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It's not the economy, stupid

— Competition between Finnish right-wing parties analysed using
multinomial logistic regression in the context of the 2023 parliamentary
election

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In the year 2023 Finland held parliamentary election. In this election the Finns Party got 46 seats, which was the best election result ever for the party. In prior research it has been found that in the 2020s Finns Party's voters have shifted right on the right-left axis. At the same time, previous research has found that critical views on immigration partly explain the voting of Finns Party.

This thesis examines how views on immigration, multiculturalism and sexual minorities affect the voters' likelihood of choosing the Finns Party. As the theoretical framework this thesis utilizes the idea of cultural backlash, which states that voters who hold negative views on the topics mentioned above are more likely to vote for a populist party. This effect is examined in relation to all other parties that won seats in the 2023 parliamentary election, with the exception of the Movement Now party. At the focus of the thesis is Finns Party against National Coalition Party and the Centre Party that, along with the Finns Party, are right-wing parties.

The analysis of this thesis was done by using a latent variable in multinomial logistic regression. The analysis indicates that Finns Party fulfils the assumption of the theoretical frame; voters who have negative feelings about the topics mentioned above are more likely to choose the Finns Party compared to other parties in the analysis. This finding was also in the model containing only the right-wing parties.

Keywords: voting behaviour, parliamentary election, populism, attitudes, right-wing parties

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Vuonna 2023 Suomessa järjestettiin eduskuntavaalit. Näissä vaaleissa Perussuomalaiset saivat 46 paikkaa, mikä on puoleen paras vaalitulokoskaan. Aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa on havaittu, että 2020-luvulla perussuomalaisten äänestäjät ovat siirtyneet oikeammalle vasemmisto-oikeisto-akselilla. Samalla on myös havaittu, että kriittiset näkemykset maahanmuuttoon ovat selittämässä perussuomalaisten äänestämistä.

Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan, miten maahanmuuttonäkemykset sekä suhtautuminen monikulttuurisuuteen ja seksuaalivähemmistöihin vaikuttavat äänestäjän todennäköisyyteen valita Perussuomalaiset. Tutkielman teoreettisena viitekehyksenä on kulttuurinen takaisku, jonka perusteella negatiivisesti yllä mainittuihin asioihin suhtautuvat äänestävät todennäköisemmin populistista puoluetta. Tätä vaikutusta tarkastellaan suhteessa muihin vuonna 2023 eduskuntavaaleissa läpi menneisiin puolueisiin, pois lukien Liike Nyt. Tarkastelun keskiössä on Perussuomalaiset suhteessa Kansalliseen Kokoomukseen ja Suomen Keskustaan, jotka ovat Perussuomalaisten ohella oikeistopuolueita.

Tutkielmassa analyysi toteutettiin käyttämällä latenttia muuttujaa nominaalisessa regressiossa. Analyysin perusteella Perussuomalaiset toteuttaa teoreettisen viitekehyksen tarjoamaa oletusta siitä, että negatiivisesti yllä mainittuihin asioihin suhtautuvat äänestävät todennäköisemmin Perussuomalaisia kuin muita tarkastelussa olleita puolueita. Tämä havainto nähdään myös oikeistopuolueiden keskinäisessä vertailussa.

Avainsanat: äänestyskäyttäytyminen, eduskuntavaalit, populismi, asenteet, oikeistopuolueet

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1. Introduction

After the 2023 parliamentary election in Finland, the government was formed under the leadership of the National Coalition Party. Some believe that this was the most right-wing government in recent Finnish history. This is because after the World Wars the government in Finland has included either the Social Democratic Party or the Centre Party (Pelli 2023). The Social Democratic Party belongs to the green-left bloc and although the Centre Party has been seen as the economically right-wing party, it has focused more on the economic development of different areas of Finland. (Mickelsson 2021, 344; Paloheimo 2008, 44).

The government that was formed after the 2023 general election is quite special. The party of the prime minister, National Coalition Party, is the classic economically right-wing party in Finland (Paloheimo 2008, 38). In addition to the National Coalition Party, the government also included the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party and Christian Democrats, none of which can be classified as left-leaning (Mickelsson 2021, 344). In addition, the parties that formed the government were all united in right-wing economic policy (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 335-336).

As all the parties in the government agreed on economic policy, it is important to find differences between these parties, especially between the two big parties, the National Coalition Party and the Finns Party. This is important, because in a functioning democracy voters need to have distinctive options between the parties in order to choose a party best suited for them. However, most voters do not choose randomly between the parties, instead, they use something called a consideration set. A consideration set is a smaller set of parties that a voter chooses to limit the number of alternatives before making the final choice on the party or candidate. (Oscarsson & Rosema 2019, 258.)

One way to analyse these consideration sets is to look at how the voters have shifted their votes compared to previous elections. In Finland, research tells that between the 2019 and 2023 elections one of these shifts was that the Centre Party lost voters to both the National Coalition Party and the Finns Party. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024d, 206). This seems to indicate that at least for part of the voters National Coalition Party, Finns Party and Centre Party were in the same consideration set. This makes the 2023 parliamentary election a great chance to analyse

what are the differences between the voters who chose to vote for the National Coalition Party compared to the voters who chose to vote for the Finns Party.

1.1. Framework and Hypothesis

As stated above, the National Coalition Party leading the government is undeniably one of the right-wing parties in Finland, but what about the Finns Party? In 2013, then chairman Timo Soini even described the Finns Party as a labour party without socialism (Soini 2013). Since the 2010s the Finns Party has been primarily thought of as a populist party (Mickelsson 2018, 180). However, the current chairperson of the Finns Party, Riikka Purra, has demanded strict fiscal discipline (Purra 2023). The current government has also made some significant cuts to government spending (De Fresnes 2024).

This thesis examines how the Finns Party differs from the classic right-wing parties in Finland. As the theoretical framework, the thesis uses the cultural backlash framework as described by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. The cultural backlash is the idea that populist parties are successful because they appeal to people who feel forgotten in this modern progressive cultural landscape and yearn for more traditionalist values (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). This idea is researched in the context of the Finnish 2023 parliamentary election.

The Finnish 2023 parliamentary election is an interesting case to observe the Finns Party because of three points. Firstly, the Finns Party has had three different chairpersons in the last three elections and with each chairperson the direction of the party has also shifted. Before 2017 the party was led by Timo Soini, and the Finns Party was a populist party that emphasized patriotism and criticized the elite. As a leader Soini was well known for speaking about the everyday lives of the voters. After Timo Soini, the Finns party was led by Jussi Halla-aho, whose sharper immigration criticism forced the Finns Party into opposition. (Mickelsson 2021, 328-330.) Now, as Riikka Purra has become the chairperson, the Finns Party is back in the government.

Secondly, the Finns Party split the last time they were in government because the coalition partners could not condone with the more anti-immigration stances of then party chair Jussi Halla-aho. The party that split from the Finns Party, later called Blue Reform, tried to

differentiate itself from the Finns Party in the next election by stating that it was not a racist party. (Mickelsson 2021, 330-331.) This gives an interesting opportunity to study how do the Finns Party's voters see immigration and other cultural issues in 2023.

Lastly, the Finns Party got its best election result ever in this election. The Finns Party has mostly been on an upward trajectory since 2007. In the 2007 parliamentary election the Finns Party got only five seats. This increased hugely in the next election in 2011, when the party secured thirty-nine seats. In the following election in 2015 the Finns Party lost one seat, but they gained it back in the 2019 election. Finally, in 2023, the party secured forty-six seats meaning that in the last 16 years the party has gone from five seats to forty-six seats. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39; Borg *et al.* 2020; 53; Borg 2012, 20.)

Based on theoretical background and the framed context, the research question is phrased as what factors differentiated the Finns Party's voters from other right-leaning voters in the 2023 Finnish parliamentary election. It can also be argued, based on previous research, that this distinction remains partly hidden in the left-right and liberal-conservative axes because citizens struggle to define what these axes represent (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2018, 107-108). Based on this, I offer three hypotheses to the research question.

H1: Finns Party is a populist party, so cultural factors are the main catalyst for defining the Finns Party's voters from other right-leaning voters.

H2: More liberally aligned people vote for the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party, and more culturally conservative people vote for the Finns Party.

H3: The difference between right-wing parties is hidden in the liberal-conservative axis.

1.2. Prior Research on the Right-Wing Parties of Finland

In order to see how previous literature has analysed the right-wing parties in Finland, some prior research is presented next. This helps to establish the ground on which this thesis will build on. In his article David Arter argues that although the Finns Party might have been a centre based populist party at the start of the 2000s, it has become a populist radical right party

with ethnonationalistic ideology in the 2010s. Arter argues that Finns Party should be categorized among the other Western European radical right populists' parties. (Arter 2010, 495; 503).

Authors Jussi Westinen, Ville Pitkänen and Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen state that before the Finns Party had their big election victory in 2011, the political climate in Finland was ready for a populist party. The Finns Party had its core voters in male blue-collar workers, but the party took a step to the right when Jussi Halla-aho became the chair of the party in 2017. (Westinen *et al.* 2020, 307-308.) From the 2011 to 2019 parliamentary elections the Finns Party's voters have moved right in the left-right axis. In 2011 only about 12 percent of the Finns Party voters self-identified to the right edge of the 0-10 left-right spectrum, meaning numbers 8 to 10, but in the 2019 elections this number had risen to 28 percent. (Westinen *et al.* 2020, 320-321.)

How does the Finns Party compare to other European populist parties? Authors Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen and Josefina Sipinen try to answer this by analysing the Finns Party's voters using three dimensions which are derived from Cas Mudde's definition of populism. (Kestilä-Kekkonen & Sipinen 2020, 478.) Compared to its European counterparts, the Finns Party is more male-dominated and educated. The Finns Party voters identify themselves more in the centre of the left-right-axis than their European counterparts. Although the Finns Party voters trust political institutions more than the other populist parties' voters, they are the least trusting of political institutions out of the voters of major Finnish parties. In the same way the Finns Party voters do not stand out on their immigration stance compared to the other populist parties' voters but are clearly more anti-immigration compared to other Finnish parties' voters. The authors of the article end by stating that Finns Party voters have not considerably changed in the measured variables before and after the splitting of the party in 2017. (Kestilä-Kekkonen & Sipinen 2020, 495-496.)

It is also valuable to look at the 2023 election and how the parties in government align or differ ideologically. According to Veikko Isotalo and Lauri Rapeli, the National Coalition Party voters are located the most right on the left-right axis. It is followed by the Finns Party voters who are about half a point to the centre compared to the NCP's voters. (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 320.) In the sociocultural GAL-TAN axis the Finns Party voters identify more in the TAN end of the axis compared to the NCP voters (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 322). The authors find that

parties in the government find alignment in the left-right axis which translates to agreements on financial issues. The Finns Party and the Christian Democrats are aligned as culturally conservative parties, but they differ from the two other government parties, the National Coalition Party and the Swedish People's Party. (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 335).

In the same article, the authors also found that Centre Party voters identified themselves in the TAN side of the axis whereas other opposition party voters put themselves in the GAL side. At the same time Centre Party voters put themselves on the right side of the left-right axis and again all other major opposition parties' voters put themselves to the left of the axis. This result was also found when the parties' candidates were asked to position themselves on left-right axis. Centre Party's candidates on average put themselves on the right and other major opposition parties' candidates put themselves into to left side. (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 319-323.) This result supports the research frame of this thesis, to position the Centre Party as part of the Finnish right-wing parties.

It seems that there has not been recent literature analysing the Finns Party as part of the Finnish right trying to differentiate it from the other parties. This thesis aims to add to the existing literature by trying to clarify the differences between the Finns Party voters and voters of other right-wing the parties in Finland. It is also expected that the results will echo those of Veikko Isotalo and Lauri Rapeli. The hypothesis states that, although the Finns Party might be a bit to the centre from the National Coalition Party in the left-right axis, the main differences will come from the socio-cultural dimension.

2. Explaining the Populist Vote

Before turning to the empirical analysis, theoretical foundation of this thesis needs to be set. The central argument of this thesis is that support for populist parties in Finland is driven by a process of cultural backlash. To motivate this claim, the intellectual origins of this idea need to be examined. This chapter will present the concept of cultural backlash as rooted in conservative thought, particularly in the belief that social and cultural change should be resisted or slowed. After that, it is fitting to move to populism itself, asking whether it should be understood as a coherent ideology or as a political strategy. Finally, the core theoretical concept

of this thesis, cultural backlash, will be introduced. However, it is practical to begin by discussing conservatism, from which this line of thinking originates.

2.1. Conservatism

Conservatism was born in the 18th century as a response to the idea of liberalism, which in turn was born in the French revolution. The first author often linked to the birth of conservatism is Edmund Burke. (Fawcett 2020, 3-5.) Although Burke himself did not use the word conservatism in his texts, his writing reflects the idea of classical conservatism. In his notable text the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* Burke argues that Britain should preserve this “method of Nature” in the state. Burke’s arguments condense into the idea that the French revolution was ruining the traditional state and society and that Britain shouldn’t be influenced by it. (Burke 1790, 274-276; 307–311.)

Another author from the start of conservatism was Joseph de Maistre who also criticized the French revolution. Maistre argued that religion constituted a key element of durable institutions. He despised the French revolution and its effect on the status of the church in France (Maistre 1796, 79-81). Maistre also criticized the fundamental human rights that were a key part of the revolution. Maistre argued that there was no universal man, there are only different nationalities, and so there should not be universal rights. (Maistre 1796, 97.) If Burke was the forerunner on classical conservatism, Maistre is regarded as the father of right-wing authoritarians and fascists (Fawcett 2020, 3).

It is important to note that both Burke and Maistre have later been added to the canon of conservatism by later authors (Fawcett 2020, 3). This is because the political idea of conservatism came later in the early 19th century (Fawcett 2020, 41). Despite that it can be seen that both Burke’s and Maistre’s texts embody the spirit of conservatism. They both believed that people are not capable of self-governance. In addition, both despised the liberalism born in the revolution, believing it made the world worse (Fawcett 2020, 5-6).

Later in the 1920s Carl Schmitt developed the idea of conservatism further. Schmitt creates an absolute divide between democracy and liberalism, as in Schmitt’s view these two cannot exist together (Schmitt 1988, 17). Schmitt argues that minorities have no rights in democracy and in

that democracy becomes inevitably a tyranny of the majority (Schmitt 1988, 9). Schmitt sees that the combination of democracy and liberalism leads to the crisis of parliamentarism because democracy is equality of equals and only the will of those who belong to equals, while liberalism advocates equality for all (Schmitt 1988, 15).

After the Second World War author Michael Oakeshott writes his own depiction of conservatism. Oakeshott describes conservatism not as a political stance but as a disposition. He argues that conservatism is the idea that the known good is not easily replaced by the unknown better. The justification of conservatism comes not from morals or religion, but from the preference of the current manner of living. Oakeshott argues that government should prefer the current state of affairs and not impose their visions on the people. In his view the current situation is preferred to the unknown change. (Oakeshott 1967.)

One of the key figures creating the canon of conservative ideas and thinkers was Russell Kirk. In his book *The Conservative Mind* Kirk creates a Kirk's a six-part test for qualifying some authors as conservatives. In his book Kirk excludes authoritarian and anti-democratic authors from the canon of conservatism because they do not pass his test for true conservatism. (Fawcett 2020, 316.) First off, Kirk's criteria were that political problems at their core were moral and religious problems. Secondly, Kirk emphasized the affection for mystery of traditional life. Kirk's third statement was that society needs classes which are based on the "natural" differences of men. Fourth of Kirk's conclusion was that freedom was dependent on the ownership of property. Kirk's fifth criterion was a belief that tradition and prejudice were needed to keep the social order and the distrust for reason alone. Last of Kirk's qualifications was the idea that change and reform are not the same, and that innovation is more of the devouring than progressing. (Kirk 1968, 17-18; Carter 1954, 308.)

