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To what extent is a universal basic income politically feasible in advanced welfare states?

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To what extent is a universal basic income politically feasible in advanced welfare states?

Joe Marek Chrisp

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Bath
Department of Social & Policy Sciences
May 2020**

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Abstract

Basic income is a policy that would provide a regular income to all individuals within a political community, irrespective of working status or income from other sources. In the last 10 years, basic income has received an unprecedented amount of policy attention from governments, civil society and the media around the world. In an era of austerity and activation, the rediscovery of basic income as a serious policy proposal is surprising and demands explanation. Existing academic research on basic income has mostly focused on theoretical, normative or descriptive questions asking if it would be just or affordable. In comparison, the politics of basic income has been under-researched. This thesis attempts to address that.

Drawing on a political economy framework of ‘constrained partisanship’, this thesis examines the factors that affect the political feasibility of basic income in advanced welfare states. Using a mixed-methods research design, the empirical analysis is divided into three parts. The first section conducts a longitudinal quantitative analysis of the determinants of party support for basic income at elections in 15 European countries between 1980 and 2018 using manifesto data from the Comparative Manifesto Database and other sources. The second section involves a quantitative analysis of voter preferences for basic income, using cross-sectional attitudinal data from wave 8 of the European Social Survey conducted in 2016-2017. The final section is a comparative case study of the UK and Finland, drawing on elite interviews and various political and media documents.

The findings provide evidence that support for basic income is more common and more robust on the left, although the cultural dimension of politics plays a greater role in explaining support among political parties. The analysis also points to the effect of unemployment and labour market risks on political support for basic income. However, the main theoretical contribution of the thesis is to argue that the institutional context explains the variation in support for basic income across countries. The analysis suggests that the most incongruent dimensions of the existing welfare state in relation to a basic income will be the most salient factors in determining support for the policy. In other words, given the *raison d’être* of a basic income is to transform the existing system, political actors and voters will support a basic income if the most transformative aspects of the policy in a given context are attractive to them. Thus, while basic income in its idealised form is largely politically unfeasible in the short-term, it can have a significant impact on the politics of the welfare state by mobilising political actors and voters in favour of significant reforms to the social security system.

1 Introduction

1.1 Basic income

This thesis examines the political feasibility of basic income in advanced welfare states in Europe from the 1980s to 2018. Basic income is a policy that would provide a regular income to all individuals within a political community, irrespective of working status or income from other sources, with “no strings attached” (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). The policy has invariably been called universal basic income (UBI), unconditional basic income, basic income guarantee, citizen’s income, citizen’s basic income, social dividend and many other names, depending on the context. Many authors trace the lineage of the idea of a basic income to Thomas Paine, who proposed a one-off payment of £15 to every 21-year-old and a yearly payment of £10 to everyone over the age of 50 (Paine, 2004[1797]). Importantly, this would be paid to all, “rich or poor”, “as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property” (ibid, p. 4-7). The radical component of his proposal was to assert that these payments would be a right, as opposed to forms of charity. However, his proposals did not amount to a universal basic income as defined above but rather what are generally called capital grants or more recently stakeholder grants (Ackerman and Alstott, 2004), alongside a basic income for pensioners.

Yet, the association of Paine’s proposals with basic income is symbolic of both its heritage and present-day relevance. While the policy has many names, basic income proposals can also vary considerably. This goes beyond the level of basic income (e.g. whether it is set above or below the poverty line) or how it is funded. Basic income’s different features (or dimensions), such as its unconditionality, universalism or uniformity, all represent significant innovations to existing arrangements in most countries, any of which may be emphasised and prioritised by different potential advocates and opponents. As a result, pragmatic ‘stepping-stone’ policies or ‘cognates’ that deviate from a pure basic income add to the variety of schemes that fit under the family of basic income policies (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004). Under this wide umbrella of basic income schemes, advocates may include negative income tax or participation income and even means-tested in-work benefits or minimum income schemes. Thus, basic income is often described as multi-dimensional (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004) or more derogatorily as a ‘Janus-faced policy proposal’ (Calnitsky, 2018).

1.1.1 An idea whose time has come?

The use of the phrase “an idea whose time has come” to describe the seeming ascendancy of basic income up the political agenda harks back at least to the late 1960s in the US

(Steensland, 2008, p.2)¹. However, since the global financial crisis of 2008-09, discussion of basic income around the world has risen exponentially, to a point where it is frequently covered by international media and the subject of reports by the World Economic Forum, IMF and World Bank (Widerquist, 2017b). This has coincided with significant political developments, the most visible of which has been the mushrooming of policy experiments instigated by civil society and governments at various levels across the world. Although the pursuit of basic income experiments has a heritage back to the 1970s negative income tax experiments in the US and Canada (Widerquist, 2005), a series of more recent experiments have taken place in developing countries (Haarmann et al., 2009; Davala et al., 2015), followed by a revival of experiments in advanced economies.

In 2017, Finland launched a 2-year experiment testing the effects of an unconditional basic income on 2000 individuals receiving unemployment benefits (Kallioma-Puha et al., 2016). Sub-national governments in Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, South Korea and Scotland have also started or are planning similar experiments, each with a slightly different design and focus (see Torry 2019). A philanthropic model of basic income experiments like those in developing countries is being replicated in the US, where tech entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley have thrown their weight behind attempts to test the policy.

Beyond experiments, this time period has seen other several other notable political events. In 2016, Switzerland held a national referendum on the introduction of a basic income after a popular initiative received the required 100,000 signatures. Hillary Clinton mentioned in her memoirs that she had considered a similar pledge in her campaign for the presidency in 2016 (Clinton, 2017). In 2017, Benoît Hamon, the French Socialist candidate for the presidential elections in 2017, also made a basic income one of his flagship policies. Most recently, Andrew Yang, a candidate for the US Democratic Party Presidential nomination, ran on a moderately successfully campaign to give every citizen a universal basic income, which he called a 'Freedom Dividend', of \$1000 per month. In an era of austerity and activation, the emergence of basic income as a serious policy proposal discussed around the world is surprising and deserves further scrutiny.

Nevertheless, in most cases, these developments are symptomatic of 'cheap support' for basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015b): tokenistic gestures that do not seriously advance the cause of basic income on the policy agenda. Similarly, surges in public interest have mostly ended in failure for basic income advocates, at least in the short-term. For example, only

¹ Steensland cites two Newsweek articles by Milton Friedman and Paul A. Samuelson published in 1968.

23% of Swiss voters backed the proposal in the referendum, the Ontario experiment in Canada was cancelled by a new government two years earlier than planned and the Finnish government decided not to expand its initial trial. Benoît Hamon's 2017 Presidential campaign in France also resulted in electoral failure. Thus, despite abundant interest across the world, there are question marks about whether this increase in policy attention can really translate into the implementation of basic income schemes by national governments. In other words, to what extent is a basic income *politically feasible*?

1.1.2 The political feasibility of basic income

Existing academic research has mostly focused on theoretical, normative or descriptive questions asking if a basic income would be just or affordable. For example, microsimulation analysis has been used to construct fiscally feasible basic income models, assuming no behavioural responses (e.g. Martinelli, 2019; Torry, 2016). On the other hand, normative accounts often cite the power of ethical justifiability in swaying public debate (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017: p.170). This may be laudable but again forgoes an analysis of the socio-political trends and institutions that structure what ideas succeed in the political process. As Purdy (2013 [1988], p. 479) argues "Political argument is not decided by the force of reason alone: the persuasiveness of a case is amplified or muffled by who is making it and how many others believe it... Politics offers plenty of scope for 'unappreciated genius' as well as successful mediocrity."

Part of the reason for the dearth of research into the politics of basic income has been the lack of data. For example, widely available survey data on public attitudes or party support has only recently become available. Largely, this is due to a persistent history of failure; advocates have rarely been able to garner meaningful political support behind the policy never mind successfully implement it². If we exclude the Alaskan Permanent Dividend on the grounds that it is small, annual and varies from year-to-year (Zelleke, 2012), no government of any size has ever implemented a basic income. Thus, studying the politics of basic income can be characterised as an attempt to explain why it is *not* feasible, or at least why it has not been feasible until now (Cavala and Wildavsky, 2003 [1970]). Such a question has not stimulated much scholarly attention outside of advocates and the occasional historical study (e.g. Sloman, 2016; van Trier, 1995).

On the other hand, the recent surge in political interest and support also requires explanation and is not unprecedented, as there have been many past waves of basic income advocacy.

² De Wispelaere (2015, p. 30) describes it as the 'unbearable lightness of basic income reality'.

There is a place for understanding the contexts in which basic income becomes *more* politically feasible, which is tentatively assumed to be the case in times of increased support and buy-in from political actors and the public. The use of the concept of political feasibility was inspired by De Wispelaere & Noguera (2012) and others within the existing literature on basic income that frame research questions through this lens (Cavala & Wildavsky, 2013 [1970]; Purdy, 2013 [1988]). De Wispelaere (2015, p. 64) defines a policy as politically feasible “when the background conditions are such that there exists a reasonable probability of the policy becoming actualised in the foreseeable future.” A politically *feasible* policy is “neither immediately realisable, nor impossible to realise” and “feasibility analysis is aimed at investigating the factors...that hamper a policy from being actualised” (ibid).

Together, this can be couched as an analysis of the opportunities and constraints that basic income faces. Understood in this sense, assessing the political feasibility of a basic income is about explaining the drivers of support for and opposition to the policy. Furthermore, as basic income is a multi-dimensional policy idea, political support may also translate into the implementation of basic income ‘cognates’ or policy reforms *towards* basic income that have a significant impact on welfare states. There is a need to understand how support translates into reform, which may be highly contingent on the context in which this political support is generated.

1.1.3 Constrained partisanship framework

The thesis uses a political economy of the welfare state framework for examining the political feasibility of basic income. Specifically, it adopts a model of ‘constrained partisanship’ (Beramendi et al., 2015), which characterises welfare state politics as an interaction between the supply and demand sides of social policies within institutional limits. The demand side relates to citizens’ policy preferences and the supply side relates to the policy proposals put forward by political actors and specifically elected political parties. Hence, social policies are viewed to have political constituencies and political ‘entrepreneurs’ that underpin both reform and stability. The institutional context is equally important: the legacies of welfare state institutions limit the feasibility of certain policy proposals (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010) and structure the pertinent conflicts.

Political parties are central to this framework, as actors with agency to propose and implement welfare state reforms in order to mobilise groups of voters with policy proposals in a multi-dimensional space. Existing institutions *constrain* the available policy options open to parties and governments but also structure the nature of political competition. Socio-economic and demographic change also play a mediated role, thus departing from a strict

functionalist approach, in that they shape the effectiveness of welfare state institutions and influence citizen preferences. A central insight of the framework for assessing the political feasibility of basic income is that socioeconomic and demographic change, mediated through citizen preferences and interacting with varying institutional contexts, may provide political actors with an incentive to instigate welfare state reform, such as basic income. Political parties may respond to and mobilise new coalitions of voters in support of basic income. This is what the research attempts to test and examine.

1.2 Aims, research questions and scope

In short, the aim of this thesis is to examine the factors that increase support for basic income among political parties and voters and how this relates to the political feasibility of basic income.

- (1) What are the determinants of political support for basic income?
 - a. What explains party support for basic income?
 - b. What explains voter support for basic income?
- (2) How and why does support for basic income vary across time and countries?
- (3) How does this support translate into legislative behaviour?

The first research question concerns the core preoccupation of the thesis to identify what explains the fluctuation in political support for basic income. As the primary political actors with the capacity to propose and implement welfare state reforms such as basic income, the focus of this question relates to the factors that increase support among political parties. Yet, parties also seek to mobilise voters that have social policy preferences. Thus, examining the determinants of *voter* support for basic income is also a critical part of this question as well, which in turn can help to explain the behaviour of political parties. The nature of the relationship between party and voter positions on basic income is also a subject of inquiry.

In considering the potential drivers of support for basic income among both parties and voters, three overarching factors are identified. Firstly, the research examines the ideological drivers of support and the extent to which the policy is associated with the left or the right, whether in terms of the economic or cultural dimension of politics. It also considers the role of ideological divides within welfare state politics, such as the principles of equity and conditionality. Secondly, the research design enables an examination of how support for basic income is driven by socioeconomic factors, specifically the effects of labour market risks and unemployment. Finally, the thesis aims to identify the effect of the institutional context on support for basic income, with a focus on the *congruence* of existing social

security policies with basic income. In other words, is support higher in countries with welfare states that look very similar or very different to a basic income?

The second research question taps into the importance of the institutional context, not only for the overall levels of support for basic income, but also for the *type* of support, i.e. *which* political actors or voters are in favour and why. Political support for basic income is extremely heterogenous across country contexts, in terms of the parties or activists that advocate it as well as the rationales used to justify the policy. The thesis explores the extent to which existing welfare state institutions explain that variation. As above, this is conceptualised in terms of the *congruence* of existing policies with basic income on several dimensions, such as conditionality, universalism and state capacity.

The third and final question moves beyond *support* to examine the specific strategies and eventual reforms that parties in favour of basic income are able to achieve. In doing so, it also gets to the crux of the title of the thesis in that support must be translated into legislative reform and the implementation of policy for it to be feasible. However, such questions are also more difficult to answer conclusively, given the ambiguities in feasibility analysis (De Wispelaere, 2015a). Thus, the lessons for political feasibility are largely explorative and conceptual in nature.

The research adopts a mixed-methods research design to answer these questions, which focuses on different aspects of the questions and provides varied lenses to examine the relevant factors. The thesis divides the research into three main empirical sections, which are presented in four separate chapters. The empirical sections are as follows:

- a) A longitudinal quantitative analysis of the determinants of party support for basic income at elections in 15 European countries between 1980 and 2018 using manifesto data from the Comparative Manifesto Database and other sources.
- b) A quantitative analysis of voter preferences for basic income, using cross-sectional attitudinal data from wave 8 of the European Social Survey conducted in 2016-2017, with a restricted sample of 15 European countries used³.

³ 8 countries are excluded from the analysis due to the restriction of the thesis to advanced welfare states.

- c) Two case studies of the partisan interest in basic income after the financial crisis in the UK and Finland, allowing a detailed comparison across diverse institutional contexts.

The combination of methods, particularly the fusion of quantitative and qualitative research designs, facilitates a triangulation of evidence, which provides answers to different interrelated questions, ensures confidence in the operationalisation of key concepts and increases the credibility of the main findings of the thesis.

Despite the increasingly *global* relevance of basic income as a policy proposal considered by political actors, as indicated above by the selection of countries, the thesis concentrates on the political economy of basic income in ‘advanced’ or ‘mature’ welfare states (Beramendi et al., 2015). There are important substantive reasons for doing so given the importance of institutions and voters within the theoretical framework, which are incomparable across developed and developing economies. On the other hand, the fact that the empirical analysis focuses specifically on Europe is predominantly for practical reasons related to data availability, proximity and expertise. Therefore, the insights are expected to be relevant to advanced welfare states outside of Europe despite their exclusion from empirical investigation.

Finally, the thesis focuses on the role of basic income in post-industrial economies, which provides a temporal context for the research. *Political* interest in basic income in Europe started in many countries in the 1980s so it also makes sense that the manifesto analysis starts from this period. However, the voter preferences analysis and the case studies focus on the contemporary period, with the former using cross-sectional data from 2016-17 and the case studies focusing on the period following the financial crisis. This is partly due to data availability, but is also justified due to the heightened interest in basic income in recent years that is the main focus of the research.

1.3 Structure of thesis

This section summarises how the thesis is structured by chapter in order. Chapters 2 and 3 outline the existing evidence and theory that is most relevant to the political feasibility of basic income. Chapter 4 describes the methodological approach, and the precise data and methods used in the research. Chapters 5-8 provide empirical analysis of party and voter preferences as well as two case studies. Each chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the main findings before Chapter 9 discusses what the combined findings mean for theories about the political feasibility of basic income.

As academic research has rarely examined the politics of basic income specifically, Chapter 2 first reviews the bulk of the literature on basic income that has focused on philosophical and economic questions about justice, reciprocity and freedom on the one hand, and fiscal/distributional effects and labour market participation on the other. These contributions tend to avoid directly addressing questions of political feasibility but provide a critical insight into the moral and technical arguments that are relevant to such questions. The chapter then summarises both the historical and contemporary case studies that chart the fluctuating political fortunes of basic income in specific country contexts, before turning to the analytical and empirical approaches that the research attempts to build on. Finally, the chapter provides a more systematic outline of the multi-dimensionality of basic income alluded to at the start of this chapter. Importantly, it identifies not only varied models of basic income, in the sense of new policy proposals, but also varied strategies for achieving goals associated with the policy.

This leads onto the content of Chapter 3, which lays out the theoretical framework used to answer the main research questions. As described above, it draws on a model of constrained partisanship (e.g. Beramendi et al., 2015) that identifies the most relevant factors to examine when explaining the politics of the welfare state and thus basic income, namely voter preferences, party competition and existing welfare state institutions. The chapter starts by charting the development of political economy approaches over time and outlines in turn the contributions related to the multi-faceted determinants of welfare state preferences, partisanship and institutions. The chapter then explains how a model of ‘constrained partisanship’ conjoins the role of partisanship, welfare state preferences and the institutional context, before describing the ways in which this framework helps us to understand recent socioeconomic trends in post-industrial societies and their impact on electoral politics and welfare state reforms. Finally, the framework is applied to basic income drawing out theoretical expectations about the ideological and socioeconomic drivers of politics support for the policy and how this is likely to differ across institutional contexts.

Chapter 4 provides a justification for the mixed-methods research design and the scope of the analysis in more detail, with an initial focus on the methodological principles underpinning the research. The methods for each empirical section are then explained in turn. As indicated above, the first empirical section analyses party manifestos from 1980-2018 in 15 European countries. Thus, the chapter provides a description of the manifesto data collected from the Comparative Manifesto Project database and elsewhere, before describing the method of coding the manifestos. The manifestos are coded according to whether they indicate support for basic income and/or a cognate policy, as well as the

rationales and commitments parties make in the texts. The section then provides a full list of independent variables used and describes the main analytical strategy.

The methods in the second empirical section, analysis of voter preferences, rely on wave 8 of the European Social Survey, which included a question on support for basic income. It discusses the merits and drawbacks of the survey question and the operationalisation of independent variables (individual-level and country-level) used to predict support for basic income and outlines the analytical strategy. The final section of Chapter 4 clarifies the purpose of conducting two case studies in the UK and Finland and explains how a comparison of these countries focuses attention on the effect of the institutional context. I describe the data collection process, which includes elite interviews with various political actors in both countries and other secondary data such as political and policy documents.

Chapter 5 examines the ‘supply-side’ of the politics of basic income. In other words, it focuses on the determinants of *party* support for basic income, as well as the rationales and commitments that parties make. The analysis is presented in stages. Firstly, the chapter provides descriptive statistics of two measures of basic income support, one of which includes support for ‘cognates’ that clearly violate at least one of the central features of a basic income and one of which does not. The section then shows the propensity to support basic income across different party families and describes the temporal and cross-national variation in support. The section ends with a brief summary of the comparatively rare instances of parties explicitly mentioning opposition to basic income. The subsequent section examines the relationship between basic income support and election-specific party characteristics, such as left-right positions or vote share, and country-level factors, such as unemployment rates and social expenditure. It also explores cross-level interactions between the level of social expenditure and party ideology (economic left-right positions and new left party family status). The final section focuses on identifying and explaining the different rationales and policy commitments associated with advocating basic income, according to party size and party family.

Chapter 6 turns to the ‘demand-side’ of the politics of basic income, i.e. the determinants of voter preferences. Thus, the chapter identifies the political constituencies in favour of basic income and the socioeconomic and institutional contexts in which support is greatest. It starts with multi-level regression analysis, comparing the findings to recent papers. The results of the interactions between education and labour market status on the one hand and welfare state and party preferences on the other are then presented. It also explores cross-level interactions between the existing institutional characteristics of the welfare state (social

expenditure, the strictness of conditionality attached to unemployment benefits and the level of existing cash benefit targeting) and other welfare state preferences (redistribution, conditionality and targeting preferences).

Chapter 7 provides an analysis of the politics of basic income in the UK after the financial crisis, with a focus on both the UK and Scottish parliaments. The first section summarises the political economy context of the UK, which is followed by an outline of the history of basic income. These provide the essential context for the description of the significant political events in the UK and Scotland related to basic income between 2007 and 2019 that follows. The main analysis then focuses on drawing out party positions on basic income and related reforms, based on the event described in the case and elite interviews, as well as the role of the socio-economic and institutional context.

Chapter 8 follows a similar structure and analyses the key events that make up the contemporary Finnish case and provides a comprehensive picture of the partisan politics of basic income in Finland since 2007. However, the main political events related to basic income are then divided into three four-year parliamentary periods, as well as a summary of the 2019 parliamentary election. As in the UK, the analysis draws out the parliamentary parties' positions on basic income, summarising commitments and positions over the period as well as utilising data from elite interviews. Finally, the analysis focuses on the role of the socio-economic and institutional context in structuring the politics of basic income in Finland.

Finally, Chapter 9 discusses what the combined findings mean for theories about the political feasibility of basic income, the limitations and suggestions for future research.

1.4 Summary of thesis

This thesis addresses a gap in the literature on basic income, which is the lack of systematic, comparative, empirical research on the drivers of support for basic income, drawing on a political economy framework. It builds on political economy of the welfare state theories and develops novel theoretical arguments using analysis of empirical data across European advanced welfare states to explain why parties and voters support a basic income, drawing on the interaction between ideological, socioeconomic and institutional factors. The main contributions are summarised as follows.

Starting with the ideological drivers of support for basic income, the findings provide consistent evidence that support is more common and more robust on the left, with three important caveats. First, the cultural dimension explains more of why parties to support basic

income. Second, support for basic income ‘cognates’ that deviate from the definition given at the start of the chapter is more common on the right. Right-wing parties are more likely to adopt constructive ambiguity about the precise details of the policy they support. Third, the propensity of parties with right-wing positions to support basic income is at least partly determined by the institutional context. Specifically, right-wing parties are more likely to support basic income when social expenditure is high.

This is one of the main theoretical contribution of the thesis: to point to the role of the institutional context in explaining the variation in support for basic income across countries. The thesis argues the most *incongruent* dimensions of the existing welfare state in relation to a basic income will be the most salient factors in determining support for the policy. In other words, given the *raison d’être* of a basic income is to *transform* the existing system, political actors and voters will support a basic income if the most transformative aspects of the policy in a given context are attractive to them.

The research also builds upon and empirically evidences the role of labour market risks in driving political support for basic income. In particular, the thesis argues that the unemployment rate plays a critical role in increasing party support for the policy. However, exceptions to the general trend, such in the UK where political support for basic income rose during record-low unemployment, suggest that the proximate cause of support for basic income is crisis in the social security system. This may be the critical mechanism by which increasing unemployment drives support for basic income: institutional dysfunction. Thus, while basic income in its idealised form is largely politically unfeasible in the short-term, it can have a significant impact on the politics of the welfare state by providing political actors with a policy proposal that attracts voters interested in implementing significant reforms to the social security system.

2 The rise and fall (and rise) of basic income: from normative and technical debates to the politics of a utopian idea

2.1 Introduction

The “rise” of basic income in recent years has been unprecedented in terms of the global attention it has received from policymakers, the media and the public. Yet, a substantial body of research and scholarship on basic income has developed over a much longer period of 50 or 60 years. This chapter examines the literature on basic income in order to establish existing knowledge about the factors that shape the political feasibility of a basic income, the empirical evidence underpinning this knowledge and, as a result, the areas of theoretical and empirical development to be addressed in this thesis.

However, the politics of basic income is under-examined in the literature. To date, academic research has instead been dominated by the ‘ethics and economics’ of basic income (Widerquist et al., 2005), which has coexisted with a tradition of social policy that includes the idea of a basic income in a broader debate about means testing, conditionality and bureaucracy (Bennett, 2017; Martinelli, 2018). At most, these literatures only loosely consider questions of political feasibility. Yet, they offer an important grounding into the central justifications and criticisms that permeate political debates on basic income and are therefore set out in Section 2.1 of this chapter.

Within the broad category of research that is more directly relevant to the politics of basic income, a dominant strand has been country-specific or regional case studies. This literature falls roughly into two similar but distinct camps. First, historical accounts of the idea of a basic income within a given country, predominantly the UK and the US. Second, ‘state of the debate’ accounts describing contemporary events surrounding basic income advocacy in specific countries or regions. Each body of literature is discussed in turn in Section 2.2, with a particular focus on what they can and cannot tell us about the dynamics affecting the political feasibility of a basic income across different contexts. The section then turns to the contributions that apply an analytical lens specifically to the question of political feasibility and strategy in advanced welfare states. This includes both theoretical and empirical approaches to the politics of basic income, where the latter is more limited in number.

Finally, recent research has been central in highlighting the ‘multi-dimensionality’ of basic income proposals (De Wispelaere, 2015a). Section 2.3 argues that this multi-dimensionality

is essential to understanding the politics of basic income, relating it to the difficulties of coalition building and identifying support for basic income more generally. The review concludes with a summary of the ‘known unknowns’ and argues that a political economy approach, investigating the role of political parties, is a major omission from the literature.

2.2 The ethics and economics of ‘free money’

2.2.1 Something for nothing? ‘Real freedom’, reciprocity and common ownership

Perhaps the most influential contemporary defence of a basic income is the work of Philippe Van Parijs. Although his contributions span across multiple disciplines and perspectives⁴, his seminal exposition of real libertarianism, which included an argument for a basic income ‘at the highest sustainable level’ (Van Parijs, 1995; Van Parijs, 1991), sparked a debate among political theorists that has lasted nearly 30 years (Bidadanure, 2019). Van Parijs’s influence has meant that the case for a basic income has often been normative; rooted in a particular theory of justice that prioritises the maximisation of the minimum level (‘maximin’) of real freedom, otherwise expressed as “the genuine capacity to do whatever one might wish to do” (Van Parijs and Vanderborcht, 2017, p.104). Other philosophical arguments in favour of basic income appeal to: a radical-liberal Rawlsian perspective (Birnbaum, 2012), a traditional libertarian perspective as an opposition to the initiation of force (Zwolinski, 2015), an ‘independentarian’ perspective as the ‘power to say no’ (Widerquist, 2013) or a republican perspective as the absence of domination (Pettit, 2007). Nevertheless, what binds all of these normative arguments is a defence of basic income based on a conception of freedom at the heart of a theory of justice, which remains the most prominent philosophical tradition of basic income advocacy⁵.

In response, the primary normative objection to a basic income is that it would violate the principle of reciprocity (Galston, 2001). The provision of an *unconditional* payment to all residents (or citizens) would involve the exploitation of the hardworking by those unwilling to contribute to the common good. The commitment to substantive economic reciprocity is such that “if one willingly enjoys the fruits of one’s fellow citizens’ labours, then as a matter of justice, one ought to provide some appropriate good or service in return” (White, 2003, p.49). Anderson (2001), who is equally concerned about forsaking the social obligations of the able population, also argues that basic income may provide too many ‘optional

⁴ His most recent book with Yannick Vanderborcht (2017) includes chapters on political philosophy, history, social policy, economics and politics.

⁵ There are other philosophical arguments related to democratic participation and citizenship (Pateman, 2004a) or communitarianism (Jordan, 1992; Freedman, 1992).

freedoms’, such as surfing opportunities, at the expense of ‘particular freedoms’ that should be prioritised, such as health and education.

The timing of Van Parijs’s contribution coincided with a resurgence of the notion of reciprocity in academic and policy circles. The influence of Third Way thinking (Giddens, 1998) on centre-left governments in the 1990s, particularly in the US and the UK, meant a growing emphasis on marrying social rights with social responsibilities. In other words, social policy and particularly unemployment benefits became more *conditional* on recipients exhibiting behaviour that proved they were willing to (attempt to) contribute to society, whether through job-search or workfare (Knotz, 2018). The work of Bowles & Gintis (2000, 2010) also emphasised the fundamental importance of reciprocity to human motivation and thus in turn to the social legitimacy of the welfare state.

Proponents counter that a basic income may not violate reciprocity if funded by returns (or a tax) on external assets commonly owned by all rather than the ‘fruits of one’s fellow citizens’ labour’. The most obvious example of such an external asset would be natural resources, such as land and water. This could be extended to include unearned income from inheritance or bequests (Steiner, 1992). Van Parijs (1995) argues further still that privileged, well-paid jobs are themselves assets, or undeserved gifts, held by the advantaged. Thus, the taxation of ‘employment rents’ is also justified and returns from such taxes should be part of the wealth that gets redistributed to pay for a basic income for everyone. Relatedly, Simon (2001) argues that social capital is the primary explanation for why incomes differ between and within countries. As social capital is a product of externalities produced collectively over time rather than individual effort, it can also be thought of as ‘owned jointly by members of the whole society’. Given the gulf in incomes between countries, he estimates that no less than 90% of income is a result of social capital, which provides the moral justification for giving all members of society access to a basic income funded by a flat-rate tax on others’ salaries. Of course, the moral force of such arguments is in turn also strongly contested (e.g. White, 2003).

Feminists also challenge the androcentric notion of reciprocity in the above criticism of a basic income, since it implicitly focuses on paid work (Pateman, 2004a; McKay, 2007). Within the household, women already undertake a disproportionate amount of unpaid work that should concern those attached to the principle of reciprocity. A basic income paid to *individuals* not households would begin to recognise the unpaid work that women do and provide a degree of economic independence. However, to some extent, this feminist argument in favour of a basic income does not counter the *principled* objection of reciprocity

as far as women undertaking unpaid work for the good of society would not be free riding at all. To satisfy reciprocity, policies such as wages for housework would appear more just and would not facilitate the free riding of those that do neither paid work nor housework. Yet, advocates argue that basic income would rather be the most *effective* way to compensate women for the unpaid work that they do, as it would avoid the potential of ‘wages for housework’ to confine women to the home (Jordan, 1998).

This example highlights what Barry (1996) calls ‘pragmatic’ justifications for basic income, which he contrasts with ‘principled’ justifications. Unlike principled justifications, which are derived from a conception of social justice, pragmatic justifications rest on the ability of basic income as a social policy to serve certain ends or goals. It is these arguments around the effectiveness of basic income that are explored in the next section.

2.2.2 The ‘new social question’, post-productivism and pragmatic arguments for a basic income

Many advocates see basic income as the most *efficient* way of addressing the ‘new social question’, by reconciling two key welfare state objectives: the alleviation of poverty and full employment (Groot and van der Veen, 2000b; Van Parijs, 1992). This concerns a growing group of people marginalised in the labour market that are unable to find full-time, secure employment with wages sufficient to meet their basic needs. Although the label and precise boundaries of this group has changed, whether the ‘claimant class’ (Jordan, 1973), the ‘new poor’ (Parker, 1989), labour market ‘outsiders’ or the ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2011c; Rehm, 2016), its increasing size and significance in post-industrial economies has been used as a justification for basic income. Unlike means-tested social assistance or contributory social insurance schemes, which are said to either trap or exclude members of this group, a basic income would provide income security for all without perverse disincentives or intrusion. As a basic income is non-withdrawable, it can reduce marginal effective tax rates for those receiving the benefits it would replace. The strength of an *unconditional* basic income is also that it is a ‘minimally presumptuous’ policy in that it does not need to continually identify particular groups of people that are entitled to the benefit (Goodin, 1992). This is particularly important when there is increasing uncertainty and volatility in socioeconomic categories, such as labour market statuses and household arrangements, as there are in post-industrial economies.

The growth of ‘conditionality’ in social policy, i.e. the increasing stringency of work-tests and workfare attached to social security, is also related to support for an unconditional basic income (Painter and Thoung, 2015). Advocates point to evidence of negative outcomes

associated with sanctions, related to health, career development and well-being (Standing, 2011a; Williams, 2019; Loopstra et al., 2018; Arni et al., 2013). Furthermore, an *individualised* basic income would be an improvement on household-based schemes, as it would provide economic independence *within* the household and avoid penalising cohabitation and employment. Importantly though, many feminists disagree that a basic income would be good for women, with critics arguing it would induce women's withdrawal from the labour market and thus both fail to redistribute unpaid work and fail to increase women's independence (Orloff, 2013; Robeyns, 2000). Nevertheless, these arguments rest on the effects of a basic income rather than a theory of justice. Although there are *principled* libertarian perspectives (Zwolinski, 2015), support for basic income from the free-market right can also be understood primarily on pragmatic grounds, as it is viewed as the 'least bad' form of government intervention in avoiding excessive distortion of market forces (Murray, 2006).

On the other hand, an important strand of pragmatic arguments in favour of a basic income see it as a 'post-productivist' policy, thus specifically eschewing its efficiency in encouraging paid work and, to some extent, growth. The central thesis is that since full employment is neither attainable nor desirable in a post-industrial or technologically advanced economy, a basic income can facilitate unpaid activities outside of the labour market (Offe, 1992). This has partly been related to concerns since the 1960s that technological advances and automation would lead to the disappearance of jobs and mass unemployment (Theobald, 1963; Stern and Kravitz, 2016). For some, a basic income is the means by which to sustain aggregate demand in an economy where technology-led growth puts downward pressure on the wage share (Crocker, 2015). On the other hand, some Green advocates see basic income as a means of facilitating *degrowth* by providing people with an incentive to withdraw from the labour market (Fitzpatrick, 1999). There are also related pragmatic arguments from a Marxist perspective. Wright (2004) argues that in light of the failure of central planning in the 20th century, basic income can serve as an alternative policy to shift the power relations of capitalism, by enabling individuals to undertake activities without entering capitalist employment relations, providing an 'exit option' which would strengthen workers individually and collectively.

Pragmatic reasoning can explain the conversion of many that objected to a basic income on principled grounds nevertheless advocate a basic income as the best way to achieve certain goals or outcomes. Barry (1992) himself was initially sceptical of a basic income from an

egalitarian perspective but later argued for it as ‘second best to an unattainable alternative’⁶, thus making it ‘the best feasible option’ (1996, p. 275). For a long time, André Gorz proposed a basic income that would be conditional on the performance of a lengthy social service but later swung in favour of an *unconditional* basic income as the best way to redistribute both paid and unpaid work and encourage voluntary activities in congruence with the modern economy (Van Parijs, 2009). Thus, while the normative debate around conditionality and reciprocity has an important bearing on the politics of basic income, this may be transcended by pragmatic considerations regarding its impact on socioeconomic relations.

Equally, objections to a basic income also relate to pragmatic issues, even among those that have sympathy for the principled case for an unconditional income. There are concerns that it would induce voluntary unemployment, especially among mothers, put downward pressure on wages and lead to the erosion of other public goods (Bergmann, 2004; Gray, 2017). Fundamentally, this moves the debate around basic income to a new set of questions that rest on empirical evidence. The ‘economics’ of basic income deals more directly with these questions, which are turned to next.

2.2.3 Fiscal, distributional and labour market consequences

How much would a basic income cost? How many people would stop working (or start working) if they received a basic income? Existing economics research into basic income has broadly revolved around these two key questions, exploring the fiscal and distributional effects of introducing a basic income, on the one hand, and the estimated impact on labour market participation, on the other.

The gross cost of introducing a universal basic income is inevitably high and many would argue prohibitively so (Piachaud, 2018; Kay, 2017). A common reply is that the *net* cost of a basic income is considerably lower (Widerquist, 2017a), although this can be perceived in two different ways. Firstly, as the intention of a basic income is usually to replace at least some existing provisions, whether benefits or tax allowances, the savings from doing so should be subtracted from the gross cost. The savings alone could conceivably fund a basic income at a net cost of zero. However, the inevitable outcome of removing existing provisions is that many people lose out. If the existing provisions are targeted at needy groups such as those on a low-income or with a disability, a budget neutral basic income

⁶ The unattainable alternative being the Swedish Economic Model from the 1960s until the collapse of centralised wage bargaining in 1983.

will increase poverty (Browne & Immervoll, 2017)⁷. This leads to the assertion that a basic income is either unaffordable or inadequate (Piachaud, 2018).

Martinelli (2019) instead identifies a *trilemma* in basic income design for advanced welfare states whereby *no more than two* of the goals of affordability, adequacy and radically simplifying welfare can be met in a specific scheme. In other words, the introduction of a basic income will: be too expensive (if a basic income is set at a high enough level to replace most existing benefits), increase poverty (if a basic income is set lower than existing provisions) or be relatively pointless (if existing social security is maintained). As the first two horns of the trilemma are intractable problems, most advocates contest the final claim and model basic income schemes that would be relatively small but exist alongside most existing social security benefits (Torry, 2016a; Reed and Lansley, 2016).

A second way to calculate the net cost relates to the total amount of income that is actually *redistributed*, once the payment of a basic income is factored into individuals' tax liabilities. This is most transparent if it is funded by additional income tax. If so, the introduction of a basic income would mean that those on a high income would be net contributors (paying more in additional income tax than receiving in basic income payments) and those on a low income would be net beneficiaries (receiving more in basic income payments than paying out in additional income tax). Widerquist (2017a) argues that the 'true' (net) cost is the sum of those net contributions. This is because individuals will be indifferent to the section of their additional tax liability that is returned to them in a basic income. Calculating the net cost in this manner reduces the headline numbers considerably.

However, this attempt to turn the notion of cost on its head provokes questions about why the cost of a basic income matters in the first place. The first reason is political, with the assumption being that the higher the cost, the less politically acceptable a basic income will be. The second is the impact on the economy, with concerns that a costly scheme would reduce economic activity. However, in both cases, the required increase in *marginal rates* of income tax would seem a more pertinent, though still not exhaustive, indicator of political and economic feasibility as it would be a very visible policy change and more clearly affect labour market incentives.

The concern about the impact on the economy and the labour market also reveals a conspicuous assumption underlying analysis of the fiscal and distributional effects of a basic

⁷ Thus, the precise winners and losers of a basic income depend not only on the specific scheme but also on its interaction with the existing institutional context.

income, which is contested by other economics research. The outcomes from microsimulation analysis are contingent on *static* behavioural responses in the labour market (and the economy more generally). Yet, an important branch of the economics of basic income includes research that estimates the effects of a basic income on labour supply and wages using simulation models or experimental evidence. A common method is to simulate behavioural responses using models of labour-leisure choice derived from individual utility functions. Neo-classical economic theory suggests that there will be both an income and a substitution effect: an increase in disposable income would induce an individual to consume more leisure⁸/work less (income effect), while an increase in marginal rates of tax would also reduce work hours (substitution effect). However, as discussed before, whether individuals see an increase or decrease in their disposable income, and whether they face higher or lower marginal rates, depends on the specific basic income scheme and what it replaces.

The size (and direction) of the effects will also depend on the income and substitution elasticities, which can be derived from existing empirical evidence on the labour supply response to benefit levels, taxes and wages (Blundell and Macurdy, 1999; Hoynes and Rothstein, 2018; Saez et al., 2012). The obvious shortcomings of these inferences, which are based on *existing* benefits and wages, is that basic income is unique. For a start, the fact that a basic income is both permanent and unconditional is rarely, if at all, incorporated into these models. In theory, existing evidence on benefit duration and conditionality, which would suggest additional downward pressure on labour supply (Arni et al., 2013), could supplement estimates of individual behavioural responses. However, no existing evidence can account for the *interaction* of basic income's multiple features that depart from existing social security arrangements. In addition, these models cannot incorporate systemic effects, such as changes in aggregate demand or wage bargaining, from the introduction of a basic income. Hence, evidence from basic income experiments (RCTs), lottery winners and the Alaskan Permanent Fund dividend offers an alternative insight into the likely effects of a basic income.

Between 1968 and 1980, the US government conducted four negative income tax experiments across different states, while the Canadian government conducted one in Manitoba between 1975 and 1978. In all five experiments, the results showed a reduction in work hours in the treatment group, particularly among mothers (Widerquist, 2005; Calnitsky

⁸ Assuming that leisure is a normal good

and Latner, 2017). Evidence from lottery winners further supported this finding (Imbens et al., 2001; Cesarini et al., 2015), although at least one study has found insignificant effects (Marx and Peeters, 2008). However, recent basic income experiments in developing countries, such as Namibia and India, have shown that the policy can increase economic activity in certain contexts (Haarmann et al., 2009; Davala et al., 2015). Early results from the 2017-18 Finnish basic income experiment also showed no overall effect on labour supply of the unemployed target group (Kangas et al., 2019). More strikingly, Jones & Marinescu (2018) find that the Alaskan Permanent Fund dividend had no overall effect on employment, which they surmise may be due to a positive general equilibrium effect (i.e. an increase in aggregate demand) cancelling out a negative income effect. This suggests that experiments focusing only on particular target groups may not account for important spillover effects. However, the small size of the payment (and the absence of substitution effects) may explain the result as well.

This highlights a key difficulty with generalising from the (quasi)experimental evidence, concerning the cross-national variation in both the treatment and control policy environment. In other words, both the model of basic income and the existing institutional context diverge across studies. Policy experiments are also inherently partial by their limited duration and the potential for Hawthorne effects, i.e. participants changing their behaviour due to the fact they are being observed. While saturation site studies are particularly susceptible to Hawthorne effects, randomised experiments that involve individuals dispersed across multiple areas are unable to study systemic or spillover effects. This is coupled with the fact that experimental evidence is subject to interpretation and framing (Widerquist, 2005). Thus, while there has been a great deal of interest from policymakers and civil society in experimenting with basic income across the world, the ability of these experiments to provide definitive evidence on labour market effects (or other social outcomes) is inherently limited.

2.2.4 Summary

While these debates about basic income do not directly address the question of political feasibility, they highlight critical fault lines in the social and political legitimacy of basic income. First, there are normative arguments about providing an unconditional payment to all. From a political perspective, this importantly divides the left; the proposal to remove any obligations on unemployed individuals meets strong opposition from reciprocity-sensitive progressives (as well as conservatives). Freedom-based arguments combined with the defence of common ownership of natural, social resources lends itself to ideological support from the Green movement, and the post-productivist left (Fitzpatrick, 1999; Weeks, 2011;

Srnicek and Williams, 2015). Equally, the objection to free riding and the emphasis on contribution finds favour with the old, labourist left (see contributions in Van Parijs (2018)). On the other hand, there is some limited optimism from advocates regarding the ability of *pragmatic* arguments in favour of an unconditional basic income to win over *principled* opposition. Basic income can be promoted as a policy to increase work incentives, improve coverage of social security, abolish poverty, reduce bureaucracy, sustain aggregate demand, redistribute work and valorise unpaid work. A question mark remains over whether such a heterodox set of justifications can be reconciled, particularly when considering the tension between productivist and post-productivist goals.

Second, there are questions about the cost and distributional consequences of a basic income as well as its effect on labour market participation and wages. Most evidence suggests that a basic income is unlikely to be effective as a cost-reduction exercise or as a measure to *increase* labour supply. However, both the costs and the expected outcomes are subject to political contestation, as the discussion about net cost and econometric or experimental evidence suggests. It might be that the most consequential outcome of these experiments is instead ‘political demonstration effects’, whereby they raise public awareness and provide campaign tools for advocates (De Wispelaere, 2016).

Thus, although often couched in terms of political philosophy or economics, these normative and empirical questions are also inherently political and determine the opportunities and constraints that political actors face when advocating basic income. The microsimulation and labour supply analysis in particular also illustrates the flexibility of the basic income idea in policy terms: basic income is not a single scheme. As Barry (2001, p. 63) points out: “Asking about the pros or cons of basic income as such is rather like asking about the pros and cons of keeping a feline as a pet without distinguishing between a tiger and a tabby”. This means that there are both practical and political trade-offs in policy design when it comes to the implementation of *specific* basic income schemes. The winners and losers of basic income can also vary, making it difficult to answer the question of whose interests it serves, which will also depend on the existing institutional context. I turn to this in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

However, these literatures forgo an analysis of the socio-political environment that structures what policies and ideas succeed in the political arena. The question of what is just and what is effective does not make policy. I, therefore, turn to research that has focused on issues related to the politics of basic income specifically, which is comparatively thin.

2.3 Politics of basic income

2.3.1 Historical accounts

The first known appearance of a basic income in formal democratic politics was in the UK⁹. Van Trier (1995) presents three ‘episodes’ during the inter-war period in which discussion of a basic income was evident. This began with the campaigning of the State Bonus League in 1918, later the Minimum Income League, for an allowance received by every individual, the sum of which would be equivalent to 20% of national income. The second episode in this period was Major C.H. Douglas’s Social Credit movement where the idea of a National Dividend became a cornerstone of the disparate groups of advocates. Finally, the third episode Van Trier cites is the work of James Meade and his discussion of social dividends, which were pitched as an anti-cyclical policy instrument to stimulate consumption. These episodes were significant in that they were intertwined with the politics of the Labour Party, albeit failing to become party policy in each case. The thirteen objections to the State Bonus scheme listed in the Labour Party Conference Report are perhaps most instructive as to why. The objections centred on the scheme being an immediate shock to the public finances but also that a flat-rate approach conflicted with the principles of progressive taxation while providing only a small payment. The alternative *gradualist* agenda of nationalisation, wage increases, better healthcare, education, housing, unemployment insurance and pensions was deemed superior. Interestingly, the fact it was unconditional on work was not mentioned as an objection (van Trier, 1995, p.127).

Although the Social Credit movement ultimately failed in the UK, it had more success elsewhere, particularly in Canada. The Alberta Social Credit Party, which was partly inspired by Major Douglas’s theories, won a surprise victory in the 1935 election and included a national dividend in its programme although it was never fully implemented¹⁰(van Trier, 1995, p.p.146; Irving, 1968; Irving, 1948). In the US, the populist Louisiana Governor, Huey Long’s Share Our Wealth plan¹¹ unveiled in 1934, included a point to ‘Guarantee every family an annual income of \$2,000 (or one-third the national average)’ funded by

⁹ As van Trier (1995, p. 31) points out, this is always subject to new evidence. Before his study many assumed that Lady Juliet Rhys-Williams’s 1943 proposals were the first. Equally, others have presented Major Douglas as the first (e.g. Walter, 1985, p. 65).

¹⁰ Irving (1968) writes: “The morning after the election a number of people lined up at the city hall in Calgary to collect the first installment of the Social Credit dividend of \$25 monthly, which, they confidently believed, would be immediately forthcoming from their new government.” The government did briefly issue ‘prosperity certificates’, to cover government expenditure but it was unpopular and the scheme was scrapped (Hanson, 2003). The party, which ended up maintaining power for over 30 years, mostly abandoned radical monetary reform and with it any prospect of a national dividend.

¹¹ The movement’s motto was "Every Man a King (But No One Wears a Crown)".

progressive income and wealth taxation (Amenta et al., 1994). However, a year after his first speech announcing the programme, Long was assassinated, which eventually put an end to his movement and the campaign for a guaranteed income.

These inter-war cases, as well as early proposals in the 18th and 19th century (see Cunliffe & Erreygers, 2004), were all broadly speaking radical and progressive¹². The policy was pitched as a dividend to either stimulate consumption and demand or provide an entitlement based on social and natural resources (or both). This emphasis shifted with the proposals of Lady Juliet Rhys-Williams, a Liberal MP in the UK, in 1943. She proposed to integrate taxes and benefits and give all citizens a weekly payment to cover subsistence needs, pitched as an alternative to the Beveridge Report (Rhys-Williams, 1943). Despite her bold stated ambition to provide a ‘new social contract’, the proposals were to embed a series of more pragmatic motivations for a basic income around reconciling poverty alleviation and work incentives that appealed to political actors on the right in the UK (and later elsewhere). An obvious appeal to the right was that such a scheme could help resist the growth of progressive taxation and collective bargaining, a suspicion which was reinforced by the fact that the original proposal included a work test (Sloman, 2017). Naturally, this in turn was a core concern of the Trade Union Congress and of the Labour Party, which as in the inter-war period preferred the Attlee government’s focus on wages and public services. On the other hand, despite the less ‘radical’ motivations of Rhys-Williams’s proposals, they were met with hostility from the Treasury and Inland Revenue (ibid). Enthusiasm in the Conservative Party also waned as soon as their electoral fortunes picked up around the 1950 election¹³, with principled objections to state ‘dependency’ and over-committing on spending also playing a part in its scepticism (Sloman, 2016a).

However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, right-wing governments on both sides of the Atlantic in the UK and the US both came very close to implementing schemes similar to Rhys-Williams’s proposals, also inspired in part by Milton Friedman’s (1962) negative income tax idea. In the US, Steensland (2008) states that the increasing recognition of *structural* unemployment in the early 1960s provoked a significant shift in government poverty strategy away from a purely ‘growth-based employment approach’ to a consideration of cash benefits and guaranteed minimum income schemes. This led to the development of President Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan (FAP), which would have

¹² Although the Alberta Social Credit Party was socially conservative

¹³ Senior Tories were also sceptical of the political benefits compared to cutting taxes for middle earners (Sloman, 2016a)

provided a guaranteed income to all families in the US. Similarly, Sloman (2016b) links the Heath Conservative government's pursuit of a similar tax credit scheme with the 'rediscovery of poverty' in mid-1960s Britain and an increasing concern with the poverty trap. Although clearly targeted at those on a low-income and not strictly covering the whole population¹⁴, both would have extended a unified minimum income floor to the vast majority of the population, reducing the rate at which benefits were withdrawn and ending the clear distinction between the working and non-working poor; two key aspects of a basic income.

In both cases, the reforms appeared to be genuinely close to legislative success. The FAP twice passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support. It was only opposition in the Senate, and specifically the Senate Finance Committee, that proved fatal. Steensland (2008) argues that the merging of different categories of recipients harmed support for the proposal. 'Symbolic pollution' meant the 'impure' status of one group, which mostly comprised those on welfare, contaminated the 'pure' status for those otherwise regarded as deserving, primarily the working poor. There were also racial undertones to the opposition to FAP. In the end, the Earned Income Tax Credit targeted at the working poor was preferred. Meanwhile, despite Cabinet approval, the Tax Credit scheme in the UK did not survive the election of a Labour government in 1974, which occurred amidst a recession that called the cost of the scheme into question (Sloman, 2016b). Labour, with support from trade unions and civil society groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group, once again preferred to emphasise progressive taxation and a 'back-to-Beveridge' approach, which meant a strengthening of National Insurance and earnings-related pensions, although the universal Child Benefit scheme was retained. The ascendancy of the New Right, which increasingly viewed poverty as pathological, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher eventually put an end to interest in such a scheme from the Conservative Party.

Among more long-term historical perspectives on the fortunes of a basic income, it is common to refer to *waves* of interest and advocacy (De Wispelaere, 2015a, p.28; Sloman, 2017; Widerquist, 2017b). Interestingly, these waves can be different depending on the location and timespan considered. However, a general theme emerges from all long-term accounts that the idea of a basic income tends to gain momentum suddenly at a given time and place but then eventually peters out and disappears from political debate again. Van Trier (1995, p. 18-19) calls this twin story of 'eternal return' and 'inevitable downfall', the

¹⁴ The Tax Credit scheme would have covered 90% of the population (Sloman 2018)

Curse of the Cheshire Cat as the idea fades in and out of political consciousness. Put another way:

“Time and again, a motley assortment of engineers, philosophers and various social reformers from widely different backgrounds (frequently inspired by religious convictions) have independently formulated the deceptively simple ideas of a universal capital grant or lifetime income, presenting them as remedies or even panaceas for society’s ills” (Cunliffe & Erreygers, 2004, p. xii).

As the above quote suggests, there is also a tendency to associate the emergence of waves with critical *individuals* that succeeded in raising the profile of the idea, such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Spence in the 18th century or figures such as Lady Rhys Williams, Milton Friedman and more recently Philippe Van Parijs in the 20th century. However, particularly in contemporary politics where waves of support for basic income have become more frequent and widespread, this seems an unsatisfactory explanation. Given the considerable variation in terms of both the framing and actual policies pursued across different contexts and historical periods, there is also only limited applicability to contemporary politics. Thus, the next section explores country case studies that describe recent political developments in a context of advanced welfare states in a post-industrial economy, which is the primary focus of this thesis.

2.3.2 Advocate case studies

The more contemporary¹⁵ case studies that focus on politics, defined in a broad sense, are a more heterogeneous collection, often grey literature, that can be described most succinctly as ‘state of the debate’ contributions. These can comprise descriptions of contemporary political reforms that are relevant to basic income, discussion of the emergence of political or advocacy groups, as well as proposals and political strategies that authors wish to promote in a given context. There are edited contributions and monographs on Australia and New Zealand (Mays et al., 2016), Latin America (Lo Vuolo, 2013), Japan (Vanderborcht and Yamamori, 2014) as well as two edited volumes that have included a broader range of countries and regions (Caputo, 2012; van der Veen & Groot, 2000). Starting in 1986, papers submitted to the Basic Income European (now Earth) Network Annual Congress have also provided country-specific perspectives on the politics of basic income.

¹⁵ The distinction between pre-1980s basic income politics and post-1980s is relatively arbitrary but is made to focus on the political dynamics within post-industrial societies.

Focusing on summarising insights from significant cases in advanced welfare states, two countries that have had relatively long-standing political interest in basic income are the Netherlands and Finland. In both countries, discussion of a basic income in civil society emerged in the 1970s as a largely abstract idea¹⁶ and then grew into a concrete policy proposal supported by political actors in the 1980s (Andersson, 2000; Groot and van der Veen, 2000a). In the Netherlands, political interest in basic income peaked twice (Groot and van der Veen, 2000a). First, in 1985 when the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) suggested a partial basic income as a means of reorganising the social security system. Then, in the mid-90s when a coalition government formed by the Labour Party (PvdA), the main Liberal Party (VVD) and the smaller left-liberals (D'66) included a basic income as part of a possible reform programme. In both cases, the scale of the reform and the availability of less controversial alternatives proved fatal.

In Finland, a cross-party parliamentary group on basic income was formed at the end of the 1980s resulting in a largely ignored report published in 1992¹⁷ (Andersson, 2000). Political support then peaked again in the late 1990s (Ikkala, 2012). Four parties, on the left, centre and right of the political spectrum, supported a version of basic income in the 1999 parliamentary election. However, as a result of their poor electoral performance, these parties subsequently dropped it as a central policy or disbanded. Interestingly, both of these countries have also seen significant political developments in the last five years with the implementation of 'so-called' basic income experiments, although the design of the experiments and the actors involved are very different (Kangas et al., 2017; Van Der Veen, 2019).

In their analysis of the Netherlands, Groot and van der Veen (2000a, p. 217) identify different strategies among basic income advocates that developed over time between the 1970s and end of the 1990s. First, advocates promoted an 'emancipatory and redistributive reform policy' to decouple income from work ('the royal way'). Second, advocates argued for a partial basic income to solve technical problems in the welfare state ('social engineering strategy'). Finally, advocates supported conditional measures that nevertheless 'loosen the link between income and paid work' ('implementation by stealth'). Now, recent evidence suggests that a new strategy, to promote local experiments, has taken precedence (Van Der Veen, 2019). In Finland, there have also been a huge variety of proposed *models* of basic

¹⁶ Groot & van der Veen (2000a, p. 200) describe basic income as a 'utopian symbol of social criticism', pitched against 'productivist market society' in this period.

¹⁷ Finland was by then experiencing its worst recession in the post-war period.

income, ranging from fully fleshed-out partial basic income schemes to more theoretical emancipatory proposals or replacements for the entire social security system (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2014). Political parties have very much taken the lead in the Finnish context (Perkiö, 2018) while basic income has also found supporters across the political spectrum. In regards to socioeconomic drivers of interest in basic income, both studies of the Netherlands and Finland imply that the political debate has ebbed and flowed in response to economic downturns and a rise in unemployment.

Another country where political interest in basic income has been linked to macroeconomic conditions is Denmark (Christensen and Loftager, 2000). As in the Netherlands and Finland, the emergence of basic income as an idea began in the late 1970s and it became more fleshed out as a proposal in the 1980s. Yet, amid rapidly rising unemployment in the early 1990s, basic income appeared briefly on the agenda of government and political parties. Most notably, the Radical Liberals (RV) party conference in 1993 endorsed the policy, while in government. However, an official report commissioned by the leader of the party, Marianne Jelved, who was also Minister of Economic Affairs at the time, ‘dealt [a] deathblow to the idea of a basic income’ by declaring that it was impossible to finance a pure scheme through taxes (ibid, p. 263). Political discussion of basic income subsequently ‘vanished’ (ibid). Since then, Denmark has become well known for its ‘flexicurity’ model of investment in active labour market policies (ALMPs) backed by conditionality attached to benefits (Madsen, 2004).

The other oft-cited country where basic income has emerged on the political agenda, prior to the global financial crisis, is Ireland (Healy and Reynolds, 2000; Healy and Reynolds, 2012; De Wispelaere, 2015a). As in the UK, basic income was discussed primarily in relation to tax-benefit integration and was considered as an option by three official reports in the 1970s and ‘80s, which rejected it primarily on cost grounds (Healy and Reynolds, 2000, p.240). Advocacy in Ireland has also had a distinctive religious component, with the most prominent organisation campaigning to get the policy on the agenda being the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)¹⁸. It played a role as a recognised ‘social partner’ in encouraging the government led by Fianna Fáil, a catchall/centre-right party, to commission a Green Paper on basic income (Healy and Reynolds, 2000). This was eventually published in autumn 2002 and it gave a very positive assessment, concluding that a basic income would reduce inequality and poverty in an affordable manner (Healy and Reynolds, 2012).

¹⁸ Its work has been taken over by Social Justice Ireland since 2009 (Healy and Reynolds, 2012, p.109).

However, despite this, no further progress was made and it largely disappeared from the formal political agenda. Advocates turned to a strategy of promoting refundable tax credits (ibid).

Other literature points to intermittent political interest in other countries. In Belgium, the smaller Green parties have been broadly in favour since the 1980s, while a party specifically formed to advocate basic income by the multi-millionaire Roland Duchâtelet, VIVANT, also gained public attention and very limited electoral success at the end of the 1990s (Vanderborght, 2000). In Germany, the vague idea of a basic income was an ‘exceedingly decorative... and harmless ornament’ within most parties’ programmes in the late 1980s but reunification dominated policy attention in the ‘90s (Lessenich, 2000). Liebermann (2012) argues that the *unconditional* dimension of basic income became more salient in Germany after 2003 when the Haartz reforms introduced stricter behavioural requirements and sanctions to unemployment benefits. Raventós, Wark, & Casassas (2012) single out Catalonia as home to noteworthy political interest from the left in the 2000s with the Spanish parliament also debating bills on basic income. In Canada, a Conservative senator, Hugh Segal, was a prominent champion of a negative income tax (Mulvale and Vanderborght, 2012) and was involved with the recent experiment in Ontario. Meanwhile, literature covering basic income advocacy in other countries within their respective language is no doubt more common but unavailable to a wider readership.

In reviewing the case studies, the politics of basic income appears to be like a game of ‘hot potato’, in which “politicians of various stripes express interest and sometimes explicit support for the idea, until it is suddenly relinquished when political scrutiny intensifies” (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019). This is likely to be due to the nature of these case studies that do not attempt to explain in a general sense why parties drop the idea, and why some pick it up again. Nevertheless, the notion that macroeconomic conditions and specifically unemployment may be linked to the increased salience of basic income is a useful insight found across cases. The ideological heterogeneity of political actors in favour of a basic income across countries gives credence to the notion that it is ‘neither left nor right’ (ibid). In addition, the wide variety of political *strategies* as well as actors and proposals raises questions about what drives the different priorities and concerns across different countries. Political actors must not just decide what type of basic income to support but what kind of implementation strategy to adopt. This is explored in more detail in the section about multi-dimensional basic income below.

Yet, again, this literature is instructive but limited in its ability to provide a convincing theoretical explanation of the drivers of support for a basic income but particularly provide systematic empirical evidence. Most importantly, these descriptive case studies lack a clear analytical framework from a political science or political economy perspective (De Wispelaere and Noguera, 2012). Particularly in the case of contemporary accounts, they are also often prone to constructing a narrative of events from the perspective of an advocate and emphasising country-specific factors. This makes it very difficult to analyse political support across countries in a comparable manner. Thus, next I review the few recent attempts to provide a more systematic approach to understanding the politics of basic income.

2.3.3 Analytical and empirical approaches

Purdy (2013 [1988]) provides a starting point for an analysis of the political feasibility of basic income by asking three staged questions, which I paraphrase here. Firstly, is there a *majority* (of the public) in favour of basic income? Secondly, can this majority *realise itself*, by achieving ‘coherence and effectiveness as a political movement’ (ibid, p. 479)? Finally, can a government or movement intent on implementing a basic income overcome opposition from economic interests and political actors? On the first, he identifies the problems with inferring majority support for a basic income based on a cross-sectional analysis of winners and losers: “This kind of exercise may reassure supporters or provide useful ammunition for rhetoric and propaganda. But it is not a substitute for the creative task of political mobilization” (ibid, p. 481). On the question of mobilisation, he raises concerns that those that stand to gain most from a basic income, ‘the dispossessed’, have the least resources to instigate change, meaning a broad coalition of forces is required. However, mostly, the questions are left answered.

More recently, De Wispelaere & Noguera (2012) provide a more precise analytical framework for understanding the political feasibility of basic income by dividing it into four different types of feasibility, mirroring to some extent the questions above. These are strategic feasibility, psychological feasibility, institutional feasibility and behavioural feasibility.

Firstly, *strategic* feasibility is concerned with whether a political coalition can be formed that could pass legislation including a basic income. More specifically, their understanding of a political coalition comprises *discrete* agents, i.e. ‘readily identifiable actors with distinctive interests, roles, capacities and intentions’. It includes political parties, politicians, bureaucrats and social partners such as trade unions. There is a lack of systematic empirical analysis investigating strategic feasibility beyond the case studies described above.

However, some have focused on why certain actors are generally hostile to a basic income. For example, Vanderborght (2006) explores the opposition of trade unions, pointing to their role in the maintenance of the existing social security system in many countries and the composition of their members as privileged insiders that do not stand to gain from a basic income. Torry (2016b) infers that bureaucrats may be hostile to a basic income if it implies a reduction in the number of public servants, as most successful welfare reforms in the UK expanded administration, at least at first. Beyond a focus on feasibility per se, researchers have also analysed the rhetoric or framing employed by these political actors in debates about basic income (Perkiö, 2018; Perkiö, 2019; Perkiö et al., 2019). As suggested above, these frames can be highly variable across contexts and consequential for the political coalitions that gravitate around a basic income.

The second type the authors identify is *psychological* feasibility, which relates to the understanding and appreciation of the policy by the public at large. As with Purdy, the implication is that in order for basic income to be politically feasible, it requires sufficient public support. Thus, this concerns *diffuse* agents, defined as an amorphous set of actors, with little or no apparent coordination or collective intention (De Wispelaere and Noguera, 2012, p.19)¹⁹. Loosely defined, psychological feasibility is one area of empirical research that has expanded considerably during the course of this PhD research project, through the analysis of public attitudes to basic income. This was prompted by the availability of cross-national survey data in the European Social Survey, first released in 2017. Prior to this, research on this topic had been limited to a few individual country surveys (e.g. Andersson & Kangas, 2004; Bay & Pedersen, 2006). However, given the centrality of this aspect of political feasibility to the theoretical framework underpinning the thesis, these are reviewed in Chapter 3.

Both of these types of feasibility concern what the authors call *prospective* constraints and together comprise the ‘achievability’ of a basic income. The second two types of feasibility correspond to *retrospective* constraints, which determine the ‘viability’ of a basic income *ex post*, i.e. its robustness or resilience after its initial introduction (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2016). The third type, *institutional* feasibility, is concerned with the process of implementation after a universal basic income becomes passed legislation and *discrete* agents and questions of bureaucratic discretion, which pose potential barriers to desired

¹⁹ The notion of a political *constituency* for basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015a, p.68) in the wider public may blur these two types of feasibility in that it is not a strictly diffuse agent.

outcomes for basic income advocates (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2012). Finally, *behavioural* feasibility refers to the political and economic responses of individuals (*diffuse* agents) to the policy once it is implemented. For example, will people stop working or immediately vote for another party to abolish a basic income?

However, as discussed above, the problem with the latter types of feasibility is that empirical researchers have few examples to analyse. Until basic income legislation is passed, researching its political *viability* puts the cart before the horse.

On the question of what factors drive political support for basic income and what enhances the ‘achievability’ of basic income, there are still considerable gaps in the literature, particularly regarding evidencing theoretical claims and systematic comparative analysis. Thus, the thesis focuses advances this area of research. Yet, before identifying an approach to answering this question, it is necessary to address a potential ‘dependent variable problem’ (Clasen and Siegel, 2007) that arises due to the flexibility of what basic income means. I turn to this in the next section.

2.4 A multi-dimensional basic income

The journey from the philosophical debate around the abstract idea to the realm of politics exposes the ‘many faces’ of a basic income, where ‘the devil is in the detail’ of specific policy proposals (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004). This requires conceptualising basic income beyond its monolithic form and beyond its portrayal as a ‘disarmingly simple’ and straightforward idea that can be easily defined (Van Parijs, 1992). This section focuses on the heterogeneous policies that fit under the umbrella of basic income in the existing literature and from this concludes that basic income is better conceptualised as multi-dimensional for research comparing the politics of basic income across contexts. It is a pivotal starting point for the explanatory framework developed in the following chapter.

To start with, the diversity of overarching goals or frames associated with the policy is striking²⁰. As the summary of philosophical and social policy literatures outline, these can range from valorising unpaid work and alleviating poverty to increasing labour market incentives and reducing bureaucracy. In itself, this is not necessarily problematic. Indeed, the argument that cross-class alliances explain the creation of many welfare state and labour market policies (Mares, 2003; Swenson, 2002; Vlandas, 2013) suggests that these differing interests could conceivably converge upon the implementation of a basic income. In the US,

²⁰ Torry (2015), for example, lists 101 reasons to support a basic income

Steensland (2008, p. 19) argues that the rapid rise to prominence and broad appeal of the Guaranteed Annual Income was a function of the ‘multiple meanings’ it was attributed by influential stakeholders. However, an issue arises when many of these goals are mutually incompatible: a basic income cannot simultaneously provide an exit-option from the labour market *and* increase labour market incentives. Likewise, the twin aims of facilitating ‘degrowth’ and stimulating aggregate demand are diametrically opposed.

More importantly, as illustrated in the case studies above, basic income is a catchall concept to refer to an extremely diverse range of concrete policy reform strategies that reflect the respective goals of different advocates. Many authors have highlighted this diversity by pointing to a series of dimensions on which basic income proposals can vary (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004). These include:

- (i) Universality, i.e. who is covered by the scheme?
- (ii) Individuality, i.e. is the administrative unit individuals or households?
- (iii) Conditionality, i.e. what conditions do recipients need to satisfy to be eligible?
- (iv) Uniformity, i.e. to what extent are benefit levels the same for all recipients?
- (v) Frequency/Duration, i.e. how regular/permanent is receipt of the scheme?
- (vi) Modality, i.e. what form does the scheme take? (cash or voucher)
- (vii) Adequacy, i.e. what level is the scheme set at?

To this list, the extent to which basic income supplants existing welfare and the proposed funding mechanism could be added, while universality (or conditionality depending on one’s definition) can be further divided into separate dimensions related to the role of means-testing, coverage and the political community to which entitlement extends (Chrisp et al., 2018).

However, these examples also illustrate that policies that fit under the umbrella of basic income do not just vary according to these dimensions, they also vary according to the degree of abstraction by which political advocates and opponents understand the policy of ‘basic income’. Advocates may propose specific basic income *schemes* that conform to the definition of a basic income²¹ or they may propose basic income ‘*cognates*’ that deviate to some degree from this definition. In some cases, advocates also propose more modest ‘steps’ towards basic income along these dimensions, such as harmonising benefit levels, i.e.

²¹ Van Parijs & Vanderborght (2017) define it as “a regular income paid in cash to every individual member of a society, irrespective of income from other sources and with no strings attached.” The BIEN definition is “a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without *means*-test or work requirement.”

increasing uniformity. To distinguish between these examples, the main variation in basic income proposals according to these three types of strategies are described in turn below²².

2.4.1 Basic income schemes

Firstly, there is considerable flexibility within the definition given by Van Parijs & Vanderborght (2017) or BIEN that allows for various basic income *schemes*. The four most important features that can be adjusted are the level, the defined political community that is universally granted access, the means by which it is funded – whether through a variety of taxes, a Sovereign Wealth Fund or money creation – and the status of existing welfare programmes. A basic income is often colloquially understood to mean it would be paid at subsistence level or at least at the level of existing minimum income benefits for an individual. Many advocates also argue for a level of basic income that is *at least* sufficient to meet basic needs or at the level of the minimum income standard (MIS) (Miller, 2017). However, this need not be the case and many basic income schemes are set at a level far lower than the MIS (Torry, 2016a; Reed and Lansley, 2016).

The level inevitably interacts with two other features that can be adjusted. Firstly, the funding source, which is not specified in any definition of basic income, can generate considerable diversity in schemes. As acknowledged by many advocates (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Miller, 2017), the largest and most dependable source of funding is income tax. However, new taxes related to carbon emissions, land or data could fund a basic income (Farley, 2017; Howard, 2012; Painter et al., 2018). Alternatively, a Sovereign Wealth Fund could pay a basic income from returns on its investments (Lansley et al., 2018; Cummine, 2012). Finally, a basic income could be issued by central banks, in a form of helicopter money or ‘economic stabilisation grants’ (Standing, 2011b). The use of new taxes, Sovereign Wealth Funds or central banks often necessitates a low (and possibly variable) level of basic income. Secondly, the breadth of social security that a basic income is intended to replace can vary. Basic income can be a supplement to (Torry, 2016a) or a replacement of the existing social security system (Murray, 2006). In many cases, proposals are in between, meaning decisions about *which* benefits a basic income replaces have a significant

²² Table A1 in the Appendix describes three levels (or tiers) of abstraction that differentiate basic income proposals according to whether they are specific basic income schemes, ‘cognates’ or ‘steps’ towards basic income. For each level, Table A1 also identifies a series of dimensions on which policies can vary as well as the pertinent factors there are to consider. The detail for this table was developed partly as a result of findings from the PhD, which highlighted the central role of modest ‘steps’ in the advocacy of basic income from political parties.

impact on the nature of the proposal. This also inevitably provides considerable cross-national variation in policy proposals.

Similarly, although a basic income must be universal, the defined political community can vary across schemes. Thus, a basic income could be distributed at a local level, a regional level, a national level or a supra-national level. Equally, access could be granted to all citizens, all residents or only those who are both citizens and residents within a jurisdiction. Finally, there is also room for variation in administration and method of delivery, such as whether a basic income is paid weekly, monthly or yearly, which have non-trivial distributional consequences (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2012).

This all-encompassing ambiguity about the form and impact of a basic income could be argued to be the case for most welfare state policies, whether social insurance, publicly-provided childcare or higher education. Reforms should not generally be examined in isolation but in a specific context and as a holistic package. For example, the policy outcomes associated with in-work benefits may be very different if implemented alongside removal of employment protection or increases in the minimum wage (Abbas, 2020). Equally, the progressiveness of introducing university tuition fees may depend on whether a country has an elite or mass higher education system (Ansell, 2008). Yet, a basic income as defined above is unique in that its sheer gross cost makes it impossible to design a costed basic income scheme without the simultaneous transformation of the existing tax-benefit system. The accompanying reforms are not interacting factors to be wary of but an indispensable feature of the policy itself.

2.4.2 Basic income ‘cognates’

Secondly, in response to political constraints, support for basic income may translate into various ‘cognate’ policies with the relaxation of one or more of its key features (Noguera, 2013). For example, a ‘participation income’ mirrors the features of a basic income, except that it would be conditional on recipients of working age²³ performing a broadly defined set of ‘socially useful activities’ (Atkinson, 1996). These would include caring, approved forms of volunteering and training as well as paid work, self-employment, being unemployed, i.e. ‘available’ for work, or unable to work due to sickness or disability. André Gorz’s initial basic income proposal was coupled with compulsory social service (Gorz, 1985). Those that take the reciprocity objection seriously, whether from a normative or political perspective,

²³ It would still be unconditional for children and pensioners.

may prefer a participation income to a basic income, although there are reasons to be cautious about its added value from a political perspective (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2018).

