

Types of democrats

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In the last years several pundits and academics have painted an alarmist picture of the decay of western democracy. In this paper, we propose a very simple typology of democrats that can help observers to get an idea of one particular aspect of the state of democracy – the citizens’ democratic attitudes and their implications for voting behaviour. We illustrate the usefulness of this typology by applying it to three key issues about the state of democracy in Europe – regional variations of democratic support, age-related variations of democratic support, and implications of democratic support for the citizens vote. The results suggest that we should not dramatize the situation of democracy in Europe, even if there is widespread democratic dissatisfaction.

Keywords: Democracy, Deconsolidation, Dissatisfaction, Voting Behaviour, Europe

The democratic ‘Zeitgeist’ is becoming more pessimistic (Brunkert *et al.* 2019) and the current public debate about democracy suggests that liberal democracy is in crisis. In Europe, the rise of populism from the right and the left, the imposition of austerity on southern European countries by the Troika, Brexit and the illiberal measures taken by governments in Hungary and Poland are interpreted by pundits – academics as well as public intellectuals – as so many signs of a crisis of democracy. In a widely cited recent paper, Foa and Mounk (2016) claim that citizens in western democracies in general are increasingly turning away

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from democracy³. Based on World Value Survey data they maintain (p. 7) that citizens ‘have become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives.’ Moreover, they claim that younger cohorts are particularly affected by the decline in support for democracy. They are not the only academic observers who voice concern: Larry Diamond (2015) writes about ‘a democratic recession’ and Marc Plattner (2017) sees democracies ‘on the defensive’. More recently, the tone has become more alarmist still: Sasha Mounk (2018) published a treatise entitled ‘The people vs democracy’, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018) discussed ‘How democracies die’ and David Runciman (2018) similarly wrote about ‘How democracy ends’. Is this time different? Are we heading for a truly transformative crisis of western democracy?

To answer this kind of questions, we first need to get the facts right. And in order to get the facts right, we need better indicators than those which are currently used to assess the state of western democracy. In this paper, we propose a very simple typology of democrats, which can help observers to get an idea of one particular aspect of the state of democracy – the citizens’ democratic attitudes and their implications for voting behaviour. While we agree with Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018: 19) that the citizens’ democratic values do not provide a guarantee for the survival of democracy, following Verba and Almond (1963) we believe that such values constitute a necessary condition for democracy’s survival, as well as a key constraint of possible relapses into authoritarianism. Although people cannot shape at will the government they possess, the governments cannot ignore the will of the people in the long run. We shall propose two ways of operationalizing this typology – a generic version and a more sophisticated version. We shall illustrate the usefulness of this typology by applying it

³ E.g. Martin Wolf, The politics of hope against the politics of fear, FT, May 1, 2019.

to three key issues about the state of democracy in Europe – regional variations of democratic support, age-related variations of democratic support, and implications of democratic support for the citizens vote. As we shall see, the results are by and large comparable, whether we use the rough and ready or the more sophisticated versions of the typology. Moreover, the results suggest that we should not dramatize the situation of democracy in Europe, even if there is widespread democratic dissatisfaction.

A simple typology of democrats

Our typology builds on an idea that is far from new. Some time ago, Pippa Norris (1999) observed a growing tension between democratic ideals and democratic reality, which did not go unnoticed among the citizens. Against the background of this tension, she introduced the notion of ‘critical citizens’ or ‘disenchanted democrats’, i.e. of citizens ‘who value democracy as an ideal yet who remain dissatisfied with the performance of their political system, and particularly the core institutions of representative government’ (p. 269). Hans-Dieter Klingemann (1999), in the same volume, referred to this type of citizens as ‘dissatisfied democrats’, and Russell Dalton (2004) later took up this concept as well. The discrepancy between democratic ideals and evaluations of democratic reality became the key idea when Norris (2011) revisited the critical citizens in her book on the ‘Democratic Deficit’ some years later. Similarly, Klingemann (2014) took up the idea again in a systematic comparison between satisfied and dissatisfied democrats. However, neither Norris, nor Klingemann, nor anybody else to the best of our knowledge followed up on the key idea of combining support of democratic ideals and democratic evaluations – that is, specific and diffuse support in Easton’s (1975) terminology⁴ – to create an exhaustive typology of

⁴ For a detailed account of Easton’s distinction see Magalhães (2014: 78–80).

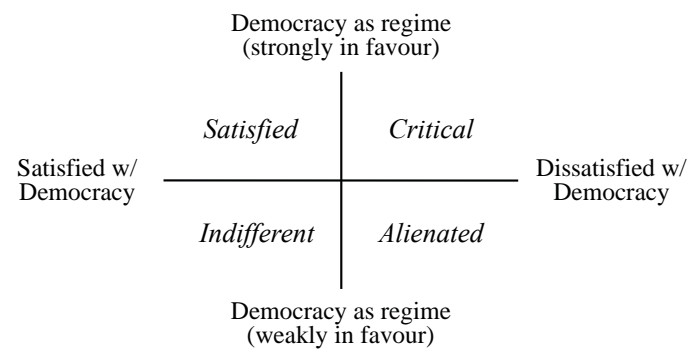
democrats. Norris focused on the discrepancy between the two in her work, and Klingemann chose to focus on convinced democrats, neglecting the less convinced among them in his comparison.

We propose to build on this key distinction and to combine support of democratic ideals and democratic evaluations to create a simple, four-fold typology of democrats, which is presented in *Figure 1*. In terms of support of the democratic ideals, we distinguish between citizens who are strongly in favour of the democratic regime and those who only weakly favour such a regime. Contrary to Klingemann, who uses a democracy-autocracy preference index to operationalize support for democracy, we do not intend to base our typology on the contrast between democratic and autocratic regimes, but consider support for democracy as a dimension that runs from strong to only lukewarm support of this particular political regime. In terms of democratic evaluations, in line with Klingemann, we distinguish between citizens who are satisfied with the way democracy works in their own country and those who are dissatisfied with the way it works. Combining the two dimensions, we get four types: the two polar types are the *satisfied democrats* who embrace the democratic ideals and who are satisfied with the democratic reality in their own country, and what we call the *alienated democrats* who are only weak supporters of democratic regimes and who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their own country. We use the notion of ‘alienation’ to characterize the type that stands opposite to the satisfied democrats in order to underline that these citizens are not only dissatisfied with the really existing democracy, but also not very convinced by the democratic ideal. There are two intermediary types: on the one hand, there are those citizens who are only weakly supportive of democratic ideals, but who are quite satisfied with the democratic reality that they get. These are what we call the *indifferent democrats*. They do not much care about democratic ideals, and may not notice that the democratic reality falls short of the democratic ideal. Finally, there are the *critical democrats*,

which correspond to Norris' 'critical citizens' and to Klingemann's 'dissatisfied democrats'.

