Understanding the Determinants of Populist Attitudes: The Case of Canada

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Abstract

While research on populism has traditionally focused on the populist political supply-side, there has been a growing body of research devoted to the populist demand-side in recent years. These studies have primarily investigated populist attitudes on an individual level to explain voting for populist parties. However, we still know very little about the determinants of these populist attitudes. This study seeks to fill this gap by testing a set of so-called sociopolitical explanatory factors in the Canadian context. Canada has long been seen as one of the last strongholds resisting the populist tide that has swept Western democracies since the beginning of the 21st century. Many, however, contend that this is no longer the case, which makes the country an especially intriguing case study for research on populist attitudes. This research mobilizes data from the Canadian Election Studies and tests the various hypotheses using a block recursive model and a structural equation model. Results indicate that populist attitudes are significantly better explained by subjective sociological factors, referring to individuals' subjective evaluations of society, than by their objective position within it. Specifically, individuals with low political trust and a perception that Canadian society is in decline are more likely to adopt populist attitudes. Additionally, this study offers a longitudinal analysis showing the relative stability of populist attitudes in Canada over the last twenty years.

Keywords: Populism; Populist attitudes; Political Trust; Declinism; Canada.

Résumé

Alors que la recherche sur le populisme s'est traditionnellement concentrée sur l'offre politique populiste, un nombre croissant d'études ont été consacrées à la demande populiste au cours des dernières années. Ces études ont principalement porté sur les attitudes populistes au niveau individuel afin d'expliquer le vote pour les partis populistes. Cependant, nous en savons encore très peu sur les déterminants de celles-ci. La présente étude vise à combler cette lacune en testant un ensemble de facteurs explicatifs dits sociopolitiques dans le contexte canadien. Le Canada a longtemps été considéré comme l'un des derniers bastions résistant à la montée du populisme qui s'est fait sentir dans les démocraties occidentales depuis le début du XXIe siècle. Nombreux sont ceux qui affirment aujourd'hui que ce n'est plus le cas, ce qui fait du pays cas d'étude particulièrement intéressante pour étudier les attitudes populistes. Cette recherche mobilise les données des Études électorales canadiennes et teste les différentes hypothèses à l'aide d'un modèle à blocs récursifs et d'un modèle d'équation structurelle. Les résultats indiquent que les attitudes populistes sont nettement mieux expliquées par des facteurs sociologiques subjectifs, c'est-à-dire l'évaluation subjectives que font les individus de leur société, que par leur position objective au sein de celle-ci. Plus précisément, les individus ayant une faible confiance politique et la perception que la société canadienne est en déclin sont plus susceptibles d'adopter des attitudes populistes. En outre, cette étude propose une analyse longitudinale montrant la stabilité relative des attitudes populistes au Canada au cours des vingt dernières années.

Mots clés: Populisme; Attitudes populistes; Confiance politique; Déclinisme; Canada.

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1. Introduction

For several years now, populism has been the talk of the West. According to French historian Pierre Rosanvallon (2020), the 21st century may well be dubbed the "populist century". In fact, since the early 2000s, there has been a noticeable rise in populism, marked by the emergence and consolidation of numerous populist parties and movements across virtually all Western democracies (Berman, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020). This trend has attracted considerable attention from the social sciences over the last two decades, leading to extensive documentation and research, firmly establishing it as one of the most studied topics in the field today (Rooduijn, 2019). Thus, while the notion of populism continues to be fiercely disputed and is the subject of numerous scholarly debates, there is a degree of agreement regarding this current surge in populism.

However, Canada has been regarded as one of the last strongholds resisting this populist tide that has swept Western democracies (Adams, 2017, 2022; Gillies et al., 2023). In fact, since the dissolution of the Reform Party of Canada in 2000, Canada has long been one of the few democracies without a populist party in its political landscape (Macaulay, 2022a). Nonetheless, several recent events have cast doubt on the distinctiveness of Canada, such as the creation of the People's Party of Canada (PPC) by Maxime Bernier in 2018, the events of the Freedom Convoy in early 2022, and the election of Pierre Poilievre as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) in the late summer of the same year. The result is that Canadian exceptionalism is now being called into question at a time when the nation could be experiencing its own populist moment. So, what is going on? The first objective of this thesis will be to test this hypothesis of the recent rise of populism in Canada by painting a portrait of the evolution of populist attitudes

in the country over the past 20 years. With this first contribution, it will be possible to determine whether Canada truly stands out as an exception among Western democracies or if it has undergone a normalization process, becoming a stage for a populist surge.

Furthermore, over the years, research on populism has generally focused on studying the populist political "supply" (Benczes & Szabó, 2023), that is, populist political actors (political parties, politicians, and movements), and their effects on the political system (Mudde, 2014; Vachudova, 2021). This trend has dominated populism research over the past two decades. But more recently, a new stream of research has begun to take an interest in the populist "demand" (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023) by measuring populist attitudes at an individual level (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012; Schulz et al., 2018). In other words, several researchers have tried to understand the extent to which individuals themselves embrace populist ideology. Most of them mainly attempted to explain voting for populist parties by studying the explanatory power of individual populist attitudes. But what drives people to adopt a populist view of the world and politics? The determinants of populist demand remain largely unknown. The potential recent rise of populism in Canada offers an interesting context in which to seek a better understanding of what motivates individuals to adopt populist attitudes. Consequently, the second main objective of this thesis will be to test a set of potential explanatory factors for populist attitudes in Canada. Special attention will be paid to socio-political factors, as they are deemed more conducive to unravelling the underlying reasons behind populist support than the communicative or psychological factors often mentioned.

In order to address these two research objectives, the thesis begins with a review of the literature on populism in Canada, focusing on the phenomenon's particular situation in the country, and then moves on to recent advances in populist demand research and their significance for the Canadian case. By the same token, a total of nine hypotheses will be proposed to study the potential determinants of populist attitudes. In order to test these potential explanatory factors, the thesis mobilizes data from the Canadian Election Studies (CES) from 2000 to 2021 and initially uses a block recursive model (BRM). The relationships between the various variables are then investigated more closely by building a structural equation model (SEM). The results will show that subjective sociological factors, that is, people's assessment of the state of their society and their place within it, are the ones that best explain populist attitudes in Canada. In particular, political trust and the perception of societal decline are especially pertinent factors in comprehending the support that Canadians have for populism. A longitudinal analysis of the level of populist attitudes in Canada will nevertheless point to their stability, contradicting the idea that there has been a marked rise in populism in recent years. Finally, the last section will discuss the implications of the results for the understanding of the populist phenomenon in Canada, and their contribution to understanding the determinants of populist attitudes.

2. Background, Research Questions and Hypotheses

2.1. Theorising Populism

It has become commonplace to speak of populism as a highly contested concept in the social sciences. Indeed, while populism has been conceptualized quite differently in recent decades and the usefulness of the concept itself has long been debated, there is today a growing consensus

around the ideational definition of populism (McKibben, 2023). Mudde (2004) defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (543). Even if it does not always meet with consensus (Olivas Osuna, 2021), this ideational definition of populism is the most widely recognized and has become the benchmark definition over the past twenty years (Hunger & Paxton, 2022). This definition highlights the three essential characteristics of populism: anti-elitism based on a moral dichotomy between the people and the elite, a conception of the people characterized by its homogeneity, and the primacy of popular sovereignty legitimately accorded to it.

However, this definition has prompted research to consider populism as a thin ideology that must be combined with another ideology. It has enabled researchers to study the various incarnations of populism across diverse political parties on both the right and the left (Sengul, 2019), but has simultaneously had the effect of diverting attention from populism itself to its host ideology and so to its adjacent attitudinal dimensions such as authoritarianism or nativism (Neuner & Wratil, 2022). It is not least because of this close attention that researchers have focused on the political attitudes associated with populism that the definition of populism is hotly contested and that the literature on the subject is full of contradictions. However, this academic debate is not without consequences, for as Ralph Schroeder (2020) points out: "if researchers continue to treat populism as 'thin', wondering which 'thick' ideology it attaches itself to, they are bound to miss the main thrust of populism as an independent force, including its causes and how it sustains itself" (28). In

other words, it is impossible to understand the determinants of populist attitudes if we define populism as fundamentally dependent on other political attitudes.

What is more, recent literature tends to demonstrate a certain stability in the populist phenomenon, which calls into question this dependence on populism as a thin ideology (Medeiros, 2021). As a result, studying populist demand necessitates moving away from a purely ideational conception of populism that only motivates people to mobilize and support populist forces (Kaltwasser & Hawkins, 2018). Studying populist attitudes as proposed in this thesis requires considering populism as a consistent attitudinal dimension. This concept of populism aligns with scholarship, which is increasingly moving toward a thick conception of populism (Medeiros, 2021; Tarragoni, 2024). Therefore, contrary to Hawkins et al.'s (2020) claim, populism can be conceptualized as a coherent worldview that stands on its own and embodies popular sovereignty and majority rule (Canovan, 2002). In fact, "populism is a vision of society that wants power to reside as close to the people as possible, […] so if the will of the people is not to be distorted, there needs to be a direct connection between the people and policies" (Medeiros, 2021: 921). Therefore, those who embrace this ideology are not only driven to vote for populist parties but also adhere to a vision of democracy that comes close to direct democracy and challenges the foundations of the liberal regime (Mohrenberg et al., 2021).

In sum, if the diversity of forms that populism has taken in the different political contexts studied in recent years has justified the adoption of an ideational definition of populism that can account for its malleability and its ability to graft itself onto other ideologies, it seems more relevant than ever to acknowledge the stability of this concept and to return to a stricter conceptualization that

highlights its essential components: the homogeneous conception of the people, its moral dichotomy with the elite, and the consequent importance accorded to popular sovereignty. Only then will it be possible to fully understand what drives people to adopt this particular view of the world and the political system. This definition of populism, limited to its essential dimensions, will avoid mixing the concept with other attitudinal dimensions, as is often the case in literature.