A ‘negative income tax’ is another cognate in that it is not universal; only those below a threshold receive a payment, the level of which decreases as earned income increases. However, the fiscal and distributional consequences of a negative income tax are in theory the same as basic income²⁴. A negative income tax may be preferred because even if the net cost of an *individualised* negative income tax is identical to a basic income funded by income tax, it may be more politically feasible due to ‘fiscal cosmetics’ (Van Parijs, 2001, p. 126). The optics of providing a flat-rate benefit to people on high salaries is problematic politically even if the distributional outcome is the same once new rates of income tax are applied. In addition, when proponents design specific models of negative income tax, they tend to compromise on another dimension of a basic income by applying a *household* means test in a bid to target resources more effectively (Friedman, 1962). Similarly, a ‘household’ basic income scheme could be designed such that at least part of the income was dependent on living arrangements (Pinilla and Sanzo, 2004). Iran’s experiment with a basic income was also targeted at the household (Tabatabai, 2012). Universal child benefits and universal pensions may be supported as basic incomes exclusively for children and the elderly (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004).

The *regularity* of a basic income may also be compromised on in the form of stakeholder or capital grants (Ackerman and Alstott, 2004). A stakeholder grant is paid as a lump sum at a particular stage in life, rather than at regular intervals. This corresponds to the original proposal of Thomas Paine (1797) and more recently the proposals of Ackerman and Alstott (2004). The decision to propose a stakeholder grant may be a political consideration, in that providing a lump-sum payment is less likely to cause moral hazard and viewed as more legitimate by the public, or simply a principled position in its own right. However, they are often considered part of the same family of proposals. Similarly, sabbatical grants may provide a regular payment but for a limited period, e.g. up to 10 years (Offe and de Deken, 2013). There may also be further conditions applied to receipt of the benefit, such as educational training or care.

Cognates may be seen as ‘friendly alternatives’ to basic income or indeed ‘realistic versions’ of a pure basic income (Noguera, 2013). Importantly though, as with different basic income schemes, many advocates may be strongly opposed to cognates that violate a central

²⁴ Provided the tax rates and withdrawal rates are the same.

principle that motivates their support for basic income in the first place. Different potential supporters are willing to compromise on different dimensions of a basic income, whether that is conditionality, coverage, reciprocity, tax-benefit system, frequency and duration.

2.4.3 Basic income ‘steps’

Finally, adding to this complexity about the design of basic income proposals is the variety of envisaged steps or *paths* to basic income. If we assume that policy reform is generally incremental, it may be that advocates must seek to reform towards basic income. The ‘cognates’ mentioned above may form part of this strategy, and are sometimes referred to as ‘stepping stones’ (Spies-Butcher and Henderson, 2019). For example, Torry (2017) suggests a basic income could be implemented for one age group at a time, starting with a universal child benefit, then unconditional state pension, then a young person’s basic income and so on. Alternatively, 18-year olds could start receiving a basic income and then continue to do so indefinitely, with each year cohort increasing the number of people receiving the benefit. Indeed, any of the cognates listed above could be construed as steps or paths towards basic income in a certain context.

However, in a politically challenging environment, less ambitious reforms to the *existing* system may be sought. Van Parijs (2006, p. 23) refers to a dual strategy of ‘an eye in the distance and an eye on the ground’, whereby ‘precise proposals for modest, immediately beneficial and politically feasible steps’ in the direction of a basic income are as essential as the long-term vision for a just society, i.e. a basic income. Offe (2001) argues that a strategy of ‘gradualism’ and ‘reversibility’ for basic income is essential given the scale of political opposition but also uncertainty about the likely outcomes. An example of his gradualist strategy would be to extend the categories of people that are entitled to tax-financed income transfers. Both Standing (1999, p. 335) and Parker (1989, p. v) cite a Barbara Wootton quote in defence of the idea of a basic income: “It is from the champions of the impossible rather than the slaves of the possible that evolution draws its creative force”. In doing so, there is an implicit acceptance that a basic income is nigh impossible to achieve but that its advocacy is worthwhile in steering policy in the right direction.

Vanderborght (2014) argues that the direction of reform towards or away from basic income is related to four central dimensions: providing cash benefits as opposed to services, greater universalism as opposed to selectivity, unconditional benefits as opposed to those conditional on job-seeking requirements and individualised as opposed to household-based transfers. Earned income tax credits or in-work benefits are also viewed as steps in the direction of basic income by some advocates as they effectively provide a basic income for

part-time workers and reduce incentive traps for entry to the labour market (Jordan et al., 2000; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). Tax benefit integration, such as with the introduction of Universal Credit, could also provide a stepping-stone towards basic income (Jordan, 2012). In theory, any of the features or goals of a basic income could reasonably be used to justify a reform as a step towards basic income. In addition to the four dimensions Vanderborght mentions, the length of entitlement to many benefits could be extended, the levels of benefits could be raised or harmonised and benefits could be withdrawn at a less steep rate.

2.4.4 Problems of persistent political division and cheap support

All of this heterogeneity helps to explain why basic income proposals can appear on libertarian agendas to ‘replace the welfare state’ (Murray, 2006) as well as anti-capitalist agendas to ‘radically alter the bargaining power between labour and capital’ (Callinicos, 2003). It is not just that diverse advocates envisage different outcomes or have distinct goals in mind but that they tend to support very different basic income policy packages. The oft-cited cliché that basic income is neither left nor right may be more accurately described as *either* left or right (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019b). President Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan bears only faint resemblance to the demogrant briefly proposed at one stage by Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern. The Liberal Ontario government’s “basic income” experiment, which was means-tested at the household level, was also very different to the basic income experiment right-wing coalition government in Finland. The consequence of this variety is what De Wispelaere (2015b) calls the problem of persistent political division. The breadth of basic income’s support base disappears as soon as policy details are specified. As De Wispelaere (2015a, p. 73) puts it elsewhere: “no amount of agreement on the basic ideal will prevent opposition from blocking the policy as it moves along the legislative process”.

Relatedly, De Wispelaere (2015b) identifies the problem of ‘cheap support’ among political actors in favour of basic income. The notion has two key interlinked components. Firstly, those expressing support for basic income are often those with a marginal role in politics: small, opposition parties or individual backbenchers in larger parties. Secondly, those same actors are prone to dropping their support as soon as they ascend the political ladder and get into government. The concept can also draw attention to citizens or political actors that may support the abstract idea without any interest in a feasible model with sufficient funding or indeed a cognate or reform in the direction of basic income. Although this symbolic support for the principles of basic income may be sincere, it is also possible that abstract support hides an ulterior motive that stands in contradiction to its principles. For example, citizens

or parties may claim to support basic income but simultaneously prefer more conditionality attached to unemployment benefits, which contradicts key definitional features of a basic income. It is vital to understand the type and level of commitment from political actors and what affects that as well.

The important take-home from the literature on multi-dimensionality is that trying to map out political support for basic income is two-fold: do actors support the catch-all concept of basic income but also which specific policy package do they support or prioritise? The factors that help to explain the first may differ considerably from the second. Similarly, an ideal-type basic income as defined in the introduction may be politically infeasible, but which cognates or basic income-related reforms may be feasible in a given context? And what explains the distinctive political behaviour of basic income advocates in specific contexts? The point is to tease out what policy strategies and commitments emerge, whether they are feasible and whether they truly amount to reforms that advance the cause of basic income. This is what the identification of less ambitious reform strategies underpinned by basic income advocacy above can help to explore.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the basic income literature, focusing on existing philosophical, economic and political analysis of basic income. All these perspectives point to the contentious issue of conditionality and the tax rises required to fund it as enduring dividing lines in the politics of basic income. These undoubtedly affect a basic income's social and political legitimacy, but the picture is more multi-faceted with opposition from key political actors such as trade unions also playing an important role. More importantly, these factors are those which make basic income *not* feasible.

Yet, basic income continues to attract support and has emerged as a serious policy proposal across multiple contexts in the past 40 years. A key question, only partly addressed in the extant literature, is what explains this rising support. Case studies and theory points to the importance of labour market risks, the emergence of a precariat and unemployment but evidence for this is limited and other factors not explored. An oversight in some studies, especially concerning generalisable explanations for basic income, is also that basic income is also fundamentally multi-dimensional, which points in both an encouraging and a pessimistic direction in regards to political feasibility. On the one hand, it contributes to a politics of persistent division where it is difficult to form coalitions among disparate, diverse supporters. On the other, basic income advocacy can involve less rigid strategies for reform, once advocates make compromises in respect of coalition building.

Thus, there is a need for a systematic, comparative approach to explain political support and opposition to basic income. More than 30 years of research around the political economy of the welfare state is a source of insight and tools with which to do this. Specifically, insufficient attention has been given to the role of political parties in basic income research. Many basic income scholars introduce parties into a broader debate about the congruence of a basic income with particular ‘ideologies’ (Torry, 2015; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017), betraying the dominance of a tradition of political philosophy that tends to abstract from the interests and norms generated by a given socio-political context. The focus on political parties is also useful for avoiding a focus on critical individuals in civil society, who may have sparked a wider debate *without* any meaningful impact on the political process. Advocates in civil society are an essential part of the wider picture but ultimately, political parties and governments are required to implement a basic income or to propose ‘basic income friendly’ reforms.

An analysis of parties also requires us to consider voters and ask whether a political constituency for basic income can be mobilised effectively by political actors. This means moving beyond simplistic analysis of winners and losers to appreciate the multiple policy dimensions on which voters can prioritise, including sociotropic and cultural concerns. This focus also allows us to move beyond relating the political prospects of basic income to a process of public deliberation implicit in much of the basic income literature (see Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). Thus, within the framework of De Wispelaere & Noguera (2012), the thesis seeks to offer insights into the strategic and psychological feasibility of basic income, although the boundaries of these concepts of feasibility are rearranged in the next chapter. Given the evident failure of basic income to find legislative success, the focus on factors that affect political support prior to its enactment makes sense as a priority for research. However, as the theoretical framework in the next chapter makes clear, the institutional context is important not only to the implementation of basic income subsequent to the passing of legislation but also the nature of political competition prior to any policymaking.

In summary, the main research questions that the existing literature fails to answer are: what factors increase political support for basic income? How and why does the nature and composition of this support vary across countries? And, how does this support translate into legislative behaviour? The next chapter sets out the theoretical framework, building on the broader literature on the political economy of the welfare state, in order to gain a deeper understanding of these questions in the context of broader changes in the socioeconomic environment, electoral politics and welfare state reform. The framework is employed to

establish the parameters and analytical foci of the empirical investigation presented in this thesis.

3 Parties, voters and institutions: the political economy of basic income

3.1 Introduction

What are the determinants of political support for basic income and how and why does support vary cross-nationally? The previous chapter identified lacunae in the existing literature on the political feasibility of basic income that gravitate around these questions, particularly in regards to systematic, empirical evidence. Importantly, existing research is limited in its application of a political economy framework for interpreting evidence on these questions and is therefore potentially blind to the salience and interaction of political and economic factors in shaping the political feasibility of basic income in national contexts.

Thus, this chapter lays out the theoretical framework for analysing the political feasibility of basic income in this thesis. It draws primarily on frameworks developed in the electoral turn in political economy of the welfare state research (e.g. Beramendi, Häusermann, Kitschelt, & Kriesi, 2015), that direct attention towards particular aspects of the politics of basic income, namely voter preferences and party competition. In line with this literature, basic income is understood primarily as a welfare state reform and not a form of dividend or helicopter money, as is proposed elsewhere (e.g. Widerquist & Howard, 2012). The focus on ‘advanced welfare states’ also places the context of research in a post-industrial economy and the democratic politics that arise out of it. Thus, the analysis relies on a set of assumptions about the level of economic development, the quality of democratic institutions and the nature of political representation found in such a context²⁵, although these factors also vary within advanced welfare states.

The chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.1 outlines the roots of the framework and the subsequent developments in the literature that are pivotal for theorising about political support for basic income. Specifically, the Meltzer & Richard (1981) model of redistribution preferences, one of the earliest contributions to the political economy literature, is discussed to illustrate what earlier political economists neglected to account for, namely the multiple dimensions of political competition, the role of institutions and the effect of partisanship. The section explains why it is important to incorporate an understanding of each of these factors into a framework of welfare state politics.

²⁵ It is unlikely to be an effective framework for understanding the political feasibility of basic income in developing countries.

Section 3.2 establishes how these factors can be combined in a model of ‘constrained partisanship’. Political parties are the central actors within this framework, as they propose and implement welfare state reforms. Yet, policymakers are constrained by their institutional context, limiting the available policy options open to government as well as structuring the nature of political competition and at least partly determining the groups of voters parties are able to mobilise with policy proposals. Socio-economic and demographic change also shape the effectiveness of welfare state institutions and influence citizen preferences. The significant factors and trends for this framework in the context of a *post-industrial* economy are therefore also set out.

Finally, in Section 3.3, the theoretical framework developed in the previous sections is applied to the politics of basic income. The framework calls for an identification of the socioeconomic, institutional and ideological factors driving party support for a basic income. These factors tie into expectations regarding what kind of political constituency for basic income could be mobilised. Finally, the section explores how the institutional context moderates these ideological drivers of support for basic income. This generates a series of hypotheses and associated secondary research questions. The secondary questions are restated in the concluding part of the chapter and repeated with reference to specific analysis in each empirical chapter.

3.2 Political economy of the welfare state

3.2.1 Why don’t the poor soak the rich? Redistribution, income and a lump-sum benefit to all

Key to understanding the roots of the political economy of the welfare state framework developed for this research is the Meltzer and Richard (1981) (M&R) model of redistribution in a context of democratic politics. The model formalises the logic that self-interested preferences for redistribution are determined by relative income. The parameters of the model are such that the government can provide a regular flat-rate benefit to all, the size of which is determined by the level of a proportional tax rate. The model suggests that those with income above the mean would oppose any redistribution, with an ideal income tax rate of 0%, since they would contribute more than they received in government pay-outs. On the other hand, anyone with an income below the mean would support redistribution as they would get a net benefit, unless the efficiency costs of taxation were too high. Assuming that the income distribution is negatively skewed, as indeed all are, the median voter will have an income below the mean. Thus, there is an intuitive expectation that the median voter and

therefore the majority of voters will demand redistribution and increase taxes, if the main political dividing line is income.

In addition to its influence on the political economy research agenda, the M&R paper is a noteworthy contribution for the purposes of this thesis as it specifically models the provision of a basic income. The model employs a logic that mirrors those that use micro-simulations to calculate winners and losers from the implementation of a basic income and infer voting preferences from there²⁶. In the case of Meltzer and Richard, the modelling of a flat-rate tax and universal payment was likely a question of ease and simplicity. Yet, it nevertheless poses a related question: given it would be the simplest way to redistribute income, why has a basic income not been implemented?

A more regularly cited implication of the model is that it predicts increasing inequality, which tends to increase the distance between the median voter and mean income, increases demand for redistribution. However, the relationship between inequality and redistribution does not stand up to empirical scrutiny, whether at the micro-level of individual preferences or at the level of welfare state spending (Lindert, 2004; Kenworthy and McCall, 2008). The clue as to why basic income has not been implemented, and the alternative factors that may affect its political feasibility, can also be derived from criticisms of the model.

There are at least three key reasons why the model fails to accurately depict the politics of the welfare state. Firstly, neither policymaking nor individual voter preferences can be reduced to a simple dimension of ‘more’ or ‘less’ redistribution. Secondly, the model ignores how the existing institutional environment affects policymaking, through path dependency and policy feedback effects. Thirdly, political parties are assumed to have no independent effect in determining government policies or role in mobilising particular groups of voters, despite considerable evidence to the contrary. The next three sub-sections outline the significance of these factors for the politics of the welfare state.

3.2.2 Many political and policy dimensions

Although it is meant as a stylised model and is thus intentionally simplistic, the M&R model is clearly limited in understanding the more complex set of trade-offs that policymakers and voters face. For a start, the welfare state does not simply redistribute income, it also provides a variety of services such as healthcare, education and housing. The extent to which these services and cash transfers are provided across countries is not necessarily well-correlated

²⁶ An exercise, which the previous chapter argued was naive.

(Castles, 2008) and the extent to which individuals will have an interest in their provision will not depend solely on their income.

Kifmann & Roeder (2014) attempt to account for such a trade-off between public health insurance and a universal cash benefit, building on the M&R model. The authors suggest that society may prefer public health insurance over basic income in the hypothetical Rawlsian scenario of a ‘veil of ignorance’, as public health insurance would redistribute from both rich to poor and high-risk to low-risk individuals (rather than just rich to poor). However, when both policies compete for resources, basic income will crowd out health insurance if voters know their relative income position and level of health risks. Although it extends the M&R model to a two-dimensional policy space and thus serves to highlight at least one key trade-off in welfare state policies (between health services and cash benefits), it similarly abstracts from empirical evidence of demands for either and fails to account for other limits to such an approach discussed below²⁷.

For example, even if we apply the M&R model solely to taxes and transfers, the model masks contention over the systematic entitlement and eligibility criteria for social security. Neither taxes nor benefits need to be designed in a proportional or flat rate manner for every individual. The ‘mode of access’ to welfare payments may be based on a contribution record (social insurance), the identification of need (social assistance), or citizenship (universalism²⁸), while the ‘structure’ of benefits may be means-tested, flat-rate or earnings-related (Bonoli and Palier, 2000). Esping-Andersen (1990) famously identified three distinct welfare regimes in advanced welfare states – social-democratic, corporatist and liberal – that relate to the relative importance of these dimensions. Social-democratic regimes emphasise redistributive, citizenship-based entitlements and universalism, corporatist regimes are primarily social insurance-based given their earnings-related contributory benefits and liberal regimes rely on residual, means-tested social assistance. The receipt of benefits can also be targeted at specific demographics. For example, pensions and working-age benefits may compete for resources, raising the possibility of inter-generational conflict in addition to income-based or class conflict (Grafstein, 2014; Tepe and Vanhuysse, 2009). This could also apply to the provision of services, with healthcare catering more to the immediate needs of older people and education targeted at children and parents (Gál et al., 2018).

²⁷ The empirical fact that basic income has not been implemented and that benefits in general have not crowded out service expenditure again serves to weaken the real-world significance of the model.

²⁸ It may be more accurate to describe this approach as categorical, because such universal benefits usually target specific groups within the population, such as children and pensioners (Clasen and Clegg, 2007).

The drivers of welfare state preferences are also more multi-faceted than a static snapshot of relative income. Survey data shows that income is not a significant predictor of support for the welfare state or redistribution in all countries (Dion and Birchfield, 2010; Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). A life-cycle view of material interests may mean an individual's current income is an inadequate indicator of their long-term reliance on the welfare state. The 'prospect of upward mobility' (POUM) theory states that an individual's expectation of higher income in the future, due to education, reduces demands for redistribution (Benabou and Ok, 2001). The same could apply to wealth and assets (Ansell, 2009). On the other hand, labour market risks, i.e. the probability that an individual will lose their current job, create an *insurance* motive for redistribution (Rehm, 2009; Moene and Wallerstein, 2001). This may drive support for the welfare state among those with relatively high incomes. Individuals may also have 'sociotropic' and cultural preferences²⁹, at least partly divorced from an individual's material interests, that affect support for particular welfare state policies. These cultural factors appear to have become more significant in a globalised, post-industrial economy (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015); a point which is explored in more detail in the framework below. The salience of the welfare state to voters vis-à-vis other government priorities, such as crime or foreign policy, can also vary across countries, meaning political competition may be fought on different issues (Gingrich, 2014).

In summary, the *size* of the welfare state and the rate of tax are not the only important factors in politics and may not even be the most appropriate indicator of redistribution given the relative cost of (less redistributive) earnings-related social security. As illustrated in the previous chapter, basic income is a specific form of welfare state intervention, with idiosyncratic features that will generate trade-offs vis-à-vis other forms of social security or service provision. This in turn will affect the source of support and opposition to the policy and the individual-level factors driving support are bound to be multi-faceted.

3.2.3 Path-dependency and institutions

An extensive body of literature also points to the fact that historical context and institutions matter to the politics of the welfare state (Lynch and Rhodes, 2016). Firstly, the institutional legacies of welfare states limit the feasibility of policy proposals that deviate from existing provisions (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Governments that attempt to implement path-breaking policy will necessarily face a series of costs (Gingrich, 2015). Reform is likely to be technically costly as existing systems have sunk costs while new systems will require

²⁹ I.e. concerns about societal welfare or moral issues related to equality, reciprocity etc.

investment. It is also politically costly as existing social policies generate political constituencies that oppose reform (Pierson, 1996). Similarly, costs can arise from attempts to change the entrenched expectations of those that interact with the welfare state. The same applies to any tax reforms that would be required to fund expansionary social policy. Approaches rooted in behavioural psychology also emphasise that losses are more keenly felt than gains, providing a bias towards the status quo (Pierson, 1994; Vis, 2009). This leads to path dependence in policymaking: institutions tend to reproduce themselves and, where there is significant change, reform is more likely to be incremental than radical (Streeck and Thelen, 2005, p.9).

Institutional systems of corporatism and collective bargaining (or the lack of) also act as an important determinant of welfare state policies. The varieties of capitalism literature stresses that the construction of welfare states was at least partly motivated by the structure of these political economy institutions (Soskice et al., 2001). The concept of ‘welfare production regimes’ suggests that close linkages exist between workers’ investment in skills, the international product market strategies of firms, electoral politics, and social security policy. Labour unions have played an important role in forging welfare state institutions and continue to have an administrative role in many countries (Rasmussen and Pontusson, 2018; Scruggs, 2002). As Swenson (2002) has shown, employers were also critical actors in the early formation of social policy. As well as being involved in the *design* of policies, these ‘producer groups’ of employer and labour actors can further constrain the actions of government by acting as ‘veto players’ to future reforms, but this is dependent on the institutional context (Tsebelis, 1995; Obinger, 2002).

Historical institutionalist accounts tend to move beyond explaining the continuing stability of welfare states and explore how institutions not only constrain policymakers but also influence the reforms that governments do make (Hall and Soskice, 2001). This may be due to institutional dysfunction: negative feedback effects can generate the need for governments to reform welfare states, as much as positive feedback effects promote the status quo. Researchers also identify ‘critical junctures’; times at which reform *is* possible due to a specific context such as crises related to war or economic recession (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). These approaches provide explanations for governments that make path-breaking reform within institutional contexts: a fitting framework for understanding the political feasibility of reform strategies related to basic income.

As well as the role of institutions in constraining or enabling welfare state reform, the historical institutionalist literature has also developed (competing) theories that associate

varying forms of change with the nature of existing socio-political institutions. A well-known example is Thelen's 'varieties of liberalisation' model, which identified three distinctive ideal-type forms of liberalisation underpinned by distinctive processes in advanced political economies (Thelen, 2014). For example, liberalisation in liberal market economies is characterised by 'displacement', whereby market-oriented mechanisms and institutions push out or override previous arrangements. In contrast, institutions are 'reoriented' towards new, more market-centric logics, while retaining previous functions, in tripartite coordinated market economies experiencing liberalisation pressures. In highly coordinated continental European countries, 'institutional drift' captures the process whereby certain sectors or occupations retain their protections while a portion of the labour market has to weather liberalisation pressures, leading to 'dualization' (ibid, p. 147-148).

3.2.4 Political actors and parties

Lastly, political parties play an important role in determining welfare state policies. The Melter and Richard model and similar 'median voter' approaches imply that partisanship is irrelevant. If there is only one dimension of party competition, policymaking should converge on the median voter's preferences regardless of the party in government, given their incentives to stay in office. However, there is considerable evidence that partisanship matters: the political composition of government affects the welfare state policies adopted (Pettersson-Lidbom, 2008; Hicks and Swank, 1992; Bradley et al., 2003; Kühner, 2018). This implies that while electoral factors create incentives for parties to govern in the interests of the median voter, they have agency to design policies that differ from those.

Party difference theory (Hibbs, 1977) originally argued that parties behave differently because policies serve to consolidate their "class-defined core political constituencies". For example, in a trade-off between high unemployment and high inflation, left wing parties will prioritise reducing the unemployment rate to serve the interests of working class voters while right wing parties will prioritise reducing the inflation rate to serve middle class voters' interests. Power resources theory adopts a more sociological position that political parties act as a 'transmission belt' for latent class interests (Korpi, 1983; Huber and Stephens, 2001) . The welfare state approximates the "residues of conflict" (Korpi, 2001) between socioeconomic classes that compete for resource allocation through the political representation of parties. The *organised* working class are behind the emergence of a generous, redistributive welfare state, bound up politically in the parties of the social democratic left. In contrast, the middle classes favour a reduced role for the state and are served by parties of the right that seek to minimise taxes.

However, dealignment theories suggest that this straightforward relationship between economic classes and partisanship has gradually declined in relevance (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002). Both partisan theories described above represent what Häusermann, Picot, & Geering (2013) call the ‘traditional partisan politics approach’, which relies on an outdated view of party organisation and representation in the context of a post-industrial economy. This is largely because it ignores the other two factors that the M&R model fails to account for discussed in this section: the multiple dimensions of political competition and the role of institutions. The ‘new partisan politics of the welfare state’ precisely attempts to account for these factors, as well as include an appreciation of socioeconomic change in a post-industrial economy (Häusermann et al., 2013). It is within this literature that the theoretical framework is rooted and it is what drives the research design and research questions. These are explained in detail below.

3.3 Constrained partisanship in a post-industrial economy

3.3.1 Model of constrained partisanship

The three factors discussed above – multiple policy dimensions, institutions and parties – form the basis of the theoretical framework of the political economy of basic income employed in this thesis. More specifically, a model of ‘constrained partisanship’ developed by others to understand the political economy of advanced welfare states and (Beramendi et al., 2015; Manow et al., 2018) is applied to assess the political feasibility of basic income.

Towards this end, a stylised version of this approach characterises welfare state politics as an interaction between the supply and demand sides of social policies. The demand side relates to citizens’ policy preferences, which in turn affect electoral behaviour. The supply side relates to political actors and specifically elected political parties that put forward policy proposals to attract new voters and mobilise their base. Hence, social policies have political constituencies but also political ‘entrepreneurs’ that mobilise these constituencies, underpinning the success of both policy reform and stability. In addition, supply side *constraints* are equally important: the institutional legacies of welfare states and labour market institutions limit the feasibility of certain policy proposals (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). These are not only fiscal constraints, as illustrated in microsimulation models, but also the wider technical, political and expectations costs associated with policy reform (Gingrich, 2015).

A simple graphical representation of this model of welfare state politics is found below:

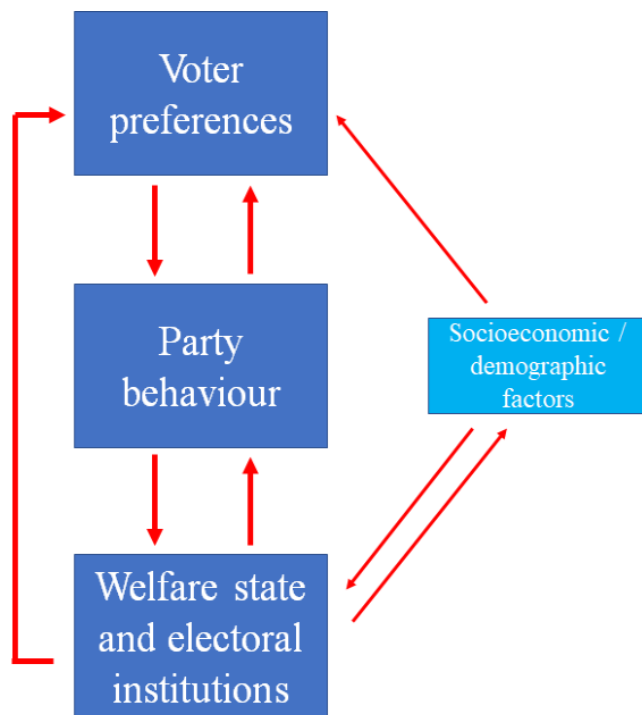


Figure 3.1: A stylised model of ‘constrained partisanship’ for assessing the political feasibility of basic income.

According to this framework, the central locus of interest for the political feasibility of a basic income is the commitment of political parties to supporting and then implementing reform if in government. A clear incentive structure for parties resides in the preferences of voters that they seek to attract. Thus, the existence of a political constituency for basic income is assumed a necessary requirement for parties to instigate reform. Institutions also direct party behaviour by shaping the feasible set of policy options.

As demonstrated in the previous section, the concept of ‘institutions’ is heterogenous across multiple disciplines and fields, from norms and rules to organisations and policies. When considering the politics of the welfare state, the most pertinent institutions are the legacies of social policies that exist in a given national context. Thus, the way in which taxes, social security and services have been organised in each country will limit the room for government and political parties to manoeuvre. This extends to existing labour market institutions and corporatist arrangements that are interconnected with welfare institutions. Finally, as parties are a central feature of this theoretical framework, there is a role for electoral systems in shaping the incentives political parties face in terms of representation and policymaking (Manow et al., 2018). There may also be process-related deficiencies in political or electoral institutions that distort the responsiveness of elected representatives (Gilens and Page, 2014;

Giger et al., 2012), while supranational institutions or policy agendas may also affect welfare state policy (Obinger et al., 2013). Nevertheless, these *political* institutions broadly take a less prominent role in the framework.

The diagram also emphasises the importance of policy feedback loops. As the diagram suggests, institutions do not only constrain the policy options available to political parties but they also influence citizen preferences (Campbell, 2012; Larsen, 2008). The empirical evidence on whether welfare *regimes* affect citizens' attitudes to social policies is mixed with some evidence in support (Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003) and some evidence points to a null effect (Bean and Papadakis, 1998; Larsen, 2008). However, the evidence on policy feedback loops is more convincing when testing for support for specific policy areas (Jordan, 2013). Broad welfare regimes may also shape the way people perceive the poor and influence whether they attribute poverty to luck or laziness rather than generating support for institutions based on material interests (Larsen, 2008).

Likewise, parties are not solely responsive to citizen preferences but can also shape them in meaningful ways. This can be in terms of how they *frame* policy issues or social problems, whereby parties communicate ideas that lead to an association between problems, their activities and certain outcomes in line with their own interests (Campbell, 1998; Béland, 2005). The process of framing is therefore a 'strategic and deliberate activity aimed at generating public support for specific policy ideas' (Béland, 2005, p.11). Moreover, political actors' frames, often tap into "existing ideological repertoires" to legitimize (in)action, reduce political risks and/or facilitate credit claiming towards the aim of political support" (ibid). The significance of framing is understood to depend on the type of policy reform (e.g. retrenchment policies rely more on framing as a blame avoidance strategy) and the political-institutional context (e.g. framing may be less significant in fragmented party systems where multiple narratives can be constructed).

Which of these effects dominates? And are parties primarily vote-seeking or policy-seeking (Strom, 1990)? The framework provided by Beramendi et al. (2015) strongly indicates that, while parties have the agency to position themselves in a multi-dimensional policy space, voter preferences are (broadly) exogenously given by socioeconomic and institutional factors. In other words, parties have a limited capacity to shape public opinion and policy proposals will serve primarily to attract votes rather than achieve policy goals. Yet, as Strom (1990) argues this is likely to depend on the context and the nature of specific parties. As the preceding paragraph suggested, the policy reform in question matters too. Thus, the framework here takes a more agnostic position on the grounds that parties could be

advocating basic income to achieve policy goals or to attract voters. The relationship between party and voter positions on basic income is explored in more detail in Section 3.4.

The role of institutions may also be more significant in shaping the pertinent cleavages in the politics of the welfare state. Thus, the effect of individual-level drivers of public attitudes, such as income, education and risk, are moderated by existing institutions (Gingrich & Ansell, 2012). For example, evidence suggests that the extent to which a country's taxes and transfers are progressive, in that they redistribute from rich to poor, affects the significance of income in predicting support for redistribution (Beramendi and Rehm, 2015). This is said to be because "preferences respond to the actual distribution of who gives and who gains", which differs across country contexts.

The role of socio-economic and demographic change in this framework deviates from a functionalist perspective in that the effect on policymaking is mediated by voter preferences and the specific institutional context. Yet, it is also important to stress that these socioeconomic and demographic changes are also at least partly affected by existing institutions and policies. For example, the early expansion of female employment in Nordic countries relied in many contexts on the emergence of public sector jobs (Manow et al., 2013). Equally, exposure to labour market risks, poverty and inequality clusters around different welfare state and labour market institutions (Ferragina et al., 2015).

This framework also borrows from the welfare regime approach of Esping-Andersen (1990). He argued that such regimes were constructed by different political parties, which in turn relied on generating historically contingent class coalitions of voters. Welfare regime theory also draws on historical institutionalism in that regimes exhibited path-dependency and were therefore relatively stable over time. Although the exact boundaries of welfare state typologies are not consistent across studies that use different theories and indicators (Arts and Gelissen, 2002), the fact that recent contributions to the literature (e.g. Manow et al., 2018) continue to use the broad contours of the welfare regime framework show the enduring resilience of institutions and the socio-demographic coalitions that underpin their stability.

3.3.2 Welfare state reform in a post-industrial economy

However, as mentioned before, alongside a background of institutional stability has come considerable reform and change (Thelen, 2014). Long-term structural pressures – including deindustrialisation, globalisation, changing family forms, technological advances and population ageing – have given rise to increased demands on the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1996; Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2005). Coupled with concerns about international competitiveness on tax rates, this has led to a corresponding pressure to reign

in expenditure; the emergence of what Pierson (1996) has depicted as an environment of ‘permanent austerity’ across advanced welfare states. The above literature argues that this socio-economic and institutional context has sharpened the trade-offs between different policies and increased pressure to *reorganise* existing systems as compared with the period of expansion before the 1980s (see also Häusermann, Kurer, & Traber, 2019). Thus, retrenchment and recalibration have become dominant themes in the trajectories of welfare states, albeit to different degrees and in different ways (Breunig and Busemeyer, 2012).

Some governments have also embraced a social investment agenda to prioritise the productive – as opposed to the protective – functions of the welfare state (Hudson and Kühner, 2009; van Kersbergen et al., 2014; Hemerijck, 2015). This has brought into focus a host of emerging policy issues such as family and early childhood care and the expansion of higher education. As the previous chapter briefly alluded to, there has been an increased emphasis on active labour market policies and the role of behavioural conditionality within social security systems to reduce unemployment (Bonoli, 2010; Knotz, 2018). ‘Welfare chauvinism’ has also become an increasingly salient issue, as many governments have increasingly restricted migrants’ access to welfare benefits and services (Andersen, 2007; Careja et al., 2016).

An important means of explaining this shifting political environment lies in the socio-economic and demographic change that has transformed the *demand-side* of the welfare state. For example, the decline of manufacturing as a share of GDP across all high-income countries has had dramatic implications for occupational patterns, specifically the decline of the ‘blue collar’ working class. This has occurred alongside a decline in trade union membership and the growth of white collar and low-skilled service sector employment (Oesch, 2006; Oesch, 2014). The emergence of an insider-outsider divide has further split the working class, between labour market insiders with secure employment and accompanying social rights and outsiders that cycle between atypical employment and unemployment (Rueda, 2005; Schwander and Häusermann, 2013). Female employment has also risen across advanced welfare states, increasing demand for childcare and other family policies (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010; Schwander, 2018).

These changes have been highly significant in the realm of electoral politics and have motivated a research agenda described as an ‘electoral turn’ in the study of welfare states (Green-Pedersen and Jensen, 2019; Beramendi et al., 2015). However, there is disagreement about what precisely the consequences have been for party competition and its impact on welfare state politics (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2015). ‘Dealignment theory’, points to the

general decline in the relevance of socio-economic class for questions around partisanship – the ‘dealignment’ of class, ideological orientation and party allegiance, and the corresponding emergence of ‘catch-all’ politics and the increasing importance of issue-voting (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002). Parties occupy an increasingly crowded centre ground, geared towards stimulating economic growth, containing expenditure and appealing to the median voter. Within this narrative left parties increasingly adopt ‘Third Way’ policies and retrench welfare states as they have become detached from their working class base (Arndt, 2013), which is also shrinking in size.

On the other hand, ‘realignment theory’ asserts that socio-economic class and ideology still matter for party allegiance – but that the way that they matter has changed, because traditional class structures have broken down, giving rise to new and complex patterns of economic and cultural preferences, which are reflected in the positions and strategies of political parties. Recent evidence suggests that mainstream Social Democratic parties have lost support from the working class to right-wing populist parties, motivated by opposition to immigration or globalisation, or new left parties that defend the rights of outsiders (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). For significant number of blue-collar workers, a preference for a large, redistributive welfare state is combined with ‘welfare chauvinist’ views and authoritarian attitudes towards the duties of welfare claimants (and the appropriate treatment for those who do not adequately fulfil them) (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015). Meanwhile left-wing parties – including those of the post-productivist ‘new left’ – attract growing numbers of middle class voters, especially highly-educated ‘socio-cultural professionals’, motivated by cosmopolitan and socially liberal values as well as support for social investment (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014).

Yet, these changes are also mediated by the specific institutional contexts that parties operate in. Female employment rates and fertility rates are also affected by social investment policies that facilitate labour market entry and provide economic security with parental leave (Kowalewska, 2017; Esping-Andersen, 2015). Importantly, electoral systems influence the nature of party-voter linkages, as majoritarian systems restrict the entry of new parties that seek to mobilise voters poorly represented by mainstream parties.

In short, these trends have served to complicate the increasingly multi-faceted nature of welfare state politics but also leave the door open to new reforms, such as basic income. The question is whether socio-economic and demographic trends, which interact with specific institutional contexts, may be recasting political constituencies in such a way as to provide incentives for parties to pursue basic income-related reforms. To explore the extent to which

this holds, there is a need to explore the factors that increase political support for basic income and how this may manifest itself into the implementation of basic income-related policies.

3.4 The political economy of basic income in a post-industrial economy

This section discusses the implications of this framework for the political feasibility of basic income and the theoretical expectations about how support for basic income from voters and political parties is driven by the interaction of ideological, socio-economic, and institutional factors³⁰.

3.4.1 Ideological divides

Starting with the ideological drivers of party support, the common assertion that basic income is ‘neither left nor right’ would imply that ideology is irrelevant (Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019). To some extent, such a statement is best seen as a campaign slogan used by advocates to promote the policy. Yet, as the previous chapter indicated, there is an element of truth in the assertion that political actors across the political spectrum advocate a basic income, which requires greater unpacking using the political economy framework above. From the perspective of advocates, the most obvious reason for claiming that basic income is non-ideological is to imply it is an objectively effective policy at meeting uncontested policy goals. This emphasis on evidence-based policymaking, regardless of the validity of such claims, would line up with the dealignment thesis. For example, parties may propose basic income because they believe it will effectively reconcile the twin aims of poverty alleviation and employment that have appeal across the electorate. Parties across the political spectrum may also advocate basic income to attract voters through issue-voting, if individual voters are attracted to basic income independently of broader ideological commitments.

On the other hand, the realignment thesis offers an alternative perspective on why basic income may traverse the traditional left-right spectrum. As Häusermann & Kriesi (2015) note, preferences regarding the imposition of reciprocal responsibilities or behavioural conditions on welfare recipients, the legitimacy of punitive sanctions, and restrictions to the entitlement rights of non-citizens (‘welfare chauvinism’) are all determined by issues relating to values and cultural identity as well as the nature of redistributive justice. Hence, the so-called ‘cultural’ dimension of politics – which as the above discussion implied appears to be increasingly significant in determining political partisanship – may also be critical in

³⁰ Theoretical expectations based on the framework are also discussed alongside existing analysis of the European Social Survey (ESS) data on public attitudes to basic income published during the course of the PhD.

understanding political support for basic income (Chrisp, 2017). Basic income would dilute or remove the reciprocal and/or punitive aspects of one aspect of the welfare state and is therefore more likely to attract social liberals or libertarians of both the right and left. On the other hand, socially authoritarian voters, for whom entitlement to welfare should be earned and are restricted for ‘undeserving’ groups in particular are opposed to less punitive, more universal provision. Thus, basic income may be neither left nor right on the *economic* dimension but not on the *cultural* dimension.

The framework suggests that the demand-side of basic income support, i.e. voter preferences, can provide an insight into the drivers of party support. Analysis of the existing European Social Survey (ESS) data has challenged the idea that basic income transcends the left-right divide, given the greater propensity of individuals that place themselves on the left of the spectrum to support basic income (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019b). This would suggest that left-wing *parties* are more likely to support basic income if they are responsive to voter preferences as the framework suggests. However, given this prior analysis does not distinguish between the economic and cultural dimension of politics, the ideological “sweet-spot” for basic income may be new left parties that take culturally libertarian *and* left wing economic policy positions, not the traditional social democratic parties.

On the other hand, Roosma & van Oorschot (2019) argue that support for basic income is driven much more by concerns about poverty and the desire to target resources to those on the lowest income than the wish to provide a universal or unconditional benefit. This suggests preferences for redistribution towards the most in need, rather than culturally libertarian attitudes explain public support for basic income. On the other hand, they also find that support for benefits to combine work and family life are positively associated with support for basic income, as one might expect. Similarly, Parolin & Siöland (2019) find evidence of a negative relationship between welfare chauvinism and support for basic income, thus supporting the cultural dimension of opposition outlined above. Finally, Roosma & van Oorschot (2019) find that support for increasing spending on education for the unemployed at the expense of unemployment benefit levels is associated with support for basic income.

The association of ‘increasing spending on education *at the expense of* benefits’ and ‘restricting benefits to those on the lowest incomes (targeting)’ with support for basic income is, to some extent, counter-intuitive. In regards to the former, the realignment framework above, which collapses libertarian cultural preferences, opposition to punitive sanctions and support for social investment into a single universalism-particularism dimension may offer

a theoretical explanation. Thus, although basic income is a cash benefit and its introduction would appear to contradict with the desire to increase spending on education for the unemployed, the broader ideological goals associated with reducing bureaucracy, encouraging work and facilitating retraining may align with the broader notion of social investment (Martinelli et al., 2018). Similarly, providing universal flat-rate benefits as opposed to social insurance aligns with the universalistic dimension rather than particularistic.

In regards to the latter, there are both substantive and methodological reasons that help explain the correlation of support for targeting with support for basic income. Methodologically, the ESS survey question explicitly mentions that the aim of the policy is to provide a minimum income, while it also describes the fact it is flat rate and replaces other benefits. The substantive reason is that the basic income would always be highly redistributive if accompanied by a corresponding increase in income tax, as the vast majority of proposed models of basic income are and indeed the M&R model illustrates³¹. In addition, while explicitly stating a purpose of basic income is biased framing, the description of the policy in the ESS is precise and accurate according to the BIEN definition of the policy (i.e. not the cognates/steps described in the previous chapter). Basic income is often pitched as a means to improve the minimum income or social assistance system to free those on the lowest income from a punitive system that dis-incentivises work, or is explicitly seen as a way to move away from earnings-related social insurance.

These studies provide an early indication of the likely results in the voter preferences analysis in the thesis. However, they fail to provide definitive answers to the research questions for three reasons. Firstly, previous analysis has focused on either one country or all European Economic Area countries in the ESS sample, while the thesis asks questions about the dynamics of basic income support in advanced welfare states. For this reason, the results are likely to be similar but not identical. Second, the data provide no indication of how this translates into *party* preferences. Existing analysis has not explored the effect of partisanship per se on voters rather than left-right ideology in general. The alignment of parties and voters on support for basic income can indicate the extent to which parties are vote-seeking or policy-seeking when advocating the policy. Finally, there has been limited analysis of the multi-dimensional nature of support for basic income³². The discussion in

³¹ As explained in the previous chapter, a basic income and flat-rate tax is identical to a negative income tax in distributional terms (Widerquist, 2017a).

³² Recent conjoint surveys have directly addressed the multi-dimensionality of basic income (Stadelmann-Steffen and Dermont, 2019; Rincon, 2019), but the ESS data has not been utilised to these ends.

Section 3.3.4 focuses on how ideological drivers of support vary across different constituencies and institutional contexts.

3.4.2 Socio-economic trends

The second broad factor of interest driving party support are socio-economic trends. These are likely to be intertwined with the ideological divides described above but they are also likely to affect the overall levels of party support. The most straightforward theory, in this regard, would be that parties increasingly turn to basic income during difficult economic times. Many authors have linked the recent interest among political actors to the aftermath of the financial crisis and the need for radical solutions to the economic crisis (De Wispelaere, 2017; Widerquist, 2017b). However, theories outlined in the previous chapter suggested that unemployment rather than recession per se drives political support for basic income. The unique relevance of high unemployment is that it can provide both productivist and post-productivist advocates with a rationale to propose basic income. When unemployment is high, political actors may identify problems with existing social security institutions that reduce incentives to work. Many dimensions of a basic income, such as the fact that it is non-withdrawable, automatic and simple, lend themselves to being framed as a solution to boost employment. At the same time, political actors with post-productivist goals are likely to view high unemployment as an opportunity to argue that traditional employment relationships are outdated or that harsh treatment of those out of work is unfair. Basic income is an apt policy in such an instance as a means to facilitate alternative working arrangements, including unpaid work, or reduce conditions in existing benefits on unemployed people where the structural reasons for their unemployment are emphasised.

As the previous chapter showed, advocates also often cite the precariat (Standing, 2014), an emerging group of workers that suffer multiple labour market risks, as beneficiaries and potential supporters (see also Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). Providing income security through generous unconditional benefits is seen as particularly valuable for those with an insecure attachment to the labour market and an irregular history of social security contributions. Within the political economy literature, the precariat is roughly analogous to labour market outsiders, who are found to oppose conditionality and earnings-related benefits (Schwander and Häusermann, 2013; Fossati, 2017). Thus, on the flip-side, for both empirical and theoretical reasons, we would expect insiders and union members to be opposed. The evidence from previous analysis of the ESS data has mostly focused on and highlighted this relationship between labour market risks or material deprivation and support for basic income, finding a relationship at both the individual- and country-level (Adriaans et al., 2019; Chrisp and Martinelli, 2018; Roosma and van Oorschot, 2020; Sacchi et al.,

2020; Vlandas, 2019). Union membership is also negatively associated with support for basic income adding weight to the insider-outsider distinction, although this effect is insignificant after the introduction of control variables (Vlandas, 2019).

Related to their weaker attachment to the labour market, women are also often cited as a possible constituency for basic income (Pateman, 2004b; Zelleke, 2008). Similarly, young people are also more likely to face labour market risks, particularly since the financial crisis (Blanchflower and Freeman, 2000; Ranci, 2010). Both women and young people are generally more socially liberal, which may feed into greater support for basic income. This latter factor also points to education as an important cleavage in the politics of basic income, given its association with libertarian cultural preferences (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015), although education will also act as insurance against labour market risks (Benabou and Ok, 2001). In particular, the knowledge economy heightens the division between the growing numbers of university graduates and those without a degree. All of these individual-level factors – outsiders, women, graduates and young people – point to the idea that basic income will find favour with new left parties that tend to attract such voters. Equally, social democratic parties that have found their voting base move towards these groups may also increasingly advocate basic income. However, the institutional ties between the ‘labourist’ left, i.e. social democratic parties, and unions suggest proposing basic income will be difficult for these parties (Tsarouhas, 2012; Vanderborght, 2006). Given unions will oppose reforms to social security arrangements that they have a stake in, we might expect social democratic parties to be more strongly opposed to basic income than their voters.

However, existing analysis of the ESS provides mixed evidence for these theoretical claims. Firstly, age is a highly robust predictor of basic income preferences, with young people much more in favour, even after controlling for a number of covariates. Yet, the ESS results have challenged the idea that basic income is attractive to women and well-educated individuals, with either a negative or insignificant relationship to support for basic income. In Germany, analysis suggests that education is *positively* associated with basic income support (Adriaans et al., 2019), so there may be cross-national variation related to the inclusion of many heterogeneous countries.

Finally, the theoretical framework draws on the *realignment* literature that argues parties compete to represent new occupational class groups unique to a post-industrial economy and advanced welfare states (Beramendi et al., 2015; Oesch, 2006). Thus, it is important to identify a constituency for basic income within this conceptualisation of horizontal (as well as vertical) class differences. Based on the mix of redistributive and cultural dimensions, we

would expect middle-class ‘sociocultural professionals’ and workers in the service sector, classified as ‘low service functionaries’, to be more supportive than ‘capital accumulators’, ‘mixed service functionaries’ and even ‘blue collar workers’, who may be cross-pressured by their insider and authoritarian preferences. Existing analysis has not explored these factors nor has it attempted to explore the socioeconomic divides *within* party voter bases. This can inform the extent to which basic income poses electoral trade-offs for parties that wish to mobilise different socio-political groups.

3.4.3 Institutional context

The influence of existing welfare state institutions is also essential to understanding the political feasibility of basic income. Existing ESS analysis has shown that the size of the existing welfare state, in terms of social expenditure, is negatively related to the level of support for basic income at the country-level (Lee, 2018; Vlandas, 2019). Lee (2018) suggests that the lack of social protection in these countries creates a greater demand for basic income. In other words, the social protection that basic income promises is more attractive in countries without sufficient *existing* social security. This intuitive theory, however, can be broadened to take other pertinent welfare state characteristics beyond total social expenditure into account, in line with developments in welfare state research, which emphasise the importance of expenditure-based measured of welfare states alongside other characteristics (Clasen and Clegg, 2007).

An overarching framework to interpret the institutional context is to consider dimensions of the existing welfare state that are *congruent* with a basic income and those that are *incongruent*. For example, countries with strict behavioural requirements and sanctions will be incongruent with a basic income on the dimension of (conduct) conditionality. Similarly, countries with low levels of cash benefit spending relative to services will be incongruent with a basic income on the cash-service dimension. In the case of total social expenditure, one could argue that low levels of social expenditure are incongruent with a basic income to the extent that they provide inadequate social protection in general. Low levels of expenditure may also imply an insufficient fiscal base with which to provide a basic income. Given the results concerning expenditure, one may expect to see incongruence on a number of dimensions drive support for basic income at the country-level. However, this may of course depend on the extent to which that characteristic of the welfare state finds support from the public and how salient a factor it is in determining their support. This highlights another important relevance of the institutional context, which I turn to in the next section.

3.4.4 Multi-dimensionality across constituencies and institutions

There is an obvious contradiction when conceptualising a basic income, in its most abstract form, within much of the political economy literature and the constrained partisanship framework laid out above. The challenge is to reconcile a policy idea that often implies that existing institutions can be entirely *replaced* with a framework that expects institutional stickiness and incremental reforms. This is where the multi-dimensionality of basic income proposals outlined in the previous chapter is essential. If a full basic income is politically infeasible due to a series of institutional constraints, political actors must be flexible in pursuing basic income reforms. What past analysis has failed to answer is how the multi-dimensional nature of basic income complicates voters' and parties' preferences in relation to the policy.

Thus, exploring the supply-side of basic income, i.e. the policy proposals political parties make, requires an explanation of the *variety* of reforms strategies. The notion of 'cheap support' for basic income suggests that other characteristics of political parties other than ideology will also affect the *levels* of support and commitment (De Wispelaere, 2015b). Crucially, the size and legislative power of a party is likely to be inversely related to the strength of support for basic income (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017, p.206). In addition, the *type* of basic income proposals and the actors advocating the policy is likely to vary: basic income is an ambiguous policy instrument. In terms of voters, basic income's constituencies may be pulled in different directions by the idea of a basic income. For example, some supporters may be attracted to its universalism but others to the promise of guaranteeing a minimum income for the poorest. A related unanswered question is the extent of division *within* parties. For example, the trade-offs associated with insider-outsider politics are said to be most pertinent for social democratic parties (Rueda, 2005). To the extent that basic income is a wedge policy issue dividing insiders and outsiders, we might expect the difference to be largest among social democratic voters. A similar dynamic may be visible for education, gender and age, with young, educated people and women in social democratic parties strongly in favour, versus older, low-skilled men who are strongly opposed.

This also requires explaining the heterogeneity of party proposals for basic income. While advocates may label the policy 'neither left nor right' or 'beyond left and right', a more accurate description may be that basic income is *either* left or right (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019b). In other words, the precise policy proposal will depend on the political actors' advocating it. Left-wing parties will advocate redistributive basic income policies and prioritise reducing poverty, while right-wing parties will advocate basic income policies that

involve replacing existing benefits and prioritise reducing bureaucracy and activation. Given the possibility for basic income proposals to vary on a number of dimensions, this may also correspond to the variety of political actors on the left and right. For example, new left parties will be more likely to support post-productivist basic income policies or those that prioritise the interests of labour market outsiders. Populist right or nativist parties may propose basic income policies that restrict access to citizens and exclude foreign residents.

Importantly, the framework suggests that the heterogeneity of proposals is also likely to depend on the specific institutional context. Existing welfare state institutions provide country-specific constraints but also motivate the need for reform in the first place. Thus, welfare state institutions are unlikely to drive voter and party support for basic income in a linear direction. Rather the institutional context may relate to the specific strategies of *different* political actors and shape which groups of voters are attracted to a basic income. For example, the history of basic income in the UK showed that political actors within both left and right parties have advocated the policy at different times. This may directly relate to the varying institutional context that these political actors found themselves in. In the inter-war period, the lack of a welfare state may explain why left-wing figures pitched basic income as an expansionary policy to redistribute income. On the other hand, in a context of radical welfare state expansion in the post-war period, it is understandable that basic income was advocated by right-wing political actors as a way to *contain* the expansion of the welfare state, or as a least-bad form of intervention. Generalising this example would mean that the *size* of the welfare state reduces the extent to which the left supports basic income relative to the right.

Martinelli & De Wispelaere (2017) make a similar theoretical argument, arguing that the institutional (and socioeconomic) context will shape the ‘varieties of basic income’ we see across countries. This ‘variety’ refers to both the type of political actors supporting basic income and the specific policy proposals they advocate. Martinelli and De Wispelaere (2017) relate this dynamic to more fine-grained features of existing welfare state and labour market institutions, such as the coverage of existing social security, the strictness of conditionality rules attached to benefits and the fiscal regime. Interestingly, they are agnostic as to whether the dimensions of the existing system that are congruent or incongruent with basic income will be more salient in political debate. However, in line with the theory that levels of social expenditure will increase support from *right-wing* political actors who want to decrease spending, I expect the incongruence of a basic income with the existing system to drive support (and opposition). In other words, political actors and voters will view basic income as a way of transforming the welfare state rather than continuing its trajectory. Thus, as an

illustrative example, the rationale of a basic income is more likely to be increasing coverage in countries with very low coverage. Similarly, supporters of the status quo who benefit from restricted coverage may also be more likely to oppose basic income for this reason.

In their analysis, Parolin & Siöland (2019) consider the question of cross-national variation in the ideological determinants of voter support for basic income. However, contrary to the theoretical expectations above, they find that in countries where social spending is high, being left-wing has a *greater* effect on support for basic income. Yet, they also find that welfare chauvinism is a better predictor of opposition to basic income in high-spending countries. Thus, taking these two findings together, there is a question about which dimension (i.e. economic or cultural) the left-right self-placement measure is picking up. The theoretical argument that higher social spending will increase support among right-wing political actors and voters (and thus reduce the salience of the left-right divide) is distinctly related to the *economic* dimension of redistributive politics. Instead, the increasing effect of welfare chauvinism in larger welfare states could be compatible with an alternative modernisation or welfare competition argument, whereby economic development or social spending heighten the salience of the *cultural* dimension (e.g. Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). This and other institutional determinants, beyond social expenditure, are intriguing questions to explore in the research.

3.5 Conclusion: summary of theoretical framework and research questions

The chapter started with two research questions: What are the determinants of political support for basic income and how and why does support vary cross-nationally? The content of this chapter has laid out a political economy of the welfare state framework in order to specify these questions, and therefore the focus and purpose of empirical investigation. It also provides a lens with which to interpret the findings of the empirical investigation. More specifically, the framework resulted in the specification of research questions concerning the drivers of support for basic income by political parties and voters, and proposed the relevance and interplay of ideological, socio-economic and institutional factors in determining support, which are re-stated here.

At the heart of the theoretical framework is a conceptualisation of political support that concerns the *supply-side* of basic income support, i.e. the behaviour of political parties. In this regard, the central research question is elaborated to concern what factors drive party support for basic income and how that support translates into policymaking and legislation. Simultaneously, voters' preferences for basic income – the *demand-side* – are considered

both an important determinant of party behaviour and worthy of investigation in their own right. Thus, another important research question concerns the factors that relate to support for basic income among the public. In other words, what is the political constituency for basic income? The analytical separation of demand- and supply-side factors facilitates analysis of the extent of alignment between parties and their potential supporters, and thus feeds into theory of the political economy of basic income and of the welfare state more broadly. The extent to which parties and voters align also aids an understanding of *why* parties advocate basic income, as vote-seeking or policy-seeking.

As well as identifying the relevant units of analysis, political parties and voters, the theoretical framework also identified three groups of factors that may *explain* party and voter support. The first question posed, therefore, is which *ideological* factors explain basic income preferences? Specifically, this means testing the assumption that basic income is neither left nor right and, at the same time, whether economic or cultural preferences better explain variance in basic income support. Second, it was theorised that support for basic income is likely to be highly contingent on *socioeconomic* trends in a post-industrial economy, notably unemployment. The question to be addressed in the research is therefore: To what extent do socioeconomic factors, specifically unemployment and labour market risks, drive support for basic income?

Third, the framework set out the role of institutions in constraining political actors' policy options and shaping the preferences of voters and parties. Institutional constraints are therefore fed into the model for explaining and interpreting different forms and degrees of basic income support across countries and over time. This leads onto another set of research questions, which concern the multi-dimensionality of basic income and the cross-national variation in support for the policy. To what extent can the institutional context explain the political actors that support a basic income and why? To answer this question, the thesis examines whether characteristics of the existing welfare state that are (*in*)*congruent* with a basic income are more salient predictors of support across different institutional contexts. Finally, given the variance in political strategies for implementing basic income-related policies, it is important to also explore how political support translates into policymaking. Effectively this is an extension and nuancing of the dependent variable 'basic income support' to allow for variation in the types of basic income policy pursued in given contexts and their distinctive drivers.

4 Methodology: A mixed-methods research design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the methodological approach employed in the thesis to answer the research questions. It was informed by the theoretical framework set out in the previous chapter and employs a mixed methods research design. This combines quantitative analysis of party and voter preferences, in line with other political economy research into voter and party representation (e.g. Manow, Palier, & Schwander, 2018), with case studies that draw on a tradition of historical institutionalism to examine the role of context, mechanisms and a multitude of actors important to the politics of basic income (e.g. Thelen, 2014).

The mixed-methods approach adopted here is split across three main parts of the empirical investigation. The first is longitudinal quantitative analysis of party support for basic income at elections between 1980 and 2018. The second part comprises analysis of cross-sectional attitudinal data from the European Social Survey in 2016-2017 to predict voter preferences for basic income. The third part comprises two case studies of the partisan interest in basic income after the financial crisis in the UK and Finland, with a particular focus on the role of the institutional contexts in shaping the politics of basic income.

The chapter is structured as follows: Section 4.2 justifies the mixed-methods research design, explaining the methodological principles underpinning the research. The scope of the research design, including the decision to restrict the investigation to advanced welfare states in Europe after 1980 is also explained. Section 4.3 focuses on the methods applied to explaining party support for basic income, and discusses the collection, coding and analysis of data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006) database and other sources used for the analysis.

Section 4.4 outlines the data and the analysis that were utilised to examine voter preferences for basic income, notably secondary data from wave 8 of the European Social Survey (ESS), which included a question on basic income. Finally, Section 4.6 describes and justifies the case study approach employed to examine the politics of basic income in the UK and Finland, including the merits and drawbacks of the elite interviews with political actors in both countries and other secondary data sources. The conclusion summarises the overall approach paving the way for the presentation of the empirical investigation in the subsequent chapters.

4.2 Comparative, mixed-methods research design

The decision to adopt a comparative mixed-methods research design aligns with the literature underpinning the theoretical framework. Firstly, in identifying the determinants of political support for basic income, the research employed the methods of political economy approaches that analyse voter preferences for social policies or ideological positions (e.g. Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015). In line with the traditions and assumptions of ‘variable-oriented’ research, quantitative analysis of survey data and political documents was undertaken to examine the relationship between the factors identified as salient in the theoretical framework (the independent variables) and political support for basic income in a generalisable manner across contexts (Ragin, 1989).

At the same time, the theoretical framework also places strong emphasis on studying the politics of basic income in national contexts in order to understand how political actors’ behaviours and rationales are shaped by welfare state and political institutions. Thus the case study method is employed to understand or interpret outcomes or processes by “piecing evidence together in a manner sensitive to historical chronology” (Ragin, 1989, p.35; Lynch and Rhodes, 2016, p.421). Case studies are employed to interrogate the relationships identified in statistical analysis, in line with ‘realist’ perspectives that pay closer attention to the ‘causal mechanisms’ and processes behind possible relationships (Gerring, 2009, p.93). The case studies were also employed to offset limits to the quantitative analysis in capturing variation in both the context-specific meaning of basic income and the significance of political support in national contexts (Ragin, 1989, p.35).

Charges against mixed or multi-method research include the incompatibility of the ontology and epistemology of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as those concerning data collection and analyses. Responses to these criticisms vary depending on the approach taken by the researcher. For example, pragmatic approaches are primarily concerned with using all tools available to fully answer the research questions (Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2015, p.xxxv), whereas the ‘dialectical approach’ employed here involves ‘creating a spiralling conversation between the epistemological paradigms and the methods themselves’ (ibid). Departing from purist perspectives, it uses the insights garnered from different methods and their associate epistemologies to speak to one another. For example, while acknowledging that basic income and political support may have context-specific meanings, this study does not subscribe to the pure interpretivist-constructivist approaches that these phenomena cannot be examined across cultural contexts and independently of the actors that create meaning within them (Hay, 2008, p.60). Nor does it subscribe to the pure positivist approach,

which sees qualitative inquiry as unable to satisfy certain criteria for producing sound knowledge, and it acknowledges the limits of some quantitative measures of a complex social world that such analyses necessarily simplifies (Ragin, 1989, p.54). Instead, the theory underpinning this thesis adopts the view that the social world is not *wholly* generalizable or reducible to laws and principles but that it is possible to study and analyse social reality in a meaningful way, using quantitative and qualitative methods across countries and over time, being mindful of the contributions and limits of each.

Relatedly, the presentation of the investigation in the thesis implies a sequential and linear research process, with the quantitative analysis leading onto the exploration of mechanisms in the case studies. However, the analysis was more iterative and approximated the process of nested analysis described by Lieberman (2005, 2015). Initial quantitative analysis that was carried out before the case studies was later refined using insights from the case studies. In particular, the choice of country-level variables to interact with other welfare state attitudes in the voter preferences chapter was partly informed by the cases: the relative salience of conditionality and providing a minimum income in the UK and Finland appeared to be related to the *existing* configuration of welfare state institutions. However, as this was the only significant change to the models in the quantitative analysis, it did not warrant presenting the entire research design as three-staged. Other key insights in the case studies that either highlighted the role of other actors, raised alternative theoretical explanations or challenged the assumptions in the quantitative analysis were difficult or impossible to reintroduce back into the regressions. The significance of these findings are explored in relation to suggested future research in the final discussion chapter.

This description of the benefits of mixed-methods research exposes the methodological position I take in the thesis. Lieberman (2015, p. 241) suggests that the “sweet spot” for nested analysis, which could extend to most mixed-methods approaches, are studies where “causation is understood in terms of likelihoods and probabilities.” In other words, it is not well-suited to deterministic claims that use Mill’s methods or Boolean logic to prove necessary and/or sufficient conditions for Y to occur.

In terms of the tools and techniques available for comparative researchers, quantitative and qualitative methods are associated with some distinctive and overlapping strengths and weaknesses. For example, the increasing availability of standardised and representative cross-national (and longitudinal/ time-series) datasets along with developments in statistical techniques provide researchers with means to test relationships between variables using more carefully constructed indicators across contexts. Yet, often quantitative data of social

phenomenon are far from perfect and there are other issues associated with statistical analyses including ‘problems posed by influential cases’ and ‘the arbitrariness of standard significance tests’ (Gerring, 2009, p.92; Spicker, 2017). Qualitative methods associated with case-studies in comparative political economy, such as interviews and analysis of policy documents, are better oriented towards understanding processes and meaning and aspects of social reality that are not (easily) measured using, for example, surveys, across contexts.

However, the tools and techniques associated with case studies are less systematic and are seen to involve more subjectivity on the part of the researcher. The intensiveness of case studies often restricts the number of cases compared and the scope of the analysis within a given case, and selection bias is also a key concern levied against case study approaches, which often select on the basis of the dependent variable, a violation of standards in quantitative research (Mahoney and Terrie, 2008, p.744). The combination of methods can therefore help to advance “the quality of conceptualisation and measurement”, “analysis of rival explanations”, and “overall confidence in the central findings of a study” (Lieberman, 2015). In other words, if executed effectively, “multimethod research combines the strength of large-N designs for identifying empirical regularities and patterns, and the strength of case studies for revealing the causal mechanisms that give rise to political outcomes of interest” (Fearon and Laitin, 2009, p.1168). These tensions, limitations and merits of mixed-methods research also played out in the process of conducting the empirical investigation for this thesis.

First, the inclusion of case studies helped to test the inferences made in the quantitative analysis, by exploring the mechanisms by which the correlates of political support for basic income may drive it. In both the party and voter quantitative analysis, the number of cases (15) at the country-level is also limited to such an extent that the statistical power of inferences is weak. An interrogation of two cases that differ in terms of their institutional and socioeconomic context helps to examine the theoretical argument in detail. Perhaps more importantly, the difficulty with collecting and analysing data on both party and voter support for basic income leaves the quantitative research open to criticism that it suffers from the ‘streetlight effect’ or ‘the principle of the drunkard's search’ (Kaplan, 1964). In short, this is because the survey and manifesto data do not provide definitive evidence on the level (and type) of support for basic income from voters and parties respectively. To continue with the use of the streetlight metaphor, the mixed-methods approach allows quantitative analysis of the data where there is the brightest light, but also to spend some time searching in the dark, with less generalisable but nevertheless insightful analysis of cases.

To some extent, the case studies also provided evidence on additional research questions. Although the term is usually used to refer to methodological problems when measuring the welfare state itself, the notion of a ‘dependent variable’ problem is equally pertinent when assessing the political feasibility of basic income (Clasen and Siegel, 2007). There are two elements to this problem related to both the concept of ‘basic income’ and the notion of ‘support’. The analysis of party manifestos and voter preferences equate political feasibility with indicators of ‘support’, while both also mostly constrain the analysis to one dichotomous variable of support for basic income³³. However, in-depth case studies offer an alternative lens to query assumptions regarding the relationship between ‘support’ as operationalised in quantitative analysis and political feasibility. They also afford a more holistic view of how institutions constrain and influence party strategies, without relying solely on the quantitative operationalisation of institutional characteristics of a welfare state. For example, the measure of conditionality used in the quantitative analysis is blunt because it only applies to unemployment insurance benefits, whereas conditionality within welfare systems is often applied in many more policy areas, to different degrees. More fundamentally, the case studies probe how political support translates into legislative behaviour in a way that the quantitative analysis cannot because the quantitative analysis is restricted to manifestos.

Finally, the other main decision for the overarching research design is the scope of the analysis in terms of the contexts studied. In terms of which countries are included, the research focuses on ‘advanced welfare states’, the boundaries of which are discussed below. Yet, I also chose to focus on European welfare states, rather than those in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Japan that are usually included in such a category. This was primarily for practical rather than substantive reasons, given the lack of cross-national survey data that included non-European countries, the accessibility of these countries for case studies and the number of countries that I could feasibly include in the manifesto analysis. I expect the findings of the research to be relevant to these countries that I deem advanced welfare states, even if they are not included in any analysis.

This raises the question of which countries in Europe are *not* classified as advanced welfare states. I follow the lead of others (e.g. Beramendi, Häusermann, Kitschelt, & Kriesi, 2015) that acknowledge a qualitative difference between the political and welfare state regimes of so-called ‘advanced welfare states’ and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. CEE

³³ As explained in detail in the sections below, different *types* of support are explored in the party and voter preferences analysis.

countries are comparatively young welfare states and democracies and their party systems diverge considerably, which makes consistent party family categorisation particularly difficult. Given the period of study, their inclusion would also have made some of the cross-national comparisons less consistent. For practical reasons, their inclusion in the party manifesto analysis or case studies would have made data collection considerably more time-consuming for which there was not the scope within this study.

The overarching *period* chosen for the research starts in 1980 up until the present day to focus on the politics of basic income in post-industrial economies. Although the process of deindustrialisation started well before 1980 in many countries, by this point the impact on economic sectors, labour markets and welfare states had become more profound (Iversen and Cusack, 2000). In addition, as the literature review outlined, the idea of basic income began more political in the 1980s in many countries, in the sense that political actors began to consider it as a serious policy proposal rather than an abstract idea. Finally, for Southern European countries, an analysis would only have been possible after the transition to democracy. Of course, while these factors guided the overarching scope (time and country contexts) of the research, each empirical section has a different scope of analysis, which relate to substantive and practical decisions about data collection, as indicated below. I now turn to the first empirical part of the thesis and explain the methods for analysing party support for basic income.

4.3 Party support for basic income: election manifestos 1980-2018

One of the central research aims mentioned in the previous chapter is to identify the determinants of party support for basic income, including the characteristics of parties and contextual factors. Given the lack of an existing database on this subject, the research question demands the collection and coding of new data. Common methods for revealing the preferences of political actors, such as political parties, include elite interviews, social media analysis, expert surveys or the use of political documents published by those actors (Epstein and Mershon, 1996). However, given the desire to identify contextual determinants over a long period of time, political documents are best suited to the task. Both elite interviews and expert surveys would be difficult to incorporate reliably into a longitudinal study, as would social media data. However, expert surveys and elite interviews are also utilised in the thesis. Country experts assisted in the validation of coding in this analysis and elite interviews were an important source of data for the case studies. These are explained in more detail in the relevant sections below.

The focus on political parties as the most relevant unit of analysis motivated restricting the collection of political documents to those created centrally by the party rather than including individual politicians who may not speak for the party as a whole. Out of the possible political documents that fit this criterion, election manifestos were selected as the primary source of data as manifestos require a considerable amount of strategic thinking from parties. In most cases, they are also readily available and easy to standardise (one manifesto per party per election). In order to obtain manifestos, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) dataset is an unparalleled resource and thus was the main access point. However, as explained below, this was not exhaustive and where possible missing manifestos were sourced from elsewhere.

Due to the selection of manifestos as the political documents used for analysis, the time period did not need to be constrained by practical considerations and was selected to start in 1980 for the reasons explained in the previous section. Similarly, as the overall research design focuses on advanced welfare states in Europe, this immediately limited the possible scope to 18 countries. However, time- and resource-constraints meant three additional countries were excluded from the analysis. Iceland and Greece were excluded for language reasons that made coding and validation difficult. Switzerland was also excluded for the unique political system that shapes party strategies in a different way. This left 15 countries for which analysis was possible: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, (West) Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

4.3.1 Collecting manifestos: Comparative Manifesto Project dataset and missing data

The first part of the investigation into political support for basic income in this thesis involved analysis of the content of political party manifestos from 1980 to 2018 in 15 European countries. Most of the manifestos (or political documents used as manifestos) were retrieved from the Comparative Manifestos Project database, due to the depth and breadth of its collection. The data collection followed a number of steps. The details of some of these steps, including issues concerning the reliability and validity of the analysis and data are set out in this section.

First, the criteria for including a party and its manifesto at a given election in the database was established. Providing a systematic rule for inclusion helps to avoid biases in selection and to identify any additional gaps in the Comparative Manifestos Project (hereafter CMP) dataset. To include a broad range of parties able to attract voters and influence policy debates, the criteria specified that any party that won a seat in the lower house or held a seat

in the previous parliament was included³⁴. Despite being highly inclusive, including some parties that won less than 1% of the vote, these criteria can also exclude parties that win a relatively high percentage of votes but do not win seats. In proportional electoral systems with low thresholds, this is impossible. However, in majoritarian systems such as the UK, parties can win a substantial share of the vote without any parliamentary representation. Although these parties cannot be said to have no influence on policy debates, they are excluded for two reasons. Firstly, despite a high number of votes, extra-parliamentary parties are unable to impact on the formal legislative process. Secondly, the ability to win seats requires a comparatively greater element of pragmatism. This is important for considering basic income strategies where there may be a tendency to promise the undeliverable.

