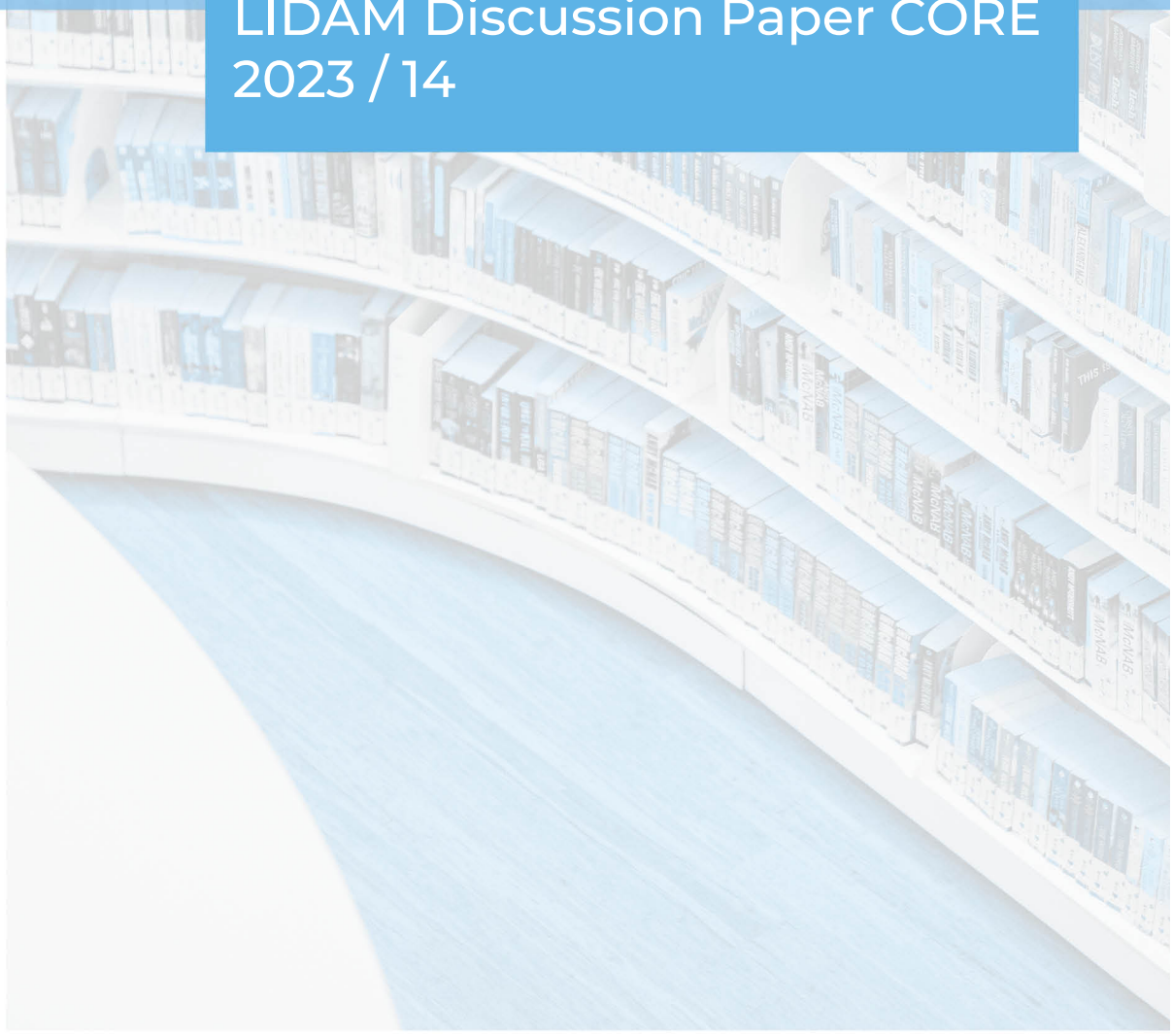
SOCIAL MOBILITY AND POPULIST VALUES

Sergio Perelman, Pierre Pestieau

LIDAM Discussion Paper CORE
2023 / 14



UCLouvain

CORE | LIDAM
Louvain Institute of Data Analysis and Modeling in economics and statistics

CORE

Voie du Roman Pays 34, L1.03.01

B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve

Tel (32 10) 47 43 04

Email: immaq-library@uclouvain.be

https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/lidam/core/core-discussion-papers.html

Social mobility and populist values

Sergio Perelman[*] and Pierre Pestieau[**]

Abstract

Despite some successes in Europe, the welfare state has not been able to renew itself to meet the challenge of various social divides. The major source of these divides is undoubtedly the failure of the social elevator. One might conjecture that the welfare state has probably been too preoccupied with income inequality and poverty and not enough with social mobility. To support this hypothesis, it is important to have good measures of intergenerational mobility and of populist attitudes to compare them with indicators of redistribution. If redistribution and social mobility are indeed found to be negatively correlated, this would invalidate the famous Gatsby Curve. In this paper, we rely on the several waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) to elicit indicators of mobility and of populism and show how the lack of social mobility can explain populist attitudes across a number of European countries.

Keywords: populism, social mobility, education policy, Gatsby curve
JEL classification: H20,H31,H50

1. **Introduction**.

The welfare state has never been as decried as it is today, yet it has probably never been so necessary. The criticisms it faces come from those who want to reduce its size as well as from those who find it inefficient in fulfilling its main missions. The multiple social divides that have led a part of the population to doubt the policies that are supposed to help them and to tip over into the populist vote give a new justification to a more efficient welfare state that is concerned with bridging the gap between a certain part of the population that is socially integrated and another one that is made up of excluded people.

At the outset, it should be recognized that the current context is very different from the one the welfare state experienced when it was first established after the Second World War. The main changes are the opening of borders, the increasingly precarious labor market, the fragmented family structure and growing individualism; to which we must add the challenge of climate change, demographic aging and a clear slowdown in growth. In addition to the need to adapt to these new conditions, the welfare state must give everyone hope and perspectives.

Our society no longer succeeds in upgrading deserving individuals; on the contrary, it gives them the impression of being downgraded. It seems that the stronger this impression is, the more individuals demand proactive intervention from their governments. It is quite intuitive that one can be patient in the face of a status quo if one knows that it is temporary. On the other hand, if we perceive it as permanent, we lose our composure. This breakdown of the social elevator is frequently cited as a factor explaining the growing dissatisfaction of the middle classes, the populist vote and the yellow vests movement.

A recent OECD study[1] on the break-down of the social elevator shows that, given current levels of inequality and intergenerational mobility on the income scale, it could take at least five generations (or 150 years), on average, in OECD countries for children from modest families to reach the level of the average income. In the Nordic countries, it could take only two to three generations, while in some emerging economies, this process could take nine or more generations.