2.2. A Rise in Populism in Canada?

Populism has gained significant prominence in political science research in recent years. This can be explained by the fact that it is now commonly acknowledged that there has been a populist upsurge in the West since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Berman, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020). Indeed, populist parties have enjoyed growth in electoral success in the vast majority of liberal democracies (Mudde, 2004; Schwörer, 2021). Even if this rise is not new, while populist actors were already appearing in Europe in the 1980s (Katsambekis, 2017), what is novel today is "the intensity and simultaneity of its manifestation in almost all countries ruled by a constitutional democracy" (Urbinati, 2019: 112). This research interest in populism has become even more pronounced since Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in 2016 (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rooduijn, 2019), so much so that today studies examining populism are available for virtually every Western country, with Europe being the most widely studied region (Hunger & Paxton, 2022).

However, Canada stands out as an exception among Western democracies, where populism has received little attention in scholarly research since the turn of the century. One explanation for this is that, despite the lengthy history of populist movements in the country (Conway, 1978; Laycock,

2005; LeDuc et al., 2023), populist parties have been absent in the Canadian party system since the Reform Party's demise in 2000 (Macaulay, 2022a), while at the same time, this type of party was booming in all the other Western democracies (Guth & Nelsen, 2021). Therefore, many came to the conclusion that Canada was to some extent immune to the rise of populism that was being observed elsewhere (Adams, 2017, 2022; Gillies et al., 2023). Several factors have been identified to explain this so-called resistance to populism, including Canadian multiculturalism (Laycock & Weldon, 2019), stable socioeconomic conditions (Adams, 2017), and the Canadian political culture (Gillies, 2021).

Nevertheless, it appears that the idea that populism has been absent from Canadian politics thus far has been more of a myth than an established fact (Kwak, 2020). Indeed, although from 2000 to 2018, the Canadian party system did not have, properly speaking, a populist party (Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023), studies have highlighted numerous populist manifestations during this period. Many focus on the populist approach implemented by the Harper government. Between 2006 and 2015, the CPC developed an anti-elite economic discourse that attacked the welfare state and the intermediary institutions of representative democracy—what has been referred to as "market populism" (Sawer & Laycock, 2009). Also, research demonstrates that the rhetoric of the Harper administration sought to define an "other" by developing a "penal populism" that capitalized on the idea that the country's criminality threatened ordinary Canadians (Gordon, 2021; Kelly & Puddister, 2017) and an "authoritarian populism" (Hall, 1985) that targeted some minorities, notably the Muslim community (Carlaw, 2018; Laycock & Weldon, 2019). Some even go further, claiming that the CPC could be considered a mainstream populist party (Snow & Moffitt, 2012), although the literature is divided on this point. The disagreement stems from the various definitions

of populism that are used, which causes authors to concentrate on many different facets of populism. In fact, populism is frequently confused with overlapping concepts like nationalism and nativism. (Bonikowski et al., 2019).

In addition, many have highlighted the populist nature of other politicians, not only at the federal level (Budd, 2019) but also at the provincial and municipal levels (Boily, 2014; Budd, 2020; Macaulay, 2022b). Nevertheless, it was the creation of the right-wing PPC by former Conservative Maxime Bernier in 2018 that definitively marked the return of populism to the Canadian political landscape (Erl, 2021; Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023). Budd (2021) argues that it was precisely the Harper government, while not itself overly populist, that helped establish the ideological and discursive space for future radical right-wing political actors in Canada. However, the marginal results obtained by the PPC in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections have once again called into question the importance of this political movement in Canada (Gillies, 2021).

2.3. Studying Populism Beyond the Supply Side

Although the electoral performance of populism in Canada has been relatively weak in comparison to what we see elsewhere in the Western world, it would be precipitous to assert that this ideology has no roots in the country. Indeed, while the literature on populism in Canada and elsewhere has focused mainly on the populist supply side (Benczes & Szabó, 2023), namely populist political parties, politicians, or movements (Rooduijn, 2019), and their effects on the political system (Mudde, 2014; Vachudova, 2021), a new research trend has developed around the populist demand side, that is, the extent to which individuals are populist themselves (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023). Thus, several researchers have made significant empirical and methodological

contributions in recent years by proposing indices for measuring populist attitudes based on public opinion questions (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012; Schulz et al., 2018) and have shown that these individual political attitudes constitute a dimension that is separate from other political attitudes such as elitism, pluralism, political trust, and external political efficacy (Geurkink et al., 2020).

This means that populist supply and demand do not necessarily align. As a result, a country's population may exhibit a high degree of populist attitudes even though the party system does not contain any populist political parties. This is exactly what Santana Pereira & Cancela (2021) demonstrate with the case of Portugal, which has long been considered a negative case of the populist surge due to the longstanding absence of clear-cut populist parties. The authors show, in fact, that populist attitudes are widespread throughout the country, proving that the lack of populist parties in Portuguese politics is not a reflection of a lack of support for this kind of politics.

The findings of this study hold significant relevance for the Canadian context, given that the "populist situation" in both nations is remarkably comparable. Indeed, Canada and Portugal share the same status as bastions resisting populism. Both countries feature minor populist parties enjoying marginal electoral successes (Salgado & Zúquete, 2017), which are not represented in political institutions, apart from the single seat won by Chega in the Portuguese parliament in October 2019. Furthermore, the issue of immigration has a feeble salience in both countries (Santana Pereira & Cancela, 2021; Taylor, 2021), so there is no strong nativist divide to bolster populism (Polacko et al., 2022). Finally, both countries feature political parties that have generally

succeeded in channelling political discontent over the years (Bélanger & Nadeau, 2005; Salgado, 2019).

Hence, it is possible that the Canadian population, similar to that of Portugal, holds a considerable degree of populist attitudes, notwithstanding the absence of populist parties. This notion is further supported by the possibility that the specific political context in Canada could impede the provision of populist supply. In particular, due to its first-past-the-post electoral system and significant vote regionalization (Cochrane & Perrella, 2012), it is challenging for new political parties to arise and survive on the federal political scene (Johnston, 2017), as they must experience rapid growth and a high vote concentration in order to succeed.

In addition, some studies have already shown the influence of populist attitudes in Canadian politics. Medeiros (2021) demonstrates that in the 2015 federal election, populist attitudes were relatively prominent and influenced vote choice even in the absence of a populist party in the running. This study reveals that populist attitudes do not always need to be anchored in a specific environment (Hawkins et al., 2020) and fueled by political discourse (Rooduijn et al., 2016) in order to become activated. Thus, "populist attitudes can exist in settings without socio-economic crises to activate them or partisan rhetoric to fuel them" (Medeiros, 2021: 938). Rancourt et al. (2023) provide some evidence to support this claim by demonstrating that support for the abolition of the Senate in Canada, a topic that is not at the forefront of the Canadian political agenda, is primarily explained by populist attitudes. In brief, populist attitudes appear to be a significant factor influencing public opinion and elections in Canada.

However, no empirical study has measured the extent of populist attitudes in Canada to date. Consequently, the current prevalence of populist attitudes among the Canadian population remains unknown, and our understanding of their trend is even more limited. Therefore, this thesis will seek to fill this gap in the literature by answering the following research question:

Q₁: How has the level of populist attitudes evolved from 2000 to 2021?

The year 2000 was selected as the first year of observation for a number of reasons. First, it was the year of the Reform Party's demise, which marked the start of an almost two-decade absence of populist parties from the Canadian political system. Thus, it is interesting to see whether the absence of such a political actor that can fuel populist attitudes has in fact led to a low level of populist demand. Second, it is generally accepted that the populist wave sweeping Western democracies has grown significantly since the beginning of the 21st century (Stockemer, 2019). It would therefore be expected to see an increase in populist attitudes between the early 2000s and the late 2010s. Finally, there is no data to measure populist attitudes prior to this date. This is also why 2021 is the last observation date.

Along with the return of a populist party to the federal political scene with the PPC in 2018, several recent events suggest that Canada is currently experiencing a populist moment. The early 2022 Freedom Convoy began as a protest movement against COVID-19 health measures, but it eventually expanded into a larger populist protest movement that reflected a portion of the Canadian population's sense of political dispossession (Gillies et al., 2023; LeDuc et al., 2023). Then, when Pierre Poilievre was elected leader of the CPC in the autumn of 2022, it marked the

first time that a populist supply had emerged from a traditional political party (Zimonjic, 2022). Indeed, many pundits have characterized Poilievre as adopting a resolutely populist strategy and discourse (Moscrop, 2023; Wherry, 2022). Considering Canada's current political climate as well as the extensive literature discussions about the rise of populism in Western democracies, the following hypothesis can be put forth:

H₁: There has been an increase in the level of populist attitudes in Canada between 2000 and 2021.

2.4. Understanding the Determinants of Populist Attitudes

In recent years, the main focus of studies has been on populist attitudes as a factor that explains why people vote for populist parties. (Bos et al., 2018; Gründl & Aichholzer, 2020; Marcos-Marne, 2021). However, little research has looked at populist demand as an outcome variable and has tried to identify the determinants of populist attitudes at an individual level, although there are a few more global theories to explain the rise of populism in the West (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). So, we still know very little about the factors that explain a country's level of populist attitudes. Thus, the following part of the thesis will seek to fill this gap in the literature by answering this second research question:

Q₂: How can we explain the level of populist attitudes in Canada?

The anticipated rise in populist demand in Canada over the past twenty years makes this country a particularly interesting case study for examining the determinants of populist attitudes. The Canadian case provides a context for studying populist attitudes that is all the more interesting

given the low profile of populist parties on the political scene. Indeed, since there are few political actors who can potentially activate and fuel populist demand, it will be possible to study various hypotheses of explanatory factors without having to worry too much about whether these populist attitudes are endogenous to partisan identification and the presence of salient populist actors.