Second, using official government reports that describe parliamentary election results in each country, 1336 data points (party election campaigns) were identified that met the criteria. Of these data points, 279 manifestos were not available to download from the Comparative Manifestos Project's online database (20.9%), while 165 of these data points were not included at all in the main dataset. Firstly, I rectified the latter by adding a data point for all the parties that meet the criteria described above to the now-edited CMP dataset. This allowed for a systematic mapping of missing data as provided below. Secondly, 86 manifestos are sourced from elsewhere, with a full list of other manifesto sources provided in Table A2 in the Appendix. This resulted in 1142 data points with non-missing basic income support data and 193 manifestos missing (14.45%). Of the 86 manifestos sourced from elsewhere, 41 also corresponded to coded data about those parties within the CMP dataset, i.e. a data point already existed, while 45 are missing. Thus, for all analysis that included variables necessarily coded by CMP (left-right index, libertarian-authoritarian index, welfare index etc.), the total sample is smaller with only 1097 valid data points. Table 4.1 shows a summary of the missing manifestos and the availability of coded data.

³⁴ Parties that sat in the previous parliament but did not stand in the subsequent election were not included for the obvious reason that they would not have an election manifesto.

Table 4.1: Summary of missing data points: manifesto sources and Manifesto Project coding

Manifesto/coding	CMP coding	CMP coding missing	Total
CMP manifesto source	1056 (79.10%)	0 (0%)	1056 (79.10%)
Other manifesto source	41 (3.07%)	45 (3.37%)	86 (6.44%)
Missing manifestos	73 (5.47%)	120 (8.99%)	193 (14.46%)
Total	1171 (87.64%)	165 (12.36%)	1335

On the face of it, the number of missing manifestos is quite high. However, there is a concentration of small or non-nationwide parties within the missing data. Of the 193 missing manifestos, 118 are of parties that received less than 1% of the vote in that election while 162 are of parties that received less than 3%. In addition, 38 of the missing manifestos are of parties that lost their seat in that election while 115 are regionalist or special issue parties. 172 of the missing manifestos (89% of missing in total) were parties with either less than 3% of the vote, no seat or a regionalist or special issue party³⁵. This reduced concerns that there is a significant element of bias in the subsequent analysis caused by missing data, particularly when it is weighted by party size (a decision explained in the analysis section).

Nevertheless, there are a few important concerns with the quality and reliability of the data that could also distort the analysis. Firstly, the variation in manifesto length across parties and countries could be identified as an issue. While other manifesto analysis that uses CMP usually deals with very broad concepts that appear in nearly every manifesto in some form, such as left-right ideology or ‘welfare’, basic income is a comparatively rare policy to mention in a manifesto, meaning it makes little sense to measure the proportion of quasi-sentences in the manifesto that refer to a basic income³⁶. This may lead to bias in the sense that longer manifestos are more likely to mention any support for basic income. In other words, there may be cases where a party *has* supported basic income, or at least wanted to pay lip service to it, but it did not appear in the manifesto because the document was comparatively concise. On the other hand, to the extent that publishing a concise manifesto is a *decision* made by parties, it is reasonable to consider this part of the variation that I seek

³⁵ In comparison, only 27% of non-missing manifestos fit these three criteria

³⁶ The measurement of the *proportion* of quasi-sentences is the normal method for avoiding bias from the length of manifestos.

to explain with the independent variables³⁷. The average difference in length between manifestos that indicate support for basic income and those that do not is also not statistically significant. The results for this test are shown in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Yet, the cross-national variation in manifesto length is a potential source of bias, as shown in Table A4. The average number of quasi-sentences³⁸ is as high as 2017 in Norway and as low as 182 in Denmark. These differences are more concerning as they may reflect cultural differences in the way manifestos are written across countries rather than decisions made by parties to emphasise certain issues. For example, the fact that Sweden has no examples of support for basic income (or a cognate policy) may be due to the relatively low average number of quasi-sentences in manifestos (332) rather than because parties have supported basic income less than in other countries. Thus, comparisons of the level of party support for basic income across countries should be treated with caution and most analysis of contextual factors models within-country variation rather than between-country. Although it does not prove that there is not still bias, it is worth adding that the country with the most cases of support for basic income (Finland) also has the second shortest average length of manifesto (277 quasi-sentences).

Another issue with the quality of the data is that some documents downloaded from the Comparative Manifesto Project dataset are not election manifestos. In cases where no manifesto is issued by the party or a manifesto cannot be sourced, the CMP dataset assigns policy documents, key speeches or conference proceedings from that election. This increases the possibility of bias, given the varying degrees of detail and/or the level of commitment provided in these documents. Denmark, in particular, has a poor collection of election manifestos, with the files provided and coded on the Comparative Manifestos Project representing a mixture of political texts, such as speeches and conference proceedings, and a high percentage of quasi-sentences that could not be coded (Hansen, 2008). Denmark is excluded from the analysis as a robustness check for all key findings with no significant differences (see Tables A5-A6).

³⁷ For example, if parties want to write a 3-page manifesto that focuses entirely on immigration or dealing with an economic crisis, they are deliberately choosing that emphasis at the expense of other policy issues, such as basic income.

³⁸ Quasi-sentences are the main coding unit in the CMP manifesto data. As the coding instructions state: “One quasi-sentence contains exactly one statement or message. In many cases, parties make one statement per sentence, which results in one quasi-sentence equalling one full sentence. Therefore, the basic unitising rule is that one sentence is, at minimum, one quasi-sentence. There are, however, instances when one natural sentence contains more than one quasi-sentence” (Werner et al., 2011).

4.3.2 Coding basic income support

Once the set of manifestos was defined, the next step was to produce data specifying which parties supported a basic income at given elections. The process of coding the manifestos to generate basic income support data included a number of distinct stages and a validation check, which are explained in turn below. The first stage was a keyword search of all manifestos. A list of all terms searched are shown in Table A5. This required knowledge of the relevant terms for basic income in the respective languages, which was gathered by searching for the terms used by Basic Income Earth Network-affiliated groups in each country and reading relevant literature or country reports for each country. Terms were also gathered and confirmed from enquiries with selected country experts to provide a historical perspective given the common fluctuation of terminology. Cognate policies such as negative income tax are given in italics.

Following Perkiö (2018) and Stirton, De Wispelaere, Perkiö, & Chrisp (2017), the initial stage adopted a broad keyword approach to include all references to basic income or related concepts, although references to a guaranteed minimum income were not included as in Perkiö (2018)³⁹. Then, all manifestos that mentioned a keyword were noted and the section of the manifesto that included the keyword was copied into a separate country-specific document. Thus, each country document had a collection of extracts from manifestos that mentioned one of the keywords listed above. All sections of manifestos that included a keyword listed above were then translated into English using online translation software. This was then used to code whether or not the extract indicated support for basic income or not. To limit personal bias in coding, manifestos were coded as supporting basic income if any positive statement was made, while the mention of basic income without any positive statement by definition constituted opposition to basic income.

There is a danger of both Type I and Type II errors using keyword searches to identify references to basic income or citizen's income. Policies *equivalent* to a basic income may not use one of the keywords and policies that include a keyword may not be equivalent to a basic income. For example, the use of terms such as basic income may not refer to a policy at all but rather to a general concern with living standards, whether as a result of social security or wages. Searches may also include unrelated policies such as 'basic income tax'. For obvious cases such as these, the extracts were removed from the country-specific document and manifestos were not coded as indicating support for basic income. However,

³⁹ Apart from in Ireland where it was synonymous with a negative income tax approach.

the use of the term basic income may signify a range of benefit policies that are conditional, targeted at particular groups or means-tested. This motivated a more expansive definition of a basic income *cognate* than would normally be used, given the inability to get contextual details about each manifesto commitment. A set of criteria was used to downgrade references to a basic income as a cognate. This included if there was any mention of a basic income that indicated it was targeted at a specific group, such as the elderly, children or disabled people, or if a requirement to work or means test was mentioned.

Thus, to distinguish, at least partly, between different policies advocated and to account for the possibility that there is cross-national variation in how often the *terms* rather than the concepts are used by political actors⁴⁰, two basic income support variables are included. One has stricter criteria for being defined as basic income, while the other also includes cognates such as negative income tax and references to basic income that are conditional as explained above. The reality is that even when we have full contextual details about a manifesto commitment, the boundaries of when a party is actually supporting basic income and when it is simply paying lip service to the policy or actually advocating something very different, e.g. a means-tested minimum income scheme, are blurred. Thus, the potential for error is unavoidable but a keyword search approach provides a *systematic* method of coding basic income support across countries and across time. The reality of which is bolstered by the cautious and graduated approach employed here. At the end of the coding process indicated above, there were four binary variables corresponding to:

- (i) whether the manifesto mentioned basic income;
- (ii) whether the manifesto mentioned basic income or a cognate;
- (iii) whether the manifesto indicated support for basic income;
- (iv) whether the manifesto indicated support for basic income or a cognate.

Each extract was also coded according to the basic income commitments that the party made and the rationales provided. The coding categories for these were developed inductively. Initially, each reference to basic income or a cognate was coded qualitatively with a very short description of up to ten commitment(s) or rationale(s), such as ‘experiment’ or ‘reduce poverty’. After all the manifestos were coded, the various qualitative codes were grouped into categories. These were devised based on theory from the literature review about what

⁴⁰ For example, it is more likely that the use of basic income will simply refer to the provision of an acceptable living standard by whatever means, whether wages, benefits or services, compared to the use of the term citizen’s wage, which has been more common in Nordic countries.

the main commitments or rationales in the past have been and the distribution of qualitative codes provided. For commitments, the four categories are:

- (i) To introduce the policy;
- (ii) To experiment with or to test the policy;
- (iii) To investigate or explore the policy in a government commission or public debate;
- (iv) To commit to the policy as a long-term aim and/or to make steps towards it in the short-run.

These are not mutually exclusive categories so parties could commit to more than one of these things. In the dataset, each category is a binary variable specifying whether a party had committed to one of those four things at a given election.

For rationales, the eight categories were:

- (i) Social rights (e.g. to reduce poverty or inequality and guarantee a minimum income);
- (ii) Simplify/bureaucracy (e.g. to simplify benefits, reduce bureaucracy/fraud or harmonising access);
- (iii) Activation (e.g. to increase labour market participation/incentives);
- (iv) Post-productivism (e.g. increasing freedom, valorising unpaid work or reducing work hours);
- (v) Social inequalities (e.g. reducing gender inequality, increasing social inclusion or solidarity);
- (vi) Economic development (e.g. increasing economic activity in certain sectors such as agriculture, technology or research; or activity in certain regions such as towns or rural areas);
- (vii) Retrenchment (e.g. cutting costs or reducing benefit levels);
- (viii) Precurity (e.g. increasing coverage for atypical workers, facilitating atypical work or increasing economic security).

As mentioned above most categories were based on theory and the existing literature, but the categories for social inequalities and economic development were developed from the initial stage of qualitative coding, which included many rationales that did not fit within the pre-existing categories. In the dataset, each category is a binary variable specifying whether a party had given one of the eight rationales at a given election. Again, they are not mutually exclusive. To test theories about the ideological reasons for parties supporting basic income,

three broader categories are also created: new left rationales (post-productivism and precarity), [old] left rationales (social rights and social inequalities) and right rationales (simplify, activation and retrenchment).

Finally, given the possibility for problems with inconsistent coding, a validation exercise conducted with country experts⁴¹ was a useful cross-check of the coding process. Figures A1-A3 in the Appendix show an example of the questionnaire instructions, a questionnaire front page specific to each country and a manifesto extract that experts were asked to code respectively. The list of instructions can further reinforce the coding principles adopted for the analysis. The intention was for the validation process to facilitate the correction of both Type I and Type II errors, as country experts were given an opportunity to point to cases not listed in the selection as well as provide their own coding of basic income support, rationales and commitments. However, no experts provided any new cases of manifesto support. This could mean that there is an exhaustive list of cases or that country experts did not have enough knowledge of the entire period to adequately cross-check the results.

Table A6 shows the rate of consistency between my coding and that of country experts that filled out questionnaires. An expert was able to validate the manifestos in all but two of the countries that had examples of manifesto support (Austria and Luxembourg) while two experts filled out the questionnaires in four countries (Finland, Germany, Italy and Netherlands). The percentage corresponds to the consistency in coding of the basic income/cognate support variables (2 binary variables per manifesto), the commitment variables (4 binary variables) and the rationale variables (8 binary variables). Thus, a rate of 50% consistency would be expected if it were done purely at random. The results of the validation show that there is a significant element of individual interpretation in the coding, particularly for commitments and rationales. Roughly half of the validations indicated 100% consistency with the main basic income/cognate support variables and only one country had less than 85% (Spain). In comparison, there was only one validation for commitments that had 100% consistency (France) and one validation for rationales that had 100% consistency (Denmark).

4.3.3 Independent variables

For the variables that describe ideological party characteristics, the main source of data was the Comparative Manifestos Project (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006). Firstly,

⁴¹ Country experts included individuals in academia or activism connected to basic income in the respective country.

the CMP classification of party families provides a static categorisation of a party's ideology⁴² (See Table A7 for a list of party families and the classification strategy for the 165 parties not in the CMP database).

The rest of the party-level variables are election-specific, with the ideological variables derived from the coding of manifestos. It is worth briefly discussing the theory behind the CMP's method of coding the manifestos given its significance to the variables used. The CMP was designed to reflect 'saliency theory', which makes claims about how parties compete and how they express their policy preferences. In short, Budge et al. (2001) argue that most political parties endorse the same policy *position*, meaning that the main difference between parties is emphasis. The theory suggests that the frequency with which parties mention particular policy issues indicates how salient those issues are to the party, which in turn indicates what the party's policy preferences are. Thus, the CMP variables calculate the *proportion* of all quasi-sentences in a manifesto that refer to a given category, such as 'Anti-Growth Economy: Positive'. In this case, the higher the proportion of anti-growth statements, the more anti-growth that party is. This is also applied to broader ideological divides such as left-right ideology, where the proportion of left-wing statements in a manifesto are subtracted from the proportion of right-wing statements.

However, many contest that salience theory best reflects the nature of party competition, at least outside of majoritarian systems, and propose a different operationalisation of party positions (Kim and Fording, 2002). One example is to calculate the *ratio* of, for example, left to right positions rather than the proportion of total sentences that are left or right (ibid). The main analysis adopts the CMP position but the Appendix includes analysis using ratio measures as robustness checks (Tables A13-A14). All results are the same except the interaction between social expenditure and economic left-right positions, which becomes insignificant in the full model (other models not shown are significant).

In order to denote a party's ideological position at a given election, i.e. a variable measure of ideology, I first use the standard measure of left-right position provided by the CMP database and as originally given in Laver & Budge (1992).

⁴² For some analysis, these party families were collapsed into four broader categories: New left (Ecological and Socialist), Social democratic, Centre-right (Liberal, Christian Democratic and Conservative) and Other (Nationalist, Agrarian, Ethnic and regional and Special issue) parties to fit with the grouping of parties identified in the theoretical framework.

- **Left-right ('rile')**. This is a continuous variable indicating the proportion of quasi-sentences that refer to left-wing categories subtracted from the proportion of quasi-sentences that refer to right-wing categories.

However, given the research interest in multiple dimensions of political competition, as well as theoretical and methodological concerns about the ability to reduce politics to a single left-right dimension (cite), three additional variables were included in the analysis:

- **Welfare ('welfare')**. This continuous variable measures the proportion of quasi-sentences that refer to 'Welfare State Expansion' or 'Education Expansion'.
- **Economic left-right (ecorile)**. This continuous variable measures the proportion of quasi-sentences that refer to left-wing categories subtracted from right-wing categories on the economic dimension. I followed the categorisation of Bakker & Hobolt (2012) and Wagner & Meyer (2017).
- **Libertarian-authoritarian (libauth)**. This continuous variable measures the proportion of quasi-sentences that refer to libertarian categories subtracted from authoritarian categories. The list of categories was also taken from the same studies (Bakker and Hobolt, 2012; Wagner and Meyer, 2017).

The CMP database also provided the vote share and the number of seats a party received at that election⁴³, which I use as measures of party size.

- **Vote share ('pervote')**. This is a continuous variable given as a number between zero and one.
- **Seat share ('perseat')**. This continuous variable was derived by dividing the number of seats a party gained at that election ('absseats') by the total number of seats in that parliament ('totseats'). It was also given as a number between zero and one.

Finally, I used government records of past cabinet composition to code whether or not the party was in government prior to the election. In some cases, a party resigned from the cabinet prior to an election being called, despite being in government for most of the

⁴³ In many cases, data for these variables was missing or evidently an error. In such cases, I imputed vote share and seat share data from official national election statistics.

parliamentary period. I coded a party as being in government if it participated in the cabinet up to 6 months before the election.

- **Government-opposition ('govopp')**. This is a binary variable where opposition parties are coded as zero and government parties are coded as one.

Table A8 in the Appendix shows the descriptive statistics of the variables above, while Table A9 indicates the coded categories that make up the variables.

Given the extensive timespan of the analysis, sources that include country-level variables continuously across the period 1975-2018 were required (as some variables are 5-year averages). This excluded institutional variables such as conditionality indexes and long-term unemployed social assistance replacement rates. GDP growth and the unemployment rate are used to test theories about the contextual effects of the economic cycle, with the latter a particularly important part of the theoretical framework. A measure is provided for a 5-year average (and 3-year average) prior to an election due to the acknowledgement that there is a gradual effect of a rise in unemployment (results for 3-year average and that year's unemployment rate are shown in Tables A15-A16). I use social expenditure as an imperfect catchall measure of the size of the welfare state. The data sources and calculations for the country-level independent variables used are summarised in Table A10.

4.3.4 Analytical strategy: mapping and regression modelling

Given the significant task of collecting and coding the new dataset, there is a substantial contribution in the provision of descriptive statistics comparing the distribution of party support for basic income across different countries, election years or periods and party families. Similarly, for the coded variables corresponding to party commitments to basic income and rationales for basic income, the small sub-sample of manifestos that indicate support for basic income restricts the amount of analysis that is possible. Thus, the distribution of party commitments is compared across two categories of party size (above and below 5% of the vote) and whether or not the party is in government. The distribution of rationales is compared across the paired-down party family categories (new left, social democrat, centre-right and other). This facilitates a straightforward test of whether smaller or non-governmental parties are more likely to make cheap commitments and whether party families are likely to advocate basic income using rationales related to their ideology. For all analysis I present results for both measures of basic income support (including cognates or not).

To examine the relationship between election specific party-level and country-level factors on the one hand and party support for basic income on the other, I also analysed the data in careful stages. Firstly, for party characteristics I initially compared the mean characteristics of parties (at a given election) that supported basic income and those did not [bivariate]. Among other things, this showed the much greater propensity of small, minor parties to support basic income. This poses a problem for examining the effect of country-level factors, as the size of the party is important for assessing the level of party support; a party with 30% of the vote supporting basic income is more significant than a party with 0.5% of the vote. For example, if we want to make the claim that GDP growth reduces the level of party support, it makes sense to account for the *size* of parties. Thus, for all subsequent analysis, the data are weighted by the vote share of the party at that election. The relationship between these country-level factors and support for basic income is first examined in a pooled sample. In other words, I correlate the level of unemployment/GDP growth/social expenditure and the level of party support for basic income at every election across all countries. Then, I examine the within-country variation by correlating these country-level factors and the level of support for basic income at every election within individual countries. This helps to separate the effect from differences across countries and differences across elections.

Finally, I use a variety of regression models to test the effect of both party characteristics and country-level factors simultaneously. Again, I specify the models in stages. Each variable is used as a predictor of party support for basic income (or a cognate) in a pooled bivariate logistic regression, i.e. without modelling country effects. Then in a second model, I specify country fixed effects at the country level. The third model introduces election period fixed effects as well. I use election *period* effects rather than election year effects given the unequal distribution of elections around certain years and the non-existent cases of support for basic income in some years, which would drop out a large number of observations. Finally, I specify a full model with all the independent variables to control for other effects. The limited number of independent variables still leave the analysis open to the problem of omitted variable bias. However, I argue that sufficient care has been taken to account for this within a feasible research design, particularly given the small amount of positive cases of basic income support.

On this latter point, I also run Penalized Maximum Likelihood Estimation logistic regressions (Firth method) as a robustness check to account for possible bias in standard logistic models that predict rare events (King and Zeng, 2003; Coveney, 2008). As it is not possible to use weights on this analysis, this also serves as a robustness check for the removal of weighting. The results are shown in Tables A17-18 in the Appendix.

4.4 Voter preferences

The theoretical framework identified two broad research questions that I seek to answer in this empirical section. Firstly, what are the determinants of public support for basic income? This question can be further divided into determinants at the individual-level, i.e. characteristics such as household income or other preferences, and at the country-level, i.e. contextual factors such as unemployment and social expenditure. Individual-level factors can help illuminate a basic income constituency, while country-level factors help to identify contexts that are most conducive to public support for basic income. Secondly, how does support for basic income vary depending on the characteristics of the supporters and the socioeconomic or institutional context? In other words, how do individual attitudes towards other aspects of the welfare state affect the different voting coalitions in favour of the policy? From this, we can make inferences about the multi-dimensionality of basic income support, while relying on a single survey question. Next, I describe this data and the dependent variable for the analysis.

4.4.1 Choosing the data: European Social Survey wave 8

The dataset used in the analysis is wave 8 of the European Social Survey (ESS), which covers 23 European countries and around 44,000 respondents surveyed in the years 2016-17. For the reasons mentioned above, the sample is restricted due to the focus on advanced welfare states. This excludes eight countries from the analysis (Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovenia). The remaining countries in the analysis are: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. The final total sample is 28,374. This decision distinguishes the analysis from other recent work on attitudes to basic income, which have either used all 23 countries (Roosma and van Oorschot, 2020) or excluded only Israel and Russia (Vlandas, 2019). Care is taken throughout the analysis, particularly when exploring cross-national questions, to highlight the effect on the results of restricting the sample in this way.

The ESS is the first large-scale survey to ask respondents for their attitudes to basic income per se, as opposed to their positions on related issues such as conditionality and deservingness. The concept was defined to them in the following way:

A basic income scheme includes all of the following:

- The government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs.
- It replaces many other social benefits.
- The purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living.

- Everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working.
- People also keep the money they earn from work or other sources.
- This scheme is paid for by taxes

Respondents were asked if they were ‘strongly in favour’, ‘in favour’, ‘against’ or ‘strongly against’ basic income. For this analysis, responses were then recoded into a binary variable, with ‘in favour’ and ‘strongly in favour’ equal to one, and ‘against’, ‘strongly against’ equal to zero. Don’t know responses (8% of total sample) were coded as missing. I also operationalise the dependent variable for basic income support in three alternative ways as robustness checks, as described below:

1. ‘Don’t know’ responses are coded as zero (i.e. not supporting basic income).
2. Only ‘Strongly in favour’ responses are coded as one (supporting basic income) with ‘in favour’, ‘against’ and ‘strongly against’ coded as zero (not supporting basic income).
3. The original ordinal variable from one to four is maintained and ordinal logistic regressions run instead.

The results for running models on these dependent variables with a full set of individual-level variables and the cross-level interactions are shown in the Appendix (Tables A23-A25). The table shows that the results are broadly consistent across the four model specifications. The direction of *significant* relationships in the main analysis is not reversed in any alternative specification. The most different results are for the dependent variable that distinguishes strong support from all other responses.

The main benefits of using this data are the quality of the data, the size of the sample, the range of other sociodemographic and attitudinal variables available to use as independent variables and the ability to explore cross-national questions, which are central to the theoretical framework. Compared to many other survey questions on basic income it also provides a clear and detailed definition of the policy that is likely to enhance the validity and reliability of the measure. However, there are two major drawbacks related to the theoretical framework of the PhD. Firstly, the question explicitly mentions a *purpose* for the introduction of a basic income that prompts respondents to envision a specific type or model of basic income that is more attuned to left-wing or redistributive goals. This relates to the second drawback, which is that the single definition of a basic income limits the extent to which the analysis can explore how variation in the design of the policy can alter the constituencies in favour. However, as the section above explained, the data facilitates questions about the different ideological drivers of support across institutional contexts and

social groups. The precise analytical strategy is explained further in the final part of this section, but first I describe the independent variables used in the analysis in the next section.

4.4.2 Independent variables

Firstly, a range of standard covariates were used for the regression analysis, with all detailed in the ESS. This included age, gender, education, union membership, religious attendance and labour market status. I also introduce two socioeconomic variables with a variation on previously published analysis of basic income preferences. Firstly, I calculate a continuous equivalised household income measure. Past research has simply used the given measure of net household income, which is provided in country-specific deciles and not equivalised. I also classify occupations into five ‘post-industrial’ occupation groups following Schwander and Häusermann (2013) who use the 16-class schema devised by Oesch (2006). The advantage of this scheme is that it “takes into account a heterogeneous middle class” and “distinguishes between different types of low-skilled employees who can no longer be reasonably subsumed under a single category of (blue collar or manual) workers” (Schwander and Häusermann, 2013, p. 252). This is particularly important for studying the possible emerging class constituencies for a basic income in a post-industrial economy.

A number of welfare state preferences were also used as independent variables, provided by ESS and mostly recoded into binary variables. Each variable is expected to tap into a potential dimension of the welfare state that relates to basic income. For example, the anti-sanctions variable concerns conditionality, targeting concerns the balance between social insurance and social assistance and active labour market policies concern the investment-consumption dimension. Finally, an individual’s party preference, indicated by the party they voted for at the last election, was important for testing some of the key theories about multi-dimensional politics discussed in the theoretical framework. Full description of the operationalisation of all independent variables is provided in Table A19, while the summary statistics can be found in Table A20.

Country-level variables were sourced from elsewhere (Eurostat, 2019; OECD, 2018; OECD, 2019). A broader range of variables were available for this analysis of preferences (vis-à-vis the manifestos analysis) given the less stringent requirement for data only for 2016. The variables can be divided into two sets of factors. Firstly, I include the following socioeconomic factors: real GDP per capita, unemployment rate 5-year average (2012-2016), inequality (Gini), at risk of poverty rate. Secondly, I include a series of institutional factors: social expenditure, cash benefits expenditure, cash expenditure ratio, unemployment benefit expenditure, cash transfer targeting, conditionality index and unemployment benefit

replacement rate. All variables are described in Table A21 in the Appendix, while the summary statistics can be found in Table A22.

4.4.3 Analysis

To identify individual-level and country-level determinants of basic income preferences, I use multi-level logistic models with random intercepts at the country-level to predict the binary measure of support for basic income. The main statistical problem with the analysis at the country-level is the number of cases, fifteen. This makes inferences about the effect of country-level variables tentative, at best (Spicker, 2017). Although fixed-effect models would be more suited to the individual-level analysis, given the difficulty with explaining country-level variance with only 15 cases, I use random-effects models to provide a consistent method across the whole analysis. In all models, post-stratification weights provided by the European Social Survey are also applied. This accounts for the disparity in the probability of certain demographics being represented in the sample relative to the population.

For the analysis of multi-dimensionality, I run regression models with an interaction of welfare state preferences with sociodemographic characteristics at the individual-level and institutional variables at the country-level. This is to explore whether the marginal effect of these welfare state preferences (which are representative of particular dimensions of the welfare state and/or a basic income) is greater for particular groups and within particular types of welfare state.

4.5 Case studies

As the first section of this chapter indicated, the case studies provide nuance on three important factors that are attributed importance in the party and voter quantitative analysis. The first is the role of ‘context’, including a more in-depth understanding of the institutions themselves, the actors involved and the interaction of multiple factors such as social security and labour market institutions. The second is to probe the *mechanisms* by which the explanatory factors relate to support for a basic income. The cases also allow an examination of alternative explanations for increased political support. The third is to problematise the neat operationalisation of support required for the quantitative analysis. To answer questions of political feasibility, we must explore how robust that political support is. Both the second and third factors make a more detailed exploration of the stated preferences and rationales of political actors useful. This provided a central motivation for the inclusion of elite interviews of political actors as a key source of data for enriching the cases. Details of the interviews are given in data collection section below.

4.5.1 Case selection

Finland and the UK were selected as cases for three substantive reasons. Firstly, both amounted to contemporary contexts where the notion of basic income has entered political debate and been used by political parties to advance their policymaking goals. Specifically, both countries had examples of political capital expended by parties on plans to set up basic income experiments. Experiments also offer a tangible policy commitment with which to analyse party's concrete preferences for basic income, as political actors must settle positions on and decisions about policy and experiment design. As is often found in case-study research, the cases were selected based on the outcome/dependent variable in line with the goal to compare two cases where the political support for basic income was high. This aspect of the research is therefore ill-suited for explaining why basic income reached a level of saliency in some countries and not others, which would have been better addressed through comparison of cases exhibiting greater variation in political support. Secondly, their *institutional* context was very different on all the relevant dimensions listed in the theoretical framework. Third, the countries' unemployment rates diverged during the period despite an increase in political support, i.e. their *socioeconomic* context was also varied.

Why include variance on two explanatory contextual factors (institutional and socioeconomic), given comparative case studies tend to hold one constant if the outcome variable is the same? The main reason is that the logic of comparing institutional and socioeconomic factors across the two cases is different regarding theoretical expectations generated from the previous chapter and subsequent quantitative empirical analysis. Socioeconomic factors, in particular the rate of unemployment, are expected to affect the *level* of support and indeed explain the comparatively high support for basic income during the period studied in both countries. The puzzle in the case of the UK is what explains the high level of support despite record-low unemployment. On the other hand, institutional factors, in particular the nature of the existing social security system, are expected to affect the *type* of support in each country. Thus, the focus of comparison in relation to the institutional context is the ideological positions of the parties advocating basic income and the specific proposals and rationales provided.

Case selection was also justified by four pragmatic reasons. Firstly, case studies require an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and the context, which meant my existing expertise in the welfare state context in the UK and the main events regarding basic income in both countries was an asset. In both countries, I was also able to utilise contacts and networks that I had developed during the early stages of the research, i.e. initially before case selection. This was particularly useful in the case of Finland, given the need for country experts to help

interpret policy documents and parliamentary records. This ties into the third pragmatic reason for the choice of cases, which was language concerns. Of course, for the UK, interviews were conducted in the native tongue of interviewees. However, Finland was also chosen because of its relative competency of senior figures in the English language. Finally, Finland also enabled the availability of data on welfare state statistics, parliamentary records and other important documents in English, given the government's commitment to international transparency and communication.

4.5.2 Data collection and analysis

The main data collection process involved an initial scoping of relevant political behaviour using keyword searches of 'basic income' ('perustulo') within parliamentary proceedings, media databases and political and policy documents. Academic literature and ad hoc data such as parliamentary surveys were also included in the study. These were used to provide data about both the relevant political *events* and the reasoning, beliefs and strategies of political actors as repeated by themselves. Importantly, they also gave invaluable information so that I was able to approach the elite interviews with as much knowledge about the context and past behaviour of the interviewees as possible before engaging in the elite interviews.

Given the language barrier in Finland, there was an inevitable asymmetry in the method of data collection across the two cases. This was reduced considerably by the relatively large proportion of government documents provided in English and the comparatively extensive existing research about the politics of basic income in Finland in the English language that helped to steer searches. I also had help with important contextual details and translation from academics at the University of Tampere, where I had a 2-month research visit, and the University of Helsinki.

The wide-ranging research aims of the case studies, including gaining in-depth knowledge of political events related to basic income and to understanding the preferences and rationales of political actors themselves, motivated the use of semi-structured elite interviews. The elite interviews were structured around four main themes. The first was the interviewee's personal involvement with campaigns for or against basic income. This always started with a question about the first time they had heard of the idea and usually questions about the (planned) experiments in either the UK or Finland and other initiatives or political/media appearances. The second theme was around the *motivations* for reform, whether related to basic income or alternative policies. This involved questions to identify the *main* reasons for supporting the policy and what *features* of the policy were especially

attractive. In particular, the aim was to probe the types of compromises in policy design and strategies that actors would be willing to make. At times this revealed a lack of deep thinking on the part of political actors about the policy beyond rehearsed lines but at others it enabled a discussion of the pertinent trade-offs those actors saw in broader social security policy debates.

The third theme related to party politics and the positions of the interviewee's party and other parties. The primary interest was in their understanding of the party's *overall* position but also the divides *within* the party and the development of policy proposals. Finally, the fourth theme related to the mechanisms between public support and party positions. The questions concerned their experience of engaging with the public or their constituents on the issue and which groups they believe are most supportive of the policy. The broad interview question schedule is shown in Table A26 in the Appendix. Of course, each interview included a number of more specific questions related to the interviewee's experiences and knowledge and follow-up questions. As the interviews progressed, I also felt more confident to deviate from the interview schedule and pick up on the more unique experiences that interviewees had. This also meant challenging the interviewees on vague statements and pressing for more details about their policy positions.

Given the disparate level of knowledge of and interest in the policy, randomised sampling of political actors would have made no sense. Thus, interviewees were sampled and sent interview invitations based on their political role (e.g. social security spokesperson/adviser), their involvement in political events regarding basic income or their past comments that indicated a clear position on the policy. There was also an element of snowball sampling, as political actors would suggest that I speak to other individuals relevant to the situation. Often these individuals would not have been as vocal in the media, but were interested in discussing their position on the policy and their experience of the process of advocating or opposing the policy. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show the distribution of interviewees according to their political party *affiliation* and their political *role*. In the UK, the politics of basic income traversed both Westminster and Holyrood parliaments and the significance of events at a local level in Scotland meant there was a much wider array of political actors at different levels of government. Interviews took place between March and August 2018 in the UK. Meanwhile the dominant role of political parties and politicians in the basic income debate in Finland (Perkiö, 2018) meant that 24 out of 29 of the interviewees were connected to the central organisation of a parliamentary party. The other five interviewees were civil servants or members of independent think tanks. The interviews were conducted between August and October 2018 in Finland.

Table 4.7: Tally of interviewees by political party and political role in the UK.

Political role	MP	MSP	Councillor / Officer	Adviser	Other	<i>Total</i>
Political party						
Labour Party	5	2	4	0	1	12
Conservative Party	1	1	0	0	0	2
Scottish National Party	2	2	1	1	0	6
Green Party	0	1	2	2	0	5
Liberal Democrats	0	0	0	0	1	1
No affiliated party	0	0	1	0	8	9
<i>Total</i>	8	6	8	3	10	36

Table 4.8: Tally of interviewees by political party and political role in Finland.

Political role	MP	Adviser	Other	<i>Total</i>
Political party				
Social Democrats (SDP)	1	0	4	5
National Coalition (KOK)	3	0	0	3
Centre (KESK)	4	1	1	6
Blue Reform (SIN)	1	0	0	1
Green League (VIHR)	1	1	2	4
Left Alliance (VAS)	1	1	2	4
Christian Democrat (KD)	0	1	0	1
No affiliated party	0	0	5	5
<i>Total</i>	11	4	14	29

Once the multiple forms of data were collated, including transcriptions of the interviews, I underwent another stage of data collection, to triangulate with information about events provided by the interviews. Many of the interviews, particularly in Finland, steered me in the direction of other important documents that help to construct a more accurate timeline of events⁴⁴. Finally, I manually coded interviews with politicians to identify common themes

⁴⁴ For example, other Finnish basic income researchers had not previously cited a pamphlet written by the future Prime Minister Juha Sipilä in 2012. I was alerted to its existence by one of my interviewees. This pamphlet included a statement of his support for basic income, which reduced the credibility of arguments

in the rationales of support for or opposition to basic income and the key priorities they had in terms of policy design trade-offs.

4.5.3 Ethics

The research was given ethical approval by the University of Bath. I followed ethical guidelines concerning consent, privacy and confidentiality and accuracy throughout the duration of the research, including in data management practices (ESRC, 2015). In the case of the interviews, written and verbal consent was obtained before conducting the interview and participants had the right to withdraw their contribution at any point. The consent form asked the participants if they consented to the audio-recording of the interviews and outlined the confidentiality procedure followed in the research. Interview data were stored securely and responsibly at the University of Bath and I attended training on Data Management in the developmental phases of the research.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described and justified the study design and methodology employed in this thesis. It first set out why and how a mixed methods study design was utilised for this research, and discussed the relevant challenges and strengths associated with mixed methods for researching the political economy of basic income in a comparative perspective. The chapter then moved on to describe the methods applied to explaining party support for basic income in the form of the analysis of data collected from the Comparative Manifesto Project (Budge et al., 2001) database. This aspect of the research constitutes the first systematic analysis of party preferences for basic income across countries, covering a considerable timespan from 1980s to 2018, facilitating analysis of the relationship between socio-economic and institutional factors and this form of political support for basic income.

Next, the chapter described the part of the research analysing public attitudes using secondary data from wave 8 of the European Social Survey (ESS). While other researchers published similar findings using this data during the course of the project, the analysis carried out for the thesis focused on advanced welfare states incorporating the findings into a multi-faceted, mixed-methods study, with a specific interpretation as part of a wider with a political economy theoretical framework. The final section focused on the case studies and discussed the selection of cases, data collection, analysis and ethical considerations. The case study part of the research, conducted for the UK and Finland, is distinguished from previous

made by another of my interviewees (and in other academic work) that Sipilä's support had been a response to a think tank report in 2014.

studies for two reasons: it is explicitly comparative and it pays close attention to the interaction of the institutional context with political party strategies, drawing on a wide variety of sources including elite interviews with political actors.

Going beyond the ‘pragmatism’ of some mixed methods research, the constituent parts of the empirical investigation were not only intended to examine different forms of political support for basic income (voters, political party and other political actors) and their relationship to socio-economic and institutional context using different methods. The different parts were also intended to speak to one another, feeding in insights that shaped the way the research was conducted, analysed and interpreted as a whole. The next chapter provides the first part of this empirical strategy, focusing on the determinants of party support for basic income.

5 Explaining party support for basic income in advanced welfare states across Europe from 1980-2018

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores what is described in the theoretical framework as the *supply-side* of the politics of basic income. Substantively, this means identifying political party support for basic income, the policy proposals parties make and the factors that drive support. As Section 4.2 of the methodology lays out in detail, the main data sources for this part of the analysis are election manifestos, which are largely collected from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) database (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006). Manifestos provide a comparable party-level statement of intent that avoids some of the problems associated with measuring political support for policies from individual MPs. These manifestos are coded according to whether they indicate support for (or opposition to) basic income. This provides the basis of the analysis to explain what factors related to increased party support for basic income.

Section 5.1 starts by restating what the existing literature tells us about political support for basic income and what hypotheses were derived from the political economy framework. This is divided into expectations about party-level characteristics and contextual factors. Section 5.2 provides descriptive statistics of two measures of basic income support, one of which includes support for ‘cognates’ that clearly violate at least one of the central features of a basic income and one of which does not. The section then shows the propensity to support basic income across different party families and describes the temporal and cross-national variation in support. The section ends with a brief summary of the comparatively rare instances of parties explicitly mentioning *opposition* to basic income.

The chapter then turns to the main analysis. Section 5.3 examines the relationship between basic income support and party characteristics and country-level factors. In addition to providing the manifesto texts, the CMP data also codes election-specific party characteristics such as party size and party positions (e.g. left-right scale, authoritarian-libertarian scale, and welfare support) that are used to compare parties that support basic income at a given election and those that do not. I also examine the socioeconomic (unemployment and growth rates) and institutional (social expenditure) determinants of party support for basic income at the country level using a variety of data sources. The availability of election manifesto

data from 1980 until 2018 allows for analysis of within-country variation in context as well as between-country variation. However, it also limits the quality of other institutional variables available to explore the impact on party support. Social expenditure is thus used as an imperfect proxy for the level of welfare state effort. The section ends with multivariate regression analysis to control for the independent effect of other variables. It also explores cross-level interactions between the level of social expenditure and party ideology (economic left-right positions and new left party family status).

The final empirical contribution in Section 5.4 explores the diverse ways that parties support basic income. In line with the depiction of basic income as a multi-dimensional policy idea, the analysis focuses on identifying and explaining the different rationales and policy commitments associated with advocating basic income⁴⁵. In terms of policy commitments, the analysis first distinguishes between the *types* of commitment that parties make in manifestos. This includes four types of commitments: to implement the policy, to investigate the policy in a commission or public debate, to work towards the policy in the long-term and to experiment or test the policy. In some cases, parties do not provide any commitment beyond expressing support. The size (vote share) of a party and whether or not the party is in government is used to compare the commitments that parties make. The rationales include eight categories of justifications for basic income, seven of which collapse into three broader categories that relate to traditional left-wing issues (social rights and social inequalities), new left issues (precarious employment and post-productivism) and right-wing issues (bureaucracy, retrenchment and activation). The propensity to use these types of rationales is compared across party families.

The chapter concludes in Section 5.5 with a summary of the key findings of the analysis and discusses the implications for existing theory and the subsequent chapters.

5.2 Political support for basic income: theories and hypotheses

As the first two chapters indicated, empirical evidence on what drives political support for basic income is extremely sparse and systematic cross-national analysis is, to my knowledge, non-existent. However, as the theoretical framework laid out, there are a number of competing and overlapping theories about the possible determinants of partisan support for basic income. This section briefly repeats the main theoretical expectations explained in

⁴⁵ The rationales and the policy commitments/proposals are not mutually exclusive.

more detail in Section 3.3 and specifies the hypotheses more clearly in terms of the methods adopted in this chapter.

5.2.1 Party-level characteristics

To start, the theoretical framework outlined hypotheses about the *ideological* foundations of party support. Arguably the most common assertion is that basic income is neither left nor right (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019b). Supporters of basic income can be found across the political spectrum from right-wing libertarians (Murray, 2006) through to revolutionary socialists (Callinicos, 2003). Interpreted simply, this would suggest that there is no difference in the propensity to support basic income among left- or right-wing parties. On the other hand, the limited evidence on voter preferences suggests that support is much more common on the left. Assuming the party-voter links hold sway, left-wing parties should be more likely to support basic income if their voters are more in favour.

Yet, regardless of whether this holds, there are also alternative explanations for why left-right ideology is not a good indicator of a party's disposition towards basic income. The least nuanced explanation is that basic income as a policy contains a mixture of features that appeal to *both* (or neither) left- and right-wing parties. On the other hand, the framework of a *multi-dimensional* basic income suggests that it is more likely to be *either* a left- or right-wing policy, depending on the precise vision of how it would work in practice. Thus, left-wing parties will support a 'progressive' basic income, while right-wing parties will support a 'conservative' basic income.

Furthermore, many authors point to the problems with reducing the ideology to a unidimensional left-right scale, arguing that politics is at least two-dimensional (Kitschelt, 1994). In a two-dimensional ideological space, support for basic income may be better explained by a party's position on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension than on economic interventionism or even their position on welfare more generally (Chrisp, 2017). In reference to welfare state politics, this is sometimes described as the universalism-particularism dimension (Beramendi et al., 2015). As a universal and unconditional policy that does not target resources based on the deservingness of recipients, we would expect basic income to be supported by parties that take broadly libertarian or universalist policy positions on this dimension.

Finally, it may be that the left is fundamentally divided. Past theory and evidence suggests that basic income may be most 'at home' within *new left* parties that curry support from labour market outsiders and often focus on post-productivist issues (van der Veen and Groot, 2000). New left parties are also likely to advocate basic income for post-productivist reasons

or to help labour market outsiders. On the other hand, the ‘labourist’ left, i.e. social democratic parties, are most strongly opposed it, given the threat to existing social insurance arrangements.

In addition to the *ideological* characteristics of parties, the assertion that political actors predominantly provide ‘cheap support’ for basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015b) suggests that it is mostly likely to be small parties in opposition that advocate basic income. The closer to government parties get, whether through gaining seats or being included in a coalition, the more likely they are to drop their commitment to basic income (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017, p.206). In addition, the size and position of a party is likely to affect the *type* (or level) of commitment made regarding the implementation of a basic income. Promising to implement the policy outright would signify the most commitment, while promising to work towards the policy in the long-term or stimulate public debate would signify the least commitment. Smaller parties in opposition are more likely to commit to introducing the policy, while large parties make either weak commitments or none.

5.2.2 Contextual factors

Turning to contextual factors, the main theory about what drives support for basic income relates to the macroeconomic conditions of a country. Broadly, we would expect support for basic income to increase in response to periods of economic crisis, such as recessions, and support to be less likely during periods of economic boom. Thus, the growth rate should be negatively associated with the level of party support at a given election. A more specific theory discussed in the theoretical framework is that higher rates of unemployment drive political support for basic income as high unemployment provides both productivist and post-productivist advocates with a rationale to propose basic income. The unemployment rate leading up to the election should be related to greater support for basic income.

In terms of the institutional context, the theoretical framework laid out two contrasting hypotheses about the likely drivers of support, related to the congruence or incongruence of the existing welfare state to a basic income. Due to the longitudinal nature of the dataset, it was difficult to source variables that could be used related to specific dimensions of a basic income such as conditionality or the share of benefits devoted to social insurance. However, the level of social expenditure can also be viewed as indicators of how much the existing system is capable of delivering a basic income. High spending welfare states can be perceived as being *more* congruent with a basic income in that the state has a sufficiently large tax base and state capacity to meet citizens’ welfare. Thus, if the incongruence thesis holds, i.e. that support for basic income increases in existing welfare states incongruent with

a basic income, we would expect support for basic income to be negatively related to the level of expenditure that exists.

Finally, we would expect the institutional context to be important for structuring the ideology of parties that advocate basic income. As above, there are two contrasting hypotheses. First, support from left-wing parties may be greater relative to right-wing parties in low-spending countries, as basic income would be an expansionary policy that would necessarily require increased taxation in such a context. In high-spending countries, existing provisions could be repurposed as a basic income rather than relying solely on taxation, making the policy more attractive to right-wing parties. On the other hand, evidence from voter preferences suggests that the opposite is the case: in high-spending countries, there is a larger difference between left-wing and right-wing voters (Parolin and Siöland, 2019a). Here, both unidimensional left-right measures and solely economic left-right or cultural libertarian-authoritarian measures can be used to deconstruct the relevant effect.

5.3 Who, when and where: a summary of basic income support in election manifestos 1980-2018

As outlined in Section 4.2 of the methodology, the party support analysis relies on party manifesto data spanning 15 countries, 38 years, 151 elections and 1142 non-missing election manifestos of parties that won at least one seat or had a seat in the previous parliament. Given the breadth (and novelty) of this data, it is useful to provide a summary of which party families are generally supportive of basic income and in which time-periods and countries support is most frequent.

5.3.1 Basic income mention and support data

Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the main variables of interest. The first variable indicates mentions of basic income in party manifestos, while the second variable also includes mentions of cognate policies, such as negative income tax or basic incomes that explicitly target particular groups. The third and fourth variables only include cases where the manifesto expresses (at least some) *support* for basic income or a cognate. The difference between the two sets of variables show the number of manifestos that express opposition to basic income⁴⁶. The mention/support observations column shows the absolute number of manifestos that either mention or indicate support for basic income, while the mean value corresponds to the proportion of manifestos that do so. The table shows that mentions of

⁴⁶ There is no neutral coding: parties are coded either as supporters or as opponents of basic income if it is mentioned.

basic income and support for it in manifestos are relatively niche: roughly 6% of manifestos (69 in total) express support for basic income while roughly 11% (127 in total) express support for either basic income *or* a cognate policy. There are also six (or eight if including cognates) manifestos expressing opposition to basic income.

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics of basic income mention / support data

Variable	Obs.	Mention / support obs.	Mean value	Std. Dev.	Min value	Max value
Basic income mentions	1,142	75	0.066	0.248	0	1
Basic income/cognate mentions	1,142	135	0.118	0.326	0	1
Basic income support	1,142	69	0.060	0.238	0	1
Basic income/cognate support	1,142	127	0.111	0.314	0	1

5.3.2 Support for basic income across party families, countries and time

Next, Table 5.2 shows the distribution of election manifestos indicating support for basic income or a cognate according to party family. It provides an initial indication of the ideological nature of party support for basic income, with support disproportionately found in new left parties and specifically green parties across Europe. 31.4% of ecological / green election manifestos indicated support for basic income, while the rate was 41% if cognates were included. Socialist / left parties were the next most likely to support a basic income with 6.8% of election manifestos expressing support. However, this was only 13% if including cognates, which was less than for liberal parties, of which 19.2% of manifestos expressed support for basic income or a cognate. Only 6% clearly expressed support for a basic income (rather than a cognate). At the other end of the spectrum, there were no cases of Nationalist parties supporting either basic income or a cognate, while support for basic income was very rare (less than 2%) among Christian democrat, conservative and ethnic / regional parties. Support for basic income *or cognates* was more common among most of these party families, with around 5% of Christian democrat and special issue party election manifestos and 7% of ethnic / regional parties, though conservative party support was still only 2.4%. On the other hand, while nearly 5% of social democrat election manifestos indicated support for basic income, this barely rose when including cognates to 6%.

This gives an early indication of the significance of the *cultural* dimension of politics with new left parties most likely to be in favour on the left of the spectrum and liberal parties on the right. Of course, this categorisation of party families is not election-specific, meaning it may mask considerable variation in the ideological position of parties that fit within each category and over time. This is explored in the next section.

Figure 5.1 also shows the mean basic income support values when weighted by party size, given here by the percentage of the vote gained in that election. In most cases, this slightly reduced the mean values for both measures of support, implying that within each party family it is smaller parties that are more likely to support basic income. This effect is particularly large for Social Democrat parties, which becomes the second least likely party family to support a basic income or cognate after Nationalist parties.

Table 5.2: Descriptive statistics of basic income and cognate support by party family

Party family	BI support obs.	Mean BI support value	BI/cognate support obs.	Mean BI/cognate support value	<i>N</i>
Ecological / green	33	0.314	43	0.410	105
Socialist / left	11	0.068	21	0.130	161
Social democrat	9	0.049	11	0.059	185
Liberal	9	0.060	29	0.192	151
Christian democrat	2	0.013	8	0.053	151
Conservative	1	0.008	3	0.024	127
Nationalist	0	0	0	0	52
Agrarian	2	0.054	4	0.108	37
Ethnic / Regional	0	0	8	0.071	112
Special Issue	2	0.033	3	0.049	61

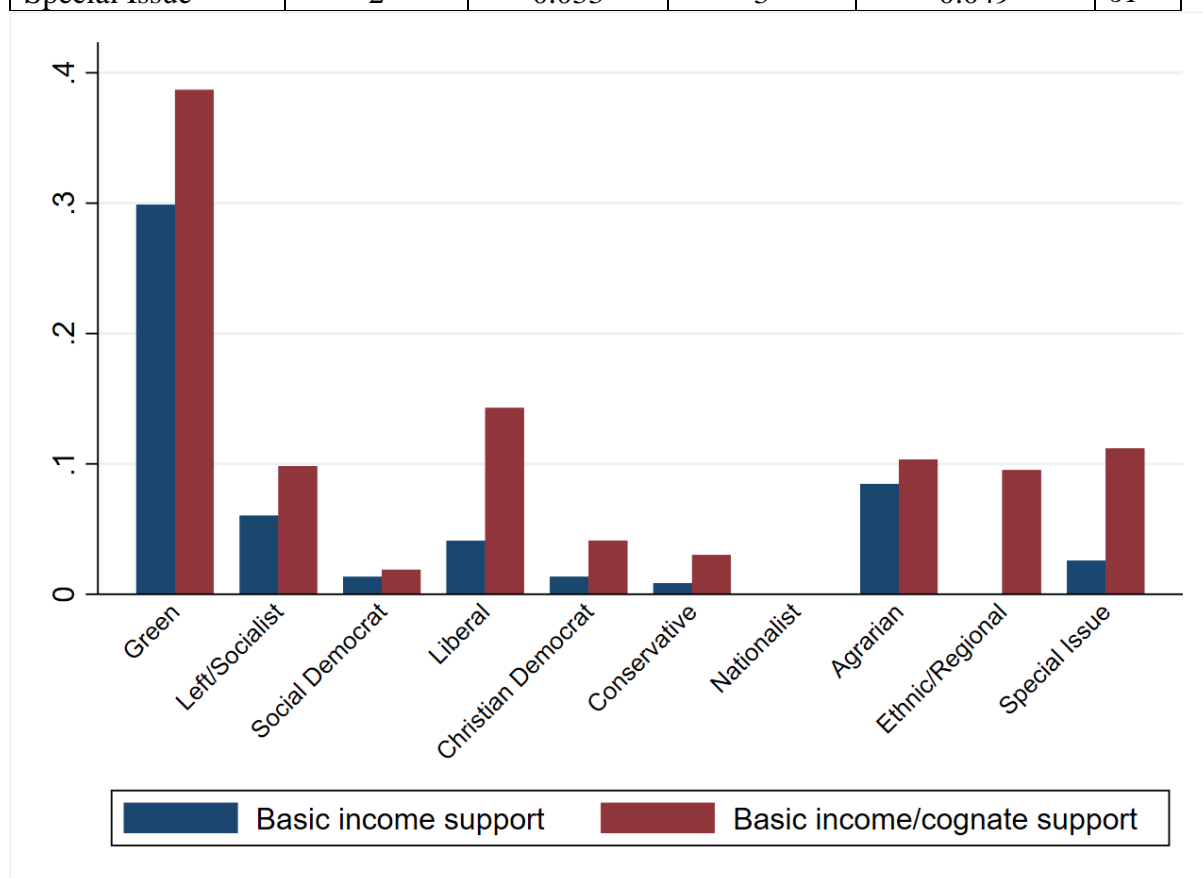


Figure 5.1: Likelihood of supporting basic income by party family (weighted by party size [percentage of vote])

Table 5.3 shows the cross-national distribution of support for basic income with considerable variation in the frequency of party support across countries. Party support for basic income is most common in Finland with 17.1% of election manifestos expressing support (20% if including cognates), although the absolute number of parties is higher in the Netherlands (16 in the Netherlands versus 12 in Finland), where the party system is more fragmented meaning the proportion is lower at 12.5% (14.8% if including cognates). Ireland is the only other country that has over 10% of manifestos expressing support for basic income, while it has the highest proportion of parties advocating a basic income or a cognate (22.2%). Germany also has a high frequency of support for basic income or cognates (21.2%), despite a lower level of support for basic income-only (7.7%) and Belgium is very similar; 20% of parties support a basic income or cognate but only 7% support basic income. Norway had a marginally higher than average proportion of parties supporting basic income (8.1%) and basic income or a cognate (12.2%).

The only country with no examples of support for basic income or a cognate was Sweden, while there was only a single case of party support in Portugal (1.4% of manifestos). There was only one example of party support for basic income in Italy, Austria and Spain but in the latter two cases, support for basic income or a cognate was much more common, 12% and 12.6% respectively. Denmark, France and the UK also had a lower than average proportion of support for both measures of basic income, while support for basic income in Luxembourg was similarly low (5%) but the proportion of manifestos was much higher when including cognates (17.5%).

The effect of weighting the results by party size is greater when examining country-level support for basic income than for party families, as Figure 5.2 shows. While at least 20% of manifestos express support for a basic income or cognate in four countries (i.e. the mean score is at least 0.2 in Belgium, Finland, Germany and Ireland), the weighted mean score is lower than 0.15 in all four countries. Factoring in the size of parties supporting basic income suggests that support on both measures has been greatest in Finland, as support in Germany and Ireland is evidently more disproportionately found among smaller parties.

Table 5.3: Descriptive statistics of basic income and cognate support by country

Country	BI support obs.	Mean BI support value	BI/cognate support obs.	Mean BI/cognate support value	N
Austria	1	0.02	6	0.120	50
Belgium	7	0.070	18	0.200	100
Denmark	4	0.043	5	0.065	93
Finland	12	0.171	14	0.200	70
France	3	0.055	4	0.073	55
Germany	4	0.077	11	0.212	52
Ireland	7	0.111	14	0.222	63
Italy	1	0.010	3	0.029	103
Luxembourg	2	0.050	7	0.175	40
Netherlands	16	0.125	19	0.148	128
Norway	6	0.081	9	0.122	74
Portugal	1	0.014	1	0.014	71
Spain	1	0.011	12	0.126	95
Sweden	0	0	0	0	77
UK	4	0.056	4	0.056	71

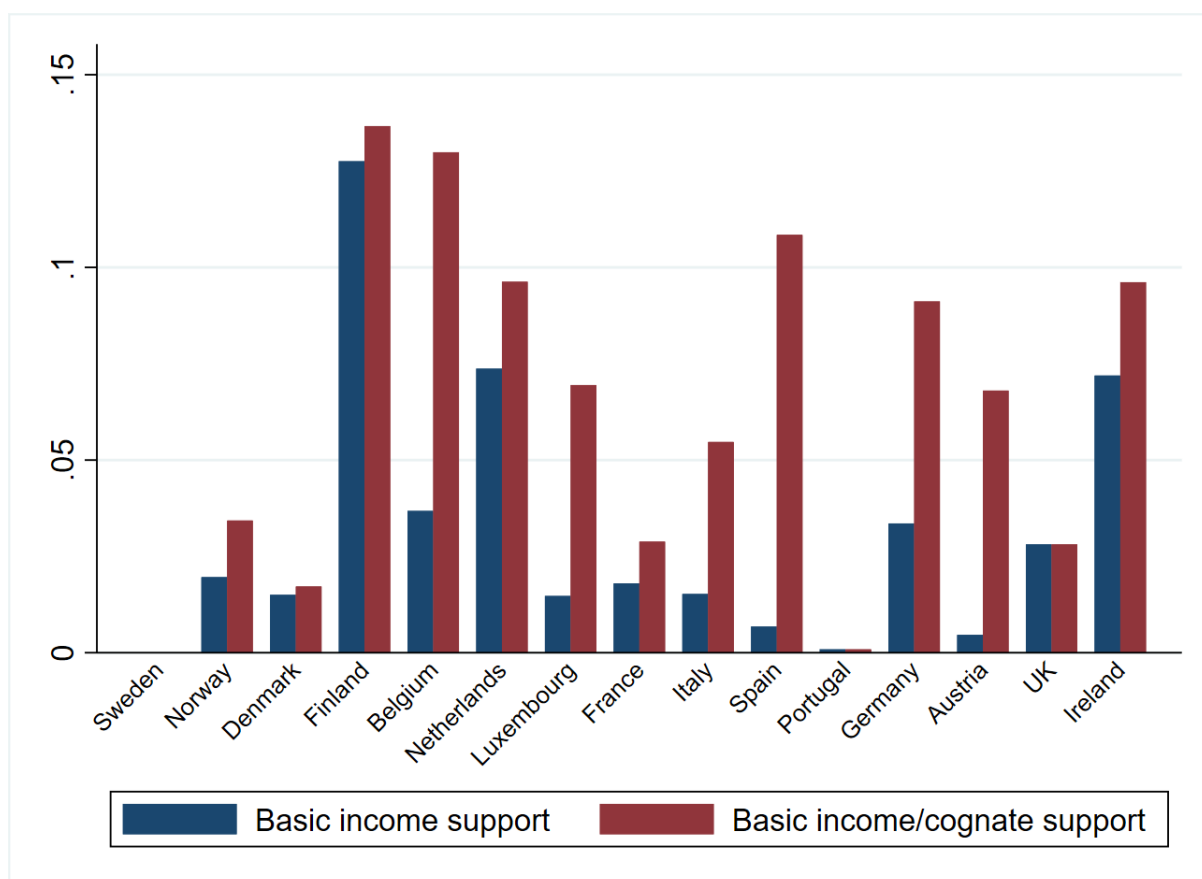


Figure 5.2: Likelihood of supporting basic income by country (weighted by party size [percentage of vote])

Finally, Table 5.4 shows the levels of support for basic income by election period (defined as 5-year segments starting in 1980). This evidences the claim that there has been a notable surge in support in the last few years, as the period from 2015-2018 has the highest

proportion of party manifestos expressing support for basic income (13%) or support for basic income or a cognate (20.9%). Whether or not cognates are included, support for basic income was at its lowest at the turn of the millennium between 2000 and 2004 (0.8% supported basic income, 6.1% supported basic income or a cognate). Support was not much higher between 2005 and 2009 (2.6% supported basic income, 8.4% supported basic income or a cognate) or in the first half of the 1980s (3.7% supported basic income, 6.6% supported basic income or a cognate). Two other periods of comparatively high support were in the second halves of the 1980s (8.8% supported basic income, 11.9% supported basic income or a cognate) and the 1990s (8.4% supported basic income, 13.7% supported basic income or a cognate). The early 1990s and early 2010s exhibited average levels of party support. Thus, the overall picture indicates the existence of *waves* of increased support rather than a linear trajectory in an upwards direction. The next section seeks to explore why these waves occur.

Figure 5.3 also provides a year-by-year comparison of support for basic income in elections and is again weighted by party size. It further strengthens the argument that the recent interest is more significant than before, once factoring in the size of parties in favour.

Table 5.4: Descriptive statistics of basic income and cognate support by election period (5 years)

Election period	BI support obs.	Mean BI support value	BI/cognate support obs.	Mean BI/cognate support value	<i>N</i>
1980-1984	5	0.037	9	0.066	136
1985-1989	14	0.088	19	0.119	159
1990-1994	8	0.059	13	0.096	135
1995-1999	11	0.084	18	0.137	131
2000-2004	1	0.008	8	0.061	132
2004-2009	4	0.026	13	0.084	155
2010-2014	8	0.052	18	0.116	155
2015-2018	18	0.130	29	0.209	139

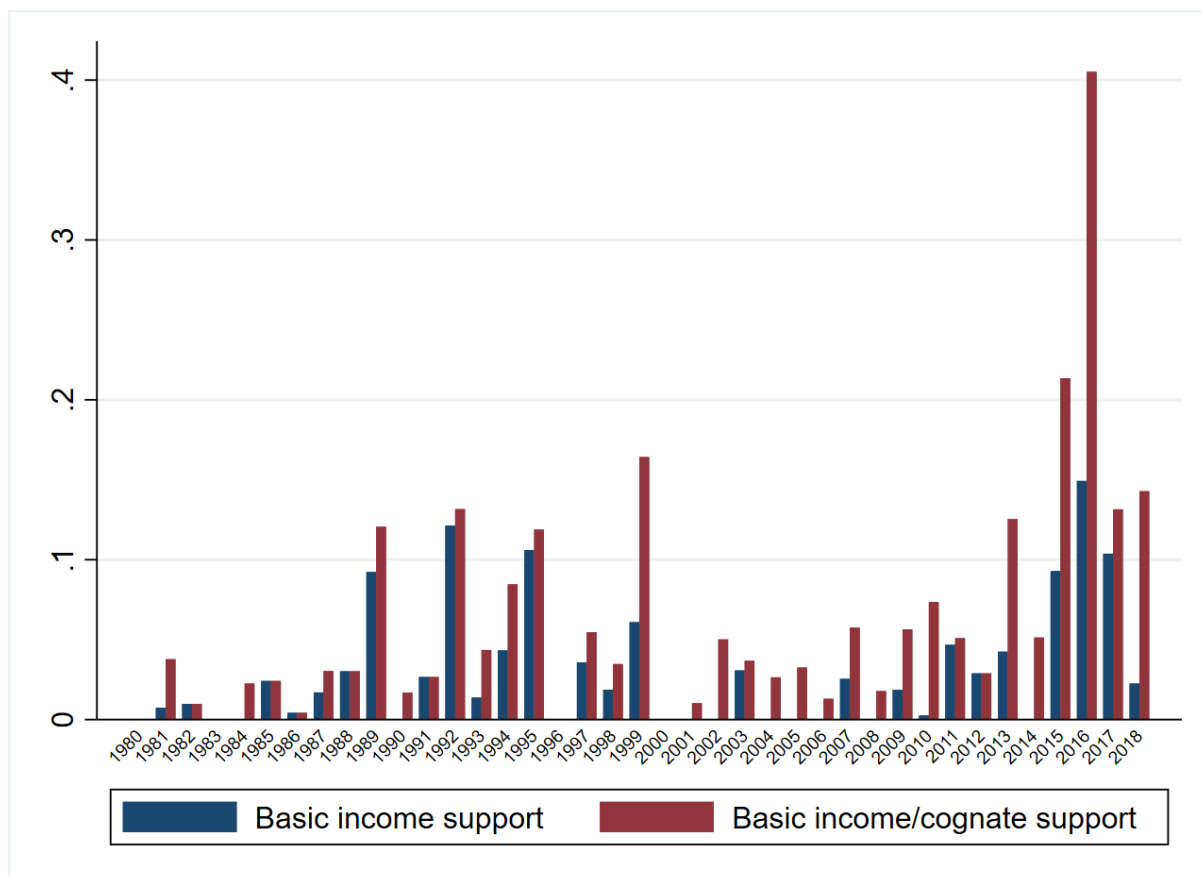


Figure 5.3: Likelihood of supporting basic income by year (weighted by party size [percentage of vote])

This descriptive analysis highlights two important early indicative results. First, the distribution of support for basic income is notably different to support for basic income and cognates. It is not just that including cognates makes support more common, it also changes the distribution of support in important ways, whether examining party families, countries or time. Thus, in all subsequent analysis, attention is paid to how the results differ depending on the definition used. Second, the figures show that, when weighted by party size, the mean probability of supporting a basic income (or indeed a cognate) is lower than in the tables that are not weighted. This is also the case when examining the results by year, country or party family. It shows that smaller parties are more likely to support basic income (although the significance of the difference is tested in the next section). Thus, in later analysis, particularly when estimating country or election differences, the data is weighted by party size to account for the relative significance of party support⁴⁷.

5.3.3 Opposition to basic income

Finally, before moving onto the statistical analysis, it is worth identifying the few cases of manifestos expressing opposition to basic income. These are both rare and heterogeneous in

⁴⁷ Fragmented party systems are more likely to include a party that supports basic income, despite overall political support (or indeed political feasibility) not necessarily being higher.

nature with no clear pattern across party families, election periods or countries. The similarity across the parties listed is their size: smaller parties are evidently more likely to directly oppose basic income in a manifesto. As with the cases of support, the rationale for opposition given in a manifesto is also coded according to five categories: (1) cost; (2) incentives; (3) morality; (4) poverty; (5) gender. Again, the rationales are quite heterogeneous and varied.

The fact that a party would explicitly oppose basic income suggests that the issue was prominent within political debate during that election. Indeed, in all cases, at least one other party expressed support for basic income (or a cognate) in the same election. Thus, while there is no evident pattern in the parties that oppose basic income other than their size, opposition may be a pertinent indicator of salience and could be included in future analysis of *attention* given to basic income rather than support.

Table 5.5: Manifestos that express opposition to basic income or a cognate policy

Party	Party family	Election year	Country	BI or cognate	Rationale
Reformed Political Party (SGP)	Special Issue	1986	Netherlands	BI	Morality
Reformatory Political Federation (RPF)	Christian Democratic	1989	Netherlands	BI	Cost; Morality; Gender
Alliance'90/Greens (B'90/G)	Green	1994	Germany	Cognate	n/a
Progressive Democrats (PD)	Liberal	1997	Ireland	BI	Morality
Swedish People's Party (RKP/SFP)	Ethnic / Regional	1999	Finland	BI	Incentives
Left Radical Party (PRG)	Socialist	2017	France	BI	Cost; Poverty
Brothers of Italy (FDI)	Nationalist	2018	Italy	Cognate	n/a
Alternative Democratic Reform Party	Special Issue	2018	Luxembourg	BI	Cost; Incentives; Poverty

5.4 Party-level and contextual drivers of support for basic income

The previous section provided a general overview of the parties that support basic income and the time-period and countries that have seen most support. However, it does not indicate what *varying* party-level characteristics and country-level factors are associated with greater support for basic income. This is a necessary step to test the central hypotheses outlined in the first section of this chapter. I start by exploring the relationship between support for basic income and party-level characteristics and then explore pooled and within-country variation

in support for basic income using country-level factors. Finally, it is also important to explore party-level and country-level determinants simultaneously and to control for both country- and period-effects. In order to so, I run multi-level regression models to predict basic income support. For all regression analysis, the data are weighted by party size (vote share).

5.4.1 Party characteristics: ideology and size

Table 5.6 shows the differences between parties that expressed support for basic income in an election manifesto and parties that did not, using seven measures of ideology and party size. In summary, parties that support basic income or a cognate are significantly more left-wing at elections across both economic and cultural (i.e. libertarian) dimensions and in terms of being pro-welfare⁴⁸, although the difference related to the latter is less significant ($p < 0.05$). This gives further indication that party support for basic income is more left than right. Parties in favour of basic income are also considerably smaller on average (in terms of votes and seats) and are less likely to be in government, confirming the inference in the section above. In the regression analysis below, vote share is used to weight the estimates, but the government/opposition binary is used as an independent variable. On every indicator of ideology and size/importance, the difference is smaller when including cognates, again suggesting that the more diverse sources of support are a result of a more expansive definition of the policy.

Table 5.6: Mean characteristics of parties that support basic income vs. parties that do not (95% confidence intervals in square brackets; significance of difference given below)

	% vote (Min 0 - Max 51.3)	% seats (0 - 63.4)	Government party (0 - 1)	L-R scale (-64.3 - 64.7)	L-R (Eco.) (-73.6 - 55)	Lib-Auth (-73.0 - 56.1)	Welfare (0 - 42.0)
Basic income support	6.46 [5.07; 7.85]	5.53 [3.94; 7.12]	0.130 [0.049; 0.212]	-16.63 [-20.78; -12.48]	-24.99 [-21.01; -28.98]	-22.04 [-18.36; -25.73]	15.59 [13.58; 17.60]
No basic income support	13.04 [12.30; 13.78]	13.61 [12.76; 14.47]	0.296 [0.269; 0.324]	-3.95 [-5.22; -2.68]	-16.75 [-15.74; -17.76]	-8.65 [-7.63; -9.68]	13.37 [12.91; 13.83]
Diff.	***	***	***	***	***	***	**
BI/cognate support	7.18 [5.99; 8.37]	6.46 [5.06; 7.85]	0.181 [0.113; 0.249]	-13.72 [-16.66; -10.77]	-22.43 [-19.67; -25.20]	-19.98 [-17.38; -22.58]	15.18 [13.74; 16.62]
No BI/cognate support	13.33 [12.56; 14.10]	13.96 [13.07; 14.85]	0.300 [0.271; 0.328]	-3.55 [-4.87; -2.23]	16.57 [-15.53; -17.61]	-8.11 [-7.05; -9.17]	13.29 [12.81; 13.76]
Diff.	***	***	***	***	***	***	**
N=	1142	1142	1142	1097	1097	1097	1097

* $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

⁴⁸ Higher (positive) values indicate right-wing/authoritarian positions except for 'welfare', which is higher in cases where a party is more pro-welfare.

5.4.2 Country-level factors: unemployment, growth and expenditure

Turning to country-level factors, there are three main variables of interest to explore, which are unemployment, GDP growth and social expenditure. Figure 5.4 shows the relationship between these country-level factors and the likelihood of a party supporting basic income (left-hand side) or basic income or a cognate (right-hand side) at a given election, weighted by party size (vote share). Thus, as each data point represents an election, the y-axis values effectively indicate the proportion of voters⁴⁹ that supported a party in favour of basic income in a given election. In both graphs for unemployment, the line of best fit has an upward slope suggesting there is a positive relationship between the unemployment rate preceding an election and the level of party support for basic income at that election. This confirms expectations outlined in the initial theoretical section. The gradient is steeper when including cognates suggesting a stronger relationship. However, for GDP growth rates, the evidence does not support expectations. Rather than lower or negative growth rates increasing party support, party support appears to be linked to *higher* GDP growth, although the relationship is broadly flat for both indicators of basic income support. Finally, for social expenditure, the results offer more support to the congruence thesis, in that higher levels of expenditure are associated with more party support for basic income or cognates. However, the relationship is roughly flat when excluding cognates.

In these graphs, the data is pooled, which fails to distinguish between country differences and period differences. Figures 5.5-5.7 show the relationship between these factors and party support for basic income at a given election by individual country, thus examining *within* country variation. Figure 5.5 shows that within countries, the relationship between the unemployment rate and support for basic income is also mostly positive; the gradient is either upward sloping or flat in every country except for Germany. Yet, for GDP growth (Figure 5.6) and social expenditure (Figure 5.7), the relationship is positive in some countries and negative in others. For example, in Finland, the Netherlands, Ireland and to some extent Belgium party support for basic income appears to be greater during economic booms, i.e. higher growth. On the other hand, party support is related to economic downturns in the UK, Denmark, Spain, and to some extent Luxembourg and France. Meanwhile, party support for basic income is higher when social expenditure is higher in Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Spain and Germany but lower in Denmark, Belgium, Italy and Ireland. Broadly, the same pattern of a consistent positive relationship between unemployment and

⁴⁹ It is marginally higher than the actual proportion of voters, as the analysis excludes those who voted for a party that did not win a seat.

party support⁵⁰ and inconsistent relationship with GDP growth and social expenditure exists when cognates are included. The graphs for these are shown in Appendix Figures A4-A6.