[*] HEC, University of Liège
[**] CORE, University of Louvain and HEC, University of Liège.
1 OCDE (2018)

The OECD (2018) study clearly shows that the European welfare state has sought to redistribute income rather than to stimulate social mobility. In the European countries concerned, inequality has remained stable over the period from 1990 to 2010, while social mobility has declined more or less sharply everywhere. Much in the Netherlands, little in Germany.

The lack of prospects one feels for oneself and one's children can partly explain the social divide and its political consequences[2]. The lower middle class feels trapped in a downward spiral of decline with devastating effects. The social divide is not a static reality. For a part of the population, the growth of inequalities, the downward mobility, the crushing of purchasing power and the impoverishment of entire cohorts of overeducated young people form an explosive whole. This set of factors has led to an exasperation in front of which the public authorities seem disarmed.

How can we explain that the welfare state has neglected social mobility? A natural answer is that most policy maker have been lured by the deceptive Gatsby Curve. The "Great Gatsby Curve" is the positive empirical relationship between cross-sectional income inequality and persistence of income across generations. This relationship was first observed by Corak[3] and so labeled by late Alan Krueger. Though the foundations of the Gatsby Curve are weak, it is tempting to believe that it suffices to redistribute income to enhance social mobility. As the OECD data show the Gatsby Curve does not seem to hold over time.

Another aspect that is often neglected is the fact that individuals tend to give less weight to replacement incomes than to earned income[4]. In other words they value more efforts to enhance their productivity than redistributive policies.

In this paper we rely on individual data concerning the populist attitudes of individuals and the extent to which they outperform or not their parents in terms of education. Anticipating the final results, we show that those who reach a lower level of education than their parents tend to adopt populist values quite more often that those who reach a higher level.

There exist a number of papers[5] dealing with the drivers of populist votes or populist attitudes. Some authors focus on psychological traits and others on the membership of radical parties or movement. Economic factors such as globalisation, climate change or mounting inequalities are also often invoked. Our paper focuses on a different driver, namely the lack of mobility. To a large extent it fits in the spirit of opinion polls that followed the recent elections in many countries. Accordingly, populist parties receive the majority of their votes from voters who do not have confidence in the future, who feel deprived of prospects for themselves and their children. As a CEPREMAP study[6] on the last French presidential election shows, malaise and pessimism are the key to explaining the extreme vote.

Starmans et al. (2017) review the behavioral science literature on attitudes towards inequality and convincingly argue that “there is no evidence that people are bothered by economic inequality itself. Rather, they are bothered by something that is often confounded with inequality: economic unfairness”.

In a recent paper, Protzer (2021) presents empirical evidence to support the contention that unfair economic outcomes are linked to the rise of contemporary developed-world populism. It uses cross-sectional regression analysis to explore the correlation between low social mobility, an indicator of unfair economic outcomes, and the geography of populism in several settings. Intuitively, in places with low social mobility, economic outcomes are strongly influenced by parental wealth – a clear violation of reward according to contribution, and thus of fairness.

In this paper, we make two related assumptions. First, we assume that individuals have some aversion to loss following Kahneman and Tversky (1992). In other words, their response to losses in mobility is stronger than the response to corresponding gains. Second, following Easterlin (1974), we posit that unchanged mobility implies a loss in utility.

2 Chauvel (2016)
3 Corak (2013).
4 Ratzel, S. (2012)
5 Guriev (2018), Huber et al. (2022)
6 Algan et al. (2018).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the way we measure social mobility and populist attitudes. Section 3 provides the key results concerning the effect of upward and downward mobility on populism at the level of individuals. Section 4 adopts an aggregate approach in order to test whether or not we witness a Gatsby Curve in Europe.

2. Measuring social mobility and populist attitudes

To obtain the degree of intergenerational mobility observed in a society, one has to measure the degree to which a child's social and economic opportunities depend on his parents' income or social status. Because opportunities are difficult to measure, virtually all empirical studies of mobility measure the extent to which a child's income, education or occupation depends on his parents' income, education or occupation.

In this paper, we use the level of education as an indicator of lifetime achievement instead of income or occupation that are generally used. Two reasons for this choice. First, the data set we used, the European Social Survey (ESS, 2020), yields good information about the educational level of respondents and both of their parents that allow us to assess intergenerational mobility. Second, whereas both income and occupation can change over lifetime, education is an endowment that is permanent. [7]

The ESS is a cross-national survey that measures attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of random samples of population in more than 30 countries every other years (even years). From the original sample, we retain 25 countries and the first ten waves covering the period 2002 to 2020.[8]

2.1. Populist attitudes

Political scientists use two types of variables to address populism: (i) Votes or membership participation to populist parties or (ii) values and attitudes, which can be considered supporting or related to populist behavior. We chose option (ii) for the reason that in surveys evidence on populist values is much more reliable than voting behavior: Interviewees often do not remember the vote they casted, or feel uncomfortable to confess they voted for a populist party or personality, and others simply did not vote. We follow Norris and Inglehart (2018), who introduced indicators of 'distrust of institutions', 'anti-immigration feelings', and 'leaning for law and orders' (authoritarianism) in their work. These are computed using ESS individual answers to specific questions. For each indicator and each individual, we added the scores given as answers to the corresponding questions, and normalized them between 0 and 1.0.[9] Table1 presents a summary by country over a period of 19 years. In spite of some differences across countries, populist attitudes' scores are in average higher in Eastern and Southern European countries than in Northern and, to a less extent, Central Western countries.

2.2. Intergenerational mobility.

To measure social mobility, we relate the educational level of the respondent to his/her parents' higher educational level. We use five levels of education and exclude from the sample those who declare having no education and who cannot be distinguished from those who did not reply.[10] Thus, we have a 5x5 mobility matrix with three possibilities: same level as the parents, higher and lower level than the parents.

---

[7] See Eurofound (2017) for a study on intergenerational occupational mobility based on the ESS.

[8] See Table A1 in the Appendix for an overview of countries and waves.

[9] For the details on the computation of the three indicators, see Table A2 in Appendix.

[10] From the original UNESCO international scale classification (ISCED-97) reported in ESS, we distinguish five categories: 1=Less than lower secondary school completed (ISCED 0-1); 2= Lower secondary school completed (ISCED 2); 3=Upper secondary school completed (ISCED 3); 4=Post-secondary non-tertiary education completed (ISCED 4) and 5=Tertiary education completed (ISCED 5-6).

In the first two columns of Table 3, we report the average level of education (within the 1 to 5 range) of ESS respondents and the higher among their parents. For the purpose of this study, we only retained respondents aged 26 to 75 years old, assuming that a majority of them have then completed their education. These indicators confirm the remarkable increase in population education over the last half century in European countries, with an average of 3.16 among respondents and of 2.53 for their parents.

