trust Fed. Gov.	-0.22*** (0.01)	-0.19*** (0.01)	0.38*** (0.01)	0.35*** (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)
Constant	6.20*** (0.22)	5.90*** (0.18)	1.70*** (0.20)	2.00*** (0.16)	4.70*** (0.26)	5.20*** (0.21)
Observations	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.35	0.29	0.55	0.49	0.13	0.08
Adjusted R ²	0.35	0.28	0.54	0.48	0.13	0.08
Residual Std. Error	1.30 (df = 2025)	1.30 (df = 2808)	1.10 (df = 2025)	1.20 (df = 2808)	1.50 (df = 2025)	1.60 (df = 2808)
F Statistic	123.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	125.00*** (df = 9; 2808)	271.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	296.00*** (df = 9; 2808)	33.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	29.00*** (df = 9; 2808)

Note:

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

A.6 Analysis of main results for political trust in the parliament

Figure 17: Behavioural consequences of political distrust in parliament

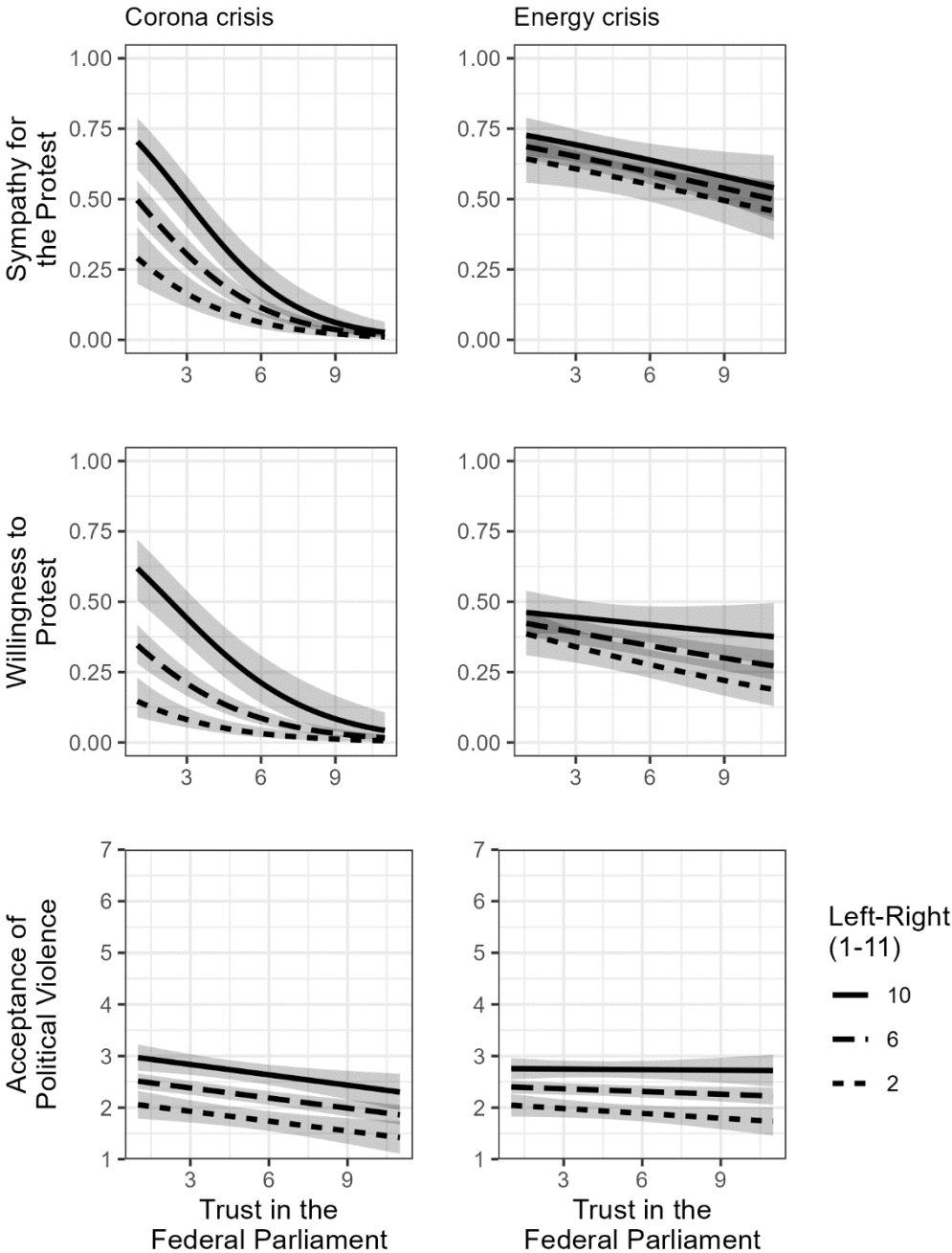


Table 14: Regression analysis of Figure 17 in Appendix A.6

	<i>Dependent variables:</i>					
	Sympathy for the protest (logit)		Willingness to protest (logit)		Acceptance of political violence (OLS)	
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)	COVID-19 crisis (3)	Energy crisis (4)	COVID-19 crisis (5)	Energy crisis (6)
Gender	-0.44*** (0.13)	-0.14 (0.08)	-0.24* (0.14)	-0.33*** (0.08)	-0.45*** (0.06)	-0.41*** (0.05)
Age	-14.00*** (3.30)	-5.80** (2.50)	-16.00*** (3.70)	-11.00*** (2.40)	-11.00*** (1.60)	-22.00*** (1.50)
Age2	-7.60** (3.00)	6.60*** (2.30)	-4.90 (3.40)	2.30 (2.20)	1.00 (1.40)	2.10 (1.40)
Education high	0.75*** (0.17)	0.36*** (0.11)	0.32* (0.19)	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.40*** (0.07)
Education middle	0.22 (0.15)	0.28*** (0.10)	0.05 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.24*** (0.07)
Cur. econ. situation	0.03 (0.07)	-0.17*** (0.05)	0.03 (0.08)	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.09** (0.04)	0.05* (0.03)
Children	0.36*** (0.13)	0.32*** (0.09)	0.43*** (0.15)	0.45*** (0.09)	0.05 (0.07)	0.05 (0.06)
Eastern Germany	0.24* (0.14)	0.05 (0.11)	0.31** (0.16)	0.21** (0.10)	0.18** (0.07)	0.16** (0.07)
Left-Right	0.23*** (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.28*** (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)