So far, the literature has produced three primary families of explanations for populist attitudes, which emphasize psychological, communicational, or sociological aspects (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023). The first focuses on the types of personalities most likely to display populist attitudes (Galais & Rico, 2021; Pruysers, 2021) and the way in which emotions trigger them (Rico et al., 2017; Van Prooijen et al., 2022). The second looks at how populist messaging from political actors and the media can boost populist attitudes among individuals (Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017; Müller et al., 2017). However, these two categories of factors do not really explain the underlying causes that lead individuals to adopt populist attitudes. Indeed, it is essential to first understand how sociological factors can create fertile ground for the spread of populist attitudes (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023) to gain an in-depth insight into the circumstances that lead many individuals to adopt a populist vision.

This thesis will focus on the explanatory power of sociological factors. An examination of these factors cited in the literature that attempts to explain populist demand reveals two distinct subcategories: objective and subjective (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023). Objective sociological factors refer to an individual's objective position in society, especially in socio-economic terms. Subjective sociological factors relate to people's perceptions of their own status in relation to other social groups or, more broadly, to how they see the state of society. A significant portion of

populist attitudes have been demonstrated to be explained by objective factors, but subjective

factors appear to provide the most compelling explanation because they tend to better capture the

people-elite dichotomy that structures individuals' perceptions of society (Marcos-Marne et al.,

2023). To these, we can add a third category of factors, more political in nature, which refers to

how individuals identify themselves politically. These political identifications have been shown to

have an important influence on political attitudes (Gerber et al., 2010) and, in our case, on populist

attitudes (Meléndez & Kaltwasser, 2019). This research will therefore seek to test a series of

hypotheses relating to these three categories of explanatory factors.

2.4.1. Objective Sociological Factors

A first factor widely studied in the literature to explain the rise of populist attitudes asserts

that individuals who can be considered "losers of globalization" are more vulnerable to economic

and cultural change and are more likely to respond to this instability by embracing populist views

(Diamond, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2006; Rodrik, 2021). People with precarious employment, low

incomes, low levels of education, and living in rural areas are thus more likely to be affected by

an open and mutable economic environment (Santana Pereira & Cancela, 2021). A first hypothesis

to explain populist attitudes can therefore be proposed:

H₂: Individuals who fit the profile of "losers of globalization" are more likely to display a high level of populist attitudes.

2.4.2. Subjective Sociological Factors

Second, populist attitudes have been shown to tap into different underlying attitudes, such

as political trust and external political efficacy, which are distinct empirical phenomena (Geurkink

et al., 2020). Although these concepts may partly overlap, it seems that an individual's level of trust in the political system is predictive of a high level of populist attitudes (Castanho Silva et al., 2020; Erisen et al., 2021). Similarly, a low level of external political efficacy would also have the effect of increasing the level of populist attitudes (Bene & Boda, 2023). The logic behind these two effects is that people are more likely to support populist ideas if they feel that the political system is out of touch with their reality and their opinions are not heard by politicians. The explanatory power of these two factors is even more promising given that they have been demonstrated to explain voting for populist parties (Geurkink et al., 2020; Krause & Wagner, 2021; Magni, 2017), although there is no consensus in the literature (Mauk, 2020). Thus:

H_3: People with low political trust are more likely to have high levels of populist attitudes.

H_4: People with low levels of external political efficacy are more likely to have high levels of populist attitudes.

Thirdly, it is possible that populist attitudes are influenced less by the objective socio-economic status of individuals (hypothesis 2) than by their perception of their economic situation (Zhirnov et al., 2023) and that of their society (Guiso et al., 2020). This is even more likely, as studies have shown that economic insecurity is a predictor of voting for populist parties. (Ivanov, 2023; Sipma et al., 2023). The potential relationship between economic insecurity and populist attitudes can be explained by the fact that the latter contribute to increasing people's negative feelings towards outgroups (Watson et al., 2022) and their resentment of the way democracy works (Ferrari, 2022). Consequently:

H_5: People with high economic insecurity are more likely to display populist attitudes.

Fourth, the study by Elchardus & Spruyt (2016) is probably the most significant contribution made to understanding the role of subjective sociological factors as determinants of populist attitudes. The authors demonstrate that declinism is a central factor influencing people's support for populism. Declinism refers to a negative perception of how society is evolving, whether economically, politically, or culturally. This notion holds significance important since populism is rooted in the idea that a better world has been lost (Betz & Johnson, 2004; Taggart, 2002) and that populism is a way of reconnecting with this ideal (Canovan, 1999; da Silva & Vieira, 2018). As a result:

H_6: Individuals who feel their society is in decline are more likely to display populist attitudes.

2.4.3. Political Identification Factors

Fifth, the influence of left-right ideological placement has been the subject of a few studies, some of which have shown that populist attitudes are more prevalent among left-wing individuals (Rico & Anduiza, 2019; Tsatsanis et al., 2018). However, it would be more accurate to suppose that populist attitudes are predicted by ideological radicalism (Ivaldi et al., 2017; Müller et al., 2017), as left-right ideology and populist attitudes are highly dependent on national context (Marcos-Marne et al., 2022). In the Canadian context, where populist parties have historically existed at both ends of the political spectrum (LeDuc et al., 2023), this seems even more probable. The connection between ideological extremism and populist attitudes can be explained by the fact that people in both extremes are more likely to be critical of society and want it to change drastically (Hawkins et al., 2012; McClosky & Chong, 1985). Thus, it is possible to derive the following hypothesis:

H₇: People located at the extremes of the left-right ideological axis are more likely to have high levels of populist attitudes.

Then, it is plausible that in the Canadian context, where there has been a prolonged absence of a populist party within the partisan system, individuals' proximity to politics may impact their support for populism. In fact, people with a strong emotional attachment to politics, particularly through partisan identification, are less likely to reject the rules of the political game and are therefore less prone to developping populist attitudes (Santana Pereira & Cancela, 2021). However, partisan identification could actually boost populist attitudes when an individual identifies with a populist party (Ferrari, 2022). The effect should therefore be different in 2019 and 2021 in Canada among supporters of the PPC.

H₈ₐ: Individuals with a partisan identification are less likely to display high levels of populist attitudes.

H₈ᵦ: Individuals identifying with the PPC in 2019 and 2021 are more likely to have high levels of populist attitudes.

3. Data & Method

In order to test all the hypotheses listed above, the thesis will mobilize data from seven surveys of the CES from 2000 to 2021[1]. The populism-dependent variable is measured using a multi-item scale from 0 to 1, formed with four items on a 5-point scale in 2019 and 2021 and three items on a 4-point scale from 2000 to 2015[2]. For any given question, respondents who choose

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[1] I exclude the 2006 election study due to the brief period between this election and the one in 2004, which led to the omission of numerous questions from the 2004 study in the 2006 survey.
[2] See Appendix A for a summary of all the questions used each year.

"don't know" or "refuse to answer" are excluded from the analysis. The formulation of the questions changes somewhat over the years, but they maintain a consistent underlying meaning. For 2019 and 2021, I use the same measurement scale as Rancourt et al. (2023), with the difference that I do not include the question asking whether "most politicians are trustworthy" since this question does not appear in any of the measurement scales most widely used in the literature to measure populist attitudes (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012), and because this question is more generally used to measure political trust (Marien, 2011), a concept close to populism but distinct from it (Geurkink et al., 2020).

In the Canadian context, where populism is traditionally rooted in the Prairie provinces, it would have been interesting to include an item measuring the extent to which individuals perceive that their province is treated less favorably than others by the federal government. Indeed, it is highly probable that the anti-elite dimension of populist attitudes in Canada is embodied above all in resentment towards the central government in Ottawa. This would have, in a sense, enabled the consideration of the distinctive feature of Canadian populism, which is highly influenced by federal political dynamics. Unfortunately, the available data do not allow such a measure to be included in the populist attitudes index.

From 2000 to 2015, the first item used is: 1a) "We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grassroots". For 2019 and 2021, the wording of the first item changes slightly but keeps the same underlying meaning: 1b). It is the same for the second item, which has a constant wording between 2000 and 2015: 2a) "Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people" but changes in 2019 and 2021 while retaining the

same meaning: 2b) "Most politicians care only about the interests of the rich and the powerful". The third item varies very slightly between years, from 2000 to 2008: 3a) "I don't think the government cares much what people like me think"; from 2011 to 2015: 3b) "The government does not care much about what people like you think"; and from 2019 to 2021: 3c) "Most politicians do not care about the people". The fourth question for 2019 and 2021 is: 4) "What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one's principles". Together, these questions encapsulate the three main sub-dimensions of populism: the people centrism, the moral dichotomy between the latter and the elites, and the precedence of popular sovereignty (Schulz et al., 2018).

The reliability tests carried out indicate, however, that the indices measuring populism do not meet the minimum reliability criteria. In particular, the Cronbach's alpha of indices prior to 2015 was below the 0.6 score normally required to consider the measure reliable. The unreliability of the data therefore prevents us from painting a picture of the evolution of populist attitudes in Canada since 2000. Instead, the evolution of the three constant items between 2000 and 2021 will be presented individually. It will not be possible to draw precise conclusions about the level of populist attitudes in Canada and thus confirm or refute the hypothesis, but the three observations may give an idea of the general trend.

The independent variables are either constructed from a multi-item scale or simply defined by a single question. All the questions used for each variable can be found in Appendix B. The three scales constructed to measure the "declinism", "political trust" and "economic insecurity" variables all have a Cronbach's alpha above 0.7. The factorial analysis of the different scales can

be found in Appendix C. Like Santana Pereira & Cancela (2021), to test hypothesis 2 of the losers of globalization, I do not construct a multi-item scale variable but rather test each of the characteristics individually (employment precarity, income, level of education and rural life) since this is a latent concept that is difficult to measure validly and reliably.

