French Politics
https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-026-00347-1

Cleavage structures and vote for the right in interwar France: a multilevel analysis of the social bases of conservative support

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Received: 13 February 2026 / Accepted: 7 August 2026
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Abstract
The situation of the French right during the Third Republic (1870–1940) has been characterised as one of weak mobilising capacity and precarious institutionalisation. This situation is remarkable, given the duration of the Third Republic and the strength of political cleavages in France. In this paper, we aim to shed light on this topic by conducting multilevel analyses on the electoral performance of the right in the critical 1936 elections, in a context marked by the rise of authoritarianism in Europe. More specifically, our paper examines the role played by Lipset and Rokkan's main cleavages in the electoral support for the right at the commune-level. Our analyses reveal the extraordinary importance of the religious cleavage for conservative support. We also find clear evidence of the importance of social class and urban–rural cleavages. Finally, and more surprisingly, our analyses show that the right was weaker in linguistically distinctive territories. These findings make a substantive contribution to contemporary debates on the role of cultural and socioeconomic factors in French electoral behaviour. They are also relevant to our understanding of the social basis of conservative support in a period that proved critical for the survival of democratic regimes.

Keywords Interwar period · France · Conservative parties · Elections · Political cleavages

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Published online: 29 October 2026

Introduction

From a comparative perspective, the situation of the French right during the Third Republic (1870–1940) presents quite remarkable features. Firstly, in a country characterised by both strong ideological divisions and a long democratic tradition, conservative actors failed to develop modern, mass-based political parties until the very end of the Third Republic, preferring instead to rely, as other European conservative parties, on "deep networks of informal authority" and "personality-centred deference" towards old elites (Ziblatt 2017, pp. 29 and 49; Kalyvas 1996, pp. 52–53; Rémond 1954, p. 167). Only after the foundation of the *Parti Social Français* (PSF, French Social Party), in the aftermath of the 1936 legislative elections, did the right witness the development of a truly mass-based political party (Berstein and Thomas 2016). In the second place, despite the historical importance of religious conflicts, France did not witness the development of a confessional or Christian-democratic party, a fact that, to a large extent, has been explained by the decisions adopted by the Catholic Church. At the supply-side level, this situation has already been analysed by many historical and political science contributions (Rémond 1954; Dupeux 1962; Huard 1996; Richard 2023; Lévêque 1992; Kalyvas 1996). As for the electoral behaviour level, (Cagé and Piketty 2023) provide an impressively rich overview of the dynamics and causes of voting covering the whole Third Republic period. However, their analysis does not focus on specific historical conjunctures and leaves therefore much room for detailed studies on the determinants of vote in single historical periods. Furthermore, persisting disagreements on the comparative importance of cultural and economic factors justify the interest in conducting focused and multivariate analyses on the factors shaping conservative support in the Third Republic. In our view, this interest is particularly evident in the case of the 1930s. One reason for it lies in the intensity of political polarisation and the presence of significant threats to the survival of democratic regimes. The fact that the chances of democratic survival were conditioned by the electoral strength of conservative parties (Ziblatt 2017) increases the substantive interest of further investigations on this specific topic. Our goal here is to contribute to the knowledge of this period by focusing on the social bases of conservative vote in the 1930s. We do that by linking empirical analyses to (Rokkan, 1999)'s classical theoretical framework on cleavage formation and electoral behaviour in Western Europe.

The contribution of this analysis goes beyond the empirical knowledge of the French case. First, our analyses can help assess the electoral influence of religious orientations in a country that, despite the presence of strong divisions on religious issues, lacked a powerful Christian-Democratic or confessional party (Kalyvas 1996). Second, our analyses shed more light on the political role of the family peasantry in a context characterised by both low levels of left-wing rural mobilisation and hegemonic centrist and liberal parties (Luebbert 1991). In both respects, due to the supply-side characteristics of its party system, France can be interpreted as just a moderately favourable case to the conservative electoral activation of religious attitudes and agrarian interests. Consequently, the results of our analyses may provide strong evidence for theories on the role of both religious cleavages and family peasants in interwar Europe.



A few general considerations about conservative parties are necessary before we begin our exploration. Conservative parties have been identified based on both sociological and ideological characteristics. Ziblatt defined them by a 'core constituency' of "upper class propertied economic or political elites" and a set of ideas that included anti-egalitarianism and the defence of traditional values and institutions (Ziblatt 2017, p. 30). These two features fit the characteristics of the French right during the Third Republic (Rémond 1954; Lévêque 1992), which was also defined by the defence of order and private property, strong nationalism, and anti-communism (Lévêque 1992, pp. 58–59; Rémond 1954).

We can link this characterisation to Rokkan (1999)'s analysis on the position of conservatives in cleavage formation processes. In their framework, support for the right was connected to the religious, social class, rural–urban, and centre-periphery cleavages structuring the French polity. Now, beyond this general description, no conclusive empirical evidence is available on the relative weight of each of these cleavages in the 1930s. Particularly important is the disagreement over the role of economic and cultural factors in explaining conservative support (Cagé and Piketty 2023; Mayer 2023; Crulli and Emanuele 2025). Also importantly, empirical analyses have not explicitly addressed the role of centre-periphery divisions in electoral behaviour. Our goal here is to make an empirical contribution to these debates by assessing the impact of different explanatory variables on voting behaviour in the 1930s. We do that by conducting multilevel, commune-level ecological analyses of the electoral performance of right-wing parties in the 1936 legislative elections. This research has been made possible by the extraordinary data released by (Cagé and Piketty 2023).

We have selected the 1936 elections for their crucial historical importance. 1936 witnessed the triumph of the Popular Front, the left-wing coalition integrated by the socialists –the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO, French Section of the Workers' International)–, the radical-socialists, and the communist party. The *Front Populaire* (Popular Front) victory took place in a context marked by economic turmoil and, most importantly, by extreme ideological polarisation (Dupeux 1959, p. 113; Lévêque 1992). These elections led to the first Socialist prime minister in French history. And they were the last general elections held before the Second World War. Ideological polarisation was accentuated by an international context characterised by Hitler's rise to power, the breakdown of Austrian democracy, and the escalation of political violence in Spain. The perception that a victory for the Popular Front posed dramatic risks stimulated conservative mobilisation. According to the right, the victory of the Popular Front would bring about chaos and instability and could even lead to civil war and revolutionary dictatorship (Dupeux, 1959, pp. 119–20). Right-wing forces failed to build a national alliance and suffered a strong political defeat. However, they only lost about 70,000 votes since the 1932 elections (Rémond 1996, p. 161). The electoral resilience of the right in a context of high ideological polarisation and low activation of religious conflicts makes this contest particularly useful for assessing the sources of support for conservative parties.

The 1936 legislative elections were held under the pre-World War electoral system, as re-established by the 1927 Electoral Law. The Republic was divided into 618 single-member districts. If no candidate reached an absolute majority of votes in the



first round (and also one-quarter of the electorate), a second ballot was held in one week (Caramani 2000, p. 301; Campbell 1958, pp. 97–98). One could assume that incentives for inter-party coordination previous to the first round were limited and that competitive concurrence of ideologically close candidates was common. In fact, in the 1936 elections, 4,815 candidates competed for 618 seats in the first round (that is, on average, almost 8 candidates in each district). Second ballots were needed in 433 districts (Campbell 1958, pp. 100–101). In the 1930s, no formal electoral alliance between right-wing parties was formalised. However, in most cases, right parties agreed on which candidates should run in the second round (Campbell 1958, 98) and, in 1936, second rounds were usually contests between a left-wing and a right-wing candidate (Rémond 1996, p. 160). We focus here on the first round because in this way we can combine the analysis of the aggregate performance of the right and its two main political parties, *Fédération Républicaine* (FR, Republican Federation) and *Alliance Démocratique* (AD, Democratic Alliance). In doing that, we also avoid the complex methodological problem of measuring and assessing the interactive impact of different subtypes of right- and left-wing party competition (for instance, AD or FR candidates against Radical, Socialist, or Communist candidates). Therefore, our analysis leaves aside supply-side inter-district differences in both the right and left sides of the spectrum and focuses on the impact of demand-side variations.

In the following section, we outline our main expectations regarding the sources of social support for the French right. Next, we present the data and methods used in our analysis. In the third section, we discuss our empirical findings and present some tests for the robustness of our results. Finally, we reflect on the main substantive implications of our empirical findings.

The social basis of conservative support

We begin our exploration of conservative support by examining comparative literature and studies that focus on the French case. Unfortunately, we lack comparative empirical analyses on the electoral support of conservative parties in the 1930s. Neither can we find in this case the richness of electoral analyses that characterise the study of German national-socialism and Italian fascism (O'Loughlin et al. 1994; O'Loughlin 2002; Brustein and Berntson 1999; Brustein 1996, 1991; Wellhofer 2003). However, we can draw inspiration from comparative studies on cleavage formation processes (Rokkan, 1999) and comparative, inter-case historical studies on the development of conservative parties (Ziblatt 2017).

We base this analysis on Lipset and Rokkan (1967)'s theory on cleavage formation in Europe. In their theory, cleavage formation processes involved socio-structural conditions, divisions on norms and identities, and behavioural and organisational developments (Bartolini 2000, p. 17). Certainly, this theory does not settle important empirical questions about the development of political divisions in each European polity. Cleavage formation processes depended on concrete combinations of characteristics and were conditioned by contingent historical events. In this respect, there was no mechanistic transition from social processes to party formation and voting behaviour (Flora 1999, p. 45; Zollinger and Attewell 2026) Despite this caveat,



Lipset and Rokkan's framework provides researchers with an analytical grid that is useful for directing empirical analysis, assessing causal inferences, and drawing revealing comparisons.

The point of departure for this analysis is the identification of four cleavages structuring mass politics in Western Europe: Church versus secular state, centre versus periphery, rural versus urban interests, and workers versus owners (Rokkan, 1999, p. 305). In Lipset and Rokkan (1967)'s approach, whereas the religious and centre-periphery cleavages had a predominantly cultural content, the last two had a functional and economic character (Rokkan, 1999, pp. 284–85). It is also important that the centre-periphery and rural–urban cleavages shared a strongly territorial character. Depending on historical trajectories, these four cleavages could overlap or cut across each other. Interestingly, while some cleavages (like the workers-owners one) were shared almost in all Western European cases, some others (like the centre-periphery) adopted nationally idiosyncratic forms (Flora 1999, p. 44). In Lipset and Rokkan (1967)'s analysis, the French right was located in a specific pole in each of the main cleavages they identified. Specifically, in France, this political tendency was characterised by the defence of a) landed interests (rural–urban cleavage), b) Catholic values and institutions (religious cleavage), c) peripheries resisting the powers of the national centre (centre-periphery cleavage), and d) propertied classes (workers-owners cleavage) (Rokkan, 1999, pp. 314–17).