A simple and straightforward measure of intergenerational mobility is ($1 - \rho$), with ρ being the Spearman rank correlation coefficient between children and parents indicators. In the third column of Table 2, the higher value of $1-\rho$ corresponds to higher mobility. This is the case of Iceland (0.670), Germany (0.635), Estonia (0.635) and Lithuania (0.626). On the contrary, Bulgaria (0.396) and Italy (0.456) exhibit the lowest scores of intergenerational mobility.

As a stylized fact, Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between populist attitudes, in this case distrust of institutions, and intergenerational mobility at the aggregated country level. According to this figure, there appears a clear negative relationship between them [ρ = -0.567 (p-value 0.002)].[11]

But in this study, we are particularly interested by individuals' intergenerational mobility rather than by aggregated measures. To this aim, in the last columns of Table 2, we report the proportion of ESS' respondents for whom intergenerational mobility, measured by the level of education, is either positive, negative, or nil. The higher proportion of downward intergenerational mobility is observed in Northern (0.149) and in Central-Western (0.138) countries, while the higher proportion of upward mobility is observed in Southern (0.543) and Northern (0.498) countries. For Eastern countries we observe at the same time the higher proportion of unchanged educational degree (0.454) and the lower proportion of upward mobility (0.431).

3. Mobility and populism.

In this section, we present the results of OLS estimates where the dependent variable is one of three aggregated populist attitudes and the explanatory variables are the higher parents' educational degree (dummy variables) and a mobility indicator crossed with the level of parents' education. The mobility indicator is a discrete variable corresponding to the difference between respondents' and parents' highest educational degrees.

We are particularly interested by the coefficients attached to the educational degree dummy variables, which correspond to the case of unchanged situation, and to the mobility indicators which catch the effect of upward and downward mobility for each educational degree, e.g. from 1 to 4 for ISCED 1 (Less than lower secondary education), -2 to +2 for ISCED 3 (Upper secondary education), and -1 to -4 for ISCED 5-6 (Tertiary education).

In Table 3, we report the results obtained for the three models. In all models, we include crossed country* year effects to control for the unbalanced nature of the data (see Table A1 in the Appendix). As expected, the level of education has a significant negative effect on populist attitudes. The coefficients reported in Table 3, which correspond by construction to the reference group of unchanged intergenerational education, indicate that, e.g., anti-immigration attitudes decrease by 0.175 and 0.229 for the case of upper secondary education and tertiary education, respectively.

The coefficients associated with intergenerational mobility are statistically highly significant and present the expected negative signs in the three cases, lower however for distrust of institutions (-0.014) and for authoritarianism (-0.014) than for anti-immigration (-0.039). These effects correspond to the lower level of education (ISCED 0-1). For higher levels of education, we observe slight variations in negative effects, increasingly negative for distrust of institutions and anti-immigration attitudes, but decreasingly negative for authoritarianism.

In Table 4 we report the results of a model including covariates, in all cases dummy variables, which control for gender, place of birth for respondent and her/his mother and father (born in country or not for each of them), year of birth cohorts, satisfaction with income, health status, unemployment, urban-rural location and household size. As expected, the size of coefficients are higher when we do not control for covariates.

[11] Note that we also found a clear negative relationship at the aggregated level between the authoritarianism indicator and intergenerational mobility [ρ = -0.581 (p-value=0.001)] but not for the anti-immigration indicator [ρ = -0.196 (p-value=0.327)].

However, we observe only slight differences for the coefficients associated to education levels and to mobility when comparing Table 4 with Table 3.

For covariates, very often parameters differ in sign and in significance across models, particularly between authoritarianism, in one side, and distrust of institutions and anti-immigration, in the other side. For instance, satisfaction with income has negative effect on distrust of institutions and anti-immigration but negative or not significant effect on authoritarianism. Also birth cohorts' effects vary across models, but in this case distrust of institutions increases for after second-world war generations while anti-immigration and authoritarianism attitudes decline. Concerning health status, however, the three models indicate that populist attitudes decline among individuals reporting better health.

Even if we make here the assumption that intergenerational mobility explains populist attitudes, it could be argued that causality maybe go in the around direction. However, we consider that this potential source of endogeneity bias is solved by the temporality of the process. Parents' education as well as children's mobility occur well before these adopt populist attitudes. Furthermore, to minimize the effect of this potential endogeneity bias, we limited the ESS sample used in estimations to individuals aged 26 years old or more, which assumes that at this age their studies are completed.

On the contrary, our estimations could be biased due to confounding factors which may affect simultaneously populist attitudes and intergenerational mobility. For instance, it can be argued that several of the covariates included in Tables 3 and 4 to explain populist attitudes are at the same time drivers of mobility, among them the country, the gender, the origin, and the year of birth cohort. To test for potential confounding bias, we analysed the sensitivity of results running the basic model for different subsamples of the 26-75 year-old population.

We make the distinction by gender, by year of birth cohort and by place of birth (subsample of individuals born, themselves and their parents, in the country). The results, for distrust of institutions, are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix. It appears that the results are in all cases very close in signs and in significance with those reported for the whole sample in Table 3. However, we observe that the intergenerational mobility effect is the highest, -0.026, among baby-boomers, born from 1946 to 1964, and the lowest among women, -0.005.

To be complete, we report in the Appendix the results country by country for the models with distrust of institutions and anti-immigration attitudes scores as dependent variable, respectively in Tables A4 and A5. In both cases and for the majority of countries, the results are very close to those obtained with the whole sample in Table 3: higher degree of parents' education and increasing mobility are associated with negative and statistically significant coefficients. These is particularly the case in Table A5 for anti-immigration attitudes, with the only exceptions being Croatia and Slovakia for which the effect of intergenerational mobility is less clear-cut, and two other countries, Czechia and Germany, for which it appears that anti-immigration attitudes are the highest for intermediate education levels (2 and 3). From Table A4, which reports the results with distrust of institutions as dependent variable, similar conclusions can be drawn, except that for Austria, Greece, Iceland and Poland, mobility parameters are always negative but statistically non-significant.

4. Mobility and redistribution.

One of reason that may explain why our Welfare States tend to neglect social mobility may be their naïve belief that social mobility and income inequality are, in practice, so closely related that it suffices to act on income inequality to boost social mobility. This is the so-called Great Gatsby Curve, introduced by Corak (2013), who shows that social mobility and income inequality are negatively correlated across countries. The two variables are of course causally related to one another in some sense as shown by Bénabou (2017).

However social mobility is also a function of a wide variety of other factors, and the claim that it is indistinguishable from income inequality is not borne out empirically. Chetty and Hendren (2016) show that income inequality is just one of several important factors that influence mobility. In this section, we use the EES data to obtain mobility indicators at the national level and check whether or not are negatively correlated with to income inequality.