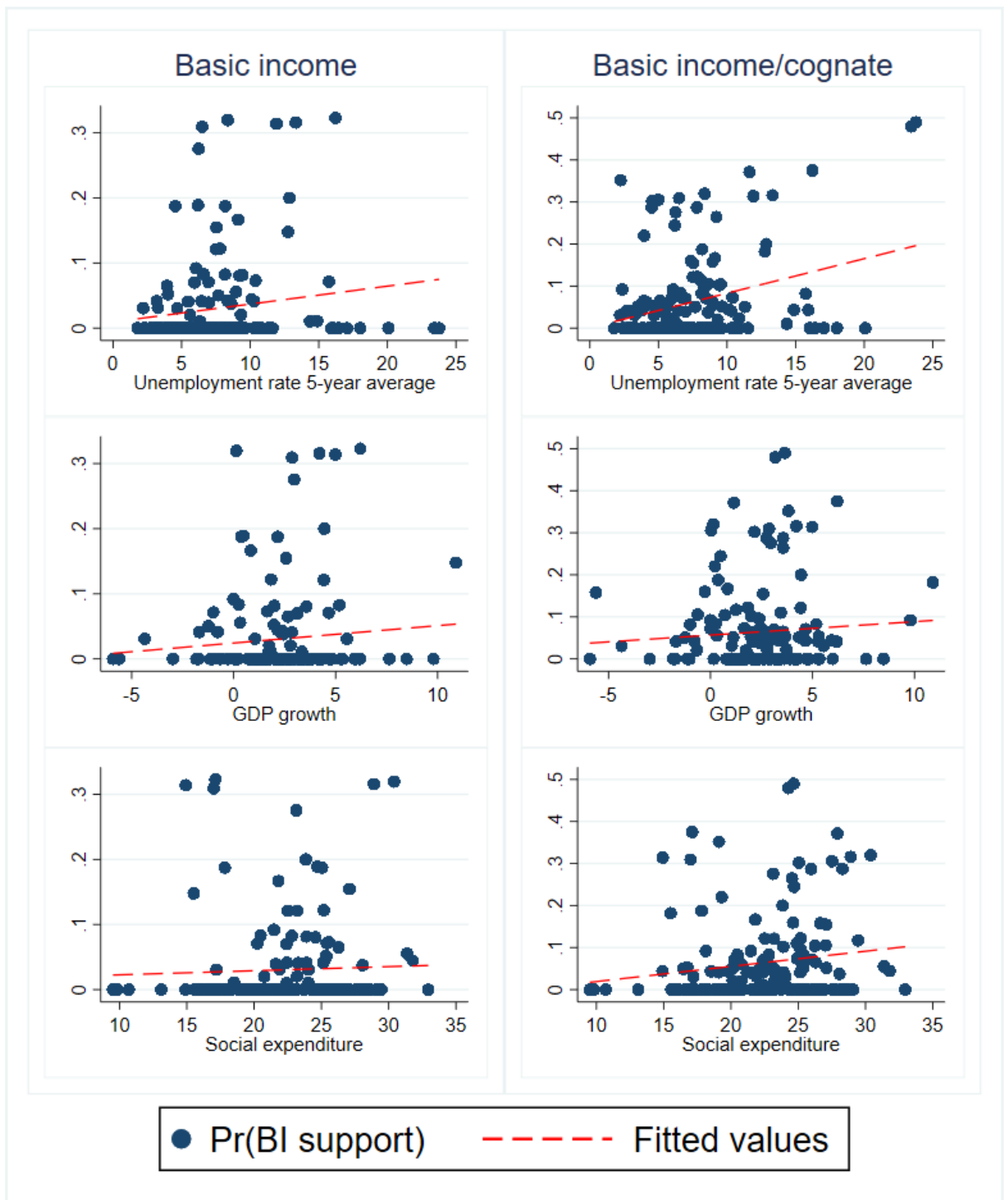


Figure 5.4: Level of party support for basic income at a given election by unemployment rate, GDP growth rate and social expenditure (pooled data).

⁵⁰ For cognates, the relationship is positive in Germany but negative in Luxembourg and very weakly negative in Belgium.

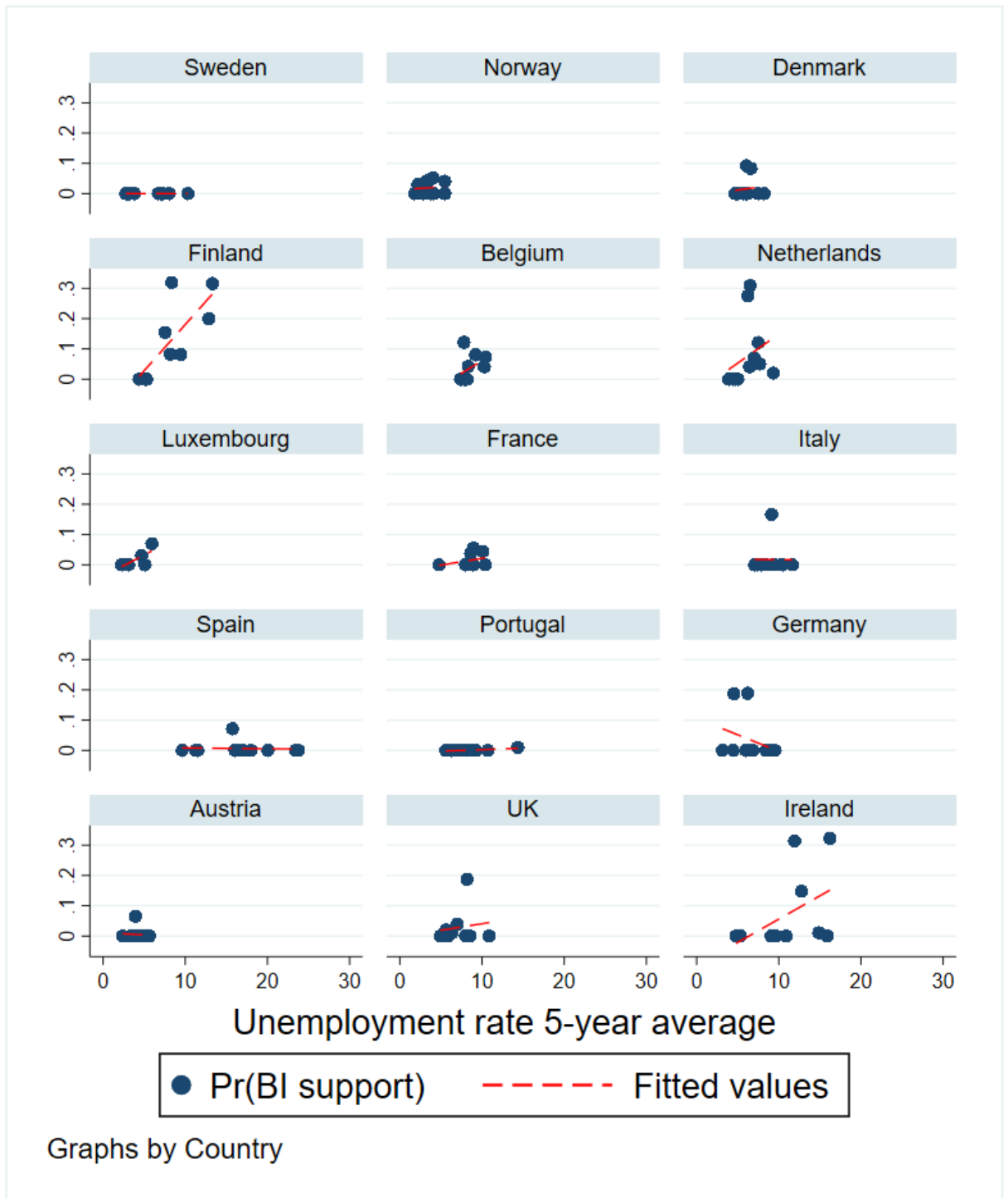


Figure 5.5: Level of party support for basic income at a given election by unemployment rate (within-country variation).

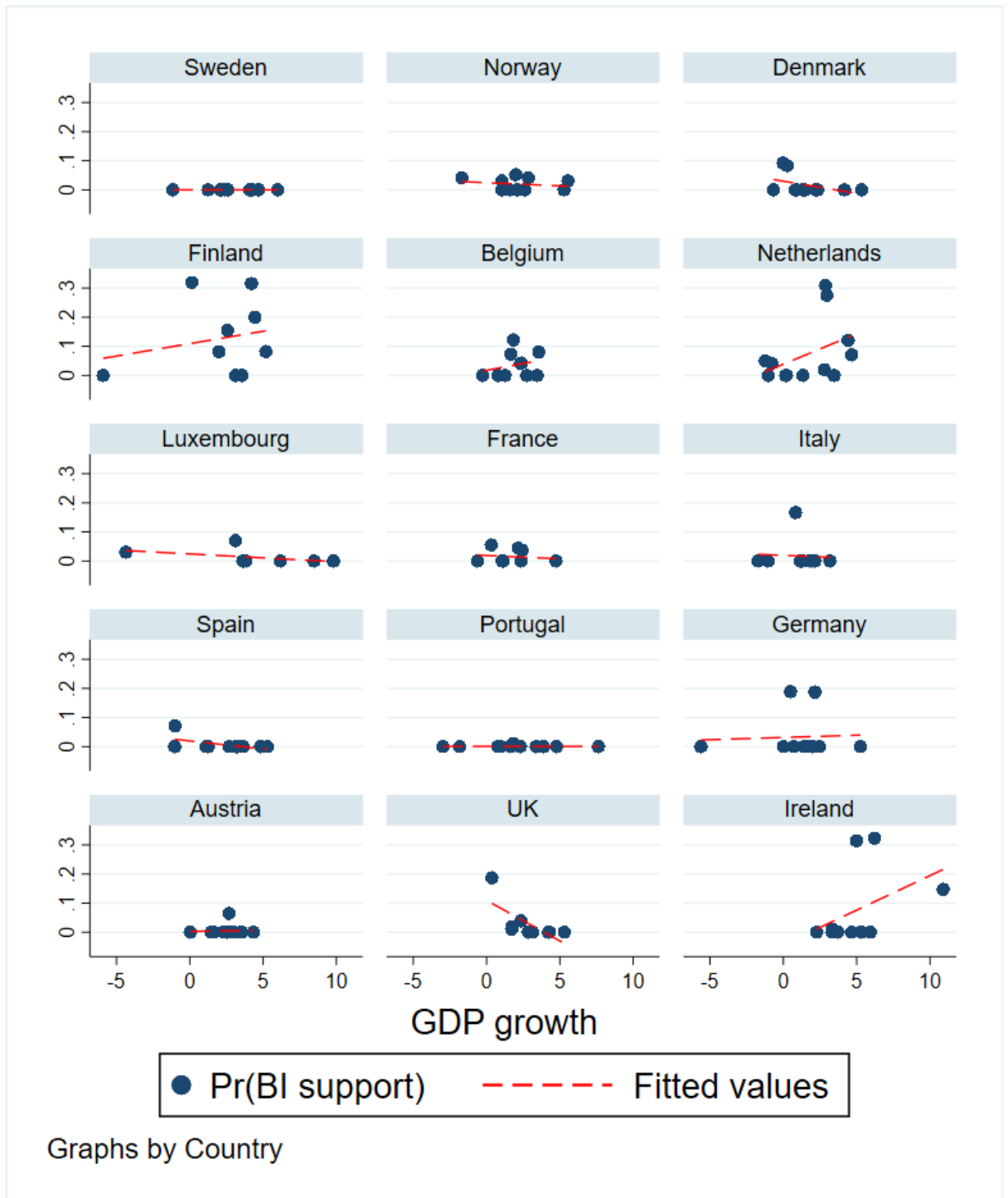
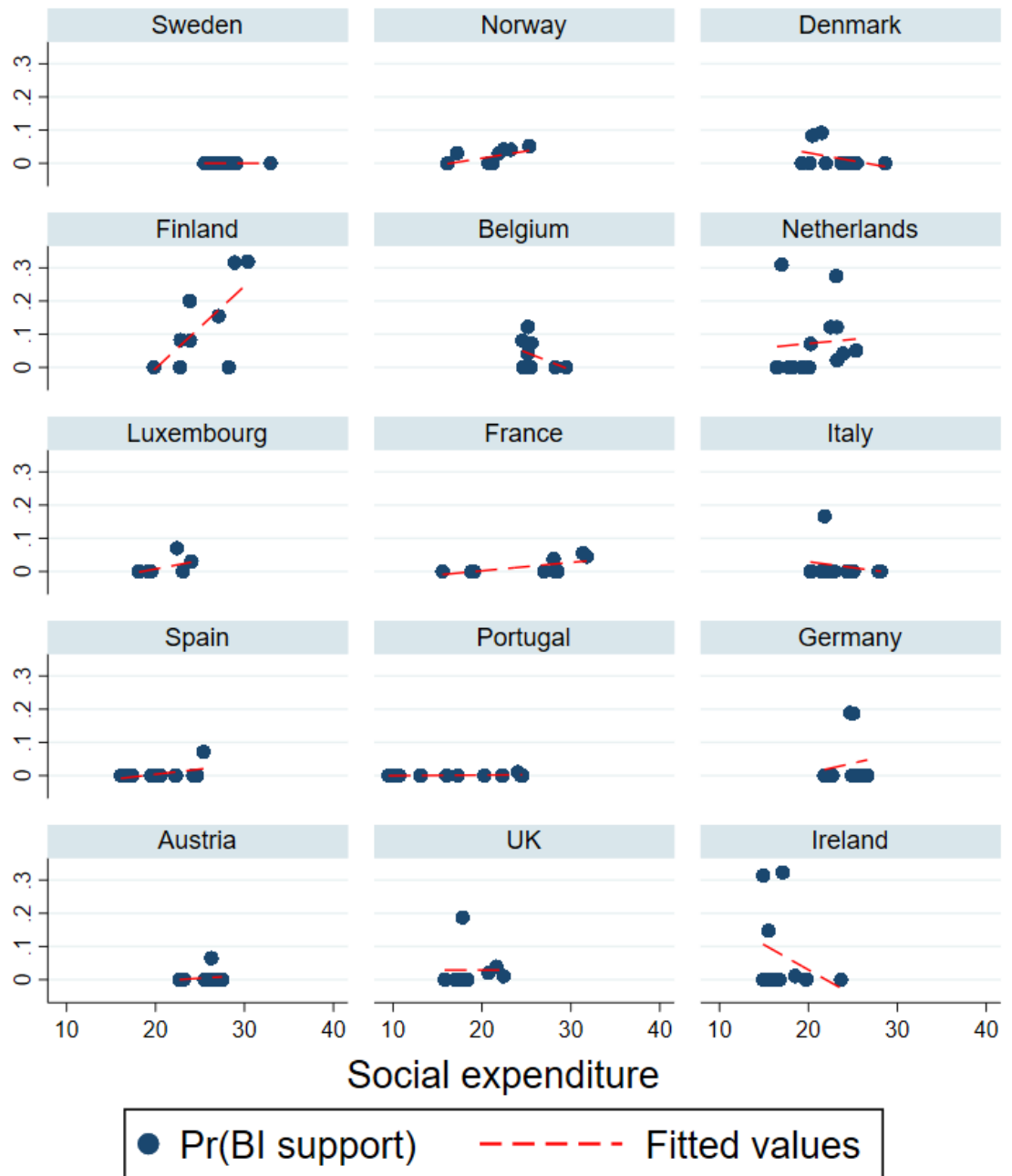


Figure 5.6: Level of party support for basic income at a given election by GDP growth rate (within-country variation).



Graphs by Country

Figure 5.7: Level of party support for basic income at a given election by social expenditure (within-country variation).

5.4.3 Regression modelling

To control for the effect of other variables, I also run a series of logistic regressions predicting party support for basic income or a cognate according to four different model specifications (all weighted by party vote share). The results for basic income are shown in Table 5.7, while the results when including cognates is shown in Table 5.8. Model specification 1 is a pooled bivariate regression akin to Figure 5.4, with no other covariates or specification of country- or time-effects. Thus, the coefficient for each variable represents a different model, even if they are in the same column. Model specification 2 solely accounts for country fixed effects, with standard errors clustered at the country-level. Model specification 3 adds election-period fixed effects. Election periods are defined in 5-year segments as in Table 5.4. Finally, model specification 4 is a full multivariate regression model including all the independent variables shown in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 as well as country and election-period fixed effects. A number of robustness checks were also carried out as described in the methodology, with the results shown in Tables A14-18 in the Appendix.

The results show that the only two variables that are robust to various model specifications and the inclusion (or exclusion) of cognates are the unemployment rate at the country-level and the libertarian-authoritarian party position at the party-level. The latter in particular is highly significant ($p < 0.01$) across all 8 possible models in Tables 5.7 and 5.8. The unemployment rate is also highly significant in all model specifications when predicting basic income or cognates (Table 5.8) but is only weakly significant ($p < 0.1$) for predicting support for basic income-only when specifying election-period fixed effects (Model 3 in Table 5.7). The effect is larger again with the inclusion of other covariates in model 4.

Economic left-right positions and whether the party is in government are also consistently significant ($p < 0.05$) when predicting party support for basic income only. However, in models predicting support for basic income or cognates, economic left-right positions are insignificant when election period fixed effects are included (Models 3-4 in Table 5.8), while being in opposition is insignificant once the full model is specified (Models 4 in Table 5.8). This suggests that the cultural dimension explains support for basic income better than economic party positions, particularly in the case of cognates. As in the previous analysis, welfare positions are also not a strong predictor of support for basic income, particularly when including cognates where it is insignificant in all model specifications. Similarly, GDP growth is positive but insignificant in all specifications refuting the theoretical expectations. Social expenditure is an insignificant predictor of support for basic income only but is positively associated ($p < 0.05$) with party support for basic income or cognates when election period effects or other covariates are not modelled.

Table 5.7: Multi-level logistic regression models predicting party support for basic income

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Unemployment rate	0.075** (0.030)	0.216*** (0.051)	0.177* (0.095)	0.292** (0.143)
GDP growth	0.100 (0.073)	0.085 (0.076)	0.055 (0.095)	0.030 (0.134)
Social expenditure	0.019 (0.044)	0.077 (0.069)	-0.006 (0.061)	-0.042 (0.129)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.034** (0.010)	0.035** (0.015)	0.033** (0.013)	0.024** (0.012)
Lib.-Auth. scale	0.062*** (0.011)	0.065*** (0.015)	0.075*** (0.011)	0.074*** (0.016)
Welfare	0.047** (0.023)	0.038 (0.023)	0.037** (0.019)	-0.027 (0.024)
In government	-1.026** (0.433)	-1.218*** (0.360)	-1.222*** (0.371)	-0.832** (0.039)

Model specifications: (1) Bivariate pooled regression (2) Bivariate country fixed effects (SE clustered at country level); (3) Bivariate country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects (SE clustered at country level); (4) Multivariate (all covariates included) country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects (SE clustered at country level)

Table 5.8: Multi-level logistic regression models predicting party support for basic income / cognates

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Unemployment rate	0.110*** (0.032)	0.241*** (0.053)	0.181*** (0.034)	0.200*** (0.055)
GDP growth	0.058 (0.054)	0.060 (0.054)	0.037 (0.072)	0.023 (0.076)
Social expenditure	0.064** (0.031)	0.149** (0.073)	0.058 (0.048)	0.001 (0.082)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.017** (0.008)	0.018*** (0.007)	0.010 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.017)
Lib.-Auth. scale	0.049*** (0.010)	0.049*** (0.014)	0.059*** (0.012)	0.061*** (0.015)
Welfare	0.017 (0.019)	0.022 (0.018)	0.008 (0.018)	-0.015 (0.028)
In government	-0.635** (0.306)	-0.810** (0.353)	-0.788** (0.374)	-0.543 (0.445)

See model specifications in Table 5.7

5.4.4 Social expenditure and ideology: Cross-level interactions

Finally, the first section outlined hypotheses about the interaction between party ideology and the institutional context regarding support for basic income. This is explored through two operationalisations of ideology: economic left-right party positions at a given election and whether or not a party is characterised as new left (Green or Socialist / Left), and the level of social expenditure as an indicator of the institutional context. Tables 5.9 and 5.10 show the results of these interactions when predicting party support for basic income and

basic income or a cognate respectively. Each model is set according to the same specifications as above. Interestingly, the interaction effects go in opposite directions.

Firstly, the results show that there is a negative interaction between economic leftism and social expenditure. In other words, the marginal effect of being economically left-wing is smaller in high-spending countries. Table 5.9 indicates that this is only significant when country fixed effects or random intercepts are modelled to predict party support for basic income. However, when including cognates (Table 5.10) the interaction is significant except when the full model is specified. Figure 5.8 shows the predicted likelihood of party support according to whether a party adopts a left-wing economic position (75th percentile on the L-R economic scale) or a right-wing economic position (25th percentile) and the level of social expenditure at that election (Figure A7 in the Appendix also shows the marginal effect of economic left-right positions by social expenditure). This also shows that there is not a significant difference between economically left-wing or economically right-wing parties at any level of social expenditure, even if the interaction is significant. On the other hand, there is a positive interaction between being a new left party and social expenditure. In other words, the difference in likelihood between a new left party and other parties supporting basic income increases when social expenditure is high. Figure 5.9 shows the predicted likelihood of party support according to whether the party is new left or not and the level of social expenditure at that election (Figure A8 in the Appendix shows the marginal effect of being a new left party by social expenditure).

There are two obvious ways to interpret this discrepancy. The first is that ‘new left’ parties are distinctive and their ideology cannot be reduced to the economic left-right dimension. Thus, it is theoretically possible that the same new left parties that advocate basic income in high-spending countries are more economically right-wing than parties in favour of basic income in low-spending countries. The second more plausible explanation is that the economic left-right position is a variable measure of ideology across different elections. This means it is not that right-wing parties support basic income in high-spending countries but that parties taking economically right-wing *positions* at a given election are more likely to support basic income or a cognate.

Table 5.9: Models predicting party support for basic income with interactions between economic left-right party position (variable) or new left party family (fixed) & social expenditure.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.108* (0.060)	0.105*** (0.031)	0.083** (0.038)	0.064 (0.044)
Social expenditure	0.078 (0.081)	0.145 (0.102)	0.053 (0.096)	0.002 (0.160)
L-R scale (Eco) X Social expenditure	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)
New left party	-2.25 (1.71)	-2.69 (1.97)	-3.20 (2.27)	-4.62 (2.49)
Social expenditure	-0.072 (0.063)	0.005 (0.112)	0.061 (0.099)	-0.129 (0.147)
New left X Social expenditure	0.195** (0.075)	0.230** (0.090)	0.258** (0.105)	0.289*** (0.147)

See model specifications in Table 5.7

Table 5.10: Models predicting party support for basic income / cognate with interactions between economic left-right party position & social expenditure.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.092** (0.041)	0.138*** (0.038)	0.100*** (0.037)	0.066 (0.058)
Social expenditure	0.119*** (0.042)	0.249*** (0.080)	0.142** (0.063)	0.078 (0.090)
L-R scale (Eco) X Social expenditure	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.003 (0.002)

See model specifications in Table 5.7

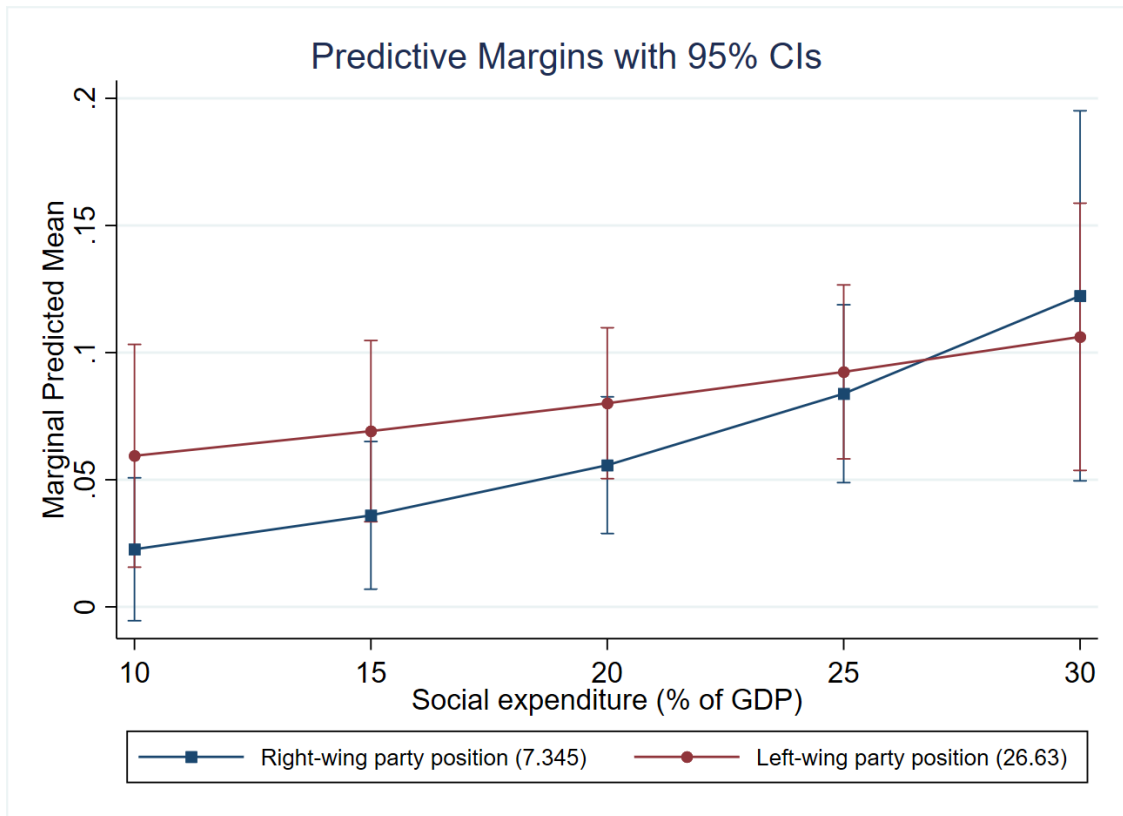


Figure 5.8: Cross-level interaction predicting party support for basic income or a cognate by social expenditure and the ideological position of a party at a given election (economic left-right dimension). [Margins from Model 3 in Table 5.10]

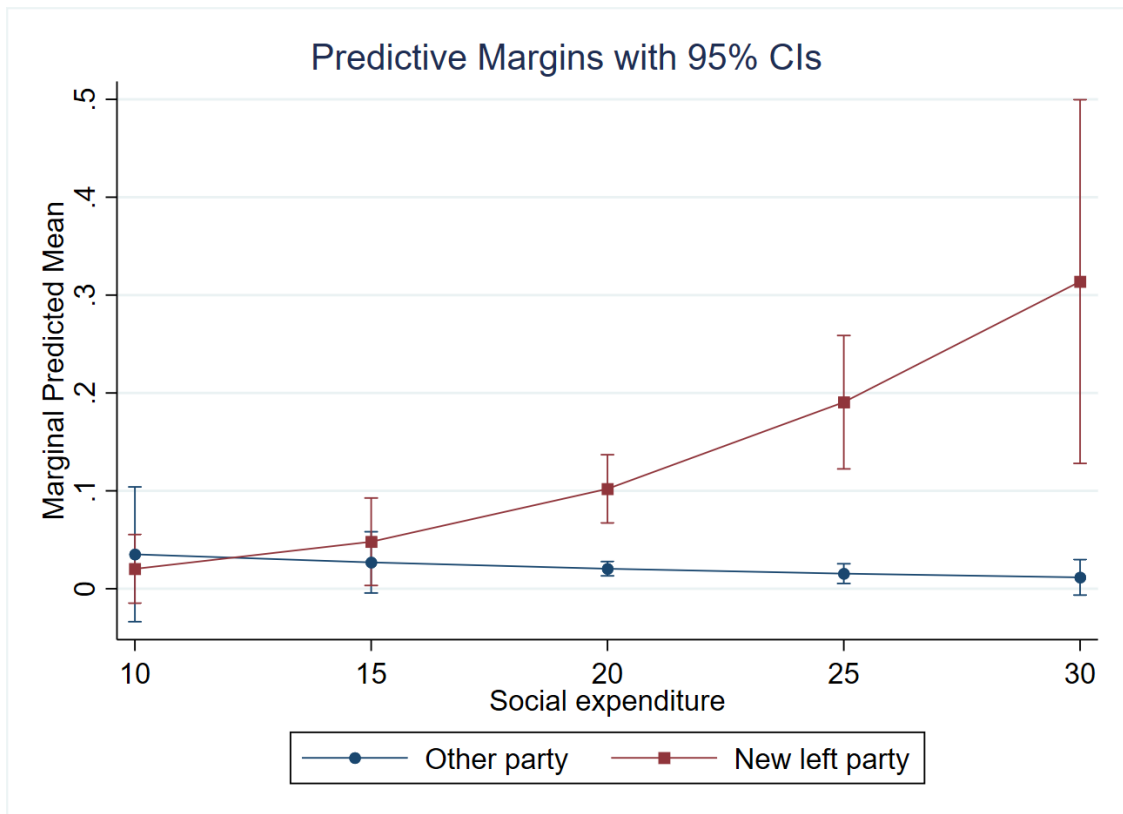


Figure 5.9: Cross-level interaction predicting party support for basic income (not including cognates) by social expenditure and party family (Green or Socialist / Left = New left; All other parties = Other party). [Margins from Model 3 in Table 5.9]

5.5 Rationales and commitments: the multi-dimensionality of basic income support

This final section explores the varying rationales and commitments parties give when supporting basic income in manifestos. Given the relatively small sub-sample of party manifestos that indicate support for basic income, it is not possible to use complex modelling to test the main hypotheses about different visions of basic income. As the validation exercise highlighted (found in the methodology in Chapter 4), there was also less consistency in the coding of these variables, so there is a greater margin of error.

Nevertheless, the data can provide an exploration of two key theories and research questions. Firstly, how *committed* are political parties to basic income, while expressing support in a manifesto, and is their level of commitment related to a party's size? Secondly, what kind of *rationales* are used to support basic income by different parties, and can this be explained by party ideology?

5.5.1 Party commitments to basic income

Starting with party commitments, Table 5.11 shows the proportion of party manifestos that commit to one of four things: introducing the policy outright; investigating or exploring the policy in a government commission or public discussion; launching an experiment or test of the policy; and/or indicating support for the policy as a long-term goal, while making legislative steps towards a basic income in the short-term. These commitments are not mutually exclusive.

Table 5.11: Commitments made in manifestos by parties supporting basic income or cognates

Commitment	Basic income (N=69)	Basic income/cognate (N=130)
Introduce policy	18.8% (13)	27.6% (35)
Investigate / explore	27.5% (19)	18.9% (24)
Experiment / test	20.3% (14)	13.4% (17)
Long-term goal / steps	50.7% (35)	37.0% (47)

The results suggest that a commitment to *introduce* a basic income is rare, with only 13 examples in the whole sample. This amounts to roughly 19% of party manifestos that indicate support for basic income and 1.1% of all election manifestos. On the other hand, the most common commitment is to make steps towards a basic income or to state that it is a long-term goal with just over 50% of supportive manifestos making that claim (35 overall). The next most common is a commitment to investigate or explore a basic income with 27.5%

of manifestos, while 20.3% of parties committed to an experiment or test of the policy. However, if including cognates, the picture is slightly different. The proportion of manifestos committing to introducing a basic income or cognate increases to 27.6%, while all other commitments are a diminished share of the total. Only 37% of parties indicated that basic income was a *long-term* goal or that they would implement steps in the next parliament, while 13.4% committed to an experiment and 18.9% committed to investigating or exploring the policy in question. Thus, while support is clearly ‘cheap’ for basic income in the sense that very few parties commit to introducing the policy or indeed implementing an experiment or test, party support for cognates is *less* cheap.

A similar picture is found if we look at the spread of commitments by the size of the party and whether or not the party is in government at the time of the election. Figure 5.9 shows that small parties, i.e. those with less than 5%, are nearly twice as likely to commit to introducing a basic income compared to larger parties with more than 5% of the vote. On the other hand, when cognates are included, larger parties become marginally *more* likely to commit to introducing the policy. While this may illustrate that the introduction of ‘cognate’ policies as defined in this analysis are not as politically or fiscally ‘expensive’ as basic income, it is noteworthy that another relatively ‘expensive’ commitment to experiment or test a basic income is more common among larger parties. This is the case for both indicators, while both of the ‘cheapest’ commitments (to investigate basic income or to move towards it in the long-term) are more common among small parties. Thus, although the data confirms the fact that larger parties are less likely to commit to *introducing* a basic income, the overall picture is more mixed.

The picture is roughly replicated when looking at parties in government versus parties in opposition, shown in Figure 5.10. No governmental party has ever committed to introducing a basic income according to the coding here and the commitment to introduce the policy is still more common among opposition parties when cognates are included. Government parties also rarely indicate that basic income is a long-term goal or that they seek to implement steps towards basic income in the next parliament.

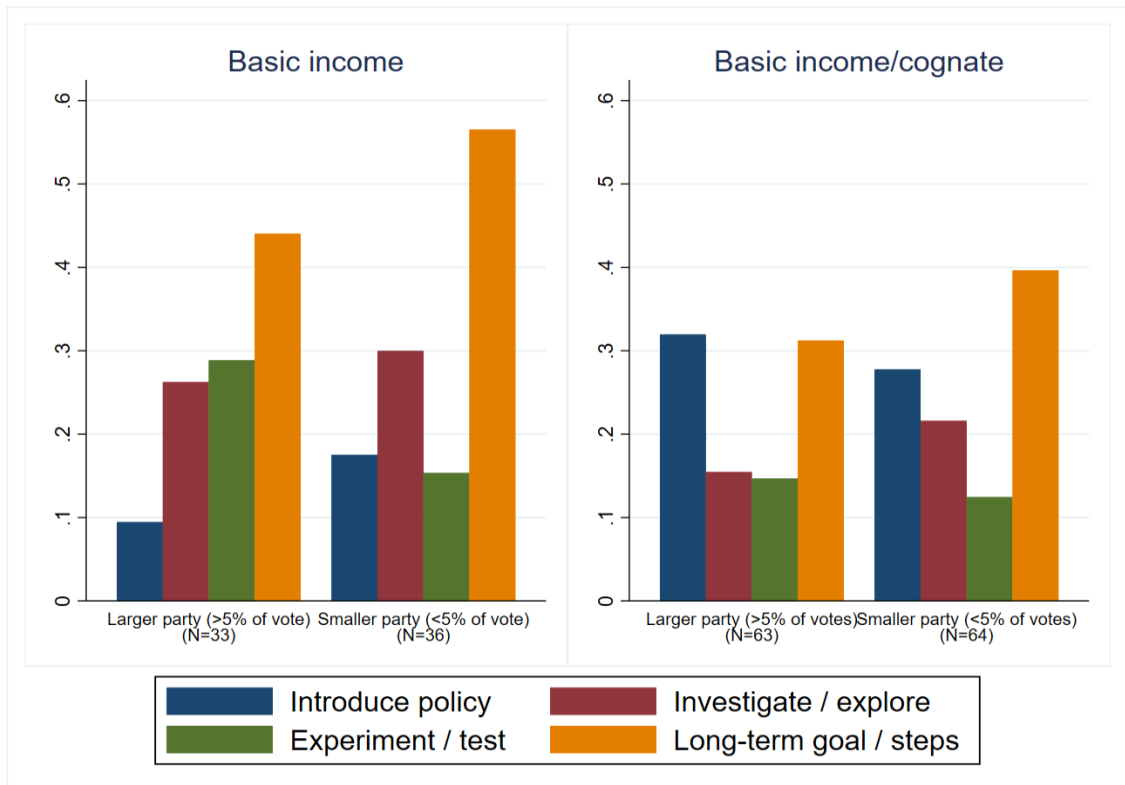


Figure 5.9: Commitments of parties supporting basic income (left-hand side) or either basic income or a cognate (right-hand side) by party vote share (more or less than 5% of the vote).

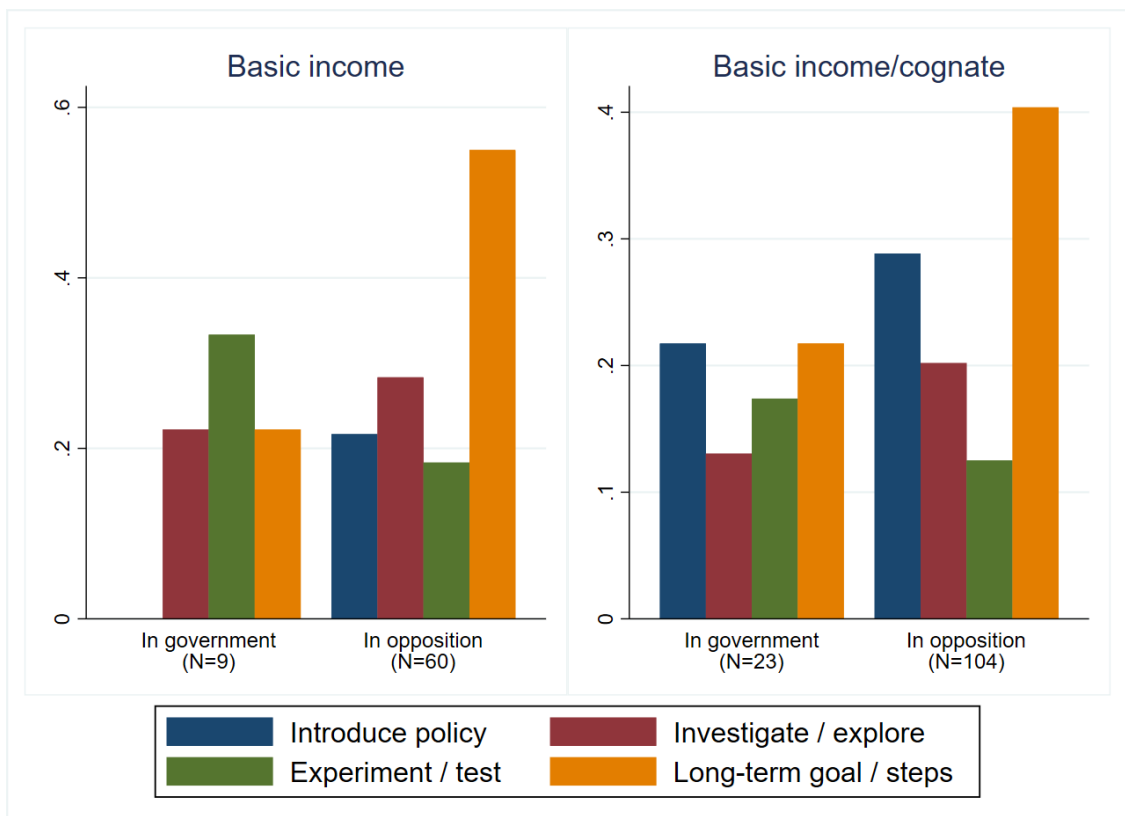


Figure 5.10: Commitments of parties supporting basic income (left-hand side) or either basic income or a cognate (right-hand side) by whether they were in government at the time of election.

5.5.2 Rationales for basic income

Finally, Table 5.12 shows the propensity of different rationales for parties supporting basic income or cognates according to eight categories, which can be collapsed into three broader categories (shown in parentheses). The precise definition and boundaries of these rationales is given in the methodology in Chapter 4. The results show that the most common rationale for basic income and/or cognates is ‘social rights’. 62.3% of parties supporting basic income mention reducing poverty or inequality or guaranteeing a minimum standard of living, while the proportion is 61.4% when including cognates. On the side of the spectrum, the least common rationale is ‘retrenchment’, i.e. cutting costs or reducing benefit levels, with no examples found among basic income supporters and only 3.9% of manifestos when including cognates. This is also the only rationale for which the proportion is higher when including cognates, indicating that parties are less likely to use a wide range of rationales when advocating cognate policies.

The next two most common rationales for basic income, post-productivist goals (e.g. valorising unpaid work) and social inequalities (e.g. reducing social exclusion), also see the largest drop in the percentage of manifestos that mention such a rationale when including cognates. While 53.6% of party manifestos in favour of basic income mention post-productivist goals, only 37.8% do so when including cognates. Meanwhile, the percentages are 44.9% versus 37.8% for social inequalities. This is perhaps not so surprising given that many basic income cognates, such as those that are means-tested or targeted at particular groups, are unlikely to cater to these policy goals. Policy goals related to bureaucracy and activation are relatively common rationales for both indicators. 40.6% of election manifestos mention bureaucracy (e.g. simplifying benefits), while this is 37% if including cognates. 43.5% of manifestos mention activation (e.g. increasing incentives to work), while this is 42.5% if including cognates. Policy goals related to precarious employment are surprisingly rare, with less than a quarter of manifestos mentioning it for both measures. Finally, economic development is also not a common rationale with roughly one in ten manifestos using this as a rationale, whether or not cognates are included.

Table 5.12: Rationales given in manifestos by parties supporting basic income or cognates.

Rationale	Basic income (N=69)	Basic income/cognate (N=127)
Social rights (Left)	62.3% (43)	61.4% (78)
Social inequalities (Left)	44.9% (31)	37.8% (48)
Economic development (None)	10.1% (7)	9.5% (12)
Post-productivist goals (New Left)	53.6% (37)	37.8% (48)
Precarious employment (New Left)	24.6% (17)	20.5% (26)
Bureaucracy (Right)	40.6% (28)	37.0% (47)
Activation (Right)	43.5% (30)	42.5% (54)
Retrenchment (Right)	0%	3.9% (5)

When comparing the rationales for basic income (or cognates) by party family, only one of the theoretical expectations holds. New left parties are more likely to use new left rationales (related to post-productivist goals or precarious employment) than all other party types. However, new left parties are only marginally more likely to use new left rationales than right-wing rationales and are more likely to use other left-wing rationales such as those related to social rights and social inequalities. Centre-right parties are also the *least* likely group to provide one of the three right-wing rationales for a basic income, while social democrats and then the new left are the least likely parties to provide left-wing rationales. This turns the whole picture on its head: right-wing parties are more likely to use left-wing rationales and left-wing parties, right-wing rationales. The four party families classified as ‘Other’ appear to use both rationales.

When including cognates, the picture is less surprising. New left parties are still the most likely to use new left rationales, while centre-right parties are more likely to use right-wing rationales than social democrats. New left parties are also more likely to use left-wing rationales than centre-right parties when including cognates. However, social democrats are still the least likely party family to use left-wing rationales, although here it appears as if they are less likely to offer a range of rationales at all.

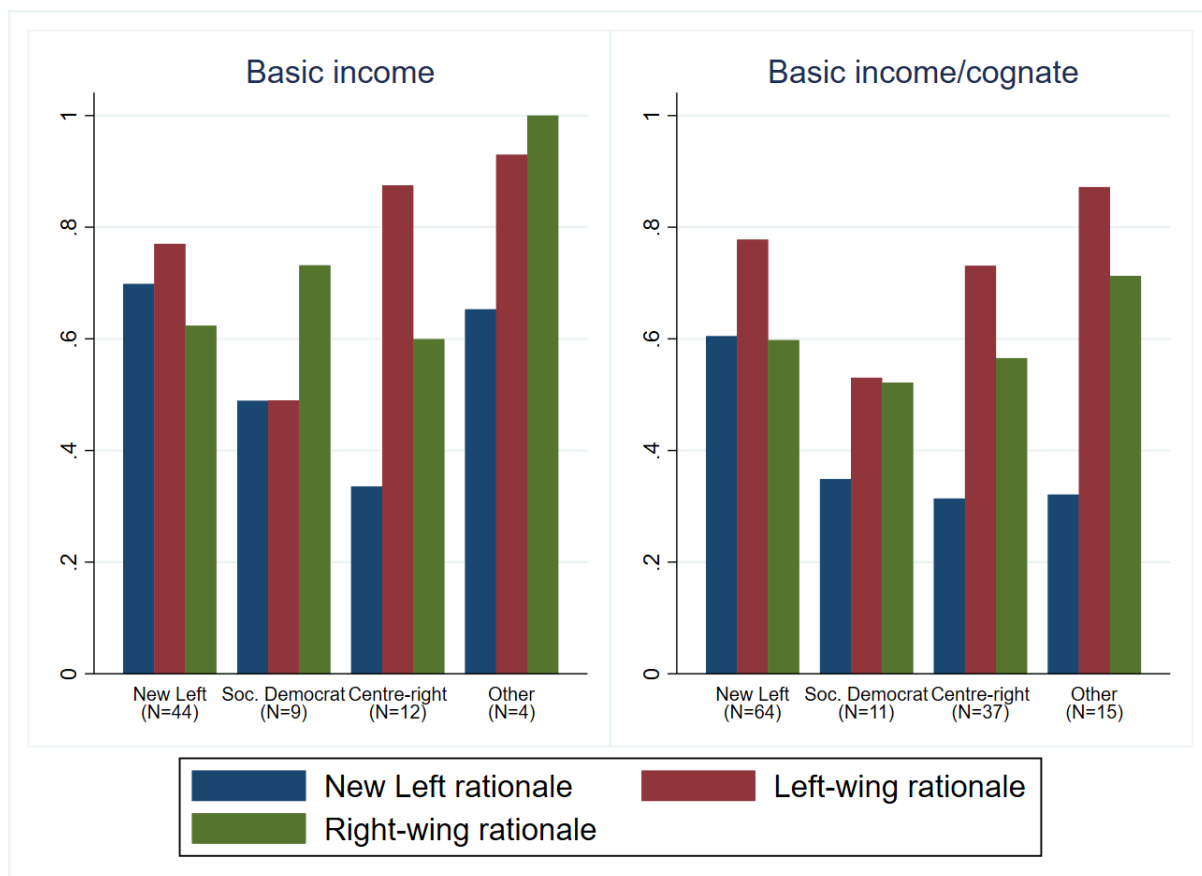


Figure 5.11: Rationales of parties supporting basic income (left-hand side) or either basic income or a cognate (right-hand side) by party family groups.

5.6 Discussion

The results provide a repudiation of the notion that basic income is neither left nor right when it comes to party support. Left-wing parties, both in terms of their fixed party families and election-specific programmes, are much more likely to support basic income and/or a cognate policy. However, this is more related to the *cultural* dimension of politics, with libertarian policy positions consistently related to party support for basic income. This is reflected in the strong representation of green parties as supporters of basic income but also other new left and liberal parties who are the next most in favour. In comparison, the *economic* left-right dimension (and party welfare positions) is not as robust an indicator of support for basic income, particularly when including cognates. This latter stipulation highlights an important point: the notion that basic income transcends the (economic) left-right spectrum may relate to a loose definition of the policy that deviates from its universal and unconditional features.

At the country-level, the unemployment rate in the 5 years preceding the election was most clearly related to party support for basic income. In nearly all individual countries, the unemployment rate was either positively related to the level of party support for basic income at a given election or the gradient was flat. This relationship was broadly robust to

the inclusion of controls in regression modelling. However, Germany was an exception, where Figure 5.5 shows a negative relationship between party support for basic income (not including cognates) and the unemployment rate. Given the lack of a relationship between growth rates and party support for basic income, the results of the empirical analysis provide evidence for the intuition expressed in the initial section that there is something specific about unemployment that drives support for basic income over and beyond broader economic downturns. However, these results provide no evidence on the *mechanisms* by which unemployment might drive party support. This is a question turned to in the next three empirical chapters.

While there was no robust relationship between social expenditure and party support for basic income, the regression analysis highlighted the relevance of the institutional context for structuring the ideology of parties that support basic income. As social expenditure increases, left-right economic positions explain party support for basic income or cognates, as economically right-wing parties become more likely to support a basic income policy. This interaction also weakly exists for basic income only. Referring to the theoretical expectations, this could be because there is a greater amount of existing spending that can be repurposed as a basic income rather than relying on taxation. However, when modelling this interaction using fixed party families, *new left* parties become more likely to support basic income in high social spending environments. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between left and right parties as fixed ideologically and the positions that they take election-by-election. Thus, support for basic income in high spending environments may relate to economically right-wing strategies rather than right-wing parties per se.

In addition, the evidence from an analysis of rationales suggests that the multi-dimensionality of basic income is not as straightforward as expected. Centre-right and social democrat parties that support basic income appear to justify the policy more commonly using rationales contrary to their expected ideology. Social democrat parties are more likely to use right-wing rationales, related to bureaucracy and activation, while centre-right parties are more likely to use left-wing rationales, related to social rights and social inequalities. This could be an indication that parties use basic income to signal a move to the centre ground or because they are trying to appeal beyond their base. This contrast is less stark when including cognates. On the other hand, it could also be explained by the small number of cases and/or coding decisions that reduced complex rationales to three blunt categories. The consequences of these methodological problems and suggestions for future research are discussed further in the final discussion chapter.

Two empirical findings illustrate the nature of ‘cheap support’ for basic income among political parties. First, the majority of parties in favour of basic income are very small with less than 5% of the vote. Thus, these political actors can commit to many things without much chance of being in a position to deliver those commitments. Parties in government are also much less likely to advocate basic income even after accounting for party size. Second, parties rarely commit to *introducing* a basic income, preferring to commit to a government commission, experiment or to refer to the policy as a long-term aim. This is particularly true of larger parties, while no governmental parties have committed to introducing basic income at all. In both regards, support is less ‘cheap’ when including cognates, with larger parties, including those in government, more likely to advocate such policies and make commitments to introduce them. However, this is perhaps not so significant given that in many cases these policies are not so radical and, as discussed in the methodology (Chapter 4), may not be identified as functionally equivalent basic income policies by many advocates.

An interesting finding in the final section is that commitments to ‘work towards’ a basic income are common, particularly among small parties in favour of basic income, and are often accompanied by a series of proposed short-term ‘steps’. These proposed reforms are intended to be achievable in the next parliament while representing their vision of movement in the direction of basic income. A summary of the types of reforms proposed in manifestos is given in Table A26 in the Appendix. Unfortunately, due to the complexity of the text, which posed problems for translation and validation, I could not be confident enough in the rigour of the coding. There was also ambiguity about what constituted ‘steps’ versus tangential reforms in the same manifesto. Thus, this coding is merely illustrative of the variety of proposals linked to basic income by political parties at elections. This is a theme explored in more detail in the case studies in Chapters 7 and 8.

The findings regarding party ideology, unemployment rates and the institutional context provoke questions about the mechanisms by such factors influence party support for basic income. This leads neatly onto the focus of the next chapter, which explores one important mechanism by which this might occur: voter preferences.

6 Shifting political constituencies for basic income in advanced welfare states in Europe

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to examine the ‘demand-side’ of the politics of basic income by exploring the determinants of voter preferences for basic income. Thus, the chapter seeks to identify the political constituencies for a basic income and the contexts in which support is greatest. As the first two chapters indicated, analysis of the individual- and country-level factors that affect public support for basic income has emerged in recent years as a result of the increasing political interest in basic income and the release of the European Social Survey’s 8th wave conducted in 2016-17, which included a survey question on basic income. The aim of this chapter is to complement those contributions, by expanding on previous analysis but also by concentrating on the effects of the three key factors in the theoretical framework (and the interaction between them): multi-dimensional preferences, institutions and partisanship. Past research has only briefly or tangentially explored these factors. Crucially, this analysis differs from past research by focusing on advanced welfare states, limiting the sample to 15 countries for which there is data. As other studies have shown, the effect of individual-level factors varies across countries (Vlandas, 2019; Parolin and Siöland, 2019). This suggests that the results may be different for the restricted sample of advanced welfare states.

In line with the theoretical framework, an analysis of voter preferences for basic income provides an evidence base for why political parties might advocate the policy. It also allows an exploration of the mechanisms by which factors such as unemployment, identified in the previous chapter as related to increased party support, might drive political support for basic income through voters. The cross-sectional analysis and the quality of the data means a wider selection of independent variables can be used, which facilitates the testing of more complex theories about the multi-dimensionality of basic income⁵¹. A key contribution of the chapter is to examine the varying attraction of a basic income across different socioeconomic groups and in different country contexts. Basic income is an ambiguous policy instrument, which means the most salient reasons for supporting or opposing it can differ across individuals or countries. In particular, attention should be paid to the expected cleavages on the left between graduates and non-graduates and labour market insiders and outsiders. This is tested using

⁵¹ For these results, it is assumed that insights about the dynamics at the voter-level will be relevant to the strategic behaviour of political parties.

regression models interacting party and welfare state preferences with socio-economic characteristics at the individual level and institutional characteristics at the country level.

Section 6.1 starts by restating expectations and hypotheses based on the existing literature and theoretical framework. For the initial analysis, a few studies have published similar results during the period of research undertaken for the PhD. Thus, the initial expectations roughly mirror the results found in those studies, even if the sample and covariates are slightly different. This section also outlines hypotheses regarding variables not included in past studies, such as party support and post-industrial occupational class schemas, as well as the expectations regarding the multi-dimensionality of basic income. At the individual-level, this focuses on the graduate-non-graduate and insider-outsider divides. At the country-level, the hypotheses concern whether features of a basic income that are congruent or incongruent with the existing system will be more salient in determining support.

Section 6.2 summarises the results of the initial individual-level and country-level regression analysis, discussing differences in results in comparison to past analysis and the hypotheses regarding new variables explored, such as partisanship, post-industrial occupational class and attitudes to conditionality. Section 6.3 focuses on the questions alluded to above about the multi-dimensionality of basic income, i.e. the varying attraction of the policy across socioeconomic groups and institutional contexts. It outlines the results of the interactions between education and labour market status on the one hand and welfare state and party preferences on the other. It also explores cross-level interactions between the existing institutional characteristics of the welfare state (social expenditure, the strictness of conditionality attached to unemployment benefits and the level of existing cash benefit targeting) and other welfare state preferences (redistribution, conditionality and targeting preferences). The chapter ends in Section 6.4 with a discussion of the key findings.

6.2 Preferences, parties and institutions: theory and hypotheses

This section starts by briefly summarising past results, which are likely to be roughly replicated here when analysis is restricted to advanced welfare states. Then, the section outlines the stated hypotheses for new analysis related to the interaction of party and welfare state preferences with sociodemographic characteristics and country-level institutional variables.

6.2.1 Socioeconomic, ideological and institutional determinants of support for basic income

As described in the theoretical framework, recent publications have found that countries with lower levels of social spending and higher levels of insecurity are more supportive of basic

income, while at the individual-level, various measures of labour market risk and deprivation predict support for basic income (Lee, 2018; Vlandas, 2019). Thus, in this analysis, low-income, unemployment and temporary work are expected to be associated with individual-level support, while unemployment, poverty, inequality, low social spending and low GDP should be correlated with support at the country-level. Young people are also consistently found to be highly supportive, while in cross-national analysis women and those with higher levels of education are either not significantly different to, or are *less* supportive than, men and low-skilled individuals. The main difference with past analysis is that education is operationalised as a binary variable indicating whether an individual is a university graduate. This is justified as a lens to focus on the knowledge economy divide that many identify in post-industrial democracies (Iversen and Soskice, 2019). Past findings that religious individuals are economically and culturally right-wing suggests that attendance of religious ceremonies will be negatively associated with support for basic income (Scheve and Stasavage, 2006; Flanagan and Lee, 2003).

Other studies have explored the effect of occupational class but have used industrial class specifications that do not account for ‘horizontal’ occupational differences (e.g. Vlandas, 2019). As past results suggest that there is not a clear linear trend of support from higher classes to lower classes, post-industrial class schemas that distinguish, for example, between socio-cultural professionals and other professionals could identify a new class constituency for basic income (e.g. Oesch, 2006). As outlined in the methodology, a reduced 5-class schema employed by Schwander & Häusermann (2013) is used to simplify Oesch’s classification. Based on this, socio-cultural professionals (SCPs) with left economic and libertarian cultural preferences are expected to be the most supportive occupational class. Based on their economic preferences, capital accumulators (CAs) are expected to oppose a basic income, while blue-collar workers (BCWs) and low-service functionaries (LSFs) should be supportive. However, blue-collar workers are likely to be less supportive than low-service functionaries due to their more authoritarian cultural preferences and the greater likelihood of them being insiders (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014). Mixed-service functionaries (MSFs) are expected to be more supportive than capital accumulators but otherwise less than the other three occupational classes.

Regarding the relationship of basic income support to other political preferences, most studies identify that left-wing individuals are more likely to support basic income (Parolin and Siöland, 2019b). However, in the analysis here the focus is on specific welfare state and party preferences to capture the multi-dimensional nature of welfare state politics. In this regard, the results are expected to mirror past findings. Thus, expectations are that support

for redistribution, benefits to combine work and family life, targeting and more education for the unemployed at the expense of benefit levels (ALMPs) will predict support for basic income. Welfare chauvinism is expected to predict *opposition* to basic income. Finally, opposition to sanctions should predict support for a basic income, given the unconditional nature of the latter.

The final individual-level explanatory factor included is partisanship. In line with the previous empirical chapter and for ease of cross-national comparison, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) classification of party families is used to explore the effect of partisanship. While past results suggest that those on the left of the political spectrum are generally more supportive, the theoretical framework and the results from the previous chapter suggests two important distinctions. Firstly, voters of new left parties, and especially green partisans, are expected to be more strongly in favour than social democrats, who are expected to be broadly opposed. Secondly, while voters on the right are generally opposed, liberal partisans are expected to be more strongly in favour.

At the country-level, the analysis also examines the effect of more specific institutional variables rather than simply overall social spending. This includes cash spending (as a percentage of GDP and as a percentage of total spending), unemployment benefit spending and cash targeting (percentage of total cash spending received by the bottom quintile), as well as the replacement rate for the long-term unemployed and the strictness of existing conditionality rules attached to unemployment benefits. The theoretical framework suggested that we would expect to see greater support for basic income in welfare states with incongruent characteristics to basic income (as in the case of low spending). Thus, low spending on cash and unemployment benefits, as well as a low replacement rate and strict eligibility conditions, should increase support for basic income. It is more ambiguous what the implications are for targeting but, given that support for targeting is associated with support for basic income at the individual level, we might expect lower levels of targeting to increase support.

6.2.2 Multi-dimensional support for basic income: interactions

The second main empirical section models the interaction of other welfare state and party preferences with education and labour market status, as well as cross-level interactions of preferences with institutional variables at the country-level. The hypotheses for this analysis are developed based on theory rather than recent empirical analysis.

The graduate-non-graduate and the insider-outsider divides are expected to be significant when explaining basic income preferences for two reasons. Firstly, these groups are likely

to be attracted to different features of a basic income. Starting with education, support for basic income among university graduates should be less related to support for targeting or active labour market policies (i.e. education for the unemployed) than among non-graduates. This is because graduates are more likely to be attracted to the universalism and the freedom of choice a basic income gives, rather than concerns with targeting or activation, due to their libertarian cultural preferences. As for labour market status, redistribution and targeting preferences are expected to predict support for basic income among outsiders more than insiders. However, the reverse is expected for ALMP preferences: the marginal effect will be larger for labour market insiders. This is because, while outsiders are likely to see basic income as a redistributive, targeting measure, they are unlikely to be attracted to its activating qualities. The second reason to explore the graduate and outsider divides is to identify rifts within the constituencies of political parties and within the voting base of social democrat parties in particular. Basic income is likely to be a wedge issue on the left, appealing to graduates and outsiders but not non-graduates and insiders. Therefore, there is expected to be an interaction between party preferences on the one hand and education or labour market status on the other.

The cross-level interactions are also intended to pick up the varying attraction of different features of a basic income, across country contexts. At the country-level, the theoretical framework argued that features of a basic income that are incongruent with the existing institutional context will be more salient for voters. Chapter 5 also finds that *right-wing parties* are more likely to support basic income in countries with higher expenditure. However, uncertainty exists because of contradictory empirical evidence in past analysis of voter preferences. Using ESS data, Parolin & Siöland (2019) find that *left-wing voters* are more likely to support basic income in countries with high levels of social expenditure. This contradiction could be because of a difference between voters and parties or because the latter uses a unidimensional left-right scale (that collapses economic and social issues into one metric) whereas the former uses a measure solely on the economic dimension.

Therefore, the interaction of Parolin & Siöland is replicated here using the same left-right indicator but then also interacting social expenditure with redistribution, which can be seen as a proxy for the economic left-right dimension. If the incongruence thesis holds, the latter should be more strongly associated with support for basic income in countries with lower social spending. The analysis also examines the interaction between welfare state preferences and two other institutional context variables. Firstly, there is a test of whether the strictness of a country's existing conditionality regime increases the marginal effect of opposition to sanctions (incongruence thesis) or decreases it (congruence thesis). Secondly,

there is a test of whether the existing level of targeting within a country's social security system decreases the marginal effect of support for targeting (incongruence thesis) or increases it (congruence thesis). The expectation is that the *incongruence* of given dimensions of a basic income with the existing welfare state will increase the salience of that dimension.

6.3 Individual-level and country-level determinants of support for basic income

This section explores the main constituencies for a basic income in advanced welfare states by regressing attitudinal data on individual-level characteristics sourced from the European Social Survey wave 8 (2016/17). It also analyses the country-level factors that are related to support for a basic income. In all regression analysis here, multi-level logistic models with random intercepts at the country-level are used to predict a binary measure of support for basic income. Standard errors are therefore clustered at the country level. Post-stratification weights are also applied. Full details of the dependent and independent variables used are given in the methodology.

6.3.1 Individual-level determinants

The analysis starts by examining the *individual-level* determinants of support for basic income according to three model specifications: a bivariate regression without any controls, a regression with all sociodemographic variables as covariates⁵² and a regression with all sociodemographic and political preference variables as covariates. The effect of every variable according to each model specification is shown in Figures 6.1 - 6.2, while the results for the full model specification are also shown in Table 6.1.

The initial results of interest concern the variables not included in other studies. First, party preferences show a surprising consistency across the left-right spectrum. Left/socialist and green partisans are most strongly in favour, significantly different from the reference category ("N/A", i.e. did not vote or don't know) in all specifications. Social democrat voters are marginally more in favour of a basic income than voters of unclassified parties, neither of whom are significantly different from the reference category. Finally, voters of the four right-wing party families – Christian democrat, nationalist, conservative and liberal – are all significantly more opposed to a basic income, relative to non-partisans. The results run

⁵² For the political preference variables, only that variable was included in the model alongside all the sociodemographic variables. For the sociodemographic variables, no political preferences were included.

contrary to expectations that liberal voters would be more in favour of a basic income than other right-wing partisans would.

The results for occupational class similarly do not uniformly confirm the hypotheses. Broadly, the pattern is as expected in that socio-cultural professionals, blue-collar workers and low-service functionaries are the most in favour, significantly different from capital accumulators in the model without controls. However, when the full model is specified, there are no significant differences between any of the occupational classes. While support from socio-cultural professionals is most robust to the inclusion of controls, there are no differences between blue-collar workers and low-service functionaries, contrary to expectations. In both models that include controls, mixed-service functionaries are actually more against a basic income than capital accumulators, although the difference is not significant.

Several other results unsurprisingly mirror past findings. Age is highly significant as a predictor of opposition to basic income. Unemployed and temporary workers are considerably more in favour of a basic income than the reference category (permanent full-time employees), although much of this is explained by their sociodemographic characteristics. Interestingly, while the effect of being in temporary employment is reduced by the inclusion of political preferences in the final model, this is not the case for unemployment. Thus, unemployed workers may be more attracted to a basic income specifically, even though the effect is only very weakly significant due to the size of the confidence intervals⁵³. Inactive individuals are also significantly more in favour than permanent employees, although again the inclusion of political preferences reduces the size (and significance) of the effect. Equivalised household income is also a significant predictor of opposition to basic income in all specifications, suggesting that despite the inadequacy of previous measures, they were nevertheless capturing the strong negative relationship between income and preferences for basic income. Yet, Table 6.2 shows that the negative effect of income on support for basic income increases as an individual's income rises. As Figure 6.3 indicates, the difference in support for basic income between individuals on a very low income and medium income is very small. Thus, opposition to basic income among individuals with very high household incomes mostly drives the size of the average effect rather than support from the most deprived.

⁵³ This is primarily driven by the size of the sample: unemployed workers account for 791 in the model (when weighted).

In addition, although there are no dramatic changes in results, there are a few variables that have a noticeably different effect to past results and to the results shown in Table A27 in the Appendix⁵⁴. Firstly, in the analysis shown here, a university education is a significant predictor of support for basic income with the inclusion of controls. This suggests that the past analysis for Germany is broadly indicative of a difference between advanced welfare states and other countries (Adriaans et al., 2019). On the other hand, women are more clearly *opposed* to basic income, significantly so when sociodemographic or political covariates are included in the model. The solo self-employed are also more in favour within advanced welfare states. This is particularly evident in Table A18 in the Appendix, which shows that the effect of solo self-employment is large when predicting *strong* support for basic income, as well as in an ordered logistic regression. Table A28 in the Appendix also shows the interaction between education, gender and solo self-employment at the individual-level and a dummy for advanced welfare states as well as GDP at the country-level, confirming the inferences stated above.

In regard to welfare state preferences, opposition to sanctions is a significant predictor of support for basic income in all model specifications, as expected. Support for redistribution, support for targeting cash benefits at those on low incomes and support for benefits to facilitate more time with family are all positively correlated with support for basic income, as in previous studies. On the other hand, the relationship between support for basic income and support for spending more on education at the cost of benefit levels is much weaker, to the point where it is insignificant in the final model with other welfare state preferences. Welfare chauvinism is also more strongly related to opposition to basic income. This corresponds to the finding of Parolin & Siöland (2019) that welfare chauvinism drives opposition to basic income in countries with higher levels of social expenditure, given the excluded countries have much smaller welfare states.

⁵⁴ This shows the results for the full model of independent variables when including CEE countries, Israel and Russia.

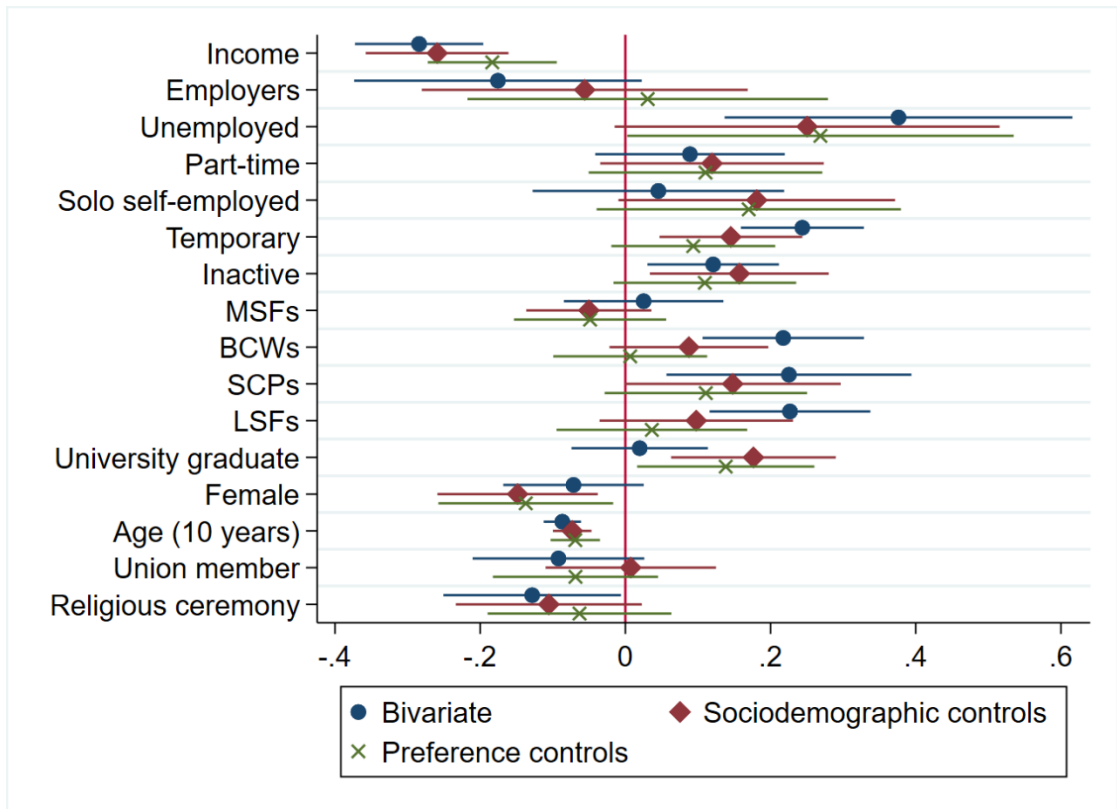


Figure 6.1: Coefficient plot of the effect of sociodemographic variables in regressions predicting support for basic income, according to three model specifications.

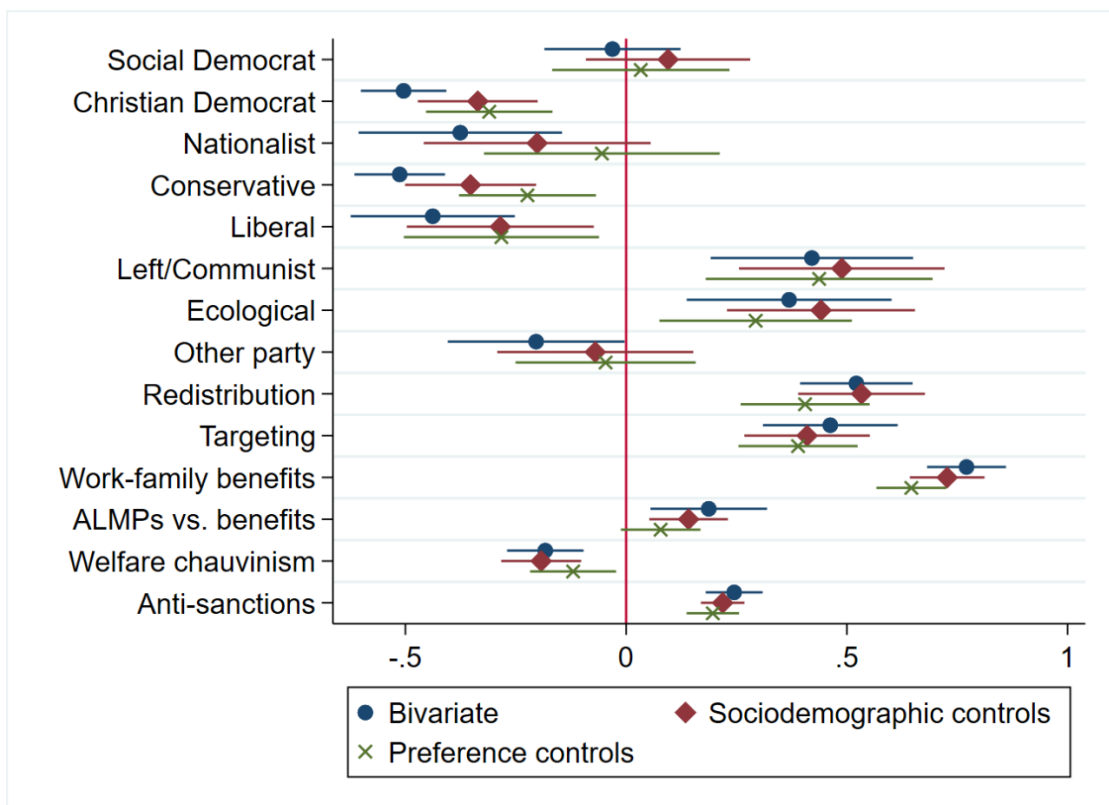


Figure 6.2: Coefficient plot of the effect of party and welfare state preferences in regressions predicting support for basic income, according to three model specifications.

Table 6.1: Regression model predicting support for basic income with all covariates

Variable	Support for basic income
Equivalised household income (log)	-0.183***
Employers	0.031
Unemployed	0.269**
Part-time	0.110
Solo self-employed	0.170
Temporary employee	0.094*
Non-working status	0.109*
Mixed service functionaries (Ref: Capital accumulators)	-0.049
Blue collar workers	0.007
Socio-cultural professionals	0.111
Low service functionaries	0.037
University education	0.138**
Female	-0.137**
Age (10 years)	-0.069***
Current union member	-0.069
Attends religious ceremonies	-0.063
Social Democrat	0.033
Christian Democrat	-0.310***
Nationalist	-0.055
Conservative	-0.224***
Liberal	-0.283**
Left/Socialist	0.437***
Ecological/Green	0.293**
Other party	-0.047
Support for redistribution	0.405***
Support for targeting benefits to those with the lowest incomes	0.389***
Support for benefits for parents to combine work and family	0.646***
Support more education for unemployed at cost of benefits	0.078*
Support to deny non-citizens access to benefits	-0.120**
Opposition to sanctions	0.196***
N=	18,922
No. of countries	15

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.2: Regression model including income squared.