This framework has been enriched by Ziblatt (2017)'s study on conservative parties and democratisation in the UK and Germany. His definition underscored the importance of both core constituencies and political-ideological orientations that can be related to the cleavages identified by Rokkan. Also important is the fact that Ziblatt's study highlighted the crucial role of cultural, religious, and symbolic elements in the cross-class appeal of conservative forces (Ziblatt 2017, pp. 189 and 214). The impact of religious divisions on right and far-right mobilisation has also been underscored by historical studies focusing on the cases of Spain (Llamazares 2024) and Russia (Boix and Kofanov 2025).

Comparative literature also enables us to assess the strength of each distinct cleavage (Emanuele and Marino 2025). Given the levels of capitalist and industrial development reached by the French economy and the size of the industrial working-class, there is no doubt that the workers-owners cleavage was one of the key factors shaping electoral competition and conditioning the support for conservative parties. This is also consistent with the well-known links between French conservative parties and business interests (Lévêque 1992, p. 40).

As for the religious cleavage, two factors contributed to making it particularly important. First, this cleavage arose at an early stage of the nation-building process, and this fact conditioned later political divisions (Flora 1999, p. 45; Bartolini 2000, p. 458). And second, the saliency of this tension was accentuated by the social strength of Catholicism and the secular positions of state-building elites (Emanuele and Marino 2025).

In the case of the rural–urban cleavage, its importance may have been favoured by the urban orientations of state-building elites (Rokkan, 1999) and the monocentric character of France (Emanuele and Marino 2025). As in other Catholic countries, conservative and pro-Church parties channelled the defence of agrarian interests



(Flora 1999, p. 41), a fact that contributed to preventing the rise of agrarian parties (Flora 1999, p. 45; Emanuele and Marino 2025).

Finally, in the case of the centre-periphery cleavage, one would expect it to have a far weaker influence on conservative support. The early character of the processes of territorial consolidation and nation-building points in this direction (Flora 1999, p. 44). This interpretation is endorsed by the weakness of French regionalism during the Third Republic (Pasquier 2014). Certainly, conservatives often advocated the defence of regional interests and cultures against the centralising Jacobin state (Pasquier 2014, pp. 21–23; Rémond, p. 196), and some important rightist politicians, as it was the case of Louis Marin – leader of FR–, participated in regionalist associations and activities. This seems to fit Rokkan's observations regarding the role of French conservatism in the defence of peripheral regions. However, this association might also result from the tensions between the centralising liberal state and the Catholic Church, an institution that was particularly strong in certain peripheral areas. Furthermore, non-conservative parties proved very successful in channelling peripheral or regional interests in the national arena, as was the case of the *Parti Radical* (Radical Party) in the *Midi Rouge* (Berstein 1977; Nicolas 2004). Again, the prevalence of the Radical Party in this region might be connected to its social and economic characteristics rather than to its cultural distinctiveness. Consequently, we find no strong reasons to expect a strong saliency of the centre-periphery cleavage once we control for religious practices and the rural–urban divide.

As in other European cases, empirical and historical analyses focusing on France have underscored the importance of the rural–urban, religious, and class cleavages. In particular, most studies have emphasised the crucial role of the religious cleavage (Dobry 2000, p. 162; Kalyvas 1996; Gougou and Roux 2013). As for economic factors, they have been connected to the rural–urban division and class inequalities (Cagé and Piketty 2023). The associations between these factors and voting have been endorsed by empirical and historical analyses. In the case of religious characteristics, different studies have revealed the success of the right in Catholic regions in the twentieth century (Rémond 1954; Le Bras 2022, p. 231; Goguel 1970; Lévêque 1992, pp. 33–36). As Rémond notes, the conservative right was primarily supported by Catholic voters, who were attracted by its explicit defence of religious values. Many of its representatives were known for their Catholic convictions, and its electoral strongholds were concentrated in areas of high religious practice, such as the West, Lorraine, Franche-Comté, and parts of the southern Massif Central (Rémond 1954, pp. 162 and 193–96). Variations in the influence of Catholic values and the Catholic Church have been traced back at least as far as the French Revolution (Le Bras 2022, pp. 213–16 and 235). This characterisation has been endorsed by individual-level analyses of voting behaviour in the second half of the twentieth century (Michelat and Simon 1977; Boy and Mayer 1997; Lewis-Beck 1998; Dargent 2004; Gougou and Roux 2013). These studies have revealed that religious orientations were the most important factor accounting for vote-choices in that historical period. In fact, they continued to be crucial explanatory factors in elections held at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Cautrès and Mayer 2004; Gougou and Roux 2013).



Despite the importance of religious orientations, no strong confessional or Christian-democratic party was present in the Third Republic. In addition to that, lay Catholic associations did not develop organic links with right-wing parties, and, for the most part, the Church and its ancillary networks endorsed the candidates that were considered closer to Catholic values in each electoral district (Bonnafoux-Verrax 2004, pp. 250–52). According to (Lévêque 1992), this resulted from the rejection of the confessional party-building strategy by the Church, which favoured instead the formation of a coalition between moderate Republicans and Catholics. The political importance of the decisions made by the Catholic Church has been shown by (Boix and Lacroix 2025). Their analysis shows that the 1926 Papal decision to ban Catholic participation in the extreme right *L'Action Française* had a strong impact on support for this organisation.

As for socioeconomic factors, Cagé and Piketty's long-term and diachronic analyses have shown the strong rural bias of the conservative vote during the Third Republic. Their data show that the vote for the right was higher than the national average in localities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants and lower in large cities and suburbs (Cagé and Piketty 2023, pp. 380–81). As recent studies have shown, the rural–urban divide continues to play a significant role in French electoral behaviour, with conservative and radical-right forces experiencing better electoral performance in rural areas (Brookes and Cappellina 2023; Corradi 2022).

Furthermore, when Cagé and Piketty include socioeconomic and occupational controls in the analysis, the effect of religious characteristics (measured by school enrolment in private schools) strongly diminishes. They conclude that it was the presence of farmers and small landowners, and not the strength of Catholicism, which largely accounted for the preponderance of the right in certain areas (Cagé and Piketty 2023, pp. 394–96). At least in part, this could be explained by the perception that leftist parties posed a threat to the property rights of landowners, and that this fear even affected family peasants, the largest social group in the agrarian sector (Dobry 2000, p. 160). However, other analyses of peasant political behaviour after the Second World War have underlined the heterogeneous character of this social group and the context-dependent character of the associations between family peasantry and voting (Klatzmann 1958; Derivry and Dogan 1986; Derivry 1972; Le Bras 2022). This heterogeneous character of French peasants has also been highlighted by many comparative studies (Luebbert 1991, p. 283; Linz 1976, pp. 384–385 and 388; Kalyvas 1996, p. 108).

The work of Cagé and Piketty offers the most comprehensive analysis of the long-term dynamics of electoral behaviour in France (Lehingue 2024). However, their study does not definitively settle very important questions on the social bases of voting. In her review of their book, (Mayer 2023) points out that the religious variables chosen by Cagé and Piketty (enrolment in private schools and data on refractory priests under the revolution) do not provide us with good indicators of the strength of Catholicism. She advocates instead for the use of information on religious practices. The choice of indicators might explain why Cagé and Piketty's results downplay cultural factors whose decisive importance had been established by a very rich literature

on this topic (Michelat and Simon 1977; Boy and Mayer 1997; Gougou and Roux 2013; Fourquet and Le Bras 2014). To further complicate this topic, it is necessary to take into account the organisational and ideological complexity of the French right (Rémond 1954). Particularly important were the differences between the conservative and the liberal wings of this political current. The conservative sector, articulated by the FR, adopted more traditional, paternalistic, and pro-Church positions than the centre-right AD, a relaxed organisation of notables strongly tied to business interests which was also more prone to establish agreements with the Radical party (Rémond 1954, p. 378; Dobry 2000, p. 171; Bonnafoux-Verrax 2004, p. 253). These political differences highlight the interest to combine aggregate and single-party analyses of the right's electoral success.

This discussion reveals that, despite the richness of historical and empirical analyses, we are far from achieving an academic consensus on the primary bases of support for the French right during the Third Republic. This justifies the interest in conducting more multivariate analyses aimed at testing the findings of previous geographical and long-term diachronic historical explorations. By assessing the impact of different plausible explanatory factors, we can reach more conclusive answers on the direct and conditional effects of cultural and socioeconomic elements on political behaviour. Indirectly, the results of these analyses are also relevant to our understanding of the European right's situation in the interwar period.

More specifically, this paper examines from an aggregate perspective (also known as ecological analysis) the electoral effects of four political cleavages in the 1936 elections. Building on the theoretical considerations outlined above, we formulate our main hypotheses. First, we expect that the strength of Catholicism strongly conditioned the support for right-wing parties (H1). As Bartolini points out, the combination of religious denominations, above-average religious practices, and membership in religion-related organisations should lead to distinctive voting patterns (Bartolini 2023, p. 79). This should be particularly the case in a country characterised by the presence of both a powerful Catholic Church and very strong secularist actors (Montero 2023, p. 91). Second, we argue that the class composition of communes influenced voting behaviour. In particular, we hypothesise that the higher the presence of the working classes, the lower the performance of the right. In terms of our statistical analysis, we expect the presence of blue-collar workers and the unemployed to have negative effects on the vote for the right (H2). We simply assume that these social groups, which were often concentrated in more urbanised or industrialised settings, tended to support parties with redistributive and pro-labour economic platforms. Third, we posit that rural and agrarian areas were more favourable terrain for right-wing parties. The presence of farmers and the prevalence of traditional social structures should have fostered conservative success (H3). Finally, in line with our previous discussion of the centre–periphery cleavage, we do not advance strong expectations regarding the effects of regional distinctiveness on right-wing voting. Our analysis of this dimension is therefore exploratory and intended to provide a basis for future research.



Data and methods

To test our hypothesis, we rely on the dataset compiled and released by (Cagé and Piketty 2023). Specifically, we conduct a fine-grained analysis at the commune-level, which corresponds to municipalities or localities in other countries.[1] This level of disaggregation allows us not only to test our hypothesis with greater precision but also to take advantage of a large sample size (N = 33,939), significantly enhancing the robustness of our findings. Each commune, on average, had a population of 1,149 dwellers and spanned over an area of approximately 15.77 km^2.

Our dependent variable is the vote for right-wing parties in the first round, following the criteria established by (Lachapelle 1936), as integrated into the database of (Cagé and Piketty 2023). According to this classification, AD and FR were the main right-wing parties, respectively included in Group I and II in Lachapelle's classification.[2] This category also includes other small groups (popular democrats, for instance) and independent candidates closely aligned with AD and FR. Figure 1 displays the electoral performance of the right in the 1936 legislative elections at the commune level.