Table 5 presents both indicators. For mobility, we use *1-ρ*, where ρ is the Spearman correlation (see Table 1). For the income inequality we use the average Gini over the period 2005-2018 (World Bank, 2022). Mobility ranges from 0.396 in Bulgaria to 0.670 in Iceland. Regarding inequality, average Gini ranges from 0.262 in Slovenia to 0.3§9 in Bulgaria. From these data, we obtain Figure 2 that clearly shows that we do not have anything looking like a Great Gatsby Curve. The coefficient is negative (-0.342) but hardly significant (p-value=0.080).

5. Conclusion

This paper objective was to argue that the apparent neglect of social mobility by European welfare states is in part the source of the mounting populist movements. Furthermore, given that this neglect can be explained by the belief that mobility and equality move along according to the Great Gatsby curve, we showed that the Great Gatsby curve does not seem to be a robust concept.

To proceed with these two exercises, we used data from the EES surveys. We first show that indeed populist attitudes can be explained in part by the lack of mobility. We also show that there is no solid grounds for asserting that mobility and equality move together.

References

Algan, Yann, Elizabeth Beasley et Claudia Senik (2018), Les Français, le Bonheur et l'Argent, Opuscule du Cepremap, #46

Bénabou, R., (2017), Comment on "Understanding the Great Gatsby Curve". *NBER Macroeconomics Annual*, University of Chicago Press, 32, 394-406.

Bourdieu, P. and I. C. Passeron, (1977), *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, Sage, London.

Chauvel, L., (2016), *La spirale du déclassement, Essai sur la société des illusions*, Seuil, Paris.

Corak, M., (2013), "Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27-3, 79-102.

Chetty, R. and N. Hendren, (2016), "The impacts of neighborhoods on intergenerational mobility II: County-level estimates", No.23002. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Easterlin, R. (1974), Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? », in Paul A. David et Melvin W. Reder, *Nations and Households in Economic Growth : Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*, New York, Academic Press.

Eurofound (2017), *Social mobility in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

European Social Survey (ESS), (2020), Norwegian Centre for Research Data for ESS ERIC; https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

Ginsburgh, V., S. Perelman and P. Pestieau, (2021), "Populism and Social Polarization in European Democracies", *CESifo Economic Studies*, 67- 4, 371-404.

Guriev, S., (2018), "Economic drivers of populism", *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 108, 200-203.

Huber, R., M. Jankowski and C. Wegscheider (2022) Explaining Populist Attitudes: The Impact of Policy Discontent and Representation, *Polit Vierteljahresschr German Political Science Quarterly.*

Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. (1992). "Advances in prospect theory: Cumulative representation of uncertainty". *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*. **5**(4): 297–323.

Norris, P., and R. Inglehart.(2018), *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

OCDE (2018), *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility*, OCDE Paris.

Protzer, E. S. M., (2021), "Social Mobility Explains Populism, Not Inequality or Culture", CID Research Fellow and Graduate Student Working Paper Series 2021.118, Harvard University, Cambridge,MA.

Ratzel, S. (2012) Labour supply, life satisfaction and the disutility of work. Scandinavian journal of Economics, 114, 1160-1181.

Starmans, C., M. Sheskin, and P. Bloom, (2017), "Why people prefer unequal societies", *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1.4 0082.

World Bank (2022), World Development Indicators | DataBank (worldbank.org).

Table 1. Populist attitudes by region and country

Region	Country	Distrust of institutions	Anti-immigration	Authoritarianism
Central-Western	Austria	0.586	0.493	0.676
	Belgium	0.575	0.452	0.671
	France	0.647	0.451	0.602
	Germany	0.613	0.391	0.638
	Ireland	0.634	0.431	0.690
	Switzerland	0.467	0.390	0.636
	United Kingdom	0.621	0.476	0.655
Southern	Cyprus	0.614	0.639	0.781
	Greece	0.697	0.644	0.775
	Italy	0.699	0.461	0.737
	Portugal	0.731	0.552	0.643
	Spain	0.673	0.445	0.721
Northern	Denmark	0.445	0.439	0.636
	Finland	0.491	0.490	0.645
	Iceland	0.541	0.253	0.566
	Netherlands	0.479	0.435	0.629
	Norway	0.471	0.373	0.634
	Sweden	0.478	0.245	0.559
Eastern	Bulgaria	0.804	0.447	0.752
	Croatia	0.779	0.430	0.716
	Czechia	0.667	0.611	0.694
	Estonia	0.625	0.519	0.651
	Hungary	0.657	0.650	0.709
	Lithuania	0.698	0.452	0.663
	Poland	0.751	0.429	0.769
	Slovakia	0.677	0.508	0.740
	Slovenia	0.709	0.457	0.725
Regions	Central-Western	0.595	0.436	0.651
	Southern	0.692	0.537	0.718
	Northern	0.478	0.402	0.622
	Eastern	0.700	0.514	0.712
All		0.621	0.469	0.676

Source: ESS 2002-2020 (all available waves). Distrust of institutions 2004-2020.
Notes: See Table A.2 in the Appendix for indicators definition and computation. ESS weight variable: *pspwght.*

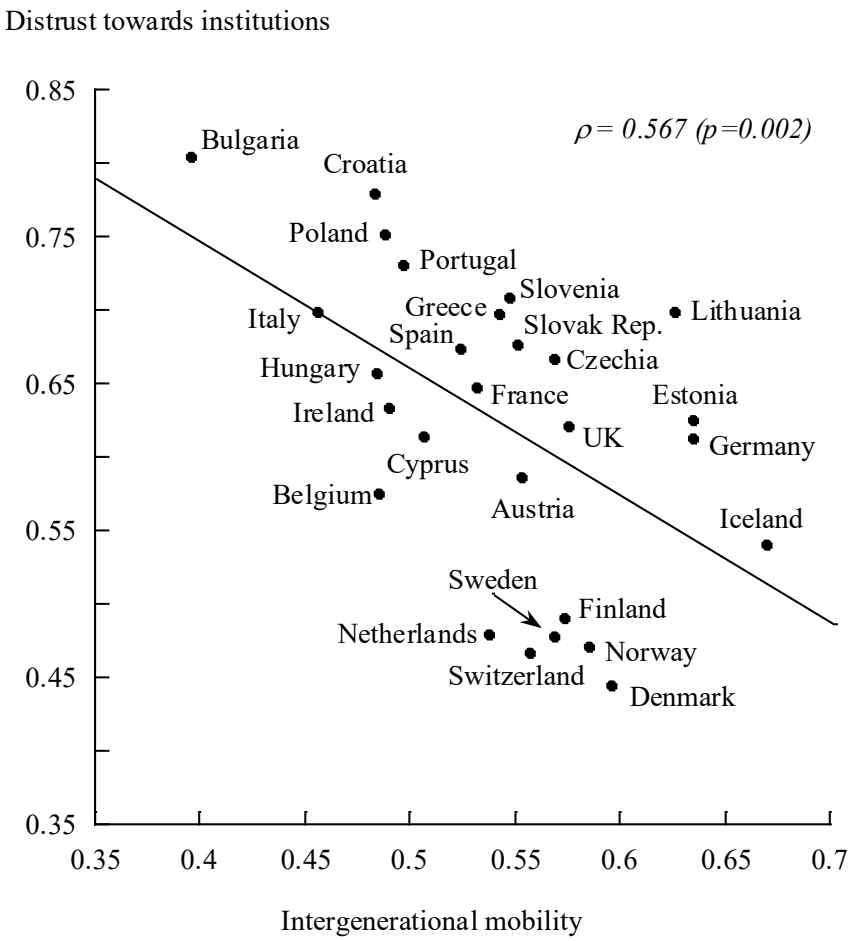
Table 2. Intergenerational mobility in education