These are the citizens who embrace the democratic ideals, but are not satisfied with the implementation of these ideals in their own country.

Figure 1: Typology of Democrats



Operationalization of the typology

As already indicated, we propose two ways to operationalize the typology. We shall use the sixth round of the European Social Survey (ESS), which went into the field in 2012, for these purposes. It is important to note, however, that the generic version of the typology can also be operationalized by other surveys, such as the World Value Survey (WVS), although not with the other rounds of the ESS, which lack a question for democratic regime support. For the generic version, we use two items – one for regime support and one for satisfaction with democracy. In the ESS6, regime support is measured by a straightforward question: 'how important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?' The response categories vary from 0 (not important at all) to 10 (extremely important). The answers to this question are highly skewed: almost half (47.5 percent) of the ESS6 respondents opted for the 10. These are the people whom we consider as strong supporters of democracy. In making this choice, we follow the analyses in Ferrín and Kriesi (2016), but also in Foa and Mounk (2016). One can choose other thresholds for democratic support, but results become less clear-cut if one does not opt for the 10. For satisfaction with democracy, the ESS6 relies on the well-known SWD question: 'On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way

democracy works in [country]?’ The response categories vary again from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). To distinguish between the satisfied and dissatisfied democrats, we distinguish between the responses above 5 and up to and including 5. As shown by Linde and Ekman (2003), the SWD question is not an indicator for the support of the principles of democracy, but for an assessment of how democracy works in practice: it is about the gap between what “should be” and what “is” (Heyne 2019). While the SWD question is very widely used, the importance question is not often applied. Instead, a variety of other questions aiming to get at regime support exist. The WVS for example uses the ‘Churchill’ question, which requires a reaction to the statement ‘Democracy may have problems but it’s better than any other form of government’.⁵

The sophisticated version of the typology builds on the democracy module of the ESS6. This module contained a battery of questions about the support of different aspects of democracy as well as a corresponding battery for the evaluation of these aspects. The support questions ask for the importance of these aspects, while the evaluation questions ask to what extent these aspects apply in the respective country⁶. All questions have an 11-point response scale ranging from 0 (not important at all for democracy in general) to 10 (extremely important for democracy in general) for the support, and from 0 (does not apply at all) to 10 (applies completely) for the evaluation. Following Kriesi *et al.* (2016), we selected 11 of the items related to the model of liberal democracy for which we created the scale they proposed,

⁵ Several authors have discussed at length the question of cross-country comparability of indicators for attitudes towards democracy (e.g. Lagos 2003; Ariely and Davidov 2011). However, this is a minor problem in the present case given that we rely only on a European sample and on two individual questions and not on composite indicators, which should minimize cross-country comparability issues.

⁶ The question about the importance of the different aspects read: ‘Please tell me, how important you think it is for democracy in general.... that national elections are free and fair? The evaluation question read: ‘Please tell me to what extent you think each of the following statements applies in [country]?’

and for the evaluations we calculated the corresponding average response⁷. These measures constitute our indices for support of liberal democracy – which ought to capture the overall level of support despite cross-country differences in its meaning (see Quaranta 2018) – and for satisfaction with liberal democracy. To arrive at our typology based on the combination of the two indices, we cut each of them at their mean.

Table 1 presents the overall distribution of the sample of ESS6 respondents on the four types for the two versions of operationalization. The two distributions are quite similar, except for the fact that there are more critical citizens in terms of the more sophisticated version based on the liberal democracy model. As it turns out, citizens of poor quality democracies tend to attribute more importance to the component elements of liberal democracy than to democracy in general, which is why there is somewhat more support for democracy according to the liberal democracy measure, even if dissatisfaction with democracy is still widespread according to both measures. However, the overall distributions are not that important for the application of these typologies. What really matters is whether the typology allows elucidating pertinent questions regarding democracy.

Table 1: Typology of democrats – two versions of operationalization

Type of Democrats	Generic	Liberal Democracy
Satisfied	32.6	30.4
Indifferent	25.7	24.4
Critical	16.5	23.5
Alienated	25.2	21.8
Total	100.0	100.0
n	44,920	54,673

Distribution of the types in the different European regions

The first question we would like to clarify using the typology is the question of regional

⁷ More specifically, we chose the aspects which refer to the items E1-E7, E10, E12, E14 and E16 in ESS6.

differences in Europe. For this purpose, we shall distinguish between five regions. The Nordic countries constitute the first region. The rest of north-western Europe includes both the Anglo-Saxon countries – Ireland and the UK – and the north-western continental countries, which participated in the ESS6 – Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Southern Europe includes Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Unfortunately, Greece did not participate in this round of the ESS. There are no less than nine countries from central-eastern Europe – Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The fifth region refers to hybrid democracies, a category that includes Russia, Ukraine and Kosovo, and which can serve as a benchmark.

Table 2 presents the distribution of the types of democrats in the five regions according to the two versions of operationalization. Overall the distributive pattern that emerges is quite similar according to both versions, which is a first indication that the rough and ready generic indicators are valid proxies for more sophisticated measurements. Strikingly, in Nordic countries and continental/Anglo-Saxon countries, satisfied and indifferent democrats predominate, while in the other three regions critical and alienated democrats are the dominant categories.