Measuring our independent variables

The variables used to test our hypotheses are as follows. H1 concerns the positive impact of Catholicism on the vote for the right. We use two indicators to capture the local strength of Catholicism. First, we rely on the Easter mass attendance in 1935, which serves as a proxy for the intensity of religious practice in each place. Data for this indicator has been extracted from (Lacroix and Boix 2025) and is ultimately based on the information gathered by (Boulard 1982). This measure has the advantage of being temporally proximate to the 1936 elections. Second, we also include an indicator for the proportion of students enrolled in private primary schools at the end of the nineteenth century (Cagé and Piketty 2023). Most private education was provided by religious institutions, making this variable a plausible proxy for the Church's influence and the social transmission of Catholic norms. Furthermore, historical studies have emphasised the role of education in the construction of a French national identity during the Third Republic (Weber 1976, pp. 303 and the following; Roux 2014, pp. 53–57). One would expect that within religious schools, national identification processes would be addressed in a traditional and religious frame, one that would be more akin to the ideas of conservative parties.

Admittedly, these indicators do not allow us to identify and assess the specific mechanisms through which local Catholicism affected the performance of the right.

[1] As (Cagé and Piketty 2023) explain, the data for these communes have been standardised according to the current territorial organisation.

[2] Of the total right-wing vote, 69.4% corresponds to AD and FR, while the remaining share was cast for independent right-wing candidates.

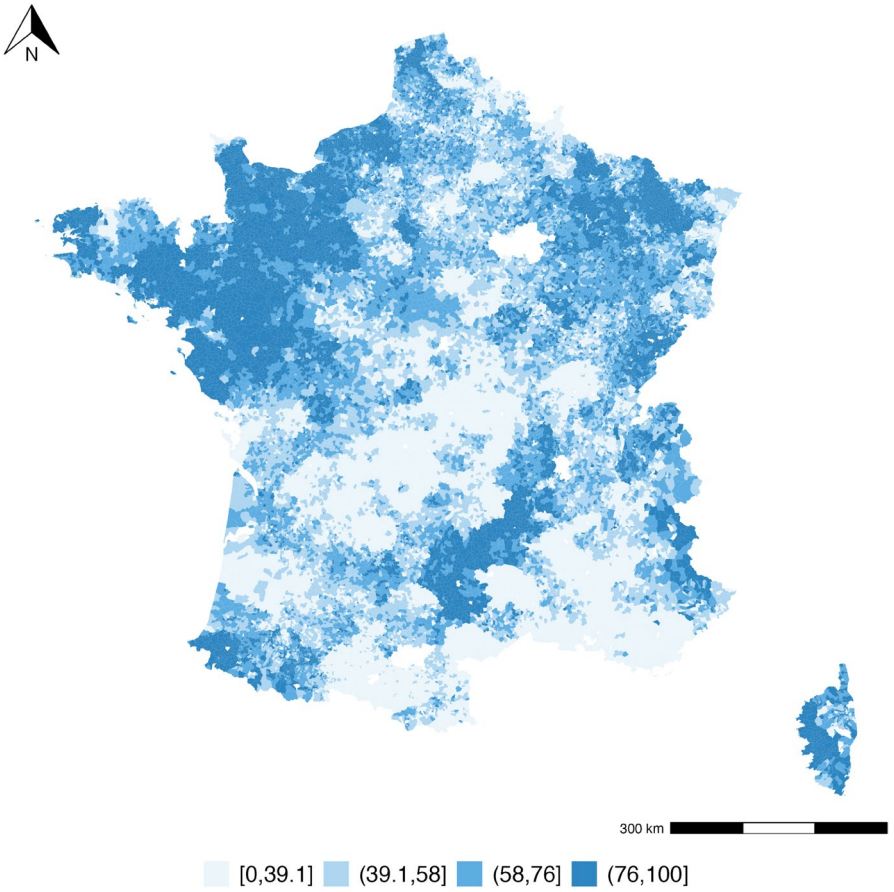


Fig. 1 Geographical distribution of the vote for right-wing parties (1936)

Easter mass attendance may capture both the cultural alignment of voters with conservative values and the direct political influence exerted by the Church. We assume that cultural and ideological proximity strongly conditioned the choices of voters in highly Catholic areas. But we also know from (Boix and Lacroix 2025) that Church decisions affected the support of citizens in Catholic regions for specific political organisations. Therefore, our analysis allows us to grasp the force of the religious cleavage, but does not provide us with a precise answer on the weight of the causal mechanisms driving the voting decisions of individual voters.

A potential limitation concerns the temporal distance between the 1936 elections and the measure of private education (1894). However, we assume that this variable can capture the long-term institutional and cultural imprint of Catholicism (Cuchet



2018). This concern is mitigated by the inclusion of the Easter mass attendance variable, which is measured in 1935 and thus closely matches the timing of the elections.[3]

According to H1, we expect both indicators of religious strength to be positively associated with support for right-wing parties. Furthermore, in line with the historical literature, we anticipate that the effect of religious variables will be stronger for the support for the FR than for the AD.

Second, H2 concerns the idea that the presence of certain social groups could undermine the electoral success of conservative parties. Specifically, we focus on the proportion of blue-collar workers and the unemployed in the communes. These are measured as percentiles of their respective distributions –meaning that higher values indicate a greater presence of these groups. Although the operationalisation of these variables provided by (Cagé and Piketty 2023) may complicate the substantive interpretation of results, they nevertheless allow us to test whether the presence of these groups affected the support for the right. In line with H2, we expect their presence to be negatively associated with the right-wing vote.

Third, to examine the rural–urban divide (H3), we rely on two variables. First, in line with the operationalisation of social structures outlined above, we use the proportion of farmers as an indicator of the agrarian character of a commune. One would expect more agrarian communes to be more inclined to support conservative parties. Second, we draw on a rural–urban classification adapted from (Cagé and Piketty 2023). However, unlike their original typology, we group both *banlieues* (suburbs) and *métropoles* (metropolitan areas) under the label 'Urban' (2). Although suburban and metropolitan communes differ in several respects, both are integrated into broader urban economic and social systems and therefore share characteristics that distinguish them from villages and towns. By contrast, villages (1) and *bourgs* (towns) are retained as distinct categories, with the latter serving as the reference category (0). This recoding is theoretically motivated by our focus on the contrast between predominantly rural environments and areas embedded in urban dynamics. In this respect, our primary interest lies in the rural–urban divide rather than in differences within urban areas themselves. Moreover, this three-category specification allows us to distinguish clearly between rural, intermediate, and urban contexts, which aligns closely with our hypotheses regarding the relative strength of right-wing support across these environments. To address potential concerns regarding this aggregation, Table 14 reports robustness checks using the original four-category classification proposed by (Cagé and Piketty 2023). The results remain substantively similar. In particular, the negative association between urban environments and support for the right persists. The main difference is that, when metropolitan areas and suburbs are modelled separately, only the coefficient for suburbs remains statistically significant. This suggests that the urban effect observed in the main analyses is driven primarily by suburban rather

[3] As a robustness check, we replicate our analyses using the proportion of Sunday mass attendance in 1950 provided by (Cagé and Piketty 2023). Although this measure is temporally more distant from the 1936 elections, it is highly correlated with Easter attendance in 1935 (see Fig. 4), and yields substantively similar results (Table 16).

than metropolitan communes. Consequently, the rural–urban contrast identified in our analyses does not appear to be an artefact of grouping suburbs and metropolitan areas into a single category. Following our theoretical expectations, we hypothesise that conservative parties performed better in villages (compared to towns) and worse in urban areas. Additionally, we expect that a higher proportion of farmers in a commune is associated with greater support for the right.

Finally, in the case of the centre-periphery cleavage, we choose characteristics that may have prevented full national assimilation and favoured the persistence of distinctive identities. Rokkan considered three main components in his definition of peripherality: distance, difference, and dependence (Rokkan, 1999, p. 115). In our analysis, we focus on the first two dimensions. We include the distance of each commune to Paris as our first indicator for the peripheral character of territories. In line with other works (e.g., Sánchez-García and Negral (2023) or Huijsmans et al. (2021)) which use the distance to the capital (or government headquarters), we assume that distance from the state-building core may have limited communication flows and full integration into the national culture.

Our 'difference' indicator is based on the linguistic characteristics of territories. For Rokkan, language was "a focal point of identity" and "the most pervasive and obvious stigma of distinctiveness" (Rokkan, 1999, p. 171). Not surprisingly, in the French case, historical studies have underlined the connections between the formation of the national identity and the extension of the French language throughout all national territories (Weber 1976; Roux 2014). Based on Weber's data on the persistence of non-French linguistic variations in the 1860s (Weber 1976, p. 68), we have distinguished between departments where non-French languages were significantly present and the rest of the country. We are aware that this is a crude indicator of the linguistic distinctiveness of territories. Unfortunately, we lack quantitative data about linguistic uses in the 1930s. Another limitation is that this classification merges very different languages into single categories. To mitigate this problem, in our robustness checks, we have used a more disaggregated classification of peripheral languages. Rokkan distinguished among languages based on "the status of each language, and the linguistic system of the territory where it was used" (Rokkan, 1999, p. 174). He separated 'marginal' languages, which, in his words, lacked an effective standard and significant political autonomy, and 'interface' languages, which were characterised by strong cross-pressures between linguistic communities. He included Breton, Occitan, and Corsican in the first category, and Alsatian, Catalan, and Franco-Provençal in the second (Rokkan, 1999, pp. 172–76). We have added Basque to the latter group since, according to Rokkan, in the Spanish case, this language lacked an effective standard but maintained some level of political autonomy. We do not include this alternative classification in our main model because linguistic subtypes are strongly correlated with distance. We have also discarded the creation of dummy variables for each linguistic group because this would hardly be compatible with a hierarchical linear model. Admittedly, our analysis of the effects of this cleavage is exploratory, and its results will need to be tested by more refined studies on this topic.

Statistical strategy

For this empirical analysis, we conduct a random intercepts multilevel regression, in which our dependent variable is the vote for right-wing parties at the commune-level.