Trust Parliament	-0.34*** (0.08)	-0.07* (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.09)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Left-Right x Trust	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Constant	-0.84* (0.48)	1.20*** (0.33)	-2.10*** (0.55)	0.47 (0.32)	2.80*** (0.26)	2.40*** (0.21)
Observations	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
Log Likelihood	-859.00	-1,718.00	-715.00	-1,766.00	-	-
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,741.00	3,461.00	1,454.00	3,556.00	-	-
R ²	-	-	-	-	0.10	0.11
Adjusted R ²	-	-	-	-	0.09	0.11
Residual Std. Error	-	-	-	-	1.40 (df = 2023)	1.40 (df = 2806)
F Statistic	-	-	-	-	20.00*** (df = 11; 2023)	33.00*** (df = 11; 2806)

Note:

$p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Table 15: Socio-demographic and political determinants of trust in parliament

	Trust in the Parliament			
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)	COVID-19 crisis (3)	Energy crisis (4)
Female/diverse	-0.28** (0.13)	-0.54*** (0.10)	-0.31** (0.12)	-0.60*** (0.10)
Age	12.00*** (3.20)	9.90*** (3.00)	16.00*** (3.10)	13.00*** (2.90)
Age2	6.00** (2.90)	12.00*** (2.80)	3.60 (2.80)	8.60*** (2.60)
Education high	1.30*** (0.17)	1.00*** (0.14)	1.00*** (0.17)	0.63*** (0.13)
Education middle	0.10 (0.16)	0.20 (0.13)	0.02 (0.15)	0.06 (0.12)
Cur. econ. situation	0.71*** (0.07)	0.77*** (0.06)	0.63*** (0.07)	0.70*** (0.05)
Children	-0.00 (0.14)	0.07 (0.11)	0.04 (0.13)	0.11 (0.11)
Eastern Germany	-0.43*** (0.15)	-0.46*** (0.13)	-0.29** (0.15)	-0.29** (0.12)
Left-Right	-22.00*** (2.80)	-24.00*** (2.70)		
Left-Right 2	-5.80** (2.80)	-11.00*** (2.70)		
Immigration			-0.37*** (0.03)	-0.40*** (0.03)
New cultural liberalism			0.17*** (0.04)	0.19*** (0.03)
Economic liberalism			-0.25*** (0.04)	-0.24*** (0.03)
Constant	3.00*** (0.32)	3.20*** (0.25)	5.00*** (0.44)	5.40*** (0.33)
Observations	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.15	0.16	0.21	0.24
Adjusted R ²	0.14	0.15	0.20	0.24
Residual Std. Error	2.80 (df = 2024)	2.70 (df = 2807)	2.70 (df = 2023)	2.60 (df = 2806)
F Statistic	35.00*** (df = 10; 2024)	52.00*** (df = 10; 2807)	48.00*** (df = 11; 2023)	81.00*** (df = 11; 2806)

Note:

p<0.1; *p*<0.05; *p*<0.01

Table 16: Regression analysis of Figure 2 (upper panel) – Sympathy with the protest