Region	Country	Education (1 to 5 range)		Intergenerational mobility			
		Parents *	Respondent	$(1-\rho)$	Increase	Unchanged	Decrease
Central-Western	Austria	2.85	3.24	0.553	0.377	0.509	0.114
	Belgium	2.46	3.15	0.485	0.507	0.373	0.120
	France	2.18	3.04	0.532	0.526	0.375	0.099
	Germany	3.29	3.39	0.635	0.274	0.511	0.214
	Ireland	2.25	3.26	0.490	0.592	0.338	0.070
	Switzerland	2.98	3.42	0.557	0.407	0.452	0.141
	United Kingdom	2.47	3.13	0.576	0.432	0.391	0.177
Southern	Cyprus	1.79	3.00	0.507	0.642	0.321	0.037
	Greece	1.59	2.60	0.543	0.587	0.372	0.041
	Italy	1.85	2.71	0.456	0.640	0.308	0.051
	Portugal	1.33	2.07	0.497	0.411	0.561	0.027
	Spain	1.72	2.76	0.524	0.553	0.391	0.056
Northern	Denmark	2.93	3.26	0.596	0.372	0.436	0.192
	Finland	2.39	3.30	0.574	0.532	0.351	0.117
	Iceland	3.13	3.36	0.670	0.390	0.340	0.270
	Netherlands	2.48	3.26	0.538	0.568	0.313	0.120
	Norway	3.05	3.52	0.585	0.450	0.379	0.171
	Sweden	2.60	3.44	0.569	0.545	0.309	0.146
Eastern	Bulgaria	2.55	3.13	0.396	0.504	0.422	0.074
	Croatia	2.48	3.05	0.483	0.489	0.420	0.092
	Czechia	3.22	3.30	0.569	0.228	0.604	0.169
	Estonia	3.09	3.69	0.635	0.491	0.330	0.178
	Hungary	2.66	3.11	0.484	0.426	0.475	0.099
	Lithuania	2.70	3.48	0.626	0.551	0.319	0.130
	Poland	2.39	3.12	0.488	0.548	0.387	0.066
	Slovakia	2.81	3.20	0.551	0.359	0.571	0.070
	Slovenia	2.73	3.15	0.547	0.415	0.479	0.106
Regions	Central-Western	2.67	3.24	0.532	0.438	0.424	0.138
	Southern	1.61	2.55	0.500	0.543	0.414	0.043
	Northern	2.68	3.35	0.562	0.498	0.353	0.149
	Eastern	2.78	3.26	0.536	0.431	0.454	0.115
All		2.53	3.16	0.492	0.465	0.417	0.117

Source: ESS 2002-2020 (all available waves). Education levels (ISCED-97): 1=Less than lower secondary school completed (ISCED 0-1); 2= Lower secondary school completed (ISCED 2); 3=Upper secondary school completed (ISCED 3); 4=Post-secondary non-tertiary education completed (ISCED 4) and 5=Tertiary education completed (ISCED 5-6).

Notes: * Higher education among parents. ESS weight variable: *pspwght*. Spearman rank correlation (ρ) is not weighted.

Figure 1. Distrust towards institutions and social mobility



Notes: Distrust of institutions as defined in Table A.2 in Appendix. Intergenerational mobility = $(1 - \rho)$, with ρ being the Spearman correlation between respondent' education and parents' highest education.

Table 3. Intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes.

Explanatory variables	Distrust of institutions	Anti-immigration	Authoritarianism
Constant	0.639***	0.647***	0.701***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Parents' higher education			
Less than lower secondary education	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Lower secondary education	-0.009***	-0.043***	-0.030***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Upper secondary education	-0.023***	-0.101***	-0.057***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	-0.058***	-0.175***	-0.086***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Tertiary education	-0.086***	-0.229***	-0.105***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intergenerational mobility	-0.014***	-0.039***	-0.014***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Less than lower secondary education	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Lower secondary education	-0.007***	-0.005***	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Upper secondary education	-0.012***	-0.009***	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	-0.017***	-0.007***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Tertiary education	-0.011***	0.002	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
N	245592	266965	264919
R^2	0.235	0.194	0.135

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Crossed country-year effects included.

Table 4. Intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes. With covariates.

Explanatory variables	Distrust of institutions	Anti- immigration	Authoritarianism
Constant	0.709***	0.647***	0.753***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.005)
Parents' higher education			
Less than lower secondary education	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Lower secondary education	-0.016***	-0.036***	-0.018***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Upper secondary education	-0.024***	-0.080***	-0.035***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	-0.046***	-0.140***	-0.060***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Tertiary education	-0.063***	-0.186***	-0.080***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intergenerational mobility	-0.014***	-0.028***	-0.013***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Less than lower secondary education	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Lower secondary education	-0.003	-0.002	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Upper secondary education	0.001	-0.003	0.004***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	0.000	-0.007***	0.003*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Tertiary education	-0.000	-0.009***	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Gender and place of birth			
Female	-0.001	0.002**	-0.019***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Born in country	0.040***	0.025***	-0.025***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Father born in country	0.001	0.024***	-0.009***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Mother born in country	0.004**	0.017***	-0.015***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Year of birth cohort: Before 1946	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
1946-1964	0.021***	-0.020***	-0.044***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
1965-1979	0.033***	-0.022***	-0.062***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
After 1979	0.038***	-0.032***	-0.070***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Urban-Rural: City	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Suburbs	0.001	0.002	-0.002**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Small city	0.006***	0.012***	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Village	0.005***	0.023***	0.006***