For hypotheses 2 to 8, I start by using a block recursive approach (Miller et al., 1996) where three models are created. The principle of this approach is to create regression models that sequentially add sets of independent variables, starting with those furthest apart in time. This approach allows us to take into account the fact that variables that are distant in time can have direct and indirect effects on populist attitudes through their influence on factors that intervene later in time (Anderson & Stephenson, 2011). In this way, the results of this type of regression analysis make it possible to account for the interaction between long-term predispositions and short-term, immediate variables.

Model 1 therefore includes the objective sociological variables of Hypothesis 1 and control variables relating to age, gender, and province of residence. I control for age and gender variables because men are more likely than women to have populist attitudes (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016) and because older people tend to be more populist than younger people (Müller et al., 2017). I also control for the region of residence, given the cultural and political complexity of the Canadian landscape (Rancourt et al., 2023). Model 2 then adds political identification variables relating to party affiliation, proximity to politics, and ideological extremism. Finally, Model 3 adds the subjective sociological variables since individuals' evaluation of their society and their place

within it is likely to be influenced by the above-mentioned variables. The coefficients of the regression models are estimated using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method.

Next, I largely reproduce the methodology employed by Elchardus & Spruyt (2016) by using a SEM in order to create a more parsimonious statistical model that includes only the independent variables with a substantial influence on populist attitudes. SEM is a multivariate data analysis method that enables the simultaneous modelling and estimation of complex relationships among multiple unobservable variables (Hair et al., 2021). This model is the most appropriate for estimating the influence of various explanatory factors on populist attitudes because the outcome variable under study is latent, and some of the explanatory variables are also latent and measured by multiple indicators. This approach will enable to obtain a model that takes into account the influence of latent variables on each other and has a higher explanatory power than a BRM. The direct effects of the model (shown in Figure 1 by the red arrows) will be estimated using the method of maximum likelihood (ML). Indirect effects (shown in Figure 1 by the blue arrows) will be estimated using the product of coefficients. This involves multiplying the ML regression coefficients along the indirect path. All effects will be standardized due to the complexity of the SEM and the numerous relationships tested. This will make it easier to compare the effects of various variables.

Since the CES of 2019 and 2021 allow for better measurement of populist attitudes, given the inclusion of an additional item and the use of consistent questions, I will test hypotheses 2 to 8 by including only the data from 2019 and 2021. To do this, I merge the databases of both CES to increase the sample size. The two elections took place only 23 months apart and produced an

almost identical electoral outcome, allowing for the study of their data together. The factorial analysis of the populist scale can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 1. Conceptual Path Diagram Structural Equation Model for Populist Attitudes
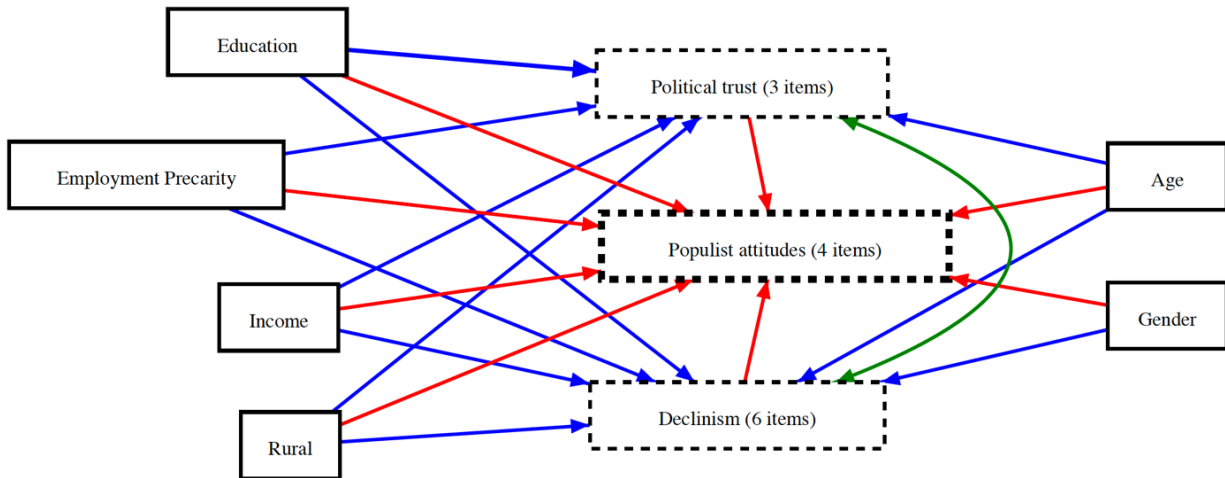
*Dashed boxes refer to latent variables with indicators

4. Results

4.1. Evolution of Populist attitudes in Canada

Figures 2 shows the aggregate level of three of the four items used to create the populism measurement index between 2000 and 2021. As previously mentioned, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about the trend in the level of populism in Canada and thus to confirm or refute Hypothesis 1. Nevertheless, this graph provides interesting information on the populist demand in the country. Item 1 measures the importance Canadians attach to popular sovereignty, while items 2 and 3 indicate how anti-elite they are. Popular sovereignty and anti-elitism are indeed two of the three essential components of populism (Van Hauwaert et al., 2020). Unfortunately, as item 4 cannot be measured before 2019, it is not possible to measure Canadians' Manichean vision of society over time.

The first noteworthy observation is that there is no marked upward or downward trend for any of the three items. In fact, trends in the levels of these three items show no clear pattern. Rather, there was a slight volatility in item 1 and relative stability in items 2 and 3. Another notable fact is that there was no marked increase in any of the three items between 2019 and 2021, despite the imposition of sanitary measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that took place between the two elections and which, as mentioned earlier, many said had boosted populist attitudes. Overall, these trends generally contradict the first hypothesis, which suggests an increase in populism in Canada. Conversely, the data appear to indicate that there has been a significant degree of anti-elitism and prioritization of sovereignty since the early 2000s, as the yearly averages of all items consistently exceed 0.5. Therefore, populist views in Canada might not be new but rather an enduring feature of the country.

Figure 2. Evolution of Three Populist Attitude Items Between 2000 and 2021 in Canada.
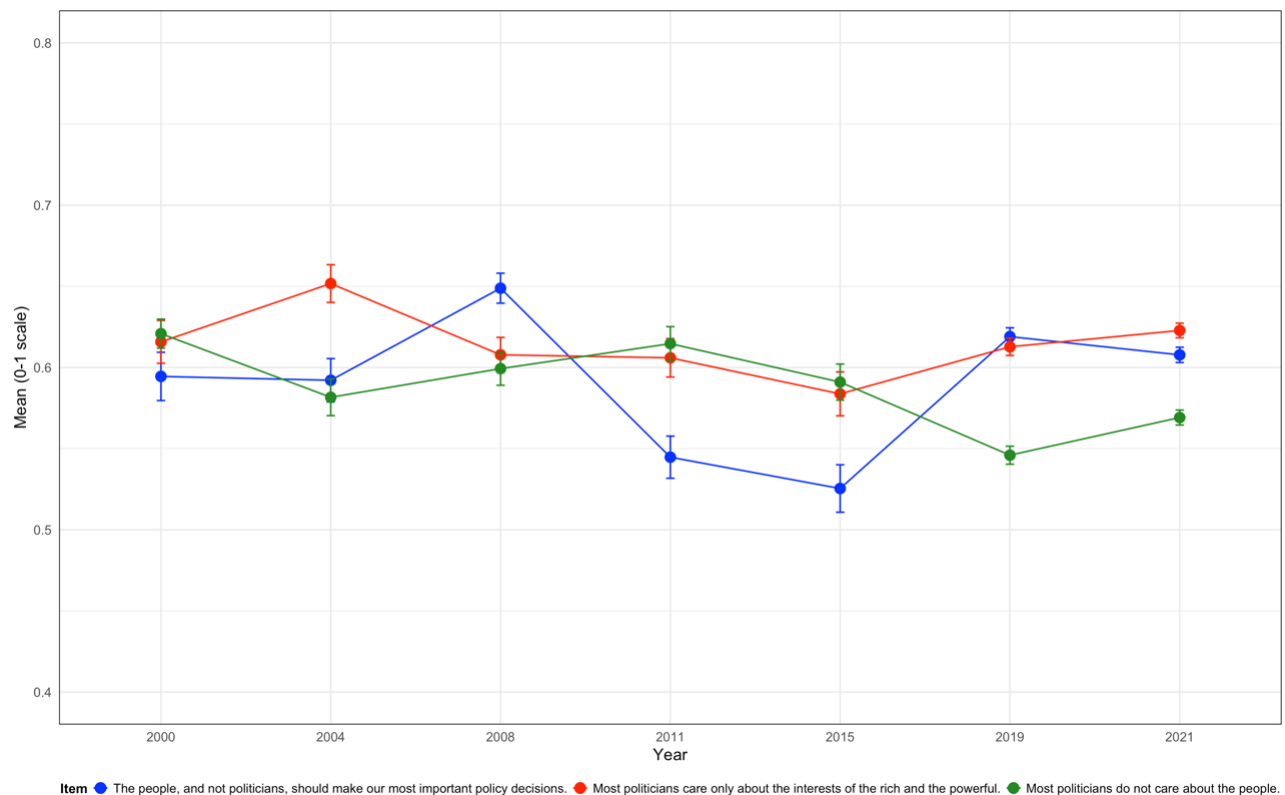
4.2. The Determinants of Populist Attitudes

    4.2.1. Block Recursive Model

    Table 1 presents the three regression models that include all socio-political variables. Firstly, Model 1 contains several interesting results. To begin with, of the four socio-demographic variables, only income (-0.105) and education level (-0.212) have a substantial and statistically significant effect on populist attitudes. However, their effect fades when Models 2 and 3 are added, showing that these variables play only a minor role in populist attitudes when all the explanatory factors are considered. Next, age, gender, and region of residence have very minimal effects on populist attitudes. Residents of the Prairies (0.085) and Ontario (0.066) are the regions with the most populists, but the effects also fade when Models 2 and 3 are added. Overall, objective sociological variables have very limited explanatory power for populist attitudes in Canada, with Model 1 explaining only 9.6% of the variance. Hypothesis 2 is therefore only partially confirmed.