	Trust in parliament	
	COVID-19 crisis (1) (1)	Energy crisis (2) (2)
Female/diverse	-0.19 (0.11)	-0.40*** (0.09)
Age	4.50 (2.80)	5.90** (2.70)
Age2	2.40 (2.50)	6.10** (2.50)
Education high	0.77*** (0.15)	0.56*** (0.12)
Education middle	0.08 (0.14)	0.02 (0.12)
Cur. econ. situation	0.43*** (0.06)	0.51*** (0.05)
Children	-0.06 (0.12)	-0.02 (0.10)
Eastern Germany	-0.06 (0.14)	-0.16 (0.12)
not represented	-3.30*** (0.20)	-3.00*** (0.17)
don't know	-1.80*** (0.20)	-1.80*** (0.16)
AfD	-4.10*** (0.21)	-3.90*** (0.17)
Die Linke	-1.50*** (0.25)	-1.90*** (0.23)
FDP	-1.30*** (0.23)	-0.99*** (0.23)
CDU/CSU	-0.27 (0.20)	-0.72*** (0.16)
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	-0.07 (0.21)	0.21 (0.17)
Constant	5.40*** (0.32)	5.50*** (0.25)
Observations	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.33	0.33
Adjusted R ²	0.33	0.33
Residual Std. Error	2.50 (df = 2019)	2.40 (df = 2802)
F Statistic	67.00*** (df = 15; 2019)	93.00*** (df = 15; 2802)

Note: $p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Figure 18: Political trust in parliament across partisan group based on Table 13

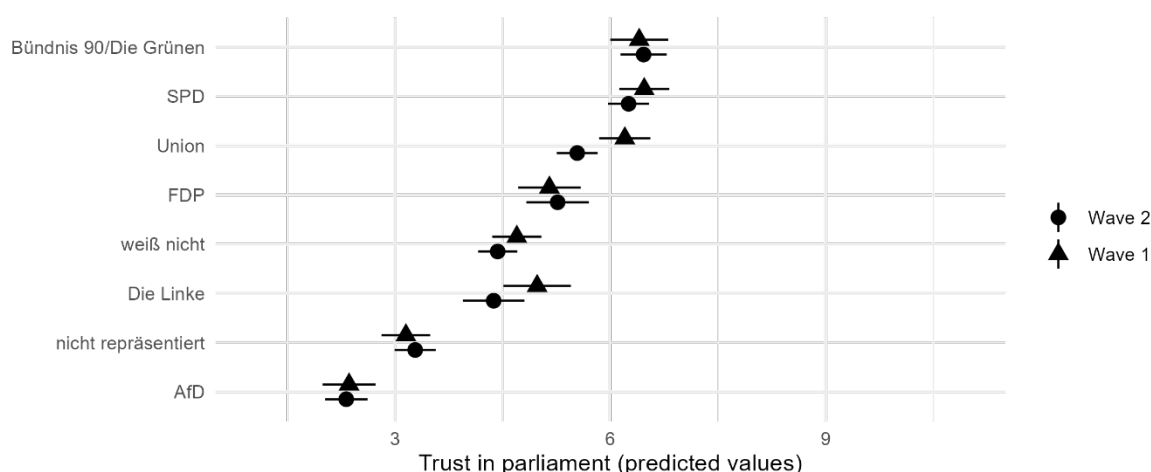


Table 17: Attitudinal correlates of political trust in parliament

	Dependent variables:					
	Political Deprivation		Satisfaction with Democracy		Pro Direct Democracy	
	COVID-19 crisis (1)	Energy crisis (2)	COVID-19 crisis (3)	Energy crisis (4)	COVID-19 crisis (5)	Energy crisis (6)
Female/diverse	0.10 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.16*** (0.05)	-0.12* (0.07)	-0.18*** (0.06)
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Education high	-0.58*** (0.08)	-0.43*** (0.07)	0.15** (0.07)	0.16*** (0.06)	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.08)
Education middle	-0.22*** (0.08)	-0.22*** (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	0.13 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.08)
Cur. econ. situation	-0.33*** (0.04)	-0.29*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.03)	0.18*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.08** (0.03)
Children	0.08 (0.06)	0.16*** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)	0.12 (0.07)	0.28*** (0.07)
Eastern Germany	0.15** (0.07)	0.12* (0.06)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.11* (0.06)	0.20** (0.08)	0.12 (0.08)
Left-Right	0.12*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Trust Parliament	-0.22*** (0.01)	-0.21*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.36*** (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)
Constant	6.10*** (0.22)	6.00*** (0.17)	1.80*** (0.19)	1.90*** (0.16)	4.60*** (0.26)	5.20*** (0.22)
Observations	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818	2,035	2,818
R ²	0.35	0.30	0.56	0.49	0.12	0.09
Adjusted R ²	0.35	0.30	0.55	0.48	0.12	0.08
Residual Std. Error	1.30 (df = 2025)	1.30 (df = 2808)	1.10 (df = 2025)	1.20 (df = 2808)	1.50 (df = 2025)	1.60 (df = 2808)
F Statistic	121.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	132.00*** (df = 9; 2808)	281.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	296.00*** (df = 9; 2808)	32.00*** (df = 9; 2025)	29.00*** (df = 9; 2808)

Note:

$p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$