Table 2: Distribution of types of democrats in five European regions: percentages

a) Generic version

Type of Democrats	Nordic	Continental/ Anglo-Saxon	Southern	Central- Eastern	Hybrid democracies	Total
Satisfied	62.1	39.1	22.7	19.2	8.2	31.4
Indifferent	27.0	33.4	15.2	24.0	22.6	26.1
Critical	5.4	9.8	28.8	22.3	22.1	16.5
Alienated	5.5	17.7	33.4	34.5	47.1	26.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	7,249	12,446	4,853	13,606	4,700	42,854

b) Liberal democratic version

Type of Democrats	Nordic	Continental/ Anglo-Saxon	Southern	Central- Eastern	Hybrid democracies	Total
Satisfied	47.9	35.2	26.0	25.1	11.0	30.1
Indifferent	39.1	34.9	11.8	17.6	8.9	24.2
Critical	5.3	10.9	33.3	32.0	45.9	23.5
Alienated	7.7	19.0	28.9	25.3	34.1	22.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	8,070	15,047	6,116	16,975	5,957	52,165

In the extreme case of hybrid regimes there are virtually no satisfied democrats. In these countries, more than two-thirds of the citizens are either critical or alienated democrats. In southern and central-eastern Europe, the situation is less dramatic, since roughly one fifth of the citizens are satisfied democrats, but together critical and alienated citizens still largely predominate. In southern Europe, the widespread dissatisfaction with democracy is a result of the poor performance of the economy and the governments in these countries during the Great Recession, while dissatisfaction has a chronic character in central-eastern Europe (Kriesi and Hutter 2019: 47–51). The strong presence of critical democrats in these regions suggests that the widespread dissatisfaction with democracy in the respective countries does not necessarily lead their citizens to abandon the democratic ideals, but rather induces them to adopt a critical attitude that combines dissatisfaction with support of the democratic ideals. This outcome vindicates the *‘critical citizens’ hypothesis* (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004; Fuchs and Roller 2006), which claims that dissatisfied democrats may actually demand more, not less democracy, and it contradicts the *‘spill-over’ hypothesis*, which claims that democratic aspirations are adjusted downwards as democratic regimes perform poorly.

There are some differences of detail between the two typologies. Thus, the generic typology sets the Nordic countries clearly apart, given that almost two-thirds of the Nordic citizens are satisfied democrats according to this typology. From the perspective of the typology based on the liberal democratic model, the difference with continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe is less pronounced, since the share of indifferent democrats in Nordic countries is

markedly larger from this perspective. In other words, the Nordics appear to be somewhat less wedded to democratic principles, when asked about them in detail. More than the citizens of other European regions, they seem to be giving stereotypical responses when asked generic questions about democracy. On the other hand, the typology based on liberal democracy sets the hybrid democracies more clearly apart from southern and central-eastern European countries, since no less than 80 percent of the citizens from these countries are dissatisfied with the quality of democracy they get domestically, compared to 57 and 63 percent respectively in central-eastern and southern Europe. In countries of particularly poor democratic quality, drawing attention to the details of democracy not only increases the citizens' support for democratic principles, but also their dissatisfaction with the democratic reality in their own countries

There are, of course, also differences between countries within regions, some of which we shall briefly address based on the liberal-democratic measures. Thus, among the Nordic countries, Sweden has the largest share of satisfied democrats (59.8 percent), followed by Denmark (55.9 percent) and Norway (50.9 percent). In Finland, the corresponding share falls to roughly 30 percent, while Finland has the largest share of indifferent democrats (56.4 percent) of all the countries considered. The shares of indifferent democrats are also high in Norway (41.1 percent), Denmark (35.3 percent) as well as in the small countries of continental Europe (45.5 percent on average in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland). Large parts of the citizens of small west European democracies seem to lack an acute sense of the importance of democratic institutions, which we might attribute to the fact that these democracies have been working well enough to induce their citizens to take these institutions for granted. Indirect support for this conjecture is provided by Iceland, the only Nordic country with a below average share of indifferent democrats (21.8 percent), but sizable shares of critical (21.1 percent) and alienated (13.4 percent) democrats, a pattern that

is easily linked to the catastrophic economic and political consequences of the Great Recession in this particular country.

In continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe, Germany is set apart, because the German share of satisfied democrats reaches Nordic proportions – 55.0 percent in West Germany and still 46.6 percent in East Germany. In East-Germany, the shares of critical and alienated democrats are somewhat higher than in the western part of the country – 18.0 vs 12.6 percent critical democrats and 14.2 vs 9.6 percent alienated democrats, but they are nowhere near the corresponding levels of the countries in central-eastern Europe. A generation after joining the West, the Germans from the former GDR seem to have made up most of the difference in terms of democratic attitudes with respect to the citizens of West-Germany. The Anglo-Saxons largely correspond to the average pattern in this region, but France has a much larger share of alienated democrats (30.4 percent), a share that puts it close to southern Europe. If it were not for its much lower share of critical democrats (17.0 percent, half the corresponding southern European percentage), France ought to have been classified as southern European in terms of our typologies. In some sense, the large French share of alienated democrats we find for 2012 already prefigures the rise of the ‘gilets jaunes’ six years later.

In southern Europe, the dominant type varies as well. In Cyprus satisfied democrats actually predominate (48.2 percent), but it is the alienated democrats who dominate in Portugal (44.5 percent) and the critical democrats who constitute the largest categories in Italy (45.5 percent) and Spain (39.3 percent). The mobilization by the Indignados in Spain and by the Movimento 5 Stelle in Italy, which preceded the ESS6 by only a few months in the case of Spain and coincided with it in the case of Italy, reflect this prevalence of critical democrats. Finally, in central-eastern Europe, the south-eastern countries of Albania and Bulgaria stick out. Compared to the other countries from this region, they have a much larger share of critical democrats (52.4 percent on average), a share that is even larger than the

corresponding share in the hybrid democracies. Indeed, according to the World Bank governance indicators, at the time of the ESS6 the quality of governance in these two countries has been almost as low as in the hybrid democracies.

What is the upshot of this discussion of regional differences for the assessment of the state of democracy in Europe? Three points should be heeded. First of all, there is little reason for preoccupation in the Nordic countries or in continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe. Satisfied democrats predominate together with indifferent democrats, the latter especially in small west European countries. If indifferent democrats lack a keen sense of the importance of living in a democracy, they are nevertheless satisfied with what they get from their democratic regimes and shall not be ready to mobilize against them. Second, the situation is very different in the other regions of Europe, where dissatisfaction with democracy is rampant. However, in these regions there are more critical than alienated democrats, i.e. even if highly dissatisfied with what they get in terms of democracy, large parts of the citizens in these countries strongly support democracy. We can expect the critical democrats to mobilize for a renewal, but not for a suppression of democracy. Third, most preoccupying are the large shares of alienated democrats we find in some countries. These are the groups who are not only dissatisfied with democracy, but also not much attached to democratic regimes.