Secondly, Model 2 adds political identification variables, which overall also marginally explain populist attitudes. Positioning on the right of the ideological axis (0.098) and identification with the PPC (0.161) are the only variables to have a substantial effect on populist attitudes, but once again, these effects disappear completely with the addition of the third block of variables. Hypothesis 8B is therefore partially confirmed. Political extremism (0.024) and proximity to politics (-0.036) have very minimal effects (albeit statistically significant), which prevents hypotheses 7 and 8A from being convincingly confirmed. Identification with other political parties also has no significant effect on populist attitudes, with a slight exception for LPC identification (-0.083). Overall, the explanatory power of Model 2 remains limited, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.167.

Table 1. Regression Analysis of Populist Attitudes in Canada

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Employment Precarity	**0.004**	0.004	0.005
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Income	**-0.105***	-0.102***	-0.072***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.010)
Education	**-0.212***	-0.174***	-0.075***
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.014)
Rural	**0.028***	0.013**	0.003
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)
Age	**-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Gender (0: man)	**-0.012***	-0.005	-0.004
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Atlantic	**0.047**	0.039	0.048
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.044)
Quebec	**0.007**	-0.004	0.051
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.044)
Ontario	**0.066***	0.058*	0.075*
	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.044)
Prairies	**0.085***	0.054	0.063
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.044)
British Columbia	**0.054***	0.033	0.067
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.044)
Ideology (right)	-	**0.098***	0.008
		(0.009)	(0.012)
Extremism	-	**0.024***	0.035***
		(0.004)	(0.005)
Proximity to Politics	-	**-0.036***	0.001
		(0.007)	(0.010)
LPC	-	**-0.083***	0.012**
		(0.005)	(0.007)
CPC	-	**0.021***	-0.046***
		(0.006)	(0.008)
NDP	-	**0.010**	0.036***
		(0.007)	(0.009)
BQ	-	**-0.014**	-0.011
		(0.008)	(0.010)
GPC	-	**0.014**	0.019
		(0.011)	(0.017)
PPC	-	**0.153***	0.016
		(0.014)	(0.016)
Political Trust (inverted)	-	-	**0.426***
			(0.013)
Efficacy	-	-	**0.068***
			(0.011)
Declinism	-	-	**0.222***
			(0.014)
Economic Insecurtity	-	-	**0.044***
			(0.015)
Adjusted R²	*0.096*	*0.167*	*0.466*
Constant	*0.831*	*0.803*	*0.290*
	(0.031)	*(0.037)*	*(0.048)*

Note: N_1=19632; N_2=13228; N_3=5232.   *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Thirdly, Model 3 contains the most interesting results with the addition of subjective sociological variables. Indeed, political trust has a very strong (0.426) and statistically significant positive effect on populist attitudes, as does declinism (0.222), which is the second variable with the greatest explanatory power. Hypotheses 3 and 6 are therefore confirmed. External political efficacy (0.068) and economic insecurity (0.044) both have positive and significant effects, but these remain marginal, especially compared with the other two variables. Hypotheses 4 and 5 cannot therefore be convincingly confirmed. Finally, Model 3 boosts the adjusted R^2 to 0.466, indicating the major role played by subjective sociological variables in Canadians' support for populist ideology.

An analysis of multicollinearity was carried out by calculating the variance inflation factor (VIF) of all the independent variables in model 3. With the exception of the residence area variables, which have high values, none of the model's VIF exceeds 2.19, meaning that multicollinearity is not an issue in the BRM analyses. All VIF values can be found in Appendix D.

All in all, the BRM can explain almost half of the variance in populist attitudes in Canada. Nevertheless, this approach fails to incorporate the interaction effects of latent variables (i.e., those in Block 3). This is what SEM makes possible by creating a more precise model that can integrate a greater number of relationships between variables. At the same time, SEM enables us to adopt a more parsimonious approach by including only independent variables that have a substantial effect on populist attitudes. Indeed, it is not possible to include all BRM variables in the SEM, as this would create a saturated model with no explanatory power (Gana & Broc, 2019).

4.2.2. Structural Equation Model

The first strategy employed is to retain the three latent variables in Block 3, as well as the socio-economic variables, age and gender in Block 1, which are likely to have an indirect effect on populist attitudes via their effect on the latent variables. Block 2 variables and region of residence variables are excluded from the SEM[3]. A first model is created by including only the three latent variables without specifying correlation errors. However, Model 1 (see Table 2) does not present satisfactory fit indices, so the economic insecurity variable is removed from Model 2 given its weak effect. Correlated error terms between adjacent items in the CESs are added, as "measurement theory indicates that correlated error terms between items adjacent in the questionnaire have to be allowed" (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016). Model 2's fit indices are much more satisfactory, although the Chi-square test is inconclusive (p < 0.000). Nevertheless, this test tends to be sensitive to large sample sizes, and the literature indicates that in such a case, other indices are more reliable for judging the fit of SEM (Gana & Broc, 2019). In fact, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) show a very good model fit. This measurement model is therefore used as the base model to which socio-economic and control variables are added (Figure 1).

Model 3, presented in Table 2, has greater predictive power than the BRM (albeit with far fewer variables), explaining 60.1% of the variance in populist attitudes in Canada. This is due to the very

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[3]A saturated model was created (but not reproduced here) and showed that these variables, as in the BRM, do not have a significant effect on populist attitudes.

Table 2. Fit Statistics and Parameter Estimates Structural Equation Model for Populist Attitudes in Canada

	χ^2	df	RMSEA	90% C.I.[a]	P (close fit)[b]	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Measurement model								
Model 1 (N=6599):	7216	146	0.086	0.087	0.000	0.836	0.808	0.074
- 3 latent variables								
- No error correlations								
Model 2 (N=12654):	2026	48	0.057	0.059	0.000	0.962	0.939	0.045
- 2 latent variables								
- With error correlations								
Structural model								
Model 3[c] (*N= 11682*):	3022	109	0.048	0.049	0.992	0.943	0.919	0.038
- Base model								
Standardized effects on populist attitudes		Total effect			Direct effect[d]		Indirect effect	
Political trust (inverted)		0.622***			0.622***		-	
Declinism		0.226***			0.226***		-	
Employment Precarity		0.017			0.001		0.016	
Income		-0.105***			-0.094***		-0.011	
Education		-0.177***			-0.024**		-0.153***	
Rural		0.058***			-0.008		0.066***	
Age		-0.150***			-0.144***		-0.007	
Gender (0: man)		-0.029***			-0.019***		-0.007	
R² = 0.601								

Notes: [a]Upper limit 90% confidence interval RMSEA.
[b]Probability that RMSEA < 0.050.
[c]See Figure 1
[d]Significance levels: *** when P < 0.001; ** when P < 0.010.

strong effect of political trust (0.622) and, to a lesser extent, declinism (0.226). These results once again confirm hypotheses 3 and 6 and demonstrate the importance of these two variables in understanding populist attitudes in Canada.

As for the socio-economic variables, the SEM reinforces the idea that education and income play a significant role in explaining populism, since here, unlike in the BRM, these two variables retain their effect even in the presence of latent variables. One reason for this is that these variables have a very small direct effect on populist attitudes but substantial indirect effects through the latent variables. Then, as with the BRM, rurality (0.058) and job insecurity (0.017) have a minimal effect (and not significant for the latter). The SEM, like the BRM, only partially confirms hypothesis 2. An interesting result that differs from the BRM is the effect of age (-0.150), which plays a much greater role in the SEM in explaining populist attitudes. Unlike education and income, this effect is mainly direct and not so much mediated by the two latent variables. Finally, the SEM confirms the weak influence of gender (-0.029) on populism. In other words, Canadian women are only marginally less likely to adopt populist attitudes than men.

5. Discussion

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Canada has been described by many as an exception resisting the populist wave sweeping through the vast majority of Western democracies (Adams, 2017, 2022; Gillies et al., 2023). However, the country appears to have recently experienced a surge in populism, both on the political stage, with the arrival of the PPC and the election of Pierre Poilievre as head of the CPC, and among the general population, where a substantial proportion of citizens demonstrated a sense of political dispossession during the

Freedom Convoy in early 2022. In fact, Canada might now be experiencing its own populist moment, while these events suggest that Canadians have an appetite for this kind of politics.

It is this first hypothesis that this study proposed to test by painting a portrait of the evolution of populist attitudes among Canadians from 2000 to 2021. However, as explained above, CES data do not provide a reliable measure of populist attitudes in Canada between 2000 and 2015. An alternative approach was thus proposed: to individually analyze the evolution of the questions that should have been used to construct the index of populist attitudes. While this methodological choice limits the ability to generalize conclusions about the extent of populism in Canada, these analyses did provide some interesting insights.

In the first place, the evolution of the various questions is remarkably stable. In fact, no increase or decrease in any of the items is clearly identifiable. This indicates that, overall, the Canadian population does not seem to be increasingly concerned about the confiscation of its popular sovereignty and the power held by the country's elites. Therefore, an increase in populist attitudes over the last two decades is unlikely. Although it is impossible to say with certainty whether populist attitudes in Canada have remained stable since the early 2000s, these results are likely the most accurate that will ever be obtained. In fact, it appears that no other data for measuring populist attitudes in Canada during the relevant period is available. Therefore, it seems that making do with these imperfect data and results is necessary.