Variable	(1)	(2)
Equivalised household income (log)	-0.222*** (0.048)	-0.181*** (0.048)
Eq. income ²	-0.067** (0.033)	-0.079** (0.031)
N=	22,594	20,760
No. of countries	15	15
Socio-demographic controls	NO	YES

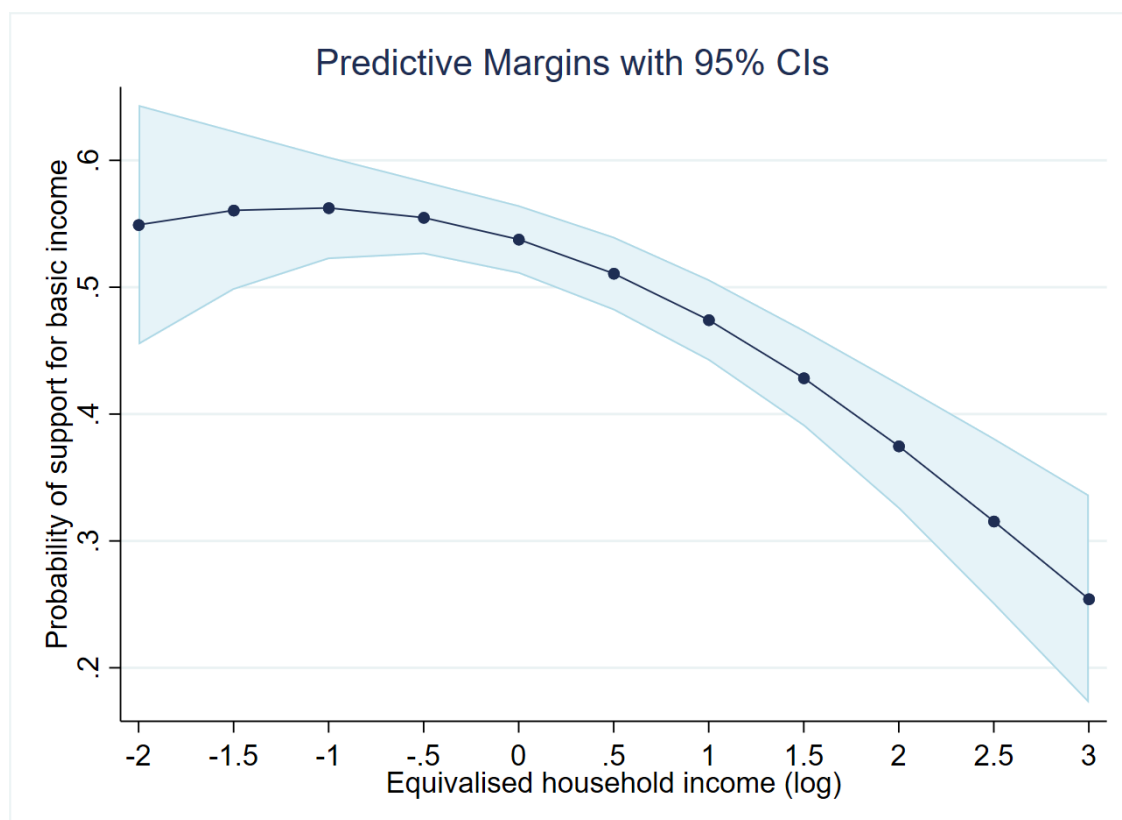


Figure 6.3: Predicted probability of support by the log of equivalised household income in units of 10,000 euros, modelling income squared.

6.3.2 Country-level determinants

Next, the analysis turns to *country-level* factors that affect support for basic income. Given the small number of country cases in the main sample (15), all results should be treated with caution. Most coefficients are also insignificant for this reason. Figure 6.3 shows the effect of all the country-level variables (standardised to facilitate comparison of the effect sizes) for two model specifications, with and without individual-level covariates in the multi-level model. Starting with the socio-economic factors, all variables relate to support for basic income in the expected direction. Higher levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality are all positively associated with greater support for basic income at the country-level, while GDP per capita is negatively related. However, only the effects of poverty rates and GDP

are significant if there are no controls, while only the latter is significant if individual-level covariates are included in the model.

Turning to institutional factors, there is not an entirely consistent pattern as to whether the congruence or incongruence of the existing welfare state drives support for basic income. Firstly, social expenditure does not relate to the levels of support, as it does in past analysis. Second, all the other expenditure indicators – cash benefit spending, unemployment benefit spending and cash benefit spending as a share of total social spending – are *positively* associated with support for basic income. The latter two are *significantly* related to country-level support for basic income, while only unemployment benefit expenditure is still significant with the introduction of individual-level covariates. According to the theoretical framework, this would suggest that countries with welfare states congruent with a basic income (i.e. high current spending on cash or unemployment benefits) are more in favour. The negative relationship between support for basic income and the strictness of the existing conditionality regime, albeit insignificant, can be framed in the same manner: less conditional welfare states are more in favour of an unconditional basic income (congruence).

On the other hand, both the replacement rate for the long-term unemployed and the share of cash spending targeted at the bottom quintile are negatively associated with support for basic income. To the extent that the purpose of a basic income is to provide a level of economic security for the poorest, as indeed the survey question states, this suggests that welfare states with features *incongruent* with a basic income, i.e. poorly targeted welfare states with low levels of benefits, are more in favour of a basic income. However, the relationship is insignificant for both variables and is positive for targeting when individual-level covariates are included in the model. Thus, overall, the congruence thesis holds more sway, despite inconsistent or null results. Possible reasons for this and the implications for the political feasibility are discussed further in the final section.

All of this analysis is for the 15 advanced welfare states for which there is data in the European Social Survey. The difference in the bivariate relationships when including Central and Eastern European countries in the sample, which brings the total to 21 (20 for variables where there is no data for Lithuania), is also shown by the scatter graphs in Figures 6.4 - 6.6. The results are very similar for the four socioeconomic factors shown in Figure 6.4 with a very marginally flatter slope in all but the unemployment rate. Similarly, the results are not substantially different for the institutional variables shown in Figure 6.6, which are the replacement rates for the long-term unemployed, the share of total cash transfers received

by the bottom quintile and the strictness of eligibility conditions attached to unemployment benefits.

However, Figure 6.5 reveals some important differences in the relationship between three measures of welfare state spending and country-level support for basic income, depending on the sample of countries chosen. Firstly, it confirms that the restricting the sample to 15 advanced welfare states explains the discrepancy between the null results for social expenditure and past analysis showing a negative relationship, rather than a different measure of social expenditure. Second, while the results in Figure 6.3 show a positive relationship between support for basic income and measures of cash and unemployment benefit expenditure in advanced welfare states, the inclusion of CEE countries makes the slope weakly negative. However, this is likely to be driven by the fact these countries have lower spending on the welfare state as a whole, as the relationship between support for basic income and cash spending as a percentage of overall social expenditure is identical in Figure 6.5. It is also clearly seen by the shift in the position of the CEE countries from the left of the graph when providing the absolute cash spending figures to the right of the graph when it is expressed as a percentage.

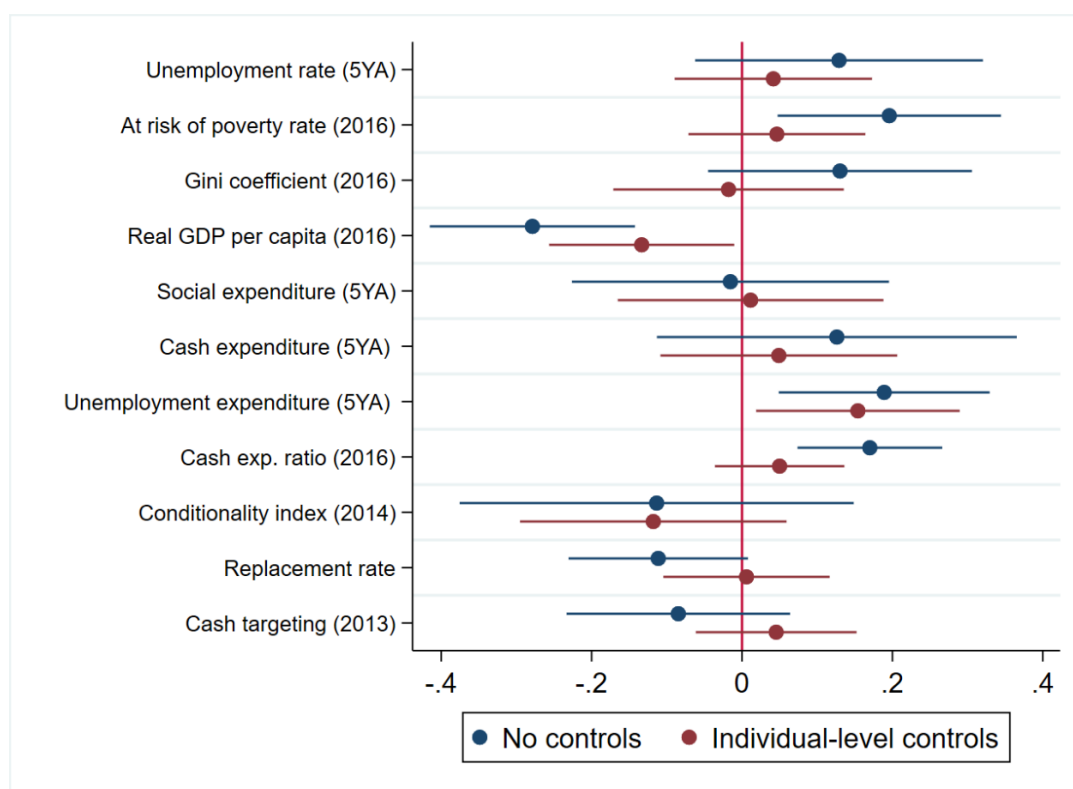


Figure 6.3: Coefficient plot of the effect of standardised country-level variables (socioeconomic and institutional factors) in regressions predicting support for basic income, according to two model specifications.

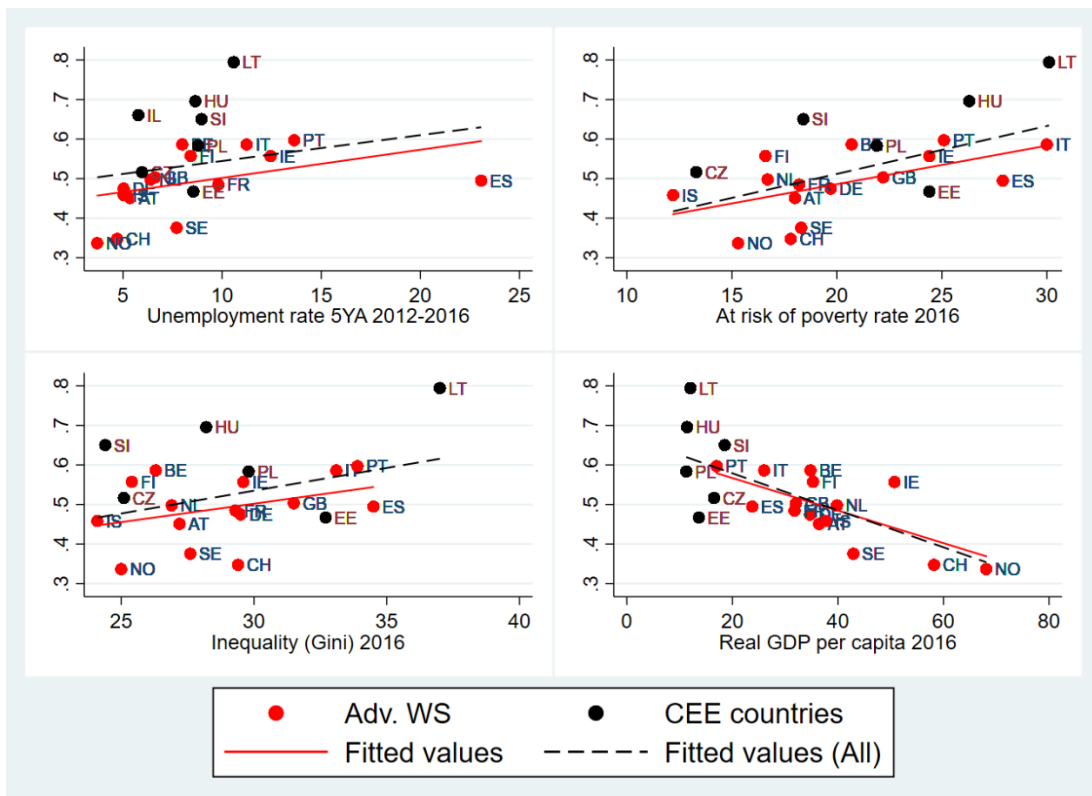


Figure 6.4: Country-level support for basic income by socioeconomic factors (Unemployment rate [5-year average], at risk of poverty rate, Gini coefficient and Real GDP per capita).

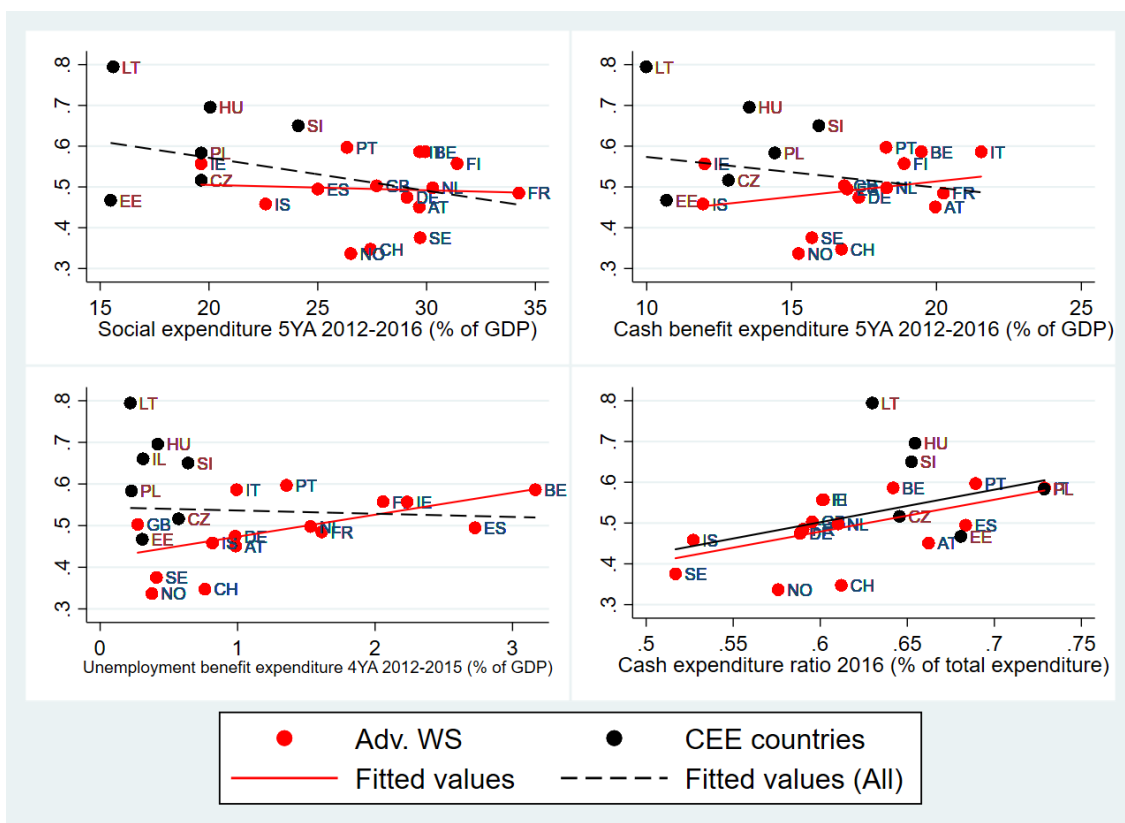


Figure 6.5: Country-level support for basic income by levels of social spending, cash benefit spending, unemployment benefit spending and the proportion of social spending dedicated to cash benefits.

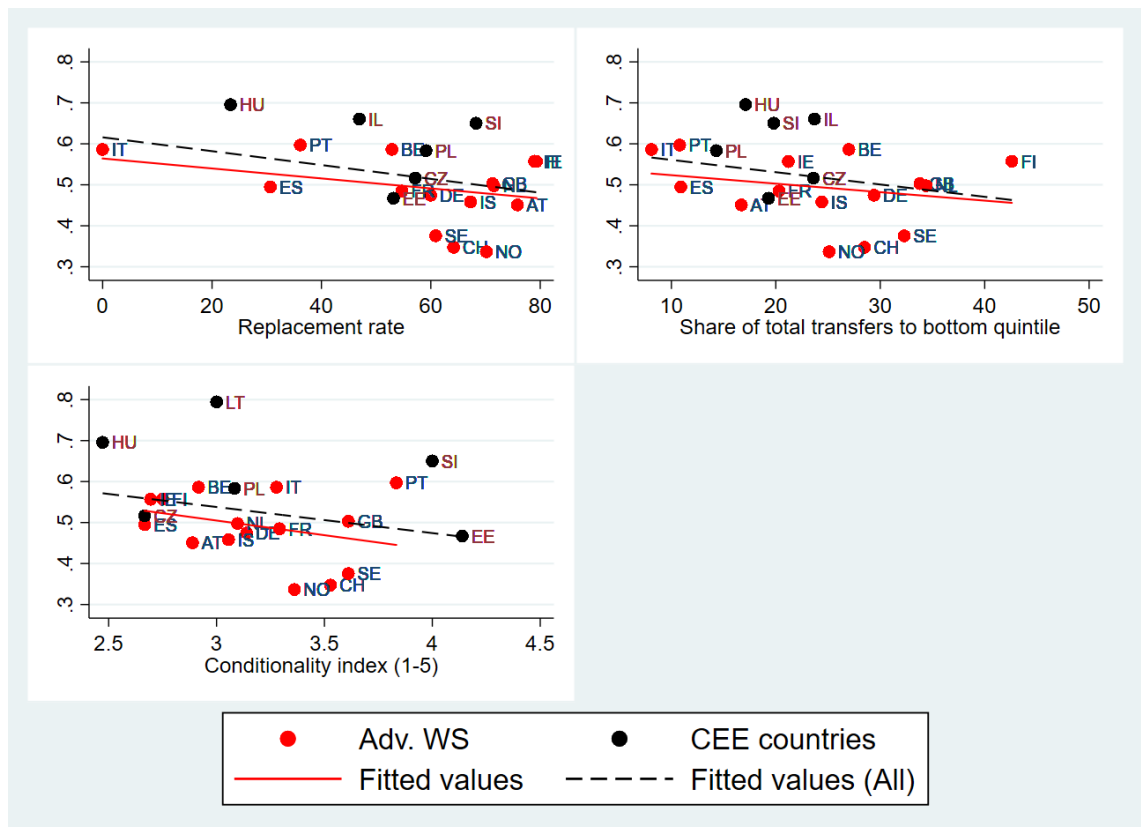


Figure 6.6: Country-level support for basic income by welfare state institutional features (replacement rate for long-term unemployed, targeting of cash transfers and conditionality index).

6.4 Pulled in different directions? Multi-dimensional preferences and shifting constituencies

6.4.1 Graduates and outsiders

This section explores the interactions between education and labour market status on the one hand and welfare state and party preferences on the other. The analysis seeks to test whether certain dimensions of a basic income will be more salient for graduates or labour market outsiders and whether political parties face different internal educational or labour market cleavages when it comes to support for basic income.

First, the regression results in Table 6.3 show how individual preferences for targeting, redistribution and spending more money on education for the unemployed at the cost of unemployment benefits (hereafter referred to as ALMP) relate to support for basic income for those with and without a university degree. For both targeting and ALMP preferences in Models 1 and 3 respectively, the results confirm the initial hypothesis: there is a significant negative interaction between these preferences and a university education. In other words, targeting and ALMP preferences explain support for basic income more among non-graduates. On the other hand, Model 2 shows that there is a weakly significant positive interaction between redistribution preferences and a university education. Thus, support for

redistribution better explains basic income preferences among graduates. Figure 6.7 also shows these results in terms of the varying marginal effects of these preferences for university graduates compared to those without a degree. The marginal effect of support for targeting and ALMPs is smaller for graduates, while the marginal effect of support for redistribution is greater. Figures A9-11 in the Appendix also show the predicted probabilities of support for basic income according to their level of education and support for targeting, redistribution and ALMPs.

Model 4 in Table 6.3 also shows the interactions between party preferences and education, while Figure 6.8 shows the expected probability of an individual supporting basic income by their party and whether they have a university degree. As cited in the methodology, parties have been grouped into four broader categories to facilitate the analysis. While Figure 6.8 shows that there is a divide within social democratic parties as expected, with graduates more in favour than non-graduates, the interaction is insignificant as the size of the divide is similar to the reference category of non-partisans (the marginal effect of education by party can also be found in Figure A12 in the Appendix). In other words, there is no evidence to suggest that social democratic parties have particularly pronounced divides between graduates and non-graduates when it comes to support for basic income. On the other hand, the interaction between new left partisanship and a university education is positive and significant, suggesting that there is a particularly large divide within new left parties. This is primarily driven by the extremely high levels of support among graduates that support new left parties rather than low levels of support among non-graduates. Although the interaction is not significant, Figure 6.8 also shows that centre-right voters are united across educational groups, revealing low levels of support for basic income for both graduates and non-graduates.

Turning to the insider-outsider divide, the regression models in Table 6.3 shows how targeting, redistribution and ALMP preferences interact with labour market status. Again, to facilitate analysis, employers and permanent employees are grouped together as insiders. However, due to the results showing varying effects across different types of outsiders, they are divided into two groups: temporary workers and solo self-employed as ‘flexi-workers’ who are distinct from unemployed individuals. Figure 6.9 shows the marginal effect of targeting, redistribution and ALMP preferences by each of these status categories.

The results in Models 1 and 3 in Table 6.4 show a significant interaction between targeting and ALMP preferences and outsiders in precarious employment (i.e. flexi-workers). Firstly, Figure 6.9 shows that while targeting preferences predict support for basic income among

insiders and unemployed individuals, the marginal effect of support for targeting is insignificantly different from zero for flexi-workers. This contradicts expectations that support for targeting would explain basic income preferences more among outsiders than insiders. Second, unlike insiders, whose support for basic income is positively associated with ALMP preferences, Figure 6.9 shows that the marginal effect of support for ALMP is *negative* among flexi-workers, although the effect is insignificant. Support for basic income among unemployed individuals is also not well-explained by ALMP preferences, even if the interaction is not significant. These two results confirm expectations that support for ALMPs would not be salient in determining support for basic income among outsiders. On the other hand, there is no significant interaction between redistribution preferences and labour market status. As Figure 6.9 shows, the marginal effect of support for redistribution is strongly positive for insiders, ‘flexi-workers’ and unemployed individuals. This contradicts with the theory that the marginal effect of redistribution preferences on support for basic income would be greater for outsiders. Graphs showing the predicted probabilities from the regressions can also be found in Figures A13-15. Overall, the results point to a more complicated picture than expected, with flexi-workers a unique constituency.

Table 6.4 also shows the interactions between party preferences and labour market status. Although none of the interactions in the table are significant, key differences are illustrated in Figure 6.10, which shows the expected probability of an individual’s support basic income by their preferred party and labour market status (marginal effects are shown in Appendix Table A16). The most relevant results concern social democrat voters. Firstly, the largest divide between permanent employees and ‘flexi-workers’ is among social democrat voters. If centre-right partisans are set as the reference category, there is a weakly significant positive interaction between social democrat voters and ‘flexi-workers’. In other words, there is a significantly bigger divide among insiders and outsiders in precarious work within social democrat parties than centre-right parties. This at least partly confirms the initial hypothesis that basic income would cause a rift between insiders and outsiders within the social democrat coalition. However, Figure 6.10 also suggests that this is specifically for these types of outsiders, as social democrat voters are the only partisans for whom unemployed individuals are *less* in favour of a basic income than insiders are. Again, the results point to the importance of distinguishing between individuals in precarious work and the unemployed.

Table 6.3: Regression models showing the interaction between other welfare state and party preferences and education (university).

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
University	0.281*** (0.067)	0.063 (0.073)	0.295*** (0.084)	0.155* (0.074)
Targeting	0.490*** (0.070)	-	-	-
University X Targeting	-0.260*** (0.064)	-	-	-
Redistribution	-	0.462*** (0.080)	-	-
University X Redistribution	-	0.190* (0.096)	-	-
ALMPs vs. benefits	-	-	0.196*** (0.041)	-
University X ALMPs vs. benefits	-	-	-0.174** (0.064)	-
Centre-right (Ref: N/A)	-	-	-	-0.282*** (0.062)
Social Democrat	-	-	-	0.086 (0.097)
New left	-	-	-	0.329*** (0.070)
Other party	-	-	-	-0.111 (0.096)
University X Centre-right	-	-	-	-0.117 (0.096)
University X Social Democrat	-	-	-	0.035 (0.124)
University X New left	-	-	-	0.285** (0.121)
University X Other party	-	-	-	0.064 (0.117)
N=	20,389	20,717	20,239	20,840
No. of countries	15	15	15	15
Sociodemographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

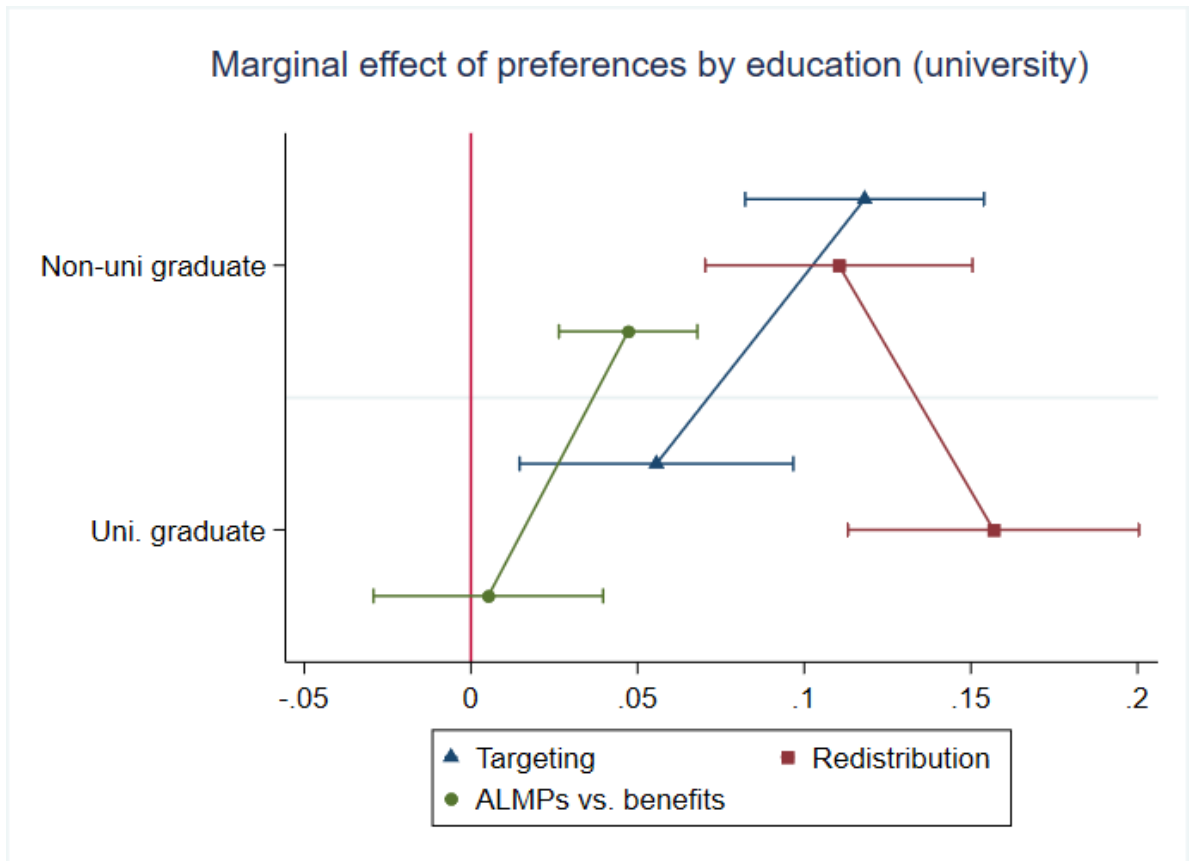


Figure 6.7: Marginal effect of other welfare state preferences on support for basic income by education (university graduate vs. non-graduate)

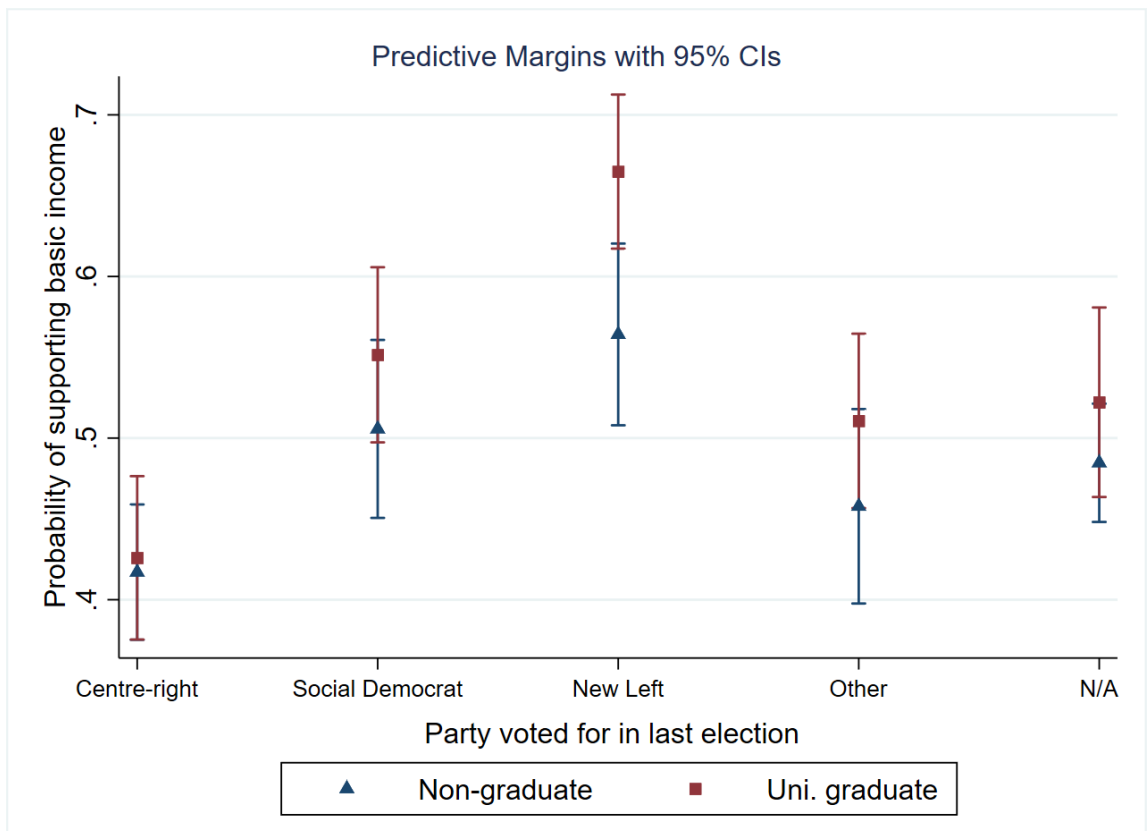


Figure 6.8: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by party preference and education (university)

Table 6.4: Regression models showing the interaction between other welfare state and party preferences and labour market status.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Flexi-workers (Ref: Employers / Perm. employees)	0.256** (0.090)	0.111 (0.114)	0.334** (0.115)	0.146* (0.077)
Unemployed	0.218 (0.185)	0.342* (0.187)	0.409 (0.233)	0.327 (0.198)
Targeting	0.445*** (0.080)	-	-	-
Flexi-workers X Targeting	-0.340*** (0.111)	-	-	-
Unemployed X Targeting	0.031 (0.194)	-	-	-
Redistribution	-	0.559*** (0.072)	-	-
Flexi-workers X Redistribution	-	0.026 (0.114)	-	-
Unemployed X Redistribution	-	-0.146 (0.185)	-	-
ALMPs vs. benefits	-	-	0.227*** (0.064)	-
Flexi-workers X ALMPs vs benefits	-	-	-0.301** (0.132)	-
Unemployed X ALMPs vs benefits	-	-	-0.250 (0.166)	-
Centre-right (Ref: N/A)	-	-	-	-0.316*** (0.080)
Social Democrat	-	-	-	0.090 (0.100)
New left	-	-	-	0.492*** (0.103)
Other party	-	-	-	-0.102 (0.106)
Flexi-workers X Centre-right	-	-	-	-0.122 (0.134)
Flexi-workers X Social Democrat	-	-	-	0.158 (0.181)
Flexi-workers X New left	-	-	-	-0.203 (0.216)
Flexi-workers X Other party	-	-	-	0.026 (0.141)
Unemployed X Centre-right	-	-	-	-0.130 (0.187)
Unemployed X Social Democrat	-	-	-	-0.426 (0.279)
Unemployed X New left	-	-	-	-0.263 (0.256)
Unemployed X Other party	-	-	-	-0.095 (0.193)
N=	12,298	12,460	12,197	12,523
No. of countries	15	15	15	15
Sociodemographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

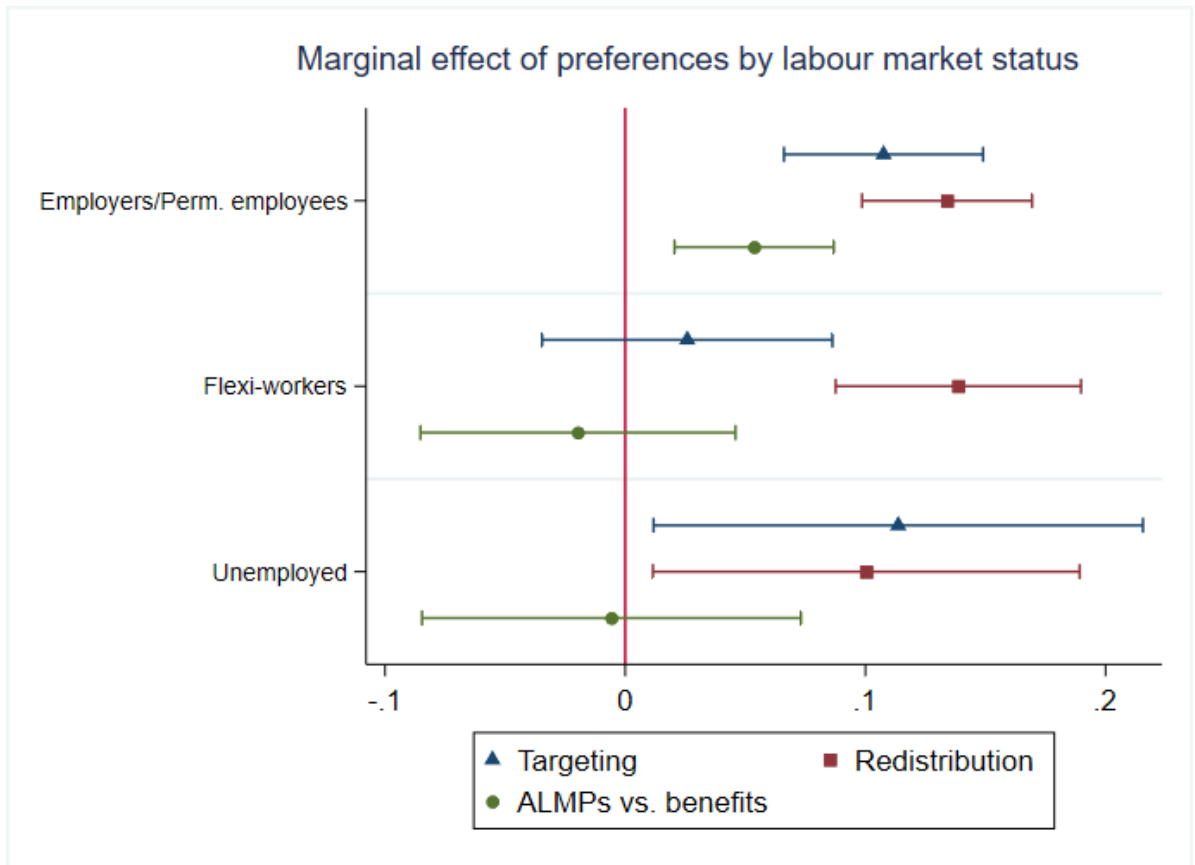


Figure 6.9: Marginal effect of other welfare state preferences on support for basic income by labour market status (Employers/Permanent employees vs. flexi-workers vs. unemployed)

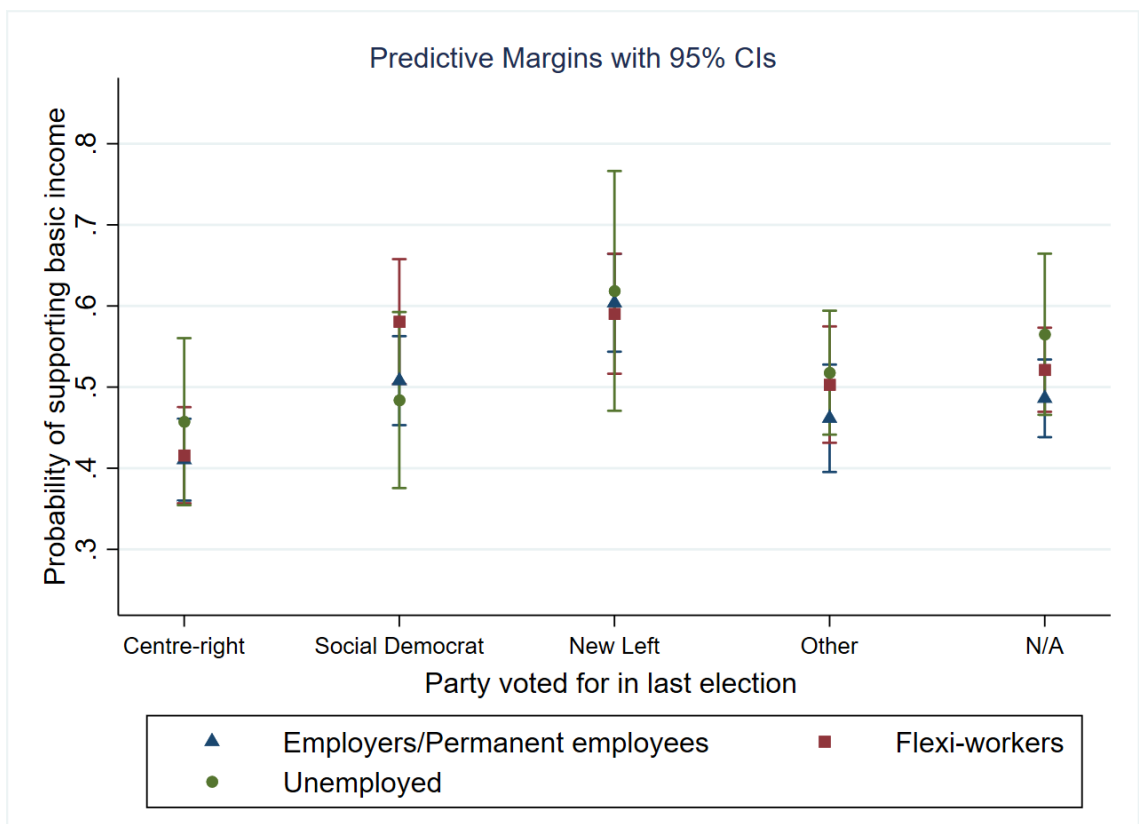


Figure 6.10: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by party preference and labour market status.

6.4.2 Imagining an alternative: cross-level interactions between institutions and welfare state preferences

This final empirical section explores how political and welfare state preferences predict support for basic income across different institutional contexts. Table 6.4 shows the results of four regression models that include cross-level interactions between institutional variables at the country-level and preferences at the individual-level. In all models, the sociodemographic variables shown in Figure 6.1 are included as covariates. The first model replicates the finding of Parolin and Siöland (2019) that left-wing individuals are more likely to support basic income in countries with high levels of social spending. The significant positive interaction shows that this finding is robust to the restriction of the sample to advanced welfare states. However, Model 2 shows that there is no significant interaction between social expenditure and support for redistribution. This supports the hypothesis that it is not the *economic* redistributive dimension of left-wing politics that is more salient in high-spending countries.

The regressions in Models 3 and 4 seek to test if the dimensions of a basic income that are incongruent with a country's existing welfare state are more or less salient for voters in determining their preferences. In both cases, the evidence supports the *incongruence* thesis. First, Model 3 shows a significant negative interaction between the share of cash benefits received by the bottom quintile in a given welfare state and individual-level support for targeting. In other words, support for basic income is best explained by targeting preferences in welfare states that currently do *not* adequately target benefit resources to the bottom quintile. Figure 6.11 shows the predicted levels of support for basic income according to whether an individual is in favour of or against targeting and the existing level of targeting at the country-level (x-axis). Figure A17 in the Appendix shows the marginal effect of targeting preferences at varying levels of targeting at the country-level. In countries with a high share of benefits targeted at the bottom quintile (>35%), there is an insignificant difference between individuals in favour of and against targeting with respect to their support for basic income. On the other hand, in countries with a low share of targeting, there is a large significant difference. For example, the model predicts that in countries with 10% of benefits received by the bottom quintile, which would presumably be a highly earnings-related social security system, there is an approximately 15% difference in the likelihood of supporting basic income for those in favour and against targeting.

Second, Model 4 shows a significant positive interaction between the strictness of the existing conditionality regime at the country-level and opposition to sanctions at the individual-level. In other words, support for basic income is best explained by conditionality

preferences in welfare states that currently have strict conditions attached to unemployment benefits. Figure 6.12 also shows the predicted levels of support for basic income according to whether an individual is in favour or against sanctions for individuals that do not meet certain behaviour requirements and the existing strictness of conditionality at the country-level (x-axis). Figure A18 in the Appendix shows the marginal effect of conditionality preferences at different levels of strictness at the country-level. In countries with a low level of conditionality, there is an insignificant difference in support for basic income between individuals in favour of or against sanctions. However, in countries with stricter conditionality, there is a large significant difference in the levels of support for basic income by whether they are in favour of sanctions.

Table 6.5: Cross-level interactions between institutional characteristics of advanced welfare states and political/welfare state preferences

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Social expenditure (% of GDP)	-0.017 (0.018)	0.001 (0.020)	-	-
Left (self-placement on scale 0-4)	-0.517* (0.285)	-	-	-
Social expenditure X Left	0.034*** (0.010)	-	-	-
(Support for) Redistribution	-	0.699** (0.277)	-	-
Social expenditure X Redistribution	-	-0.006 (0.010)	-	-
Share of cash benefits received by bottom quintile (Cash targeting)	-	-	0.007 (0.006)	-
(Support for) Targeting benefits on those with the lowest incomes	-	-	0.726*** (0.176)	-
Cash targeting X Support for targeting	-	-	-0.012** (0.005)	-
Conditionality index	-	-	-	-0.510* (0.276)
Opposition to sanctions	-	-	-	-0.164 (0.165)
Conditionality index X Opposition to sanctions	-	-	-	0.121** (0.051)
N=	20,757	20,634	20,308	20,563
Number of countries	15	15	15	15
Sociodemographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES

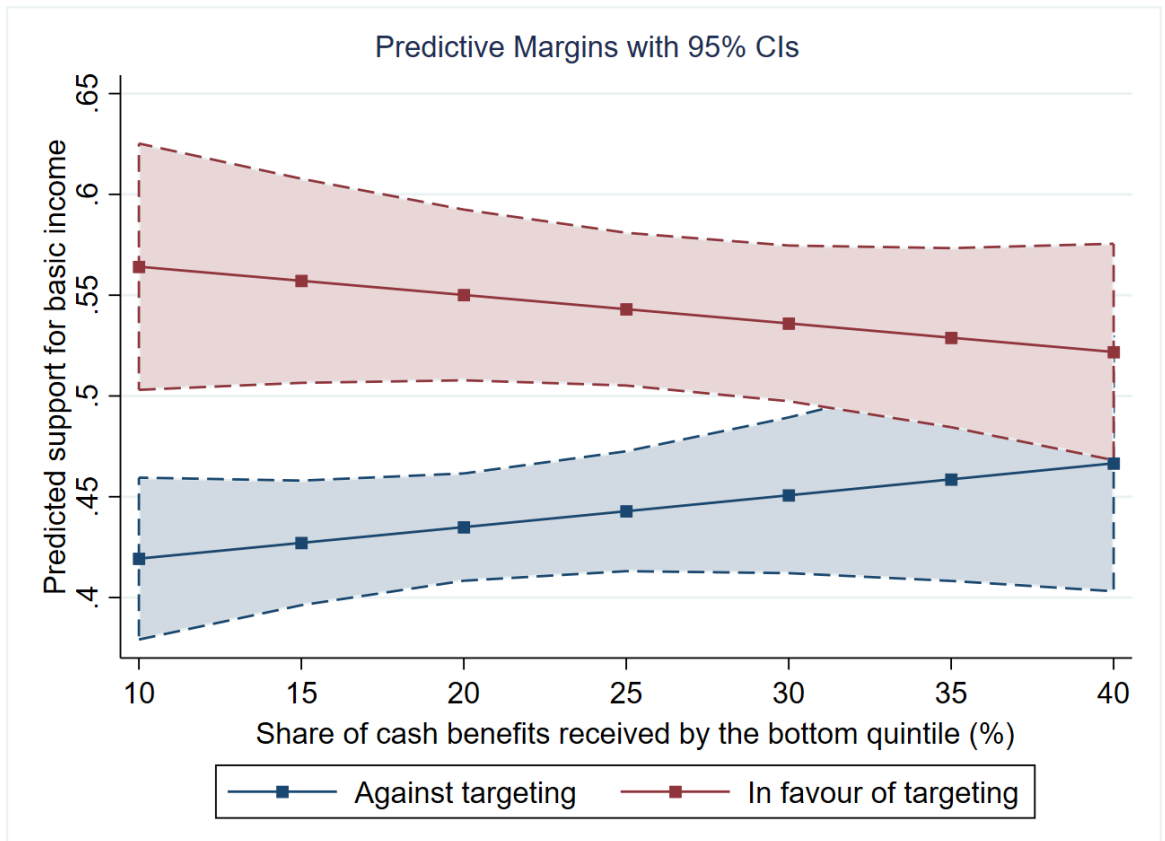


Figure 6.11: Cross-level interaction showing the predicted probabilities of support for basic income by an individual's preference for targeting and a country's existing level of cash benefit targeting.

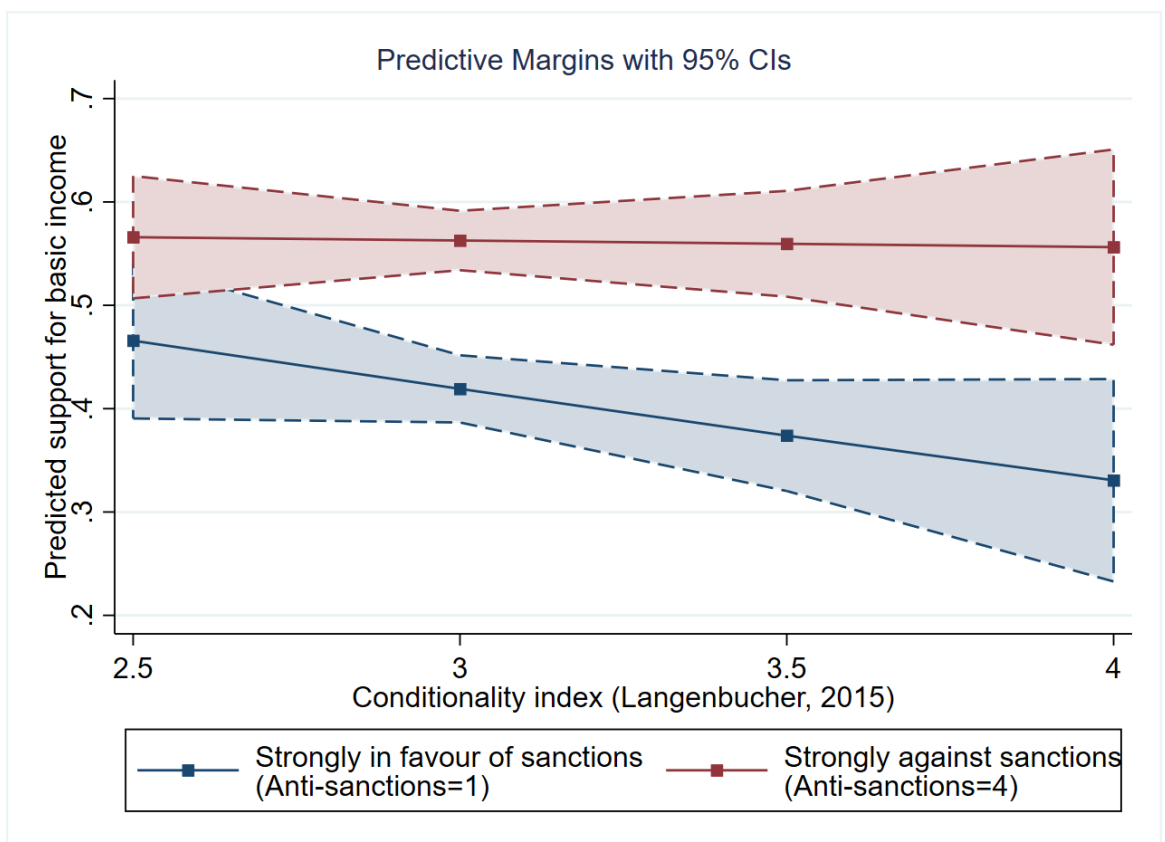


Figure 6.12: Cross-level interaction showing the predicted probabilities of support for basic income by an individual's preference for conditionality and a country's existing level of conditionality.

6.5 Discussion

The analysis in this chapter had two main aims: to identify individual-level and country-level determinants of support for basic income and to examine the multi-dimensionality of basic income support across different socioeconomic groups, parties and institutional contexts. In both regards, the results provide some confirmation of the existing evidence and theoretical expectations outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

Firstly, labour market risks and disadvantage relate to support for basic income in advanced welfare states. At the individual level, the results suggest that labour market outsiders, particularly unemployed and temporary workers, are a likely constituency for basic income, even if much of their support is explained by other sociodemographic characteristics and support for similar welfare state measures. At the country-level, poverty, unemployment and inequality are all associated with greater levels of support for basic income. Yet, at both the individual- and country-level, the most robust indicator of support is income. Support is highest in countries with low GDP per capita and household income is a highly significant predictor of basic income preferences. Interestingly though, the constituency for basic income is not chiefly individuals on the lowest incomes, whose support is similar to those on middle incomes. Rather, those on the highest incomes can be expected to mobilise strongly against a basic income. Thus, while the results point to the importance of labour market risks and disadvantage *in general*, it is difficult to argue that unemployment or precarious employment (at either the individual- or country-level) *specifically* drives public support for basic income.

Similarly, analysis of post-industrial occupational class indicates that socio-cultural professionals, and the working class (blue-collar workers and low-service functionaries) are most in favour. Yet, the evidence does not support the expected division *within* the working class and all differences between classes were insignificant with the introduction of sociodemographic and preferences controls. This does not suggest that changes in the occupational structure in the post-industrial economy will reshape political constituencies for basic income. Contrary to expectations, men are also more in favour once controlling for their sociodemographic characteristics. On the other hand, the evidence points to the relevance of university graduates and young people as a constituency for basic income. This adds more weight to the claim that the expansion of higher education in the knowledge economy will increase the constituency for basic income.

This mixed picture may explain why the identified support for basic income among voters of the main political families did not entirely conform to expectations. While new left

partisans were most in favour, liberal voters were just as opposed to basic income as other right-wing parties and social democrat voters were broadly in favour. In fact, many of the theoretical expectations that the results rejected – related to, for example, gender, occupational class and liberal/social democrat voters – can be linked to the same finding that cultural preferences did not strongly relate to support for basic income. This contradicts the main finding from the previous chapter that partisan support is more closely linked to the cultural dimension of politics than the economic left-right dimension. Whether substantive or methodological reasons explain this discrepancy is explored in more detail in Chapter 9.

A question also remains about what the effect of party preferences implies. Given the relative obscurity of basic income as a political issue in most countries, party *cues* are likely to be a weak or non-existent influence on preferences. Thus, the relationship identified between partisanship and basic income should be mostly ideological, i.e. related to the general values or preferences of supporters of a given party family, once sociodemographic factors are controlled for. On the other hand, in countries where basic income *has* been prominent in political debate, party cues may be influential precisely because it is a relatively obscure issue that voters do not develop a strong independent opinion on. Given the focus on average party effects cross-nationally, this latter consideration is not as relevant to the results here.

Given the evident effect of education, labour market status and partisanship in determining support for basic income, the results also explored the varying drivers across these groups and within party coalitions. An important finding in this regard was the distinction between temporary workers and solo self-employed on the one hand as ‘flexi-workers’, and unemployed workers on the other. On the one hand, there is likely to be overlap in these categories over time as individuals in precarious work cycle in and out of unemployment and support for basic income among both unemployed workers and so-called ‘flexi-workers’ was not explained by ALMP preferences, while it was for insiders. This confirmed the intuition described in Section 6.1. On the other hand, targeting preferences were strongly related to support for basic income for unemployed workers (and insiders) but *not* flexi-workers. Although the effects were not significant, the possibility of a social democrat ‘outsider’ cleavage only applies to flexi-workers: the difference in support between insiders and flexi-workers is largest among social democrat voters. Meanwhile, unemployed social democrat voters are *less* likely to support basic income than insiders, the only party’s voters for whom this is the case.

Both results may be because unemployed workers include *some* individuals with earnings-related coverage (as do insiders), who are opposed to replacing it with a basic income. This

inference is based on the assumption that they are also represented within the unemployed workers that vote for social democrat parties and are opposed to targeting. It also corresponds to findings elsewhere that there is a negative interaction between union membership (or higher education/income) and unemployment: the effect of being unemployed has a significantly larger effect on support for basic income among non-union members (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019a). Flexi-workers are instead always poorly covered by social insurance.

The distinction between graduate and non-graduate support for basic income was also significant. Support among non-graduates was more likely to be related to targeting or ALMP preferences, while redistribution preferences were more strongly related to support for basic income among graduates. This may be critical when attempting to build a coalition of voters in favour of a specific model of basic income across educational groups. Framing the policy as a targeting or activation measure may be critical for bringing non-graduates on board while questions of policy design are also likely to be important here. Regarding the party-education interactions, contrary to expectations, the education divide was not most pronounced within social democrat party voters, but rather within new left parties. This was due to the exceptionally high level of support for basic income from graduates (that vote for new left parties) rather than notable opposition from new left non-graduates. This may zero in on an important explanatory factor in determining whether new left parties are particularly supportive of basic income: the extent to which graduates are a key part of their voting coalition. Voters of centre-right parties were also particularly united in their opposition to basic income.

The effect of institutional variables provides more evidence to suggest that incongruence at the country-level *decreases* overall level of support, at least in regard to the level and ratio of cash benefit spending but also conditionality. In other words, countries that already have welfare states that look like a basic income are more in favour of basic income. Of course, there is no evidence here of any *causal* mechanism: cash spending may be high precisely because of public support, which in turn translates into higher levels of support for basic income. This is explored in more detail in the final chapter. However, equally, the interactions suggest that incongruence on a given dimension of basic income heightens the *salience* (i.e. the marginal effect) of that dimension for individual preferences. For example, in countries with stricter conditionality attached to unemployment benefits, individual-level conditionality preferences have a larger marginal effect on support for basic income. Similarly, in countries with a low degree of cash benefit targeting, individual-level targeting preferences have a larger marginal effect on support for basic income. A possible explanation is that voters envisage basic income as an alternative to the existing system, as

a means to transform the welfare state. Thus, the aspects of it that are most transformative will be most salient.

As with other cross-national research that focuses on a limited number of countries, the inferences from the country-level analysis are exploratory in nature. This is unavoidable given the data limitations and the theoretical assertion that the (party) politics of basic income is distinct in the advanced welfare states studied in this thesis. Nevertheless, the analysis has offered as much transparency as possible by including CEE countries in robustness checks as well, so that readers can decide for themselves as to the credibility of the assertions made. Of course, even making inferences from a sample of 21 countries is uncertain (Spicker, 2017). Thus, the strength of the findings here relies on the credibility of a *theoretical* argument, which is broadly supported by the data but not confirmed. Support for the strength of this theoretical argument can be gained from in-depth study of country cases. Thus, the next two chapters offer an opportunity to explore some of the empirical findings here and develop a richer understanding of how the institutional contexts affects the politics of basic income.

7 The New Universalism? Party support for basic income in the UK

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a case study of the UK, which in many ways constitutes an archetypal Liberal welfare regime. The purpose of the case is to allow an in-depth analysis of the mechanisms by which this specific institutional context affects the nature of party competition on basic income. The residual, highly conditional and means-tested social security system provides fertile ground to explore the expectations outlined in the theoretical framework as well as the empirical findings from the previous two chapters. On the face of it, the UK also offers a counterexample to the empirical finding that the level of party support for basic income is greatest when unemployment is high. An in-depth analysis of the case offers an opportunity to interrogate alternative explanations and whether they can be reconciled with the quantitative empirical analysis.

The chapter interrogates the commitments or policy proposals and rationales of political actors in detail, probing the divisions within parties and identifying deliberate ambiguous positions. Importantly, the evidence gathered for the case study is used to set out the sequencing of relevant events and bring a wider collection of data to bear on the interaction between parties, institutions and support for basic income. The case is informed by elite interviews with political actors, such as politicians, policy advisers, directors or researchers in think tanks and activists, as well as parliamentary documents, media reports and wider academic literature and institutional characteristics. Specific details about the data are provided in the methodology in Chapter 4.

Section 7.1 starts by summarising the political economy context of the UK relevant to the theoretical framework identified in Chapter 3. This includes a description of the historical evolution of social security policies as well as well broader socio-economic characteristics and labour market institutions. The section also outlines the significance of the UK's *political* institutions, which include the electoral and party system but also the devolution settlement that provides intra-case variation in party behaviour. The section ends by outlining the theoretical expectations about party support based on the UK's socio-economic and institutional context. These include that basic income should be most attractive to political actors on the left given the low level of existing spending, and that the *unconditional* nature of basic income should be highly salient in the context of a strict conditionality

regime. On the other hand, the highly targeted nature of the UK welfare state should reduce the salience of recalibrating the welfare state towards the poorest.

Section 7.2 initially provides a brief summary of the history of basic income in the UK and the evidence from the analysis of manifestos, which is described in more detail in Chapters 2 and 5 respectively. This historical context is supplemented with evidence on parliamentary discussions in the 1980s and the early 1990s. This provides the foundation to explore the focus of the case, which is the increase of interest in a basic income since the financial crisis. Due to the devolution settlement of the UK, the contemporary politics of basic income has, to a large extent, operated on a twin-track, one in Scotland (and to a much lesser extent in Wales) and one in the wider UK context, i.e. Westminster. Given the focus on political parties that are, to a varying extent, independent across the UK's nations, this motivates a division of the case into two parts, although there are important interactions between the two. Section 7.2.2 then starts by describing the chronological events that are centred on Westminster politics, including the Coalition and Conservative governments' welfare reforms around Universal Credit. The section then outlines the events in Scotland that involve both the Scottish Parliament and the four local authorities that have taken the initiative in exploring the feasibility of basic income experiments.

Section 7.3 collates party positions on basic income and related reforms, focusing on the types (and strength) of commitment, the rationale behind support for basic income (and opposition) and the specific policy models advocated. Themes from the elite interviews are drawn out to provide additional information about the nature of political actors' positions. The section then discusses how closely expectations based on the theoretical framework predict the party politics of basic income, with a focus on the socio-economic and institutional context of the UK. It also discusses some general lessons for the political feasibility of basic income based on the case. Section 7.4 ends with a summary of the main findings of the case study.

7.2 The political economy of the UK: history, institutions and social security

7.2.1 Political economy context: The archetypal Liberal model?

Although some question the classification of the UK as a coherently Liberal welfare regime, given its nationalised health-care system, which is free-at-the-point-of-use (Bambra, 2005), the focus of this research on existing social security and labour market institutions make it a more difficult categorisation to contest. The UK has residual social security benefits funded by general taxation, high private involvement in the provision of welfare services and

flexible labour markets. While social spending as a whole is roughly equal to the OECD average (21% of GDP in 2016), the UK's unemployment net replacement rate for single people is the fourth lowest in the OECD at 38% in 2014 [the OECD average is 58%] (OECD, 2019). Excluding housing benefits, the UK has the lowest unemployment net replacement rate (14%) due to its exceptionally low flat-rate unemployment benefit, Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). There is both a contributory JSA and a heavily means-tested JSA, but they are both set at the same level of £73.10 a week. The UK's net pension replacement rate is the second lowest after Mexico at 29% in 2014 [OECD average is 63% and EU28 average is 71%] (OECD, 2019). Finally, based on an average of the OECD's four main Employment Protection Legislation (EPL) indicators, the UK has the fourth least regulated labour market in the OECD. Union density and collective bargaining coverage are also low, at 25% and 27.5% in 2014 respectively.

Manow (2009) argues that the origins of electoral systems and political economies are intertwined, where a Liberal political economy is mostly likely to coexist with a majoritarian first-past-the-post electoral system as in the UK. The electoral system has tended towards a two-party system according to Duverger's Law (Riker, 1982), with the centre-right Conservative Party and the centre-left Labour Party leading majority governments for most of the past 70 years. Thus, the shape of the welfare state has been constructed largely in the image of the Conservative and Labour Party.

The electoral success of the Conservative Party in particular, which has led the government for 45 of the last 74 years, has left its mark on the residual nature of social security policy in the UK. Yet, the Beveridge Report of 1942 was also a pivotal moment in the construction of the UK's welfare state. It strongly influenced the first majority Labour government after the 1945 general election, which passed the National Insurance Act 1946 introducing flat-rate contributory benefits according to Beveridgean principles. However, the level of benefits was lower than originally envisaged by Beveridge and this drove a lingering reliance on means testing. Earnings-related elements to social security were introduced in the 1960s by both Conservative and Labour governments (Pemberton, 2012). Yet, again, the low coverage and generosity, at least partly driven by economic difficulties and the short-lived nature of Labour governments, was such that means-testing continued to play a dominant role (Micklewright, 1989). Thatcher's New Right Conservative government in the 1980s ensured a slide towards an increasingly residual welfare state as benefit levels were frozen, the earnings-related sickness and unemployment benefits were abolished in the early 1980s.

The New Labour government from 1997 to 2010 did not reverse the trend of greater means-testing, with a huge expansion of targeted family⁵⁵ and in-work benefits. At the same time, New Labour embraced a conditionality agenda, marrying social rights with responsibilities (Blair, 1996). This meant increasing the requirements expected of claimants, extending the groups subject to the conditions and adopting harsher sanctions for non-compliance (Dwyer, 2004). The Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition and the successive Conservative governments in pursuit of an austerity agenda retrenched working age benefits and in 2012 legislated for largescale radical reform of the working age benefits system. By 2014, the UK had the 8th strictest conditionality regime attached to unemployment benefits of the 40 OECD and EU countries for which there was data (Langenbucher, 2015). This included the strictest job search requirements and monitoring of any country, with moderately strict availability requirements and suitable work criteria (21st strictest) and moderately strict sanctions (20th strictest). Now that the new state pension is entirely flat rate (Pearce and Massala, 2020), the UK is one of only a handful of countries to have no public earnings-related benefits.

In terms of political institutions, the devolution agenda of the New Labour government in 1997 created the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, which has fostered greater party fragmentation as both are mixed-member proportional representation (MMP) electoral systems. It also offers an opportunity to see the possible independent effect of electoral systems on party support by comparing the politics of basic income in Scotland and the UK. A final point about the institutional context is that unlike many other countries, the UK has very few veto players (Tsebelis, 1995). This is true in regards to the constitutional principle of parliamentary sovereignty but also the lack of producer group involvement in the administration of taxes and benefits.

7.2.2 Theoretical expectations

So how might this socioeconomic and institutional context influence the party politics of basic income in the UK? Both the theoretical framework and the empirical results in the preceding chapters indicate that unemployment relates to increased political support for basic income. Therefore, the fact that partisan interest in a basic income has sprung up at a time when the unemployment rate has been rapidly falling (by 2017 it was at a 40-year low) is an empirical puzzle. The question is to consider what other factors may have driven

⁵⁵ Non-working families also receive Child Tax Credits.

support for basic income and to explore whether the low unemployment rate has nevertheless put dampening pressure on the level of support.

The UK's welfare state institutions also generate some theoretical expectations about the likely political contestation around basic income. Given the low-spending, residual welfare state, we would expect the left to support a basic income in the UK. Right-wing parties are unlikely to be attracted to a policy that would likely imply expansionary spending commitments. The lack of earnings-related insurance benefits is expected to reduce the attraction of basic income as a way of improving provision among poorer recipients. Thus, this institutional context should reduce the salience of targeting in debates around basic income. On the other hand, the comparatively strict conditionality regime attached to unemployment benefits in the UK should heighten the salience of conditionality in political debates on basic income.

7.3 Basic income in the UK

7.3.1 Historical background

As outlined in the initial chapter on past basic income research, the UK is generally identified as the first country where the idea of a basic income entered the sphere of democratic politics. Throughout the inter-war period, interest in a basic income (or a national/social dividend) predominantly came from the political left, in and around the Labour Party (van Trier, 1995). However, in the post-war period, support for a basic income came primarily from the political right, whether in the proposals of Juliet Rhys-Williams in the 1940s and '50s or the Tax Credit scheme of the Heath government in the 1970s (Sloman, 2016b).

The analysis of party manifestos since 1980 shows that only two parliamentary parties since then have advocated a basic income (or citizen's income) in a nationwide election: the Liberal Democrats in 1992 and the Green Party in 2010, 2015 and 2017. The latter have advocated a basic income for much longer but only gained parliamentary representation in 2010. Support for a 'tax credit' scheme or a basic income from Liberal MPs also preceded its official merger with the SDP in 1988, which was when new leader Paddy Ashdown made a basic income one of its flagship policies (Ashdown, 1989). In March 1990, Liberal Democrat party members gave unanimous approval to a Green Paper titled *Common Benefit*, in which they proposed a citizen's income as a 'second-stage reform' to be implemented after a period of about five years (Liberal Democrats, 1989). However, the Lib Dems eventually dropped the policy at its Annual Conference on 21st September 1994 after its failure to attract voters in the 1992 election.

An intriguing manifesto ‘considering’ a basic income that was excluded from the analysis in Chapter 5 due to its lack of parliamentary representation was the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in 2001. Further details in the manifesto⁵⁶ suggest that they are clearly drawing on the broader concept but did not have an unconditional and universal benefit in mind. Yet, the example serves to illustrate the breadth of ideological support in the UK at various points, from the Greens on the left through the Lib Dems in the centre to UKIP on the right.

While there has only been one Commons debate on record referring specifically to a basic income, held recently on 14th September 2016, the idea has been raised many times by individual MPs within the context of other broader debates. Figures 7.1-7.3 show the references in parliament to ‘basic income’ or ‘citizen’s income’ from 1945 to 2019 and ‘tax credit’ between 1960 and 1997⁵⁷. The references to basic income are inflated by the fact it includes general mentions of ‘basic income support’ or providing a basic income to people, which could imply generic wage or benefit policies, and to ‘basic income tax’, i.e. the lowest tax band. Nevertheless, it accurately shows that much parliamentary discussion of a basic income occurred in the 1980s, despite the lack of any party manifesto commitments.

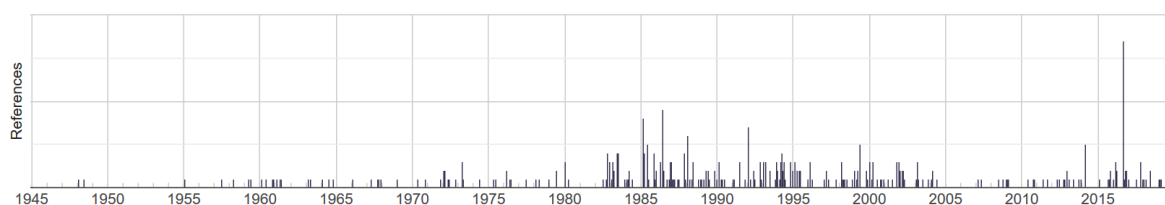


Figure 7.1: References to “basic income” in Hansard 1945-2019

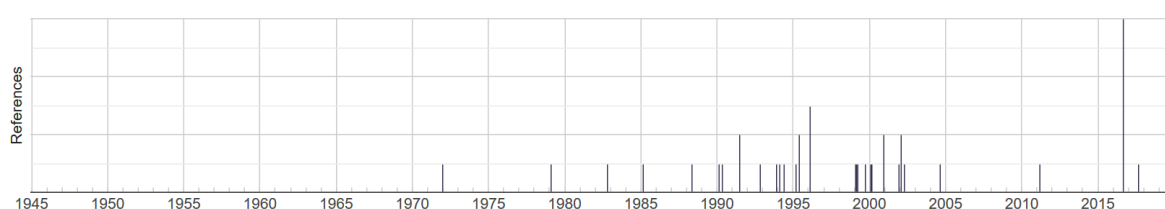


Figure 7.2: References to “citizen’s income” in Hansard 1945-2019

⁵⁶ The manifesto states that the advantages of such a system are “it is straightforward to administer and not so open to fraud.” UKIP reforms also aim to ensure that “the net income gained from working, either part-time or full-time, is always greater than the benefits foregone.” Thus, it is clear UKIP’s policy is at least partly inspired by a basic income, despite the state goal of restoring “people to independence from benefits and to the dignity that comes with it.”

⁵⁷ This time period was selected to avoid capturing post-1997 references to the New Labour government’s Working Families Tax Credit and its successors

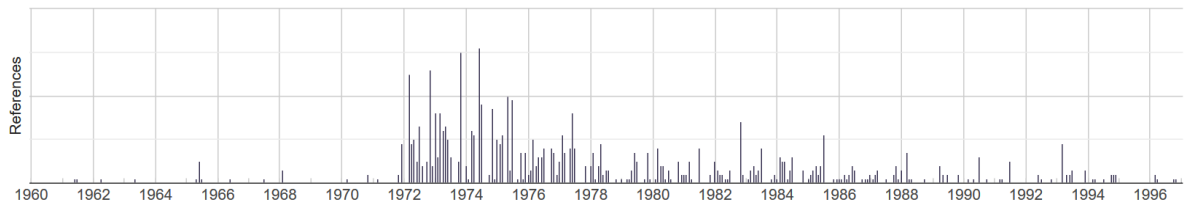


Figure 7.3: References to “tax credit” in Hansard 1960-1997

This was chiefly spearheaded by Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams, son of Lady Juliet Rhys-Williams and the Conservative MP for Kensington between 1974 and his death in 1988. Rhys-Williams was instrumental in the shift from the use of the term ‘tax credit’ to basic income guarantee (BIG) and eventually basic income, which was deemed necessary in order to present it as a new initiative (Parker, 1989, p.xii). Many Conservative MPs were interested in tax-benefit integration more generally and the removal of poverty traps caused by very high marginal rates was a defining issue of the time. The Fowler Review and the 1986 Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation eventually confirmed it was heading in a different direction, entrenching the means-tested benefits system and rejecting ‘all-embracing, big bang solutions.’ Conservative Party public interest gradually waned after that.

The Labour Party’s attitude throughout this period was one of scepticism or outright hostility. Frank Field MP was a vocal opponent (Raven, 1989). However, the Commission on Social Justice in 1994 set up by Labour leader John Smith was less categorical and perhaps signalled the seeds of a more open-minded approach⁵⁸. Yet between 1996 and 2011, Lynne Jones, a Labour MP, was the only politician of any party to mention citizen’s income⁵⁹ (or basic income) in the Commons in a positive light before 2011. The founding of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 meant that Scottish Green Party MSPs were given a platform from which to mention a citizen’s income a handful of times between 2001 and 2008.