So, what is the conservative political thought? Conservatism is understood as a practice of politics. The idea of conservatism as stated above is intricately linked with the idea of liberalism. Conservatism has been sometimes categorized as the thought of resistance to the liberal change. It tries to protect traditions and battles against liberal modernity which is trying to undermine it. (Fawcett 2020, 41-42; 67.) Conservative political thought in its core is the opposition to change. Also, to be noted is, that conservatism is not interchangeable with broad

“right-wing”. This is because “right-wing” contains those who are unconcerned with resisting change and therefore cannot be called conservatives. (O’Hara 2011, 16-20.)

2.2. Populism

Author Ernesto Laclau set out to define populism not as a phenomenon but as a way of conducting politics (Laclau 2005, xi). Laclau frames populism not as a fixed ideology but a set of discursive resources that can be used in vastly different ways. This means that the rhetorical tools that populists use are not only available for them but also for other political actors. (Laclau 2005, 176.) This emphasises populism not as a movement but as a toolbelt. In Laclau’s view populism is not political and ideological operation but a performative act with its own rationality. (Laclau 2005, 18.)

Laclau summarises the definition of populism as a political logic. In order to understand Laclau’s political logic, one needs to first examine his social logic. Laclau sees the social logic as involving an exclusive system of statements, a system of rules drawing a horizon within which some objects are representable while others are excluded. Political logic in the other hand is connected to the social institutions. This connection results from social demands and, as such, is essential to any process of social change. (Laclau 2005, 117-120.)

Author Cas Mudde defines anti-establishment position as the main criterion for populist parties. He also separates populist parties into three groups: right-wing populist, neoliberal populist and social populist (Mudde 2007, 29). Later Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser clarify the definition of populism. Authors state that populism is a thin ideology that sees the society fundamentally separated into two groups, the pure people and the corrupt elite. Populism argues that politics should be the manifestation of the general will of the people. This in the authors’ views means that populism in its core is that the distinction between the elite and the people is principally about moral (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012, 8–9).

Lastly, Benjamin Moffitt’s characterization of populism will be explored. Moffitt defines populism as a political style. This approach emphasises the performative aspects of populism. (Moffitt 2016, 28). Moffitt defines political style as embodied and symbolical acts that are performed for the audience and are used to create and navigate the aspects of power from the

political domain to the everyday life (Moffitt 2016, 38). Moffitt defines three features in his definition on populism. These are appeal to ‘the People’ versus ‘the Elite’, Bad Manners, and Crisis, Breakdown, Threat. (Moffitt 2016, 45.)

Starting with appeal to ‘the People’ versus ‘the Elite’, which refers to a rhetoric where people are seen as the true holders of sovereignty and they are being contrasted to the elite or the establishment as the source of crisis, dysfunction and corruption. The Bad Manners feature means in this context the appeal to people as a source of “common sense” used for political rhetoric where more appropriate modes of action can be disregarded. Last feature describes that populism needs the perception of crisis, breakdown or threat to function, which is also created by dramatization and performance. (Moffitt 2016, 43-45.)

Above three different definitions for populism have been discussed. It seems there is not one clear description for populism. There are only characteristics that the presented authors agree on. Authors describe populism more as a tool than a thick ideology, like for example socialism. This populism tool is used by politicians to frame the society. Another common thought shared by the authors is the often-arbitrary contrast that populists create within the society.

2.3. Cultural Backlash

Finally, it is time for cultural backlash. Cultural backlash is a hypothesis explaining support for populism (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 1). This thesis uses cultural backlash as presented by Pippa Norris and Ronald F. Inglehart. Next, it is appropriate to go over the theoretical framework of cultural backlash and give some examples of the framework used in prior studies.

The theory of cultural backlash builds upon the theory of silent revolution. Silent revolution is an idea that after the Second World War there started to be a growing focus towards postmaterialist values in the younger generations who took survival for granted. This growing focus on postmaterialist values brought cultural issues, for example new norms of sexual orientation. This pivot to postmateriality caused a reaction, one could say a backlash, in parts of the population who felt threatened by the erosion of traditional values. The rise in cultural change also caused a decline in the traditional social class voting as the cultural issues overpowered the classic left-right position. This, in turn, paved way for the populist parties, as

working-class people had the option of choosing the classical left party, which was culturally progressive, or the culturally conservative populist party. (Inglehart & Norris 2017, 443-444.)

The theory of cultural backlash states that the increase in support for populism is not merely due to an economic phenomenon, but in fact is a response against progressive cultural change (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 2-3). Who are these people who feel threatened by the cultural change? The cultural backlash theory predicts that strongest support will be found among the older generation, men, less-educated people and people who oppose the progressive cultural trend (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). The theory also assumes that populist parties have recognized this response and use it to gain support. Populist parties emphasize the fear of the traditionalists and criticize the establishment for not addressing these concerns. (Inglehart & Norris 2019, 49-52.) Next it is fit to go through some previous studies where cultural backlash has been used in order to get a view of the earlier finding.

In the article authors Manunta *et al.* evaluate, among other things, the cultural backlash pattern as a predictor for populism in a cross-sectional survey study from five countries. The study found that economic anxiety and cultural backlash patterns can both be considered parallel explanatory factors for populism. The study found that in both paths the identity threat to belonging played a key role as a partial mediator. (Manunta *et al.* 2025, 1760; 1773.)

In the article author Maria Ferrara looks at how the trade shocks catalyse cultural backlash and drive support for conservative candidates in the 2008-2016 US presidential elections. The study finds that economic threats increase demand for cultural conformity. They also found that in addition to cultural conformity, individuals living in import-exposed areas are predisposed to taking harsher stance towards out-groups such as ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual minorities. (Ferrara 2023, 678; 697.)

This chapter started from classical conservatism, which in its core is an ideology of resisting change. Then it got to modern populism, which was recognized as being a hollow political idea. That is where the cultural backlash comes in. The main thought behind this thesis is the idea that the electoral success of a populist party, like the Finns Party, is the use of populism as a tool to appeal to the people who feel forgotten in this modern progressive culture landscape and yearn for more traditionalist values.

3. Finnish 2023 Parliamentary Election

Finnish parliament consists of 200 members. These members are selected in parliamentary elections that are held in normal circumstances every four years. All Finnish citizens who are 18 years of age or older on polling day are eligible to vote. In the 2023 elections Finland was divided into thirteen constituencies. Twelve of these constituencies are situated on mainland Finland and elect 199 of the members. The last constituency is in the Åland Islands, and it selects one member to the parliament. (Borg 2014, 39-41; Ministry of Justice 2023.)

In parliamentary elections Finland uses an open party-list proportional representation system. The system can be thought of as thirteen smaller elections happening in each constituency that do not really affect each other. (Borg 2014, 39-41; Ministry of Justice 2023.) The number of seats assigned to each constituency is dependent on the population and is decided before the election. For example, the decision for the number of seats for the 2023 parliamentary election was announced in November of 2022. (Finnish Government 888/2022.)

In the elections people vote for candidates and not for parties, although because of the party-list system parties play a key role in the elections. After all votes are cast each candidate from a given constituency is calculated a comparative figure. This figure is calculated by adding up all the votes the members of the party got from that constituency and then using the D'Hondt method to calculate a comparative figure for each candidate. The candidate who got the most personal votes gets the whole party's vote share from that constituency divided by one, then the second largest personal vote share gets the whole party's vote share divided by two and so forth. (Borg 2014, 39-41.)

One of main criticism of the Finnish parliamentary election system is the election threshold in some constituencies. This means that in constituencies with low number of available seats the percentage of votes a party needs to secure at least one seat rises. In some constituencies this percentage can rise to well over 10 percent. This is a problem, because it can lead to situations where voters of certain parties do not vote because they feel that their candidates have no chance of getting elected. (Borg 2014, 41.)

Example of this can be found in the 2023 parliamentary election where the threshold for the Lapland parliamentary electoral district was 12.36 percent, compared to for example the capital city Helsinki or Southwest Finland parliamentary electoral district where the threshold was 3.74 percent on the former and 4.59 percent on the latter (Ministry of Justice 2025, 11-12).

Returning to the 2023 parliamentary election. The big parties employed roughly two different campaign strategies. The National Coalition Party and the Finns Party campaigned with strict economic discipline and halting government debt. Social Democratic Party on the other hand campaigned with the idea that the Finnish welfare state could continue with no major cuts even if it meant more government borrowing. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 33.)

Economy was clearly one of the major talking points of this election, which made sense considering the state of the Finnish economy in 2023. Finnish Ministry of Finance stated in the spring of 2023 that Finland's GDP had reduced slightly in the latter half of 2022. It also estimated that the weak economic development would keep going into the first half of 2023. This was driven by the rising inflation and interest rates. (Ministry of Finance 2023, 12.)

Closing to the election the three big parties, the NCP, the Finns and the SDP, were all shoulder to shoulder in the opinion polls. In the last months of campaigns, the differences between these three parties were within the statistical margin of error in the polls. Because of the evenness between the three, and the Finnish system where the winner of the election starts the forming of the government, there was serious talk about tactical voting at least from the SDP. The SDP tried to appeal to voters by creating a contrast between itself and the right-wing parties (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 33; Isaksson 2014, 162.)

So, how did the election turn out? The National Coalition Party came out on top with 20.8 percent of the votes which translated into forty-eight seats. The Finns Party came second with 20.1 percent of the votes and got forty-six seats. The Social Democratic Party came third and got 19.9 percent of the votes and forty-three seats. Notable is that the Social Democratic Party managed to increase both the vote share and seats even though they were the prime minister party in the outgoing government. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 37.)

The Centre Party came fourth in the election, getting 11.3 percentage of votes and twenty-three seats. The Left Alliance got 7.1 percent of the votes and eleven seats. The Green League got 7.0 percent of votes but got thirteen seats. This difference between the Left Alliance and the Green League is the result of the Finnish constituency based electoral system. After the Green League came the Swedish People's Party, which got 4.3 percent and nine seats. The Christian Democrats got 4.2 percent and five seats and Movement Now got 2.4 percent and one seat. The last seat was elected by the Åland Islands, and it went to För Åland list. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39.) The voter turnout of this election was 72.1 percent of the Finns who live in Finland. If also the Finnish citizens living abroad are added, the turnout is 68.5 percent. This is almost the same as in the last parliamentary election in 2019. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 37.)

As the National Coalition Party got the most seats in the parliament, it started to form the government. The NCP formed the government with the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats. Together they have 108 seats in the Finnish Parliament. Although this is technically reduced by one, as per tradition the second largest party in the government gets to name the Speaker of the Parliament and the Speaker does not vote on the bills. The ministerial posts were shared so that the NCP got eight ministers, The Finns Party got seven including the finance minister, the SPP got three and the Christian Democrats got one. (Wiberg 2014, 179; Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 38; Parliament of Finland 2025.)

4. Right-Wing Parties in Finland

In this thesis the right-wing parties of Finland are limited to only three: the Finns Party, the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party. The National Coalition Party and the Centre Party are classic economic right-wing parties (Mickelsson 2021, 344). Although the Finns Party has not always been considered a right-wing party, the Finns Party voters identified themselves right of the left-right axis in the 2023 parliamentary election (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 320). This is why it is more fitting to analyse the Finns Party as part of the right-wing parties in Finland rather than among working class parties. The Christian Democrats and Power Belongs to the People are left out of this primary research frame. The Christian Democrats are left out because the party is not a part of the right-wing parties of Finland but is strictly a conservative party. Furthermore, the party is relatively small, as it got only 5 seats in the 2023 and 2019

parliamentary elections (Mickelsson 2021, 344; Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39). The recent electoral success indicates that the CD is a party with a limited voter base. Power Belongs to the People party is left out just because the party did not get any seats in the 2023 parliamentary election (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39).

Analysis of the differences between the Finnish right-wing parties is relevant during the time of increasing ideological polarization. At the same time, people are focusing more on substance questions and are less likely to vote for a party just because of party loyalty. (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 316; Isotalo *et al.* 2020, 300-301.) This seems to imply that voters in Finland are more mobile inside of their designated block. This is why it is practical to analyse these three parties together. Next, a brief summary of the three Finnish right-wing parties will be presented.

4.1. The Finns Party

To understand the Finns Party, one must first look at the party that came before it. Small Peasants' Party of Finland was founded in 1959 by Veikko Vennamo. In 1967 the party changed its name to the Finnish Rural Party (Gazes 2019). The Finnish Rural Party strongly criticized the power of large businesses and argued that old parties were alienated from the challenges of ordinary citizens (Paloheimo 2008, 53). In 1983 the Finnish Rural Party had transformed from an agrarian party to a protest party (Gazes 2019). Later the Finnish Rural Party ran into financial troubles and fell into bankruptcy in 1995 (Mickelsson 2021, 327).

From the ashes of the Finnish Rural Party, party actives, most famously Timo Soini, established a new party, The Finns Party, then called True Finns in English. Later in 1997 Soini became the chairperson of this party. (Gazes 2019; Laitinen 2011.) Finns Party had its first big electoral success in the 2011 parliamentary election when the party got thirty-nine seats in the Finnish parliament, coming third after the National Coalition Party and the Social Democratic Party. In the 2011 election the Finns Party benefited from increasing globalization and the party got its biggest vote shares from industrial towns that suffered from the negative effects of globalization (Mickelsson 2021, 328).

In 2015 the Finns Party kept up the great form in elections coming only second to the Centre Party with thirty-eight seats (Grönlund 2016, 65). After the 2015 election the Finns Party was

for the first time part of the government. The winner of the 2015 election, the Centre Party, formed the government with the Finns Party and the National Coalition Party, which came third in the election (Mickelsson 2021, 329-330). In 2017 the long-time party chair Timo Soini gave up the position. The Finns Party elected Jussi Halla-aho as its next chairperson. Coalition partners the Centre Party and the National Coalition Party could not accept collaborating with the Finns Party led by Halla-aho. To keep the government together, all the Finns Party's ministers and fourteen members of parliament left the Finns Party and formed a new parliamentary group called the New Choice. (Mickelsson 2021, 330.)

This new group did not get any seats at the next parliamentary election in 2019. The Finns Party on the other hand continued its electoral success coming again second with thirty-nine seats. The Finns Party was beaten by the Social Democratic Party by only one seat. (Borg *et al.* 2020, 53.) After the 2019 election the SDP formed a government which did not include the Finns Party. Part of the difficulty of forming a government after the 2019 parliamentary election was that most parties had refused to go into government with the Finns Party. (Mykkänen & Virtanen 2020, 196-198.) This was most likely due to the harsher immigration stands the party took with its new chair Halla-aho (Gazes 2019). Jussi Halla-aho's time as the party chair did not last long, as in 2021 Riikka Purra became the chairperson (Aaltonen 2021).

The Finns Party did not publish a singular manifesto for the 2023 parliamentary election, instead they published multiple issue-specific manifestos. In the economic manifesto the Finns Party states that in the next two parliamentary terms each of the administrative branches of the Finnish government should cut spending about 2-4 percent a year (Finns Party 2023). In the immigration policy manifesto, they stated that Finnish immigration policy has systematically failed. In the manifesto the Finns Party advocates that the right to seek asylum should be limited to the refugees inside Europe (Finns Party 2022a). Finns Party also published a Finnish identity manifesto where they state that woke thinking is trying to alienate people from traditional family values and forms of sexuality, and it highlights the need to change perception of this matter (Finns Party 2022b).

4.2. The National Coalition Party

National Coalition Party was founded all the way back in 1918 (Mickelsson 2021, 78). After the World Wars the NCP has solidified itself as the economically right-wing party in Finland (Paloheimo 2008, 38). National Coalition Party was kept out of government from the years 1966-1987 because the Finnish President at the time, Urho Kekkonen, felt the National Coalition Party was unfit to govern due to foreign policy reason (Wiberg 2008, 176; Vares 2017, 420).

