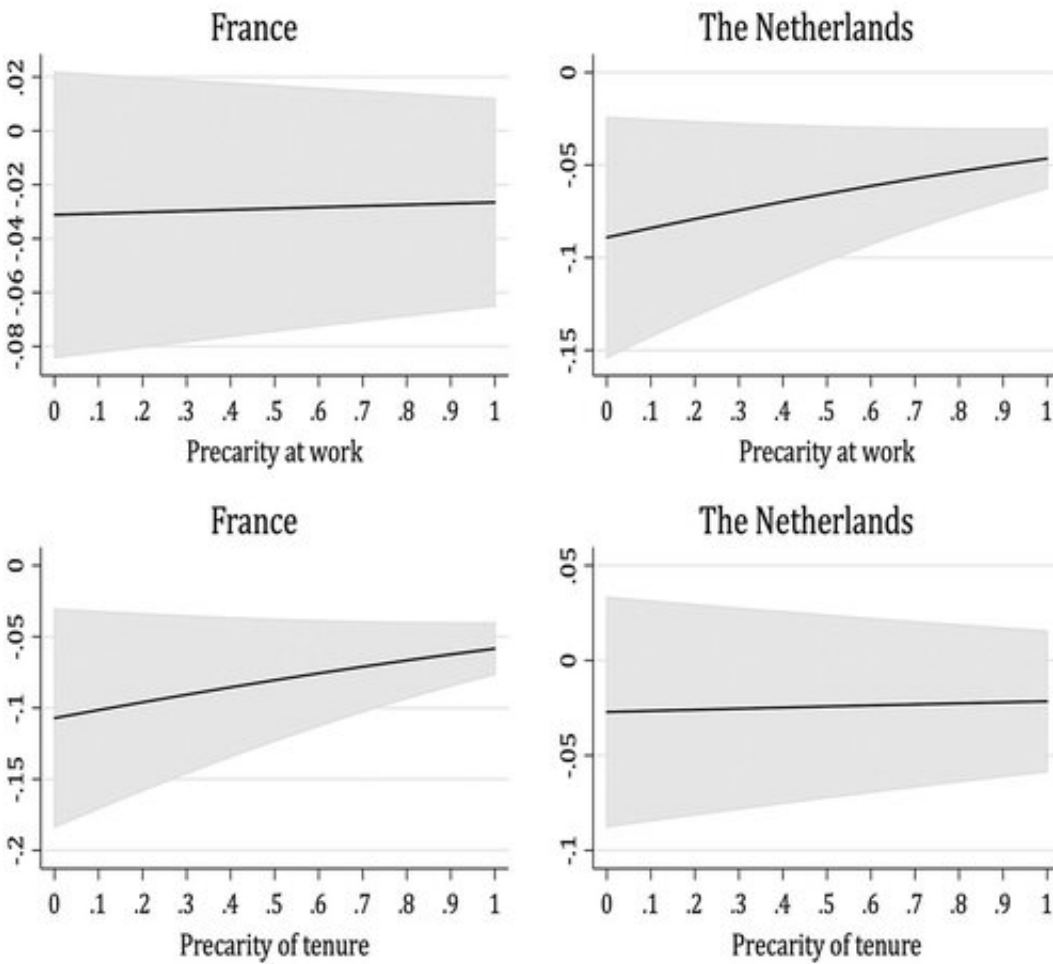


Employment fears may explain rise of extremist parties across Europe

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Estimated marginal impact of precarity at work and precarity of tenure on the probability of voting for established parties in the Netherlands and France.

Credit: DOI: [10.1177/13607804211020321](https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211020321)

Fears over job security and quality of work for a new class of disaffected citizens—the 'precariat' – could explain the rise of popular extremist parties across Europe, according to a new study.

Studying the 2017 [national elections](#) in France and the Netherlands, researchers discovered a link between [electoral support](#) for radical populist parties of both the right and left and 'precarity' – a lack of economic security and stable occupational identities.

Precairety also dissuaded this new class of citizens—people who felt 'left behind' and the insecure 'squeezed middle' facing declining work and living conditions—from voting for traditional parties in both countries.

The state of precarity is associated with voting for radical populist parties, such as the Front National, in France, and Partij voor de Vrijheid, in the Netherlands, as well as radical left parties—for example, La France insoumise and the Socialistische Partij (Netherlands).

Led by experts at the University of Birmingham, the international research team published its findings in Sociological Research Online—outlining how they measured precarity using new contributory factors such as autonomy at work, satisfaction with job advancement, work-life balance, and cognitive employment [insecurity](#).

Researchers found two main factors that drive precarity: 'precairety at work' grouping items about subjective insecurity in working conditions; and 'precairety of tenure' which measures job insecurity.

Study lead Dr. Lorenza Antonucci, Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham, commented: "We found that the policy trend of flexibilisation—and the related declining quality of work experienced by workers in France and the Netherlands—has political effects.

"Radical populist parties exploit the insecurity felt by people who make up the 'precariat,' with parties on the left proposing an anti-austerity solution to labor market insecurity and those on the right promoting a form of chauvinist labor market protection for citizens.

"Precarity of work conditions could also potentially explain populist voting in other European countries."

The study highlights 'precarity of tenure' concerns such as fear of dismissal, worries about not working hard enough and reductions in working hours. "Precarity at work' issues include not being paid for missing a day's work, lack of career advancement opportunities, work-life balance concerns, and unfulfilled salary expectations.

The researchers found that precarity at work increased the likelihood of people voting of voting for both the radical populist right and the radical left by a factor of two to three in both France and the Netherlands.

Precarity of tenure increases the odds of voters choosing the radical right in particular—an effect that is particularly pronounced in France, where likelihood of voting for the radical right is raised by a factor of 7.5.

"Since 2016, scholars have been discussing the economic and cultural origins behind the so-called 'Brexit effect'—the rise of populist and radical voting in Europe," added Dr. Antonucci. "We have shown that precarity, in particular the subjective insecurity of [work](#) conditions, can explain voting patterns."

More information: Lorenza Antonucci et al, What's Work Got to Do with It? How Precarity Influences Radical Party Support in France and the Netherlands, *Sociological Research Online* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/13607804211020321](https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211020321)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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