An even more surprising fact is the stability observed between 2019 and 2021, given the possibility that the COVID-19-related pandemic context would have exacerbated the feeling of

disconnection between the will of the people and the ruling elite (Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023). These results confirm the findings of LeDuc et al. (2023) that the government's health measures triggered populist attitudes in only a small proportion of the Canadian population, whereas the vast majority saw them as legitimate actions. So, contrary to what many have suggested, it seems that the events of the Freedom Convoy were not evidence of an overall rise in populist sentiment in the country. These results reinforce the argument that Canada, unlike most other Western democracies (Berman, 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020), does not seem to have experienced an increase in populism from its population since the beginning of the 21st century (Adams, 2017, 2022; Gillies et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite this apparent stability, these analyses show that the level of populist demand in Canada could be significant overall. This is evidenced by the fact that the average for each of the items is always above the median for all the years under study. Therefore, the recent events that characterized this populist moment may be more closely associated with the liberation of populist discourse in Canada than with a rise in the prevalence of this ideology. The Freedom Convoy, and the Covid-19 crisis more generally, should therefore be seen as an event that gave expression to this latent populism within the population.

In this sense, Canada's exceptionalism would lie in the stability of its level of populist demand compared to other liberal democracies rather than in its complete absence. This would confirm the argument made by several authors that populism in Canada has occupied a significant place since the beginning of the 2000s (Kwak, 2020; Sawer & Laycock, 2009; Snow & Moffitt, 2012). In summary, 21st-century Canadian populism appears to be more a continuation of the ideology's

lengthy history in this country (Conway, 1978; Laycock, 2005; LeDuc et al., 2023) than a divergence from it. Only, it seems that the partisan context has masked this reality, where populist attitudes may have been channeled by incumbent parties for some time.

However, the stability of populist attitudes in Canada does not imply that the electoral weight of this ideology has remained constant. While it is true that what Canada has witnessed since 2018 reflects a liberation of the populist discourse rather than an increase in demand for it, it may indeed be the case that populists have more power today than they did during the last two decades. This hypothesis would allow the results presented here to be reconciled with those of other authors who have shown the influence of populist attitudes on electoral results in Canada (Medeiros, 2021) and on other political attitudes (Rancourt et al., 2023). What is more, this new populist offering, which has taken shape since the creation of the PPC and the arrival of Pierre Poilièvre as CPC leader, redefines the political and partisan context, giving Canadian populists a political voice with greater influence. It could also contribute to nurture this ideology, which has remained apparently stable in recent years, but which did not then have politicians drawing directly on its ideas to build their political discourse and bolster their public support. These considerations indicate that further work is necessary to fully comprehend the unique context of populist demand in Canada and its current and future political implications in a changing Canadian partisan system.

Subsequently, this study proposed to test three sets of explanatory variables using the Canadian case to gain a deeper understanding of the determinants of populist attitudes. Despite growing interest in populist demand in recent years and the proliferation of indices to measure it (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012; Schulz et al., 2018), few studies have empirically tested the

explanatory power of potential factors behind these attitudes (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023). Generally speaking, analyses show that populist attitudes are much better explained by people's evaluation of their society and the perception of their place within it than by their objective status and the way they identify themselves politically.

First, the BRM and SEM demonstrated that individuals who fit the profile of "losers of globalization" were not significantly more likely to hold populist views. Neither rural residence nor employment precarity have a impact on populist demand. Income level, meanwhile, has a substantial effect but remains much weaker than other variables studied. The only truly noteworthy effect is that of education level, with the least educated being more likely to support populism. This finding is in line with the most recent developments in the literature on this subject, which identify this effect of education in different national contexts (van Noord et al., 2024). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the SEM reveals that education primarily influences populist attitudes indirectly. Indeed, its effect seems to be mediated by other attitudes, in this case political trust and delinism. But generally speaking, this effect of education could be explained by the fact that this variable is the one that most directly reflects the vulnerability of individuals to globalization: "indeed, education is the one 'economic' factor that is robustly associated with trade attitudes, yet it of course also captures other potentially influential factors, such as individuals' levels of cosmopolitanism or ethnocentrism" (Margalit, 2019). Despite this, we must nevertheless conclude that the "losers of globalization" hypothesis seems to have much less explanatory power for populist attitudes in Canada than many studies show for the United States and Europe (Broz et al., 2021; Diamond, 2018; Rodrik, 2021). These results could potentially be explained by the relative stability of socio-economic conditions in the country (Adams, 2017).

Second, political identification variables also have very limited explanatory power. Individuals who lean towards the right side of the political spectrum exhibit a marginally greater propensity to adopt populism, whereas being at the extremes of the ideological axis has no significant impact. However, what is most unexpected is the negligible impact that partisan identification plays. Indeed, notwithstanding the PPC's significant effect, it remains relatively feeble in light of this party's clear populist stance (Erl, 2021; Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023). These results suggest that no single party is effectively channelling the support of Canadian populists. Consequently, populist attitudes in Canada are unlikely to be endogenous to partisan identification. This would make sense considering the potential presence of populist attitudes since the beginning of the 21st century, while there were no populist parties to speak of between 2000 and 2018 to activate and nurture them (Medeiros, 2021).

These results, along with the weak effect of all socio-economic variables, suggest that populist attitudes in Canada are not concentrated on a specific fringe of the Canadian population. Rather, it seems that populism is diffuse both socioeconomically and politically, as mentioned above, but also geographically. Indeed, the region of residence in Canada had a rather weak effect on populist attitudes, which is quite surprising considering the long history of populist movements on both the left and right in the Canadian Prairies during the 20th century (Conway, 1978; LeDuc et al., 2023; Macaulay, 2023), the relative success of the PPC in this region in 2019 and 2021 (Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023), and the usual strong regionalization of political attitudes in Canada (Henderson, 2004). However, this weak regional effect could be potentially explained by the fact that, as mentioned above, the items used to measure the level of populist attitudes did not capture this potential regional dimension of Canadian populism, which would be expressed as a provincial-

federal dichotomy. This is certainly an important limitation in understanding the particular case of populism in Canada. Future studies should include items to measure this sense of regional deprivation.

The lack of any discernible gender effect on populist attitudes is also unexpected, considering the body of literature that consistently demonstrates that men are far more likely to adopt populist views (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Spierings & Zaslove, 2017). But even more surprising is the substantial negative effect of age demonstrated by the SEM. Indeed, most studies tend to show that older people have higher levels of populist attitudes (Müller et al., 2017). These results suggest once again that populist attitudes in Canada do not seem to be distributed in the same way across the population as in other countries. As a result, Canadian populists deviate from the conventional profile outlined in the literature, which features older males who lean conservative (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Margalit, 2019).

Third, subjective sociological variables provide the most comprehensive explanation for Canadian populist attitudes. In particular, political trust proves to be an extremely important factor in understanding people's adherence to populist ideology. Indeed, the normative evaluation they make of political institutions (Van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017) is central to understanding the people's dissatisfaction with the elites and their consequent demand for a politics centred around their will. Nevertheless, it is somewhat surprising that more attention has not been paid to this causal relationship between populist attitudes and political trust, given the extensive research on the impact of the former on the populist vote (Geurkink et al., 2020; Krause & Wagner, 2021; Magni, 2017). This research demonstrates the importance of investigating the connection between

populist attitudes and political trust in other contexts, even if the two concepts are theoretically close to each other. Indeed, the robustness tests carried out and described above have shown that although political trust and populism are certainly close, they are sufficiently distinct to be able to investigate the effect of the former on the latter. However, the relationship between political trust and populist attitudes in Canada is particularly challenging to study given the federal context, which makes it difficult to assess public trust in the political system. Indeed, federal dynamics make it difficult to distinguish between political trust in various levels of government. For example, a person may profess great faith in their provincial government while expressing mistrust towards the federal government. The impact of these kinds of federal dynamics will certainly need to be studied in greater depth to determine their effect on political trust and populist attitudes. Future research on the effects of such federal dynamics on political trust and populist attitudes will undoubtedly be necessary.

Additionally, the research validated the substantial impact that declinism has on populist attitudes. Indeed, it seems that populist ideology presents itself to those individuals who believe that their society is in moral and political decline as a way of reconnecting with that past ideal world (Canovan, 1999; da Silva & Vieira, 2018). As Elchardus & Spruyt put it, "the decline, perceived by many, is blamed on the establishment politicians or rather because no convincing solution to those problems is offered by the political establishment, people turn to populism, to belief in the solutions offered by common sense, which are often at odds with the analysis of established parties, intellectuals and elites" (2016). Moreover, the results confirm that, as Santana Pereira & Cancela (2021) have shown, the effect of declinism on populist attitudes is perceptible even in the absence of important populist actors to activate these attitudes. However, the negative effect of age on

populist attitudes is somewhat surprising, given the logical assumption that older individuals would be more receptive to the declinist vision of society (Mastroianni & Gilbert, 2023). These somewhat contradictory results could be explained by distinguishing between the different dimensions of populism because, as LeDuc et al. (2023) show in the Canadian context: "older people are more likely to feel that […] politicians are untrustworthy. However, younger people are the ones who are more likely to agree that 'politicians care only about the rich and powerful' and also that politicians don't care about the people" (4). Thus, using the same data as for the present research, the authors show that the effect of age on populism can only be properly understood by distinguishing it according to the dimensions of populism. This could potentially explain the negative effect of age on populist attitudes mentioned earlier. Future research should investigate these distinctions between the different dimensions of populism.

Nevertheless, not all subjective factors account for populist attitudes. External political efficacy and economic insecurity have no notable effect. This means that it is not so much the feeling of not having the ability to influence the political process (external efficacy) that leads individuals to populist ideology, as some authors maintain (Bene & Boda, 2023), but rather the impression that the political system itself is not trustworthy (political distrust). As for the inconclusive effect of perceived economic insecurity on populist attitudes, although this result contradicts what is generally demonstrated in the literature (Guiso et al., 2020; Zhirnov et al., 2023), it supports Margalit's (2019) argument that the effect of this explanatory factor has likely been exaggerated in recent years. However, it may be that the weak effect of perceived economic insecurity often cited in the literature on populism is partly explained by the imperfection of the items used to measure this latent variable. Indeed, it would have been preferable to distinguish between macro

and micro economic insecurity variables, considering their potentially distinct explanatory power and the greatest explanatory potential for sociotropic economic insecurity (Watson et al., 2022). But this limited effect of perceived economic insecurity is probably also due to the relative stability of the Canadian socio-economic context in recent years (Adams, 2017). It is essential that future research look more closely at this relationship before concluding with certainty that perceived economic insecurity plays only a very limited role in populist attitudes.