We focus first on the aggregate vote for the right and distinguish later among the vote for FR and AD. The first analysis refers to the right as a large and heterogeneous coalition, both socially and ideologically. It reveals the social foundations of conservatism as a national, multi-class force, aiming at electoral success and cultural hegemony. By contrast, separate analyses allow us to grasp inter-party social and ideological differences. We include both analyses in this paper, even if, for synthetic purposes, we devote more attention to the discussion of aggregate results. Following the approach used by (Patana 2021), we specify a Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) in which commune-level variables (level 1) are nested within their respective departments (level 2) – Fig. 2 visually represents the two levels included in our model. Both methodological and substantive reasons make HLM analysis well-suited for our goals. First, it allows us to better capture the hierarchical structure of the data, recognising that voting behaviour at the commune-level may be shaped not only by local socioeconomic and demographic characteristics but also by unobserved contextual factors at the departmental-level. This advantage is not only methodological. It fits well with the ideas contributed by many studies on the role of regional and departmental contexts in French political behaviour (Derivry and Dogan 1986; Klatzmann 1958; Mayer 2023).[4] Finally, by structuring our analysis hierarchically,

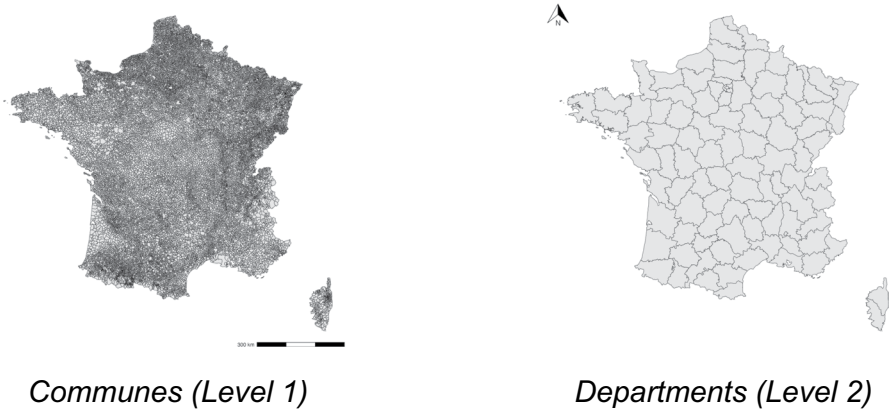


Fig. 2 The two administrative levels of our analysis

[4] We acknowledge that communes were also nested in legislative constituencies and that this fact directly determined candidate availability and vote shares for individual parties and the right as a whole. Ideally, we should control for party supply for all parties (right and left) in each district. However, our data do not allow us to incorporate this constituency-level information in the analysis. We hope that this problem is mitigated by the fact that in many districts multiple candidates for each major political current competed against each other. In districts where only candidates of a specific right-wing party were present, we assume that this situation already reflected the local relative strength of each party. A second issue concerns the fact that communes were nested in electoral districts and electoral districts were nested in departments. However, in our multilevel analysis, communes are just nested in departments. This has to do both with the nature of our data (which is either commune- or department-level) and with the fact that departments constitute a meaningful unit for the study of electoral behaviour in France.

we mitigate the risk of biased standard errors, which could arise from ignoring the dependencies between observations within the same department.[5]

Our HLM models include, in addition to the aforementioned explanatory variables, several control variables such as age, proportion of women, income, real estate capital, share of *baccalauréat* holders, rate of foreigners, logarithm of population, and home ownership.[6] Further details on all variables used in the analysis are provided in the Online Appendix C. To evaluate the relative substantive importance of our main explanatory variables, we also conduct a Dominance Analysis (DA) (Luchman 2021), a technique designed to address the question: "Is X_1 more or less (or equally) important than X_2 in predicting Y, given the set of predictors included in the model?" (Azen and Budescu 2003, p. 145). More specifically, dominance statistics are computed from the average contribution of each predictor to the overall fit of the model across all possible subset specifications. Consequently, DA allows us to assess the relative explanatory importance of the variables included in the model while accounting for their interrelationships.[7]

Finally, in addition to those mentioned before, we conduct a series of complementary analyses as robustness checks (see Online Appendix C) to further validate our findings. To assess the inter-temporal validity of our results, we replicate our analyses for the 1928 and 1932 elections (see Table 11). This temporal comparison allows us to evaluate whether the patterns we identified in 1936 were already present in earlier electoral contests or if they represent a distinct political shift. In addition to that, we run, as robustness checks, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analyses at the departmen-

[5] Data availability varies across department-level covariates. Church attendance (Easter) is unavailable for nine departments: Charente, Corse-du-Sud, Drôme, Essonne, Haute-Corse, Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-d'Oise, and Val-de-Marne. Private education is unavailable for eight additional departments: Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Haute-Loire, Haute-Savoie, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Moselle, Savoie, and Territoire de Belfort. Since these two sets do not overlap, historical data on at least one of these covariates are unavailable for 17 departments in total. Consequently, multivariate specifications including both covariates are restricted from 96 to 79 departments. This restriction mechanically reduces the number of commune-level observations, as all communes located in departments for which the relevant historical information is unavailable are excluded. In our main election year (1936), for instance, the sample decreases from 33,901 to 27,266 communes. The number of commune-level observations in the original (Cagé and Piketty 2023) dataset also varies slightly across election years, with 33,901 communes in 1936, 33,302 in 1932, and 33,907 in 1928. Importantly, the reduction in our estimation sample reflects the availability of the historical sources from which the department-level covariates are constructed rather than researcher-imposed sample selection. While we cannot fully rule out non-random missingness, the excluded departments do not exhibit an evident systematic pattern that would be expected to bias our main estimates. Moreover, our results are robust to alternative specifications excluding these department-level covariates, which retain the full set of departments, providing reassurance that the findings are not driven by this sample restriction.

[6] Some predictors could display slightly negative dominance statistics. These values indicate that, once the remaining predictors are taken into account, a variable contributes little additional explanatory power to the model and may marginally decrease the average contribution measure across subset specifications. Therefore, negative dominance statistics should be interpreted as evidence of very limited relative importance rather than as substantively meaningful negative effects.

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tal-level (see Table 13) and OLS models at the commune-level with departmental Fixed Effects (FE) (see Table 12).[8]

Empirical analysis

We begin by analysing the results of our model, as presented in Table 1. In the first place, it must be pointed out that the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) equals 0.47, which means that almost one-half of the variation in the dependent variable is due to variation between departments. This fact justifies the need to use a multilevel model. As for the independent variables, results show that both mass attendance (Easter) and private school enrolment are strongly associated with conservative voting (p-value < 0.001), thus confirming H1 and endorsing classical interpretations of the social bases of the French right. Thus, the results indicate that communes located

Table 1 HLM model on the right-wing vote in 1936

	Right-wing vote
Blue-collar workers	−8.58***
	(0.59)
Farmers	15.01***
	(1.44)
Unemployed	−0.39
	(0.51)
Mass attendance (Easter)	42.53***
	(7.74)
Private education	16.63***
	(0.80)
Village	1.25***
	(0.35)
Urban	−1.91**
	(0.73)
Linguistic peripheries	−22.29***
	(3.86)
Distance to Paris	0.01*
	(0.00)
AIC	231,128.31
BIC	231,309.01
Log Likelihood	−115,542.16
Num. obs	27,266
Num. groups: dep	79
Var: dep (Intercept)	222.19
Var: Residual	276.27

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

[8] These alternative strategies present, however, some limitations. One limitation of OLS regressions at the departmental-level lies in the high correlation between independent variables (see Fig. 4). This arises largely from the reduced number of observations and the lower variability associated with more aggregated spatial units. As for the FE models, their main limitation is that they do not allow us to control for the effects of departmental-level variables, which are mainly the religious ones.

in departments with higher levels of private school enrolment and Easter mass attendance tend to exhibit higher levels of support for right-wing parties. Substantively, a 10-percentage-point increase in Easter mass attendance at the departmental level is associated with an increase of approximately 4.4 percentage points in the expected right-wing vote across the communes belonging to that department. Likewise, the same increase in private school enrolment is associated with an increase of around 1.7 percentage points in right-wing support.

Importantly, this pattern remains consistent when Easter mass attendance is replaced by the 1950 measure of church attendance (see Table 16). This is hardly surprising if we consider the high stability of religious practices in France until the mid-1960s (Cuchet 2018). In fact, the Pearson correlation between our 1935 and 1950 religious indicators equals +0.86 (see Fig. 4). Certainly, all these coefficients should be interpreted with caution, as they capture the effects of departmental-level on communal-level electoral results.

Let us now turn to our theoretical expectations regarding the socioeconomic composition of localities. Starting with blue-collar workers, their presence is clearly linked to lower support for right-wing parties at the commune-level –a relationship that is both negative and highly significant (p-value < 0.001). The same direction emerges for the presence of unemployed people, although in this case, the association is not statistically significant. Taken together, these two variables provide support for H2, particularly regarding the negative association between industrial working-class contexts and conservative voting. Substantively, communes with higher proportions of blue-collar workers tended to exhibit substantially lower levels of support for right-wing parties. Moving from the minimum to the maximum observed value of the blue-collar variable is associated with an estimated decrease of 8.5 percentage points in the right-wing vote.

As expected, the presence of farmers operates in the opposite direction. This relationship is positive and statistically significant (p-value < 0.001), confirming the role of the agrarian world as a key basis of support for the right. Substantively, communes with larger agricultural populations tended to display markedly higher levels of support for conservative parties. Moving from the minimum to the maximum observed value of the farmers variable is associated with an increase of 15.01 percentage points in the vote for right-wing parties.

Lastly, we assess the role of the rural–urban divide in shaping voting behaviour. Results indicate that villages (our most rural category) exhibit significantly stronger support for right-wing parties compared to towns (p-value < 0.001). The vote for right-wing parties was 1.25 percentage points higher in villages than in towns. In contrast, urban communes show a significant drop in right-wing support compared to towns (p-value < 0.01), with support for right-wing parties being 1.91 percentage points lower.[9] That is, political preferences tilt clearly along spatial lines: rural settings appear to nurture conservative support, while urban areas remain far more resistant to it. The positive effects of the farmers and the village variables reveal the

[9] According to Table 14, when metropolitan areas and suburbs are modelled separately, only the coefficient for suburbs remains statistically significant. This indicates that the urban effect observed in the main analyses is mainly driven by suburban communes.



agrarian and rural character of the conservative support in the 1936 elections. Overall, these results highlight the weight of socioeconomic structures. While industrial communes seem less inclined towards conservative options, more agrarian contexts show a clear preference for the right.

In terms of the centre-periphery cleavage, our findings reveal important differences between cultural and geographical forms of peripherality. Our results show that the right was significantly weaker in linguistically distinctive territories (p-value < 0.001). That is, once we control for religious orientations and a large number of socio-economic characteristics, linguistic peripheries were less likely to vote for conservative parties. This pattern remains when we use alternative operationalisations of linguistic distinctiveness. As shown by Table 15, the effects of both marginal and interface peripheries are also negative and statistically significant (p-value < 0.001 and p-value < 0.05, respectively). However, other factors not included in our models, such as the ability of left parties to channel local demands and incorporate regional elites, or the characteristics of landownership structures (Todd and Le Bras 2012, pp. 327–29) might also account for the lower performance of the right in these territories. Testing these explanations would demand more complex statistical analyses and a qualitative examination of historical literature.

By contrast, our models reveal a positive association between distance to Paris and the vote for right-wing parties (p-value < 0.05). That is, the farther from Paris, the better the performance of the right, a result that is more in line with traditional wisdom on the social bases of the right. Due to the tension between this result and our finding regarding linguistic peripheries, and, following recent research on the political effects of geographical distance (e.g., Dazey and Gay 2024), we have tested the possibility of a curvilinear association between this variable and conservative support. Table 9 reports the coefficients for both the linear and squared terms of distance to Paris, while Figure 5 presents the corresponding predicted values. The results suggest a non-linear geographical pattern. The support for right-wing parties initially increases with distance from Paris, reaches its highest levels at intermediate distances, and then declines among the most distant communes. In our view, these complex results are consistent with the multidimensional character of the concept of periphery. They also suggest that it is impossible to subject the political effects of centre-periphery divisions to a mechanistic and linear causal logic.