Returning to more modern times, the National Coalition Party has been in government for eleven of the fifteen years. Jyrki Katainen, who led the NCP for 10 years, started the trend in 2010-2011 when the NCP was part of the government led by the Centre Party (Finnish Government 2025a). Then after the parliamentary election of 2011 the NCP came out on top and formed a government with the SDP, the SPP, the Christian Democrats, the Left Alliance and the Green League, although the latter two left the government in the middle of the parliamentary term. Also, in the middle of the parliamentary term, the NCP elected a new chairperson Alexander Stubb, who served from 2014 to 2016. (Hämäläinen 2016, 48-56.)

After the 2015 parliamentary election the Centre Party got the largest vote share and formed a government with the NCP and the Finns Party (Mykkänen 2016, 241). In this government the NCP again switched its party chair as Petteri Orpo became the leader (Toivonen & Blencowe 2016). In the 2019 parliamentary election the NCP came third with thirty-eight seats and was left out of the government formed by the SDP (Mykkänen & Virtanen 2020, 196-198). As previously discussed, in the 2023 general election the National Coalition Party got the largest vote share and secured forty-eight seats in the parliament (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39). After the election the NCP, with Orpo as party chair, formed a government with the Finns Party and two smaller parties, the SPP and the CD (Finnish Government 2025b).

In their election manifesto for the 2023 parliamentary election, the NCP promised to create a two parliamentary term long plan to stop the increase of government debt and to balance the budget by the year 2031. In addition to that, the National Coalition Party sought to lower the total tax ratio. The manifesto also promised to prioritize asylum to those who are most in need

and stop the exploitation of the system. Furthermore, the manifesto promises to build strong incentives for the integration of immigrants. (National Coalition Party, 2023.)

4.3. The Centre Party

The Centre Party, like the NCP, is one of the long-standing parties in Finland. The party was founded in 1908 with a name Agrarian League. The central thesis of the newfound party was the belief in agriculture and the superiority of rural Finland. (Mickelsson 2021, 71-72.) In 1965 the Agrarian League changed its name to the Centre Party (Mickelsson 2021, 187). In later years, the Centre Party has shifted its focus from the living conditions of rural Finland to the push for balanced development in different regions of Finland (Paloheimo 2008, 44).

The Centre Party has had a difficult journey in the past fifteen years. In the year 2010, the party was led by Mari Kiviniemi, and the Centre Party also held the largest number of seats in the parliament. In the 2011 parliamentary election, the Centre Party lost 16 seats and came fourth. It was also left out of the government. The Centre Party also changed leadership and in 2012 Juha Sipilä became the head of the party (Hämäläinen 2016, 47-51).

In the next election, the Centre Party had a phenomenal result as it came first with 49 seats. The Finns Party, who came second, got only 38 seats (Grönlund 2016, 65). After the election the Centre Party formed government with the NCP and the Finns Party and Juha Sipilä became prime minister. The 2019 parliamentary election was not a success for the Centre Party, as the party lost 18 seats and came fourth in the election. Despite the relatively bad election result the Centre Party still joined the government formed by the SDP. (Borg *et al.* 2020, 53; Mykkänen & Virtanen 2020, 196.)

After the 2019 election, Katri Kulmuni was elected head of the Centre Party. However, her reign did not last long as she had to resign in 2020 because of a scandal related to the buying of consulting services with taxpayer money that benefitted her personally (Sundman 2020). After Kulmuni, Annika Saarikko became the party chair. Under her leadership the Centre Party headed for the next parliamentary election in 2023. In this election, the Centre Party again lost seats and managed to gather 23 seats. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2020, 36-39.) In 2024, the Centre

Party again changed leadership and former Minister of Defence Antti Kaikkonen rose to the chair (Dementjeff, 2024).

In their 2023 parliamentary election manifesto the Centre Party promises to reform the economic policy and increase Finland's economic growth, which was estimated to be 1 percent for this decade, to 2 percent. The manifesto also states that the Centre Party strives for reforms that increase for example the employment rate. The Centre Party also wants to increase labour immigration as part of active population policy. (Centre Party 2024.)

5. Finnish National Election Study 2023

As this thesis focuses on the Finnish 2023 parliamentary election, it is fitting to use the Finnish National Election Study, shortened to FNES later, as the data. The FNES is part of the international Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and the first study was conducted in Finland as early as in 2003, in the 2003 Finnish parliamentary election. Base of the FNES data is formed in a questionnaire survey which was conducted after the 2023 parliamentary elections and is a representative sample of eligible voters in Finland. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024c, 27.)

The actual study was conducted by Taloustutkimus Oy, and the responses were collected with a paper form or online questionnaire in the timespan of 12.4.2023–6.6.2023. The sample for the study was selected with stratified sampling, which was done by Digital and Population Data Services Agency of Finland, and the total sample was 33 000. In total there were 298 variables and the overall response amount for the surveys was 8 636. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024c, 27; Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024b, 390.)

Since the variables that are used in the analysis were only asked in some of the survey forms, this thesis is limited to only using the survey forms two and three of the FNES where all the relevant questions were asked. This lowers the sample size to 5 779. This amount is further reduced as the excessive number of Swedish speakers in the data needs to be accounted for. In the original data almost half the respondents answered the survey in Swedish. By random sampling and deleting some of the samples, the sample more closely describes the actual number of Swedish speakers in Finland, which is about five percent of the population

(Saarenmaa, 2021). After a list-wise deletion due to item non-response, final analytical sample size is 3 322.

6. Method

This thesis focuses on the impact that certain values have on vote choice. It is logical then to use a quantitative method. As the goal is to observe correlation between variables and try to see how values affect vote choice, it is then appropriate to choose regression analysis as the method (Töttö 2025, 119-121). Since this thesis studies the relationship between vote choice and other variables, there is a bit of a problem, since linear regression analysis assumes that the analysed variables are continuous (Töttö 2025, 126).

6.1. Statistical Testing

Statistical inference is fundamentally concerned with making statements about a population using information obtained from a sample of that population. The goal of statistical inference is to test assumptions and hypotheses about a population. (Nummenmaa 2014, 162.) One way of making assumptions about the population is by using statistical testing. Statistical testing allows one to see how likely a relationship found in a sample is to occur in the population. (Nummenmaa 2014, 173) Statistical testing is used to test a theory against a sample. When the test result is positive, it gives strength to the tested theory. Important to note here is that a positive test result doesn't necessarily mean that the theory is true. (Töttö 2025, 25.)

Key part of statistical testing is the p-value. The p-value evaluates how likely it is that the results from the statistical analysis gives a false result (Nummenmaa *et al.* 2014, 176) In social sciences it is commonly agreed to use a p-value < 0.05 . This means that if one would draw 100 samples from the population, they would find a statistical relationship in at least 95 of the samples (Nummenmaa *et al.* 2014, 176; Nummenmaa 2009, 159). This means that in statistical analysis assumptions can be made from regression results when the p-value of the independent variable is less than 0.05 (Nummenmaa 2009, 339).

Another important part are confidence intervals. In summary, because a singular value from sample doesn't give a good representation of the corresponding value in the whole population,

it is more sensible to calculate an interval where the value might reside (Nummenmaa *et al.* 2014, 166). In practice, when talking about a 95 percent confidence interval, it tells that if the test was to be repeated and confidence interval was calculated for each test, the average of these confidence intervals would have the estimated value 95 percent of the time. A single confidence interval does not tell where in the interval the estimated value is. (Töttö 2025, 156.)

6.2. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis allows one to test two things: if there is a relationship between two variables and the directionality of the relationship. In regression analysis the variables are divided into two groups, dependent variables and independent variables. Dependent variable is the subject of the research, and its alteration is the thing regression is attempting to predict. Independent variables on the other hand are the ones that are used to find the previous mentioned alteration in the dependent variable. So, regression analysis looks how do the independent variables affect the dependent variable. (Thrane 2020, 14-17.)

One of the key strengths of regression analysis is that it can predict traits that occur in the original population and traits that did not occur in the original population. It is important to note here that the same population can be described with different statistical models that might give different results. (Nummenmaa *et al.* 2014, 242-243). As with other statistical testing, confidence intervals are used to estimate the statistical significance of a given model. These confidence intervals tell what is the interval between the values predicted by a regression model in a population with a given probability (Nummenmaa *et al.* 2014, 261-262).

If the dependent variable is binary, normal linear regression cannot be used. In that case, an option is to use logistic regression. Logistic regression is a variant of generalized linear model where the logit function is used as a link that allows one to apply the regression to binary dependent variables. Logistic regression works a bit differently than linear regression in that it models the probability of the dependent variable getting value 1. (Töttö 2025, 200-203.)

Vote choice is not continuous but a nominal category because there is no functional way to order parties in a way that would make sense for linear regression analysis. One possibility could be to use the logistic regression. This kind of research frame could be created by

combining every other party together and comparing that to the Finns Party. In this kind of analysis differences between specific parties compared to the Finns Party could not be analysed.

However, there is a variant of logistic regression that considers the ordinal category of some dependent variables and its multinomial logistic regression. Multinomial logistic regression is a variant of logistic regression where the dependent variable is a nominal category that cannot be put to order (Long 1997, 148-149). As the dependent variable is vote choice, this thesis uses multinomial logistic regression as the research method. In table 1 there are commonly used regression models and examples of dependent variables that these models fit the best.

Table 1: Different types of regression models

The measurement type of the dependent variable	Example of a dependent variable	Appropriate regression model
Ordinal	Age	Linear Regression
Dichotomic	Gender	Logistic Regression
Nominal	Vote Choice	Multinomial Logistic Regression

6.3. Multinomial Logistic Regression

Multinomial logistic regression allows one to examine one reference category by comparing all other categories to that reference category. As multinomial logistic regression is an application of logistic regression, it has the same problems one would face with logistic regression. (Töttö 2025, 216-218). In this thesis multinomial logistic regression will be utilized in the way that the Finns Party is set as the reference category and then all other parties are compared against it.

Next, it is useful to go over couple of articles where multinomial logistic regression has been used in election research. This helps to justify why it is the correct method to use in this thesis. Michael A. Hansen and Mikko Leino look at how attitudes towards specific issue questions affect the probability that a voter chose the Finns Party compared to other parties. Authors justify the use of multinomial logistic regression as the method because the analysis is focused

on factors affecting individual level vote choices and the vote choice is a nominal variable with more than two categories. (Hansen & Leino 2024, 5-7.)

In the second article authors Stephen Ansolabehere and Socorro M. Puy analyse how the significance of an issue among the voters and the position of the parties on a given issue interact with each other and determine vote choice in the context of Basque Regional Elections in Spain. Ansolabehere and Puy argue that the multinomial logit coefficients provide information about both the significance of the issues and the uniqueness of party choices on that issue, and that researchers do not need individual level perceptions of party positions to identify these separate factors. (Ansolabehere & Puy 2018, 103-104.)

The last article is from Jay K. Dow and James W. Endersby. In this paper authors Dow and Endersby compare the differences between multinomial probit and multinomial logit models in voting research. Authors note that one of multinomial logistic regression's use case is in multiparty vote choice analysis. Furthermore, multinomial logit models offer more intuitive answers to theoretical questions. (Dow & Enderby 2004, 107-108, 120.)

According to the research above, it seems that multinomial logistic regression is used on political science specifically in multiparty vote choice analysis. It seems that one of the main use cases for multinomial logistic regression is analysing issue questions' impact on vote choice. With the research above it seems justified to use of multinomial logistic regression as the research method in this thesis as it will be an analysis of issues effecting vote choice.

7. Variables and Operationalization

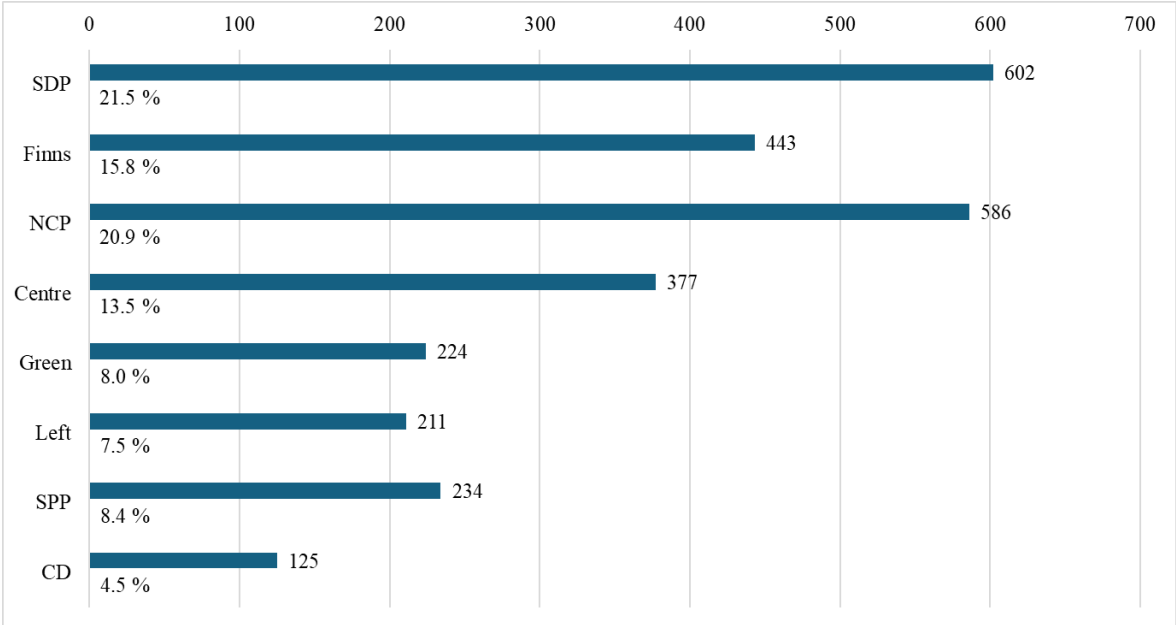
Last step before getting to the actual analysis is to look at the variables that are used in the analysis. So, next the variables and their operationalization are presented. The chapter will start by going over the vote choice variable which is the dependent variable in the analysis. After that, the chapter will move on to the independent variables which consist of control variables and a latent variable.

7.1. Dependent Variable

In this thesis the dependent variable will be vote choice. This is measured in the FNES with the question “Which party’s or group’s candidate did you vote in the current parliamentary election?”. It is important to note that this thesis will only focus on the parties already in the Finnish parliament. This thesis will also exclude the Movement Now and Power Belongs to the People parties due to their small size and status as a one-man party in the Finnish parliament.

In table 2 the results from the vote choice question are illustrated. If these results are compared to the actual results of the 2023 parliamentary election, it can be noticed that there are some inaccuracies. For example, in the actual election the SDP got only 19.9 percent of the votes and the Finns Party got 20.1 percent. The Centre Party only got 11.3 percent and the Green League 7 percent. (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39.) This is partly because some answers have been removed from the analysis, so in turn it increases the remaining parties’ vote shares. However, this doesn’t explain the inaccuracies in the vote share relative to other parties.

Table 2: Independent variable



7.2. Independent Variables

As the control variables this thesis uses basic sociodemographic variables gender, age, and education. In addition to the sociodemographic variables, the self-identification in liberal-

conservative and left-right axes will also be used as a control variable. These control variables are represented in table 3. In table 3 the upper section presents the sample from survey forms two and three. The lower section, which is the analytical sample, presents the data where non-respondents are removed from all the variables that are used in the analysis. This analytical sample is the data used in the regression analysis later in this thesis.