	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Country	0.015***	0.032***	0.003*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Satisfaction with income: Very difficulty	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Difficulty	-0.023***	-0.023***	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Coping	-0.051***	-0.045***	0.004***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Comfortable	-0.082***	-0.068***	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Health status: Very bad	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Bad	-0.016***	-0.009*	-0.011***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Fair	-0.041***	-0.025***	-0.017***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Good	-0.062***	-0.040***	-0.022***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Very good	-0.072***	-0.048***	-0.016***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Unemployment (> 3 months)	-0.018***	0.015***	0.017***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Household size = 1	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
2	-0.000	0.001	0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
3	-0.002	-0.000	0.016***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
4	-0.008***	-0.001	0.022***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
>4	-0.016***	-0.008***	0.025***
N	241072	261354	259478
R^2	0.258	0.209	0.161

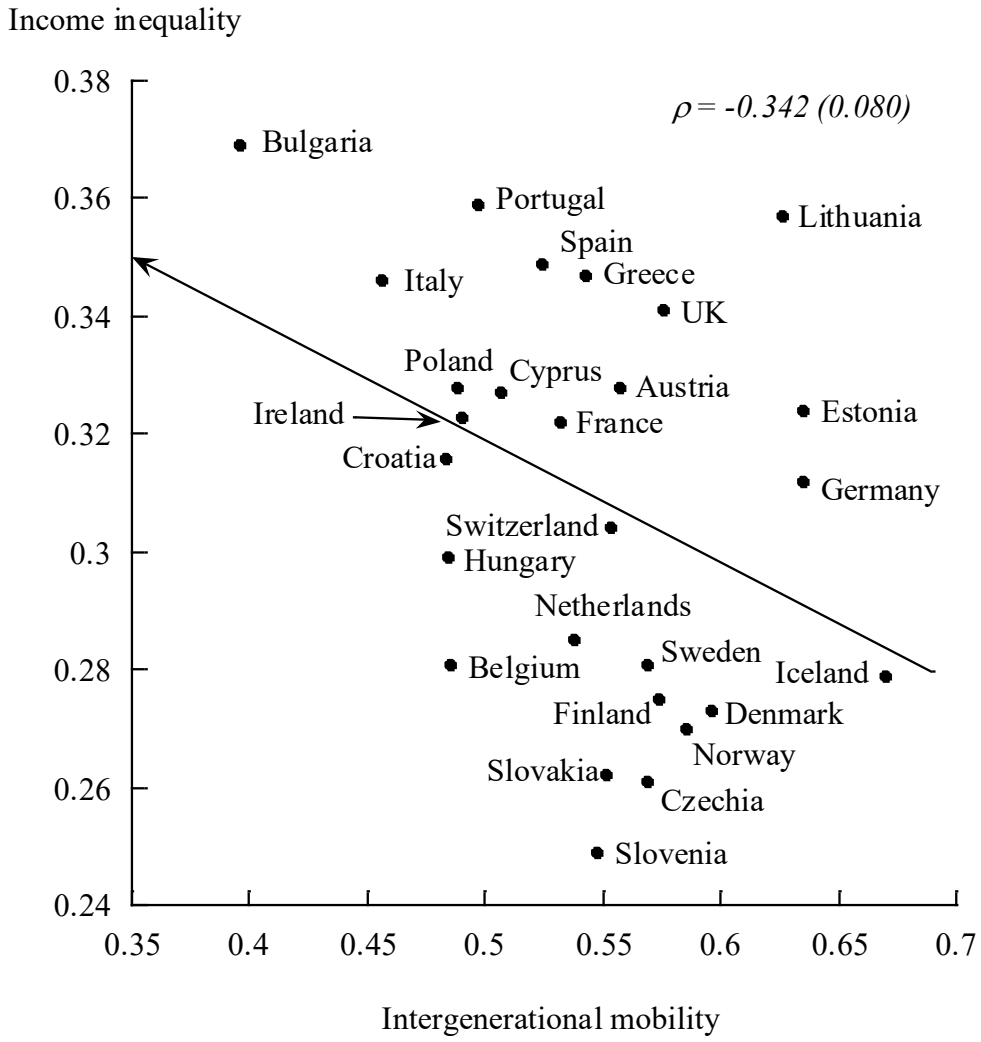
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Crossed country-year effects included.

Table 5. Social mobility and income inequality

Region	Country	Mobility in education ($1 - \rho$)	Inequality Gini coefficient
Central-Western	Austria	0.553	0.304
	Belgium	0.485	0.281
	France	0.532	0.322
	Germany	0.635	0.312
	Ireland	0.490	0.323
	Switzerland	0.557	0.328
	United Kingdom	0.576	0.341
Southern	Cyprus	0.507	0.327
	Greece	0.543	0.347
	Italy	0.456	0.346
	Portugal	0.497	0.359
	Spain	0.524	0.349
Northern	Denmark	0.596	0.273
	Finland	0.574	0.275
	Iceland	0.670	0.279
	Netherlands	0.538	0.285
	Norway	0.585	0.270
	Sweden	0.569	0.281
Eastern	Bulgaria	0.396	0.369
	Croatia	0.483	0.316
	Czechia	0.569	0.261
	Estonia	0.635	0.324
	Hungary	0.484	0.299
	Lithuania	0.626	0.357
	Poland	0.488	0.328
	Slovakia	0.551	0.262
	Slovenia	0.547	0.249

Notes: Mobility in education computed on ESS waves 1 to 10 (from Table 1).
Income inequality corresponds to average Gini coefficients over the period 2005-2018 (World Bank, 2022).

Figure 2. The Gatsby curve



Notes: Income inequality corresponds to average Gini coefficient over the period 2005-2018 (World Bank, 2022). Intergenerational mobility = $(1 - \rho)$, with ρ the Spearman correlation between respondent' education and parents' highest education.

Table A1. European Social Survey. Selected countries and years.

Region	Country	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	Observ.
Central-Western	Austria	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	9814
	Belgium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	10807
	France	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12809
	Germany	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	18186
	Ireland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14782
	Switzerland	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	12497
	United Kingdom	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	12201
Southern	Cyprus	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	4023
	Greece	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	9880
	Italy	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	7250
	Portugal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12597
	Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	12402
Northern	Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	8210
	Finland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14461
	Iceland	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	2237
	Netherlands	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13426
	Norway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12116
	Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	8263
Eastern	Bulgaria	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	10248
	Croatia	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	4800
	Czechia	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15403
	Estonia	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11198
	Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10918
	Lithuania	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	7647
	Poland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	10624
	Slovakia	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	8494
	Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9640

Notes: For the 2020 ESS round, data was only available for countries in which interviews where in face-to-face mode.