Identical analyses conducted for the 1928 and 1932 elections (see Table 11 in the Online Appendix) confirm most of these findings. Interestingly, some coefficients –particularly those associated with the religious variables, namely Easter mass attendance and private school enrolment– reach their highest values in the 1936 elections. Additionally, alternative empirical specifications, including OLS models with department FE (see Table 12 in the Online Appendix), yield results that are consistent with the previous findings.

Beyond our main variables of interest, some control variables also reveal noteworthy patterns in explaining right-wing support. First, there is a negative association between the age variable and conservative vote share. And second, population has a negative effect on right-wing vote, a fact that reveals the lower traction of conservatism in densely populated areas. Finally, when it comes to the proportion of foreign immigrants, we find a strong and significant negative effect (p-value < 0.001),

Table 2 Dominance statistics and rankings by variable (top 5)

	Dominance Stat	Standardised Domin. Stat	Rank-ing
Mass attendance (Easter)	0.2046	0.5403	1
Linguistic periphery	0.1278	0.3375	2
Age	0.0422	0.1114	3
Foreigners	0.0117	0.0309	4
Habitat	0.0089	0.0236	5

Number of observations: 27,266. Overall fit: 0.62. Full DA can be found in the Online Appendix, Table 7

suggesting that communes with more foreign-born residents tended to vote less for conservative parties.[10]

We can also assess the explanatory role of these independent variables by conducting a DA for our multilevel model (Luchman 2021). Results (see Table 2) show that Easter mass attendance is the most important predictor in our model. This result supports Mayer's observation (2023) that mass attendance is a more reliable indicator of religious orientations and a better predictor of voting than school enrolment. In this respect, it must also be taken into account that enrolment in private schools may have been conditioned not only by religiosity levels, but also by the socioeconomic characteristics of communes (such as population size, per capita income, and urbanisation).[11] As the standardised dominance statistics show, our religious indicator is followed very distantly by the linguistic peripheries variable. Again, these results confirm the crucial role of religious orientations in the vote for the French right. More surprising is the second position of the linguistic peripheries variable. Again, we lack a pure theoretical explanation for the strength of this effect. Further in-depth explorations, both quantitative and historical, would be needed to unpack the effects of linguistic differences on conservative voting.

As previously noted, the category of right-wing parties follows the operationalisation developed by (Lachapelle 1936), and consists of two main groups: FR and AD. Given the ideological distinctions discussed in the theoretical section, we now turn to exploring ecological patterns in their specific support, focusing on the hypotheses proposed in this article. Table 3 displays the results of our main explanatory variables for both parties. As can be observed, key differences emerge between them. First, support for the FR is strongly associated with villages ($\beta = 1.59$, p-value < 0.001) and negatively associated with urban communes ($\beta = -2.79$, p-value < 0.001), whereas these rural–urban patterns are not statistically significant for the AD. A similar contrast emerges in the case of the linguistic peripheries variable. Communes located in linguistic peripheries tended to exhibit substantially lower levels of support for the FR ($\beta = -25.23$, p-value < 0.001), while the corresponding coefficient for the AD

[10] Multilevel models allow us to also assess the degree to which the effects of communal-level variables vary between departments. Table 17 in the Online Appendix displays the random-effect parameters for our level 1 independent variables in a model that specifies random slopes. We have abstained from specifying department-level predictors for our level 1 parameters because this would make the analysis extremely complex. In general, the results of the random slopes model show that regional contexts matter and that a full understanding of causes of electoral behaviour would demand conducting regional and localized analyses, as underlined recently by (Delaporte et al. 2023) regarding contemporary politics.

[11] DA conducted at the departmental-level using OLS regression (see Table 9in the Online Appendix).



Table 3 HLM for FR and AD (1936)

	FR	AD
Blue-collar workers	−1.26	−4.38***
	(0.70)	*(0.80)*
Farmers	9.78***	3.72
	(1.72)	*(1.96)*
Unemployed	−0.36	−0.11
	(0.61)	*(0.69)*
Mass attendance (Easter)	21.32**	16.77*
	(7.99)	*(7.01)*
Private education	8.60***	5.64***
	(0.96)	*(1.09)*
Village	1.59***	−0.33
	(0.42)	*(0.48)*
Urban	−2.79**	1.80
	(0.88)	*(1.00)*
Linguistic peripheries	−25.43***	3.82
	(4.02)	*(3.61)*
Distance to Paris	0.06***	−0.04***
	(0.00)	*(0.01)*
AIC	240,873.76	248,066.97
BIC	241,054.46	248,247.67
Log Likelihood	−120,414.88	−124,011.49
Num. obs	27,266	27,266
Num. groups: dep	79	79
Var: dep (Intercept)	235.47	179.39
Var: Residual	395.30	515.43

The HLM for both parties with all variables and for the three elections can be found in the Online Appendix, Table 7

is not statistically significant. In the same vein, the association between distance to Paris and electoral support points in opposite directions for the two party families. AD performed better in communes located closer to Paris, whereas the FR appears to have achieved stronger support in more geographically peripheral areas. Also importantly, AD performed worse in communes with blue-collar workers, whereas this variable was not statistically significant in the case of FR.

Despite these important differences, the religious indicators remain mostly consistent across both party families in 1936. For both the FR and the AD, Easter mass attendance is positively and significantly associated with electoral support (p-value < 0.01 and p-value < 0.05, respectively), as is the proportion of students enrolled in private schools (p-value < 0.001 in both cases). Thus, while some variables display contrasting patterns across the two right-wing traditions, in 1936 the religious cleavage appears to have operated in a similar direction for both, even if with different levels of intensity. Further information on the effects of the control variables in the 1928, 1932, and 1936 elections can be found in Table 7 in the Online Appendix. Interestingly, the coefficients for mass attendance were not statistically significant in the case of AD in the 1928 and 1932 elections. Overall, these findings are highly consistent with the historical literature on the French right, particularly with Rémond

(1954, pp. 188–89) distinction between different conservative traditions. Compared to the AD, the FR drew stronger support from more rural and more intensely Catholic territories, whereas the communes in which the AD performed better exhibited a more bourgeois and less working-class profile. This reveals the presence of important differences between both parties at the demand-side level. These differences must have prevented full party coordination and led to contrasting strategies in the institutional arena.

Conclusions

Previous studies on the social bases of the French right during the Third Republic had revealed the key role played by religious, socioeconomic, and political factors. Ultimately, these elements may be linked to the primary structural cleavages shaping modern French politics. In particular, earlier studies have underscored the influence of religious orientations and class structures, though with differing levels of emphasis. Our multilevel analyses offer detailed empirical evidence on the role of each of these factors in the explanation of conservative vote.

Particularly, our results reveal the importance of the religious characteristics of local societies for the success of the right. They show that mass attendance, our main indicator for the local strength of Catholicism, is a strong predictor of the vote for the right in general and the FR in particular. Furthermore, DA reveals that religious attendance is the most important predictor of right-wing voting. It is also noteworthy that the religious practices variable plays a similarly strong role for the whole right in both the 1928 and 1932 elections. In fact, as shown by Table 11, the magnitude of the coefficient increases from 1928 to 1932 and then again to 1936. That is, the effect of religiosity goes beyond the contingent characteristics of a particular electoral contest and can be established through both communal- and departmental-level analyses. The importance of religiosity levels is confirmed when we run departmental-level OLS regressions, although in this case, religiosity ranks second, after age, in the dominance analysis. Overall, this finding is consistent with the extraordinary importance of the religious cleavage in the French interwar period, despite the higher salience of social, economic, and foreign policy issues in the 1930s. Of course, we do not rule out the possibility that religiosity levels were connected to other cultural factors not included in our models and directly relevant to the political appeal of the right.

To appraise the importance of this finding, it is necessary to bear in mind that France lacked a Christian-democratic or confessional party and that no stable links between lay Catholic organisations and the main right forces existed in that period. From a comparative perspective, this phenomenon reveals the high mobilising potential of religious values in that historical period, a fact consistent with previous findings on the crucial role of the religious cleavage in many European societies (Montero 2023, pp. 110–12). It is also consistent with Ziblatt (2017)'s analysis on the role of cultural values (nationalist and religious) in the development of conservative, cross-



class electoral alliances in Germany and the UK. Of course, we do not claim that religious orientations were a totally independent causal factor. We instead assume, in line with classical studies on this topic, that the strength of Catholicism was shaped, in a long-term historical process, by a wide array of social, cultural, geographic, and economic conditions.

In the second place, our analyses reveal that the vote for the right was correlated with class structures and economic modernisation. The right was stronger in non-urban settings and communes with more farmers, fewer industrial workers, fewer foreigners, and fewer population. These results were consistent across the three electoral contests addressed in this paper. Consequently, in sociopolitical terms, we can say that right-wing parties drew strength from both the rural–urban and class cleavages. In particular, districts inhabited by farmers (and village localities) had a strong inclination to vote for the right. Interestingly, this effect occurred in a country where the family peasantry prevailed and in which, unlike Italy in the early 1920s and Spain during the 1930s, no strong agrarian reform threat existed. On the other hand, the low threat posed by the left in the rural world may help explain the weakness of fascist alternatives among the French peasantry, in line with Luebbert's (1991) and Brustein and Berntson's (1999) analyses on this topic. Now, as in the case of the Catholicism variable, we find important differences between FR and AD, the former having a much stronger non-urban and agrarian profile. Also, although both parties were weaker in working-class areas, this pattern was more pronounced in the case of the AD. This confirms that FR was a more traditional, conservative, and agrarian party than AD, which, by contrast, appeared as a more bourgeois and partially urban organisation.

Perhaps the most surprising result concerns the lower performance of the right in linguistically distinctive territories, a fact that confirms that centre-periphery cleavages elude cross-national generalisations. Interestingly, the effect of this variable was statistically significant in the 1928 and 1932 elections as well, although its magnitude tended to decrease in this period. To our knowledge, this factor has not been addressed in empirical studies on that period, which opens the door to more refined and localised analyses of the party-system correlates of language-related differences. So far, we cannot rule out the possibility that this association was conditioned by social factors not included in our models or by idiosyncratic regional logics.

Our results can also be connected to the literature on the role of compositional and contextual effects (Delaporte et al. 2023, 363). This is particularly true with regard to the nature of the rural–urban divide (Taylor et al. 2023). Our findings suggest that both composition and place effects mattered. Not only were different types of habitats –villages, towns, and urban areas– associated with distinct electoral behaviours, but the socio-demographic composition of communes played an important role in shaping support for right-wing parties. Variables such as the proportion of farmers, blue-collar workers, unemployed people, and foreigners contributed to explaining variation in conservative voting across local contexts. What our analysis cannot do is adjudicate between the different types of contextual effects (environmental or



based on networks, grossly speaking) that have been identified by specialised literature (Audemard 2017). This limitation also concerns our findings on the effects of linguistic distinctiveness. There is no easy way to overcome this limitation. First, because our data are strictly ecological, and second, because we lack information on social networks and organisational density. As indicated in contemporary studies (Delaporte et al. 2023), analyses focusing on specific contexts could help refine and interpret the statistical associations presented here.