On the other hand, there were policy developments in this period that many advocates saw as positive steps. As mentioned in the political economy summary (Section 7.1), the New Labour government’s flagship social security reforms were a massive expansion of tax credits, which some basic income advocates were unsure whether to support (Jordan et al., 2000). Although heavily means-tested and targeted solely at working people, it did effectively provide a “basic income... for people working at the national minimum wage, or

⁵⁸ With Tony Atkinson as a member of the Commission, the Report considered the idea of a participation income and was not entirely dismissive of a citizen’s income. The report stated, “It would be unwise...to rule out a move towards Citizen’s Income in future” when wages may not provide enough income security.

⁵⁹ In a debate on the tax system in 2002, she described a basic income as a possible second step, with the first step being a pause or reversal of the continued complex means testing pursued by the New Labour government (House of Commons, 2002).

just over it, for 16 hours a week or slightly longer” (ibid, p. 10). Advocates such as Philippe Van Parijs also identify earned income tax credit-type policies as basic income cousins worthy of support (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). Finally, New Labour introduced the Child Trust Fund in 2005, which combined a savings scheme for children with government vouchers of up to £1000 that could be redeemed when children turned 18. The policy was very much inspired by the discussion of stakeholder grants and asset-based welfare (Lissauer and Kelly, 2000).

7.3.2 Basic income after the financial crisis in the UK

As stated in the introduction, a separate analysis of the politics of basic income in Scotland and the UK is useful. In particular, in order to understand the two most significant events, it is best to see it as two interlinked cases, with the Scottish government’s decision to fund feasibility studies undertaken by four local authorities representing one significant political event and the Labour Party’s internal debate and eventual commitment to a ‘pilot’ in the 2019 general election representing the other. However, both are influenced by political and socio-economic events at the UK level and I detail this first⁶⁰.

7.3.2.1 UK and Westminster politics

The seeds of the basic income debate in the UK lie in the financial crisis of 2008-09 and the idea of Universal Credit. The UK economy shrunk by 0.3% in 2008 and then 4.2% in 2009 (Eurostat, 2019), while the government budget deficit increased from -2.7% to -5.1% of GDP in 2008 and then to -10.1% in 2009 (Eurostat, 2019). The rise in unemployment was less dramatic from 5.6% in 2008 to 7.6% in 2009. This provided the socioeconomic context for the development of social policy at the start of the case. The evolution of Universal Credit is also particularly interesting because of its ambiguous relationship with basic income. Even more so than tax credits, advocates of a basic income have been unsure whether to embrace the policy as a step in the right direction (Jordan, 2012). Thus, an account of Universal Credit also provides important context for the development of political interest in basic income⁶¹.

For example, at the start of the case study period, impetus for tax-benefit integration was already growing. In 2007, a Work and Pensions Select Committee report on *Benefits Simplification* set out what it described as a “radical solution to simplifying the UK benefits

⁶⁰ It is worth adding that the Welsh Parliament has also expressed interest in exploring experiments, including the Labour Finance Minister at the time Mark Drakeford is now First Minister of Wales. Plaid Cymru’s current leader Adam Price also mentioned interest in a young person’s basic income scheme. I do not explore this in the case below.

⁶¹ Timmins’s (2016) identification of negative income tax proposals in the 60s as the origin of Universal Credit points to a shared heritage.

system by introducing a Single Working Age Benefit (SWAB) for those both in work on a low salary and those out of work for whatever reason” (Work and Pensions Committee, 2007). Two years later, a report titled *Dynamic Benefits* by the former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith’s think tank, the Centre for Social Justice, outlined similar plans for a single Universal Credit benefit (with two components), combining eight means-tested benefits, with a standardised (and lower) withdrawal rate and a more generous earnings disregard (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

Yet, unsurprisingly, the financial crisis dominated the 2010 election campaign. Universal Credit was not actually mentioned in the Conservative Party’s manifesto, while basic income continued to be absent from mainstream political debate. It did feature in the Green Party election manifesto, which mentioned a citizen’s income as a long-term aim. Yet, their 2010 manifesto read, “We recognise that with the public finances in their present state this is not the time to introduce such a scheme” (The Green Party of England and Wales, 2010). Instead, they proposed the introduction of a Citizen’s Pension scheme and a large increase in Child Benefit.

The result of the 2010 general election in May was a hung parliament for the first time since 1974, with the Conservatives as the largest party. They formed the first coalition government since the Second World War with the Liberal Democrats and a commitment to reduce the budget deficit. This meant the government began to implement a range of austerity measures. Indeed, one of the first things the government did upon entering office was to abolish the Child Trust Fund. It also announced a number of measures in the June Budget of that year to reduce expenditure on benefits, with £21 billion of savings were expected to come from ‘welfare reform’. However, pensions were protected by a ‘triple lock’, which guaranteed that they would rise by the rate of inflation, the rate of wage growth or 2.5%, whichever was largest. The election also led to the Green Party winning its first seat in the House of Commons giving parliamentary representation to the only basic income advocates at the time.

On 5th October 2010, Iain Duncan Smith, after appointment as Work and Pensions Secretary, announced the government’s plan to introduce Universal Credit at the Conservative Party Conference, stating that it would “restore fairness and simplicity to a complex, outdated and wildly expensive benefits system” (Duncan Smith, 2010). At first, there was cross-party support for the principles but not necessarily for the whole direction of policy. A relevant example of this was shown on 9th March 2011, when John McDonnell, then a backbench, left-wing Labour MP, expressed his tacit approval for the idea behind Universal Credit on

the basis that it was a step towards a citizen's income (House of Commons, 2011). He qualified that by stating that he did not support the Welfare Reform Bill they were debating as Universal Credit was not set at a high enough level and the policy did not help with the lack of well-paid jobs for unemployed people to go into, which "discredits the whole concept of the universal credit" (ibid).

The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 points to two distinct, if inter-related, trends in this period for working-age social security: austerity measures that affected the existing system and the development of Universal Credit. The austerity measures in this legislation included both reductions in the real level of benefits and stricter sanctions for failing to meet behavioural requirements. In regards to the latter, researchers have described a particularly 'punitive turn' in the conditionality applied to out-of-work benefits from 2012 onwards (Fletcher and Wright, 2018). Meanwhile, the gradual roll-out of Universal Credit also began in 2013, which faced a number of administrative and political problems that continued to blight its implementation (Timmins, 2016).

In this environment, political support for basic income was still very sparse but there was some early interest from the right and free market think tanks, including the Adam Smith Institute (Bowman, 2016). On the left, John McDonnell held a meeting on citizen's income in March 2014, including speeches from the Green Party leader Natalie Bennett. The 2015 election campaign saw heightened media attention when the Green Party promoted basic income as its flagship policy. However, the party struggled to articulate their policy in the media, with mixed messages about whether it was a long-term aim or a policy it wished to implement.

The 2015 general election resulted in a surprise Conservative majority, as the Liberal Democrats lost all but eight of their seats. This emboldened the austerity agenda of the government and gave breathing space for Universal Credit to continue its roll out. Labour, which lost 26 seats, also saw a collapse in Scotland, as the SNP won 56 out of 59 possible seats, and Ed Miliband resigned as leader. In September, Jeremy Corbyn, a left-wing Labour MP who had voted against the party whip more than any other between 1997 and 2010, won a shocking victory in the Labour leadership election. His long-time ally John McDonnell became Shadow Chancellor. This transformed the landscape for the politics of basic income just at a time when global interest was also increasing.

A number of MPs began publicising their view on basic income in the media. In February 2016, Jonathan Reynolds, a Labour shadow cabinet minister, wrote an article in the *New Statesman* expressing his support for the idea on the basis that it could cope with "inevitable

but fundamental economic change”, that it would transform the existing complex and punitive welfare system and that it would tackle poverty (Reynolds, 2016). On the other hand, Jon Cruddas, another Labour MP, co-authored an article with Tom Kibasi the director of a centre-left think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research in June, titled ‘Universal Basic Mistake’ (Cruddas and Kibasi, 2016). They argued that a basic income is “politically toxic” and “antithetical to the values of most British people, who believe in the value of work.” This had coincided with a string of centre-left think tanks releasing reports in support of a basic income (Painter and Thong, 2015), a ‘modified’ partial basic income scheme of £71 (Reed and Lansley, 2016) and a universal benefit, “not as vast new spending, but a process of integrating and rationalising existing entitlements of broadly similar generosity” (Harrop, 2016).

In parliament, Ronnie Cowan, the SNP MP, raised the issue with a written question in July 2016 asking the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake research into a universal basic income. He would continue to be the ‘go-to’ basic income MP citing it in more debates than any other MP. On the 14th September 2016, Ronnie Cowan also arranged a debate in Westminster Hall on ‘Universal Basic Income’. In his opening remarks, he indicates he has an open mind stating, “[until we have a clear definition], we cannot decide if universal basic income is a solution or not, but I hope we can agree that the current welfare system has failed.” He cited the complex and punitive nature of the system, as well as growing inequality, in-work poverty and deprivation. In response, the Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds, argued: “Our high employment rate shows that an active welfare system that helps people into work, rather than only handing out money to everyone in the same way, is the right approach.” Most other contributions were positive from MPs on the left although one Labour MP indicated that the previous government’s approach of universal child benefit and tax credits would be preferable.

That same week the Trade Union Congress passed a composite motion (C13) in defence of in-work benefits while also calling to ‘acknowledge Universal Basic Income and argue for a progressive system that would be easier to administer, easier for people to navigate, paid individually and that is complementary to comprehensive public services and childcare provision.’ This was moved by members of the Unite union who had passed a stronger motion at its policy conference in July, calling upon the conference ‘to actively campaign for a Universal Basic Income and eradicate poverty for all.’ Then, in February 2017, John McDonnell announced he had set up a working group, led by Jonathan Reynolds, to explore the idea in preparation for the next election. The working group included a number of

interested parties, such as academics, union officials and campaigners. It met once to discuss options for moving the debate forward and planning experiments.

Yet, while there was some momentum building behind the policy in terms of salient individual advocates, including among the senior ranks of the Labour Party, support for the idea among MPs did not appear widespread. In January 2017, the Work and Pensions Select Committee held a one-off oral evidence session on citizen's income in response to the growing interest in the policy in 2016⁶². The evidence session revealed a collection of MPs across the political spectrum (3 Labour MPs, two Conservatives and an SNP MP) that also appeared broadly sceptical and this was reflected when the Committee published its report on 28th April 2017 in which it concluded that citizen's income was "not the solution to welfare state problems". Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, Frank Field MP, a long-standing opponent, said at the time: "A universal Citizen's Income would either require unthinkable tax rises or fail to deliver its objectives of simplification and a guaranteed standard of living. There are problems in the welfare system, but CI is not the solution to them. Rather it is a distraction from finding workable solutions" (Work and Pensions Committee, 2017).

These developments occurred during a period dominated by the issue of the European Union. On 23rd June 2016, the UK voted to leave the EU, 52-48%. David Cameron resigned as Prime Minister and in July, Theresa May won the leadership of the Conservative Party. With a slim majority and an enormous lead in the polls (roughly 20% ahead of Labour), she called an early snap election in April 2017. Partly due to the sudden nature of the election and perhaps the unsettled debate within the party, Labour did not include basic income in its election manifesto. The Green Party again made a universal basic income one of its flagship policies and committed to an experiment, but the party was not centre stage in an election where Labour had largely moved onto its ideological territory (it would receive only 1.6% of the vote). Yet, contrary to expectations, the 2017 general election in May saw Labour gaining seats from the Conservatives, resulting in a hung parliament. As well as increasing the likelihood of a future Labour government, the new crop of Labour MPs also included politicians sympathetic to the idea of a basic income⁶³.

⁶² Interview with MP on 23rd May 2018.

⁶³ For example, Dan Carden, the MP for Liverpool Walton, cited the need to consider a 'universal basic citizen's income' as a means of responding to the fourth industrial revolution in his maiden speech on 12th September 2017.

Perhaps as a sign that it was being taken seriously, high-profile opposition also became more vocal. On 14th November 2017, Chuka Ummuna, the then Labour MP for Streatham, described basic income as a “counsel of despair” and a “victory of selfish individualism” (Umunna, 2017). On 8th December, David Gauke, who had been appointed Work and Pensions Secretary, gave a speech on the 75th anniversary of the Beveridge Report, criticising basic income as a “retreat from the future”, “legitimising the decision to... opt out” and “poorly targeted” (Gauke, 2017)⁶⁴. Nick Boles, a former Conservative minister, also released an early extract from his book to the media at the end of December in which he argued against basic income as a solution to automation because ‘mankind is hard-wired to work’ (Stewart, 2017).

Think tanks continued to play an important role in the public debate including by proposing related policies as alternatives. For example, the UCL’s Institute for Global Prosperity published its first paper on the concept of Universal Basic Services as an alternative to basic income (Percy et al., 2017), suggesting free housing, food, transport and internet should be provided to citizens rather than cash (Percy et al., 2017). This was broadly well received by Labour Party politicians and began to be included in discussions within party policy. In February 2018, the RSA proposed a sabbatical grant it called a Universal Basic Opportunity Fund as a ‘stepping stone’ towards basic income (Painter et al., 2018). This would give citizens a £5000 dividend for two years at a point of their choosing. Think tanks also proposed for partial basic income and low level basic income schemes in 2018 and 2019, which found favour with some previously sceptical Labour MPs (Stirling and Arnold, 2019; Lansley and Reed, 2019; Gaffney and Buck, 2018).

Partly a response to John McDonnell announcing in August 2018 that Labour would commit to an experiment in the next election manifesto, the formation of so-called UBI Labs to develop ideas in Liverpool and Sheffield were followed by the passing of motions 2018 and 2019 supporting the implementation of basic income experiments in both cities. Highlighting increasing pragmatism among advocates of basic income from civil society, Guy Standing published a report on May 7th commissioned by John McDonnell titled ‘Piloting Basic Income as Common Dividends’ (Standing, 2019). The report proposed five options for a basic income experiment, with varying degrees of radicalism.

⁶⁴ “An affordable basic income would be inadequate, and a basic income that’s adequate for all would be unaffordable”

Despite this momentum, political attention was increasingly devoted to Brexit, particularly from December 2018. In March 2019, after parliament rejected the negotiated withdrawal agreement from the EU, the government extended the 2-year negotiation period forcing European elections in May. In the election, the Conservative Party received less than 10% of the vote, Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister. Boris Johnson subsequently won the leadership of the Conservative Party and after negotiating a new withdrawal agreement with the EU, tried to force an election, which was eventually called for 12th December.

In the end, a basic income experiment was mentioned briefly in Labour's election manifesto in a section that said, "we will explore other innovative ways of responding to low pay, including a pilot of Universal Basic Income" (Labour Party, 2019, p.60). However, the result of the election saw the Conservatives win a large majority of 78 seats, spelling a disastrous result for Labour. Labour's loss means the experiments in Liverpool and Sheffield will not go ahead with central government funding. The election leaves the future Labour position on basic income uncertain. However, concerns from senior figures that the party needs to reconnect with its roots to win back post-industrial towns may be read as code for dropping left-libertarian projects such as basic income.

The section next goes back to the late 2000s to identify the key events leading up to the growing interest in basic income in Scotland.

7.3.2.2 Holyrood and four Scottish local authorities: Fife, Glasgow, Edinburgh and North Ayrshire

While the politics of basic income in Scotland overlaps with the Westminster, there are several distinctive attributes to basic income support in Scotland that are drawn out in this section. First, it shows that government commitment to basic income was more resilient in the face of political upheaval, especially commitments to pilots at the local level. Second, the party support for basic income plays out in different ways, owing in part to the electoral system. Third, the referendum for Scottish independence and the independence movement in general is inextricably tied to basic income as it gave it greater prominence in the political arena and the eventual devolution of some powers concerning social security meant there was more reason to consider and test radical alternatives for social security in Scotland. In contrast, the EU referendum in the UK drowned out some of the basic income momentum that had gathered. These aspects are drawn out by charting the events that are seen as significant in the politics of basic income in Scotland chronology, starting from the early 2000s.

As mentioned before, the existence of Green MSPs meant that the idea of basic income had at least some parliamentary proponents in Scotland in the 2000s, despite the evident lack of powers to implement it. The PR electoral system in the Scottish Parliament, among other things, also weakened the Labour Party's dominance and boosted the Scottish National Party (SNP)⁶⁵, which appeared to have some limited sympathy for the idea⁶⁶. It was also in the context of the Scottish independence referendum preparation that interest in basic income began to build.

Signs of upheaval in the partisan politics of Scotland had started in 2007 when the SNP became the largest party for the first time in the Scottish parliament elections. Following the 2011 election when the SNP won a remarkable majority, Alex Salmond, the SNP First Minister, claimed a mandate for a referendum, which was eventually agreed to by the UK government in 2012. The Scottish government then set up a series of working groups tasked with mapping out the future paths for an independent Scotland. In 2013 and 2014, the Expert Working Group on Welfare two reports that included a consideration of a Citizen's Basic Income. In August 2014, the Scottish Green Party also released its own briefing note on a citizen's income scheme at £100 a week for its independence campaign⁶⁷. However, while the independence vote had clearly boosted discussion of basic income, the SNP did not publicly or explicitly support the idea it could form part of an independent Scotland's social security system.

In the end, on 18th September, despite a late swing towards independence in voting intention, 55% voted 'No'. Yet, two days before the referendum the No campaign had pledged to devolve more powers to Scotland. After the referendum, the Smith Commission was formed and a report was published in late November, which, among other things, recommended devolving control of a number of benefits and allowing for discretionary welfare payments. This started a more serious and public discussion of what Scotland's vision of social security would be. Although independence had been rejected, the referendum would also galvanise the SNP and in the general election in May 2015, they won all but three of the Scottish seats.

In November 2015, a poverty commission in Fife (the Fairer Fife Commission), chaired by the same Martyn Evans who had led the Expert Group on Welfare, recommended that Fife

⁶⁵ For example, while the Labour Party won 56 out of 72 and 41 of the 59 seats in the Westminster elections of 2001 and 2005 respectively, it failed to get a majority in the 1999 and 2003 Holyrood elections. Labour required a coalition with the Liberal Democrats to govern between 1999 and 2007.

⁶⁶ For example, in late October 2008, a citizens' income was mentioned as a possible means of tackling child poverty in a parliamentary motion signed by 11 SNP MSPs on the left of the party [Motion S3M-02787: Bill Wilson, West of Scotland, Scottish National Party].

⁶⁷ The Scottish Greens support Scottish independence.

should identify a town in the area in which to test out a pilot of unconditional basic income. This had been a last-minute addition to the report in response to news that the municipality of Utrecht was preparing its own basic income experiments. Similar calls for pilots were made by a broadly centre-right think tank, Reform Scotland (Mackenzie et al., 2016). The following month, the SNP passed a motion at its Spring Conference stating that ‘Conference believes that a basic or universal income can potentially provide a foundation to eradicate poverty, make work pay and ensure all our citizens can live in dignity’. It called for the party to research the policy and to consider models of a basic income when ‘designing a welfare system for an independent Scotland’.

In the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections in May, the SNP lost their majority. However, they were only two seats short of a majority and formed a minority government with the support of the Greens who had gained four seats. Fife Council also began acting on the mandate from the Fairer Fife Commission including information gathering and consultation events. On 26th November, Citizen’s Basic Income Network Scotland (CBINS) was launched in Govan. Ronnie Cowan was there on behalf of the SNP and Matt Kerr, a Labour councillor in Glasgow, announced during the roundtable that Glasgow council was considering a pilot of its own. Although it was only loosely true⁶⁸, it sparked a lot of media attention and set in train some substantive action.

In January 2017, CBINS and Fife Council co-hosted a public event around undertaking a pilot of basic income, including representatives of all the Scottish parliamentary parties except the Liberal Democrats. The Scottish Conservatives Shadow Social Security spokesperson, Adam Tomkins, also wrote an article in the Daily Record in which he said devolution prompted bigger questions about how to rethink social security and suggested considering a citizen’s income as it could unite left and right and would simplify the system and increase work incentives (Tomkins, 2017a)⁶⁹. The Labour-led North Ayrshire Council also agreed to provide £200,000 for a basic income pilot in March, which would look at the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing a basic income. On 9th March 2017, the Scottish Parliament Social Security Committee also held an evidence session on basic income.

There was criticism within government as evident in a Civil Service briefing on a Citizens Basic Income (CBI) prepared for the First Minister, which was made public due to a Freedom

⁶⁸ In the sense that colleagues had very briefly discussed the idea.

⁶⁹ He had also been a representative on the Smith Commission and his interest in basic income came from Geoff Mawdsley, who was director of Reform Scotland at the time.

of Information request for all correspondence regarding basic income with the Scottish Government. It states:

“Although elements of the concept align with elements of the Government’s state purpose in terms of promoting inclusive economic growth and creating a Fairer Scotland, it is a very costly policy which is unlikely to gain public acceptability and ultimately may not have the desired transformative impact.”

Scottish local elections on the 4th May saw the SNP overtaking Labour in Fife and Glasgow, leading to a coalition between the two parties in the former and the SNP leading a new administration in the latter. Despite the electoral upheaval, the newly formed Labour and SNP administration in Fife Council restated its commitment to the pilot project, as did the SNP minority administration in Glasgow. At the end of July, officers from Fife, Glasgow and North Ayrshire councils had a meeting in Glasgow to discuss how to coordinate their efforts. Finally, Edinburgh joined the collection of local authorities interested in an experiment when it approved a motion on exploring basic income pilots on 24th August. This was prompted by the Greens who had committed to including Edinburgh in any pilots in their council manifesto in May.

The most significant decision then came on 5th September when the Scottish Government published its Programme for Government in which it allocated £250,000 to a fund designed to help the local authorities’ feasibility studies for arranging a basic income pilot⁷⁰. The government stated that an attraction of basic income was that “it may help those on the lowest incomes back into work or help them work more hours, while providing an unconditional 'basic income' as a safety net.” (Scottish Government, 2017). The government also said it believed that “bold and imaginative projects like this deserve support but we also recognise that the concept is currently untested.” It included a proviso to ask the Poverty and Inequality Commission to “consider how it could help to draw together findings from local authorities to inform the government’s thinking.” The following month, the commitment was strongly criticised by the Scottish Conservatives when a Freedom of Information request revealed the briefing paper that the civil service had provided in March stating that the policy would cost £12.3bn. Adam Tomkins described it as “utterly unaffordable and not remotely sustainable” (Tomkins, 2017b).

⁷⁰ A Freedom of Information request shows that proposals for a Citizen’s Basic Income Fund were being considered from at least the 17th July. In this proposal, it stated “At the moment, it would be inappropriate to provide funding for a full CBI pilot – any such pilot would be very expensive and have very limited meaning without full support from DWP. However, the Scottish Government could provide seedcorn monies to help local areas.”

In November 2017, the four local authorities clubbed together to set up three groups⁷¹ to oversee the development of the pilots, including the coordination of a funding bid and finally on 21st May, the Scottish Government confirmed its award of the fund to the team. That month, Nicola Sturgeon wrote an article in the Economist magazine in which she expressed her interest in basic income, while claiming to be “sceptical of some of the claims made around its impact” (Sturgeon, 2018). A significant shift in the policy environment also occurred in 2018 when the Scottish Parliament also passed the Social Security (Scotland) Bill that transferred responsibility for 11 benefits, including disability benefits and Carer’s Allowance. It also allows the Scottish Government to top up any existing payments. The government talked about building a new welfare system built on ‘dignity’, ‘respect’ and ‘human rights’.

The feasibility studies also forced action on the part of the UK government. On the 18th May, Esther McVey, the Work and Pensions Secretary responded to a request from the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, in which she gave permission for DWP officials to cooperate with the project, “with an initial focus on understanding in more detail the scale and scope of the assistance for which you are looking.” She also added that she was unconvinced by the policy as it would be “poorly targeted on people’s needs, ineffective in reducing poverty and inflexible to people’s changing circumstances.”⁷² However, future reports from the Steering Group mentioned below reported limited cooperation from DWP or HMRC⁷³. Alongside the work being done on the feasibility studies, a Cross Party Group on basic income was set up in the Scottish Parliament and had its first official meeting of the group on Wednesday 20th June 2018 in the Scottish Parliament. It was initially co-chaired by Ivan Lewis (SNP) and Alex Rowley (Labour). However, future meetings have since been poorly attended by MSPs.

Since then, there have been three main reports published by the Steering Group. The most significant of these, an interim report that gave some preliminary recommendations for designing the experiment, was published in September 2019. Its preferred model was a 3-year saturation study including all individual residents without conditions within a

⁷¹ This included a Steering Group of officers from across the local authorities, a cross-party Councillor Group made up of three councillors from each local authority (including SNP, Labour and Green councillors) and a Stakeholder Group, which included civil society organisations such as RSA Scotland.

⁷² Letter made available through Freedom of Information request published on the Scottish Government website.

⁷³ In the March 2019 progress report it stated “progress has been slower than anticipated and this has had an impact on exploring and agreeing feasible funding and payment options.” Similarly, in the interim report in September they reported “engagement has not progressed as substantively as the steering group had initially hoped.”

geographical area (saturation site). Two payment level options were specified, one at the minimum level of existing benefits for each age group and one at the minimum income standard (£213.59 per week for 16-64 year olds). The experiment would suspend most benefits other than those related to disability, limited capability for work, housing, childcare and caring. This was quite a radical proposal that would require an enormous amount of investment and deviated from some of the early proposals made by councillors. A final feasibility report is expected in March 2020. At this point, the Scottish Government and other political actors will be required to take clearer positions on the benefits of conducting a basic income experiment.

7.4 Party support for basic income in the UK: Who, what and why?

This section interprets the evidence from the period following the financial crisis to identify party support for and opposition to basic income in the UK and Scotland. It starts by summarising the positions of political actors within the main parties, as well as their rationale. This interpretation of events and positioning is enhanced with data from elite interviews. In many cases, it is difficult to find a common stance within parties, particularly within the Labour Party, so tensions are drawn out. The section ends with a discussion of the consequences of the institutional and socio-economic context for the politics of basic income in the UK and concludes with some implications for the political feasibility of basic income more generally.

7.4.1 Identifying party support for basic income and its rationale

An appropriate starting point for assessing party positions on basic income in the UK is taking stock of the recent Labour Party interest, which given the entrenched two-party system in Westminster is the most significant event for basic income since the Conservatives' support for a Tax Credit scheme in the 1970s. The proximate cause relates to the unique set of circumstances surrounding the unexpected victory of the left in winning leadership of the Labour Party. Although support for the policy included moderates within the party, such as Jonathan Reynolds, and think tanks close to the party, it is highly unlikely that it would have been pursued to the same degree without the leadership of the left and John McDonnell in particular. Thus, any contextual determinant of the (albeit weak) commitment of the Labour Party at the national level to basic income should be able to incorporate an explanation of why Jeremy Corbyn was able to win the leadership election and the ideological or strategic benefit of the policy to the left of the party.

An obvious attraction, linked to John McDonnell's historical interest, was to propound the new leadership's purported radicalism and a break from the Labour Party's past attitude to

welfare. As one supportive Labour MP said, “tax credits are a sticking plaster for a wider structural problem in the British economy of low wages and underemployment, so we have to deal with that in a much more radical way.” Although John McDonnell and others were always careful to make clear that it was simply ‘interested’ in the policy, it helped to furnish the perception that it was considering big and bold ideas. Yet, this precise selling point also met with inevitable opposition within the party from those that wanted to maintain economic credibility and avoid “simple solution proposals”⁷⁴. In that sense, divisions within the party on basic income mapped onto the split that emerged in the wake of Jeremy Corbyn’s election as leader.

On the other hand, others felt that the “fashionable” policy was simply “a substitute for deeper inquiry” into the meaning of the left or social security⁷⁵. This tied into two other deeper factors driving opposition common to social democratic parties, which were the value of paid work and of universal (basic) services. In both cases, the antipathy was more a question of framing and priorities than objections to specific policy proposals. For example, one sceptical Labour politician argued, “why I react against the UBI is primarily because of the ideology around it... what we should be doing is pushing back with a politics that demands dignity at work rather than the end of it.”⁷⁶ Another Labour MP stated, “I’m kind of sceptical of it... because I believe very strongly in work and in making a priority improving the quality and experience of work.”⁷⁷ The question of priorities was important because discussions of basic income had “slightly crowded out...the union left which is interesting in working conditions and pay...rather than a tax and social security model”. Thus, this was not necessarily a left-right issue as much as a cultural divide.

Similarly, the response of many was to cite the emerging proposals for universal basic services (UBS) as an alternative, arguing that it was a better use of “your marginal pound”. As another MP put it: “I would be much more comfortable in a radical agenda for economic and social rights in terms of services, housing, health, access to universal free education...That seems to me a genuinely radical transformative left politics rather than just throwing money at people.”⁷⁸ The party was more united on this front, with the party eventually including universal basic services as one of the “three central pillars of the economic programme of the next Labour Government.” On the other hand, in response to

⁷⁴ Interview with Labour politician on 23rd May 2018.

⁷⁵ Interview with Labour politician on 25th April 2018.

⁷⁶ Interview on 25th April 2018.

⁷⁷ Interview on 23rd May 2018.

⁷⁸ Interview on 25th April 2018.

the charge that it denigrates work, advocates of a basic income in the party were divided between those that said basic income was *pro-work* and those that mentioned concepts such as “wage slavery” in a justification for the policy⁷⁹. The Labour Manifesto in 2019 took the former approach as the commitment to a pilot was placed in a section about work and low pay rather than social security (Labour Party, 2019).

Evidently, the debate within the party was largely at a very abstract level with a lack of clarity about the specific policies that any politicians would support. Ironically, opponents of the policy were not strictly against *partial* basic income schemes, such as those devised by various think tanks, but then advocates also seemed far less enthused about these. In such a scenario, the concept of basic income experiments made sense as a proposal that did not engender much opposition from any quarter, while the design of the proposed experiment was left open to councils interested in experimenting. Given Scottish Labour took this position from the start, it perhaps explains why it was able to maintain a more united position. Many of the politicians expressed they were “open minded about where it goes” and often ‘scepticism’ about the policy but nevertheless wanted to “wait and see”⁸⁰. Importantly, it also had strategic reasons to avoid being outflanked on the left by the SNP, which was not a concern at all from those not attached to the Corbyn project in Westminster.

The SNP also staked an amount of *political* capital on basic income, even if the actual sum of money thus far allocated to the basic income feasibility study is incredibly small⁸¹. Nevertheless, the decision to announce feasibility studies and express support for the idea of testing it was clearly a strategic political decision made by the leadership of the party. Subsequently, the SNP have published material including it as an example of the government listening to party members, while Nicola Sturgeon has taken personal ownership of the decision. It was framed in the Economist article as a commitment to evidence-based policy, but it also appeared to be part of a leftward strategic swing in approach from 2017 onwards. Actors in and around the independence movement on the left, such as the think-tank Common Weal, have been pushing it, while Ronnie Cowan also became the most active advocate in Westminster.

Although not explicitly tied to the feasibility studies by the government, there were elements of the Scottish government’s devolved social security policy that also had echoes of a basic

⁷⁹ Interview with Labour politician on 25th April 2018.

⁸⁰ Interviews with Scottish Labour politicians on 2nd and 3rd May 2018.

⁸¹ According to the accounts given halfway through the process, the councils have actually contributed more than three times the amount that was allocated by the Scottish Government in the Programme for Government in 2017.

income. All sanctions were removed from the Work Programme when it was devolved and similar principles have been outlined for all future devolved benefits. The Social Security (Scotland) Bill describes social security as a “human right” and includes the statement that “respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system.” In Westminster, SNP MPs came out very strongly against the austerity and sanctions programme and at times attacked the Labour Party for not doing likewise. On the other hand, *unlike* Labour and the Greens, the SNP supported a means-tested child benefit top-up rather than a universal one, using common refrains against a basic income, such as that it would not be value-for-money.

While there are no clear dissenting voices against the policy, the rationales across different parts of the party were varied. A party adviser suggested it was part of a broader inclusive growth agenda, other politicians focused on efficiency savings and simplicity, while one MSP argued that it gets at “the heart of a culture that says it’s better not to work, which needs to be dealt with.”⁸² Another SNP MP stated that it “helps us acknowledge the work that has been done by people who volunteer.”⁸³ Thus, for many of the politicians there was a very ‘cheap’ flavour to their advocacy (De Wispelaere, 2015b). Most SNP politicians were “intrigued by it and... pretty positive about the gut feel of it.”⁸⁴ Others described “cautious support.” One SNP councillor said, “I’m curious to see if it can move beyond academia, I suspect it won’t.”⁸⁵ Indeed, all cited the impossibility of implementing it under the current constitutional settlement: “until we have all the powers it’s not something that we can realistically be able to think about.” Political actors in other parties raised concerns that this was precisely the point of the commitment from the SNP: to use basic income to contrast the Scottish Government’s approach with that of Westminster without committing significant economic resources and potentially provoke a row about powers when the DWP and HMRC refuse to comply with the experiment. While this seems overly speculative, the promise of independence, further powers and the connected urge to engage in “bold and imaginative projects”, as the Programme for Government states, does seem to be an important factor in the SNP’s position on basic income.

The Green Party in England and Wales and the Scottish Green Party have both had a longstanding supportive stance towards basic income, as one interviewee said, “[Green]

⁸² Interview with SNP politician on 27th April 2018.

⁸³ Interview on 21st March 2018.

⁸⁴ Interview with SNP politician on 27th April 2018.

⁸⁵ Interview on 15th March 2018.

policy documents...have basic income at its core.”⁸⁶ All public interventions and interviews indicated a largely united party in favour of the principles of a basic income. However, there are important differences in the approach of the two parties to advocating the policy. For the Greens in England and Wales, basic income has been one of their most prominent policy commitments in general elections. In the 2015 general election, they published a consultation document outlining a basic income scheme of £80 a week for working-age adults to be implemented after the following parliament. Yet, by 2017, their commitment was downgraded to experiments and the party struggled in a context where the major parties were hoovering up votes. With only one MP, they have had limited impact on the parliamentary discussions.

On the other hand, the Scottish Greens have been much more pragmatic and other than the release of a pamphlet during the independence referendum, have not mentioned it in their Scottish Parliament election manifestos. Contrary to the beliefs of other political actors, including the Scottish Conservatives⁸⁷, the Scottish Green Party was not directly involved in the commitment of the Scottish Government to fund feasibility studies. As a Green advisor said, “It’s not...in our top ten things that we want to get delivered in the next 3 years in this parliamentary session. Policy interventions that tackle poverty that we can deliver in the next 3 years, yes.” Their focus has been on policies that “gesture towards basic income” like automatic access to new devolved benefits and increasing the level of Child Benefit or Carer’s Allowance. Another Green politician said, “You have welfare systems that are more universal and more or less conditional, more or less punitive...more of the good stuff and less of the bad stuff is a good thing and basic income will help us to think about that.”⁸⁸ Thus, it has very much taken the ‘steps’ approach⁸⁹ to advocating basic income within a heavily constrained context.

Despite its historical supporters, every public intervention from the Conservative Party in government indicated united strong opposition to basic income. As Damian Hinds the Minister for Employment stated in the parliamentary debate in Westminster Hall “The Government’s approach to welfare has been about recognising the value and importance of work, making work pay and supporting people into work, while protecting the most vulnerable. A universal basic income goes against every aspect of that approach”. In an

⁸⁶ Interview with Green advisor 13th April 2018.

⁸⁷ The Conservative Party were responsible for the Freedom of Information request, which demanded correspondence between the government and external bodies on basic income.

⁸⁸ Interview with Green politician 13th March 2018.

⁸⁹ Or as a Green advisor said, it is “a good way to conceive of a *destination* in social security” [my emphasis].

interview, a Conservative MP described it in a more magnanimous tone as “one of those neat ideas that when subjected to more contact with reality does not stand the test of time.”⁹⁰

Although it cannot be said to have played an important role in the party’s positioning, it is noteworthy that basic income was often used by the Conservatives to criticise the Labour Party. David Gauke, the Work and Pensions Secretary in 2017, used a speech to juxtapose its vision of ‘contribution’ at the heart of Universal Credit with Labour’s interest in universal basic income. Theresa May also used the policy during Prime Minister’s Questions to criticise Labour’s wasteful spending plans on the 15th May 2019 (Sparrow, 2019). The Scottish Conservative Party eventually took up this approach after an initial public endorsement from its Shadow Social Security spokesperson Adam Tomkins. Clearly, in the abstract, aspects of a basic income were appealing, particularly the simplicity and the reduction in bureaucracy. Some councillors also expressed sympathy for the idea. However, once it became a policy seriously considered by other parties, the incentive for the Scottish Conservatives in Holyrood to position themselves against it were much clearer. As a Conservative MSP said, “it would be astronomically expensive and the only way in which you could make it work is by very significantly increasing income tax, which we’re not going to do. So that’s the end of it.”⁹¹

Finally, the Liberal Democrats also did not emulate their past support, opting not to advocate a basic income in either Westminster or Holyrood, although it did not take a strong position of opposition either. After participating in the coalition, which introduced cuts and sanctions to the working-age social security system, it was perhaps too soon to pivot towards a complete repudiation of these policies. Internally, there were clearly some supporters across all wings of the party, i.e. including the libertarian Adam Smith Institute, but basic income was rejected at a number of policy meetings.

7.4.2 The effect of the socioeconomic and institutional context – party support in a Liberal regime

What do these events and this constellation of party support for basic income tell us about the effect of the socioeconomic and institutional context? As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the fall in unemployment throughout this period offers a challenging counterexample for the theory that support for basic income is driven by spikes in concerns about unemployment. Detailed scrutiny of the case offers a few possible explanations. The

⁹⁰ Interview on 24th April 2018.

⁹¹ Interview on 14th April 2018.

first is an alternative driver of why basic income became attractive policy in the UK context, which is the experience of austerity, Universal Credit and sanctions. The perceived dysfunction and particularly the punitive elements of the existing welfare state system undoubtedly provoked a counter reaction among people for whom an *unconditional* basic income was the perfect antidote. The interim Labour Party's decision to abstain on a Welfare Reform bill in 2015 was also a much-discussed factor in the leadership election that led to Corbyn's victory and the capture of the party by the left. I turn to the role of conditionality and austerity in more detail below.

The second possible explanation is that the *threat* of unemployment was a pertinent issue in the public discourse, due to concerns about technological change and automation. While this challenges functionalist claims about real economic drivers, it nevertheless points to the idea that basic income emerges as a solution when unemployment is a perceived problem. In Westminster politics at least, many supporters linked their interest in basic income to automation and those that did draw on common rationales associated with activation and decommodification, such as giving people economic security or to 'make work pay'. Finally, many did not cite unemployment per se but underemployment, precarious work and wage stagnation as a factor behind their support. This suggests it is not necessarily unemployment but labour market risks in general that drives support for basic income, which was a trend also exacerbated by austerity. In most European countries in the last 40 years, unemployment has been the most significant of these risks, but the UK offers an example of why it may be more accurate to focus on broader trends in labour market insecurity and risk.

Turning to the effect of the institutional context, the fact that partisan support for basic income could be well-explained by a linear relationship across the left-right economic spectrum from the Conservative Party to the Greens offers support to the claim that a residual welfare state provides few incentives for right-wing parties to advocate basic income. The existence of Universal Credit, in particular, makes it difficult to see why actors on the right would be attracted to a basic income as Universal Credit in theory achieves most of the goals that attracts the right to basic income in the first place, related to simplification and work incentives. As a Conservative MP said, negative income tax is just an "extension of Universal Credit" but with the disadvantage that it gives people the choice to "live a basic life without work...and it's not good for them."⁹² Equally, despite opposition from some on the left, parties appeared to use their support for basic income in order to signal a more left-

⁹² Interview on 24th April 2018.

wing position on welfare. This was particularly the case in Scotland where the SNP and Labour (and the Greens) were all keen to appear radical in their aims to transform the existing system.

As mentioned above, conditionality was an oft-cited factor at the heart of support for this transformation among political actors across the left. Politicians said that the sanctions regime that “has been hardening for a decade is brutal and...counter-productive”⁹³ and had “upset a lot of people”⁹⁴. This confirms the expectation that a ‘high-conditionality’ context would make this dimension more salient. Yet, the dynamics of recent policy changes were perhaps most important. For example, in an interview with a Labour MP, it was said that the “number one issue” in their constituency was “Universal Credit and the fact that the existing system isn’t fit for purpose. People who are being put into...fit-for-work categories that are clearly not capable or don’t have the capacity for work who are then sanctioned, who are then having to go to food banks.”⁹⁵

On the other hand, this quote highlights a different possible driver, which includes the sanctions regime but also relates to the broader environment of austerity, and the low level of working-age benefits. All Labour politicians I spoke to also fundamentally disagreed with the existing conditionality regime, including sceptics of a basic income, suggesting this was not enough to unite supporters. Interest in basic income from the local authorities in Scotland was also driven by austerity in general, with the experiments coming out of poverty commissions and anti-poverty agendas, while most of the politicians were broadly agnostic about the policy itself. Many councillors were interested in targeted interventions for care leavers, kinship carers or lone parents, or simply wanted to “break the mould a wee bit on welfare”⁹⁶ without a clear set of priorities regarding basic income. Indeed, the strong concern among many advocates to relieve poverty and provide an adequate income guarantee also refutes the theoretical expectations that a pre-existing targeted system would reduce the salience of this factor. For example, for one Labour MP the main attraction was the “alleviation and relief of extreme hardship, hunger, poverty and homelessness.”⁹⁷ A few supportive MPs could not understand the point in implementing a basic income if it did not raise the *level* of benefits.

⁹³ Interview with Green politician on 13th March 2018.

⁹⁴ Interview with SNP politician on 12th March 2018.

⁹⁵ Interview on 25th April 2018.

⁹⁶ Interview on 13th March 2018.

⁹⁷ Interview on 25th April 2018.

Yet, equally, many saw the policy mostly as an attempt to instigate a new universalism for the left. The majority of political actors, particularly those with support for basic income specifically, were unwilling to compromise on the fact that “everybody gets it, you can’t start getting selective about it or you’re starting to fall back into the trap”⁹⁸. Many felt that “the universal part of it is the whole point of the system”⁹⁹, mainly for political reasons to remove the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor and to give the middle class a greater stake in the system. Further evidence of the embrace of universalism could be found in parliamentary and media debates. Nicola Sturgeon argued in her piece in the *Economist* that “a universal benefit... removes the stigma of being on benefits”. John McDonnell evoked the implementation of (universal) child benefit in the 1970s as a lesson for basic income, while Jonathan Reynolds similarly compared the widespread support for the NHS with the denigration of the existing residual, means-tested benefit system. Debbie Abrahams, Labour’s Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary at the time of the Westminster Hall debate, singled out the benefits of a universal payment in her speech during the parliamentary debate as getting away from “the Government’s divisive rhetoric of strivers and skivers”, while also citing the example of the NHS. Thus, interestingly, the existence of two other universal policies also motivates the conception of basic income as universalism rather than a complete rejection of the institutional context.

The absence of veto players did not enter into the equation in Westminster as parties in favour of the experiment did not ever enter government. However, even though the unions did not have an administrative stake in the existing system, the leadership were still broadly sceptical and may have mobilised against the policy if more progress had been made. The main institutional constraint was found in Scotland, where the government clearly did not have the powers to set up an experiment on its own. Up to the point of writing, DWP and HMRC were also reluctant to engage with the process of feasibility studies in Scotland. Of course, this is unsurprising in an environment of multi-level governance, not least with opposing parties in power. The fact that Scotland could not implement a basic income after the experiment even if it was a success also raises questions about why it is being pursued in the first place.

Finally, one of the most striking things about the public debate, written documents and interviews with political actors was the complete absence of historical reference points. For example, the fact that a Conservative government had nearly implemented a tax credit

⁹⁸ Interview with SNP MP on 21st March 2018.

⁹⁹ Interview with Green politician on 13th March 2018.

scheme and that many Conservative MPs had been in favour in the 1980s was not mentioned by any interviewee or cited by any report. For most, the contemporary debate had been their first exposure to the concept. This may be why many political actors preferred to discuss abstract principles such as the value of unpaid work or used basic income as a lightning rod for criticisms about the Corbyn project or predictions of automation. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats' decision not to adopt the policy may have been influenced by knowledge of dropping it in the past.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has collated a series of political interventions relevant to understanding party positions on basic income within the socioeconomic and institutional context of the UK and Scotland. In amongst the fine detail of the case, a few important results can be drawn out. Firstly, while support for basic income from the Labour Party and the SNP is significant, commitments to *experiments* suited both parties as a way to avoid difficult decisions about policy design and priorities. In this sense, they could be interpreted as a classic case of 'cheap support'.

However, in both cases, they also served an important purpose in signalling a radical position on welfare in a context of austerity. Indeed, in both parliaments, the issue has largely mapped onto a left-right divide. While the cultural dimension has been a factor in debates about the meaning of work and conditionality, the policy is understood by many politicians within the parameters of being pro- or anti-welfare. Using the theoretical framework, this has been linked to the *institutional context* of a residual social security system.

Similarly, Section 7.3.2 argued that the high salience of conditionality and sanctions relates to the strictness of the existing conditionality regime, while the understanding of basic income as a universal policy, "for everyone", is principally driven by the fact that the current system is highly targeted. The latter is caveated by the few political actors that primarily valued the policy as a minimum income guarantee.

Yet, to probe the credibility of these inferences further, it is necessary to examine and compare the party politics of basic income in a different context. Thus, I withhold a deeper interpretation of the evidence for the discussion chapter when comparisons across the cases can be better drawn. In the next chapter, I examine the case of Finland, which has seen a spike in support for basic income within a very different socioeconomic and institutional context.

8 Steps or Experiments? Party support for basic income in Finland

8.1 Introduction

This chapter continues with the case study approach and examines the case of Finland, which has also experienced a marked surge in interest in basic income in the last ten years, including a now-completed nationwide experiment that grabbed worldwide attention. A key motivation for exploring the additional case of Finland is that it has a very different institutional and socioeconomic context to the UK, and this allows an examination of how this impact upon party strategies advocating basic income. The aim is also to examine whether the arguments made in the theoretical framework and the empirical results in the preceding chapters hold, on the basis of evident mechanisms, the stated goals of political actors and details about policy proposals. As with the UK case study, the analysis draws on elite interviews with political actors, here these mostly comprise MPs or party advisers, as well as parliamentary records, media reports and academic literature. The case also facilitates an examination of the consequences of political support for basic income for policymaking, i.e. how does overt support translate into policy reform? This is vital for understanding the wider political feasibility of basic income.

The chapter analyses the key events that make up the contemporary Finnish case and provides a comprehensive picture of the partisan politics of basic income in Finland since 2007. While the best-known political event in Finland of the last 10 years is the basic income experiment, there are two key reasons to expand the focus of the case beyond an analysis of the experiment alone. The first is that the political behaviour of parties throughout the period between 2007 and 2019 is of interest, not least because two basic income-supporting parties claim legislative success in their aim to take ‘steps towards’ basic income during the ‘rainbow’ government of 2011-2015. The second is that the basic income experiment did not spring up in a vacuum. Despite the surprise of many that the government followed through with its commitment, there were important events that led up to the experiment that are essential for understanding the whole picture. Historical description provides some of that context, but a more fine-grained analysis of the past 10 years is also useful. This temporal analysis is one of the key motivations for engaging in a case in the first place.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 8.2 starts by summarising Finland’s political economy context, including the idiosyncratic features that deviate from the stereotypical Nordic story that are important for understanding the basis of political support for basic

income in the Finnish case. The section also sets out the theoretical expectations about the nature of political support that are examined in the rest of the chapter.

Section 8.3 includes an outline of the history of basic income in Finland using secondary sources and data from the manifesto chapter, starting in the 1970s until the beginning of the 2007 parliamentary election. This context is important as the comparatively continuous and sophisticated debate on basic income in Finland is likely to have had a consequential impact on the events of the past decade. The section then describes the main political events related to basic income, divided into three parliamentary periods (2007-2011; 2011-2015; 2015-2019) and the 2019 parliamentary election.

Section 8.4 summarises Finnish party strategies related to basic income, focusing on the types (and strength) of commitment, the rationale behind support for basic income (and opposition) and the specific policy models advocated. This utilises material from elite interviews but also an interrogation of political behaviour in parliament and in election campaigns. The section ends with a discussion of theoretical explanations for this constellation of party support in the socio-economic and institutional context of Finland and some reflections on the possibility of general lessons for the political feasibility of basic income based on the case. Finally, Section 8.5 concludes with a summary of the key findings from the Finnish case.

8.2 Finland's political economy: institutions, social security and voter preferences

8.2.1 Political economy context: Nordic or dualistic?

Finland's political economy has many hallmarks of a Nordic country. Firstly, inequality is low: the Gini coefficient was 0.259 in 2016, which was the 4th lowest in the OECD (the UK's Gini coefficient is 0.351). Social expenditure is also high: it was 29.8% of GDP in 2016, which was the 2nd highest in the OECD. Union density (64.9%) and collective bargaining coverage (89.3%) are very high, which relate to its corporatist tradition; social partners, i.e. trade union and employer confederations, are key decision-makers and veto players (Tsebelis, 1995). Historically, Finland has also had high levels of female employment (Kettunen, 2001). It has a Ghent-style voluntary unemployment insurance system with benefits administered by unemployment funds, which in most cases are run by trade unions¹⁰⁰. Politically, Finland has an open-list proportional electoral system and like all Nordic countries, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) has led the majority of governments in

¹⁰⁰ However, the biggest individual unemployment fund (YTK) is 'independent', i.e., not run by the unions.

the last fifty years. Finland also has a very weak tradition of Christian democracy, the small Christian Democrat party (KD) has only once got more than 5% of the vote, and in recent years has seen the rise of an electorally successful populist right party, the Finns (PS), and an ecological party, the Green League (VIHR).

However, Finland is often characterised as a hybrid system (Ebbinghaus, 2012), due to a number of important factors¹⁰¹. Compared to the archetypal case of a Nordic regime, Sweden, which has had a high level of conflict regarding the welfare state between the left and right, the Finnish welfare state has been built on the basis of consensus (Pekkarinen, 2005). Unlike other Nordic countries, the Social Democrats have not received more than 30% of the vote since 1939. This is partly due to the continued electoral success of the roughly equally sized Centre Party (KESK) and its predecessor the Agrarian League. In the initial, post-war period, the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), which included the Communist Party, also won a similar vote share and since the 1970s, a liberal-conservative party, the National Coalition Party (KOK) has won around 20% of the vote. Crucially, these parties have not only competed but also formed coalitions with each other at various times. Some authors have suggested that this reflects the fact that “all the main political forces in Finland are social democratic to the extent that they share the basic values and priorities of a welfare state” (Pekkarinen, 2005, p.162). Yet, this unique feature of the Finnish party system has also had an important bearing on the shape of the welfare state, particularly its social security system.

In a nutshell, the Social Democratic Party has historically defended earnings-related social insurance for its industrial workers, while the Centre/Agrarian Party has supported universal, flat-rate benefits for a rural constituency that lacked a contribution record (Kangas, 1991; Kangas, 2007; Varjonen et al., 2019). The National Coalition Party has generally been concerned with the fiscal burden on the state, reflecting a desire to keep taxes low(er). These different priorities have each had their own impact on the resulting welfare state of Finland. This is most evident when we look at the development of pensions in Finland (Kettunen, 2001; Kangas et al., 2010). In the 1950s, the Agrarian Party-led government implemented universal flat-rate pensions using the national pension funds generated by employee and employer contributions (Kangas, 2007). In response, in the early 1960s, a mandatory, earnings-related system was placed in the hands of private insurance companies, after negotiations between the employers' confederation (STK) and trade unions (SAK), and

¹⁰¹ Other typologies, including Esping Anderson's original study (1990), classify Finland as a Corporatist/Conservative welfare regime.

passed by the Social Democrats in parliament on the basis of a private member's bill against the votes of the government (ibid). Similarly, the various reforms of sickness benefits have reflected coalition building among these main parties (Kangas, 1992). Thus, party political dynamics have tended towards dualism in social security.

More relevantly for contextualising debates around basic income specifically, the Finnish unemployment benefit system is also largely dualised, with a centralised system of non-contributory and means-tested benefits coexisting alongside a generous insurance-based system with no ceiling (Varjonen et al., 2019). The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA), which has had close links to the Centre Party, administers two separate flat-rate unemployment benefits: basic unemployment allowance ('Peruspäiväraha') and labour market subsidy ('Työmarkkinatuki'). On the other hand, earnings-related unemployment benefits ('Ansiosidonnainen työttömyyspäivära') are administered by unemployment funds, which are mostly run by trade unions. The earnings-related benefits include a basic component, funded by general taxation and equal to the level of the flat-rate (basic security) unemployment benefits administered by KELA. The additional earnings-related part is funded by employee and employer contributions managed by the funds. However, this feature means that the level of flat-rate and earnings-related unemployment benefits are fundamentally linked. In 2016, there were 413,851 recipients of unemployment benefits, 40.5% of which received earnings-related insurance, 9.3% received basic unemployment allowance and 49.4% received labour market subsidy¹⁰² (Kela, 2017).

Finland also has a relatively low level of conditionality applied to unemployment benefits compared to other advanced economies, if using the OECD's index (Langenbucher, 2015). Out of the 40 OECD and EU member states studied, it has the joint 3rd (with 7 other countries) least strict availability requirements and suitable work criteria, the joint 12th (with 4 other countries) least strict job search requirements and monitoring and the 20th least strict sanctions. Thus, combined, it has the 10th least strict conditionality regime. It is worth pointing out that this data contrasts with others that find rising conditionality in Finland (Knotz, 2019) and those that argue the country has drifted towards a competitive workfare state since the 1990s (Kantola and Kananen, 2013).

Differences in the geo-political and exposure to foreign trade have changed the political economy dynamic of Finland (Pekkarinen, 2005; Kangas, 2019). This dimension has been

¹⁰² Meanwhile, earnings-related benefits were 54% of total spending. It is not higher despite a bigger discrepancy in the replacement rate because recipients are unemployed for shorter periods on average.

at least partially responsible for Finland being much harder hit by unemployment than its Nordic neighbours at various times in the last 30 years (see Figure 8.1). The collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the subsequent decline in bilateral trade was a particularly damaging event for the Finnish economy. While unemployment was on a continual decline after 1995, it increased again after the financial crisis. This is discussed further in the main description of the case.

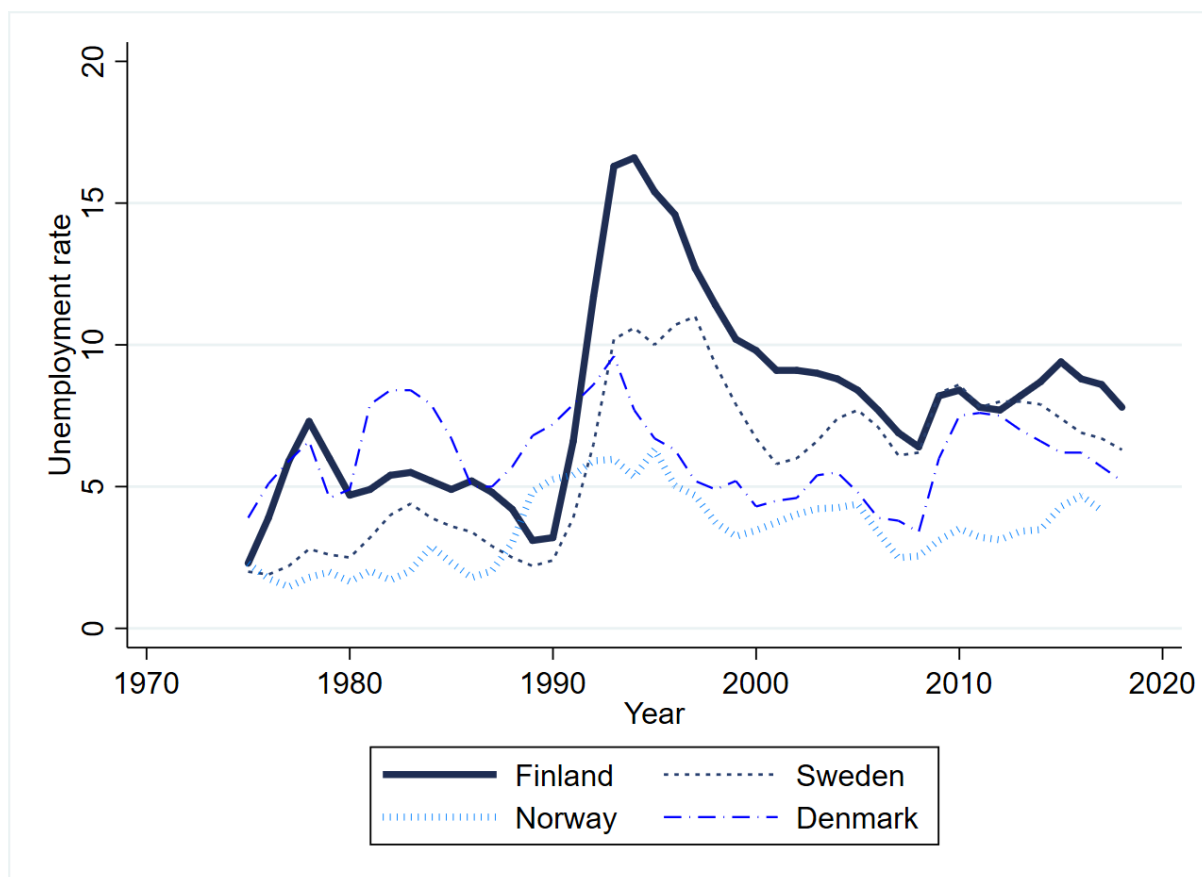


Figure 8.1: Unemployment rates across Nordic countries 1975-2018 (Source: AMECO, European Central Bank)

8.2.2 Theoretical expectations

As shown in Chapter 5, higher levels of unemployment within countries prior to elections are associated with greater party support for basic income. This relationship is also identified for Finland specifically. However, the case offers an opportunity to explore whether there are evident mechanisms by which unemployment leads to greater support. This can be explored both in terms of the sequence of events and the stated goals and policy problems of political actors.

In regards to the institutional context, the characteristic high levels of social spending and benefit generosity of a Nordic welfare state should increase support among the right, while the left seek to defend the existing system. We would expect the left’s scepticism to relate both to the social security system but also collective bargaining and labour market

institutions, which a basic income could threaten. Meanwhile, the dualised structure of unemployment benefits and particularly the comparative generosity of earnings-related unemployment benefits should increase the salience of targeting as a rationale for basic income. On the other hand, the comparatively lenient conditionality attached to unemployment benefits should reduce the salience of conditionality.

8.3 Basic income in Finland

8.3.1 Historical background

Most accounts trace the origins of the idea of a basic income in Finland to the writer Samuli Paronen, who from 1971 advocated an ‘independence grant’ (‘riipumattomuusraha’) or ‘living grant’ (elämisraha) (Andersson, 2000, p.227; Ikkala, 2012). Yet, political discussion of basic income, then called a ‘citizen’s wage’ (‘kansalaispalkka’), began later in the 1980s. At the turn of the decade, the debate was still largely academic. Osmo Soininvaara, who soon after became a senior Green politician¹⁰³ and a pivotal figure in the basic income debate in Finland, co-authored a book titled ‘Finland in the 1980s’ that depicted a post-productivist vision of a basic income, decoupling income from work (Lampinen and Soininvaara, 1980). Yet, by the end of the 1980s the idea had gone mainstream, with many members of the Centre Party, particularly its youth wing, sympathetic. The Green League were also in favour, with the party (and Osmo Soininvaara) officially gaining representation in parliament as a registered party in 1987.

In 1988, Olli Rehn, vice-president of the Centre Party and leader of the party’s youth group, set up a working group on basic income with the Green politician David Pemberton. The working group was also chaired by Eeva Kuuskoski, a Centre Party Minister of Social Affairs and Health between 1983 and 1987 and later between 1991 and 1992, lending it some political weight. The group included members from most of the main political parties who indicated some commitment to the idea (Ikkala, 2012; Andersson, 2000). The Centre Party cited basic income as a long-term goal in its policy strategy for the 1990s (Centre Party, 1989), the Left Alliance included a citizen’s income (‘kansalaistulo’) in its founding policy document in 1990, while the National Coalition Party also had some supporters of a negative income tax (Andersson, 2000). On the other hand, despite the support of the economist Pekka Korpinen, the Social Democrats and trade unions were broadly opposed.

The outcome of the working group was a partial basic income model presented in 1992 by Ilpo Lahtinen (Lahtinen, 1992). The severe economic crisis meant little attention was paid

¹⁰³ He was leader of the party between 2001-2005

to the proposal. However, the recession was also the beginning of a new way of viewing basic income, reflected in the more prominent use of the word basic income ('perustulo') over citizen's wage, and in the growing use of the 'activation' frame, i.e. employment incentives, as a rationale for basic income (Perkiö, 2018). Moving on from narratives around decommodification and the guarantee of social rights, basic income was pitched as a policy tool to incentivise people to work in part-time, low-wage jobs. A basic income was attractive as individuals would retain (some of) their basic income when taking up work, avoiding unemployment traps associated with the existing social security system.

From the 1995 parliamentary elections onwards, basic income also starts to feature in the election manifestos data. Indeed, the analysis of manifestos in Chapter 5 suggests that, Finland has had the highest proportion of parties supporting basic income in the period between 1980 and 2018¹⁰⁴. The manifestos show that party-level support for basic income has most consistently come from the Green League but also the Left Alliance and the Centre Party, as well as the short-lived Young Finns Party who disbanded after their ill-fated election campaign in 1999 where they lost all their seats. The Green League have supported a basic income in every election since 1995 (7 in total including 2019), the Left Alliance advocated a basic income in 1999 and has again in every election since 2011, while the Centre Party supported a basic income in its 1995 manifesto and then 20 years later in 2015. The Centre Party also supported a 'work reform' that included a conditional basic income in the run up to the 1999 parliamentary election (Centre Party, 1998). Interestingly, this is somewhat echoed in the commitment of the Centre Party in the most recent election.

Many have also shown that individual politicians from other parties have taken an interest throughout this period (Perkiö, 2018). Thus, while the history of basic income in Finland is much shorter than the UK, the intensity of political interest in the past 40 years has been considerably higher. The section now turns to the period of interest starting around the time of the global financial crisis, which is the focus of the case.

8.3.2 Basic income after the crisis in Finland

I divide the case into three parliamentary terms starting with 2007-2011, which includes the Green League's development of a costed partial basic income model during the 2007 election campaign and the work of the SATA Committee, which was commissioned to reform the social security system. The second parliamentary term between 2011 and 2015 saw political momentum gradually build up as actors across the political spectrum expressed interest in

¹⁰⁴ This is the case whether or not parties are weighted by vote share but not if cognates are included.

the idea. Yet, it also included a series of reforms, which have been claimed to represent ‘steps’ towards basic income by party-political advocates. Finally, the last parliamentary term 2015-2019 focuses on the basic income experiment and the debate about reforms to social security it sparked in Finnish politics.

8.3.2.1 2007-2011

Many identify the campaign for the parliamentary elections held in March 2007 as the start of a new phase of basic income politics in Finland¹⁰⁵. A key reason for this was the Green League developing its own detailed basic income model using microsimulation data to estimate its cost and distributional effects (Honkanen et al., 2007). Its partial basic income scheme, accepted by the party council in December 2006, was set at EUR 440 a month, which was equivalent to the existing level of basic unemployment benefits or labour market subsidy. This announcement led to significant media attention (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2014) and provided a benchmark for the political debate that was rooted in specific policy proposals rather than abstract discussions about principles.

In January 2007, the Social Democratic party’s think tank, the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, published a report criticising basic income, arguing that the sustainability of social security relies on the principle of reciprocity and the obligation to work (Kopra, 2007). It also criticised the cost of the Green League scheme and the required increases in marginal tax at a time when, if anything, the tax burden on wages was too high. During the election campaign, Social Democrat politicians, including leader Eero Heinäluoma in a TV debate, adopted many of the same arguments to oppose a basic income (Ikkala, 2012). Other parties were largely non-committal or sceptical, despite acknowledging a need for reform of the social security system. The election results saw significant gains for the National Coalition Party (plus 10 seats), losses for the Social Democrats (minus 8 seats) while the Centre Party was able to remain the largest party despite losing four seats. The outcome of coalition negotiations saw Matti Vanhanen, leader of the Centre Party, remain as Prime Minister in government with the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People’s Party.

After the election, in June 2007, in recognition of a need to reform social security “to offer more incentives for work, alleviate poverty and provide an adequate level of social protection in all life situations”, the government set up the SATA Committee, as proposed in the government programme (Finnish Government, 2007, p.45). One of the four sub-

¹⁰⁵ Based on interviews with multiple political actors.

committees was on ‘basic security’ and chaired by Osmo Soininvaara, the outgoing Green MP who had been a long-standing advocate for basic income. Yet, the final proposals of the Committee, presented in a final report in December 2009, were considerably less ambitious than its mandate¹⁰⁶ and were criticised from within (Soininvaara, 2010).

Despite this, the Committee did make a series of consequential suggestions. The most notable and immediately successful proposal was the idea of a guaranteed minimum pension, which was introduced before the next elections on the 1st March 2011. Although this was income-tested, it was individualised, leading many to point to similarities with a basic income (for pensioners) (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2014). Relatedly, the Committee also proposed abolishing the household means test for the receipt of labour market subsidy, i.e. making it an individual entitlement. This was framed very much as a work incentives measure, as under the existing system taking a job could mean the loss of a spouse’s benefits, and as a way to simplify the system and reduce bureaucracy, adding to the resemblance to a basic income. On the other hand, the final report also included less basic income-friendly proposals such as quicker ‘activation plans’ and changes to social assistance sanctions. Significantly, basic income was not mentioned in the Committees work.

Meanwhile, from 2008, the global financial crisis began to affect the Finnish economy and labour market. In 2009, the unemployment rate rose by more than 1% for the first time in over a decade and continued to rise into 2010 when it reached 8.4% (ILO/EU LFS). The growth rate in 2009 was -8%, although by 2011 GDP grew by 2% again, while the budget deficit soared (Kangas, 2019). Meanwhile the eurozone crisis in Southern Europe became a very salient issue as the government agreed to participate in bailout packages for Greece and Ireland (Arter, 2011).

8.3.2.2 2011-2015

In the 2011 election campaign, the Green League again promoted their 2007 model of basic income that would be ‘budget-neutral’ in the sense that the existing floor would remain at the same level (EUR 440) and the tax rises would cover the cost of the scheme. Meanwhile, the Left Alliance, which was beginning to see a shift in its activist base towards younger, university-educated supporters who had been involved with campaigns about precarious work¹⁰⁷, also came out more vocally in favour. The party had been critical of the Greens’

¹⁰⁶ This was primarily related to the inability of the Committee to agree on an increase in the level of basic security benefits (basic unemployment allowance and labour market subsidy), despite it being one of the main goals.

¹⁰⁷ Mentioned in three interviews with Left Alliance MP on 4th September 2018, and two Left Alliance policy advisers, one on 11th September 2018 and one on 20th September 2018.

role in the previous government, accepting cuts to young people's benefits despite its support for basic income¹⁰⁸. Prior to the election, the Left Alliance released a discussion paper in which it proposed a basic income model at a higher level of EUR 620 with an additional supplement of EUR 130 for discretionary reasons such as unemployment, sickness or childcare (Left Alliance, 2011). This required higher marginal rates of up to 57% on both income and capital tax, distinguishing it from the Green proposal as more redistributive.

In the midst of a European economic crisis and the possibility of a Portuguese eurozone bailout, all the major parties lost seats in the election, with the populist Finns Party making unprecedented gains (+34 seats), nearly quadrupling their vote share and becoming the third largest party in parliament (Arter, 2011). However, in an attempt to exclude the Finns from government, a 'rainbow' government was formed led by the National Coalition Party as the largest party and Jyrki Katainen as Prime Minister, but including the Social Democrats, the Left Alliance, the Green League, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats. The Centre Party, which had seen the largest losses (-16 seats), returned to opposition after two terms leading the government. The government programme was agreed on 17th June with three broad goals: the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion; fiscal consolidation; and strengthening sustainable economic growth, employment and competitiveness (Finnish Government, 2011).

While the economic climate meant much focus was on the latter two goals of fiscal consolidation and macroeconomic performance, there were some eye-catching policy commitments related to poverty reduction in the government programme. Perhaps the most significant was the decision to increase basic unemployment allowance and labour market subsidy by EUR 100 a month¹⁰⁹, which was the first time it had been increased since the 1990s and came into effect on 1st January 2012 (Varjonen et al., 2019). It was a key demand of the Left Alliance and the Green League in the coalition negotiations, with both parties advocating a raise in the level of basic security in their manifestos, although it was some way short of the Left Alliance's commitment to raise it to EUR 750 a month. However, the inclusion of the Social Democrats in the coalition meant there was no question that the link with earnings-related benefits would also be maintained. Thus, recipients of earnings-related unemployment insurance saw the same increase, adding considerably to the cost of the reform. The basic level of social assistance was also increased by 6%.

¹⁰⁸ Paavo Arhinmäki speech during plenary session PTK 126/2010, 7th December 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Due to changes in the indexing this increase ended up as EUR 120.

The government programme also contained two vague statements that had relevance to later government reforms, which have been widely heralded as steps towards basic income by the Left Alliance¹¹⁰ and the Green League (Green League, 2014)¹¹¹. Firstly, the programme mentioned that the government would seek to improve the combination of income and social security in order to improve incentives to take up work¹¹². Second, it stated that the government would explore opportunities to abolish the household means test in labour market subsidy¹¹³. Although these were not strong commitments in the published programme, the government nevertheless acted on both of these issues later in its term. From 2013, the means test on spousal earnings was removed from eligibility for labour market subsidy. Then starting in 2014, an earnings disregard of EUR 300 was applied to labour market subsidy in order to incentivise work and facilitate the combination of wages and benefits.

Beyond these reforms, this parliamentary period saw a number of events build momentum for basic income. For example, on 15th September 2012, Juha Sipilä, who had become the new leader of the Centre Party in June, published a pamphlet on his main policy priorities (Sipilä, 2012). In the section on social security, he identified the improvement of basic security as a priority, arguing that the link with earnings-related benefits should be removed (ibid, p. 58). However, more interestingly, he indicated that while he would not support a full basic income (EUR 1000 a month), he could support a basic income that encouraged work and reduced bureaucracy (ibid, p.59). A month later, a party council meeting on 18th November 2012 approved the Left Alliance's pre-election basic income model. At the beginning of 2013, BIEN Finland also instigated a citizen's initiative for basic income in the Finnish parliament¹¹⁴, with the Green League and Left Alliance active in supporting it. While it failed to reach the required threshold to trigger a parliamentary debate (between February and August 21,634 of the required 50,000 signed the Finnish parliament citizens' initiative), it continued to generate public interest and media attention. There was also a European-wide citizens' initiative open throughout the year that received 285,000 signatures, but this attracted less support in Finland (only 1622 signed that initiative).

¹¹⁰ Referenced in an interview with a Left Alliance MP on 4th September 2018, and Left Alliance policy adviser on 11th September 2018.

¹¹¹ Incidentally, the Greens also claimed that the decision to transfer administration of social assistance to KELA (implemented in 2017) was a step towards basic income.

¹¹² "methods for improving the coordination of work income and social security will be sought, with the ultimate aim of increasing the employment rate" (Finnish Government, 2011, p.96).

¹¹³ "The possibility of giving up means-testing in regard to the spouse's income in granting labour market support will be assessed" (Finnish Government, 2011, p.96).

¹¹⁴ Citizens' initiatives had been recently introduced on 1st March 2012.

On the right of the political spectrum, Libera, a free-market think tank founded in 2011, released a report in December 2013 with their own model called the ‘Life Account’, directly translated as ‘basic account’ (‘perustili’) (Lillrank et al., 2013). In this model, the government initially deposits EUR 20,000 in an individual ‘account’. Afterwards, a 10% tax on income automatically goes into the account every month and individuals can withdraw from their account indefinitely as long as the balance is positive and up to EUR 400 per month if it is negative. The idea was to introduce an element of individual responsibility into social security but a basic income remained a backstop option for those in need. In the model, the account can also be used to make investments and buy services or ‘micro-tasks’ before paying income tax, making it the perfect “social security for Uber drivers”¹¹⁵. The savings dimension of the model (for those with a positive balance) was also intended to facilitate getting rid of the earnings-related benefit system, unlike other basic income models. A number of National Coalition MPs on the libertarian wing of the party, such as Harry Jaskari, cited this idea as a possible direction of reform¹¹⁶ and one of the co-authors, Elina Lepomäki, became a National Coalition Party MP the following year. Björn Wahlroos, the Finnish banking magnate, who has advocated a basic income from a free-market perspective since 2001 is also on the board of Libera.