Table 3: Control variables

Variables	Minimum	Median	Mean	Maximum	Standard deviation	NA's
Gender	0	1	0.532	1	0.499	54
Age	18	59	54.65	84	17.618	60
Education	1	7	6.798	12	2.860	63
Liberal-Conservative	0	5	4.919	10	2.504	528
Left-Right	0	6	5.817	10	2.537	300
Analytical sample						
Gender	0	1	0.508	1	0.500	
Age	18	59	54.92	84	17.335	
Education	1	7	7.172	12	2.829	
Liberal-Conservative	0	5	4.952	10	2.480	
Left-Right	0	6	5.854	10	2.508	

Next, the operationalization of the control variables will be discussed. The gender variable is coded so that men are represented with a 0 and women are represented with a 1. It needs to be noted that in the dataset there were a total of 43 people who answered either “other” or “I do not want to say” in the gender question. These respondents were removed from the analysis. Because of the small sample size, no conclusions could be drawn about their voting preferences. According to Statistics Finland, the population at the end of 2024 had 2 790 722 men and 2 845 199 women (Statistic Finland 2025b). Calculating the mean from this gives 0.505 meaning that the sample has slightly more women than the actual population, although it seems that the analytical sample is closer to the real value. It also must be noted that officially Finland only recognises two genders (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2025).

The age variable is straightforward in the survey: the respondents were asked their year of birth, so respondent's age was calculated by subtracting their year of birth from the year the survey was taken. Since the study only includes people who are able to vote, the median on the age variable seems higher than the actual median age of the Finnish population, which was 44 years in the year 2024 (Statistic Finland 2025a). Here the analytical sample does not meaningfully differ from the original data.

In this study the education variable is treated as a continuous variable, although it can be argued that it should be an ordinal scale (Töttö 2025, 45). In this thesis the simplification is made because education is only a control variable and not the focus of the research. The median category of seven implies that the median education is over comprehensive school but lower than university degree. This makes sense, as the median education level in Finland was upper secondary level in 2020 (Statistics Finland 2021). With the education variable the analytical sample has a slightly higher mean than the original data.

Last control variables are two attitudinal questions. The questions ask the respondents' self-identification in a liberal-conservative axis and a left-right axis. Both variables go from 0 to 10 where the answer 0 represents liberal and left and 10 represents conservative and right. For this analysis the answers "I do not know" and "I have not heard about liberal or conservative and left or right" values are removed. In table 2 can be seen that in the liberal-conservative variable the mean and median are both at the centre of the scale. In this variable there are unfortunately quite many, 528, NAs.

The last control variable is a classic left-right axis. This variable leans slightly to the right which is in line with previous findings from the 2019 election (Isotalo *et al.* 2020, 294). To run these variables in the same regression it needs to be checked that they do not correlate with each other. This correlation is 0.624 which indicates that these variables are correlating on some level. Since this thesis focuses on the differences between the right-wing parties and one of the hypotheses looks at if this difference is visible in the liberal conservative axis, it is valuable to keep both variables in the model. Also, with these two attitudinal variables there is not a significant difference between the original data and the analytical sample.

In ideal circumstances income variable would also be part of the analysis. The question regarding income asked in the FNES “On average, how much is your household's combined annual income without deducting taxes (=gross income) including taxable social benefits?” The variable tells that the median household income is 55 000 euros and the average household income is 68 292 euros. This number seem unreasonably low; the Statistics Finland tells that in 2023 the median income per person in Finland was a bit over 3000 euros a month, which multiplied by twelve makes a little under 40 000 euros a year (Statistics Finland 2024). So, assuming a household’s income consists of the incomes of two people, the median should be around 80 000 euros. It needs to be noted that the Statistics Finland data is only based on earnings, and the FNES question asks about all gross income. In addition to these inconsistencies, the question has 832 NAs, which is a quarter of the sample size. Due to uncertainty about data validity concerning this question and the number of missing answers, the income variable is left out of the analysis.

7.3. Cultural Backlash Variable

To answer the actual research question, this thesis uses three attitudinal questions that ask about the respondents’ views on cultural values in society. The answer range in these three questions goes from 0 to 10, where 0 represents that the respondent views the statement as very bad and 10 represents that the respondent views the statement as very good. The first question is “The following are suggestions for Finland's future direction. What do you think of these the proposals? Multicultural Finland with a tolerant attitude towards people from other countries.” Multiculturality is an important aspect of the cultural backlash framework (Inglehart & Norris 2017, 443-444). Moving forward, this question will be referred as the multicultural question.

The second question is “The following are suggestions for Finland's future direction. What do you think of these the proposals? Finland, which strengthens the rights of gender and sexual minorities.” This question is in the core of cultural backlash, as gender and sexual minorities’ rights are prime examples of the postmaterialist values that Inglehart and Norris talk about (Inglehart & Norris 2017, 443-444). This question will be referred as the minority question.

The last question goes “The following are suggestions for Finland's future direction. What do you think of these proposals? Finland, where immigration is more extensive.” This is a key

question capturing the respondents' views on immigration, which is also closely tied to cultural backlash (Inglehart & Norris 2017, 443-444). Moving on, this question will be referred as the immigration question. In table 4 there are some basic statistics about these three variables. The density of the three variables is depicted in figure 1 under the table.

Table 4: Attitudinal questions

Variables	Median	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation	NA's
Multicultural	7	6.724	0	10	2.573	22
Minority	6	5.87	0	10	3.033	18
Immigration	5	4.57	0	10	2.662	16

Figure 1: Attitudinal questions, distributions

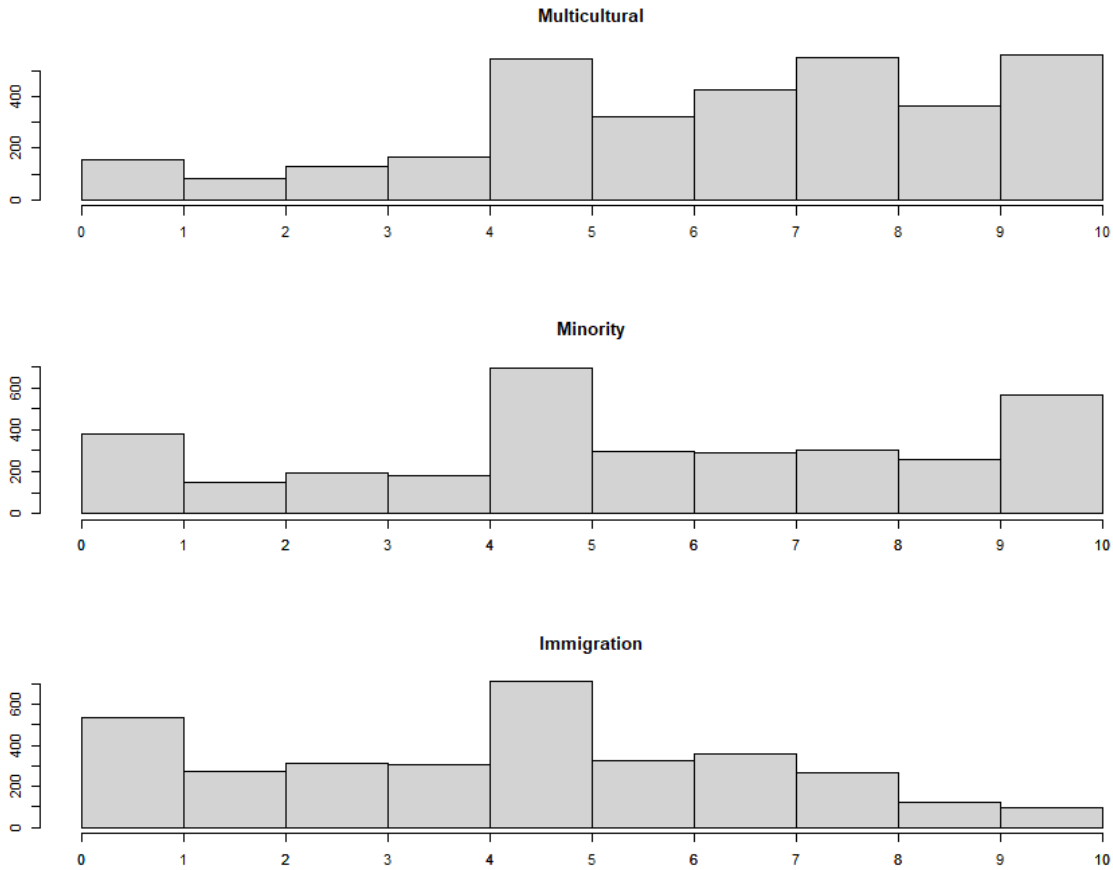


Table 5 lists the mean and median for the voters of each party separately for the three variables mentioned above. From the table it can be seen that the mean and median for the Finns Party are considerably lower than any other party in the analysis. It is notable that the Finns Party

significantly differs from the two other right-wing parties in all three variables. This would seem to be in line with the hypothesis and that a difference between the right-wing parties can be found in these cultural values.

Table 5: Attitudinal questions, by party

Median (Mean)	Finns	NCP	SDP	Centre	Green	Left	SPP	CD
Multicultural	5 (4.236)	7 (6.906)	8 (7.351)	7 (6.674)	9 (8.723)	9 (8.405)	8 (7.687)	7 (6.585)
Minority	3 (3.471)	5 (5.578)	7 (6.842)	5 (5.053)	10 (8.531)	10 (8.389)	7 (7.03)	4 (3.264)
Immigration	2 (1.975)	5 (4.757)	5 (5.269)	5 (4.481)	7 (6.534)	6 (6.367)	6 (5.509)	5 (4.4)

It is assumed that these variables describe at least partly the same group of people, so it is necessary to check for multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is a phenomenon where two or more independent variables are correlated with each other in regression analysis. This need to be accounted for as one of the assumptions behind regression analysis is that there is no significant correlation between the independent variables. In action this correlation causes that the correlating variables cannot be differentiated from each other. (Töttö 2025, 188-189.) This possible correlation is analysed in table 6.

Table 6: Attitudinal questions, correlations

Variables	Multicultural	Minority	Immigration
Multicultural	1	0.560	0.709
Minority	0.560	1	0.532
Immigration	0.709	0.532	1

In table 6 it can be seen that the three variables are in fact correlating with each other. Because of this, the variables cannot be separately in the same model. With factor analysis it is possible to combine these variables to a new latent variable. In combining these variables, a new variable called the cultural backlash is created. This new variable observes the combined cultural values from the three value variables. With factor analysis the reliability of the created variable is

checked by using proportion variance and Cronbach’s alpha. Result from the factor analysis is presented in table 7. The new variable is standardized so that it could be used in a regression model. In this standardization the median of the new latent variable is set to zero and the standard distribution is set to 1. The interpretation for this variable is that higher values indicate a positive approach to these values and lower values indicate a negative approach.

Table 7: Latent variable

	Cultural backlash
Loading: Multicultural	0.861
Loading: Minority	0.649
Loading: Immigration	0.822
Proportion variance	0.613
Cronbach’s alpha	0.81

Calculated Cronbach’s alpha value is 0.81, which can be considered as an excellent result (Töttö 2025, 316-317). Another value measuring the reliability of a latent variable is proportion variance, which in this case is 0.613. Proportion variance tells how much of the variance in a latent variable is explained by its components (Töttö 2025, 319). The three loading values at the end of table 6 tell how much of weight each of the original variables have on the latent variable (Töttö 2025, 301).

8. Analysis

Next, to the actual analysis. The analysis of this thesis consists of two different regression models. The models are otherwise the same only the number of parties analysed change. In both models the Finns Party is placed as the reference category. This means that in the analysis Finns Party is compared to every other party and all other parties are compared to the Finns Party. The first model consists of every party in the Finnish parliament excluding the Movement Now and Power Belongs to the People parties. The second model focuses only on the three right-wing parties which are the focal point of this thesis.

In the later part of this chapter when figures will be presented, the upper and lower 95 confidence limits will be reported using square brackets, where the first number given is always

the lower limit and the second number given is the upper limit. Also, the difference between the upper confidence limit of the smaller value and the lower confidence limit of the larger value will be calculated. This makes it easier to analyse the actual significance of the results. This difference will be underlined in the text.

Under the table 8 there is the N value or the sample size for this model. Under that there are PRE and ePRE values. The PRE value describes the proportional reduction in error. Simply put it measures how much more useful information there is in the model about the variables compared to only one of them. This usefulness is defined as the number of errors that are committed in attempting to predict the dependent variable. This number is compared to the ePRE value which is the expected proportional reduction in error. This serves as a kind of a baseline, and it can be seen as proportional reduction in error under no predictors. (Kviz 1981, 414.)

8.1. All Parties

As stated above, the first regression model has every party that was in the Finnish parliament with minor exceptions. This model positions the Finns Party against all other parties. The parties are placed in the table with the order of the 2023 parliamentary election. The results of this first model are presented in table 8 and variables are illustrated in the figures 2. through 8.

From the regression result described in table 8 it can be seen that the gender variable has a statistically significant result with the Green League and the Christian Democrats. This means that on average women are more likely in to vote for these two parties than the Finns Party. Earlier finding suggests that the average Finns Party voters is a man, so this is an expected result (Westinen *et al.* 2020, 307-308).

In the age variable, statistically significant results are found with the SDP, the Centre Party and the Left Alliance. The correlation is positive with all the parties, meaning that on average the voters of these three parties are older than the Finns Party voters. This result is explained in some part by the fact that a major voting group of the SDP are retired people. The result for the Centre Party is also expected as the party has not been popular among the younger generations.

However, the result with the Left Alliance is somewhat surprising, as the Left Alliance has been popular with younger people. (Paloheimo 2024, 133-139.)

The education variable shows statistical significance with the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party. Also here the correlation is positive, which means that the voters of the aforementioned parties have on average higher education than the Finns Party voters. This result is to be expected, as the Finns Party's voters are on average less educated relative to other major parties. (Paloheimo 2024, 131.)

In the liberal-conservative variable the SDP, the Green League, the Left Alliance and the SPP all have statistically significant results and the correlation is negative. It means that the voters of these parties are on average more liberal than the Finns party voters, which is an expected result as the SDP, the Green League and the Left Alliance are all positioned in the green-left block, whereas the Finns Party belongs in the conservative block (Mickelsson 2021, 344). The Swedish People's Party has also been classified as a liberal party (Mickelsson 2021, 378). The Christian Democrats has a statistically significant result too, but the correlation is positive, meaning that the voters of Christian Democrats are on average more conservative than the Finns Party voters. Both parties belong to the conservative block, so this result does not seem surprising (Mickelsson 2021, 344).

In the left-right variable it is shown that that every party other than the SPP have a statistically significant result. The NCP voters see themselves on average more right and other parties' voters see themselves more left than the Finns Party voters. This is in line with the previous findings by Isotalo and Rapeli: the Finns Party voters view themselves more right on average than any other party's voters except for the National Coalition Party's voters (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 319).

The newly created cultural backlash variable has statistically significant results with all the parties studied here. Since the correlation is positive in all the cases, it implies that voters who voted for every other party seem to be in average more favourable to these cultural values. In turn it means that on average the Finns Party voters are less favourable to these cultural values and it seems to differentiate the voters from every other party's voters. It is interesting to note that the CD voters identified themselves on average more conservative than the Finns Party

voters, but still in the cultural values variable they were on average more supportive of these values.