Finally, one of this study's major limitations is that it does not account for a potential endogeneity problem between the main variables studied. Indeed, some would argue that the embracing of populist ideology leads to a subsequent perception of society as in decline and distrust of the country's political institutions. In this way, populism could nurture a pessimistic view of society among those who adhere to this moral dichotomy between the people and the elite, thus reversing the causal relationship. While this is a legitimate concern, it seems to be tempered by the fact that the vast majority of studies examine populist attitudes as the product of other political attitudes rather than the other way around (Marcos-Marne et al., 2023). However, it would be necessary to pay particular attention to this issue in future methodological frameworks that would be able to reliably examine the potential effect of populist attitudes on other attitudinal dimensions.

6. Conclusion

In contrast to other Western democracies, Canada seems to have experienced a lack of discernible growth in populist attitudes among its citizens over the last two decades. However, this stability appears to conceal a considerable degree of populist sentiment among different segments of the population, despite the absence of political parties in the party system from 2000 to 2018.

This observation tends to support the fact that populist supply and demand do not necessarily align. The result is that Canada does indeed seem to be an exceptional case of populism among Western democracies, not because of the absence of populist attitudes among its population, but because these seem to have remained stable, unlike most other countries, which have seen an increase. Therefore, the recent rise of populist personalities in the public sphere may be associated with the emancipation of populist discourse as opposed to an increased Canadian adherence to this ideology. However, it remains unclear why populist parties are struggling to establish themselves in the Canadian party system of the 21st century, whereas they played a major role on the political scene of the previous century. This opens an interesting avenue of research that could potentially study populist supply and demand in a cross-cutting way and offer an understanding of the reasons for the limited presence of populist offerings in Canada since the 2000s.

Furthermore, the Canadian context presented an interesting setting for examining the factors that influence populist attitudes due to the low salience of the populist offer, which made it possible to study potential explanatory factors without having to worry about a potential endogeneity effect of partisan identification on populist demand. This study confirmed the importance of people's perceptions of their society in understanding what drives them to embrace populism, such as the belief that the world is morally and politically declining, and the distrust of established political institutions. The demonstration of the explanatory power of this last factor represents a major contribution to the present study, whereas political trust has not been given particular attention in explaining populist attitudes.

It seems clear that what matters most in understanding what drives people to adhere to a populist worldview are their subjective perceptions rather than their objective status. Indeed, the analyses revealed a diminished explanatory power of specific socio-demographic and ideological factors commonly encountered in the literature. These results raise important implications for the future of populist demand in Canada. For if populist attitudes are first and foremost the fruit of perceptions and beliefs, that means they are by definition manipulable and malleable. The stability of populism in the Canadian population over the past twenty years, as this thesis has pointed out, is therefore no guarantee of stability in the future. Nevertheless, it seems to suggest that politicians have not attempted or, more likely, succeeded since the beginning of the 21st century in altering Canadians' perceptions of reality in favor or against populism. Given the new populist offering that seems to be taking shape in the Canadian political landscape, Canadians' resistance to this ideology could nonetheless be put to the test once again over the next few years. Therefore, we must remain vigilant for populist discourse that seeks to undermine public trust in political institutions and foster a discourse of moral decline within Canadian society.

Furthermore, the smaller effect of objective factors presented by this thesis compared to what is generally observed in the literature could be due to the particular Canadian context, where the populist offer is marginal. Indeed, it could be that the determinants of these attitudes in contexts with low populist salience diverge somewhat from those in countries with a high populist presence. Consequently, this study paves the way for examining the factors influencing populist attitudes in various contexts. In particular, the field of research on populist demand should also focus on situations where the populist supply is scarce and explore a wide range of potential factors that could help us understand the appeal of this populist ideology. Indeed, populist ideology seems to

have established itself as a important political force in the various liberal democracies and will undoubtedly continue to play a major role in Western democratic life for years to come. Thus, delving into the multifaceted dimensions of populist demand across diverse socio-political landscapes becomes not only imperative to fully understand it but also crucial if democracies are to be resilient in the face of the enduring appeal of this ideology.

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Appendix A

Questions used from CES to measure dependant variable.

	2021	2019	2015	2011	2008	2004	2000	Populism subdimension
Item 1	The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.	The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.	We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots.	We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots.	We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots.	We could probably solve most of our big national problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots	We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots.	Popular sovereignty
Item 2	Most politicians care only about the interests of the rich and the powerful.	Most politicians care only about the interests of the rich and the powerful.	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.	Anti-elitism
Item 3	Most politicians do not care about the people.	Most politicians do not care about the people.	The government does not care much about what people like you think.	The government does not care much about what people like you think.	I don't think the government cares much what people like me think.	I don't think the government cares much what people like me think.	I don't think the government cares much what people like me think.	Anti-elitism
Item 4	What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.	What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.	x	x	x	x	x	Manichean worldview

Appendix B

*Questions used from CES 2019 & 2021 to Measure Independent Variables and Response Coding*

Objective Sociological Factors		
Losers of Globalisation	What is your employment status? Are you currently… (employment precarity)	*Coded from 0 to 1:* *1= Working for pay part-time; Unemployed/ looking for work* *0 = Other answer*
	What was your total household income, before taxes, for the year 2020? Be sure to include income from all sources, to the nearest thousand dollars. (Income)	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 11 categories. 0 = less than $20,000; 1 = more than $200,000 (each category in $20,000 increments)*
	What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (Level of education)	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 11 categories.* *0= No schooling; 1 = Professional degree or doctorate.*
	Do you live in…(Rural)	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = A large town or city (more than 50K people;* *0.25 = A suburb of a large town or city;* *0.5 = A middle-sized town (15K-50K people) not attached to a city;* *0.75 = A small town (more than 1000 people but less than 15K);* *1= A rural area or village (less than1000 people.*
Subjective Sociological Factors		
Political Trust (inverted) *Cronbach's Alpha = 0.75*	Do political parties keep their election promises most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever?	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Most of the time;* *0.25 = Some of the time;* *0.5 = Depends on the party;* *0.75 = Hardly ever* *1 = Never.*
	Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following: The federal government	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 4 categories.* *0 = A great deal* *0.33 = Quite a lot;* *0.66 = None at all* *1 = Not at all.*
	Most politicians are trustworthy.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly agree;* *0.25 = Somewhat agree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;* *0.75 = Somewhat disagree;* *1 = Strongly disagree.*

|		
Economic Insecurity *Cronbach's Alpha = 0.71*	Over the past year, has Canada's economy..	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 3 categories.* *0 = Better;* *0.5 = Not made much difference;* *1= Worse.*
	Over the past year, has your financial situation:	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 3 categories.* *0 = Better;* *0.5 = Not made much difference;* *1= Worse.*
	Have the policies of the federal government made your financial situation...	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 3 categories.* *0 = Better;* *0.5 = Not made much difference;* *1= Worse.*
	Have the policies of the federal government made Canada's economy...	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 3 categories.* *0 = Better;* *0.5 = Not made much difference;* *1= Worse.*
	Immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly disagree;* *0.25 = Somewhat disagree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;* *0.75 = Somewhat agree;* *1 = Strongly agree.*
	When there is a conflict between protecting the environment and creating jobs, jobs should come first.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly disagree;* *0.25 = Somewhat disagree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;* *0.75 = Somewhat agree;* *1 = Strongly agree.*
Declinism *Cronbach's Alpha = 0.78*	Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly disagree;* *0.25 = Somewhat disagree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;* *0.75 = Somewhat agree;* *1 = Strongly agree.*
	We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly disagree;* *0.25 = Somewhat disagree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;* *0.75 = Somewhat agree;* *1 = Strongly agree.*
	Too many recent immigrants just don't want to fit in to Canadian society.	*Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories.* *0 = Strongly disagree;* *0.25 = Somewhat disagree;* *0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree;*

|		0.75 = Somewhat agree; 1 = Strongly agree.
	Government can no longer ${e://Field/govt_programs_word} the kinds of programs and services people want.	Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories. 0 = Strongly disagree; 0.25 = Somewhat disagree; 0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree; 0.75 = Somewhat agree; 1 = Strongly agree.
	We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada.	Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories. 0 = Strongly disagree; 0.25 = Somewhat disagree; 0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree; 0.75 = Somewhat agree; 1 = Strongly agree.
	This country would have many fewer problems if there was more emphasis on traditional family values.	Coded from 0 to 1 in 5 categories. 0 = Strongly disagree; 0.25 = Somewhat disagree; 0.5 = Neither agree nor disagree; 0.75 = Somewhat agree; 1 = Strongly agree.
External Political efficacy	People like me don't have any say about what the government does	Coded from 0 to 1 in 4 categories. 0 = Strongly disagree; 0.33 = Somewhat disagree; 0.66 = Somewhat agree 1 = Strongly agree.
Political Identification Factors		
Ideology	Using the same scale where 0 means the left and 10 means the right, where would you place yourself on this scale?	Coded from 0 to 1 in 11 categories.
Ideological Extremism	Using the same scale where 0 means the left and 10 means the right, where would you place yourself on this scale?	Dichotomous variable 0-1 : 0 = 3,4,5,6,7 1 = 0,1,2,8,9,10
Proximity to politics	In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a:	Coded in 0-1 dichotomy for each party.
Party identification	In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a: AND How strongly do you feel?	Coded 1 if respondent identify with a party _and_ identify very strongly orfFairly strongly with it.
Control Variables		
Gender	Are you...?	Dichotomous variable 0-1 0 = A woman; 1= A man
Age	How old are you?	Continuous variable
Province/territory	In which province or territory are you currently living?	Coded in 0-1 dichotomy for each region (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia).