This heightened support for basic income coincided with a deteriorating macroeconomic context, with three years of negative growth between 2012 and 2014 and a slowly rising unemployment rate, reaching 9.4% in 2015. In 2014, there was also movement in government as the Left Alliance quit the coalition in March in protest at a package of austerity measures proposed by the government. In June, Jyrki Katainen stepped down as Prime Minister to be replaced by Alexander Stubb, who also became leader of the National Coalition Party.

On 23rd September 2014, during a parliamentary debate on inequality (plenary session 85/2014), Juha Sipilä and several other senior Centre Party politicians, such as Anu Vehviläinen, proposed a regional basic income experiment prepared by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, to be carried out in three different areas¹¹⁷. The proposal was met with a positive response in parliament from MPs across multiple parties, including the Centre Party and Green League but also the Finns Party and National Coalition Party, with even the Prime Minister suggesting it was worthy of consideration. However, the response of the

¹¹⁵ Interview with National Coalition MP on 12th September 2018.

¹¹⁶ For example, during plenary session PTK 87/2016 vp, 21st September 2016.

¹¹⁷ Prior to this, on 12th September, Timo Kalli and Mika Lintilä of the Centre Party (KESK) had also mentioned basic income experiments in the Finance Committee.

Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Laura Rätty (National Coalition Party) the following month to a written question from Green League MP, Alanko-Kahiluoto¹¹⁸, made clear that there was insufficient time to plan an experiment before the next election, citing a requirement to consult with social partners. This set up an opportunity for parties to make commitments related to a basic income experiment in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The last week of November also saw two noteworthy events on experiments. On 25th November 2014, Evelyn Forget was invited to parliament to speak about the basic income experiment in Manitoba, Canada, at a roundtable event organised by the Left Alliance, the Green League and the Centre Party's parliamentary groups and their think tanks. As the Manitoba experiment was a saturation site, it corresponded to the stated plan of the Centre Party to conduct regional experiments. Yet, a day later, a new think-tank focused on evidence-based policy called Tänk, released a report in which it recommended an experiment on negative income tax, which was deemed the most viable model of basic income (Forss and Kanninen, 2014). The authors argued that the experiment should last at least two years and include at least 8,000 Finns aged 18-62. However, they did not propose regional experimentation, instead suggesting that random sampling would provide better quality and more generalisable information about the effects of the model. The report also proposed experimenting with a few different levels, between EUR 400 and EUR 700. The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and Tela, which represents earnings-related pension providers in Finland, funded the report.

8.3.2.3 2015-2019

In preparation for the upcoming election, the Green League approved an updated basic income model on 1st November 2014, increasing the level to EUR 560 a month, in line with the new level of basic unemployment allowance and labour market subsidy. This required increasing the lower marginal tax rate from 39% to 42% and lowering the upper rate band to EUR 50,000. Otherwise, the details were similar to 2007; it reiterated that the point of basic income for the Green League was a recalibration of the structure of benefits rather than an adjustment of the level. The party also advocated a series of steps such as improving entrepreneurs' social security, introducing a real-time income register, simplifying housing benefit and introducing a larger earnings disregard for social assistance. The manifesto proposed a basic income experiment, implemented regionally (as a saturation site) or through randomisation, i.e. by targeting a random sample of people. The Left Alliance did not update

¹¹⁸ She asked if the government was planning either a regional or randomised basic income experiment on 1st October 2014 (KK 735/2014).

its model for the election, which was already higher than the Green League's proposal, but the party did propose a regional experiment as well as raising all basic security benefits to EUR 800 a month in its manifesto. The Centre Party manifesto also repeated the commitment of Juha Sipilä to regional experimentation, citing the need to balance guaranteeing an adequate standard of living with maintaining employment incentives.

On 11th March, the national broadcaster, YLE, released a survey of parliamentary candidates¹¹⁹, which suggested that two-third of the candidates were either partially or completely in favour of a basic income replacing the minimum income system (YLE, 2015). Of the candidates that would eventually become MPs, the percentage was lower at 52%. The Green League (99% of candidates in favour [100% of eventual MPs]), the Left Alliance (95% [100%]) and the Centre Party (83% [80%]) were the most clearly supportive, while a majority of candidates in the Social Democratic Party (80% [88%]), the National Coalition Party (67% [76%]) and the Christian Democrats (57% [80%]) opposed basic income. It was also supported by 57% [58%] of the Finns Party and 53% [22%] of the Swedish People's Party candidates. A full breakdown of the results for the initial 200 MPs that won seats in parliament is given in Table A30 in the Appendix. The results confirmed what the manifestos already indicated about the three most receptive parties as well as the traditionally most hostile party. Yet, it also dispelled the idea that the National Coalition Party had many supporters within the parliamentary group while indicating that the Finns Party was surprisingly sympathetic.

The results of the parliamentary election on 19th April 2015 made the Centre Party the biggest party, winning 14 seats mainly at the expense of both the National Coalition Party (minus 7 seats) and the Social Democrats (minus 8 seats). This time, the Finns Party, who had become the second largest party, were coalition partners in the government led by the Centre Party alongside the National Coalition Party. This was arguably the most right-wing government in decades in terms of partisan composition. Juha Sipilä, the new Prime Minister, stated in a speech on 2nd June that the “overriding objective of the Programme is to raise the employment rate to 72 per cent through a number of measures promoting employment and entrepreneurship” (Finnish Government, 2015b). This included a number of austerity measures to reduce the budget deficit. Yet, it is within this context that the government programme contained a line committing to a pilot study on basic income, under a section on customer-oriented services to cater to wellbeing and health (Finnish

¹¹⁹ A total of 1642 candidates (out of nearly 2000) answered the basic income question.

Government, 2015a). The government also had a broader agenda committed to an ‘experimental culture’ and implementing an experimentation programme with a dedicated team in the Prime Minister’s office.

In line with its own agenda and the dominant arguments used to promote a basic income prior to the election, the government set the main parameters of the experiment as a test on the employment effects. The Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Hanna Mäntylä, of the Finns Party, was given primary responsibility for the experiment, while the Minister of Local Government and Public Reforms, Anu Vehviläinen, of the Centre Party, also had responsibility for the general experimental programme of the government. The other relevant department was the Finance Ministry, which was given to the National Coalition Party; the Minister was first the former PM Alexander Stubb and then Petteri Orpo from June 2016.

Preparation for the experiment was launched in September 2015 and the implementation and design of the experiment was put out to tender, while EUR 20 million was assigned to the experiment in the government budget. The successful consortium was announced in mid-October, led by KELA and included the University of Helsinki, Tampere, Turku and Eastern Finland, the VATT Institute for Economic Research, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and the Federation of Finnish Enterprises. The Director-General of KELA, Liisa Hyssälä¹²⁰, was herself enthusiastic about basic income. The research group was instructed by the government to evaluate four models of basic income: a full basic income, a partial basic income, negative income tax and ‘other models’, including a participation income (Kela, 2016).

The concern with ‘other models’ also referred to the growing set of proposals of other parties. The election campaign and the subsequent announcement of an experiment had sparked a debate about what a new social security system should look like. As early as Autumn 2015, the Christian Democrats started referencing the UK’s Universal Credit in its proposals (‘kannustava perusturva’) to consolidate all basic social security benefits into a single form of means-tested and conditional support¹²¹. Some individuals within the Social Democrats were also less dismissive of basic income (e.g. Alaja, 2014) and the Youth group designed their own model inspired by it in 2015 (Social Democrat Youth, 2015). The model’s name has been translated as ‘universal security’ or ‘general security’ (‘yleisturva’) and has three

¹²⁰ She had been the Centre Party’s Minister of Social Affairs between 2003 and 2010, including during the SATA Committee. On 4th December 2015, she gave a presentation in which she promoted a basic income as a solution to removing incentive traps in the existing system.

¹²¹ Party leader, Sari Essayah, also cited it during plenary session PTK 77/2015, 8th December 2015.

tiers of benefits: a ‘guaranteed’ level, a ‘general’ level and an ‘active’ level. The guaranteed level would be means-tested but would not have any behavioural requirements, the general level would be based on contingencies such as unemployment, sickness or childbirth (which in itself would have both a basic and an earnings-related component) and the active level would be for those engaging with services to improve their labour market position.

On 30th March 2016, the experiment research group released its preliminary report in which it proposed conducting a partial basic income experiment among low-income individuals aged between 25 and 63 randomly selected across the country (Kela, 2016). It proposed using the existing level of basic security, EUR 560, as a baseline but suggested that in an ‘ideal test situation’ a basic income set at 600 and 700 could be given to different treatment groups. Although it suggested the sample could include 1500 individuals given the existing budget, this could be up to 10,000 if existing social benefits could also be used towards the funding. The report also proposed a regional experiment to be conducted alongside the randomised experiment to examine community effects. Regarding the other options explored, a full basic income was dismissed as too expensive but also because a high level of basic income might threaten the earnings-related unemployment benefit system, which would meet strong opposition from trade unions. Negative income tax was deemed unfeasible until a real-time income register was available to calculate monthly payments. Participation income was considered to be a bureaucratic and ethical minefield given the requirement to assess which activities were socially useful and legitimate to justify receipt of the benefit.

After the preliminary report was published, a variety of party political, bureaucratic and legal problems began to interfere with the research group’s scientific concerns. For a start, the Constitution raised at least two important constraints about the level of basic income (Kangas, 2016). Firstly, it prevented experimenting with a basic income lower than the existing basic security level. Secondly, it demands that individuals are treated equally unless there are justified reasons for not doing so. Thus, it was thought to be unconstitutional to experiment with different levels of basic income. The research group also found that EU legislation restricted the options for increasing the level of basic income or using it to replace family or insurance benefits as these would be portable (Kallioma-Puha et al., 2016). The Finns Minister in charge of the experiment, Hanna Mäntylä, was particularly keen to avoid the basic income being portable across EU member states. However, on 16th August 2016, just before the legislation was presented to parliament, she stepped down as Minister for Social Affairs and Health and Pirkko Mattila, who was also from the Finns Party, took her

place. This disrupted the momentum of experiment planning and meant a new political actor with comparatively little ‘skin in the game’ was in charge.

On 20th October 2016, the government issued its bill (HE 215/2016) to parliament, which revealed the drafted experiment plan deviated considerably from the suggestions made in the preliminary report. Firstly, it restricted the experiment to 2000 randomly selected individuals who were receiving ‘basic security’ benefits, i.e. basic unemployment allowance or labour market subsidy, from KELA in November 2016. While the Prime Minister had given his blessing for existing benefits to be used towards the budget of the experiment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health were unwilling to cooperate ensuring that the budget was highly restrictive. Secondly, due to inertia on the part of the Ministry of Finance and its Minister of Finance, Petteri Orpo (KOK), the legislation did not alter the tax code of participants, which meant the experiment could not test a cost-neutral model. However, the experiment nevertheless provided an *unconditional* benefit of EUR 560 a month for 2 years.

Unsurprisingly, the research design was strongly criticised by the Left Alliance and Green League for the lack of any tax changes, for not including a broader treatment group, such as those in precarious employment or carers, and for being too short a time-period to see any effects. The Greens proposed extending the experiment to 3 years with an experiment group of 3500 people that included self-employed and low-income workers, as well as a tax element that would make it cost-neutral. This was submitted in an amendment to the legislative bill (LA 103/2016) and in several subsequent parliamentary initiatives and motions (e.g. PR 111/2016). Parliamentary committees also insisted on studying the effects of a basic income on wellbeing, which was included in the subsequent legislation.

The research group later defended the experiment design on practical grounds, given the extremely tight timescale and small budget (Kela, 2016). It also alluded to hopes that this would just be the first phase of the experiment, followed by new and better experiments, which was a line repeated by the government. The legislation included a sentence stating that a second stage of the experiment would start at the beginning of 2018. In the parliamentary debate on the legislation, Pirkko Mattila, the new Minister of Social Affairs, continually referred to this being the “first phase” of the experiment, with a second phase to start in early 2018, and Anu Vehviläinen, the other Minister responsible for the experiment, said that she viewed this as a “first step towards social security for the 2020s” (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2016).

On the 20th December, parliament approved the legislation (HE 215/2016) for the basic income experiment at its second reading with only the five Christian Democrat MPs voting

against the bill. A week earlier, the Green League's amendment to expand the experiment had only received support from 21 MPs, including the Left Alliance (LA 103/2016). Nevertheless, both new left parties voted for the government's planned experiment, which despite their criticisms, continued to receive praise from their MPs in principle. For example, Anna Kontula, the Left Alliance MP, often stated it was a worthwhile experiment corresponding to their aspirational reforms to create better incentives and remove sanctions but insisted that it was *not* a basic income experiment¹²².

However, after the experiment started on 1st January 2017, attention began to die down and momentum swung away from basic income. In fact, the government had already begun to move increasingly in the opposite direction. On the same day as the basic income experiment legislation, two reforms to unemployment benefit eligibility that increased the level of conditionality were also issued to parliament. These increased the regularity with which mandatory interviews were conducted with employment services to every three months (HE 209/2016) and various availability for work/job search requirements and sanctions were made stricter (HE 210/2016). For example, the duration of sanctions for refusing employment increased from 60 to 90 days and unemployed individuals were obliged to accept work at any salary level after three months.

While these measures contradicted with the idea of experimenting with an *unconditional* basic income, they were relatively low key. However, the following year in September, legislation for the so-called 'activation model' ('aktiivimalli') was brought to parliament (HE 124/2017). This was a far more controversial bill that more clearly exposed the 'schizophrenic'¹²³ nature of the government's policymaking around conditionality. It required recipients of all types of unemployment benefits to fulfil certain activity requirements every three months or face a sanction of 4.65%. The requirements were vague but included either working for 18 hours, earning EUR 241 from self-employment or participating in activation services for 5 days, within a three-month period. Despite lacking tripartite agreement from social partners and all the opposition parties (including the Social Democrats, Greens, Left, Christian Democrats and the remaining Finns who had left the government¹²⁴) voting it against in parliament, the bill was passed in December and in

¹²² Anna Kontula gave a speech during plenary session PR 106/2016, 25th October 2016 in which she said that the basic income experiment is partial in the sense that a fork is a partial meal.

¹²³ The Green MP, Ville Niinistö, describes the government as such in a speech during the plenary session PR 38/2016, 14th April 2016.

¹²⁴ In June 2017, Jussi Halla-aho won the leadership of the Finns, whose controversial right wing views provoked a split in the party meaning 19 MPs, including all the ministers in government, formed a new party, later called Blue Reform (SIN).

January 2018; the ‘activation model’ came into force. This appeared to constitute a particularly significant repudiation of the basic income approach from the government. Interestingly, it also altered the noises around conditionality from the Social Democrats and the trade unions, who were highly critical of the activation model.

On 28th February 2018, OECD released a report stating that a basic income would increase poverty in Finland if it was cost-neutral and recommending Universal Credit as a better alternative. It argued that such a model could be combined with the activation strategy the government had introduced, which the OECD supported. The report was presented by the former Centre Party Prime Minister, Mari Kiviniemi, who was deputy secretary-general of the OECD at the time. In April 2018, international media began to report that the government had rejected a request from KELA for EUR 40-70 million to extend the experiment to a group of employed people. This was intertwined with the news that the Finance Minister, Petteri Orpo, of the National Coalition Party had announced it was now considering Universal Credit as a proposal to reform the social security system. In the same month, the Social Democrats party council approved the ‘general security’ model that had been devised by the party’s youth wing. Social Democrat politicians were keen to stress that while it was not unconditional, the system *rewarded* participation rather than punished unemployed people for not adhering to conditions¹²⁵. Thus, while basic income was facing increasing hostility from the major parties, the subject of social security reform was high on the governmental agenda¹²⁶.

8.3.2.4 2019 election

On 8th February 2019, KELA released preliminary results of the basic income experiment based on the first year’s income registers and a survey conducted at the end of the experiment, which showed that there was no employment effect, but the treatment group did report greater wellbeing (Kangas et al., 2019). The day before, Centre Party had released its incentivising basic income model (‘kannustava perustulo’), which was based on a conditional negative income tax model and combined all existing basic security benefits (including sickness, maternity and parental allowances) and social assistance into one payment (Centre Party, 2019). Katri Kulmuni, the chair of the social security working group, stated that a negative income tax experiment could be carried out in the next parliament

¹²⁵ Interview with Social Democrat MP on 2nd October 2018.

¹²⁶ In September 2017, the government had also set up the Toimi project, instigating a wholesale review of basic security benefits in reference to a new system by 2030. The main remit of the project was to provide evidence and proposals for an ‘overhaul’ of basic security in the run up to the 2019 parliamentary elections. It identified three possible pathways for the future of social security, one of which was clearly (though not explicitly) based on the idea of a basic income.

(Suomenmaa, 2019). She also argued that the experiment showed services needed to be improved to help people into work.

The Left Alliance updated their model of basic income increasing the level to EUR 800 a month, approved by the party in November 2018 (Left Alliance, 2018). The party committed to raising all basic security benefits (including sickness etc.) to this level as well in the next parliament. As in previous elections, it proposed standardising and combining these existing basic security benefits, as well as making payments automatic. Finally, the party supported a new experiment rectifying the problems with the previous one. The Green League made similar but less significant changes to its model, proposing to integrate basic security benefits and increase the level of basic security by EUR 50 (thus making the new level EUR 600) as steps towards a basic income, which was modelled at the same level. The Social Democrats promoted their universal security model and the Christian Democrats supported their reform based on Universal Credit as described above. The National Coalition Party proposed a similar reform ('Vastikkeellinen yleistuki') to the Christian Democrats, citing the example of Universal Credit but also a participation income, reinforcing its commitment to conditionality (National Coalition Party, 2018). Thus, despite some differences, all parties were committed to the goal of combining benefits, reducing incentive traps and improving services.

In April, there was another YLE poll of parliamentary candidates, which included a question about basic income (full results for all eventual MPs shown in Table A31). Although the question was different in that it referred to an unconditional basic income given to all, the results were starkly unlike 2015. While every Green League MP and all but one of the 16 Left Alliance MPs (94%) indicated their support for basic income, only a small minority of MPs in all the other parties did. Nine Finns MPs (23%), eight Centre Party MPs (26%), four Social Democrats (10%), two National Coalition MPs (5%) and one Swedish People's Party MP (11%) expressed support for the idea. All five Christian Democrats expressed opposition to the idea.

The results of the parliamentary elections in April saw the Social Democrats emerge as the biggest party for the first time since 1999 but with only 17.7% of the vote in a highly fragmented parliament. The Centre Party lost 18 seats dropping to the fourth largest party, while the Finns and National Coalition were roughly static in second and third place respectively. The Green League and Left Alliance saw small gains of five and four seats respectively, while the party made up of former Finns members that supported the government, Blue Reform, lost all their seats. The subsequent coalition negotiations ended

with a left-wing government led by the Social Democrats, including the Centre Party, Green League, Left Alliance and the Swedish People's Party. The government programme contained one important line committing to a negative income tax experiment¹²⁷, which suggested that the Finnish basic income debate would continue (Finnish Government, 2019).

8.4 Party support for basic income in Finland: Who, what and why?

This section takes stock of the events of the past 10 years, as well as elite interviews with political actors from the parliamentary parties, to assess party strategies towards basic income in Finland. Thus, the first sub-section collates the different pieces of evidence to summarise the commitments and legislative behaviour of the main parties, as well as the rationale behind their support for or opposition to basic income. Then, the section reviews the theoretical expectations outlined at the beginning and discuss some implications for the political feasibility of basic income.

8.4.1 Identifying party support for basic income and its rationale

Mirroring the dominance of Green party support across Europe, the Green League has been the most consistent and prominent advocate of a basic income in Finland. Yet, its support has been surprisingly high, given its relative size and significance as a governmental party, compared to other European Green parties. The party has reconciled its pragmatic approach to governing with its support for basic income by carefully calibrating both its policy commitments and its rationale. Firstly, they have long-stressed the 'steps' approach to basic income support. At every election, the Green League have advocated a basic income model but also a number of feasible short-term reforms that it will prioritise in the upcoming parliamentary elections, sold as steps towards basic income. The most notable reforms the party identified as implemented steps towards basic income include the raising of basic security benefits by EUR 100 in 2011, the removal of the household means test for labour market subsidy in 2013 and the introduction of a EUR 300 earnings disregard for unemployment benefits in 2014. These steps all relate to the basic security unemployment benefits and seek to reconcile the twin aims of poverty relief and employment incentives.

This is because a major rationale for basic income for the Greens has been labour market activation (Perkiö, 2019). Strongly influenced by the legacy of Osmo Soitinvaara, it has continually emphasised the ability to combine wages and benefits as a key benefit of a basic income, particularly to encourage more part-time or flexible work. The level of basic income has tended to motivate the party less than the reorganisation of benefits so as to reduce

¹²⁷ Intriguingly, the English language translation described it as a 'basic income experiment'.

bureaucracy, simplify the system and increase coverage. The party programme and the majority of MPs have also stressed the benefit of giving people the freedom to choose how to live their lives. However, in the last couple of years, there has also been a slight shift in perspective regarding conditionality among certain people in the party. Publicly, individual MPs such as Antero Vartia have indicated opposition to an *unconditional* basic income (Vihreä Lanka, 2017), while interviews with Green political actors suggested a slight shift in perspective. This is partly due to an acceptance that the system is moving in the direction of more conditionality anyway and the Greens are committed to constructive policymaking¹²⁸. It is also partly due to concerns about how providing unconditional benefits would affect certain groups such as young people without education and stay-at-home parents.

The Left Alliance position on basic income has largely shadowed that of the Green League, reflecting the fact that the two ‘new left’ parties have been relatively united on the issue since 2010. As Table A33 shows, this is also found in the preferences of both parties’ voters with a substantial majority in favour of a basic income in the European Social Survey data. In government, the Left Alliance supported the same reforms to basic security and have also framed them as steps towards basic income. The main overt difference with the Green League is related to the proposed level of basic income, which has always been higher in the Left Alliance models. Although this may be primarily a question of framing, it also gives an indication of varying priorities. In a trade-off between increasing the level of basic security and a simplification of the system, Left Alliance politicians suggest the former take priority in their expressed preferences¹²⁹ and their political decision-making given the outcome of the 2011 government coalition negotiations. The party also has a connection to the trade unions, who have been more reluctant to support the idea outright. This may partly explain why a left party would also advocate a pragmatic ‘steps’ approach, in order to avoid antagonising some sceptical union supporters.

The Centre Party’s position on basic income has been more elusive. While notionally in favour since the 1980s, it has not pursued basic income-related reforms in that period, despite providing the Prime Minister for 7 years during the first decade of the 2000s. The party had also not indicated its support in policy papers or manifestos until Juha Sipilä became leader. Its historical position as the defender of universal flat-rate benefits lends itself to supporting a basic income-like scheme but it has also prioritised measures that incentivise work. Every

¹²⁸ Interview with Green politician on 25th September 2018.

¹²⁹ Interview with Left Alliance MP on 4th September 2018.

statement of support prior to the 2015 election was qualified by the requirement that a basic income encouraged work. Crucially, it remained ambiguous as to whether the policy would be conditional, which was an ongoing source of tension between its members or its youth organisation and its central leadership and MPs. The former have supported an unconditional benefit¹³⁰ while senior members, particularly by 2019, have been sceptical at best¹³¹. Therefore, the so-called ‘schizophrenic’ behaviour of the Centre Party-led right-wing government is perhaps not too difficult to explain.

The balance of power within the government coalition also gradually moved towards the National Coalition during the parliament as the polls started to show diminishing support for the Centre Party. While the National Coalition Party have some individual supporters of a basic income, or at least supporters of models that have much in common with it, the party was also the most vocally opposed to a basic income within the government. The activation model was its brainchild, while it has promoted the idea of ‘inclusive’ social security, inspired by a selective version of participation income. In other words, its model of participation income does not amount to a universal scheme with light-touch conditionality as Atkinson proposed, but rather an extension of conditionality to social assistance recipients so as to require them to participate in volunteering activities¹³². The Finance Minister, Petteri Orpo, also dealt the fatal blow to the experiment, whether due to negligence or outright hostility, by not pursuing the necessary changes to taxation. The libertarian wing of the party that has supported a Life Account model of basic income and has been critical of a bureaucratic system of conditionality is ultimately a very minority position. The last 10 years suggest it has little-to-no sway on the party’s overall stance and legislative priorities.

On the other hand, the Finns Party and those that stayed in government as Blue Reform were broadly ambivalent to basic income. The theoretical framework would predict strong opposition given their cultural authoritarianism and strict notions of deservingness as a radical right party. However, while many MPs indicated they were generally sceptical of a policy that would allow people to stay at home, there were surprisingly forceful advocates of the experiment itself. Often, Finns MPs would herald their ability to make things happen where long-time advocates in the Greens and Left Alliance had not demanded an experiment when they were in government¹³³. Similarly, MPs also expressed pride in the international

¹³⁰ Based on interview with policy adviser on 18th September 2018 and statements from the chair of the party youth, Suvi Mäkeläinen (YLE, 2018).

¹³¹ Interviews with two MPs on 19th September 2018.

¹³² Outlined in interview with senior National Coalition MP on 20th September 2018.

¹³³ For example, Juho Eerola’s speech during plenary session PTK 46/2015, 7th October 2015.

attention the experiment brought. Yet, this was not a Damascene conversion; many Finns MPs (including both eventual Ministers for Social Affairs and Health) indicated they supported the idea of experiments *before* the election (see YLE poll in Table A30). The behaviour of the party suggests that basic income is ultimately a second order issue, which a position of constructive ambiguity fits perfectly. As one MP described in an interview¹³⁴, “I strongly support this Nordic welfare system...If we think about this strong Nordic welfare model, [basic income] fits very well.” When basic income did touch on their main issue, such as concerns the experiment would attract immigrants to come to Finland, their position was clear in opposing any possibility that the basic income would be portable.

The Social Democrats have historically been most opposed to basic income but recent evidence suggests a slight loosening of their attitudes to basic income. The decision to embrace its own model of basic security reform that retained certain features of a basic income marked a significant change in position. This may be partly driven by electoral concerns, as Table A33 shows a majority of Social Democrat voters indicate support a basic income. Like many other social democratic parties across Europe, it faces a threat from the populist right and the new left. On certain aspects of a basic income, particularly the notion of wage subsidies, the trade unions have also developed a less hostile position, opening up the door to cooperation with the new left parties on ‘steps’ reforms, such as the 300 euros earnings disregard for unemployment benefits.

Finally, the most spirited opponents of a basic income in this period were the Christian Democrats, who unlike other parties did not flirt with adopting an ambiguous position. Their adoption of a Universal Credit-like reform was explicitly sold as contrary to a basic income.

8.4.2 Explaining party support and constraints in a Nordic/Hybrid regime

The first theoretical explanation the case sought to explore was the role of unemployment in explaining support for basic income. The chronology of events offers evidence that the causal mechanisms exist as a spike in unemployment preceded and then sustained the surge in political support between 2012 and 2015. To some extent, the rise in unemployment cannot be distinguished from the general downturn on this front alone. However, the overriding focus of the government implementing the experiment was to increase the employment rate and the stated aim of the experiment was to test the effects on employment. Even the new left parties strongly emphasised this goal and supported steps towards basic income that were geared primarily towards the activation of unemployed individuals, such

¹³⁴ Interview with Blue Reform MP on 6th September 2018.

as the 300 euros earnings disregard introduced in 2014. Together, the case gives strong support to the empirical claim that unemployment drives support for basic income.

Yet, a longer-term perspective also shows the limits to this connection in regards to the political feasibility of basic income. If the central priority of a government is to raise the employment rate, it is unlikely that the *unconditional* aspect of a basic income will be attractive for long. While basic income is often used to promote a ‘carrot’ or incentives approach to activation in Finland, the non-withdrawable dimension of a basic income can easily be combined with a ‘stick’ approach by those that prioritise increasing employment above all else. The government itself justified the combination of unconditional basic income experiments with conditionality reforms, using this precise metaphor of testing carrots and other incentives¹³⁵.

This directly relates to one of the theoretical expectations about the relationship between Finland’s political economy institutions and party support for basic income. The case offers an interesting perspective on the role of conditionality in structuring the basic income debate, as the institutional context shifted during the period studied. Initially, it appeared to confirm expectations that conditionality was a less salient dimension of political competition. This is not to say that opponents did not exist but that many supporters adopted a position of constructive ambiguity; it is striking how various Finnish political actors could support a basic income despite appearing to support the principle of conditionality. This was particularly evident prior to the 2015 election, as the Centre Party’s supportive position on basic income was clearly not proposing the abolition of sanctions. The YLE poll conducted prior to the election also revealed a number of MPs from the Centre Party and Finns in favour of basic income, despite stating support for conditionality. Interviews with politicians in both parties revealed a similar dynamic.

However, by 2019, this had changed on a number of fronts. The Centre Party had shifted explicitly to a conditional negative income tax scheme, more nuanced views on conditionality had begun to spread to the Green League and other parties such as the National Coalition Party and Christian Democrats had directly pitched their policies as contrary to basic income. This could be related to the government’s conditionality reforms that punctuated this period. However, given the government’s reforms to conditionality in 2016-2017 were not drastic enough to significantly alter its strictness relative to other countries, it

¹³⁵ For example, Arto Satonen of the National Coalition Party used this analogy during plenary session PR 135/2017, which was discussing the introduction of the ‘activation model’.

may be more accurate to point to the proximity of recent reforms that heightened the salience of conditionality and generated opposition to basic income. This provides a more nuanced perspective on how the institutional context of conditionality shapes the politics of basic income, focusing on short-term trends as well as the static long-term shape of social security institutions.

The second institutional characteristic of interest was the dualistic nature of unemployment benefits, which evidently shapes partisan preferences for basic income in the Finnish context. One of the key things that unites basic income advocates in Finland (and indeed motivates opposition from the Social Democrats) is the prioritisation of non-contributory benefits over the earnings-related system. The ‘basic income parties’ are effectively the ‘basic security parties’ and their core constituencies include labour market outsiders, students and the self-employed.

Yet, this dimension also highlights a significant institutional constraint facing basic income advocates in Finland: the effective veto of producer groups. The frustrated attempts to remove the link between earnings-related and basic security benefits serve as an indication of the enormous barriers to any kind of radical basic income reform. Although the preferences of the three so-called ‘basic income parties’ (Left Alliance, Green League and Centre Party) were to prioritise basic security benefits at the expense of the earnings-related system, all acknowledged the political difficulty in making any progress on that front. Other evident institutional constraints include the constitution, bureaucratic capacity or resistance and EU legislation. The Finnish Constitution is comparatively well-enforced on matters of social rights.

The expectation that right-wing parties would be more supportive of a basic income in a Nordic welfare state is only partially confirmed by the case. The decision of the right-wing government and specifically the Centre Party to instigate the basic income experiment is a supporting piece of evidence. However, its lack of commitment to follow it through again shows the limits to support from the right in this context. While the main left-wing party, the SDP, has been strongly opposed in defence of earnings-related benefits as expected, the two new left parties are the strongest supporters and have been consistently through the last 10 years. On the other hand, the *rationale* of these parties has been relatively right leaning in emphasising the removal of employment traps.

Finally, the case also offers an opportunity to assess how party ‘support’ translates into concrete legislative behaviour given the specific institutional and political constraints in the Finnish context. Yet, for both the reforms identified as ‘steps’ towards basic income and the

basic income experiment, there are also reasons to question the significance of basic income as a policy itself. Scepticism about the ‘steps’ strategy may prompt two related questions. First, are these reforms really steps towards basic income? Second, would these reforms have happened anyway without the support of basic income parties? On the first question, the decision to increase the level of basic security is unlikely to constitute a genuine step in the direction of a basic income. Indeed, it may be precisely the opposite as a higher level of basic income will require higher marginal tax rates that are likely to make the policy unfeasible. It is perhaps better to construe such a reform as corresponding to the broad aims of a basic income to guarantee a minimum standard of living. The other reforms, such as the earnings disregard and the removal of the household means test, are only steps towards basic income if the non-withdrawability of existing benefits is considered a priority. For some, such a reform may constitute an entrenchment of the existing complicated, activating social security system. Paradoxically, from this perspective, the significance of a basic income here may be to provide ideological cover for activation reforms to supporters of the Green League and Left Alliance who would otherwise oppose them.

On the second question, most of these latter steps that could be more reasonably construed as steps towards basic income also found widespread political support. For example, since the EUR 300 earnings disregard was introduced, MPs across the political spectrum in the National Coalition Party (who led the government) and the Centre Party (who were in opposition) have praised the reform¹³⁶. The idea to remove the household means test was also introduced in the SATA Committee in the previous parliament. The ‘step’ that required most negotiation from the basic income-parties was the raising of the basic security benefits, which, as argued above, is the policy that least resembles a genuine step in the direction of a basic income. Nevertheless, these parties have participated in government and policymaking and the correspondence of their stated goals with policy outcomes should not be dismissed. In this Finnish context, the ‘steps’ approach to party support for basic income is a key aspect of the story, at least as important as the experiment.

Regarding the basic income experiment, an in-depth explanation of the factors driving the government’s decision is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, there are reasons to suggest that it had a performative role more important than the substantive policy features of a basic income. In particular, this has been argued in regards to Juha Sipilä’s keenness to

¹³⁶ Anu Vehviläinen, one of the Ministers responsible for the experiment, mentioned the 300 euros reform in a positive light in many parliamentary debates (e.g. plenary sessions: PR 51/2015 on 15th October 2015; PTK 86/2016 on 20th September 2016).

foster an experimental culture in order to appear innovative. Finland also has a long tradition of experiments (see e.g. Hämäläinen, 2010) and the government set up a specific experimental unit for other measures. Support from the Finns Party also appeared less ideological and specifically conditional on the experiment rather than the wider policy. However, it is difficult to argue that basic income does not have a *substantive* role in the competition between Finnish political parties, with debates about work incentives, conditionality, means-testing and generosity all playing a critical part.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the nature of party support for basic income in the period from 2007 to 2019 in Finland using events from that period, alongside political documents and interviews with political actors. The most significant event during this time concerned the basic income experiment conducted between 2017-18 and instigated by the right-wing government led by the Centre Party, which has been historically supportive. Yet, the two parties most committed to a basic income, the Left Alliance and Green League, also claimed significant legislative progress during their involvement in the ‘rainbow government’ between 2011 and 2015. Thus, while a superficial understanding of the case would point to confirmation of the theory that support for basic income comes from the right in contexts where social expenditure is high, the picture was more nuanced. Even the position of Social Democrats grew more sympathetic to aspects of the policy over time, despite rising social spending.

The context in which support for basic income surged was a period of rising unemployment. The fact that labour market incentives were the overwhelming focus of the basic income experiment and many of the reforms pursued by new left parties in favour of basic income were activating measures supports the claim that this was an important factor in driving support for the policy. Yet, the chapter has also pointed to two pertinent features of the institutional context that structured the politics of basic income in Finland. Firstly, the dualistic structure of the existing benefit system can be directly related to the focus on basic income as a non-contributory benefit, supported by the parties that advocate improvements to the basic security system and opposed by parties that were concerned about the fate of contributory benefits. Similarly, it is argued that the initial light-touch conditionality regime weakened the salience of conditionality, allowing political actors that did not support an *unconditional* basic income to nevertheless promote it in the political arena.

In the next chapter, these findings are incorporated into the wider picture of the thesis and drawn out alongside the main contributions from the empirical analysis.

9 How to transform the welfare state with a basic income: a discussion of the key findings

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the key findings of the research, discusses the interpretation of the results with respect to the research questions and outlines what this means for theories about the political feasibility of basic income. It also sets out the main conclusions of the thesis. As the chapter integrates the findings across the four empirical chapters which applied different methods and lenses, it compares and contrasts the consistency of findings. Combining these insights also facilitates a discussion of additional, multi-faceted questions. For example, are parties and their voters aligned? How does the constellation of party support across the UK and Finland compare and to what extent is it driven by the institutional context? To what extent does overt political support translate into greater political feasibility? While the multi-method approach offers the opportunity to explore these questions, it also raises questions about the generalisability of the results and highlights the need for additional research. Thus, the final two sections of the chapter identify the limitations of the study and suggest an agenda for future research into the political feasibility of basic income.

The chapter is structured in the following order: Section 9.2 provides a summary of the key findings from each empirical section, starting with the party manifesto and voter preferences analysis. The main insights from the UK and Finland case studies are described in turn. Section 9.3 interprets the consequences of these results for theory and is organised around the secondary research question themes identified in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3). This includes the ideological and socioeconomic drivers of support for basic income as well as the effect of institutions on both the overall levels of support and the nature of that support, i.e. the types of actors that support basic income and the specific proposals they advocate or implement. The section ends with a discussion of what these results mean for the political feasibility of basic income, with a focus on moving beyond the notion of ‘cheap support’. Section 9.4 explores the methodological limitations of the research, focusing on the possible problems with the methods adopted in each empirical section as well as the tensions in combining them. Section 9.5 identifies areas for future research that could address some of these problems, including research questions and themes related to the political feasibility of basic income that could not be explored in detail in this research.

9.2 Summary of key findings

9.2.1 Party manifestos

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 5) focused on the ‘supply-side’ of the politics of basic income and sought to identify and explain party support for basic income using election manifestos from 1980 to 2018. The initial descriptive analysis showed that mentions of basic income and stated support for the idea are rare. In roughly 6% of manifestos (69 in total), parties expressed support for basic income while the percentage of manifestos was roughly 11% (127 in total) when including cognates. There were also six manifestos expressing opposition to basic income, while an additional two oppositional statements were made in regard to cognates. The descriptive analysis also evidenced the ebbs and flows of support for basic income. It showed that there has been a notable surge in support in the last few years, particularly since 2015 and support was also more common in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There was also considerable variation in party support across countries with as many as 17% of election manifestos expressing support in Finland and 12.5% in the Netherlands but no parties supported basic income in Sweden across the whole period and only one election manifesto in Austria, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The distribution across time and countries was also quite different when including cognates.

The results confirmed that the ideology of parties matters in predicting support for basic income, with parties on the left, both in terms of their fixed party families and election-specific programmes, much more likely to support basic income. When distinguishing between the economic and cultural dimension of politics, the results suggest that it is the latter that matters more, with culturally *libertarian* policy positions consistently related to party support for basic income and cognates. This is partly explained by the fact that green parties are the most likely supporters of basic income and are more consistently libertarian than economically left wing. Similarly, the propensity of both new left and liberal parties, commonly on opposite sides of the economic spectrum, to be supportive also points to the importance of the cultural dimension. The economic left-right dimension and welfare positions are even less robust when cognates are included, which highlights the significance of how basic income is defined. A stricter definition of basic income suggests it is mainly the preserve of economically left *and* culturally libertarian parties.

The chapter also examined the effect of socioeconomic and institutional factors that varied across elections (and countries) rather than individual parties. The analysis showed that a country’s unemployment rate was significantly related to the level of party support for basic income at a given election. This relationship was broadly robust to the inclusion of country

fixed effects, election-period fixed effects and other covariates in regression modelling. The country-by-country analysis also showed that the relationship between the unemployment rate and the level of party support at a given election was only negative in Germany, with a flat or upward line of best fit in all other 14 countries. On the other hand, the other two variables examined, growth rates and social expenditure, did not consistently relate to party support for basic income.

Yet, the regression analysis also showed that the institutional context relates to *which* parties support basic income. Firstly, an increase in social expenditure reduces the extent to which left-right economic positions explain party support for basic income or cognates. The likelihood of parties with economically right-wing positions supporting basic income rises in contexts where there is a higher level of social expenditure. The interaction is less significant if excluding cognates. However, when modelling this interaction using fixed party families, *new left* parties become more likely to support basic income in contexts of high social expenditure. These results are somewhat contradictory, but it implies that support for basic income in high spending environments relates to economically right-wing party strategies rather than right-wing parties per se. The distinction between cognates and stricter definitions of basic income also matters here.

The analysis of rationales also provided mixed results in that parties were more likely to use contrary to their 'home' ideology to justify supporting basic income. In other words, social democrat parties were more likely to use right-wing rationales, related to reducing bureaucracy, activation or retrenchment, while centre-right parties were more likely to use left-wing rationales, related to social rights and social inequalities. On the other hand, new left parties were the most likely to use rationales coded as 'new left', such as those related to post-productivism and/or precarity in the labour market.

Finally, the chapter examined the types and strength of commitments that parties made. Firstly, parties rarely committed to introducing a basic income, preferring to commit to a government commission, experiment or to refer to the policy as a long-term aim. Secondly, the majority of parties in favour of basic income received less than 5% of the vote. Thus, the fact that these parties were also more likely to commit to introducing the policy left them without much chance of being in a position to deliver those commitments. Parties in government were also much less likely to advocate basic income even after accounting for party size and no governmental parties committed to introducing the policy in the period studied at all. Larger parties and those in government were more likely to advocate cognates and make commitments to introduce them. The analysis also identified that parties,

particularly those with a small share of the vote, often advocated short-term ‘steps’, achievable in the next parliament, that implied that basic income was a long-term goal or a direction in which to steer policy.

9.2.2 Voter preferences

The second empirical chapter (Chapter 6) addressed the ‘demand-side’ of the politics of basic income by analysing the determinants of voters’ basic income preferences. This involved the identification of individual-level and country-level factors that relate to support for basic income and the examination of varying ideological drivers of support across different socioeconomic groups and institutional contexts.

The individual-level analysis sought to identify a constituency for basic income and the results confirmed the intuition that labour market outsiders, particularly unemployed and temporary workers, are supportive of basic income, even if much of their support is explained by other sociodemographic and ideological covariates. Similarly, analysis of post-industrial occupational class indicated that socio-cultural professionals, blue-collar workers and low-service functionaries were most in favour but all differences between classes were insignificant with the introduction of the full set of covariates. The results also did not reveal the expected division *within* the working class between blue-collar and service workers. Young people were consistently in favour of a basic income, as were graduates once sociodemographic controls were included in models but men were more supportive, contrary to theoretical expectations. The most robust predictor of support for basic income was household income, although the marginal effect of income increased at higher levels of income, suggesting that the effect was chiefly driven by particularly strong opposition from those on the highest incomes. Finally, the analysis also examined the effect of partisanship on support for basic income. New left voters were most in favour as expected but liberal voters were just as opposed to basic income as other right-wing voters, while social democrat voters were unexpectedly in favour.

The ideological drivers of support for basic income varied across educational groups and labour market statuses. Support among non-graduates was more likely to be related to targeting or ALMP¹³⁷ preferences, while redistribution preferences were more strongly related to support for basic income among graduates. Similarly, support for basic income among both unemployed workers and so-called ‘flexi-workers’ (temporary workers and solo self-employed) was not explained by ALMP preferences, while it was for insiders

¹³⁷ Support for education for the unemployed at the expense of benefits.

(employers and permanent employees). On the other hand, targeting preferences were strongly related to support for basic income for unemployed workers and insiders but *not* flexi-workers. The analysis also examined the divides within parties based on education and labour market status. Regarding the party-education interactions, the education divide was most pronounced within new left parties due to the exceptionally high level of support for basic income from graduates, while centre-right voters of both educational levels were equally opposed to basic income. Finally, the (insignificant) difference in support between insiders and flexi-workers was largest among social democrat voters, indicating a possible insider-outsider conflict (Rueda, 2005). However, *unemployed* social democrat voters were even less likely to support basic income than insiders.

At the country-level, poverty, unemployment and inequality were all associated with greater levels of support for basic income. Nevertheless, mirroring the individual-level results, the most robust indicator of country-level support for basic income was income, i.e. support was highest in countries with a low GDP per capita. The effect of institutional variables provided suggested that, if anything, the congruence of existing welfare state institutions with a basic income is related to higher levels of country-level support. More specifically, countries that already have welfare states that look like a basic income, e.g. high levels of cash spending as a proportion of GDP or as a proportion of total spending and less strict conditions attached to unemployment benefits, were more in favour of basic income.

However, one of the most intriguing findings related to the cross-level interactions between institutional characteristics of a welfare state and the ideological determinants of support for basic income. The results suggest that incongruence of the existing welfare state with a given dimension of basic income heightens the salience of that dimension for individual preferences. For example, in countries with strict conditions attached to unemployment benefits, individual-level preferences for conditionality were a more significant determinant of support for basic income. In countries where existing benefits are poorly targeted at the lowest income quintile, individual-level preferences for targeting were a more significant determinant of support for basic income. This highlighted the importance of the institutional context for shaping the salient dimensions of basic income in political competition.

9.2.3 UK case study

The third empirical chapter (Chapter 8) provided a case study of the politics of basic income in the UK, which was deemed an archetypal Liberal welfare regime. The two most significant political events in the period studied were the Scottish government's decision to

fund feasibility studies undertaken by four local authorities and the Labour Party's internal debate and eventual commitment to a basic income 'pilot' in the 2019 general election.

In the latter case, the manifesto commitment came amongst deep divisions within the parliamentary Labour party. The chapter identified three key overlapping and cross-cutting dividing lines. Firstly, the divide mapped onto disagreements about the Corbyn project, which to some extent could be construed as a debate about radicalism versus gradualism, at least in tone. Secondly, opponents within the party emphasised the value of paid work, arguing that basic income signalled a denigration of these values. Thirdly, the balance of cash benefits or social security vis-à-vis public services provoked internal debate with an emphasis on the alternative of 'universal basic services' becoming more popular towards the end of the period. These themes also drive home the difficulty of reducing the debate to either the economic or cultural dimension of politics. For the SNP, such divisions did not exist in public and all political actors were notionally supportive of the policy in theory and the certainly the feasibility studies. However, the elite interviews revealed a diverse set of priorities across different politicians that may be difficult to reconcile beyond the scoping stage in Scotland.

On the other hand, for both the Labour Party and the SNP the decision to support experiments was very much driven by the leadership, with a balanced strategy of signalling a radical new approach to welfare or social security with limited fiscal consequences or conflict within their parties regarding policy design and priorities. Basic income was symbolically attractive for what it was not: whether compared to New Labour's tax credits or Westminster's sanctions. The most supportive party, the Greens, only had one MP during the period and did little outside of election periods to further the basic income 'cause'. Similarly, the Scottish Greens, who won six seats in 2016 and have since informally supported the government, were not responsible for the commitment to feasibility studies. They prioritised feasible reforms that resembled basic income, such as increases in universal child benefit, or that would achieve some of the same goals, such as reducing poverty.

The Conservatives were staunchly opposed, despite some initial interest in Scotland, which was perhaps unsurprising given their flagship policy of Universal Credit as well as the implementation of stricter sanctions and cuts during the period as well. A hangover of responsibility for these reforms during the coalition government may have influenced the non-committal nature of the Liberal Democrat position, as they were broadly against basic income but by the 2019 election had moved to supporting trials with minimum income guarantees (without sanctions).

The left-right divide in British politics, therefore, mirrors the picture of partisan support for basic income, with the subtleties in position along that spectrum still approximately reducible to whether parties and politicians were in favour of welfare or social security. This fit with expectations that the residual nature of the existing social security system in the UK would reduce the extent to which right-wing parties would be in favour of basic income. It may also have been sharpened by the fact the Conservatives, and the Coalition government before 2015, were in government implementing considerable sustained cuts in working-age benefits as part of an austerity programme.

One puzzle in the UK case was a context of exceptionally low unemployment both historically and cross-nationally despite a rise in support for basic income. Concerns about the effects of automation on employment were a factor in some of the debate, particularly at a superficial level among political actors with limited buy-in. However, more importantly a number of other trends related to underemployment, precarious employment and stagnant pay were a commonly cited issue. This was exacerbated by an alternative driver of support for basic income, which was a context of austerity and increasing sanctions, which was cited by most supportive politicians. It points to the significance of labour market risks and insecurity in a broader sense as the driver of support in the UK case.

Conditionality was also a highly salient issue in the debates around basic income and most political actors cited it as a key justification for their support for the policy. This also emphasised the salience of the cultural dimension, particularly within the debates around the value of paid work and conditionality. Although the cuts in benefits meant a lot of focus was on the *level* of basic income, many political actors emphasised universalism, and the fact it would go to everyone, as an integral part of the policy's appeal. This was juxtaposed with the existing means-tested and heavily targeted system that divided the deserving and undeserving. Thus, in both cases there was an indication that the institutional context related to the salient debates in accordance with how incongruent the existing system was to basic income.

9.2.4 Finland case study

The final empirical chapter (Chapter 8) examined the case of Finland, a Nordic/Hybrid welfare regime, which as the manifesto analysis showed has had the highest proportion of parties advocating a basic income since 1980. Momentum for basic income gradually grew following two recessions after the financial crisis in Finland, which eventually culminated in a nationwide experiment between 2017 and 2018. This was implemented by a right-wing government led by the liberal-agrarian Centre Party, in coalition with the conservative

National Coalition Party and right-populist Finns Party (a party split in 2017 left only 19 MPs in government, with their new party called Blue Reform in English). The latter were largely supportive of the experiment, providing the two Ministers of Social Affairs and Health that oversaw the experiment throughout the period. On the other hand, the National Coalition Party were largely hostile to the idea, despite a handful of MPs sympathetic.

However, drawing on the elite interviews with a range of political actors, the case study also identified reforms instigated by the Green League and Left Alliance that were claimed as ‘steps towards’ basic income during the ‘rainbow’ government of 2011-2015 (i.e. a coalition including parties across the political spectrum¹³⁸). The three most significant of these steps were the raising of the minimum level of benefits by over 100 euros, the individualisation of non-contributory unemployment benefits¹³⁹, and the introduction of a 300 euros earnings disregard. These two parties were the most unambiguously supportive of the idea of a basic income throughout the period and while critical of the design of the experiment, they nevertheless voted for it in parliament.

Recent trends also saw the Social Democrats, who have historically been strongly opposed to basic income, develop their own ‘model’ inspired by basic income that sought to simplify the system and included an unconditional component. Alongside the trade unions, who also developed a less hostile position to certain aspects of a basic income such as the ability to combine work and unemployment benefits, this marked a significant change in position. The other main opposition party during the parliamentary period between 2015 and 2019, other than the Swedish People’s Party, was the Christian Democrats who held the mantle for the party most strongly opposed to basic income. Starting in late 2015, the party proposed emulating the UK’s Universal Credit policy, selling it as an alternative to basic income rather than a variation on the model.

The case offered ‘meat on the bones’ to the theory that unemployment drives support for basic income, by evidencing the sequence of events, the stated goals and preferences of political actors and the eventual reforms pursued. Specifically, the Finnish case indicated a dominant emphasis on labour market incentives and simplification as a rationale for basic income, evident in the justification for the experiment and at least two of the reforms instigated by the Greens and Left (the earnings disregard and individualisation of means-tested unemployment benefit receipt).

¹³⁸ From the Left Alliance and Green League to the National Coalition Party and Christian Democrats.

¹³⁹ i.e. the removal of the spousal means test from labour market subsidy.

The fact that such a significant number of political actors in favour of basic income, particularly prior to 2016 within the Centre Party and to some extent the Finns, were also strongly supportive of conditionality suggested that conditionality was a less salient dimension of political competition in regards to basic income. However, this did not last after the introduction of the ‘activation model’ and other new reforms, which made conditionality a highly salient issue in Finnish politics in general and in relation to basic income. In the 2019 parliamentary election, the Centre Party had adjusted their policy to clearly state that they advocated a *conditional* basic income. This example also pointed to the importance of proximate institutional reforms when considering the context in which support or opposition to basic income exists. Finally, the dualistic nature of unemployment benefits related to both the rationales and the actors that supported basic income. All basic income advocates in Finland prioritised non-contributory benefits over the earnings-related system, acting as effectively ‘basic security’ parties, with the explicit aim of increasing the minimum level of benefits. However, the role of social partners in the social security system make reforms to this very difficult, leading to institutional gridlock.

9.3 Political feasibility of basic income: integrating and interpreting the results

What does this analysis tell us about the drivers of political support for basic income? How do the findings across empirical sections relate to each other? And what does this mean for the political feasibility of basic income? This section attempts to answer these questions by dividing the interpretation of results into four sub-sections. Section 9.2.1 explores the ideological drivers of partisan support, while Section 9.2.2 interprets the evidence on the socioeconomic drivers of support, with a focus on the theory that growing labour market risks and unemployment would be most important. Section 9.2.3 focuses on the role of the institutional context, both in affecting the *overall* levels of support and its influence on the *type* of support. Finally, 9.2.4 discusses the type of commitments parties make when they do support a basic income, and how this translates into policymaking.

9.3.1 Ideological drivers of partisan support

Starting with questions of ideology, the findings dispel the idea that basic income is ‘neither left nor right’ (Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019b). In all empirical sections, the findings showed that political support was most robust on the political left. What then explains the persistent idea that the policy finds support across the political spectrum?

First, this may be an artefact of which left-right spectrum is used to identify party positions. The manifesto analysis suggested that the cultural dimension is critical in explaining part of

the distinction: parties on the right of the *economic* dimension are more likely to support basic income than those that are *culturally* authoritarian.

The evidence across all empirical sections points to the fact that new left parties, and particularly green parties, are a natural home for basic income¹⁴⁰. Although they are also broadly left-wing economically, new left parties compete with social democratic parties primarily on the cultural dimension (Bornschier, 2010), while divisions within social democratic parties can also be well-explained by debates around the value of paid work or conditionality. Economically right-wing parties tend to support basic income if they are culturally libertarian.

In Finland, the tacit support of the right-populist Finns Party (and later Blue Reform) for basic income, and the experiment specifically, provides a counterpoint to this. While the impetus for an experiment or any basic income-related reforms did not and would not have come directly from the party, its culturally authoritarian policy positions more generally did not preclude its ambivalent position on basic income, except when concerns about migration came to the fore. However, the fact that the party was strongly opposed to the removing of behavioural conditions for unemployment benefits highlights a second reason for the inconsistency: the definition of basic income. As described throughout the thesis, basic income is a multi-dimensional policy whereby the specific policy proposals adopted by political actors can differ considerably. The manifesto analysis, in particular, highlighted that economically right-wing parties were more likely to advocate cognates rather than basic income per se.

A third reason why the overarching picture may differ from the general assertion that basic income finds support across the political spectrum is that context matters: the ideological drivers of support for basic income are dependent on the institutional context. Thus, being left-wing is less predictive of support for basic income in countries facing specific institutional constraints. This is explored in more detail in the section on institutions below (Section 9.2.3).

Finally, the research has focused on political parties and voters rather than the wider civil society and individual elected representatives. This is critical because the case studies highlighted the comparative ease with which right-wing supporters of basic income can be

¹⁴⁰ Of course, the manifesto analysis also showed that many new left parties do not support basic income, particularly left or socialist parties. This is discussed further in Section 9.4, which makes suggestions for future research.

found when the restriction on party-level commitments is dropped. For example, in the UK, two think tanks broadly on the right, the Adam Smith Institute and Reform Scotland, have been supportive of a basic income. The influence of the latter even led to an endorsement from a senior Conservative MSP responsible for social security. Yet, the party as a whole in both Holyrood and Westminster was very much hostile. In Finland, a right-wing think tank, Libera, was also enthusiastic about basic income, or at least its own model, as well as the Finnish banking magnate, Björn Wahlroos, and individual MPs in the National Coalition Party. Yet, the National Coalition Party was also one of the most hostile to basic income.

This distinction between different types of actors also leads onto the findings of inconsistency between the analysis of party and voter support in regard to ideology and partisanship. On the left, the party analysis showed that green parties are by far the most supportive of basic income, with other left and socialist parties also more likely to advocate basic income than most other party families. Meanwhile, social democrats are the *least* likely party family to support basic income other than nationalists, after weighting for party size, and/or including cognates in the analysis. However, in terms of voters the left is considerably less divided: both socialist and green voters are equally supportive, while social democrat voters are more in favour than all right-wing partisans. On the right, there is also a mismatch in empirical findings between liberal parties being more likely to support basic income in the manifesto analysis but voters being strongly opposed.

Why do parties and voters differ in this regard? The most obvious overarching reason would be the strategic considerations of parties beyond vote-seeking. For example, a clear reason why social democratic *parties* might be more sceptical of basic income than their *voters* is the financial, organisational and historical connection these parties tend to have with trade unions (Tsarouhas, 2012). The inconsistencies between parties and voters also reflect the fact that the cultural dimension was less of a determinant of voter preferences. While conditionality and welfare chauvinism preferences were robustly related to support for basic income, other cultural preferences unrelated to the welfare state were not. This may highlight the fact that many voters, with limited knowledge of the policy, will view basic income as a general welfare state measure, but political actors will have more strategic reasons for advocating basic income that relate to the cultural dimension of politics. The latter are likely to *frame* the policy as such and target specific groups of voters that are attracted to such a policy offering.

The variable alignment of parties and their voters in regards to support for basic income suggests that *different* parties are either vote- or policy-seeking when advocating the policy.

For the new left parties, there is a clear alignment of support with their voters, suggesting vote-seeking behaviour. This is likely to be particularly pronounced in environments when there is political competition between two new left parties such as in Finland. Indeed, the elite interviews in Finland indicated a clear sense of their target constituencies of young outsiders and graduates. On the other hand, the strong opposition from social democrats, as indicated above is likely to be policy-seeking behaviour, influenced by ties to labour organisations. The moves towards a more nuanced position on basic income among in many countries may be rather due to vote-seeking considerations. Similarly, right-wing parties have a clear electoral incentive to oppose basic income, which indicates that the low level of support among most right-wing parties is a function of vote-seeking. Yet, it also points to policy-seeking strategies as the reason for the comparatively high support from liberal parties.

An alternative explanation could be the changing nature of social democratic and liberal parties over time, given the manifesto analysis covers the period from 1980 until 2018, while the ESS data is only for 2016. This is supported by the fact that liberal party support of (non-cognate) basic income has been non-existent in the last 10 years, despite the spike in interest recently. Similarly, the constituencies of social democratic parties have changed considerably over the last 40 years, towards groups that are found to support basic income, such as graduates (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). In both Finland and the UK, Labour and the Social Democrats became more supportive or at least softened their attitude in recent years. A final methodological reason for the discrepancy between voters and parties relates to the precise ESS survey question, which may bias the results by steering respondents to a particular view of the policy. This is explored in more detail in Section 9.3.

The preferences analysis and the case studies also pointed to a more multi-faceted set of ideological drivers than simply the economic or cultural dimension of politics. For example, although basic income is usually described as *universal*, the preferences analysis and the case studies indicated that a key element of its appeal is guaranteeing a minimum standard of living. It might therefore be better described as a method of targeting resources at the neediest. Similarly, the dimension of conditionality was not uniformly understood in *cultural* terms, with debates also focusing on the practical consequences of these reforms.

Finally, although the findings broadly dispel the idea that basic income is equally distributed across the political spectrum, the politics of basic income experiments pointed to a ‘catch-all’ quality to party support for basic income (Mainwaring and McGraw, 2019). The attractiveness of ‘innovative’ policy ideas, experimentation *in general* and the role of

evidence-based policymaking was attractive to political actors regardless of their position on basic income as a policy. In both Finland and Scotland, this may have played a critical role in the drive to instigate basic income experiments as well as facilitate compromises with actors within parties and government coalitions that are broadly sceptical of the policy. The significance of this strategy of party support is explored further in Section 9.3.4 below.

9.3.2 Socioeconomic drivers: labour market risks and unemployment?

The basic income literature and the theoretical framework placed a large emphasis on the role of socioeconomic change as a possible driver of support for basic income and thus as a means of enhancing its political feasibility. The hypotheses focused on the effect of labour market risks and unemployment, but the analysis also considered the role of occupational change, growth and economic development as alternative explanations. The former is often associated with the notion of the ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2011c), for whom a basic income is assumed to be beneficial. Yet, to what extent is this group a constituency for basic income? Labour market risks may also drive support at the country-level as higher levels of unemployment or precarious employment may lead to institutional dysfunction or create sociotropic demands for protection. Thus, although notionally describing the same trends, the effect on support for basic income could be construed as operating through the mechanisms of voter preferences and/or institutional dysfunction. This is partly what the research has also tried to explore.

As with the findings for ideology or partisanship, the findings across empirical chapters did not all point in the same direction. For the manifesto analysis, the rate of unemployment prior to elections was identified as the most consistent factor related to support for basic income, robust to various specifications. In Finland, the causal link between higher unemployment and increased support for basic income was given credence by the sequence of events and the enhanced emphasis on labour market incentives as a rationale for the policy. On the other hand, for voter preferences, the unemployment rate was one of four correlated socioeconomic factors that all related to support for basic income, inequality, risk of poverty rate and real GDP per capita, with only GDP per capita robust to the specification of controls. Similarly, at the individual-level, those in precarious employment or unemployment were significantly more likely to support basic income but not with the inclusion of controls, suggesting that rising unemployment would only increase support among individuals to the extent that it would make them poorer. Given the support of the Labour Party in the UK general election in 2019 when unemployment was at record lows, it would have joined Germany as an example of a country where the unemployment rate was *negatively* associated with the level of support for basic income. All of this served to suggest

that unemployment was one of the broader labour market risks that drive support for basic income.

The voter preferences analysis also shows that the precariat or labour market outsiders are not uniform, mirroring past findings (Emmenegger, 2009; Rovny and Rovny, 2017; Chrisp and Martinelli, 2019a). In particular, the results indicated a distinction between temporary workers and solo self-employed on the one hand as so-called ‘flexi-workers’, and unemployed workers on the other. Firstly, the latter were more likely to be supportive of basic income due to their targeting preferences. Secondly, among social democrat voters, only flexi-workers were more supportive of basic income than insiders; unemployed social democrat voters were *less* likely than insiders to support basic income. Chrisp & Martinelli (2019a) also find that there is a negative interaction between union membership (or higher education/income) and unemployment: the effect of being unemployed has a significantly larger effect on support for basic income among non-union members, which suggests that it is only unemployed workers with inadequate *existing* social insurance protection that support basic income and do so in order to target resources better towards themselves. Flexi-workers are instead always poorly covered by social insurance.

Given the importance of the cultural dimension of politics for explaining party support for basic income and the effect of education on individual preferences, an alternative trend likely to increase support for basic income is the expansion of higher education across advanced welfare states. Thus, the enduring role of basic income may be as part of the new educational cleavage identified by many others (Bovens and Wille, 2017; Iversen and Soskice, 2019). However, as with outsiders, a coalition between non-graduates and graduates may be difficult to maintain if basic income once pitched as a certain *type* of policy solution. For example, support among non-graduates may be dependent on whether it is framed as a measure to target resources at the poorest. More strikingly, the education divide is most pronounced among new left voters, where new left graduates are very likely to be in favour. The extent to which graduates form a critical part of the left’s voting coalition may explain whether basic income is pursued as a policy proposal.

Where does this leave us? While the possibility of educational expansion raises the possibility that basic income will be increasingly attractive to voters, the relative importance of unemployment for party support vis-à-vis voters may signal that it is the effect of socioeconomic drivers on welfare state institutions that is more important than the mobilisation of voters. In other words, unemployment drives institutional dysfunction, which is the ultimate driver of support for basic income, at least among major parties that

may be adopting policy-seeking rather than vote-seeking strategies. Thus, the next section examines what the findings tell us about the role of institutions in structuring the politics of basic income.

9.3.3 The transformation thesis: institutions matter

The thesis has also focused on the role of institutions in structuring the politics of basic income. The theoretical framework asserted that existing welfare state institutions were an important constraint on the ability of political actors to successfully implement basic income reforms but also an influence on the level of support and the nature of political competition on basic income. The “nature” of political competition alludes to the types of political actors and voters that see a basic income in their interests, and the related *rationales* or motivations for advocating basic income.

The findings across empirical chapters provided inconsistent evidence on the effect of institutions on the overall level of support for basic income. Firstly, unlike previous studies that included CEE countries or Russia and Israel, the voter preferences analysis did not point to a relationship between the lack of existing provision, whether measured by social expenditure or the replacement rate for social assistance, and greater country-level support for basic income among advanced welfare states. Indeed, if anything, the opposite was the case for cash (and unemployment benefit) expenditure as a share of GDP and total social expenditure: higher levels of expenditure were associated with higher support for basic income.

Yet, the effect of institutions on the nature of political competition was more conclusive. The empirical findings from all chapters supported the ‘incongruence’ thesis outlined in Chapter 3, which suggests that that the dimensions of a basic income that would most transform the existing institutional context are also the most salient. Basic income itself is an ambiguous policy instrument, both in terms of the way in which it can be designed but also framed and interpreted by political actors and voters. Yet, it is most attractive as a way to attract support from those that want to transform the existing welfare state, which occurs at times when there is institutional dysfunction.

This also highlights that, while the quantitative analysis relied on institutional data that draws out long-term “sticky” comparative differences, the case studies also pointed to *proximate* welfare state reform as being vital for structuring the politics of basic income. Long-term institutional structures are inevitably an important constraint on feasible reforms that basic income advocates can hope to implement. Yet, the salience of particular dimensions of basic

income in a given context may be driven by more *short-term* policy decisions and concerns, which relates as much to the nature of party competition as to the institutional context.

Finally, there were questions about how *electoral* institutions influence the partisan politics of basic income. For a start, the ownership of basic income from smaller new left parties points to an important reason why electoral systems matter; majoritarian systems crowd out the main advocates of a basic income. The comparative case studies were able to draw this out by identifying the way in which Finnish new left parties in favour of basic income, the Left Alliance and the Green League, were at least able to steer policy in the direction that they advocated. This is ultimately an explanation of the relative strength of basic income-supporting parties across institutional contexts.

9.3.4 The political feasibility of a basic income: translating support into policy reform?

The introductory chapter and the subsequent review of literature and theory implied that the economic (i.e. trilemma), political and institutional constraints that exist in all advanced welfare states make implementation of even a moderately large basic income nigh impossible. Although many advocates would of course contest this (e.g. Torry, 2016), the evidence in the manifesto analysis and the two case studies served to strongly reinforce this underlying assertion. Firstly, support for basic income came mostly from small parties or those outside government, with commitments to *introduce* the policy in manifestos even more restricted to these parties. Similarly, in the elite interviews for the UK and Finland case studies, no political actors indicated that they thought implementation of a basic income was feasible, in the short-term at least.

While the manifesto analysis also indicated that the current wave of party support for basic income is greater than previous waves, the lack of policy success during past spikes in political support prompts a sense that history is repeating itself. Evocatively, in the UK case (and in international media), the repeated cliché that basic income was ‘an idea whose time has come’ echoed the words of the Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown in the late 1980s (or the US media in the 1960s)¹⁴¹. Thus, there are reasons to dismiss much of the ups and downs of support for basic income as the mere fluctuations of ‘cheap support’ (De Wispelaere, 2015b). The case studies indicated that even at an election where the coded level

¹⁴¹ There were two other notable parallels. Firstly, in similar exercises of renewing a vision of social security for the social democratic left, Commission on Social Justice’s endorsement of a participation income in 1994 was repeated in the Fabian Society’s report in 2016. On the right, in 2013 the Adam Smith Institute’s Sam Bowman advocated basic income as a symbol of ‘bleeding heart libertarianism’ echoing the journalist and author Sam Brittan who supported basic income’s role in creating ‘capitalism with a human face’.

of support was very high, the percentage of votes won by parties in favour of basic income was over 30% in Finland in 2015 and the UK in 2019¹⁴², the level of commitment and the subsequent legislative progress made by parties was extremely limited.

However, the research sought to move *beyond* the notion of ‘cheap support’ by examining and attempting to explain the precise commitments that parties have made and the concrete legislative behaviour of parties in favour of basic income that reach government. It is clear that in many cases ‘cheap support’ or ‘constructive ambiguity’ (Clasen, 2019, pp.2–3) is a deliberate strategy. For example, the long-standing debate in Finland, including political actors that have been involved in the discussion for over thirty years, means it is impossible to claim that pure ignorance lies behind support for basic income from the Centre Party. While the manifesto analysis coded four types of commitments, the case studies provided more detail on the process and eventual outcome of party proposals as well as the intra-party dynamics. The picture that emerges is of two main strategies that parties supportive of basic income adopt: ‘diversion’ or ‘gradualism’.

The strategy of ‘diversion’ is labelled as such because parties seek to simultaneously signal their preference to radically ‘divert’ from the existing system, while also ‘diverting’ from proposals to implement basic income. The former diversion serves the purpose discussed in the previous section: to use basic income as a symbol of critique for the existing social security system. The latter diversion is to maintain a supportive or at least ambivalent position on basic income without committing to introducing the policy. In colloquial terms, it is the ‘kicking the can down the road’ strategy. An obvious reason for adopting such a strategy is member enthusiasm amidst senior suspicion or parliamentary division, which is particularly likely in bigger parties that may get into or even lead a government.

The most prominent diversion strategy in recent years has been the rise of basic income experiments, which was evident in the behaviour of the Centre Party in Finland and the SNP and Labour in the UK. Indeed, the party manifesto analysis showed that such commitments were *more* common among larger parties. While decisions about experimental design and the level of financial commitment eventually cannot be put off forever, at least some responsibility for the design can be outsourced to civil servants or commissioned to research groups as in both Finland and Scotland, with KELA and the four local authorities respectively. Of the other commitments explored in the manifesto analysis, the

¹⁴² 2019 elections were not included in the manifesto analysis.

commissioning of government reports or Green Papers, such as in Ireland (Healy and Reynolds, 2012), would fit within this type of strategy.

The second party strategy, ‘gradualism’, is exemplified by the approach described in the Finnish case and taken by the Green League and the Left Alliance to push for reforms that were construed as ‘steps towards’ basic income. The concept of ‘gradualism’ draws on the proposal to move cautiously towards basic income by Offe (2001). Yet, it was also pursued by the Scottish Greens as well that occupied a similar position within a proportional electoral system in the Scottish Parliament. Within these ‘gradualist’ strategies, examples could be as “cheap” as the introduction of a real-time income register (as the Green League in Finland proposed in 2015 and 2019) or as “expensive” as abolishing sanctions for certain benefits or increasing universal child benefits (as the Scottish Greens proposed when benefits were devolved). The evidence suggests that this is most typical in coalition politics, among smaller parties in government with a commitment to the principle of basic income.

As the previous chapter discussed, from the perspective of advocates, the success of the strategy of ‘gradualism’ is likely to rely on whether the reforms are genuine concrete steps towards basic income. In many cases, the reforms proposed may be better described as *alternatives* that meet many of the same goals, such as raising the level of basic security benefits in Finland. From an explanatory perspective, there are also important questions about whether the parties that advocate basic income have sufficient agency to steer reforms in the direction they wish or if basic income is a useful frame for justifying the reforms that would have happened anyway. More evidence would be needed to judge the merits of either argument. Nevertheless, the identification of these two different strategies also helps to reinforce the distinction between vote-seeking and policy-seeking in the *advocacy* of basic income. Internal pressure from within parties (policy-seeking) leads to the diversion strategy adopted by many major parties, while the representation of pro-basic income voters (vote-seeking) leads to gradualism.

9.4 Limitations

This section identifies the main limitations to the research methods employed in this study, starting with the potential problems with the overarching mixed-methods approach and then discussing issues in each empirical section individually.

Although there were many evident benefits to a mixed-methods approach in terms of triangulating evidence across different lenses, there were two main limitations that are discussed in more detail below. The first concerns the inconsistency in relation to how basic income was defined across the empirical chapters. This meant it was difficult to isolate the

precise reasons why results may vary across parties and voters or cases. To some extent, the case studies were an opportunity to interrogate the operationalisation of key concepts, specifically the notion of support and how this translated into policymaking. However, in doing so, the conclusions are mixed. The second potential drawback with the research design was the possibility of bias as a result of the sequential analysis.

Turning to limitations with individual empirical sections, an obvious disadvantage of the party manifesto analysis was the reliance on election manifestos collected by the Comparative Manifestos Project. This limits the data to elections every four or five years, which may miss important fluctuations in support between that time. The manifestos were also variable in length, which raised the possibility of bias, while many data points were not manifestos due to the poor quality of some of the CMP database (Hansen, 2008). In addition to the quality of manifesto data, the *coding* of manifestos was also subject to interpretation across different coders. Although the validation exercises provided confidence in the main variable, which indicated whether a party supported basic income or a cognate at a given election, the consistency between coders was less robust for indicators for commitments and rationales.