The types of democrats in the different age groups

Foa and Mounk (2016) in their already cited paper make the claim that citizens increasingly turn away from democracy based on a cross-sectional comparison of the importance of democracy for different age groups. Now, the first thing to note about their dramatic message is that even according to their own presentation of the data, we need to distinguish between the US and Europe. While there is a clear decline of support of democracy in younger age groups in the US, the same does not apply to Europe. For Europe, their data show at best a

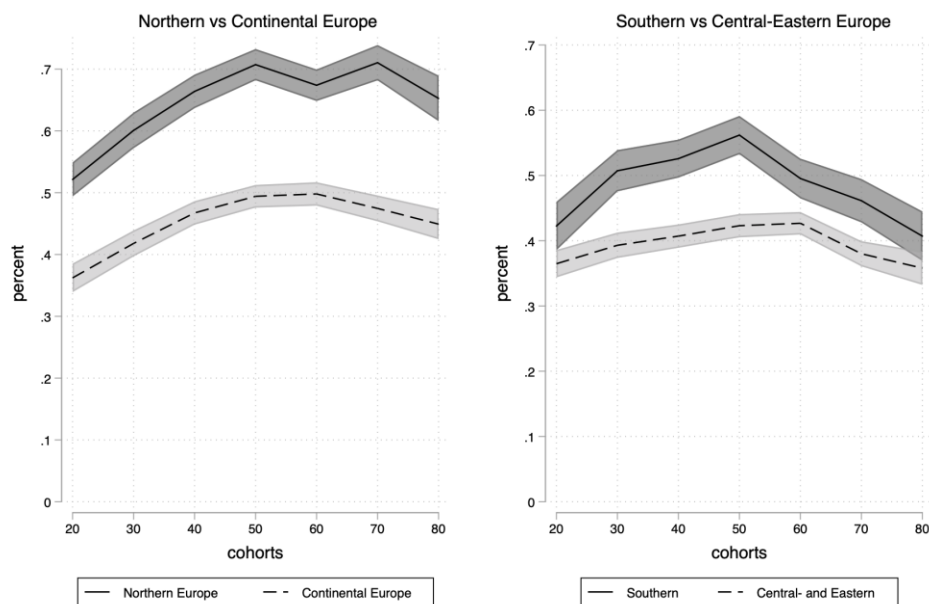
curvilinear relationship with age. Thus, in a reaction to their paper, Inglehart (2016: 18) has interpreted their results largely as ‘a specifically American period effect’. He invokes three points that account for this American effect: the virtual paralysis at the top of the American democracy, massive increases in income inequality, and the disproportionate and growing political influence of billionaires as a result of the extraordinary role played by money in US politics. He points out that existential insecurity undermines democracy, and that existential insecurity has been on the rise among most of the population in the US – especially among the young. The second point to note is that one has to guard against basic technical errors when analysing data such as those used by Foa and Mounk. The errors committed by Foa and Mounk range from exaggerating by cherry-picking cases, improper visual presentations of the survey data and failure to distinguish generational from life-cycle effects (Norris 2017), to neglecting the variable composition of the countries in the aggregate European data from one survey to the other (Voeten 2016). Using the same World Value Survey data, but avoiding such errors, Voeten (2016) finds some evidence that US millennials have grown somewhat more acceptant of non-democratic alternatives, but no evidence that people in consolidated democracies in general (Western democracies – EU15 members, as well as Canada, US, Norway, CH, Australia and NZ, as well as Costa Rica, Cyprus, Japan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Slovenia, Uruguay), have soured on democracy or have become more likely to accept authoritarian institutions as a way to run their countries.

For the analysis of the democratic attitudes of the age-groups, we proceed in three steps. First, we replicate the results of Foa and Mounk by using the two versions of operationalizing support for democracy. The generic version corresponds exactly to the way Foa and Mounk dealt with support for democracy, the sophisticated version is based on the liberal democracy scale we have introduced above. We compare the four regions with democratic regimes in Europe. Challenging Foa and Mounk, Zilinsky (2019) has shown that,

across Europe, there are no age differences in terms of democratic satisfaction. Evidence from the ESS cumulative file covering the period from 2000 to 2016 does not reveal any ‘patterns consistent with the notion that young citizens are less satisfied with democracy than middle-aged or older citizens’ (p. 6). However, the analysis in terms of satisfaction is not comparable with Foa and Mounk’s analysis of democratic support. In this sense, Zilinsky’s results do not speak to the results of Foa and Mounk. Next, we show the contrasts between the two main democratic types by age-group in each region using only the sophisticated operationalization. Finally, we repeat the analysis of step two while controlling for level of education.