Appendix C

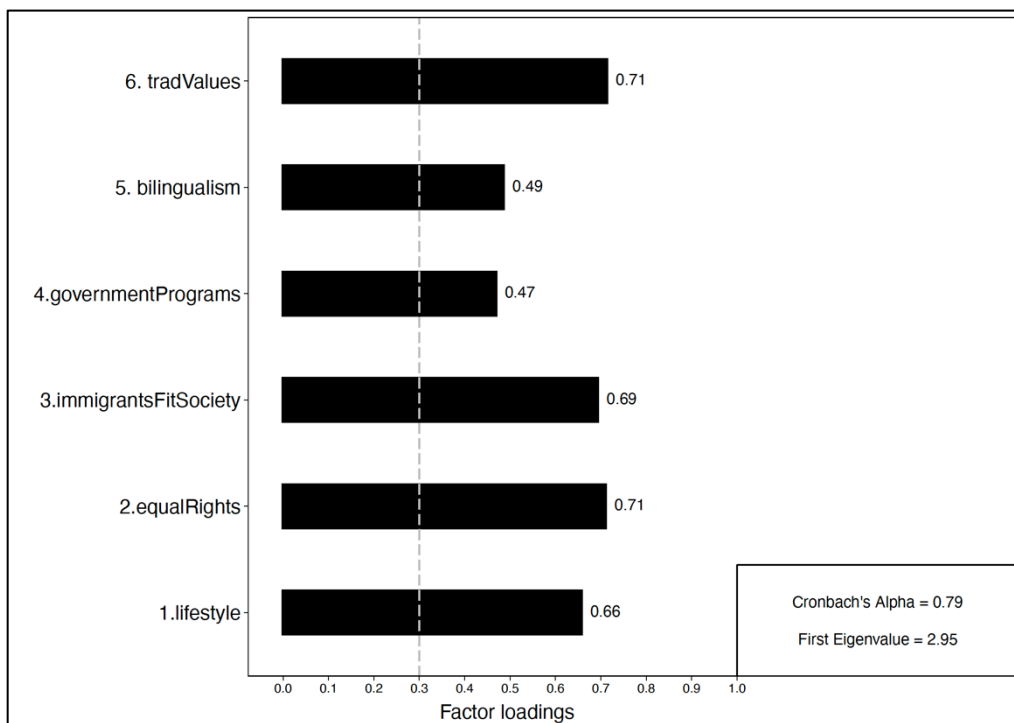## *Populist Attitudes Scale Reliability Measures*
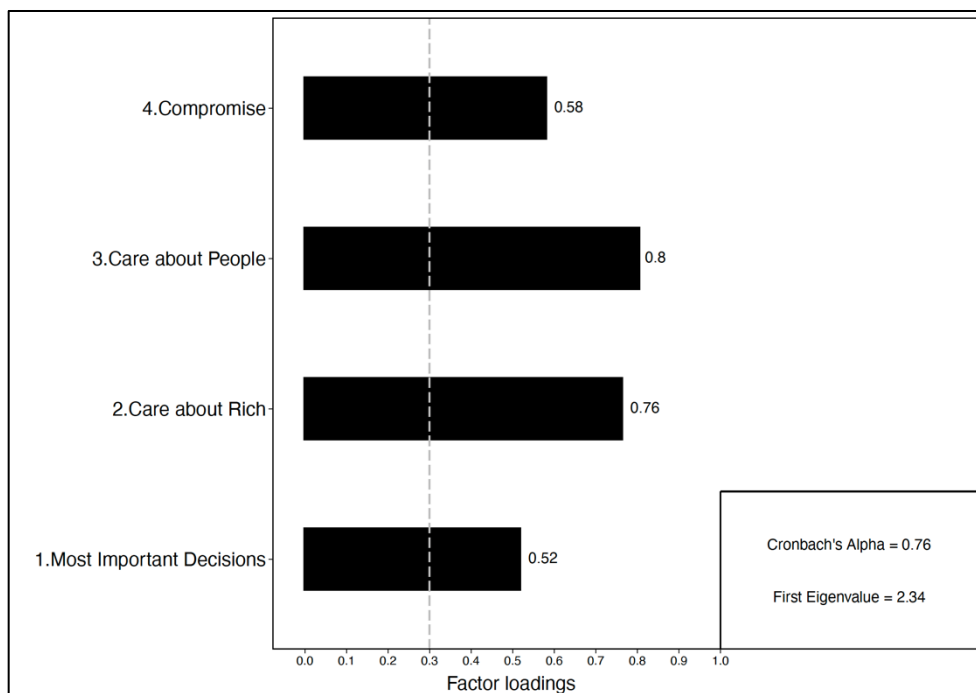
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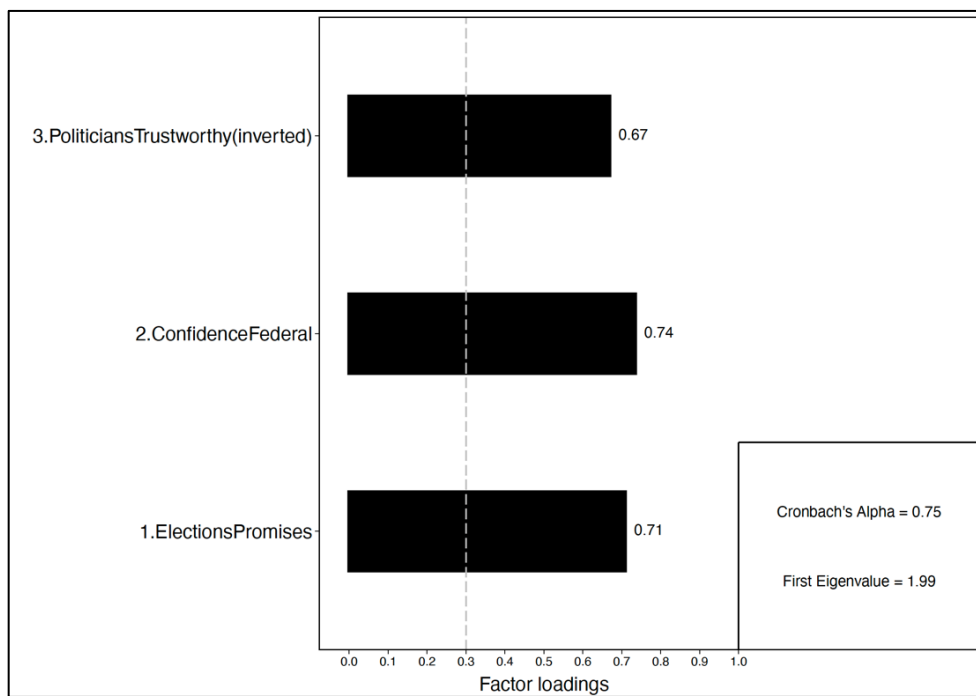
Economic Insecurity Scale Reliability Measures
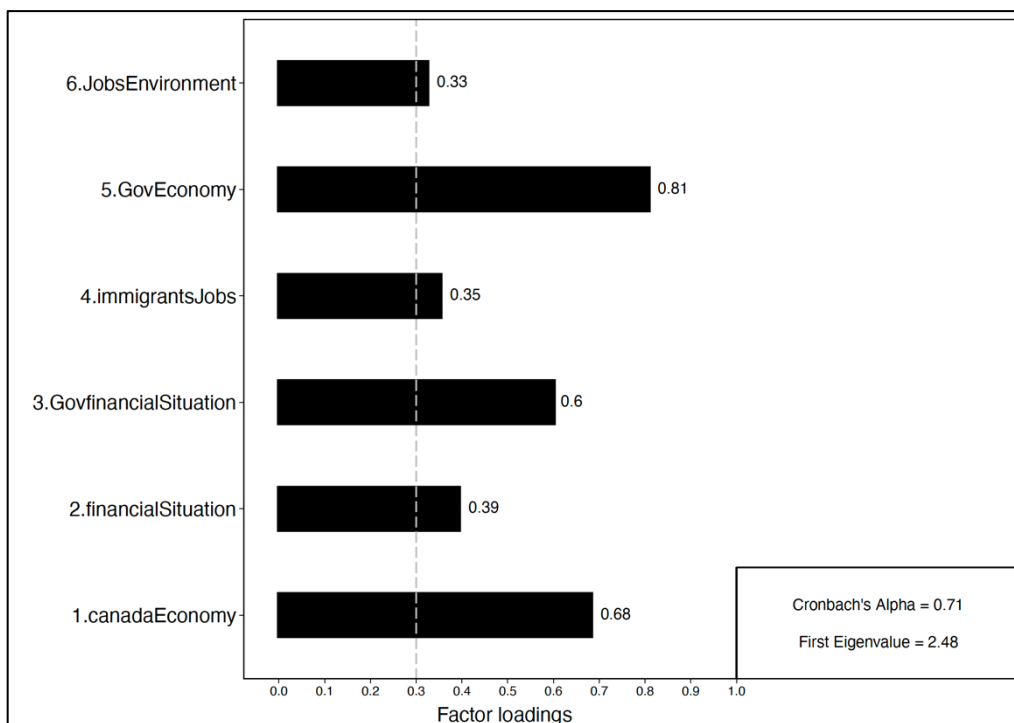
Declinism Scale Reliability Measures

Appendix D

Variance Inflation Factors – Block Recursive Model

Variables	VIF
Employment Precarity	1.04
Income	1.20
Education	1.21
Rural	1.09
Age	1.17
Gender	1.13
Atlantic	20.49
Quebec	77.31
Ontario	86.60
Prairies	62.40
British Columbia	36.84
Proximity with politics	1.40
LPC	2.19
CPC	2.13
NPD	1.72
BQ	1.54
GPC	1.12
PPC	1.07
Political Trust	1.74
Declinism	2.06
Economic insecurity	2.11
External political efficacy	1.41