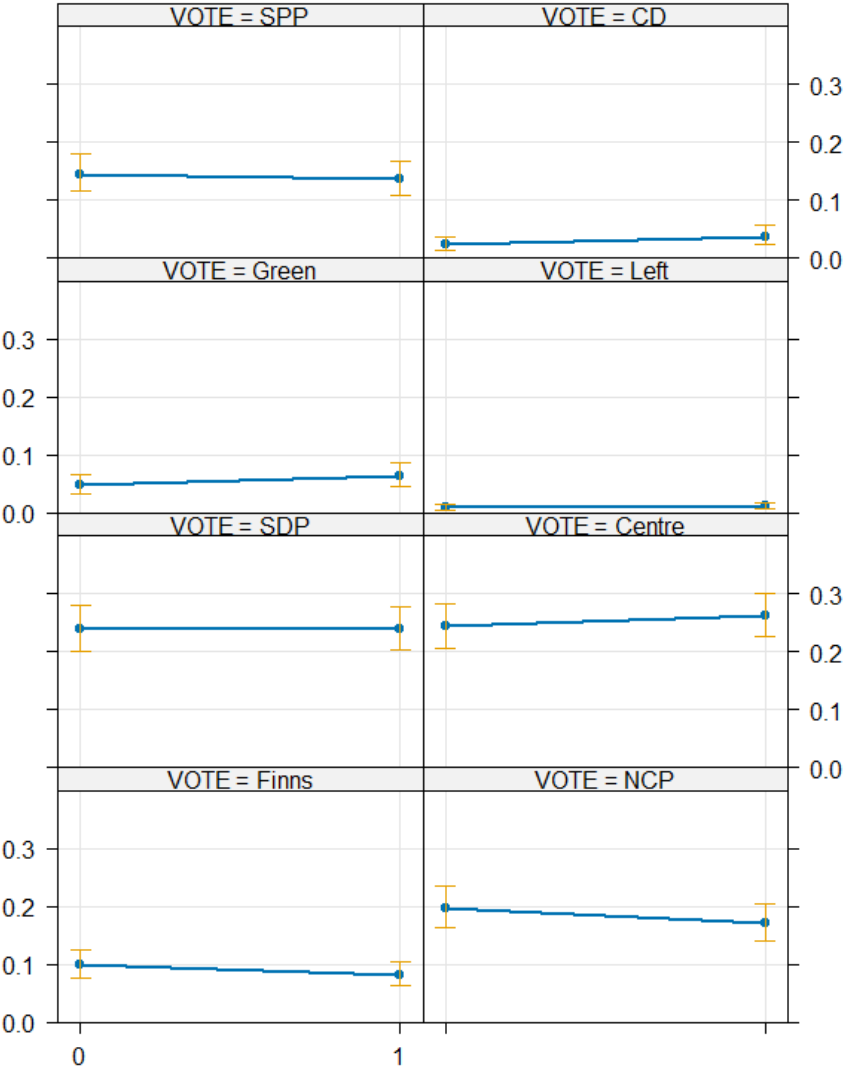
Table 8: First regression model

	Vote choice:						
	NCP (1)	SDP (2)	Centre (3)	Green (4)	Left (5)	SPP (6)	CD (7)
Constant	-3.549*** (0.553)	4.437*** (0.558)	-0.506 (0.545)	3.283*** (0.644)	5.376*** (0.692)	-0.433 (0.630)	-4.384*** (0.820)
Gender	0.044 (0.170)	0.192 (0.193)	0.266 (0.179)	0.475** (0.237)	0.363 (0.268)	0.122 (0.213)	0.702*** (0.252)
Age	0.003 (0.005)	0.040*** (0.006)	0.031*** (0.006)	-0.002 (0.007)	0.026*** (0.008)	0.013** (0.006)	0.013* (0.008)
Education	0.181*** (0.031)	-0.026 (0.036)	0.008 (0.033)	0.162*** (0.045)	-0.008 (0.049)	0.167*** (0.040)	0.058 (0.045)
Liberal- Conservative	-0.085* (0.046)	-0.173*** (0.058)	0.067 (0.052)	-0.428*** (0.072)	-0.218*** (0.079)	-0.160*** (0.060)	0.725*** (0.087)
Left-Right	0.482*** (0.061)	-0.868*** (0.063)	-0.189*** (0.059)	-0.563*** (0.071)	-1.426*** (0.092)	-0.125* (0.068)	-0.367*** (0.080)
Cultural Backlash	1.394*** (0.102)	1.461*** (0.124)	1.272*** (0.110)	1.965*** (0.173)	1.821*** (0.183)	1.740*** (0.144)	1.267*** (0.152)
N							2,305
PRE							0.354
ePRE							0.227
Akaike Inf. Crit.							6,368.537
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01						

As previously noted, in the first model the findings are that the Green League and the Christian Democrats had a statistically significant result with the gender variable. This result is described on figure 2. In this figure, the scale on the y-axis is limited to 0.4 to emphasise the effect.

In the figure it is shown that for the Green League the difference between men 0.047 [0.033-0.067] and women 0.063 [0.046-0.085] is on average 0.016 points. However, as it can be seen, the confidence intervals have quite a bit of overlap. The difference is -0.021, which means that not a lot can be deduced from this result. Same can be said about the Christian Democrats, where the difference between men 0.022 [0.013-0.036] and women 0.037 [0.025-0.056] is on average 0.015 points, but the difference between the confidence limits is -0.011.

Figure 2: Gender, all parties



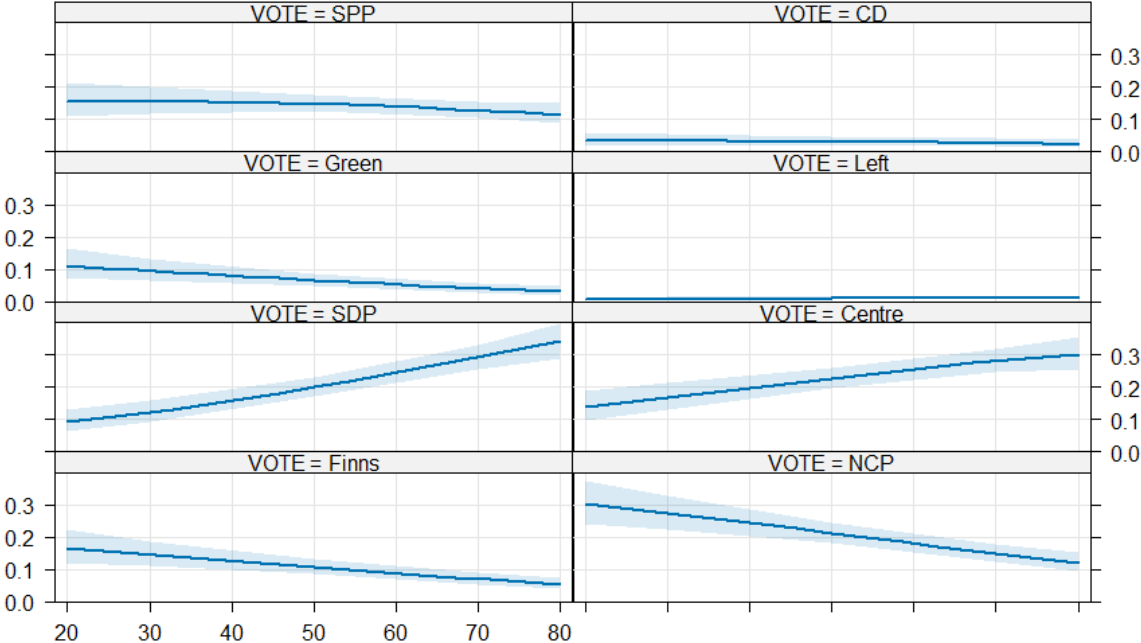
In figure 3 the age variable is plotted. As with the previous figure, the scale on the y-axis is limited to 0.4 with the intention to better illustrate the effect. In this variable the SDP, the Centre Party, the Left Alliance and the Swedish People’s Party had statistically significant results. Starting with the largest party in the group, the SDP, it can be seen that the chance of voting for the SDP increases with the age of the voter. The value for a 20-year-old is 0.094 [0.065-0.135] compared to 80-year-old’s 0.339 [0.280-0.403]. The difference is 0.145. This means that when comparing the SDP and the Finns Party, an 80-year-old is on average more likely to vote for the SDP compared to a 20-year-old.

The second largest party of this group is the Centre Party, which has a similar result to the SDP. However, the effect is not as prominent as with the Centre Party. When comparing a 20-year-

old's 0.144 [0.102-0.201] to an 80-year-old's 0.311 [0.256-0.372], on average the difference is considerably smaller with the actual difference being 0.055. Still, there is an increase, meaning that the older the voter is, the more likely they are to vote for the Centre Party instead of the Finns Party.

The two other parties in this analysis, the Left Alliance and the Swedish People's Party, have results from which nothing can really be deduced. The Left Alliance's result for a 20-year-old is 0.007 [0.004-0.015] compared to an 80-year-old's 0.012 [0.006-0.021], making the difference -0.009. For the Swedish People's Party the result for a 20-year-old was 0.150 [0.102-0.214] compared to an 80-year-old's 0.110 [0.080-0.149], which makes the difference -0.134.

Figure 3: Age, all parties

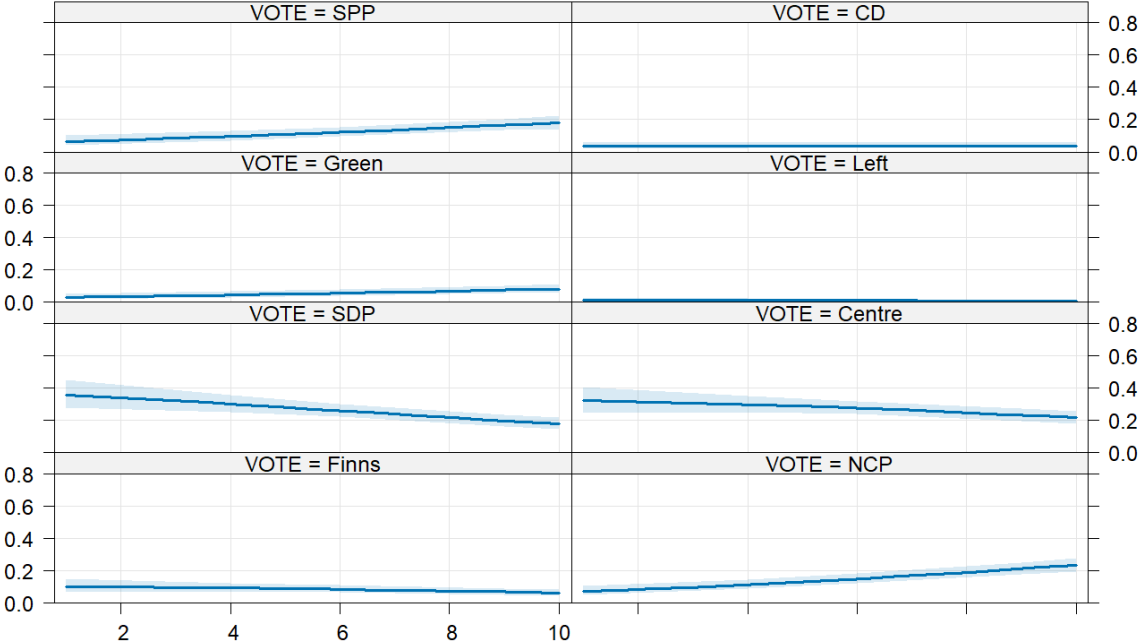


Next, the education variable is described in figure 4. In this figure, the scale on the y-axis is changed to 0.8 to show the whole effect. This scale will be held on for the rest of the figures from this first model. As previously noted, the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party all have statistically significant results with this variable. First, let's look at the NCP comparing the lowest education 0.074 [0.051-0.106] to the highest 0.235 [0.195-0.281]. This makes the difference 0.089. It can be noticed that on average compared to

the Finns Party, those who have the highest education are almost twice as likely to vote for the NCP than the Finns Party.

Next, moving to the Greens, where the difference is much more subtle, as the difference between the lowest education 0.031 [0.017-0.054] and the highest 0.082 [0.060-0.112] is much smaller, 0.006. Finally, there is the Swedish People’s Party, where the difference on average is for the lowest education 0.064 [0.040-0.101] compared to the highest education 0.179 [0.143-0.221], which makes the difference 0.042. Here, it can be seen that there is a noticeable difference: the more educated a voter is, the more likely they vote for the SPP compared to the Finns Party.

Figure 4: Education, all parties

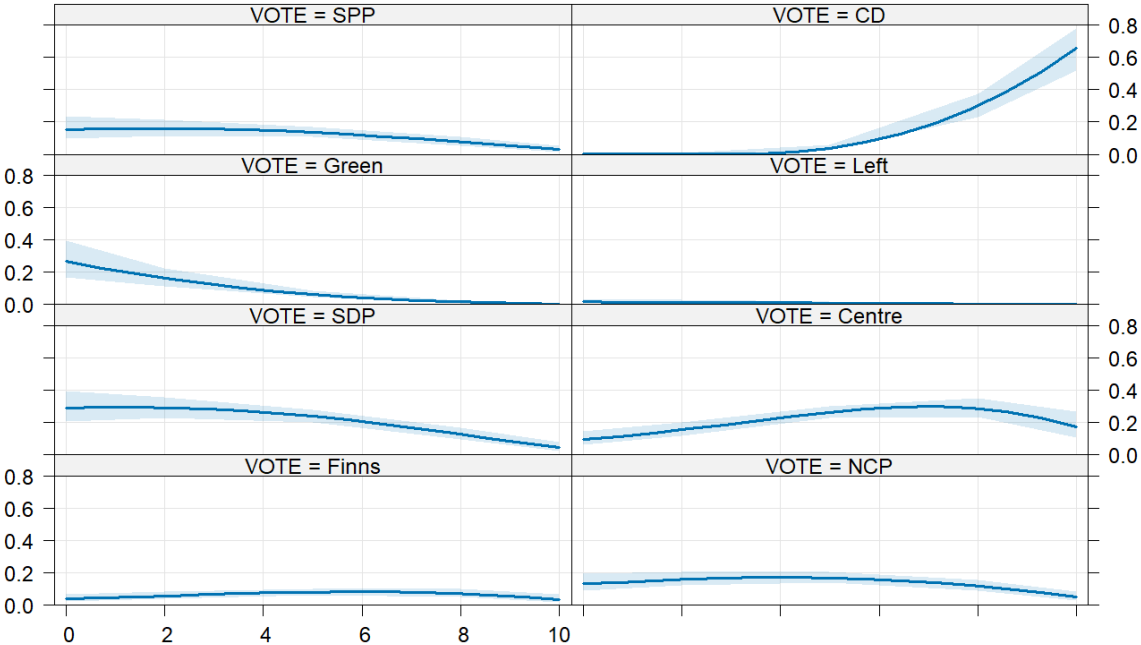


In figure 5 the liberal-conservative variable is plotted. Starting with the Social Democratic Party, the difference between the most liberal 0.291 [0.207-0.392] and the most conservative 0.047 [0.026-0.081] ends of the spectrum is considerable. The difference here is 0.126. On average, a voter who identifies themselves as more on the liberal end of the spectrum is more likely to vote for the SDP than the Finns Party.

The same kind of result is found with the Green League as the difference between the most liberal 0.267 [0.169-0.394] and the most conservative 0.004 [0.002-0.008] ends are quite harsh. Here the difference is 0.161. In the case of the Left Alliance, the results are bit hard to read from the figure, but the difference between the most liberal 0.017 [0.008-0.036] and the most conservative 0.002 [0.001-0.004] ends of the scale tells that the voter who are in the liberal end of the scale are more likely to vote for the Left Alliance compared to the Finns Party. The difference between the confidence limits is 0.004.

With the Swedish People’s Party, the result is of the same kind as with the parties analysed before, although the difference between the liberal end 0.154 [0.097-0.235] and the conservative end 0.029 [0.015-0.052] is not as stark as for example the SDP. Here the difference is 0.045 Lastly, there is the Christian Democrats. Contrary to the parties above, the CD has the opposite result. The difference between the liberal end 0.001 [0.000-0.002] and the conservative end 0.657 [0.516-0.774] shows that the likelihood of someone voting for the CD compared to the Finns Party increases dramatically when moving toward the conservative end. With the CD the difference is 0.514.