Figure 2: Support of democracy by age-group and region

a) Generic version: share of ‘extremely important’ responses



b) Liberal democratic version: scale averages

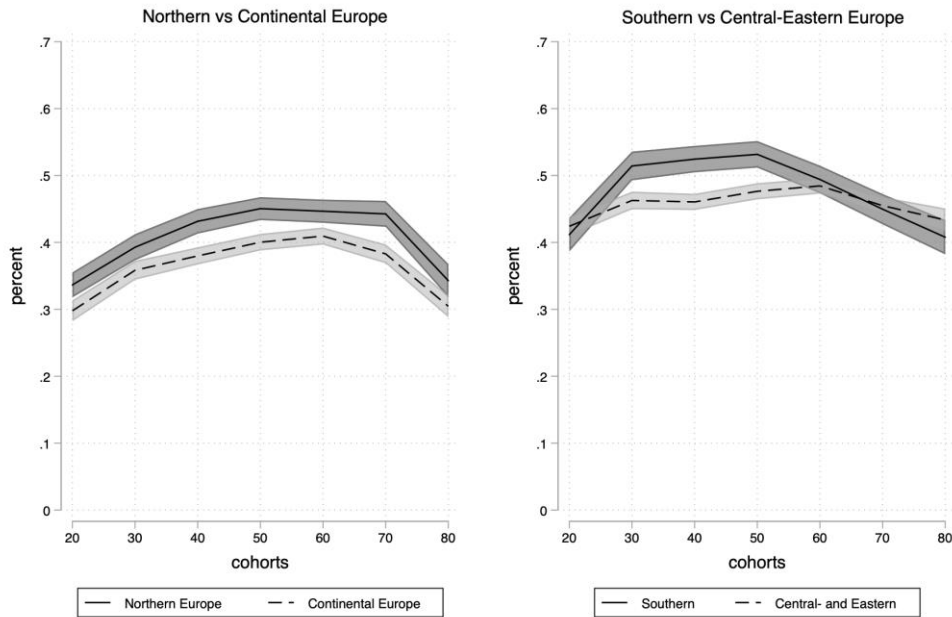


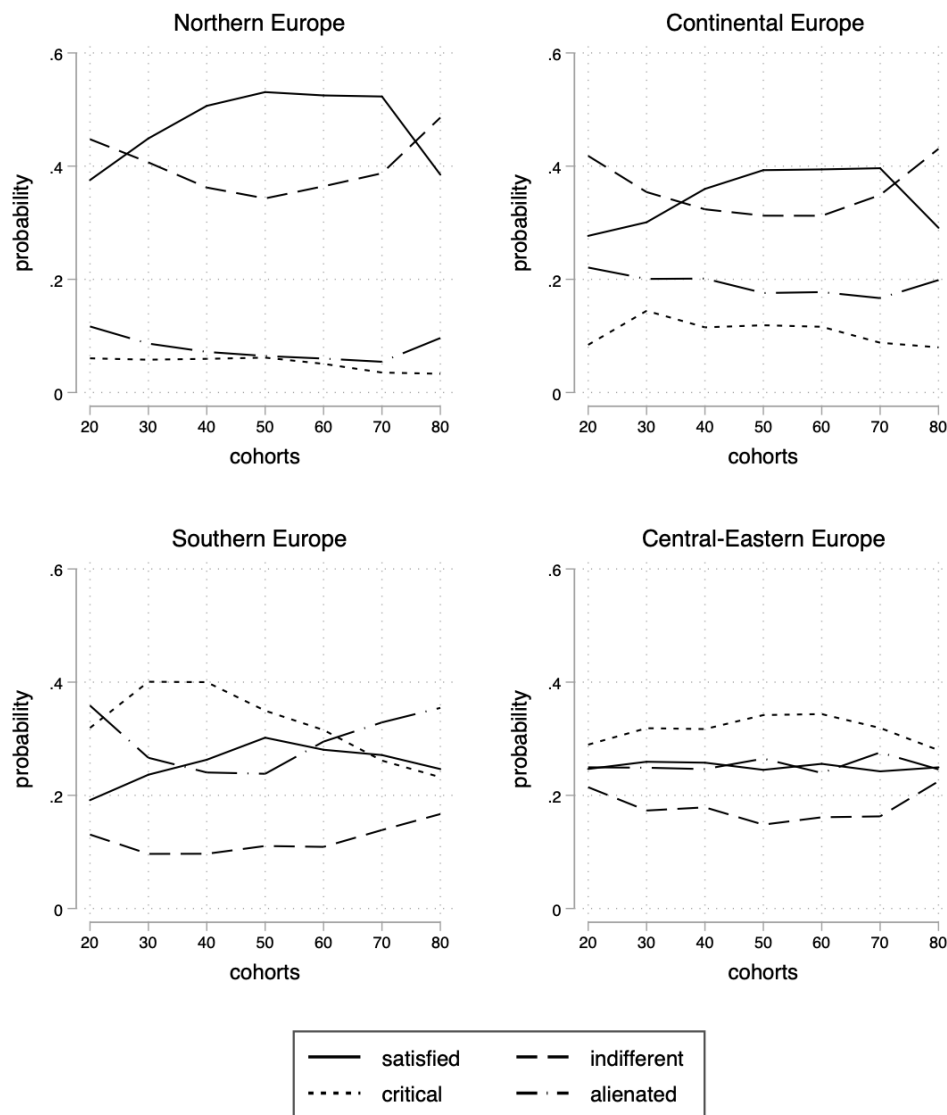
Figure 2 presents the replication of Foa and Mounk’s results for the different European regions. For each region, *Figure 2a* presents the generic version. It refers to the shares of the age-cohorts who believe that it is extremely important to live in a democratic country. As we can see, Foa and Mounk are not entirely wrong: in all four regions, younger cohorts are less enthusiastically embracing the democratic ideal than middle-aged cohorts. However, the relationship is not as strong as it is in the US, and it is somewhat curvilinear in each region, i.e. not only the youngest, but also the oldest cohorts are less enthusiastic about democracy than the middle-aged.

Moreover, the relationship between age groups and democratic support is clearly more pronounced in some regions than in others. It is quite strong in the Nordic countries, at a comparatively high level of overall support for democracy, and in southern Europe at a lower level of overall support. By contrast, this curvilinear relationship is least pronounced in central-eastern Europe. *Figure 2b* presents the average scale values for the more sophisticated version of support for liberal democracy. This version largely replicates the results for the generic version, except that the curvilinear age differences are considerably less pronounced.

Moreover, in a striking reversal of the overall levels of support, the democratic ideals receive (slightly) more overall support in the two regions where the citizens are less satisfied with democracy, southern and central-eastern Europe, than in the Nordic countries and continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe. Asking more precisely about specific aspects of democracy not only narrows the regional differences in support, but even reverses them – yet an indication that the lack of really existing democracy sharpens the attention paid to democratic principles among the citizens.

In step two, we turn to the contrast between the democratic types in each region. In terms of our typology, *Figure 3* shows that in the Nordic countries and in continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe the youngest and the oldest age-groups differ from the middle-aged above all in that