In comparative terms, the clear and stable connection between electoral behaviour and sociostructural characteristics (social, economic, and cultural) allows us to speak of a situation of 'cleavage maturity' (Emanuele 2024) that did not reach, however, the level of 'full stability' (Emanuele and Marino 2025). This was connected to the well-known organisational weakness of the right parties. The fact that, after the 1936 elections, the PSF rose vertiginously to become the first right-wing mass party in France is a clear indication of the precarious institutionalization of the right in the interwar period. In light of Ziblatt (2017)'s comparative study on conservative parties, this is a remarkable phenomenon, particularly given the electoral strength of the religious cleavage in France. We cannot ascertain, however, whether the root of this weak institutionalisation lay in elite-led party formation processes (Kalyvas 1996, pp. 118 and the following) or the political and ideological hegemony of the French liberal tradition (Luebbert 1991, pp. 6–7).

Our results leave several avenues of future research open. Our multilevel analysis enabled us to identify statistically significant variations in the effects of our independent variables across departments. These differences justify conducting more detailed regional analyses, both quantitative and qualitative. In the second place, given the importance of the political changes that took place in the late 1930s and after the Second World War, it would be necessary to analyse the degree of persistence of the patterns identified here and their relevance for the success of future right-wing parties. In the case of the PSF, due to the absence of national elections between 1936 and the Second World War, this analysis would require a different analytical strategy. In any event, specific analyses of regional variations and later historical developments shall remain the objective of future investigations. All in all, we hope that the results presented here make a useful contribution to the study of both cleavage formation processes and conservative electoral mobilisation in interwar France and Europe.

Appendix

A. Data information

See Table 4.



Table 4 Information about the variables

Variable	Definition	Source
Vote for the right	Vote percentage for all right candidates, based on Groups 1 and 2 in Lachapelle (1936)'s 1936 classification	Cagé and Piketty (2023)
Income (revratio)	Average per capita income in the municipality (expressed as a ratio of the average per capita income in mainland France)	*Idem*
Real estate capital (capitalimmoagglo)	Total property capital (total value of dwellings) in the conurbation as a fraction of the national total	*Idem*
Homeowners (perpro-pri)	Percentile in the distribution of the proportion of homeowners between communes	*Idem*
Population (Log) (pop)	Logarithm of the population	*Idem*
Professionals (percadr)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of managers and professionals	*Idem*
Blue-collar workers (perouvr)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of blue-collar workers	*Idem*
Employees (perempl)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of employees	*Idem*
Unemployment (perchom)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of unemployed people	*Idem*
Farmers (peragri)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of farmers	*Idem*
Foreigners (petranger)	Proportion of people of foreign nationality each year of the period	*Idem*
Bac holders (perbac)	Percentile of the distribution of the proportion of baccalaureate holders between communes	*Idem*
Age (perage)	Percentile of population distribution according to average age in the municipality	*Idem*
Female (perpropf)	Percentile of the population distribution according to the proportion of women in the municipality	*Idem*
Mass attendance (Easter)	Share attending Easter Mass	Lacroix and Boix (2025)
Church attendance (pmessalisants1950)	Total number of people attending Sunday mass in 1950 as a proportion of the total population at the department level	Cagé and Piketty (2023)
Private education (privecanton1894prim)	Proportion of students enrolled in private primary education	*Idem* adapted
Rural–urban (vbbm)	Based on agglomeration size: 'Towns' (0, ref.), 'Villages' (1), and 'Urban' (2), merging *banlieues* and métropoles as both follow urban dynamics	*Idem* adapted
Marginal peripheries	Based on linguistic status, linguistic system, and territorial autonomy. Absence of linguistic standard and political autonomy (1), rest (0, ref.)	Rokkan (1999)
Interface peripheries	Based on linguistic status, linguistic system, and autonomy. Subjected to strong cross pressures between linguistic communities (1), rest (0, ref.)	Rokkan (1999)
Distance to Paris	Euclidean distance from the centre of the municipality to the centre of Paris (in km)	Own elaboration
Linguistic peripheries	Presence of non-French languages or dialects in the nineteenth century	Weber (1976)

Commune-level

See Table 5 and Fig. 3.

Table 5 Summary statistics at the commune-level

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max
Right-wing vote	33,849	56.69	25.09	0.00	100.00
FR vote	33,849	15.53	24.37	0.00	100.00
AD vote	33,849	26.54	26.94	0.00	100.00
Income	33,849	0.82	0.31	0.09	3.98
Real estate capital	33,849	0.004	0.03	0.0000	0.32
Home-owners	33,849	0.78	0.20	0.0000	1.00
Population (Log)	33,849	6.11	1.06	2.77	13.73
Profes-sionals	33,849	0.23	0.19	0.0000	1.00
Blue-collar workers	33,849	0.41	0.32	0.0000	1.00
Employees	33,849	0.22	0.19	0.0000	1.00
Unem-ployment	33,849	0.26	0.22	0.0000	1.00
Farmers	33,849	0.79	0.17	0.0000	1.00
Foreigners	33,849	0.04	0.07	0.00	1.00
Bac holders	33,849	0.22	0.22	0.0000	1.00
Age	33,849	0.54	0.32	0.0000	1.00
Female	33,849	0.36	0.31	0.0000	1.00
Distance to Paris	33,849	333.66	183.50	4.83	983.89
Distance to Paris (Squared)	33,849	145,001.40	143,788.60	23.36	968,032.80



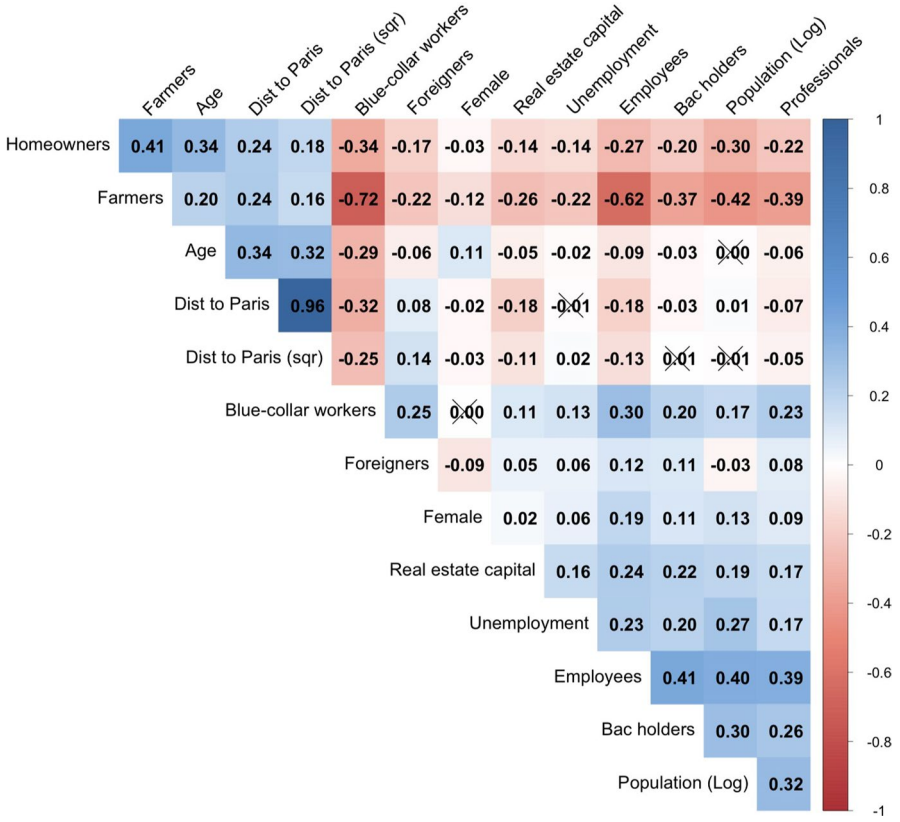


Fig. 3 Correlation diagram between commune-level variables. *Note*: All correlations with a $p \rightarrow$ value > 0.05 are crossed out

Department-level

See Table 6 and See Fig. 4.

Table 6 Summary statistics at the department-level

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max
Right-wing vote	96	55.09	19.21	5.05	90.31
FR vote	96	14.96	14.82	0.00	56.63
AD vote	96	26.40	15.83	0.00	82.45
Income	96	0.83	0.29	0.42	2.27
Real estate capital	96	0.02	0.07	0.0000	0.32
Homeowners	96	0.76	0.14	0.12	0.96
Population (Log)	96	6.07	1.03	3.48	11.72
Professionals	96	0.25	0.11	0.17	0.85
Blue-collar workers	96	0.39	0.17	0.11	0.77
Employees	96	0.24	0.13	0.09	0.95
Unemployment	96	0.28	0.11	0.20	0.91
Farmers	96	0.77	0.15	0.09	0.93
Foreigners	96	0.04	0.04	0.001	0.15
Bac holders	96	0.25	0.13	0.15	0.88
Age	96	0.57	0.17	0.22	0.92
Female	96	0.37	0.07	0.24	0.80
Mass attendance (Easter)	87	0.41	0.26	0.05	0.93
Church attendance	83	0.28	0.16	0.06	0.69
Private education	88	0.25	0.12	0.01	0.60
Distance to Paris	96	353.31	203.36	0.00	929.25
Distance to Paris (Squared)	95	168,003.70	165,486.60	88.38	864,094.70
Linguistic periphery	96	0.43	0.50	0	1
Interface peripheries	96	0.14	0.34	0	1
Marginal peripheries	96	0.42	0.50	0	1

Linguistic periphery is a dummy in which departments where a language different from French was spoken have a value of 1 and the rest have a value of 0. The same occurs with Marginal peripheries (1) versus others (0) and Interface peripheries (1) versus (0) others