Figure 5: Liberal-conservative, all parties

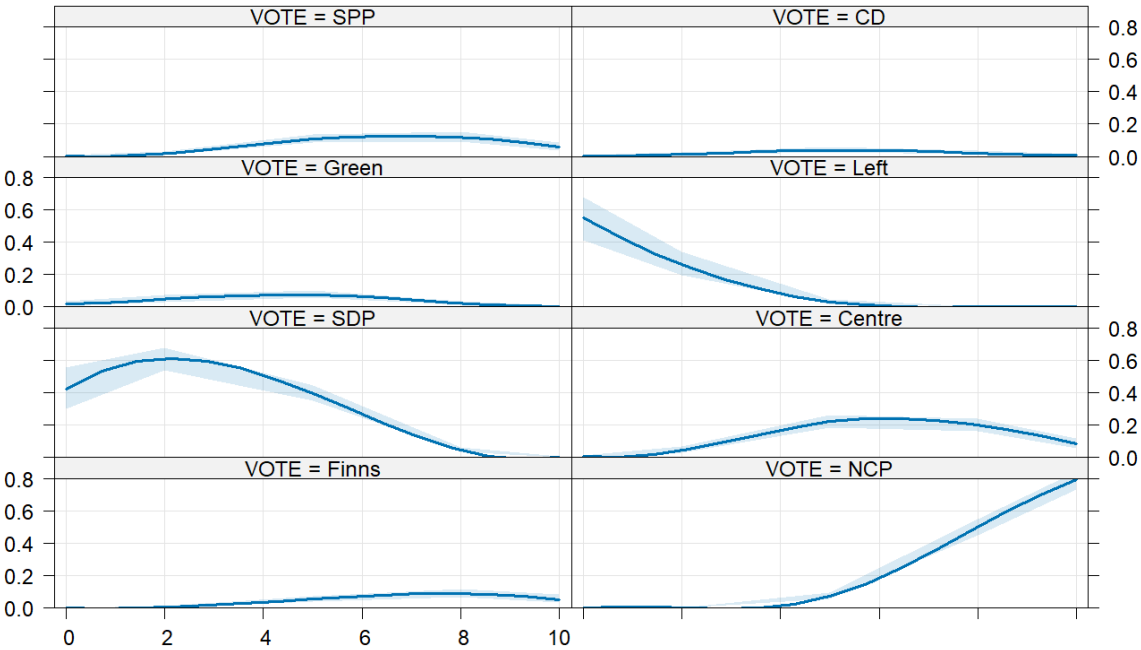


In the next figure, the left-right variable is analysed. Beginning with the National Coalition Party, there is a huge difference between the left end of the spectrum 0.000 [0.000-0.000] and the right end of the spectrum 0.791 [0.732-0.841], which makes the difference 0.732. As expected, the NCP is favoured by those who position themselves right of this spectrum. Continuing with the SDP, there is an opposite result, as the left end of the spectrum 0.420 [0.299-0.552] and the right end of the spectrum 0.005 [0.003-0.008] have quite a big difference, 0.291. Interesting to note is that the SDP gets its highest reading at number 2 on the scale 0.609 [0.537-0.676]. Here the difference is 0.529.

Next, let's look at the Centre Party. The difference between the left end of the scale 0.007 [0.004-0.015] and the right end of the scale 0.083 [0.057-0.120] is noticeable, but not huge. This difference is 0.042. Looking at figure 6, it can be seen that the highest value is at number 5 on the scale, 0.221 [0.186-0.260], which makes the difference 0.171. For the Greens the difference between the left end of the scale 0.017 [0.009-0.034] versus on the right end of the scale 0.004 [0.002-0.008] is considerably smaller than for example the NCP or the SDP. The difference with the Green League is 0.001.

On the other hand, for the Left Alliance, there seems to be quite a stark difference between the most left end 0.547 [0.411-0.677] and the most right end 0.000 [0.000-0.000], which makes the difference 0.411. For the Left Alliance it seems that the more left someone goes on the scale, the likelihood of them voting for the Left Alliance instead of the Finns party increases significantly. Finally, there are the Christian Democrats, where the difference is 0.003 [0.000-0.008] on the left end and 0.006 [0.003-0.012] on the right end. Here the difference is -0.005, meaning that nothing can really be deduced.

Figure 6: Left-right, all-parties



Finally, it is time to move to the focus of this thesis, the cultural backlash variable. In figure 7 there are the results of the cultural backlash variable. As stated above, this variable had statistically significant results with all the parties. Starting with the National Coalition Party, the difference between the lowest value 0.063 [0.042-0.095] and the highest value 0.150 [0.108-0.205] is quite small. When factoring in the confidence intervals, the difference is 0.013. The Social Democratic Party has a more prominent result, 0.076 [0.048-0.120] in the low end of the scale and 0.238 [0.175-0.313] in the high end of the scale, which makes the difference 0.055.

The Centre Party has a result in line with the two previous parties: the low end of the scale being 0.128 [0.086-0.186] versus the high end of the scale 0.187 [0.137-0.251]. This makes the difference for the Centre Party -0.049. Thus, no clear conclusion can be drawn. Next, moving on to the Green League with the values being 0.007 [0.003-0.014] at the low end and the 0.152 [0.094-0.238] high end of the scale. The difference is then 0.080. This indicates that more favourable stances on these cultural issues mean that a voter is more likely to vote for the Green League compared to the Finns Party.

With the Left Alliance the results are 0.002 [0.001-0.004] compared to 0.021 [0.010-0.042], which makes the difference 0.006. This is in line with the Green League. Also, in the same

direction goes the Swedish People’s Party with 0.023 [0.012-0.043] compared to 0.220 [0.152-0.306]. So, the difference here is 0.109. The Christian Democrats’ result is 0.018 [0.009-0.038] compared 0.026 [0.014-0.049]. This makes the difference -0.024, which means that there is quite a bit of overlap in the confidence intervals and no definite conclusions can be drawn.

Next, moving to the focal point, the Finns Party. The result from the low end of the scale is 0.683 [0.595-0.759] and when compared to the high end, which is 0.006 [0.003-0.010], there is a stark difference of 0.585. According to this model, it seems that on average, compared to every other party in the model, the likelihood of a voter choosing the Finns Party increases significantly as the voter has more negative view on these cultural values. This difference can also be seen on the Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Cultural backlash, all-parties

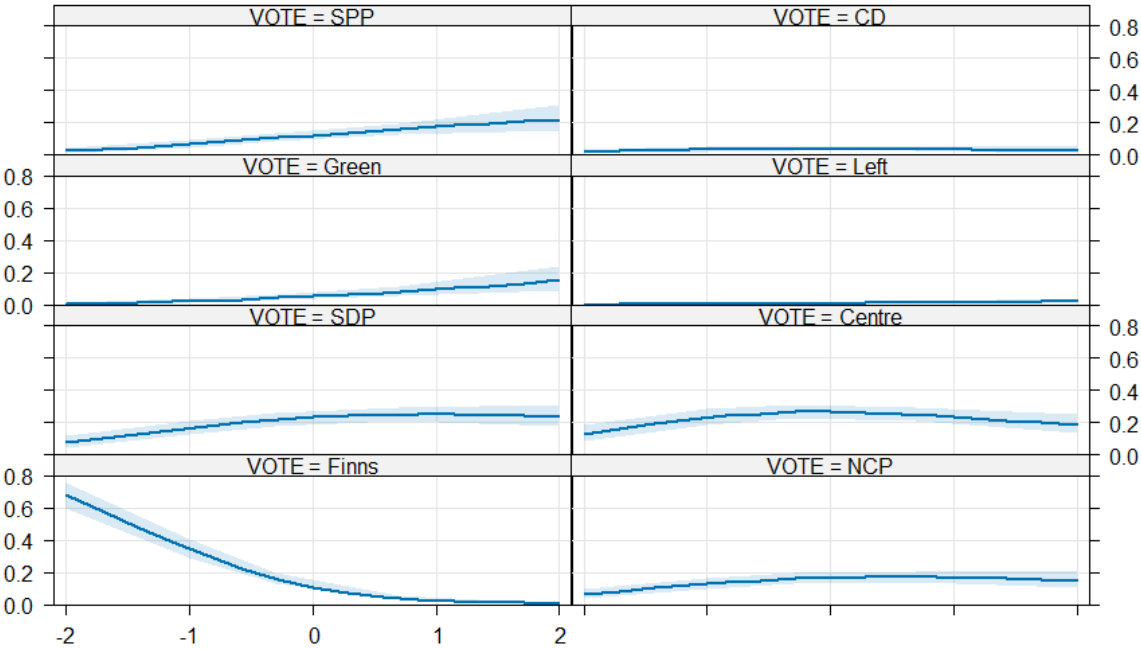
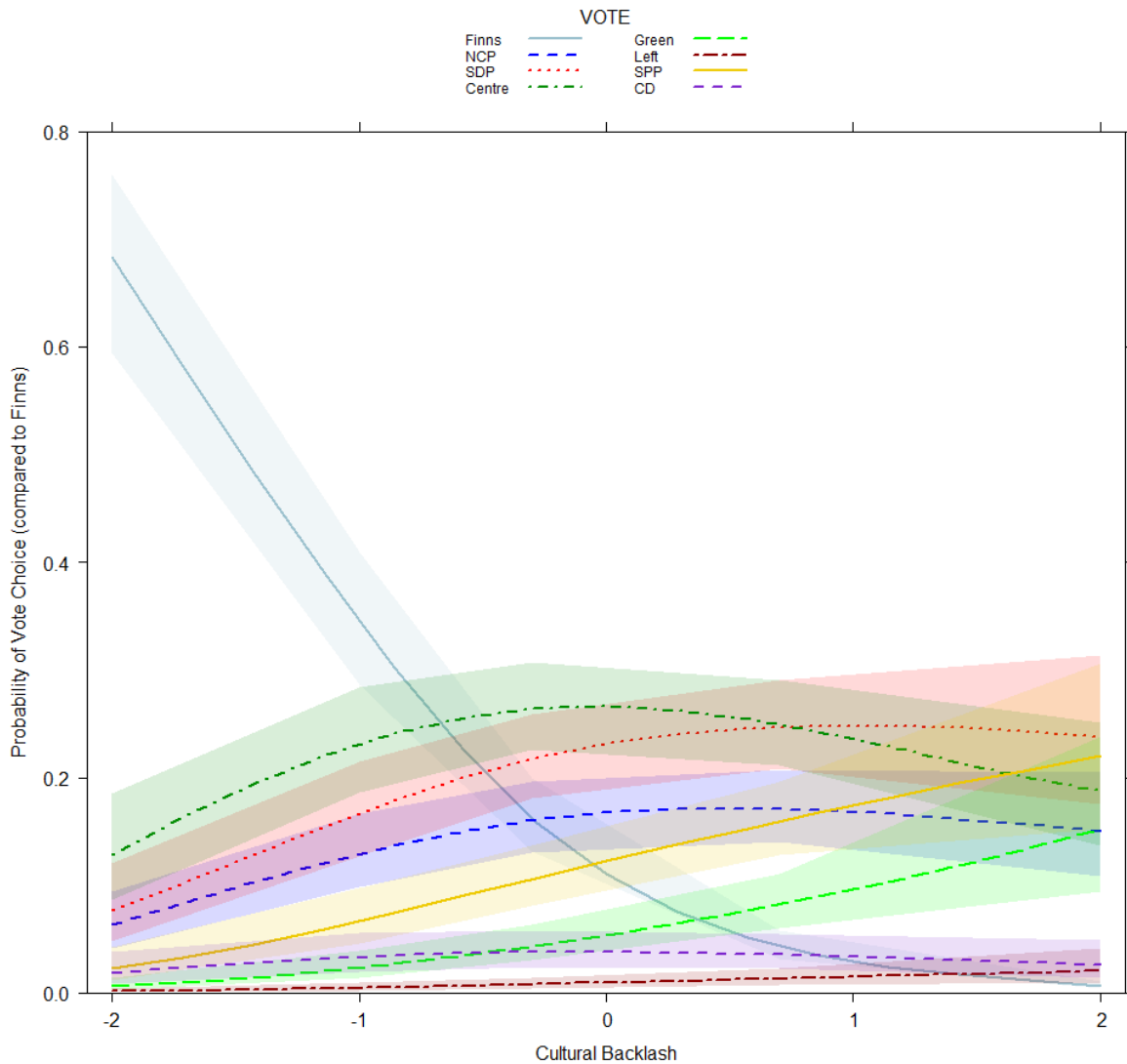


Figure 8 describes the same analysis as Figure 7 but this time the parties are set up in one graph. This highlights the difference between the effect the variable has on the Finns Party compared to all other parties. The results from Figures 7 and 8 seems to indicate that the likelihood of a voter voting for the Finns Party increases significantly when said voter has negative attitudes against these cultural values described in the cultural backlash variable.

Figure 8: Cultural backlash 2, all-parties



8.2. Right-Wing Parties

Next, the analysis moves to the second model, where the focus is on the right-wing parties. In this model all other parties have been removed, and the model only has three parties: the Finns Party, the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party. This model focuses on the research question of this thesis: what differentiates the right-wing parties from each other?

This kind of analysis is useful because, as stated earlier, the trend in Finnish politics has been that the polarization has been increasing and at the same time voters are more willing to change

parties (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 316; Isotalo *et al.* 2020, 300-301). This seems to indicate that voters are willing to change parties inside the blocks created by increased polarization. Because of that, it is valuable to analyse the differences between the parties inside the block.

Results are shown in table 9 and they are in line with the previous model. The age variable has a statistically significant result with the Centre Party, and the education variable has a significant result with the National Coalition Party. In this model a statistically significant result is found with the NCP on the liberal-conservative variable. This correlation is negative, meaning that on average the NCP voters are more liberal than the Finns Party's voters. This result is explained by the Finns Party's positions as a conservative party (Mickelsson 2021, 344).

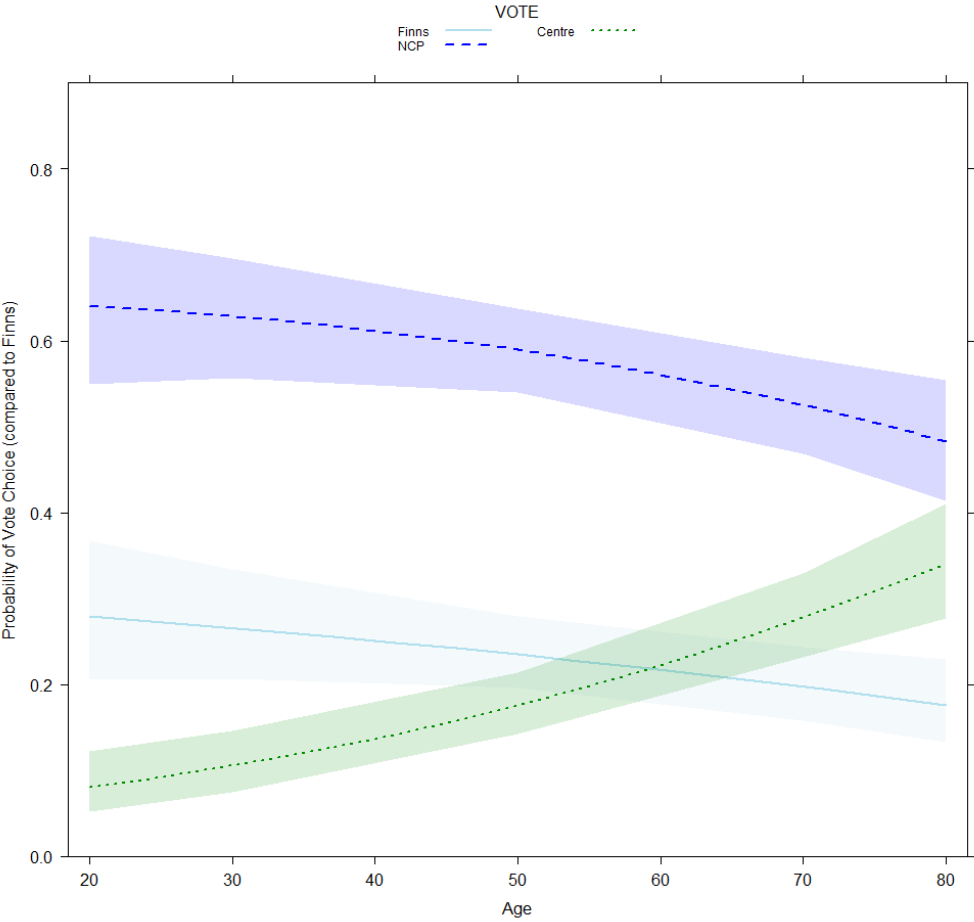
As in the previous model, this model also has results implying that on average the NCP voters identify themselves more right than the Finns Party voters, whereas the Centre Party's voters are on average more left than the Finns Party voters. Both the Centre Party and the NCP have a statistically significant correlation with the cultural backlash variable. The positive correlation implies that the voters of these two parties have a more favourable stance toward cultural values, whereas the Finns Party voters have, on average, a more negative stance. This result is also illustrated in the figures below. In all the figures below, the scale is kept at 0.9 on the y-axis.