Figure 3: Types of democracy by age group and region



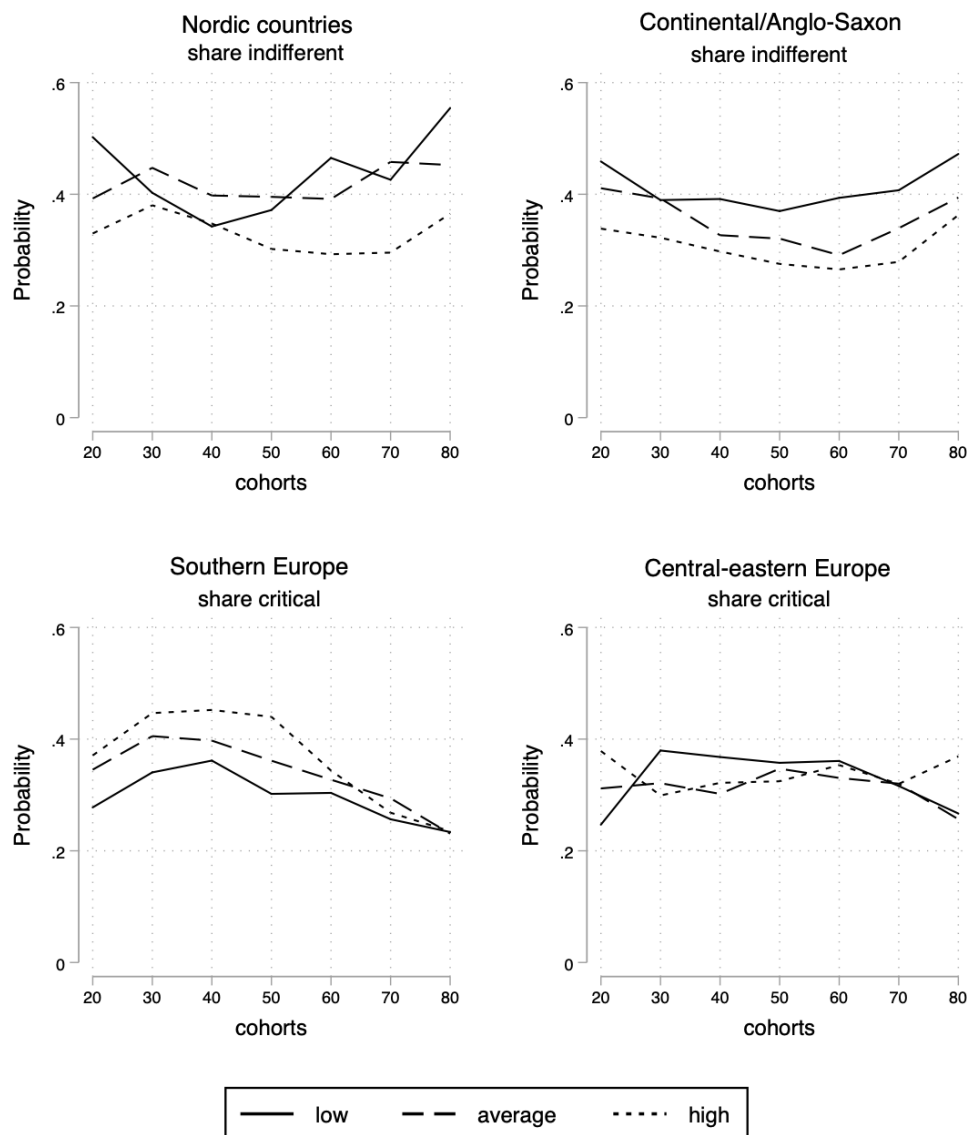
they include a larger share of indifferent democrats. In other words, in these regions, the youngest and the oldest cohorts have to some extent become more complacent about democracy – they are more likely to take democracy for granted than the middle-aged. By contrast, in southern Europe the younger generations are much more critical than the older ones. The most critical age-group in southern Europe are the 25-34 years old, that is the age-group which mobilized most in the massive protests during the Great Recession – in the Greek anti-austerity movement, the Spanish ‘Indignados’ of the 15M movement, the Portuguese ‘Geração à Rasca’ or the Italian M5S. In southern Europe, the very youngest (15-24 year olds) and the oldest age groups are also more alienated than the middling age groups.

Contrary to western Europe, age hardly seems to play a role at all in central-eastern Europe. In this part of Europe, all types of citizens are roughly equally represented in the different age-groups.

In the last step, we consider the shares of major types per region – of the indifferent democrats in the Nordic countries and Continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe, and of the critical democrats in the other two regions, controlling both for age-groups and educational levels – low, average, and high. *Figure 4* presents some important results. With the exception of central-eastern Europe, where demographics generally do not make much of a difference, level of education is an even more important factor in determining democratic attitudes than age.

As we can see from *Figure 4*, it is above all the least educated who are responsible for the curvilinear relationship of the share of indifferent democrats with age in the Nordic countries. At higher levels of education, we hardly find such a pattern in these countries. In continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe, the corresponding curvilinear trend of indifferent democrats with age becomes even insignificant once we control for level of education. In these countries, the less educated are generally more indifferent – across age-groups. By contrast, in southern Europe, where we focus on the share of critical democrats, we find that level of education plays less of a role this kind of democrats: their share generally decreases with age, for all levels of education as shown in *Figure 4*. It is with regard to the share of the alienated citizens that level of education makes a difference in southern Europe (not shown): this share is roughly twice as high (around 40 percent) among the least educated than among those with a high level of education, independently of age.

Figure 4: Types of democrats by age-group, level of education and region: contrasts between major regional types

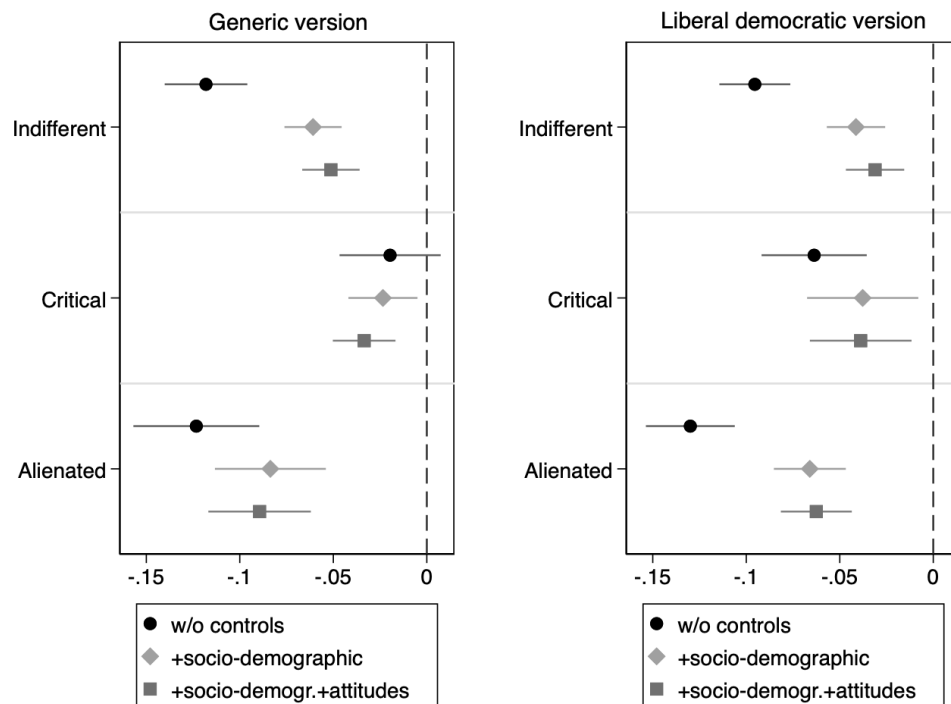


The upshot of these more detailed analyses controlling for age is that the preoccupying age-related trends manifest themselves, if at all, among the least educated in the Nordic countries, but not in other parts of Europe. In general, the lack of democratic support – either in the form of indifference in the North of Europe – or in the form of alienation in the European south – among the least educated is much more preoccupying than any age-related trends.