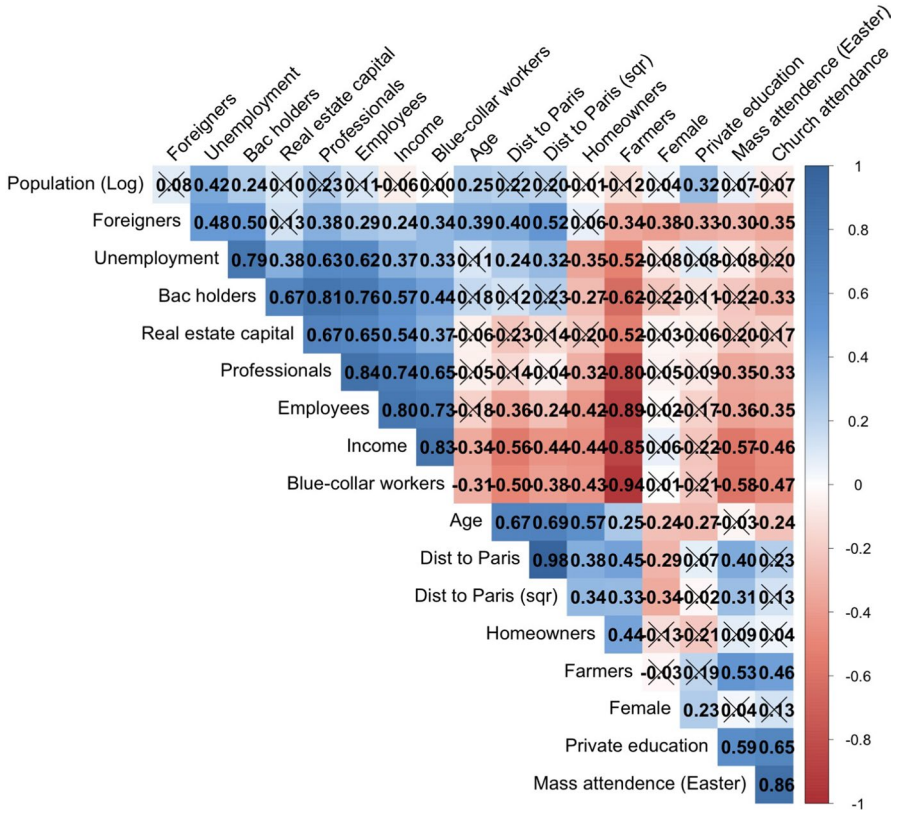


Fig. 4 Correlation diagram between department-level variables. *Note*: All correlations with a $p \rightarrow$ value > 0.05 are crossed out

B. Complementary materials

See Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7 HLM complete for FR and AD

	FR			AD		
	1928	1932	1936	1928	1932	1936
Intercept	9.55**	−4.20	0.78	24.25***	32.37***	36.45***
	(4.82)	(3.63)	(4.26)	(4.49)	(4.02)	(4.18)
Income	−0.35	−1.14*	−1.20*	−1.09	1.44**	−1.45*
	(0.57)	(0.50)	(0.65)	(0.56)	(0.53)	(0.63)
Real estate capital	−45.81***	16.25	24.97**	79.60***	29.92***	−42.73***
	(11.51)	(9.36)	(10.32)	(10.90)	(10.05)	(11.67)
Homeowners	−2.17*	0.23	−7.85***	−0.10	−1.39	2.71**
	(0.92)	(0.78)	(0.84)	(0.90)	(0.84)	(0.96)
Population (Log)	−0.13	0.15	−0.02	−0.92***	−0.94***	−1.26***
	(0.19)	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.20)
Professionals	−1.33	−0.05	−1.60*	1.33	−0.58	1.27
	(0.80)	(0.69)	(0.74)	(0.79)	(0.74)	(0.84)
Blue-collar workers	−4.43***	−3.22***	−1.26	−5.30***	−4.39***	−4.38***
	(0.77)	(0.66)	(0.70)	(0.77)	(0.70)	(0.80)
Employees	0.66	1.56	0.14	−0.23	−2.52*	1.55
	(1.11)	(0.95)	(1.02)	(1.09)	(1.02)	(1.17)
Unemployment	−1.31*	−0.00	−0.36	0.64	0.24	−0.11
	(0.66)	(0.56)	(0.61)	(0.65)	(0.60)	(0.69)
Farmers	8.09***	6.76***	9.78***	−0.09	0.10	3.72
	(1.87)	(1.62)	(1.72)	(1.84)	(1.73)	(1.96)
Foreigners	1.10	−0.47	−6.03*	9.86***	−3.88	−0.31
	(2.34)	(1.97)	(2.40)	(2.30)	(2.11)	(2.74)
Bac holders	−0.09	−0.89	−1.04	−2.00***	1.01	1.79*
	(0.71)	(0.61)	(0.65)	(0.70)	(0.65)	(0.74)
Age	−4.35***	−2.90***	−5.20***	−2.02***	−2.89***	−0.75
	(0.51)	(0.44)	(0.47)	(0.51)	(0.47)	(0.54)
Female	−0.02	−0.19	1.18**	−0.32	0.68	−0.21
	(0.44)	(0.38)	(0.41)	(0.43)	(0.40)	(0.46)
Village	0.53	−0.06	1.59***	−0.82	1.13**	−0.33
	(0.46)	(0.42)	(0.42)	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.48)
Urban	4.38***	−0.10	−2.79***	−10.76***	2.04*	1.80
	(0.98)	(0.82)	(0.88)	(0.96)	(0.88)	(1.00)
Mass attendance (Easter)	17.28	21.17***	21.32***	9.47	9.60	16.77**
	(9.22)	(6.41)	(7.99)	(8.33)	(7.26)	(7.01)
Private education	6.27***	3.19***	8.60***	9.02***	3.98***	5.64***
	(1.04)	(0.89)	(0.96)	(1.03)	(0.95)	(1.09)
Linguistic peripheries	−16.86***	−19.96***	−25.43***	−7.59	8.19*	3.82
	(4.61)	(3.27)	(4.02)	(4.20)	(3.68)	(3.61)
Distance to Paris	0.04***	0.04***	0.06***	0.01*	−0.05***	−0.04***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
AIC	241,652.49	233,183.85	240,873.76	242,550.68	236,949.22	248,066.97
BIC	246,333.24	243,336.24	241,054.46	245,431.42	237,129.60	248,247.67
Log Likelihood	−123,054.25	−116,569.92	−120,414.88	−122,603.34	−118,452.61	−124,011.49
Num. obs	27,331	26,884	27,266	27,331	26,884	27,266
Num. groups dep	79	79	79	79	79	79
Var. dep (Intercept)	313.97	150.94	235.47	255.65	193.88	179.39
Var. Residual	469.41	336.90	395.30	454.40	387.43	515.43

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 8 Dominance statistics and rankings by variable (full table)

	Dominance Stat	Standardised Domin. Stat	Rank-ing
Mass attendance (Easter)	0.2046	0.5403	1
Linguistic periphery	0.1278	0.3375	2
Older population	0.0422	0.1114	3
Foreigners	0.0117	0.0309	4
Habitat	0.0089	0.0236	5
Population (Log)	0.0085	0.0224	6
Blue-collar workers	0.0039	0.0104	7
Real-estate capital	0.0039	0.0102	8
Higher education	0.0028	0.0074	9
Managers/professionals	0.0021	0.0056	10
Unemployed	0.0018	0.0047	11
Female population	0.0014	0.0038	12
Income ratio	0.0003	0.0008	13
Employees	−0.0011	−0.0030	14
Homeowners	−0.0020	−0.0054	15
Private schools	−0.0050	−0.0132	16
Farmers	−0.0078	−0.0205	17
Distance to Paris	−0.0253	−0.0667	18

Number of observations: 27,266. Overall fit: 0.58

See Fig. 5.

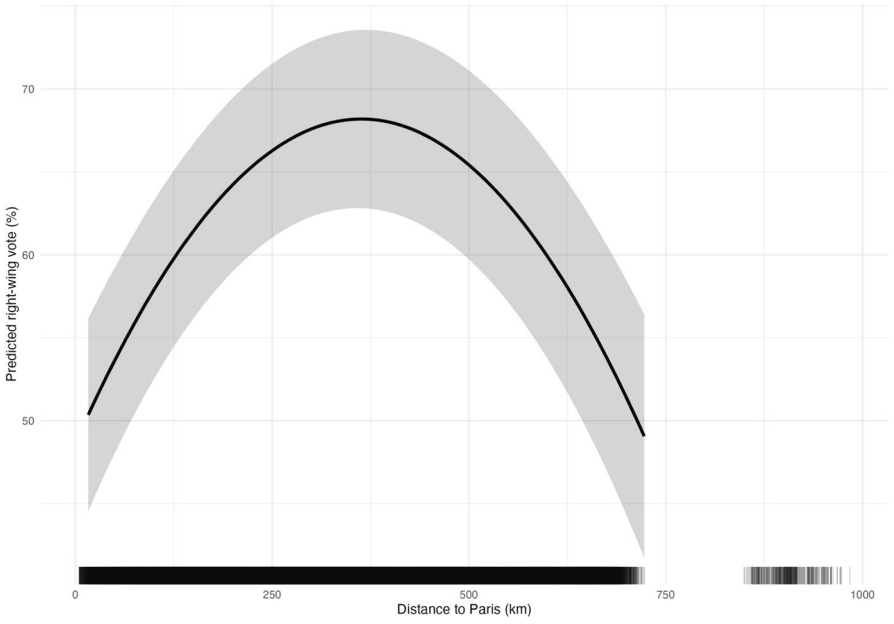


Fig. 5 Curvilinear association between distance to Paris and right-wing vote

See Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9 Dominance statistics at the department-level

	Dominance Stat	Standardised Domin. Stat	Rank-ing
Age	0.2908	0.3570	1
Mass attendance (Easter)	0.1774	0.2178	2
Employees	0.0507	0.0622	3
Distance to Paris	0.0407	0.0500	4
Bac holders	0.0384	0.0471	5
Foreigners	0.0345	0.0424	6
Professionals	0.0261	0.0321	7
Blue-collar workers	0.0195	0.0240	8
Homeowners	0.0192	0.0236	9
Unemployment	0.0188	0.0231	10
Farmers	0.0187	0.0229	11
Real estate capital	0.0161	0.0198	12
Population (Log)	0.0157	0.0193	13
Linguistic peripheries	0.0140	0.0172	14
Income	0.0129	0.0159	15
Female	0.0114	0.0140	16
Private education	0.0095	0.0117	17

Table 10 HLM with curvilinear relationship between distance to Paris and right-wing vote

	Right-wing vote	
Intercept	50.67^{***}	(4.03)
Income	-0.95^{*}	(0.48)
Real estate capital	-19.94^{**}	(6.97)
Homeowners	−0.33	(0.71)
Population (Log)	-1.52^{***}	(0.15)
Professionals	0.17	(0.63)
Blue-collar workers	-9.16^{***}	(0.56)
Employees	0.70	(0.80)
Unemployment	−0.52	(0.53)
Farmers	10.46^{***}	(1.23)
Foreigners	-4.88^{*}	(1.98)
Bac holders	0.38	(0.56)
Age	-5.02^{***}	(0.40)
Female	0.85^{*}	(0.35)
Village	1.09^{**}	(0.37)
Urban	-3.60^{***}	(0.86)
Church attendance	58.17^{***}	(10.87)
Private education	15.09^{***}	(0.84)
Distance to Paris	-0.02^{***}	(0.00)
AIC	216,436.58	
BIC	216,607.67	
Log Likelihood	−108,197.29	
Num. obs	25,517	
Num. groups: dep	82	
Var. dep (Intercept)	227.79	
Var: Residual	277.40	

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$



C. Robustness checks

See Tables 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Table 11 HLM complete for the years 1936, 1932 and 1928