Table A2. Social values indicators built using selected ESS questions

Indicator	Question asked	Scale
Distrust of institutions	Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the institutions:	
	1. Country's parliament *(trstprl)*	0 – 10
	2. Political parties *(trstprt)*	0 – 10
	3. Politicians *(trstplt)*	0 – 10
Anti-immigration	1. Would you say it is generally bad or good for your country's economy that people come to live here from other countries? *(imbgeco)*	0 – 10
	2. Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? *(imueclt)*	0 – 10
	3. Is your country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? *(imwbcnt)*	0 – 10
Authoritarianism	Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you:	
	1. Important to behave properly *(ipbhprp)*	1 – 6
	2. Important to live in secure and safe surroundings *(impsafe)*	1 – 6
	3. Important that government is strong and ensures safety *(ipstrgv)*	1 – 6
	4. Important to follow traditions and customs *(imptrad)*	1 – 6
	5. Important to do what is told and follow rules *(ipfrule)*	1 – 6

Notes: Original ESS variables' acronyms between brackets. Each indicator is computed by summing up individuals' scores given to the corresponding questions. In each case, the sum is normalized between 0 to 1. To compute the 'distrust of institutions' and 'anti-immigration' indicators, the original order of answers (0-10) reordered to (10-0), so that higher scores show higher mistrust in political institutions and higher anti-immigration attitudes, respectively.

Table A3. Distrust of institutions and intergenerational mobility. Selected subsamples.

Explanatory variables	Gender		Born in country[(a)]	Year of birth cohorts		
	Men	Women		Before 1946	1946-74	After 1974
Constant	0.670***	0.607***	0.643***	0.627***	0.659***	0.643***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.024)
Parents' higher education	-0.013***	-0.005*	-0.014***	-0.015***	-0.021***	0.007
Less than lower secondary education	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Lower secondary education	-0.025***	-0.021***	-0.030***	-0.030***	-0.038***	-0.014***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Upper secondary education	-0.060***	-0.056***	-0.067***	-0.057***	-0.070***	-0.055***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	-0.087***	-0.085***	-0.096***	-0.065***	-0.097***	-0.092***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Tertiary education	-0.013***	-0.015***	-0.016***	-0.017***	-0.018***	-0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Intergenerational mobility	-0.013***	-0.005*	-0.014***	-0.015***	-0.021***	0.007
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Less than lower secondary education	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)	(ref.)
Lower secondary education	-0.006***	-0.008***	-0.006***	-0.003	-0.005***	-0.012***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Upper secondary education	-0.010***	-0.014***	-0.011***	-0.003	-0.009***	-0.021***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	-0.013***	-0.020***	-0.017***	0.002	-0.014***	-0.022***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Tertiary education	-0.010***	-0.012***	-0.012***	-0.001	-0.007***	-0.019***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
N	125042	120459	207646	32628	155651	57312
R^2	0.238	0.236	0.244	0.210	0.238	0.261

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Crossed country-year effects included. [(a)] Respondent and mother and father born in country.

Table A4. Distrust of institutions and intergenerational mobility. Results by country.

Region	Country	Intercept	Parents' higher education					Mobility	Higher parents' education level * Mobility				
			1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Central Western	Austria	0.627 ***	0	0.005	-0.006	-0.047 ***	-0.070 ***	-0.014	0	-0.012	-0.020 *	-0.004	-0.003
	Belgium	0.607 ***	0	-0.018 **	-0.046 ***	-0.076 ***	-0.097 ***	-0.016 ***	0	-0.014 ***	-0.014 ***	-0.016 **	-0.005
	France	0.656 ***	0	-0.021 **	-0.019 ***	-0.059 ***	-0.093 ***	-0.012 ***	0	-0.010	-0.012 ***	-0.023 ***	-0.019 ***
	Germany	0.609 ***	0	0.088 ***	0.069 ***	0.023	-0.023	0.004	0	-0.037 ***	-0.039 ***	-0.045 ***	-0.038 ***
	Ireland	0.606 ***	0	-0.021 ***	-0.021 ***	-0.056 ***	-0.058 ***	-0.011 ***	0	0.000	-0.014 ***	-0.022 ***	-0.005
	Switzerland	0.500 ***	0	0.024 **	0.024 ***	0.013	-0.014	0.000	0	-0.013 **	-0.013 ***	-0.020 ***	-0.003
	United Kingdom	0.666 ***	0	-0.032 ***	-0.035 ***	-0.087 ***	-0.095 ***	-0.019 ***	0	0.001	-0.006	-0.020 ***	-0.009 **
Southern	Cyprus	0.488 ***	0	0.066 ***	0.065 ***	0.016	0.041 *	0.009 ***	0	-0.027 ***	-0.020 **	0.011	-0.006
	Greece	0.604 ***	0	0.020 *	0.005	-0.008	-0.003	0.006 ***	0	-0.011 *	-0.014 *	0.017	-0.016
	Italy	0.850 ***	0	-0.058 ***	-0.074 ***	-0.079 ***	-0.149 ***	-0.038 ***	0	0.016 **	0.001	0.042 ***	0.015
	Portugal	0.756 ***	0	-0.016	-0.057 ***	-0.101 ***	-0.105 ***	-0.022 ***	0	-0.001	-0.003	-0.002	-0.004
	Spain	0.598 ***	0	-0.003	-0.023 **	-0.020 **	-0.040 ***	-0.007 ***	0	-0.001	-0.003	-0.005	-0.010
Northern	Denmark	0.515 ***	0	-0.044 ***	-0.084 ***	-0.135 ***	-0.148 ***	-0.030 ***	0	0.002	-0.002	-0.021 **	0.004
	Finland	0.539 ***	0	-0.008	-0.044 ***	-0.087 ***	-0.117 ***	-0.024 ***	0	-0.010	-0.014 ***	-0.024 ***	-0.001
	Iceland	0.546 ***	0	-0.025	-0.060 *	-0.091 ***	-0.145 ***	-0.022	0	-0.014	-0.005	-0.024	-0.032 *
	Netherlands	0.619 ***	0	-0.049 ***	-0.092 ***	-0.131 ***	-0.165 ***	-0.035 ***	0	0.000	0.011 **	-0.004	0.000
	Norway	0.583 ***	0	0.017	-0.020	-0.065 ***	-0.113 ***	-0.018 ***	0	-0.022 ***	-0.028 ***	-0.028 ***	-0.035 ***
	Sweden	0.594 ***	0	-0.011	-0.061 ***	-0.115 ***	-0.168 ***	-0.035 ***	0	-0.018 ***	-0.007	-0.008	-0.007
Eastern	Bulgaria	0.813 ***	0	0.019 *	0.024 ***	0.003	0.002	0.007	0	-0.016 **	-0.032 ***	-0.024 **	-0.009
	Croatia	0.725 ***	0	0.034 ***	0.037 ***	0.041 **	0.021	0.007	0	-0.013	-0.014	-0.009	-0.023 *
	Czechia	0.738 ***	0	0.002	-0.014	-0.035	-0.055	0.006	0	-0.012	-0.028	-0.025	-0.018
	Estonia	0.707 ***	0	0.003	-0.030 **	-0.064 ***	-0.108 ***	-0.020 ***	0	-0.006	-0.014 **	-0.007	-0.010
	Hungary	0.738 ***	0	-0.010	-0.025 **	-0.031 **	-0.078 ***	-0.016 **	0	-0.008	-0.005	0.000	-0.023 *
	Lithuania	0.841 ***	0	-0.009	-0.035 ***	-0.075 ***	-0.120 ***	-0.015 ***	0	-0.009	-0.013	-0.017 *	-0.010
	Poland	0.817 ***	0	0.002	-0.005	-0.013	-0.048 ***	-0.007	0	-0.009	-0.010	0.016	-0.023 **
	Slovakia	0.731 ***	0	-0.008	0.007	-0.046 *	-0.013	-0.002	0	0.004	-0.002	0.010	-0.003
	Slovenia	0.685 ***	0	-0.002	-0.019	-0.056 ***	-0.072 ***	-0.019 **	0	-0.007	-0.014	-0.011	-0.010