The types of democrats and their voting behaviour

Our third kind of illustration refers to the consequences of the four types for their voting behaviour. First, we test whether the different types vary with respect to their participation in the vote and more unconventional forms of participation, as well as in their political interest. For this analysis, we use all the countries of the four European regions, and the two versions of operationalization. It is to be expected that the satisfied democrats have a higher propensity to vote than the other types. They both emphatically support democracy and they are satisfied with the way democracy works, i.e. they have two reasons to participate in the exercise of their electoral rights. The alienated democrats should be least likely to participate in the vote, since they have two reasons for not doing so – they are at best weakly supportive of democracy and they are dissatisfied with what they get. *Figure 5* shows that these expectations are generally borne out. Satisfied democrats indeed participate most, and alienated democrats participate least, even if we control for their composition. Indifferent and critical democrats take intermediary positions with indifferent democrats closer to the alienated ones than critical democrats. This pattern of results suggests that it is less dissatisfaction with democracy than lack of emphatic support of democracy that induces citizens to abstain.

Figure 5: Participation in the vote by democratic type: two versions of typology



Note: Results based on Table A1 in the Appendix.

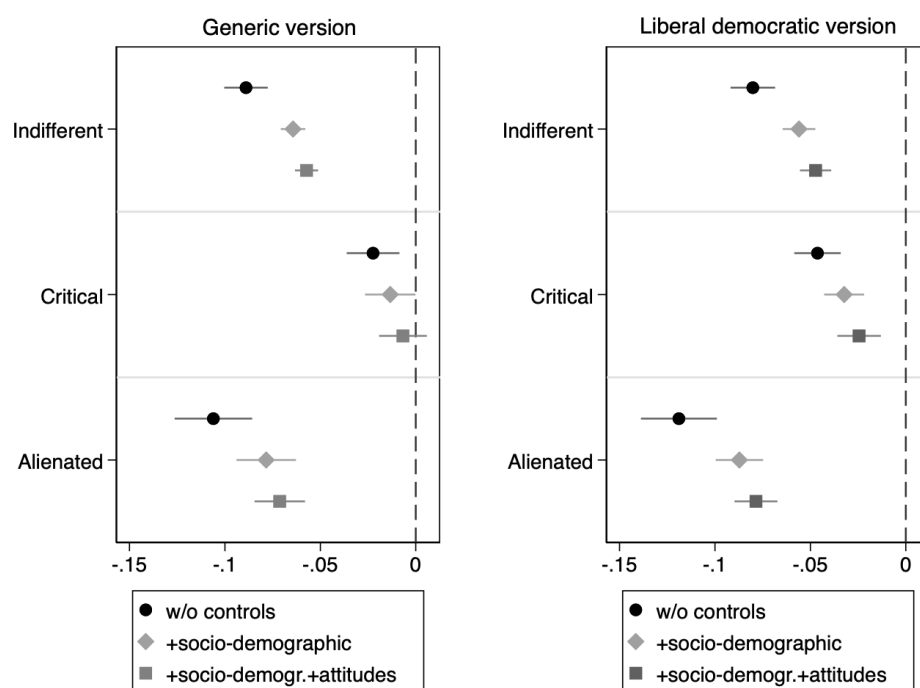
The alienated democrats are also the least likely to participate in other forms than voting in any country, as is shown by their average share of participation in a series of political activities ranging from contacting politicians and working in a political party or other organization to signing a petition, taking part in a lawful public demonstration or in boycotts of certain products⁸. Strikingly, they are the most passive in the country where they constitute the largest group of citizens – Portugal.

The pattern for political interest largely parallels the one for participation in the vote, as is illustrated by *Figure 6*. Compared to the satisfied democrats it is both the indifferent and the alienated democrats who lack political interest. The differences are less pronounced for

⁸ Based on the items B11-B17 we have created an index of political participation: respondents who have participated in at least one of these activities get a value of 1. The overall average of this index is .38.

the critical democrats. Once we control for their composition, they not distinguish themselves from satisfied democrats in the generic version.