Table 9: Second regression model

	Vote choice:	
	NCP (1)	Centre (2)
Constant	-3.354*** (0.589)	-0.189 (0.568)
Gender	0.038 (0.178)	0.313* (0.185)
Age	0.003 (0.005)	0.032*** (0.006)
Education	0.166*** (0.033)	-0.010 (0.035)
Liberal-Conservative	-0.119** (0.048)	0.032 (0.055)
Left-Right	0.501*** (0.067)	-0.188*** (0.062)
Cultural Backlash	1.451*** (0.111)	1.320*** (0.117)
<hr/>		
N		1,174
PRE		0.371
ePRE		0.255
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1,952.309
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

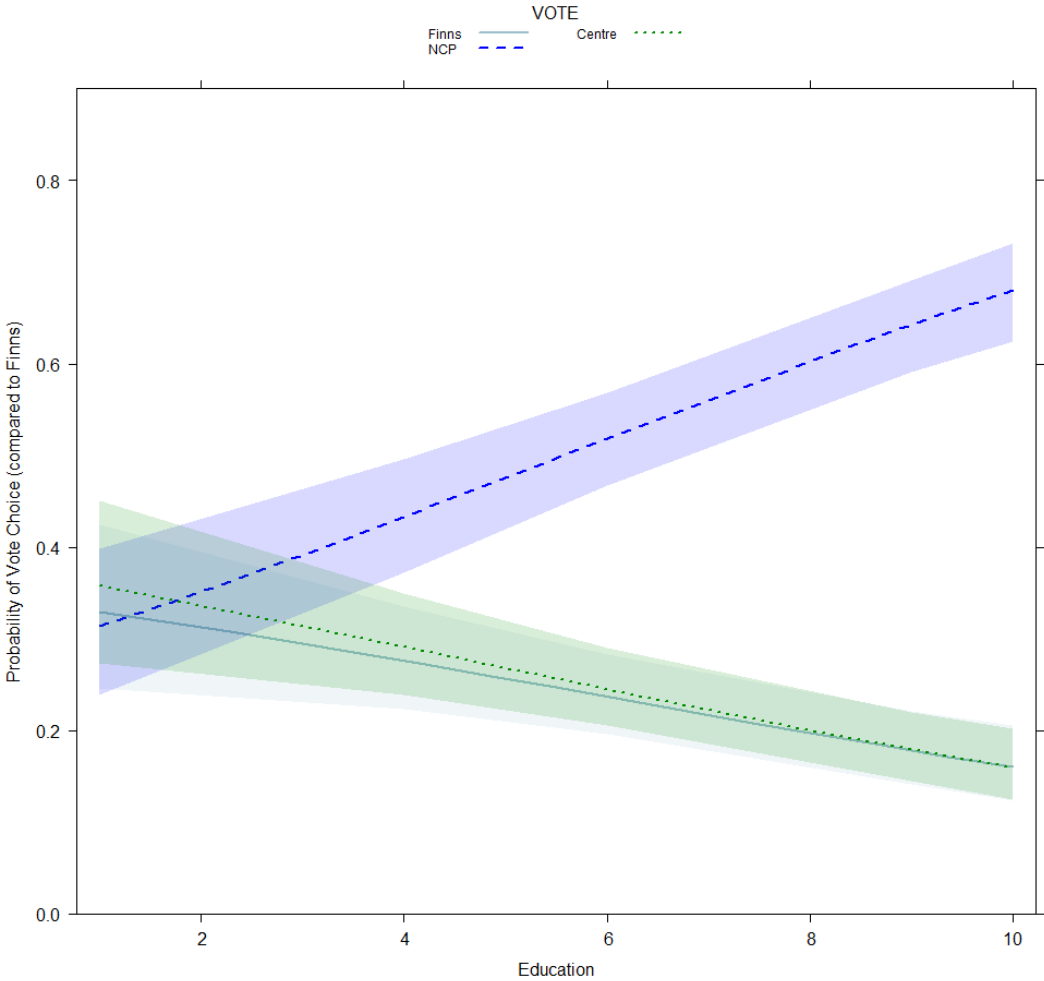
In figure 9 are the result from the age variable with only the three right-wing parties. As shown in table 9, only the Centre Party was statistically significant in this model. The Centre Party gets a value of 0.081 [0.053-0.122] at 20 years old and a value of 0.340 [0.277-0.410] at age 80. This makes the difference 0.155. In this figure, there is a clear increase in the likelihood of a voter choosing the Centre Party against the Finns Party as the voter’s age increases. This is an expected result as the Centre Party was not popular among the younger voters in the 2023 election (Paloheimo 2024, 135). This result also means that against the Centre Party on average Finns Party voters are younger.

Figure 9: Age, right-wing parties



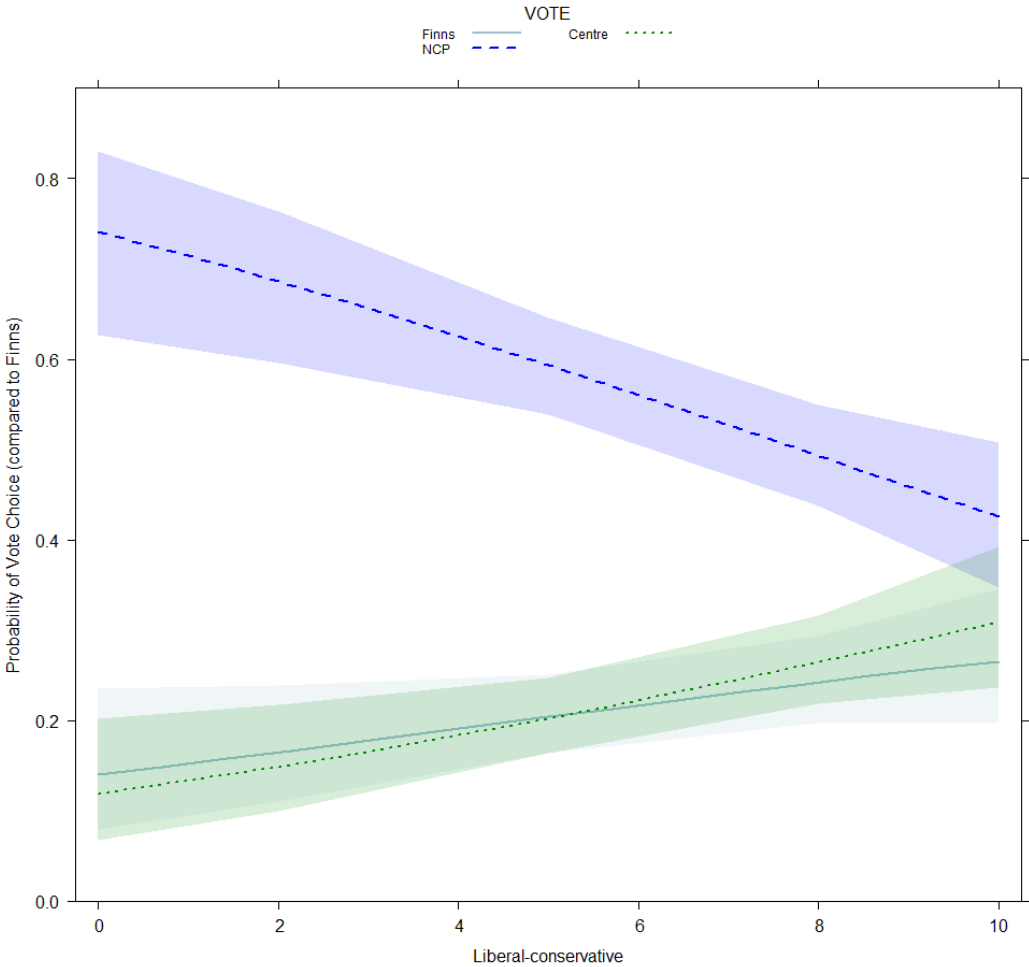
The results for the education variable are shown in figure 10. With this variable the National Coalition Party had a statically significant result. The NCP had a value of 0.314 [0.240-0.399] at the lowest education compared to a value of 0.681 [0.625-0.732] at the highest education, which makes the difference 0.226. This means that in this model voters with the highest education are on average almost twice as likely to choose the NCP over the Finns Party. This also implies that compared to the National Coalition Party, the Finns Party’s voters are on average less educated.

Figure 10: Education, right-wing parties



The liberal-conservative variable is depicted in the next figure. With this variable the National Coalition Party had a statistically significant result. At the liberal end of the scale the NCP gets a value of 0.741 [0.626-0.830] compared to a value of 0.426 [0.347-0.508] in the conservative end. This makes the difference 0.118. This result is clearly shown in figure 11. It seems that the more liberal the voter is, the more likely they choose the National Coalition Party when compared to the Finns Party. This result is not surprising as the Finns Party belongs to the conservative parties (Mickelsson 2021, 344).

Figure 11: Liberal-conservative, right-wing parties



In figure 12 is shown the result for the left-right variable. In this variable both the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party have statistically significant results. The National Coalition Party gets a value of 0.008 [0.003-0.020] in the most left end of the scale compared to value of 0.805 [0.748-0.852] in the right end of the scale, which makes the difference 0.728. From figure 12 it can be seen that the likelihood of choosing the NCP increases radically in the right end of the scale. The Centre Party has bit of an opposite result, as it gets a value of 0.815 [0.650-0.913] in the left end of the spectrum and a value of 0.081 [0.057-0.113] in the right end, which makes the difference 0.537. This seems to indicate that in this model the likelihood of choosing the Centre Party increases the more left a voter goes on the scale.

Figure 12: Left-right, right-wing parties

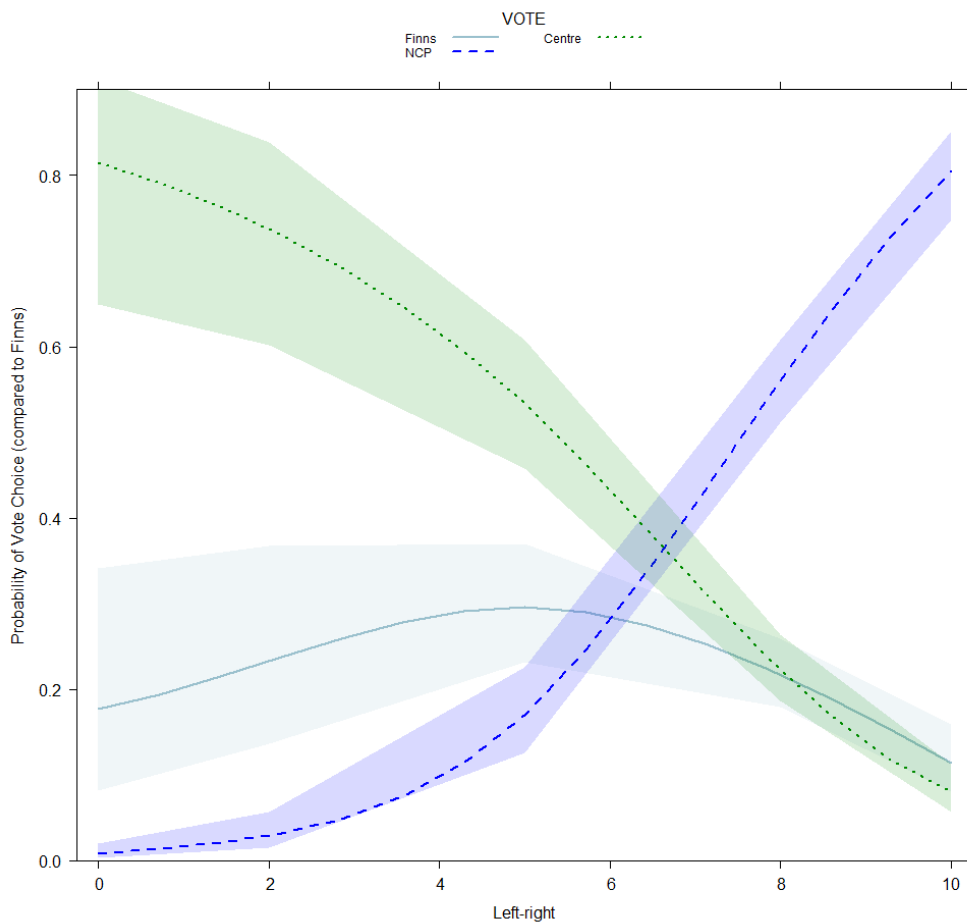


Figure 13 gets to the main analysis of this thesis, the cultural backlash variable. With the cultural backlash variables both the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party have statistically significant results. The NCP gets a value of 0.153 [0.111-0.206] at the negative end of the scale compared to a value of 0.762 [0.665-0.838] at the positive end. This makes the difference 0.459. As it can be seen in figure 13, the likelihood of choosing the National Coalition Party against the Finns Party increases dramatically when moving to the positive side of the scale.

The Centre Party on the other hand gets a result of 0.076 [0.052-0.112] at the negative end compared to a result of 0.226 [0.151-0.323] at the positive end, which makes the difference 0.039. The result is not as strong as with the NCP, but still in line with it. Also interesting to note is that in this model, there is a clear effect that the NCP voters hold more positive attitudes towards cultural values. It seems from these models that compared to the Finns Party, the NCP voters on average have a more positive view on these cultural questions. The Centre Party on the other hand does not have a majorly different result from the first model.

Finally, moving to the Finns Party. The value at the negative end is 0.761 [0.696-0.815] and at the positive end is 0.011 [0.006-0.019], which makes the difference 0.677. There is a clear increase in likelihood of voting for the Finns Party when going to the negative end of the spectrum. These results seem to indicate the same the first models suggested: the likelihood of voting for the Finns Party increases with the negative view toward these cultural values. This result shows that this correlation is true even between the right-wing parties and not only compared to the left-leaning parties.