	1928	1932	1936
Intercept	43.71*** (4.38)	47.61*** (4.36)	48.31*** (3.93)
Income	−0.21 (0.41)	0.61 (0.46)	−1.12* (0.46)
Real estate capital	20.79* (8.09)	−6.49 (8.65)	−16.77 (8.66)
Homeowners	−2.10** (0.66)	1.70* (0.72)	−2.63*** (0.70)
Population (Log)	−1.41*** (0.14)	−1.32*** (0.15)	−1.47*** (0.15)
Professionals	−0.43 (0.58)	−0.39 (0.63)	−0.29 (0.62)
Blue-collar workers	−9.08*** (0.55)	−7.48*** (0.60)	−8.58*** (0.59)
Employees	0.94 (0.80)	0.97 (0.87)	1.61 (0.85)
Unemployment	−0.47 (0.48)	−0.02 (0.51)	−0.39 (0.51)
Farmers	11.28*** (1.35)	9.19*** (1.48)	15.01*** (1.44)
Foreigners	−6.26*** (1.69)	−3.70* (1.80)	−4.99* (2.01)
Bac holders	0.53 (0.51)	1.36* (0.55)	0.45 (0.54)
Age	−5.92*** (0.37)	−5.41*** (0.40)	−5.35*** (0.40)
Female	−0.06 (0.32)	0.94** (0.34)	1.10** (0.34)
Village	0.91** (0.33)	1.67*** (0.36)	1.25*** (0.35)
Urban	−5.76*** (0.71)	−2.73*** (0.75)	−1.91** (0.73)
Mass attendance (Easter)	33.77*** (9.15)	40.84*** (8.86)	42.53*** (7.74)
Private education	14.87*** (0.76)	14.94*** (0.81)	16.63*** (0.80)
Linguistic peripheries	−28.81*** (4.50)	−23.94*** (4.38)	−22.29*** (3.86)
Distance to Paris	0.06*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
AIC	228,492.09	228,403.49	231,128.31
BIC	228,672.83	228,583.87	231,309.01
Log Likelihood	−114,224.04	−114,179.74	−115,542.16
Num. obs	27,331	26,884	27,266
Num. groups: dep	79	79	79
Var. dep (Intercept)	311.30	291.29	222.19
Var. Residual	245.54	281.33	276.27

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 12 OLS for the years 1936, 1932 and 1928 with department FE

	1928	1932	1936
Intercept	39.04***	36.78***	53.10***
	(2.24)	(2.42)	(2.39)
Income	0.52	1.91***	0.16
	(0.38)	(0.40)	(0.46)
Real estate capital	15.28***	−14.44***	−26.55***
	(4.06)	(4.24)	(4.39)
Homeowners	−1.70***	−1.80***	−1.50*
	(0.58)	(0.61)	(0.62)
Population (Log)	−1.67***	−1.54***	−1.47***
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Professionals	−0.17	−0.12	−0.09
	(0.51)	(0.54)	(0.54)
Blue-collar workers	−8.76***	−7.38***	−9.30***
	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.49)
Employees	1.07	1.27	1.09
	(0.66)	(0.70)	(0.71)
Unemployment	−0.59	−0.06	−0.48
	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.46)
Farmers	10.74***	8.91***	14.11***
	(1.00)	(1.06)	(1.07)
Foreigners	−8.80***	−9.54***	−9.57***
	(1.42)	(1.48)	(1.70)
Bac holders	0.67	1.48**	1.03*
	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.48)
Age	−5.25***	−4.69***	−4.84***
	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.36)
Female	0.24	0.81**	1.36***
	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.31)
Village	0.29	1.49***	0.31
	(0.66)	(0.44)	(0.34)
Urban	−7.31***	−5.58***	−3.25***
	(0.57)	(0.60)	(0.60)
Distance to Paris	0.05***	0.02***	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
R^2	0.53	0.56	0.55
Adj. R^2	0.53	0.56	0.54
Num. obs	33,874	33,274	33,869

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 13 OLS at department-level

	Right-wing	FR	AD
Intercept	−87.57	−399.45*	315.00
	(149.21)	(181.48)	(217.44)
Income	9.43	−15.12	−2.61
	(14.81)	(18.01)	(21.58)
Real estate capital	394.01*	516.69*	−234.54
	(182.35)	(221.80)	(265.74)
Homeowners	20.19	10.51	−20.50
	(18.11)	(22.02)	(26.39)
Population (Log)	0.13	−1.39	0.58
	(0.75)	(0.91)	(1.09)
Professionals	−167.61*	2.81	−171.68
	(75.66)	(92.03)	(110.27)
Blue-collar workers	16.03	107.04*	−89.23
	(42.69)	(51.93)	(62.22)
Employees	248.52**	255.73**	8.24
	(73.71)	(89.66)	(107.42)
Unemployment	40.85	48.74	−8.16
	(49.18)	(59.82)	(71.67)
Farmers	177.21	418.47*	−219.96
	(134.99)	(164.19)	(196.72)
Foreigners	−6.47	−11.67	−9.85
	(49.18)	(59.82)	(71.67)
Bac holders	−111.83*	−52.57	23.28
	(50.20)	(61.06)	(73.16)
Age	−85.00***	−28.49*	−42.34*
	(11.47)	(13.95)	(16.71)
Female	10.42	18.67	−6.84
	(27.75)	(33.75)	(40.44)
Mass attendance (Easter)	25.33**	18.79*	1.71
	(7.32)	(8.91)	(10.67)
Private education	−2.98	13.07	−20.69
	(7.87)	(9.57)	(11.47)
Linguistic peripheries	1.47	−3.56	9.72
	(3.85)	(4.69)	(5.62)
Distance to Paris	0.01	−0.01	−0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
R^2	0.81	0.53	0.31
Adj. R^2	0.76	0.40	0.10
Num. obs	75	75	75

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 14 HLM using 4-categories rural–urban divide

Variable	Right-wing	Std. error
Intercept	48.29***	(3.93)
Income	−1.12*	(0.46)
Real estate capital	−16.66	(8.67)
Homeowners	−2.62***	(0.70)
Population (Log)	−1.48***	(0.15)
Professionals	−0.30	(0.62)
Blue-collar workers	−8.56***	(0.59)
Employees	1.62	(0.85)
Unemployment	−0.39	(0.51)
Farmers	15.04***	(1.44)
Foreigners	−4.98*	(2.01)
Bac holders	0.45	(0.54)
Age	−5.35***	(0.40)
Female	1.10**	(0.34)
Village	1.24***	(0.36)
Suburban	−1.97**	(0.74)
Metropolitan	−0.65	(3.17)
Mass attendance (Easter)	42.60***	(7.73)
Private education	16.62***	(0.80)
Linguistic peripheries	−22.27***	(3.85)
Distance to Paris	0.01*	(0.00)
AIC	231,130.14	
BIC	231,319.05	
Log Likelihood	−115,542.07	
Num. obs	27,266	
Num. groups: dep	79	
Var: dep (Intercept)	221.51	
Var: Residual	276.27	

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 15 HLM using an alternative measure of centre-periphery (Rokkan, 1999)

	Right-wing	
Intercept	50.04***	(3.30)
Income	−1.12*	(0.46)
Real estate capital	−16.42	(8.60)
Homeowners	−2.68***	(0.70)
Population (Log)	−1.47***	(0.15)
Professionals	−0.35	(0.62)
Blue-collar workers	−8.69***	(0.59)
Employees	1.53	(0.85)
Unemployment	−0.39	(0.51)
Farmers	14.76***	(1.43)
Foreigners	−5.12*	(2.01)
Bac holders	0.44	(0.54)
Age	−5.38***	(0.40)
Female	1.12***	(0.34)
Village	1.22***	(0.35)
Urban	−1.91**	(0.73)
Mass attendance (Easter)	49.57***	(6.25)
Private education	16.61***	(0.80)
Marginal periphery	−26.99***	(3.03)
Interface periphery	−9.70*	(4.35)
AIC	231,340.21	
BIC	231,520.92	
Log Likelihood	−115,648.10	
Num. obs	27,292	
Num. groups: dep	79	
Var. dep (Intercept)	142.66	
Var: Residual	276.54	

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 16 HLM using an alternative religious variable

	Right-wing vote	
Intercept	50.67*	(4.03)
Income	−0.95*	(0.48)
Real estate capital	−19.94**	(6.97)
Homeowners	−0.33	(0.71)
Population (Log)	−1.52***	(0.15)
Professionals	0.17	(0.63)
Blue-collar workers	−9.16***	(0.56)
Employees	0.70	(0.80)
Unemployment	−0.52	(0.53)
Farmers	10.46***	(1.23)
Foreigners	−4.88*	(1.98)
Bac holders	0.38	(0.56)
Age	−5.02***	(0.40)
Female	0.85*	(0.35)
Village	1.09**	(0.37)
Urban	−3.60***	(0.86)
Church attendance	58.17***	(10.87)
Private education	15.09***	(0.84)
Distance to Paris	−0.02***	(0.00)
AIC	216,436.58	
BIC	216,607.67	
Log Likelihood	−108,197.29	
Num. obs	25,517	
Num. groups: dep	82	
Var. dep (Intercept)	227.79	
Var: Residual	277.40	

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

These parameters (Table 17) indicate how much the slopes of communal-level predictors diverge across departments. As shown by the table, no confidence interval includes the value of 0, which shows the presence of contextual di!erences in the e!ects of communallevel variables. That is, the existence of shared national patterns was compatible with wide departmental variations in the magnitude of causal e!ects. The study of these variations would require more complex qualitative and quantitative analyses, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Table 17 Random-effects model of right-wing voting (1936)

Parameter	Estimate	Std. err	[95% Conf. Interval]
Income	74.93	16.11	[49.16, 114.21]
Real estate capital	0.00	0.00	[0.00, 0.00]
Homeowners	386.06	72.16	[267.64, 556.87]
Population (Log)	5.32	1.14	[3.50, 8.10]
Professionals	12.30	6.77	[4.18, 36.16]
Blue-collar workers	74.40	16.14	[48.63, 113.82]
Employees	59.16	19.30	[31.21, 112.15]
Unemployment	1.16	2.81	[0.01, 132.59]
Farmers	246.81	65.83	[146.33, 416.27]
Foreigners	2017.09	652.34	[1070.15, 3801.97]
Bac holders	13.29	5.96	[5.52, 32.00]
Age	76.71	16.08	[50.87, 115.68]
Female	4.63	2.26	[1.78, 12.04]
Village	20.11	5.47	[11.80, 34.26]
Urban	34.64	15.03	[14.80, 81.08]
Intercept	525.79	122.86	[332.59, 831.22]

Acknowledgements The authors thank the editor of French Politics and two anonymous reviewers for all their comments and suggestions. Special thanks are also due to Christophe Roux for ideas and historical orientation and to Dolores García-Sanz and Aurora Manrique for invaluable help with the data. The authors are also grateful to Hugo Marcos-Marne, José Manuel Gutiérrez, and Mariano Torcal for comments on previous versions of this paper, and to Victor Gay, Thomas Piketty, and Alexis Litvine for prompt and helpful responses regarding French historical data.

Declarations

Conflict of interest No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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