Figure 6: Political interest by democratic type: two versions of typology



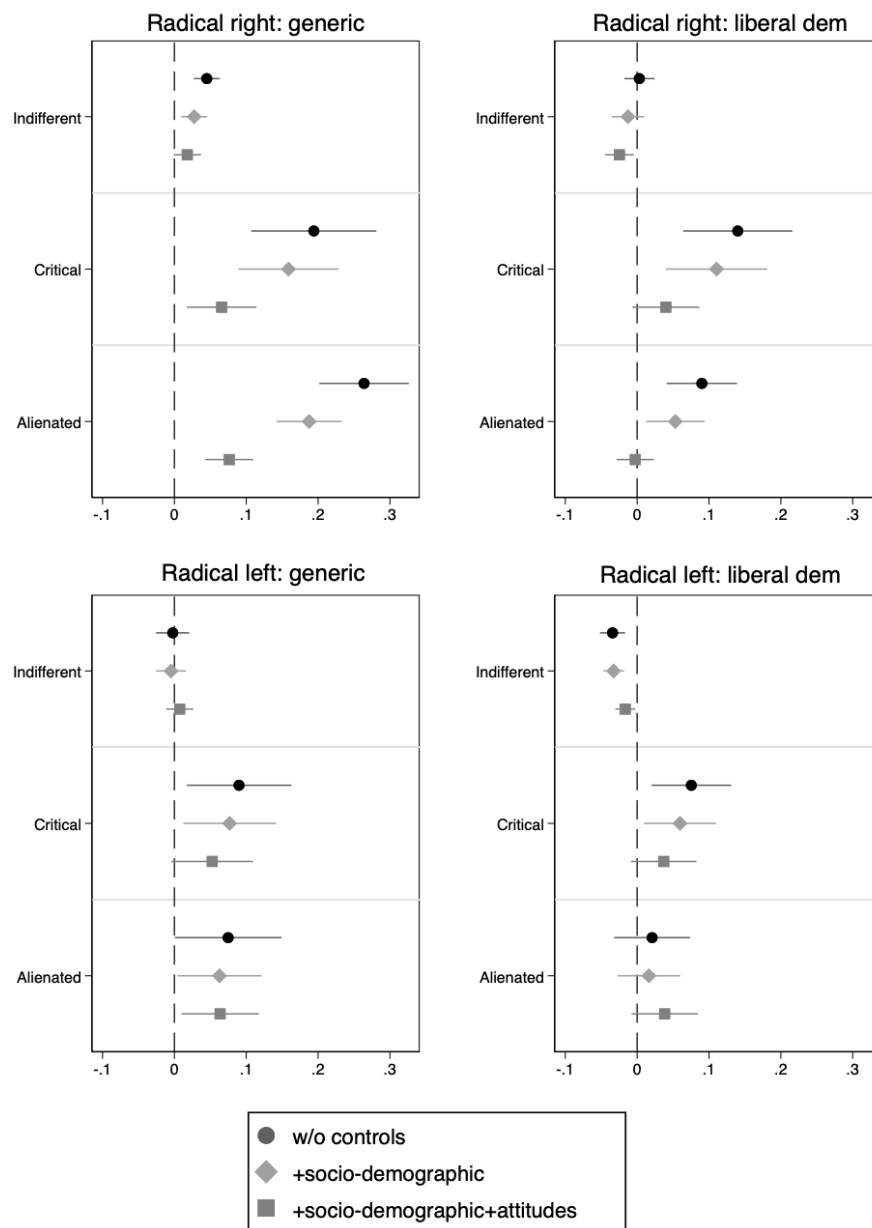
Note: Results based on Table A2 in the Appendix.

Finally, we would like to test whether indifferent, critical and alienated democrats have a higher propensity to vote for parties from the radical right or the radical left as compared to the vote for mainstream parties (from centre left or centre right). For this purpose we only consider western European countries, where these parties have been significantly present in 2012⁹. Figure 7 presents the results for the two types of parties, the two versions of the typology, and for three models for each combination – a bivariate model with only the types as independent variables, a model that adds socio-demographic controls (for age, gender, education, class, income and subjective economic difficulties), and a model that in addition

⁹ A significant presence implies a share of voters in the survey sample of at least 3 percent. In the case of radical right parties, these countries include BE, CH, DK, FI, FR, NL, NO and SE. In the case of the radical left, the corresponding countries are DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, IE, IS, IT, NL, NO, PT, and SE.

also includes political attitudes (about immigration, cultural liberalism, European integration and redistribution). As the figure shows, in the case of the radical right the results are more pronounced for the generic version of the typology. According to this version, all three types are more likely to vote for the radical right than satisfied democrats, but this tendency is most pronounced for the alienated democrats. In the case of the radical left, the effects of the generic version are generally weaker: only the critical and alienated democrats are just barely more likely to vote for the radical left. Applying the liberal democratic version of the typology, the pattern for the two types of radical parties is very similar. In both cases, the critical democrats are more likely to vote for them as do the alienated for the radical right, while the indifferent democrats are actually less likely to vote for them than satisfied democrats. Importantly, the propensity of the different types to vote for/against radical parties is largely reduced once we control for socio-demographics and political attitudes for both versions. This is to suggest that, to a large extent, it is the variable composition of the democratic types in terms of socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics which is primarily responsible for their varying degree of opting for radical parties, and not their democratic attitudes per se.

Figure 7: voting for radical right and radical left parties of the four types: two versions of typology



Note: Results based on Tables A3 and A4 in the Appendix.

Discussion and conclusion

We have introduced a very simple typology of democrats based on the notion that support of democratic ideals and dissatisfaction with democratic reality may combine in different ways, and we have proposed two versions to operationalize this typology – a generic version and a more sophisticated version based on the liberal democratic model. From a practical point of

view it is reassuring that the two broadly lead to the same results, which means that it is possible to operationalize this typology with only two questions, versions of which are quite widely used in comparative survey research. We have also introduced three kinds of illustrative results that together speak to the alarmist crisis talk of some concerned observers. First of all, our regional comparisons have shown that there is little reason for preoccupation in the Nordic countries and in continental/Anglo-Saxon Europe. In these regions, satisfied democrats and indifferent democrats predominate. Although indifferent democrats are not emphatically embracing democratic ideals, they are satisfied with what they get, they are politically rather uninterested and rather inactive, and unlikely to support radical challenging parties if they vote at all. Indifferent democrats in the Nordic countries are particularly numerous among the least educated of the younger age groups, which is the only relevant age-related difference we were able to uncover.

In southern and central-eastern Europe, the situation is quite different to the extent that democratic dissatisfaction is much more widespread in these regions. Accordingly, critical and alienated democrats predominate in the respective countries. This does, however, not mean that democratic support is lacking in these regions. Actually, in terms of liberal democracy, democratic support appears to be even more widespread in countries of poor democratic quality and deep democratic dissatisfaction. In these countries, the large number of critical democrats demands democratic renewal in the name of the democratic ideal. Controlling for their composition, critical democrats are only a bit less active and interested in politics than satisfied democrats. However, they are more likely than satisfied democrats to vote for challenger parties from the left and the right, in line with their claims for political renewal. Given that they are firmly supportive of democracy, this should not be a cause for major concern.

The large share of alienated democrats especially among the least educated in southern Europe is the most preoccupying of all our illustrative results. Alienated democrats are least likely to vote and to participate in other forms of political activities and they are the least interested in politics, even if we control for their composition. They not only do not much care about democracy, they are also dissatisfied with what they get and shun political activity as a consequence. They are not complacent about democracy like many of the citizens in the Nordic countries and in north-western Europe more generally. According to the generic version of the typology, they are the type most likely to vote for the radical right, if they get a chance to do so. Their vote for the radical right is more preoccupying, given that they have no particular attachment to democratic ideals. In 2012, at the time of the ESS6, they did not yet have much possibility to vote for a radical right party in the European South. In the meantime, this has, however, been changing: the Italian Lega has been rising from near extinction, and in Spain a new radical right party under name of Vox has emerged.

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