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. With year effects.

Table A5. Anti-immigration attitude and intergenerational mobility. Results by country.

Region	Country	Intercept	Parents' higher education					Mobility	Higher parents' education level * Mobility				
			1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Central Western	Austria	0.597 ***	0	0.043 **	-0.037 *	-0.161 ***	-0.232 ***	-0.028 **	0	-0.049 ***	-0.057 ***	-0.027 *	-0.006
	Belgium	0.581 ***	0	-0.048 ***	-0.113 ***	-0.174 ***	-0.244 ***	-0.041 ***	0	-0.007	-0.007	-0.030 ***	-0.006
	France	0.615 ***	0	-0.073 ***	-0.129 ***	-0.232 ***	-0.273 ***	-0.047 ***	0	-0.003	-0.006	0.001	0.013 *
	Germany	0.457 ***	0	0.075 ***	0.010	-0.080 ***	-0.132 ***	-0.010	0	-0.039 ***	-0.048 ***	-0.045 ***	-0.028 ***
	Ireland	0.500 ***	0	-0.010	-0.110 ***	-0.201 ***	-0.231 ***	-0.041 ***	0	-0.012 ***	0.003	-0.003	0.006
	Switzerland	0.465 ***	0	0.014	-0.048 ***	-0.135 ***	-0.193 ***	-0.033 ***	0	-0.009	-0.023 ***	-0.008	0.000
	United Kingdom	0.586 ***	0	-0.065 ***	-0.092 ***	-0.184 ***	-0.227 ***	-0.034 ***	0	-0.007 *	-0.014 **	-0.027 ***	-0.012 ***
Southern	Cyprus	0.702 ***	0	0.010	-0.064 ***	-0.128 ***	-0.144 ***	-0.019 ***	0	-0.024 ***	-0.014 *	-0.068 ***	0.012
	Greece	0.704 ***	0	-0.063 ***	-0.086 ***	-0.131 ***	-0.183 ***	-0.027 ***	0	0.005	0.007	-0.015	-0.008
	Italy	0.510 ***	0	-0.105 ***	-0.157 ***	-0.209 ***	-0.249 ***	-0.060 ***	0	0.022 ***	0.025 ***	-0.017	0.064 ***
	Portugal	0.645 ***	0	-0.062 ***	-0.117 ***	-0.189 ***	-0.224 ***	-0.040 ***	0	-0.001	-0.012	-0.015	0.003
	Spain	0.530 ***	0	-0.078 ***	-0.140 ***	-0.188 ***	-0.239 ***	-0.047 ***	0	0.006	0.004	0.011	0.005
Northern	Denmark	0.600 ***	0	-0.051 ***	-0.123 ***	-0.210 ***	-0.258 ***	-0.042 ***	0	-0.012	-0.004	-0.001	0.003
	Finland	0.616 ***	0	-0.057 ***	-0.094 ***	-0.176 ***	-0.234 ***	-0.037 ***	0	-0.002	-0.012 ***	-0.015 **	-0.005
	Iceland	0.484 ***	0	-0.094 ***	-0.139 ***	-0.175 ***	-0.264 ***	-0.047 ***	0	0.017	0.009	0.020	-0.011
	Netherlands	0.575 ***	0	-0.056 ***	-0.108 ***	-0.176 ***	-0.217 ***	-0.048 ***	0	0.003	0.017 ***	0.011	0.010
	Norway	0.501 ***	0	0.003	-0.040 ***	-0.118 ***	-0.186 ***	-0.019 ***	0	-0.026 ***	-0.038 ***	-0.030 ***	-0.029 ***
	Sweden	0.359 ***	0	-0.037 ***	-0.076 ***	-0.145 ***	-0.194 ***	-0.035 ***	0	-0.009	-0.018 ***	-0.007	0.006
Eastern	Bulgaria	0.517 ***	0	-0.058 ***	-0.072 ***	-0.126 ***	-0.170 ***	-0.042 ***	0	0.033 ***	0.014	0.053 ***	0.007
	Croatia	0.500 ***	0	0.030	-0.042 **	-0.094 ***	-0.130 ***	-0.022 *	0	-0.030 *	-0.009	-0.014	0.021
	Czechia	0.405 ***	0	0.144 ***	0.111 ***	0.058	0.023	0.068 *	0	-0.085 ***	-0.115 ***	-0.116 ***	-0.079 **
	Estonia	0.710 ***	0	-0.037 **	-0.109 ***	-0.172 ***	-0.237 ***	-0.027 ***	0	-0.005	-0.003	0.002	-0.012
	Hungary	0.715 ***	0	-0.033 ***	-0.087 ***	-0.155 ***	-0.240 ***	-0.040 ***	0	-0.002	0.000	-0.028 **	-0.027 ***
	Lithuania	0.425 ***	0	-0.002	-0.052 ***	-0.065 ***	-0.127 ***	-0.015 **	0	-0.012	-0.003	-0.032 ***	-0.011
	Poland	0.640 ***	0	-0.111 ***	-0.195 ***	-0.235 ***	-0.278 ***	-0.061 ***	0	0.017 *	0.025 ***	0.013	0.031 **
	Slovakia	0.510 ***	0	-0.008	-0.084 ***	-0.151 ***	-0.174 ***	-0.007	0	-0.038 *	-0.030	0.007	-0.012
	Slovenia	0.635 ***	0	-0.050 ***	-0.160 ***	-0.287 ***	-0.323 ***	-0.063 ***	0	-0.014	-0.004	0.006	0.026 *

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. With year effects.