Figure 13: Cultural backlash 1, right-wing parties

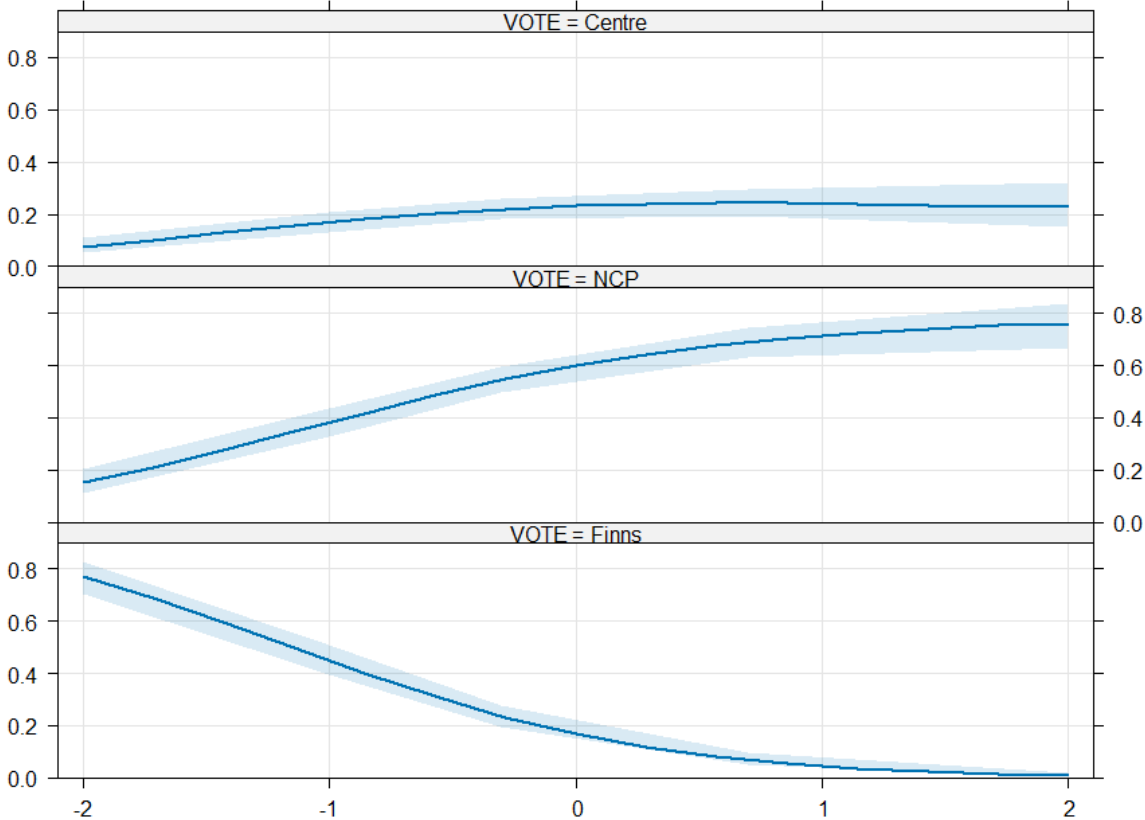
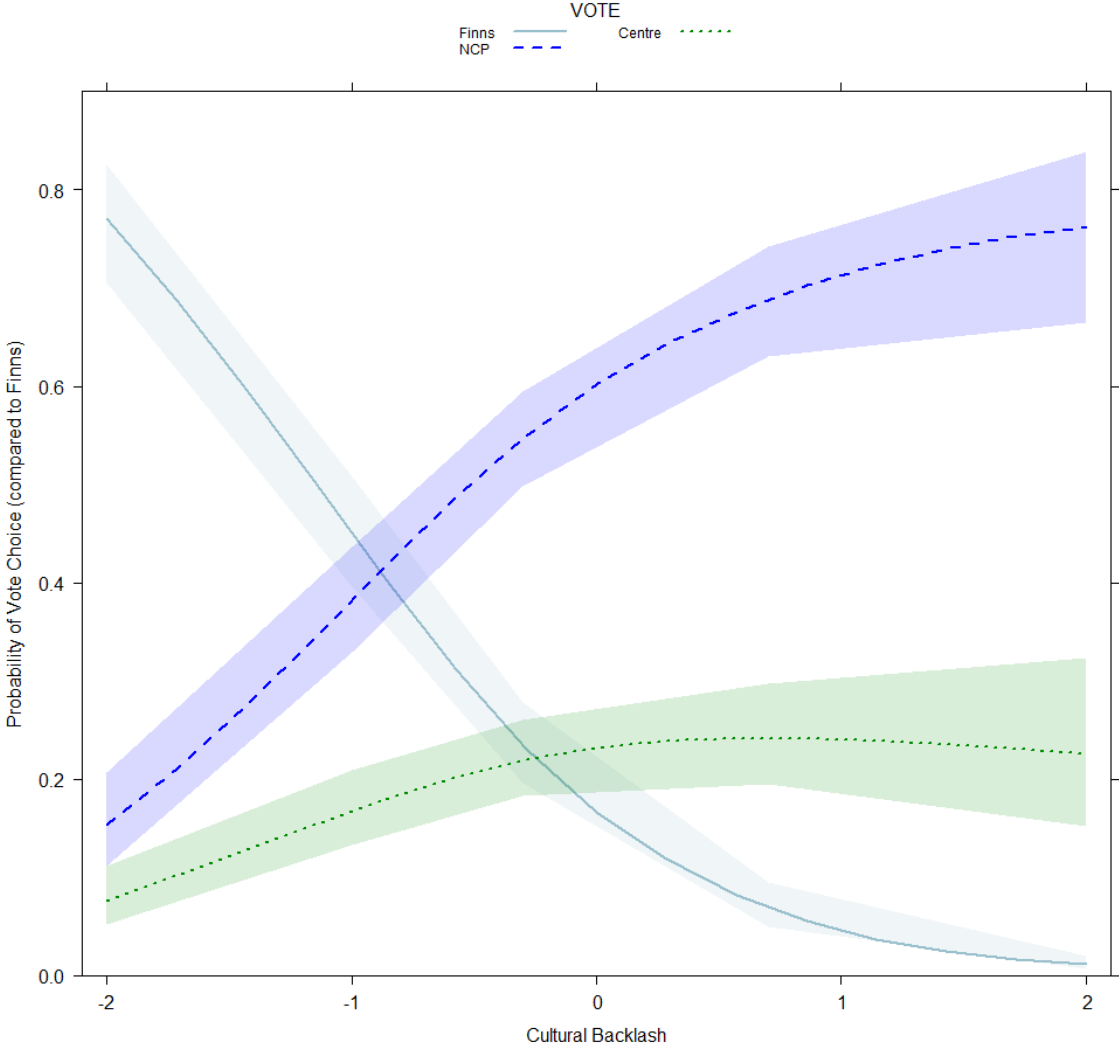


Figure 14 shows the same result as figure 13, but the result is placed on one graph. This figure highlights that as the likelihood of voting for the Finns Party increases, the likelihood of voting for the National Coalition Party decreases. Also, there is a as small but not insignificant result for the Centre Party in that the likelihood of voting for the Centre Party increases when moving to the positive side of the scale. Overall these figures highlight the effect of the cultural backlash variable on likelihood of someone voting for the Finns Party. In general, these results support

the original hypothesis and the cultural backlash framework as they seem to imply that Finns Party's voters are on average more culturally conservative.

Figure 14: Cultural backlash 2, right-wing parties



8.3. Results

At the start of this thesis three hypotheses were set and next it is time to evaluate how well these hypotheses hold up against the analysis. H1 was that Finns Party is a populist party, so cultural factors are the main catalyst for distinguishing the Finns Party's voters from other right-leaning voters. With the created cultural backlash variable, it was found that all the parties had a significant result and the correlation was positive with all parties. This means that on average

all other parties' voters had a more positive attitude on this question compared to the Finns Party. This effect was also found in the second model with only the right-wing parties.

Later, in figures 7 and 8, it was noticed that although the effect is quite small with all other parties, the Finns Party has a quite notable effect on the negative end of the spectrum. Looking at figures 13 and 14 the effect is also quite strong with the two other parties in the model. Especially the results from the second model support the first hypothesis.

In the second hypothesis it was said that more liberally aligned people vote for the National Coalition Party and the Centre Party, and more culturally conservative people vote for the Finns Party. Again, this result can clearly be seen in the figures 13 and 14, where the effect with the National Coalition Party is considerable. It must also be noted that the result is not as strong with the Centre Party, so these results support the second hypothesis only partly.

The third hypothesis of this thesis was that the difference between the right-wing parties is not visible within the liberal-conservative-axis. When looking at tables 8 and 9 there was a statistically significant result in both of the models with the liberal-conservative variable. The result is only significant with the NCP, and it tells that the NCP voters are more liberal than the Finns Party voters in this setup. This result goes against the original hypothesis, although analysis did not find statistically significant results with the Centre Party in either model.

Next, let's look at how the findings measure against the theoretical framework. The cultural backlash theory predicts that the greatest support for populist parties is among the older generation, men, less-educated people and people who oppose the progressive cultural trend (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). As the last criteria is already analysed above, it is appropriate to focus on the rest of the criteria.

Let's start from age. As stated above, according to cultural backlash the support for populist parties is greater with older people (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). In the first model including all the parties it was found that age had a statistically significant result with the SDP, the Centre Party, the Left Alliance and the SPP. The correlation with all the parties was positive, meaning that the voters of these parties were in fact older than Finns Party voters. In the second model, including only the three right-wing parties, a statistically significant result was also found with

the Centre Party. This correlation was also positive. So, regarding age these results do not align with the framework.

Next, moving to gender. The cultural backlash framework expects men to be more likely to vote for populist parties (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). In the first model it was found that the Green League and the Christian Democrats had a statistically significant result. The correlation was positive, meaning that women were more likely to vote for these parties compared to the Finns Party. In the second model there was no statistically significant results with the gender variable. The result from the first model supports the framework; the Finns Party is more popular with men when comparing to these two parties.

Lastly, the cultural backlash says that less-educated people are more likely to vote for the Finns Party (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). In the first model it was found that the NCP, the Greens and the SPP all had statistically significant results. The results with all the parties were positive, meaning that on average voters of these parties are more educated than the Finns Party voters. There was a similar result in the second model where, the NCP also had a positive correlation. This supports the cultural backlash framework as these result imply that less educated people choose the Finns Party over these parties.

9. Conclusion

So, to recap the results, the findings of this thesis are partially in line with the cultural backlash theory. This thesis found the strongest result with the people who oppose the progressive cultural trend (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). This attitude was measured with the cultural backlash variable created with factor analysis. The cultural backlash variable had statistically significant results with all of the parties and although the effect was small with some of the other parties, the variable showed a notable effect size with the Finns Party.

When it comes to other aspects of the theory, the results from the analysis are not as robust. Analysis did not find results that would indicate that the Finns Party is favoured by older people. The results also indicate that there is some preference for men to vote for to Finns Party, but these results did not extend to all the parties in the analysis. With the education variable analysis also found statistically significant results. The result with the National Coalition Party and the

Swedish People's Party were notable. This means that at least partially the Finns Party is preferred by those with lower education. Also notable is that this result was found between the right-wing parties, meaning that education is one of the dividers between them.

Next, it is appropriate to look at how these results compare to prior studies. This thesis follows in the footsteps of Michael A. Hansen and Mikko Leino, because these authors studied the effect that opinions about immigration have on the likelihood of voting for the Finns Party by using multinomial logistic regression (Hansen & Leino 2024). This thesis seeks to add to this study by attaching this effect on a theoretical framework created by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. This thesis aims to add on the previous studies on the Finnish populism. In this thesis the Finns Party is defined as part of the right-wing parties and compared against other right-wing parties in Finland. This viewpoint differs somewhat from previous studies about the Finns Party, where the party has primarily been seen as a populist party (Mickelsson 2018, 180).

The findings from this thesis also line up with the previous results from Veikko Isotalo and Lauri Rapeli. The authors found that in GAL-TAN-axis the Finns Party voters identify more in the TAN end of the axis compared to the NCP voters (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 322). The result in figure 14 shows that cultural backlash, which measures sociocultural values, is the one driving the NCP from the Finn Party.

Lastly, it is appropriate to note some of the issues in this study and point out possible follow-up research. Starting with the issues, the study was done with an already made dataset and because of this, the questions used to measure cultural backlash could have been designed differently. Also, the original sample contained too many Swedish speakers so some of them had to be removed to get a representative sample of the Finnish population able to vote. Possible future research could involve using a new dataset to and phrase the question to align even better with the cultural backlash theory. Also, this study could be redone in the 2027 parliamentary election to see what direction the Finns Party has moved.

10. Campaign Consultancy

Next, I will go over these results from the perspective of the three right-wing parties in the centre of my analysis. I will give some possible suggestions on policy positions these parties could take when they are preparing for the next parliamentary election in 2027. These suggestions are based on the idea that polarization in Finnish politics is increasing and at the same time voters are more willing to change parties, meaning that voters are more likely to switch their party inside a given block (Isotalo & Rapeli 2024, 316; Isotalo *et al.* 2020, 300-301). This means that right-wing parties have the best chance of increasing their vote share by trying to capture each other's voters. Other option, which is not discussed here, for the parties is trying to capture the almost 23 percent of Finnish citizens living in Finland who did not vote in the 2023 election (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 37).

Starting with the National Coalition Party, I have three possible options: understanding, halting and widening. Based on these results it seems that the main divider between the NCP and the Finns Party voters are sociocultural issues, as the Finns Party voters seem to be almost as right economically as the National Coalition Party voters. First suggestion is that the NCP tries to understand these voters who vote for the populist Finns Party. The cultural backlash theory states that these people are likely to shy away from the progressive cultural trend (Inglehart & Norris 2016, 13). Possible move for the NCP could be to take some of these more conservative issue positions with the possibility to steal some of the Finns Party voters, although this approach may lead to some of the more liberally aligned voters to move elsewhere.

The second option is called halt. This means that the National Coalition Party will try to build the campaign around the economic aspects and try to push economic issues as the main talking points of the elections. Possible issues could be public debt or spending cuts that need to be implemented in the next four years. At the same time the NCP should try to halt cultural issues, for example immigration, becoming the talking point in the parliamentary election debates.

The third option for the National Coalition Party is widening. This means that instead of trying to win over some of the Finns Party's voters, the NCP could try to focus on the Centre Party's voter base. The result from this thesis indicates that the Centre Party's voters seem to be more centre on the left-right scale. Trying to take some of the Centre Party's more economically

centre issues could allow to take some of the Centre Party's voters, although this runs the risk of losing the voters from the right end of the scale.

Next, I move to the Finns Party. I provide two options for the Finns Party, which are broadening and promoting. Starting with the option of broadening. The results from this thesis indicate that the Finns Party is quite alone, since no other party showed negative correlation compared to the Finns Party. The Finns Party seems to have a monopoly over the culturally conservative voters, so it could be beneficial to move the party more centre on economic issues to capture a larger voter base.

The second option for the Finns Party is called promoting. This suggestion is kind of the opposite of one of the NCP's suggestions. Because the Finns Party's voters seem to have culturally conservative views and the party is almost as right as the National Coalition Party, it would seem beneficial for the Finns Party to try to promote the cultural issues as much as possible on election debates and try to make the election about cultural issues, instead of the economy.

Last, I have the Centre Party. For the Centre Party I provide a possible option called invade. In the analysis it seemed that the Centre Party was more centre on the left-right axis than the Finns Party and the NCP. As the Centre Party has lost votes in the last two elections (Kestilä-Kekkonen *et al.* 2024a, 39; Borg *et al.* 2020, 53), one option for the Centre Party when looking at the next election is to take some more economically right policies. By doing so, the Centre Party could win voters from the NCP and the Finns Party. Both of them are in the government at the moment, and as a result, they might be losing some voters in the next election.

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Appendix

Question phrasing

Variable	Question phrasing
Vote choice	Which party's or group's candidate did you vote for in the current parliamentary elections? (The parties are in descending order of size according to parliamentary seats in 2019)
Gender	Your gender?
Age	Your year of birth?
Education	What is the highest level of education or degree you have completed?
Liberal-conservative	In politics, we talk about liberal and conservative values. We use a scale where 0 means the most liberal and 10 means the most conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
Left-right	In politics, we talk about the left and the right. We use a scale where 0 means the most on the left and 10 means the most on the right. Where would you place yourself on this scale?