With the voter preferences analysis, there were three main drawbacks to the use of the European Social Survey data and the inferences drawn from it. First, the ESS survey question was arguably biased towards a specific *type* of basic income as it mentions a *purpose* for basic income: ‘to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living’. Thus, as alluded to in the previous section, the mismatch between the findings for parties and voters could be primarily methodological rather than substantive. The question was too geared towards basic income’s redistributive potential and the promise of providing an adequate level of benefit, which likely attracts the broad swathe of left-wing voters including social democrats and socialist parties. Equally, such a frame is likely to turn off liberal voters.

Second, the data was unable to directly analyse the multi-dimensionality of basic income constituencies, in the sense of comparing support for different *models* of basic income rather than ideological drivers. Finally, the country-level analysis, including the cross-level interactions, is limited by the number of cases (Spicker, 2017). There was also a more general issue with survey questions that ask about hypothetical welfare policy reforms about which voters have low levels of knowledge. In particular, the fact that the ESS survey does not provide a response option for ‘neither support or oppose’ may mean that the analysis of basic income preferences is misreading a high levels of ‘non-attitudes’ (Converse, 1974).

Finally, while the choice of two cases where there has been a marked increase in support for basic income was justified by the need to understand the relationship between political support and the feasibility of basic income-related reforms, such as experiments or steps, this case selection was less well-suited to the task of explaining why higher support exists in the first place in comparison to countries with minimal support for basic income. Moreover, the conclusions drawn about the institutional and socio-economic determinants of support may not be generalisable to other contexts. These two cases could be anomalies. The case studies relied significantly on the interviews with political actors. Yet participants were recruited partly through the use of existing contacts in Finland and the UK, and snowballing techniques. Both could bias the sample if, for example, interviewees recommended that I speak to those who will tell a similar account of events or provide similar justifications for political events. However, the access to multiple data sources enabled me to assess the consistency of actor positions as well as any contradictions or ‘inaccuracies’ in the telling of events.

9.5 Future research

There are still many questions about the drivers of party and voter support for basic income that the data collected and/or used in this study could help to answer. For example, a wider set of country-level (socioeconomic or institutional) variables, such as conditionality or benefit generosity, could examine the contextual drivers of party support, while more fine-grained ideological party positions could better explain the parties that support the policy. Regarding voter preferences, the thesis did not have space to examine the surprising relationship between gender and support for basic income. Future research could analyse what explains lower support among women vis-à-vis men, which is particularly significant in advanced welfare states. Interactions with labour market and relationship status may provide interesting results.

However, to test the theories developed in the party and voter analysis further, future research must also focus on the collection of new data. One suggestion would be to code manifestos for additional countries to increase the data for analysis, building on the coding framework developed for this thesis, and implementing a validation procedure equivalent to or more advanced than the one carried out for this work. In a similar vein, additional political documents could be analysed in a systematic manner to gauge party support or other forms of political support.

Regarding the voter preferences analysis, there are two fruitful lines of enquiry. The first is to replicate the European Social Survey question across different time periods and advanced

welfare states, e.g. the four surveys conducted in Germany (Adriaans et al., 2019). Longitudinal data on basic income preferences would help to examine the effect of within-country variation in contextual factors. With sufficient data over a longer period of time, longitudinal data could also separate ageing and cohort effects from the robust cross-sectional relationship between age and basic income preferences. The second would be to examine attitudes in a way that taps into the multi-dimensionality of basic income outlined in this thesis, including conjoint experiments (e.g. Rincon, 2019; Stadelmann-Steffen & Dermont, 2019) or qualitative research.

As well as providing some answers to the research questions and exploring the mechanisms by which voters, parties and institutions interact in more detail, the case studies also highlighted some alternative determining factors in the politics of basic income. Two of these factors that could be broadly identified in the case studies but not reintegrated into the quantitative analysis were bureaucratic and union politics. The role of the bureaucracy and civil servants as political actors, not just the implementation issues to resolve (De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2012). In both the UK (Scottish) and Finnish case studies, civil servants at a senior level were instinctively hostile to basic income. This built on the claim made by Torry (2016) that the success of benefit reform in the UK depended on the continued support of the bureaucracy and the lack of threat to their employment. This is particularly important given the distance between the abstract idea of a basic income and the practical implementation.

Similarly, while it was clear that labour union preferences were also not fully explored, identifying a meeting point between pure basic income, which is rarely advocated anyway, and a model the unions would endorse, such as with the Greens and Left Alliance's 'steps', is worthy of further research. This leads onto another related question: why do some new left parties *not* support basic income? In both case studies, all parties on the non-social democratic left were in favour of basic income. The preferences analysis pointed to a particularly large divide between graduates and non-graduates within new left parties in terms of support for basic income. Exploring the extent to which this determines the support of new left parties will have an important bearing on the findings of this thesis .

Finally, while it is argued that the institutional context has an important bearing on the problems perceived by political actors, there is not a guaranteed link. The key mechanism is the widespread acceptance of a given policy problem, which basic income attaches itself to. The story of the politics of basic income is also incomplete without an understanding of policy transfer across countries and jurisdictions (De Wispelaere, 2016). Basic income has

clearly been an international phenomenon, with the idea travelling across countries, and the surge of interest in Scotland and other places not independent of events in other countries. Understanding and explaining this ideational process is worthy of future research.

9.6 Conclusion

The thesis sought to answer three broad research questions that helped to indicate the political feasibility of basic income. Firstly, what are the determinants of political support for basic income? The broad factors explored, ideological, socioeconomic and institutional, were used to explain support among both parties and voters. While support was most robust on the left of the political spectrum, the cultural dimension explained more of why parties support basic income. In terms of socioeconomic drivers, the analysis identified the role of unemployment in prompting greater levels of support. However, the expansion of higher education and the simultaneous increasing salience of the cultural dimension of politics may also help to explain the increased levels of support.

The second main research question concerned how and why support for basic income varies across time and countries? The central argument of the thesis has been that the *institutional context* explains the variation in actors and rationales. Specifically, the *incongruence* of given characteristics of the existing welfare state with a basic income will be the most salient aspects of the debate and likely attract political actors that seek to transform the welfare state on that front. This was evidenced in all empirical sections.

However, the final question considers how support for basic income translates into legislative behaviour? While a basic income in its pure form is largely unfeasible in the short-term, the thesis identified two main strategies that parties supportive of basic income adopt, ‘diversion’ or ‘gradualism’. The former has seen the emergence of policy experiments pursued by major governmental parties across Europe, while the latter involves smaller parties dedicated to basic income attempting to steer the welfare state in the desired direction. Advocates of a basic income may wish to consider which of these strategies, if any, they find most attractive.

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Appendix

Table A1: The three tiers of multi-dimensional basic income politics: schemes, cognates and steps

	Dimensions	Factors	Examples of policies
UBI schemes (1)	Level	MIS vs. "Token"	See Martinelli (2017)
	Political community	Unit (Supra-national vs. National vs. Local) + Eligibility (Residency vs. Citizenship)	Global resources dividend (Pogge, 2001) vs. Euro-Dividend (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2001) vs. Alaskan PFD (Widerquist and Howard, 2012)
	Tax/funding source	Income Tax vs. New Taxes vs. Sovereign Wealth Fund vs. Helicopter Money	Income tax (Stirling and Arnold, 2019) vs. New taxes (Howard, 2012) vs. SWF (Lansley et al., 2018) vs. ESGs/QE for the people (Standing, 2011b)
	Other social spending	Replacement vs. Supplement	Replacement (Murray, 2006; Martinelli, 2017) vs. Supplement (Torry, 2016a; Reed and Lansley, 2016)
Cognates (2)	Coverage	Universal vs. Categorical	Citizen's (universal) pensions (The Green Party of England and Wales, 2010) vs. Universal child benefits (Harrop and Tait, 2017) vs. Youth basic income (Spies-Butcher and Henderson, 2019)
	Tax-benefit system	Payment vs. Tax Credit	Negative income tax (Friedman, 1962; Block and Manza, 1997)
	Conditionality (work)	Unconditional vs. Conditional	Participation income (Atkinson, 1996)
	Reciprocity	Individual vs. Household	Household basic income (Sanzo & Pinilla, 2013[2004])
	Frequency	Regular vs. Endowment	Paine (2004[1797]) or Stakeholder grants (Ackerman and Alstott, 2004)
	Duration	Permanent vs. Limited	Sabbatical grants (Offe and de Deken, 2013) or Universal Basic Opportunity-Funds (Painter et al., 2018)
Steps (3)	Level	Minimum income floor	e.g. increase level of GMI
	Coverage	Categories of entitlement	e.g. extend access to self-employed
	Tax-benefit	Integration	e.g. convert tax allowances into benefit
	Conditionality (work)	Behavioural requirements and sanctions	e.g. remove sanctions from benefits
	Reciprocity	Household unit	e.g. remove household means-test / individualise tax
	Frequency	Payment schedule	e.g. increase frequency of benefit payments (from yearly to monthly)
	Uniformity	Harmonisation	e.g. merge benefits / harmonise levels
	Duration	Length of entitlement	e.g. extend length of entitlement to benefits
	Modality	Vouchers / conditions of use for benefits	e.g. convert vouchers into benefit
	Non-withdrawability	Work allowances / taper rates	e.g. enable combining earnings and benefits

Table A2: Manifesto data sources

Country	Source(s)
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data 19 party manifestos retrieved from: www.nsd.uib.no ▪ Party websites ▪ SV 2013 retrieved from: https://www.sv.no/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/130317-vedtatt-arbeidsprogram-2013-til-2017-med-vanmerke-1.pdf ▪ Høyre 2017 retrieved from: https://hoyre.no/aktuelt/nyheter/2017/nytt-partiprogram-stortingsvalg-hoyre-program-stortinget-valg-2017/
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finnish Social Science Data Archive 10 party manifestos retrieved from: www.fsd.uta.fi
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Party websites ▪ Ecolo 2014 retrieved from: https://ecolo.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/manifeste_politique_ecolo_2013v3-2.pdf
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ University of Groningen Political Parties Repository ▪ 24 party manifestos retrieved from: https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Party websites ▪ DP 2018 retrieved from: https://www.dp.lu/sites/default/files/cw2018/wpdl/DP-Programme-electoral-2018.pdf ▪ CSV 2018 retrieved from: https://scheffleng.csv.lu/2018/09/csv-wahlprogramm/ ▪ LSAP 2018 retrieved from: https://www.lsap.lu/wp-content/uploads/Wahlprogramm-2018_new.pdf ▪ Gréng 2018 retrieved from: https://moien.lu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/dei-greng-Wahlprogramm-2018.pdf ▪ ADR 2018 retrieved from: https://adr.lu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PK_Walprogramm_Programm.pdf ▪ Déi Lénk 2018 retrieved from: http://www.dei-lenk.lu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/dei-Lenk_Wahlprogramm_07.06.2018.pdf ▪ Pirate Party 2018 retrieved from: https://www.piraten.lu/programm/ - downloadable from https://issuu.com/piratepartei/docs/wahlprogramm
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Libero L'Unione 2006 retrieved from: https://digilander.libero.it/karmaproductions/politica/programma-unione.pdf ▪ USIGRai ▪ CdL 2006 retrieved from: http://www.decesare.info/programma_cdL2006.pdf
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Party websites ▪ CDS 1983 retrieved from: https://www.cds.pt/pdf/mo%E7F5es/programas/ManifestoEleitoral1983.pdf ▪ CDS 1987 retrieved from: https://www.cds.pt/pdf/mo%E7F5es/programas/ManifestoEleitoral1987.pdf ▪ CDS 1991 retrieved from: https://www.cds.pt/pdf/mo%E7F5es/programas/ProgramaEleitoral1991.pdf ▪ CDS 1995 retrieved from: https://www.cds.pt/pdf/mo%E7F5es/programas/ProgramadeGoverno1995.pdf ▪ CDS 1999 retrieved from: https://www.cds.pt/pdf/mo%E7F5es/programas/ProgramadeGoverno1999.pdf ▪ Miscellaneous website ▪ CDS 1985 retrieved from: http://cds-barcelos.com/?page_id=65
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political Science Resources ▪ 25 manifestos retrieved from: https://www.politicsresources.net/
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Irish Left Archive ▪ Green Party 1989 retrieved from: https://www.leftarchive.ie/document/view/306/

Table A3: Average no. of quasi-sentences for manifestos that support basic income vs. others

	Obs.	Mean	Std. Err	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Non-BI support	1,030	1007.2	34.8	1117.3	938.9	1075.5
BI support	61	1144.8	143.6	1121.6	857.6	1432.1

Table A4: Average number of quasi-sentences across countries

Country	Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
Sweden	331.7	311.6	77
Norway	2017.2	856.6	57
Denmark	182.3	167.4	95
Finland	277.5	305.7	75
Belgium	1530.3	1688.9	107
Netherlands	1413.1	770.7	116
Luxembourg	1305.3	725.6	39
France	281	278.9	62
Italy	735.4	1127.9	113
Spain	1705.3	1274.2	121
Portugal	1127.3	1250.8	75
Germany	1328.2	1184.9	52
Austria	870.9	759.9	50
UK	798.2	457.3	60
Ireland	770.0	689.6	65
Total	995.9	1102.0	1,164

Table A5: Basic income keywords in each country

Country (Language(s))	Keyword
Austria/Germany (German)	Grundeinkommen, BGE, bürgergeld, negativen Einkommensteuer
Belgium (French and Flemish)	Revenu de base, revenu universel, revenu d'existence, allocation universelle, revenu citoyen, grundeinkommen, BGE, <i>impôt négatif</i> , <i>bürgergeld</i> , <i>negativen Einkommensteuer</i>
Denmark (Danish)	Borgerløn, basisindkomst, <i>negativ indkomstskat</i>
Finland (Finnish)	Perustulo, kansalaispalkka, kansalaistulo, <i>negatiivinen tulovero</i>
France (French)	Revenu de base, revenu universel, revenu d'existence, allocation universelle, revenu citoyen, <i>impôt négatif</i>
Ireland/UK (English)	Basic income, citizens income, UBI, negative income tax, minimum income (Ireland)
Italy (Italian)	Reddito di base, reddito di cittadinanza, <i>imposta negativa</i>
Luxembourg (Luxemburgish, German and French)	Grondakommes, grundeinkommen, BGE, revenu de base, revenu universel, revenu d'existence, allocation universelle, revenu citoyen, <i>negativ Akommessteier</i> , <i>bürgergeld</i> , <i>negativen Einkommensteuer</i> , <i>impôt négatif</i>
Netherlands (Dutch)	Basisinkomen, negatieve inkomstenbelasting
Norway (Norwegian)	Borgerlønn, samfunnslønn, grunninntekt, borgerinntekt, <i>negativ inntektsskatt</i>
Portugal (Portuguese)	Rendimento básico, rendimento de cidadania, <i>imposto negativo</i>
Spain (Spanish)	Renta básica, ingreso ciudadano, <i>impuesto negativo</i>
Sweden (Swedish)	Basinkomst, medborgarlön, grundinkomsten, <i>negativ inkomstskatt</i>

MANIFESTO CODING

Please note that most documents are taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project dataset, but not all extracts are from election manifestos. In cases where no manifesto is issued by the party or a manifesto cannot be sourced, the CMP dataset assigns policy documents, key speeches or conference proceedings from that election. Where possible, I source the relevant election manifesto from elsewhere but if a manifesto was not produced, the analysis uses these alternative documents.

Please read the extract from each manifesto and tick the boxes that most accurately represent the text. Add comments if there are problems with classification. For each category, multiple boxes can be ticked (e.g. a manifesto may express support for a basic income in the long-term and negative income tax in the short-term). Some further guidance is given below:

Policy coding

- Tick 'Cognate' if: (1) a negative income tax is mentioned or (2) an appropriate term for basic income is mentioned but the extract clearly refers to a conditional policy or one targeted at specific groups.
- Tick 'Basic income' if: (1) the extract is clearly referring to a basic income or (2) the appropriate term is mentioned but the extract is vague about what the policy is.
- Add comments in the box below if you know relevant details about the party policy. If there are additional election manifestos that should be included, please fill it in at the bottom of this page. Note manifestos that express opposition to basic income are not included in the survey below.

Commitments

- Tick 'Introduce policy' if the extract indicates it will be implemented in this parliamentary period
- Tick 'Experiment / test' if the extract indicates support for an experiment or test of basic income
- Tick 'Investigate / explore' if the extract indicates support for a commission or increasing public debate
- Tick 'Long-term goal' if the extract indicates it will *not* be implemented in this parliamentary period and/or other reforms will take precedence/constitute short-term steps towards basic income
- Leave all boxes blank if no commitment applies

Rationale

- Tick 'Social rights' if the aim of reducing poverty, reducing (economic) inequality, increasing take-up or guaranteeing a minimum standard of living is mentioned
- Tick 'Simplify' if the aim of simplifying benefits, increasing transparency, reducing fraud, harmonising access or reducing bureaucracy is mentioned
- Tick 'Activation' if the aim of increasing employment/reducing unemployment or increasing labour market incentives is mentioned
- Tick 'Post-productivist' if the aim of valorising unpaid work, increasing freedom, facilitating new lifestyles/creative activities, reducing working hours, supporting care work or decoupling income from work is mentioned
- Tick 'Social inequalities' if the aim of reducing gender inequality, reducing stigma, reducing social exclusion, increasing social participation, increasing solidarity, increasing dignity or increasing citizenship is mentioned
- Tick 'Economic development' if miscellaneous aims related to increasing economic activity in certain sectors, e.g. agriculture, research, technology, or regions, e.g. towns, rural areas
- Tick 'Retrenchment' if the aim of cutting costs or reducing the level of benefits is mentioned
- Tick 'Precarity' if the aim of increasing coverage for atypical/part-time/temporary workers or self-employed, facilitating marginal/flexible employment or increasing economic security is mentioned

Figure A1: Manifesto coding validation questionnaire: instructions

NORWAY

Keywords: 'borgerlønn', 'grunninntekt', 'negativ inntektsskatt', 'samfunnslønn', 'borgerinntekt'

Party	1981	1985	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017
Labour Party (A)										
Conservative Party (H)										
Centre Party (Sp)										
Socialist Left Party (SV)										
Christian People's Party (KrF)										
Progress Party (FrP)										
Liberal Party (V)										
Red Electoral Alliance/Red Party (R)										
Non-Partisan Deputies/Coastal Party (KP)										
Green Party (MDG)										

Initial manifesto coding:

- ■ Pro-BI
- ■ Pro-Cognate
- ■ Anti-BI
- ■ No reference to BI
- ■ Party did not contest election/did not win seat
- No manifesto data

Additional election manifestos that advocated a basic income or cognate:

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Figure A2: Manifesto coding validation questionnaire: example of country front page

1993; Liberal (V)				
<p>Kapittel 6: Gjenreis hverdagssolidariteten</p> <p>55: Utredning av ""samfunnslønn"" For Venstre er det uakseptabelt at menneske-verdet kobles til om man er i lønnet arbeid, eller ikke. Inntekt fra tradisjonelt lønnsarbeid kan ikke være eneste mulighet til å dekke grunnleggende materielle behov. Ikke minst i tider med høy arbeidsledighet er det vesentlig å gi folk større mulighet til å gå inn og ut av arbeidslivet for å dele mer på arbeidet. For å redusere det skarpe skillet mellom lønnet og ulønnet arbeid ønsker Venstre en form for ""samfunnslønn"" for alle voksne, og foreslår en offentlig utredning av dette. Samfunnslønn må erstatte eksisterende ordninger som studielån, stipender, overgangsstonad til enslige forsørgere, en del trygder o.l., eller kunne knyttes til aktiv samfunnsnyttig innstas. Lønnsordningen bør i første omgang innføres for arbeidsledige og til personer som samfunnet ønsker skal være utenfor arbeidsmarkedet, som studenter, personer som tar etterutdanning, spebarns-foreldre, vernepliktige o. a. Med andre ord en rekke grupper som i dag faller inn under de forskjellige ordninger for støtte. På denne måten vil bl. a. byråkrati og administrasjons-oppgaver ved alle de forskjellige ordninger kunne falle bort. En mer omfattende ordning vil kunne erstatte og favne bredere enn dagens statsstipendier, kunstnerlønninger, støtte til kulturgrupper osv. og dermed stimulere til større mangfold av kulturaktiviteter. Nivået på en slik avlønning må ikke bli høyere enn at det fortsatt vil lønne seg å arbeide.</p>				
Policy coding	<input type="checkbox"/> Basic income	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognate	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither	
Click or tap here to enter text.				
Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Experiment / test	<input type="checkbox"/> Investigate / explore	<input type="checkbox"/> Long-term goal
Click or tap here to enter text.				
Rationale	<input type="checkbox"/> Social rights	<input type="checkbox"/> Simplify	<input type="checkbox"/> Activation	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-productivist
	<input type="checkbox"/> Social inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/> Retrenchment	<input type="checkbox"/> Precarity
Click or tap here to enter text.				

Figure A3: Manifesto coding validation questionnaire: example of extract from manifesto

Table A6: Validation coding – percentage overlap between original coding and other expert coding

Country	No. of cases	BI coding (1)	Commit. coding (1)	Rationale coding (1)	BI coding (2)	Commit. coding (2)	Rationale coding (2)	Total average consistency
Austria	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	20	88.5%	92.5%	90%	-	-	-	90%
Denmark	6	100%	92.7%	100%	-	-	-	97.3%
Finland	14	100%	93.3%	87.5%	90%	81.7%	84.2%	93.6% + 85.3%
France	5	90%	100%	82.5%	-	-	-	90.8%
Germany	11	100%	91.6%	92.7%	100%	89.6%	82.3%	95.8% + 90.6%
Ireland	14	86.7%	83.3%	80%	-	-	-	83.3%
Italy	4	100%	87.5%	90.6%	87.5%	81.3%	84.4%	92.7% + 84.4%
Luxembourg	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	19	95.2%	85.7%	89.3%	95.2%	82.1%	80.4%	90.1% + 85.9%
Norway	9	94.4%	75%	80.6%	-	-	-	83.3%
Portugal	1	100%	75%	87.5%	-	-	-	87.5%
Spain	13	83.3%	89.6%	86.5%	-	-	-	86.5%
Sweden	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK	4	100%	87.5%	87.5%	-	-	-	91.7%

Table A7: Party families and classification process

Party family	Party classification process ¹⁴³
Ecological parties of the were classified as regional/ethnic parties.	European Green Party (EGP)
Socialist or other left parties	Party of the European Left (PEL) and Nordic Green-Left Alliance (NGLA)
Social democrat parties	Party of European Socialists (PES) or Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
Liberal parties	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR)
Christian democratic parties	European People's Party (EPP)
Conservative parties	European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR) and European Democrats (ED)
Nationalist parties	Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe (ADDE), Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) and Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)
Regional / ethnic parties	European Free Alliance (EFA)
Special issue parties	Unclassified

¹⁴³ Initially, Pan-European grouping (The earliest classification available was used and held constant for all subsequent elections to keep the system in line with the Comparative Manifesto Project). If not available, discretionary classification based on the party's name, the party's stated ideology or the party's lineage. Otherwise, classified as special issue.

Table A8: Descriptive statistics of party characteristics for manifesto analysis

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
rile	1,170	-4.56	20.72	-64.29	64.71
welfare	1,170	13.30	7.64	0	41.98
ecorile	1,167	-16.85	16.44	-73.57	55
libauth	1,170	-9.56	16.89	-73.04	56.10
pervote	1,335	11.13	11.92	0	51.29
perseats	1,335	0.11	0.14	0	0.63
govopp	1,335	0.25	0.43	0	1
rile_ratio	1,170	-0.12	0.40	-1	1
ecorile_ratio	1,165	0.48	0.40	-0.92593	1
libauth_ratio	1,169	0.30	0.44	-1	1

Table A9: CMP variables coded categories for manifesto analysis

Variables	Left/Libertarian categories	Right/Authoritarian categories
rile	Anti-Imperialism, Military: Negative, Peace, Internationalism: Positive, Market Regulation, Economic Planning, Protectionism: Positive, Controlled Economy, Nationalisation, Welfare State Expansion, Education Expansion, Labour Groups: Positive, Democracy.	Military: Positive, Freedom and Human Rights, Constitutionalism: Positive, Political Authority, Free Market Economy, Incentives: Positive, Protectionism: Negative, Economic Orthodoxy, Welfare State Limitation, National Way of Life: Positive, Traditional Morality: Positive, Law and Order: Positive, Civic Mindedness: Positive.
ecorile	Market Regulation, Economic Planning, Corporatism/Mixed Economy, Protectionism: Positive, Keynesian Demand Management, Controlled Economy, Nationalisation, Marxist Analysis, Equality: Positive, Welfare State Expansion, Education Expansion, Labour Groups: Positive.	Free Market Economy, Incentives: Positive, Protectionism: Negative, Economic Growth: Positive, Economic Orthodoxy, Welfare State Limitation, Education Limitation, Labour Groups: Negative.
libauth	Freedom and Human Rights, Democracy, Anti-Growth Economy: Positive, Environmental Protection, Culture: Positive, National Way of Life: Negative, Traditional Morality: Negative, Multiculturalism: Positive, Underprivileged Minority Groups, Non-economic Demographic Groups.	Political Authority, National Way of Life: Positive, Traditional Morality: Negative, Law and Order: Positive, Civic Mindedness: Positive, Multiculturalism: Negative.

Table A10: Country-level variables for manifesto analysis

Variable	Source and formula
GDP	Figures were retrieved from European Commission's AMECO database ¹⁴⁴ . GDP is provided at 2010 market prices in the national currency. The figures in national currency were then converted into euros using the European Central Bank reference exchange rate ¹⁴⁵ for 2010.
GDP growth	This was derived from the GDP figure above by calculating year-by-year change as a proportion of the previous year's GDP: $\text{GDP growth}_t = ((\text{GDP}_t - \text{GDP}_{t-1}) / \text{GDP}_{t-1}) * 100$
Unemployment rate	Figures were retrieved from European Commissions's AMECO database ¹⁴⁶ .
Unemployment rate 3-year & 5-year average	Both variables were derived from the above figures as follows: $\text{UE}_{3\text{YA}} = (\text{UE}_t + \text{UE}_{t-1} + \text{UE}_{t-2}) / 3$ $\text{UE}_{5\text{YA}} = (\text{UE}_t + \text{UE}_{t-1} + \text{UE}_{t-2} + \text{UE}_{t-3} + \text{UE}_{t-4}) / 5$
Social expenditure	All data were retrieved from aggregated data on OECD.Stat (2019). Figures were given as a percentage of GDP.

Table A11: Robustness checks excluding Denmark (Multivariate models [all covariates included] country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects with SE clustered at country level)

Variable	Basic income only	Basic income and cognates
Unemployment rate	0.282** (0.139)	0.195*** (0.057)
GDP growth	0.078 (0.141)	0.053 (0.074)
Social expenditure	0.010 (0.132)	0.028 (0.080)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.000 (0.023)	-0.018 (0.017)
Lib.-Auth. scale	0.077*** (0.018)	0.063*** (0.016)
Welfare	0.008 (0.033)	-0.002 (0.033)
In government	-0.938** (0.422)	-0.563 (0.457)

¹⁴⁴ The key for each country's data is AME.A.***.1.0.0.0.OVGD where *** is an individual country's three-letter abbreviation (e.g. AUT for Austria or BEL for Belgium).

¹⁴⁵ The key for each currency's data is EXR.A.***.EUR.SP00.A where *** is a currency's three-letter abbreviation (e.g. DKK for Danish Krone, GBP for British Pounds)

¹⁴⁶ The key for each country's data is AME.A.***.1.0.0.0.ZUTN where *** is an individual country's three-letter abbreviation (e.g. see above).

Table A12: Regression interactions robustness checks excluding Denmark (Multivariate models [all covariates included] country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects with SE clustered at country level)

Variable	Basic income only	Basic income & cognates
L-R scale (Eco)	0.124** (0.060)	0.120* (0.068)
Social expenditure	0.129 (0.158)	0.144* (0.085)
L-R scale (Eco) X Social expenditure	-0.005* (0.003)	-0.006** (0.003)
New left party	-4.68* (2.55)	-
Social expenditure	-0.082 (0.133)	-
New left X Social expenditure	0.308*** (0.093)	-

Table A13: Mean ratio measure¹⁴⁷ characteristics of parties that support basic income vs. parties that do not (95% confidence intervals in square brackets; significance of difference between parties given below)

	L-R ratio	L-R (Eco.) ratio	Lib-Auth ratio
Basic income support	-0.346 [-0.421; -0.271]	0.713 [0.646; 0.781]	0.554 [0.475; 0.632]
No basic income support	-0.105 [-0.129; -0.080]	0.471 [0.446; 0.496]	0.278 [0.251; 0.305]
<i>Diff.</i>	***	***	***
BI/cognate support	-0.288 [-0.347; -0.230]	0.625 [0.565; 0.684]	0.526 [0.467; 0.585]
No BI/cognate support	-0.098 [-0.124; -0.073]	0.468 [0.443; 0.494]	0.266 [0.238; 0.294]
<i>Diff.</i>	***	***	***
N=	1098	1095	1097

* p<0.1 **p<0.05 *** p<0.01

¹⁴⁷ The formula for the left-right measures is $(\Sigma R - \Sigma L) / (\Sigma R + \Sigma L)$ where R represents a right-wing category and L represents a left-wing category.

Table A14: Regression robustness checks using ratio measures (Multivariate models [all covariates included] country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects with SE clustered at country level)

Variable	Basic income only	Basic income and cognates
Unemployment rate	0.284** (0.127)	0.202*** (0.055)
GDP growth	0.019 (0.119)	0.025 (0.070)
Social expenditure	-0.080 (0.132)	-0.019 (0.079)
L-R ratio (Eco)	1.296** (0.632)	0.348 (0.691)
Lib.-Auth. ratio	2.937*** (0.703)	2.092*** (0.754)
Welfare (scale)	-0.031 (0.025)	-0.048* (0.028)
In government	-0.671 (0.446)	-0.488 (0.466)

* p<0.1 **p<0.05 *** p<0.01

Table A15: Regressions predicting basic income only (robustness checks for alternative measures of unemployment)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Unemployment rate 3YA	0.063 (0.058)	0.150*** (0.046)	0.121 (0.084)	0.208** (0.110)
Unemployment rate	0.044 (0.055)	0.083 (0.079)	0.083 (0.089)	0.176 (0.120)

Model specifications: (1) Bivariate pooled regression (2) Bivariate country fixed effects (SE clustered at country level); (3) Bivariate country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects (SE clustered at country level); (4) Multivariate (all covariates included) country fixed effects & election-period fixed effects (SE clustered at country level)

Table A16: Regressions predicting basic income or cognates (robustness checks for alternative measures of unemployment)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Unemployment rate 3YA	0.095*** (0.019)	0.175*** (0.054)	0.124*** (0.040)	0.135** (0.056)
Unemployment rate	0.078*** (0.022)	0.101* (0.060)	0.085** (0.043)	0.098 (0.067)

Model specifications see Table A16.

Table A17: Robustness checks accounting for a rare event: Penalized Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Firth method) multivariate logistic regression models with country- and election period-fixed effects (unweighted)

Variable	Basic income only
Unemployment rate	0.192** (0.094)
GDP growth	-0.033 (0.077)
Social expenditure	0.057 (0.069)
L-R scale (Eco)	0.014 (0.014)
Lib.-Auth. scale	0.050*** (0.009)
Welfare	-0.008 (0.029)
In government	-0.988** (0.404)

Table A18: Robustness checks accounting for a rare event: Penalized Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Firth method) multivariate logistic regression models with country- and election period-fixed effects (unweighted)

Variable	Basic income only
L-R scale (Eco)	0.124** (0.060)
Social expenditure	0.036 (0.056)
L-R scale (Eco) X Social expenditure	-0.001 (0.002)
New left party	-3.035* (2.55)
Social expenditure	-0.041 (0.079)
New left X Social expenditure	0.210*** (0.081)

Table A19: Operationalisation of individual-level independent variables for voter preferences analysis

Variable	Description
Age (10 years)	This is a continuous variable with the ESS-given indicator divided by 10 [variable code is 'agea']
Female	This is a binary variable with male respondents as zero and female as one [variable code is 'gndr']
University/ Tertiary education	This is a binary variable derived from the categorical variable based on ISCED levels of education with ordered responses from zero to six [variable code is 'eisced']. Values zero to four (from no education to advanced vocational qualifications) are recoded as zero and values five to six (lower and upper tertiary education) are recoded as one
Union member (Current)	This is derived from a survey question that asks if the respondent is or has ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation [variable code is 'mbtru']. This is recoded into a binary variable with individuals that are not <i>currently</i> members of unions coded as zero (i.e. including those that were previously a member) and those that are currently members coded as one
Attends religious ceremonies	This is derived from a survey question that asks how often the respondent attends religious services apart from special occasions [variable code is 'rlgatnd']. Values one to six (from 'Every day' to 'Only on special holy days' and 'Less often') are recoded as one, while value seven ('Never') is recoded as zero.
Labour market status	This is a categorical variable with seven mutually exclusive groups derived from many other variables as follows (ESS variable codes in square brackets): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defined as self-employed ['emplrel'=2] ▪ Has at least one employee ['emplno']>0¹⁴⁸ ▪ Main activity is paid work ['mnactic'=1] 2. Permanent employees (Full-time) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment contract is unlimited duration ['wrkctra'=1] ▪ Works at least 37 hours ['wkhtot']>=37¹⁴⁸ ▪ Main activity is paid work ['mnactic']=1] 3. Unemployed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unemployed last 7 days ['uempla']=1] 4. Part-time employees (Permanent) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works fewer than 37 hours per week in main job [0<'wkhtot'<37] ▪ Employment contract is unlimited duration ['wrkctra']=1] ▪ Main activity is paid work ['mnactic']=1] 5. Solo self-employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defined as self-employed ['emplrel']=2] ▪ Has no employees ['emplno']=0] ▪ Main activity is paid work ['mnactic']=1]

¹⁴⁸ Not including missing values.

	<p>6. Temporary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment contract is limited or there is no contract ['wrkctra'=2 3] ▪ Main activity is paid work ['mnactic'=1] <p>7. Inactive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main activity: neither in paid work nor looking for work ['mnactic'=2 4 5 6 7 8 .d]
Equivalised household income (log)	<p>This is derived from a survey question on total net household income from all sources, which presents income ranges in deciles to respondents specific to each country. ESS provide the responses in deciles (1-10) [variable code is 'hinctnta']. To provide a continuous measure of equivalised household income, I first estimate the absolute level of total net household income as the mid-point of each country-specific income decile (using the income ranges from country-specific questionnaires). For the 10th decile that has no upper limit, I apply the formula in Hout (2004).</p> <p>I standardise all income into yearly salaries and convert all national currencies into euros using Eurostat data. Then, to generate <i>equivalised</i> household income, I divide the household income estimate by the square root of the number of household members. The decision to apply Hout's formula and to equivalise income in this manner was taken from Thewissen & Rueda (2019). Finally, I apply a logarithmic transformation to ensure it has a normal distribution.</p>
Occupational class	<p>The classification is derived from an individual's four-digit ISCO-08 classification ['isco08'] and the definition of their employment relations ['emplrel' and 'emplno']. I follow the operationalisation of Schwander and Häusermann (2013). The resulting five categories are below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capital accumulators (CAs) ▪ Mixed-service functionaries (MSFs) ▪ Blue-collar workers (BCWs) ▪ Socio-cultural professionals (SCPs) ▪ Low service functionaries (LSFs)
Redistribution	<p>This is a binary variable derived from the ESS question asking whether 'Government should reduce differences in income levels' [variable code is 'gincdif']. Values one to two ('Strongly agree' and 'Agree') are recoded as one and values three to five ('Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree') are recoded as zero</p>
Targeting	<p>This is a binary variable derived from the ESS question asking 'Would you be against or in favour of the government providing social benefits and services only for people with the lowest incomes, while people with middle and higher incomes are responsible for themselves?' ['bnlwinc']. Values one to two ('Strongly against' and 'Against') are recoded as zero and values three to four ('Strongly in favour' and 'In favour') are recoded as one</p>
Work-family benefits	<p>This is a binary variable derived from the ESS question asking 'Would you be against or in favour of the government introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life even if it means much higher taxes for all?' ['wrkprbf']. Values recoded as above</p>
ALMPs vs. benefits	<p>This is a binary variable derived from the ESS question asking 'Would you be against or in favour of the government spending more on education and training programs for the unemployed at the cost of reducing unemployment benefit?' ['eduunmp']. Values recoded as above</p>
Welfare chauvinism	<p>This is a binary variable derived from the ESS question asking 'Thinking of people coming to live in [country] from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?' Values one to three ('Immediately on arrival', 'After living in [country] for a year, whether or not they have worked', 'Only after they have worked and paid taxes for at least a year') are recoded as zero and values four and five ('Once they have become a [country] citizen', 'They should never get the same rights') recoded as one</p>

Anti-sanctions	<p>This is a continuous variable derived from multiple ESS questions. Each respondent is asked three questions regarding what should happen to an individual's unemployment benefit if they: (a) turn down a job because it pays a lot less than they earned previously; (b) turn down a job because it needs a much lower level of education than the person has; or (c) refuse to regularly carry out unpaid work in the area where they live in return for unemployment benefit. Respondents are randomly assigned in one of four groups, which determines whether they are asked about: an unspecified unemployed person, an unemployed person in their 50s, an unemployed person in their early 20s or an unemployed single parent with a child younger than 3.</p> <p>As they are randomly assigned and equally distributed across countries, I assume the responses are equivalent measures of preferences for conditionality. The four responses range from saying they should lose all their unemployment benefit (coded as 1), lose half of their benefit (2), lose a small part of their benefit (3) and keep all of the benefit (4). I average the responses across the three questions, with missing responses ignored where they exist</p>
Party preference	<p>This is derived from responses to two country-specific survey questions. Firstly, 'Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?' [variable code is 'vote']. Values two to three ('No' and 'Not eligible to vote') were coded as 'N/A'. For those that responded 'Yes', respondents were also asked 'Which party did you vote for in that election?' with country-specific parties as response items [variable code is 'prvtb**' where ** is the two-letter acronym for each country]. Responses for each country were recoded into cross-national party families. I used the same party family coding as for the party analysis, i.e. the Comparative Manifesto Database party family list. An additional party category 'Other' was also created. As with the party analysis, these were also grouped into four broader categories for some regression analysis ('new left', 'social democrat', 'centre-right' and 'other').</p>

Table A20: Summary statistics for individual-level independent variables for voter preferences analysis

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Age (10 years)	28,265	4.97	1.86	1.5	10
Female	28,367	0.51	0.50	0	1
University	28,374	0.32	0.47	0	1
Union member	28,374	0.21	0.41	0	1
Religious ceremony	28,254	0.62	0.48	0	1
Employers	27,762	0.027	0.16	0	1
Permanent employees	27,762	0.26	0.44	0	1
Unemployed	27,762	0.042	0.20	0	1
Part-time	27,762	0.097	0.30	0	1
Solo self-employed	27,762	0.043	0.20	0	1
Temporary	27,762	0.087	0.28	0	1
Inactive	27,762	0.44	0.50	0	1
Eq. household income (log)	23,711	0.69	0.72	-2.29	3.11
CAs	25,779	0.18	0.38	0	1
MSFs	25,779	0.30	0.46	0	1
BCWs	25,779	0.18	0.39	0	1
SCPs	25,779	0.13	0.33	0	1
LSFs	25,779	0.21	0.41	0	1
Redistribution	27,975	0.73	0.45	0	1
Targeting	27,054	0.42	0.49	0	1
Work-family benefits	26,663	0.57	0.50	0	1
ALMPs vs benefits	26,816	0.70	0.461	0	1
Welfare chauvinism	27,450	0.32	0.47	0	1
Anti-sanctions	27,620	2.59	0.88	1	4
Ecological / Green	28,374	0.046	0.21	0	1
Left / Socialist	28,374	0.036	0.19	0	1
Social Democrat	28,374	0.15	0.35	0	1
Liberal	28,374	0.067	0.25	0	1
Christian Democrat	28,374	0.093	0.29	0	1
Conservative	28,374	0.11	0.31	0	1
Nationalist	28,374	0.024	0.15	0	1
Agrarian	28,374	0.030	0.17	0	1
Ethnic / Regional	28,374	0.021	0.14	0	1
Special Issue	28,374	0.048	0.21	0	1
Other	28,374	0.0082	0.090	0	1
N/A	28,374	0.37	0.48	0	1

Table A21: Operationalisation of country-level independent variables for voter preferences analysis

Variable	
Real GDP per capita	Given in chain linked volume (2010) in euro per capita, for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [variable code is 'SDG_08_10']
Unemployment rates + 5-year average (2012-2016)	Given as a percentage of the labour force, for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [variable code is 'TPS00203']
Inequality	Given as the Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income (0-100), for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [variable code is 'ilc_di12']
At risk of poverty rate	Given as a percentage of the total population, for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex; variable code is 'ilc_peps01']
Social expenditure + 5-year average (2012-2016)	Given as a percentage of GDP, for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [Expenditure of social protection; variable code is 'TPS00098']. Figures for Germany, Spain and Italy are tagged by Eurostat as provisional. Missing data for 2016 meant the figure for 2015 was used for Iceland.
Cash benefits expenditure + 5-year average (2012-2016)	Given as a percentage of GDP, for 2016 was retrieved from Eurostat [variable code is 'spr_exp_gdp']. Figures for Germany, Spain and Italy are tagged by Eurostat as provisional.
Cash expenditure ratio	Given as a percentage of total social expenditure, for 2016 was derived from the two variables above.
Unemployment benefit expenditure + 5-year average (2012-2016)	Given as a percentage of GDP, for 2015 was retrieved from OECD ['Public unemployment spending']. Figures for 2016 were unavailable for all countries. Missing data for 2015 meant the figure for 2014 was used for Poland.
Cash transfer targeting	Given as a percentage of total cash transfers given to the bottom quintile, for 2013 was retrieved from OECD Income Distribution Database. No later data was available.
Conditionality index	Given as a composite index between one (most lenient) and five (most strict), for 2014 was retrieved from OECD unemployment benefit eligibility criteria indicator (Langenbucher, 2015). The suggested weighting was used to give equal weight to Availability requirements, Job-search requirements and monitoring and Sanctions.
Replacement rate	Given as a percentage of average wage (100%AW) for long-term unemployed (5-years) with two children and access to social assistance, for 2016 was retrieved from the Social Benefit Recipient Database (2018).

Table A22: Descriptive statistics of country-level independent variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Real GDP per capita	28,374	37.60	11.96	17.01	68.09
Unemployment rate (2016)	28,374	8.09	4.01	2.97	19.63
Unemployment rate (5YA)	28,374	8.99	4.77	3.70	23.07
Inequality (Gini)	28,374	29.19	2.96	24.1	34.5
At risk of poverty rate	28,374	20.88	4.65	12.2	30
Social expenditure (2016)	28,374	27.57	4.73	15.8	34.4
Social expenditure (5YA)	28,374	28.02	3.67	19.64	34.24
Cash expenditure (2016)	28,374	17.09	3.25	9.5	21.5
Cash expenditure (5YA)	28,374	17.47	2.71	11.94	21.54
Unemployment ben. exp. (2016)	28,374	1.25	0.73	0.173	2.95
Unemployment ben. exp. (4YA)	28,374	1.40	0.83	0.27	3.17
Cash transfer targeting	28,374	24.03	9.67	8.1	42.6
Conditionality index	28,374	3.15	0.34	2.67	3.83
Replacement rate	28,374	57.32	22.79	0	79.31
Real GDP per capita (z)	28,374	0.45	0.81	-0.94	2.51
Unemployment 5YA (z)	28,374	0.079	1.17	-1.22	3.54
Inequality (z)	28,374	-0.055	0.85	-1.53	1.48
At risk of poverty (z)	28,374	-0.084	0.92	-1.81	1.73
Social exp. 5YA (z)	28,374	0.48	0.68	-1.06	1.63
Cash exp. 5YA (z)	28,374	0.41	0.81	-1.25	1.62
Unemployment exp. 4YA (z)	28,374	0.40	0.99	-0.95	2.50
Cash targeting (z)	28,374	0.13	1.13	-1.73	2.30
Conditionality index (z)	28,374	-0.03	0.78	-1.13	1.54
Replacement rate (z)	28,374	0.089	1.11	-2.69	1.16

Table A23: Robustness checks using three alternative specifications for the dependent variable compared to the main binary variable used in the analysis

Independent variables	Code missing as zero – binary	Strong support only	Ordered variable	Main binary variable
Equivalent household income (log)	-0.160*** (0.043)	-0.184** (0.083)	-0.195*** (0.045)	-0.181*** (0.041)
Employers (Ref: Permanent employees)	0.044 (0.119)	-0.084 (0.215)	0.010 (0.122)	0.047 (0.115)
Unemployed	0.237* (0.122)	0.204 (0.189)	0.219 (0.134)	0.252* (0.126)
Part-time	0.080 (0.073)	0.007 (0.132)	0.114* (0.063)	0.111 (0.074)
Solo self-employed	0.159 (0.095)	0.543*** (0.134)	0.276** (0.105)	0.185* (0.101)
Temporary	0.090 (0.052)	0.079 (0.102)	0.093 (0.054)	0.095 (0.054)
Inactive	0.114* (0.060)	-0.059 (0.059)	0.103* (0.050)	0.120* (0.060)
Mixed service functionaries (Ref: Capital Accumulators)	-0.052 (0.047)	-0.186 (0.146)	-0.057 (0.036)	-0.043 (0.048)
Blue collar workers	0.014 (0.048)	-0.216 (0.143)	-0.012 (0.054)	0.019 (0.049)
Socio-cultural professionals	0.112 (0.065)	-0.165 (0.105)	0.085 (0.068)	0.114 (0.066)
Low service functionaries	0.036 (0.057)	-0.246 (0.161)	-0.016 (0.049)	0.040 (0.061)
Tertiary education	0.138** (0.053)	0.375*** (0.104)	0.133** (0.054)	0.147** (0.056)
Female	-0.149** (0.059)	-0.202*** (0.060)	-0.107* (0.053)	-0.135** (0.056)
Age (10 years)	-0.076*** (0.016)	-0.099*** (0.029)	-0.078*** (0.014)	-0.071*** (0.016)
Union member	-0.065 (0.054)	-0.120 (0.127)	-0.061 (0.048)	-0.065 (0.053)
Attends religious ceremonies	-0.069 (0.056)	-0.358*** (0.080)	-0.059 (0.044)	-0.062 (0.057)
Social Democrat (Ref: N/A)	0.050 (0.092)	-0.070 (0.133)	0.021 (0.087)	0.035 (0.094)
Christian Democrat	-0.283*** (0.067)	-0.359** (0.137)	-0.277*** (0.063)	-0.310*** (0.067)
Nationalist	-0.031 (0.134)	-0.056 (0.192)	-0.161* (0.081)	-0.061 (0.126)
Conservative	-0.190** (0.075)	-0.097 (0.073)	-0.236*** (0.061)	-0.219*** (0.073)
Liberal	-0.255** (0.099)	-0.420*** (0.126)	-0.261** (0.094)	-0.283** (0.102)
Left/Socialist	0.453*** (0.108)	0.731*** (0.195)	0.518*** (0.147)	0.443*** (0.119)
Ecological	0.319*** (0.105)	0.640*** (0.115)	0.370*** (0.092)	0.286** (0.102)
Other party	-0.025 (0.100)	0.271* (0.151)	-0.005 (0.086)	-0.043 (0.097)
Support for redistribution	0.393*** (0.065)	0.370*** (0.110)	0.451*** (0.057)	0.402*** (0.067)
Support for targeting benefits to those on the lowest incomes	0.383*** (0.060)	0.284** (0.103)	0.351*** (0.059)	0.392*** (0.063)
Support for benefits for parents to combine work and family	0.623*** (0.035)	0.562*** (0.080)	0.636*** (0.041)	0.641*** (0.037)
Support for spending more on education for unemployed at cost of unemployment benefits	0.080* (0.043)	-0.285*** (0.061)	0.033 (0.049)	0.074 (0.043)
Support to deny non-citizens access to benefits	-0.118** (0.046)	-0.018 (0.064)	-0.134*** (0.042)	-0.119** (0.046)
Opposition to sanctions	0.189*** (0.028)	0.173*** (0.046)	0.190*** (0.024)	0.195*** (0.027)
N=	19,322	18,850	18,850	18,850
Number of countries	15	15	15	15

Table A24: Cross-level interaction (targeting) robustness checks using three alternative specifications for the dependent variable

Variable	Code missing as zero – binary	Strong support only	Ordered variable	Main binary variable
Share of cash benefits received by bottom quintile (Cash targeting)	0.008 (0.006)	0.014 (0.008)	0.007 (0.008)	0.007 (0.006)
(Support for) Targeting benefits on those with the lowest incomes	0.681*** (0.172)	0.745*** (0.273)	0.700*** (0.182)	0.726*** (0.176)
Cash targeting X Support for targeting	-0.011** (0.005)	-0.018** (0.008)	-0.012** (0.006)	-0.012** (0.005)
N=	21,033	20,308	20,308	20,308
Number of countries	15	15	15	15
Sociodemographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table A25: Cross-level interaction (conditionality) robustness checks using three alternative specifications for the dependent variable

Variable	Code missing as zero – binary	Strong support only	Ordered variable	Main binary variable
Conditionality index	-0.483* (0.293)	-0.921** (0.355)	-0.627* (0.346)	-0.510* (0.276)
Opposition to sanctions	-0.153 (0.189)	-0.276 (0.385)	-0.160 (0.180)	-0.164 (0.165)
Conditionality index X Opposition to sanctions	0.111* (0.058)	0.164 (0.119)	0.120** (0.058)	0.121** (0.051)
N=	21,342	20,563	20,563	20,563
Number of countries	15	15	15	15
Sociodemographic controls	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table A26: Semi-structured elite interview schedule

Theme	Questions
Personal involvement/history	<p>When was the first time you heard about the idea of a basic income?</p> <p>What involvement have you had with...campaigns for or against basic income/ the experiment etc.?</p> <p>What did you see your role as?</p> <p>How would you assess the process? Has it been successful? Why/why not?</p>
Motivation for reform	<p>How would you describe your attitude to basic income? Has it changed?</p> <p>What, if any, is the main attraction of a basic income?</p> <p>What <i>features</i> of a basic income are most attractive?</p> <p>What, if any, is the main reason basic income is problematic?</p> <p>What are the main problems with the existing social security system?</p> <p>Who are the main beneficiaries of a basic income?</p>
Party positions	<p>How would you describe your party's position on basic income?</p> <p>What does your party think about the experiments?</p> <p>Have you spoken to many colleagues about it?</p> <p>Have you been involved in discussions with other parties?</p>
Public support	<p>Who do you think are the main supporters in the public?</p> <p>Have you spoken to constituents about a basic income?</p> <p>What has been your experience of discussing basic income in public?</p>

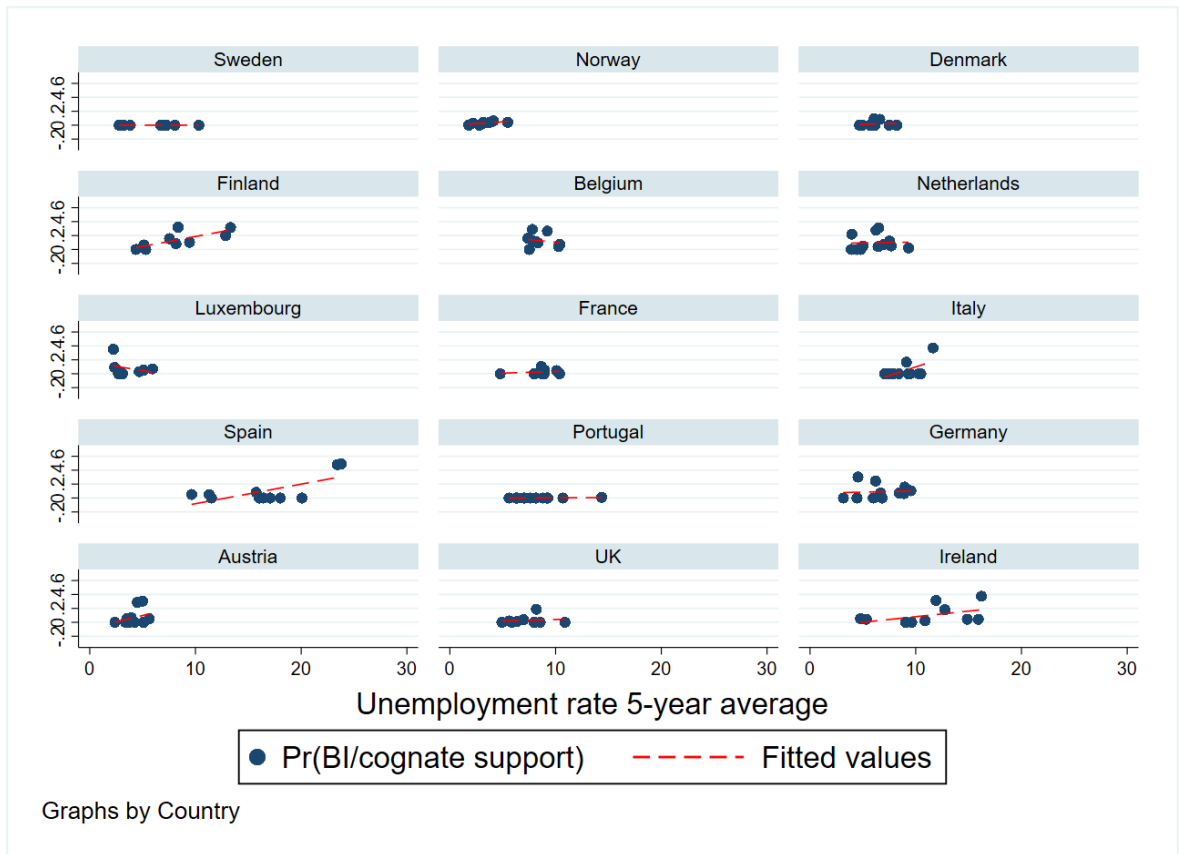


Figure A4: Level of party support for basic income or a cognate at a given election by unemployment rate (within-country variation).

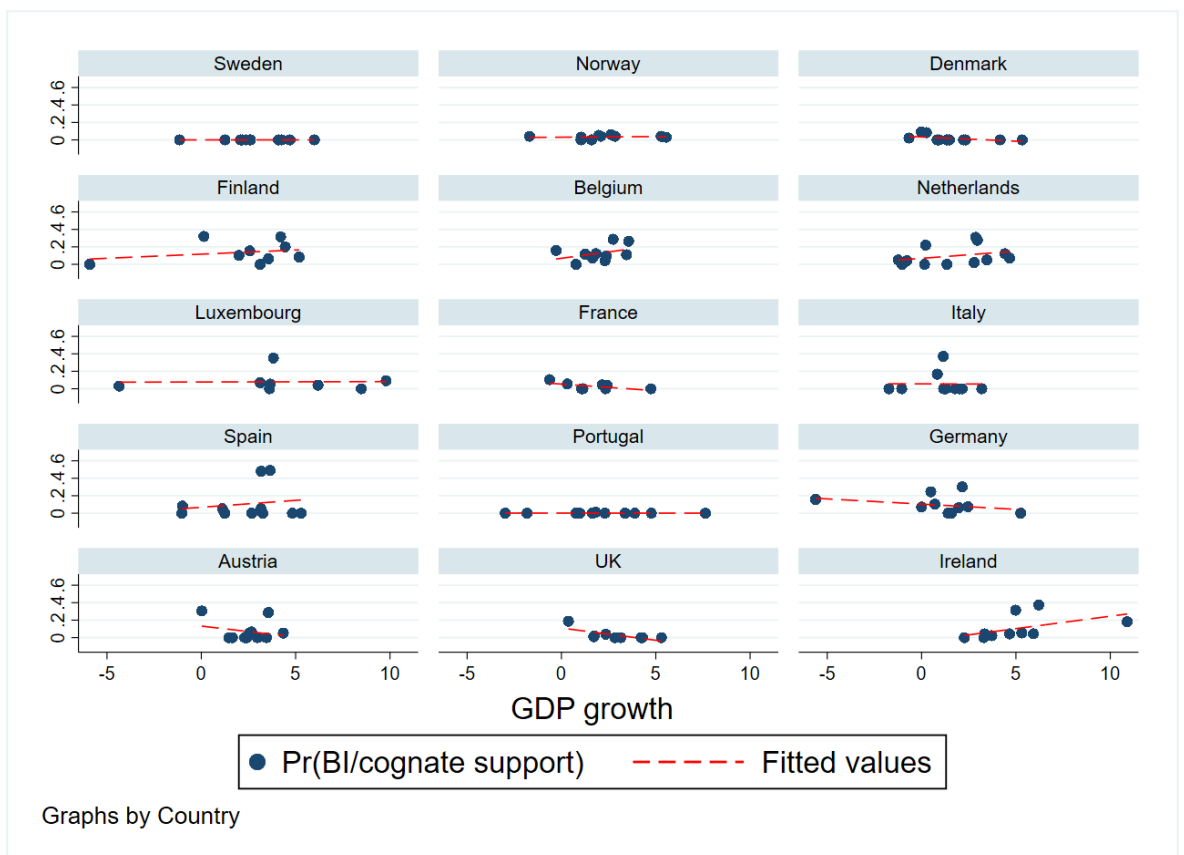


Figure A5: Level of party support for basic income or a cognate at a given election by GDP growth rate (within-country variation).

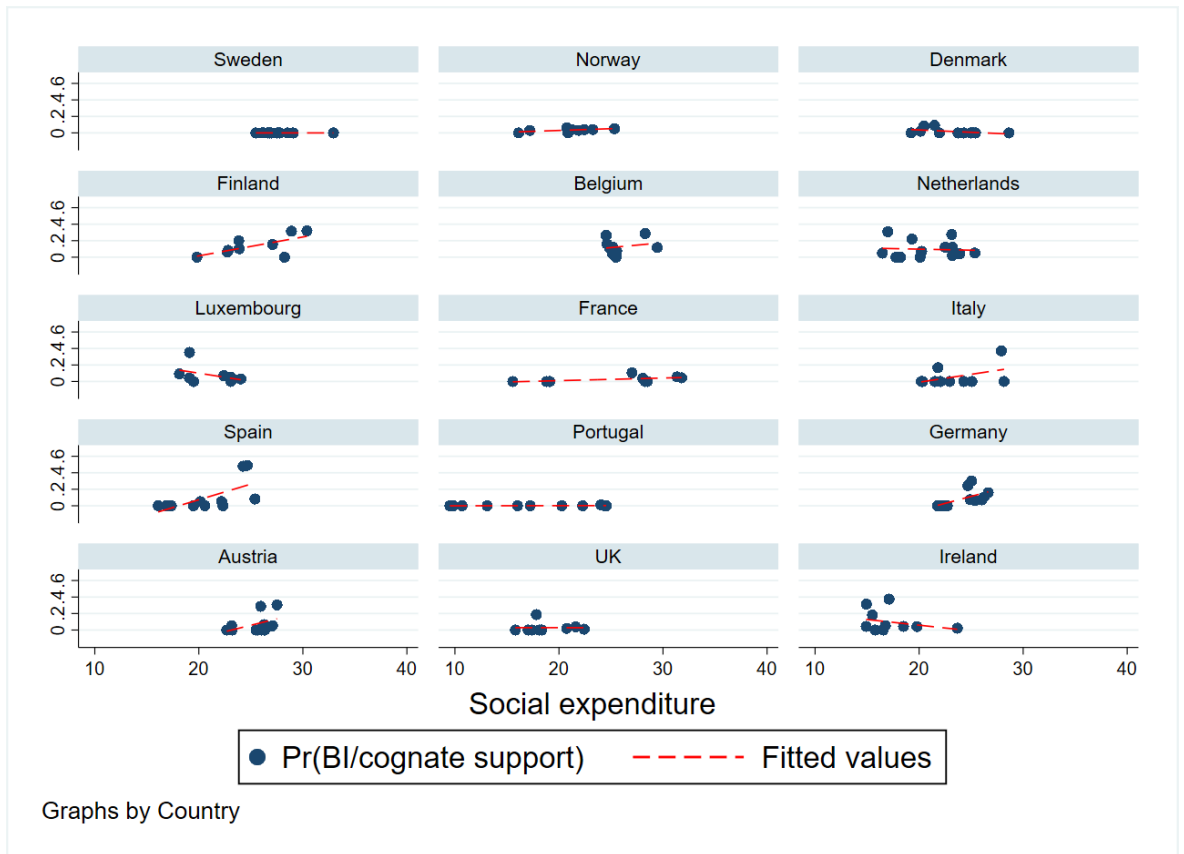


Figure A6: Level of party support for basic income or a cognate at a given election by social expenditure as a percentage of GDP (within-country variation).

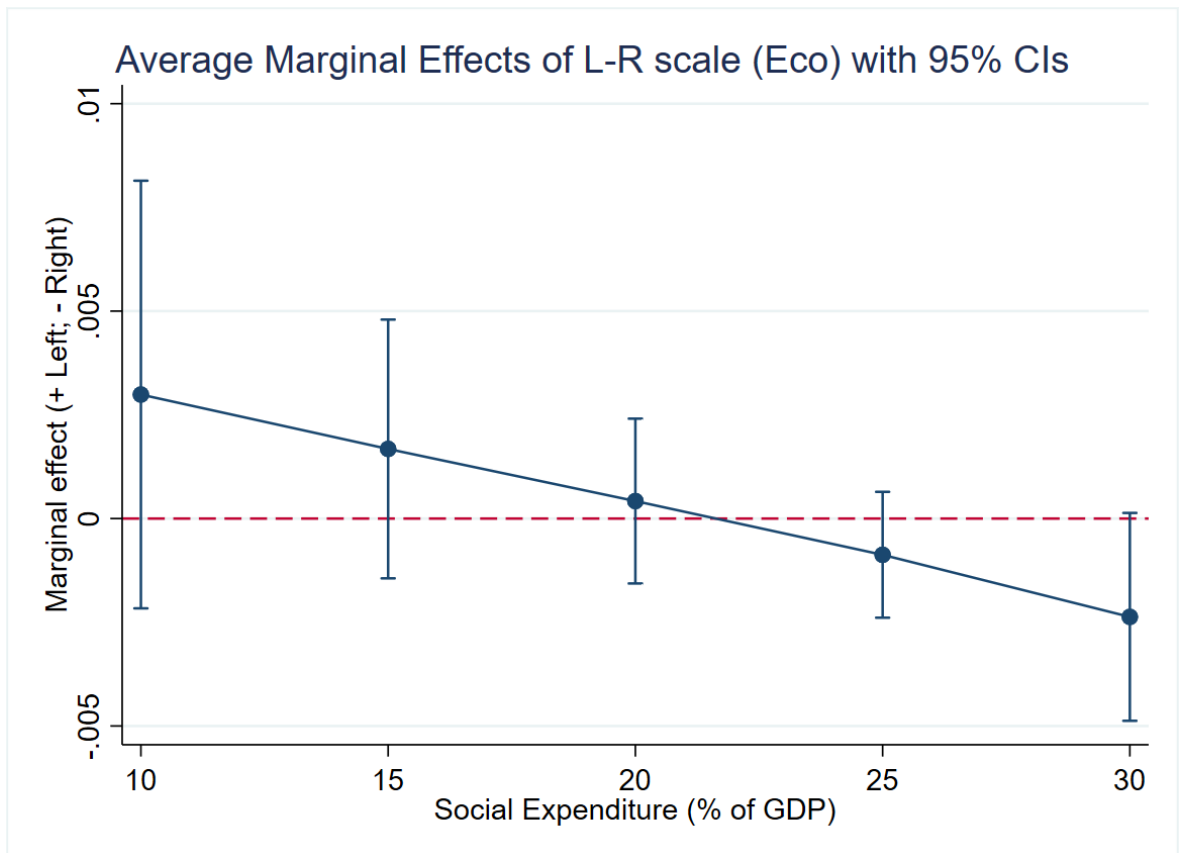


Figure A7: Marginal effect of a party's left-right economic position on the probability of supporting basic income by social expenditure

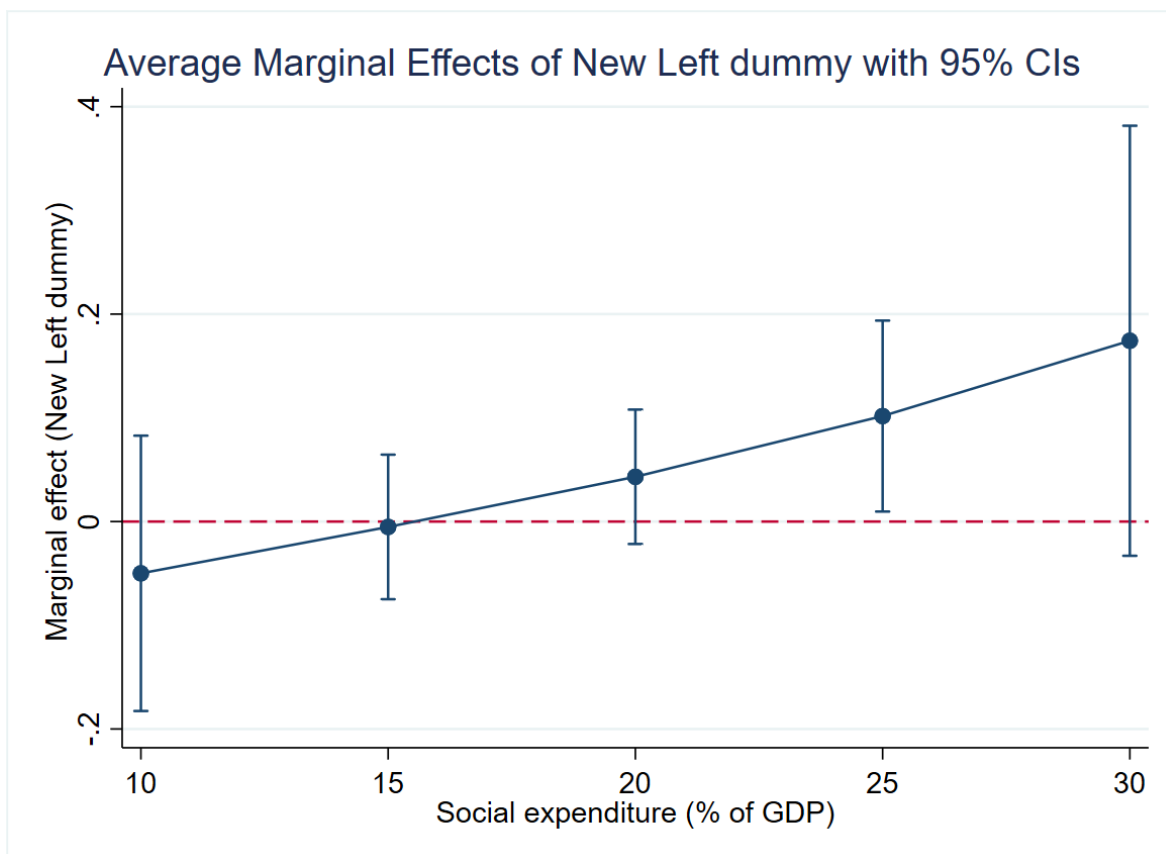


Figure A8: Marginal effect of being a new left party on the probability of supporting basic income by social expenditure

Table A27: Steps proposed in manifestos by parties in favour of basic income

Steps	Basic income (N=69) Mean value	Basic income/cognate (N=127) Mean value
Yes (≥ 1 step proposed)	0.507	0.378
Minimum income / basic level	0.203	0.118
Harmonisation / merging benefits	0.145	0.126
Centralisation	0.101	0.055
Individualisation	0.159	0.094
Conditionality / sanctions	0.087	0.055
Taper rates	0.072	0.055
Tax changes	0.145	0.087
Social participation / student benefits	0.101	0.071
Child benefits	0.130	0.087
Pensions	0.130	0.071
Negative income tax	0.101	0.055
Precarious work eligibility	0.087	0.047
Sabbatical income	0.043	0.031

Table A28: Comparison of regressions across country samples

Independent variables	Adv. WS only	All EEA countries	All countries
Equivalised household income (log)	-0.181*** (0.041)	-0.178*** (0.041)	-0.178*** (0.038)
Employers (Ref: Permanent employees)	0.047 (0.115)	0.025 (0.110)	0.058 (0.104)
Unemployed	0.252* (0.126)	0.261** (0.108)	0.258** (0.101)
Part-time	0.111 (0.074)	0.085 (0.068)	0.081 (0.067)
Solo self-employed	0.185* (0.101)	0.154 (0.093)	0.153* (0.088)
Temporary	0.095 (0.054)	0.099* (0.055)	0.112** (0.050)
Inactive	0.120* (0.060)	0.096* (0.050)	0.087* (0.049)
Mixed service functionaries (Ref: Capital Accumulators)	-0.043 (0.048)	-0.006 (0.047)	0.000 (0.045)
Blue collar workers	0.019 (0.049)	0.062 (0.048)	0.065 (0.047)
Socio-cultural professionals	0.114 (0.066)	0.150** (0.064)	0.147** (0.061)
Low service functionaries	0.040 (0.061)	0.096 (0.059)	0.088 (0.055)
Tertiary education	0.147** (0.056)	0.045 (0.062)	0.031 (0.058)
Female	-0.135** (0.056)	-0.092* (0.047)	-0.072 (0.045)
Age (10 years)	-0.071*** (0.016)	-0.070*** (0.014)	-0.068*** (0.013)
Union member	-0.065 (0.053)	-0.045 (0.052)	-0.065 (0.051)
Attends religious ceremonies	-0.062 (0.057)	-0.082 (0.052)	-0.101* (0.050)
Social Democrat (Ref: N/A)	0.035 (0.094)	0.002 (0.078)	0.003 (0.078)
Christian Democrat	-0.310*** (0.067)	-0.316*** (0.062)	-0.318*** (0.062)
Nationalist	-0.061 (0.126)	0.032 (0.134)	0.027 (0.135)
Conservative	-0.219*** (0.073)	-0.178** (0.067)	-0.182** (0.066)
Liberal	-0.283** (0.102)	-0.151* (0.087)	-0.152* (0.087)
Left/Socialist	0.443*** (0.119)	0.439*** (0.111)	0.443*** (0.111)
Ecological	0.286** (0.102)	0.290*** (0.091)	0.293*** (0.091)
Other party	-0.043 (0.097)	-0.067 (0.086)	-0.071 (0.086)
Support for redistribution	0.402*** (0.067)	0.421*** (0.052)	0.431*** (0.049)
Support for targeting benefits to those on the lowest incomes	0.392*** (0.063)	0.355*** (0.055)	0.348*** (0.052)
Support for benefits for parents to combine work and family	0.641*** (0.037)	0.649*** (0.033)	0.667*** (0.034)
Support for spending more on education for unemployed at cost of unemployment benefits	0.074 (0.043)	0.092** (0.040)	0.116** (0.042)
Support to deny non-citizens access to benefits	-0.119** (0.046)	-0.066 (0.044)	-0.054 (0.042)
Opposition to sanctions	0.195*** (0.027)	0.200*** (0.029)	0.180*** (0.030)
N=	18,850	24,933	27,085
Number of countries	15	21	23

Table A29: Education, gender and solo self-employment in advanced welfare states vs. CEE countries, Israel and Russia

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
University education	-0.386*** (0.077)	-	-	-0.105** (0.045)	-	-
Female	-	0.141*** (0.030)	-	-	-0.022 (0.035)	-
Solo self-employment	-	-	-0.180 (0.173)	-	-	-0.093 (0.073)
Advanced welfare state (binary)	-0.738*** (0.189)	-0.518*** (0.194)	-0.609*** (0.193)	-	-	-
Real GDP per capita	-	-	-	-0.360*** (0.077)	-0.282*** (0.088)	-0.313*** (0.081)
University X AWS	0.406*** (0.088)	-	-	-	-	-
Female X AWS	-	-0.213*** (0.054)	-	-	-	-
Solo-self X AWS	-	-	0.154 (0.190)	-	-	-
University X GDP	-	-	-	0.165*** (0.050)	-	-
Female X GDP	-	-	-	-	-0.059 (0.042)	-
Solo-self X GDP	-	-	-	-	-	0.188** (0.090)

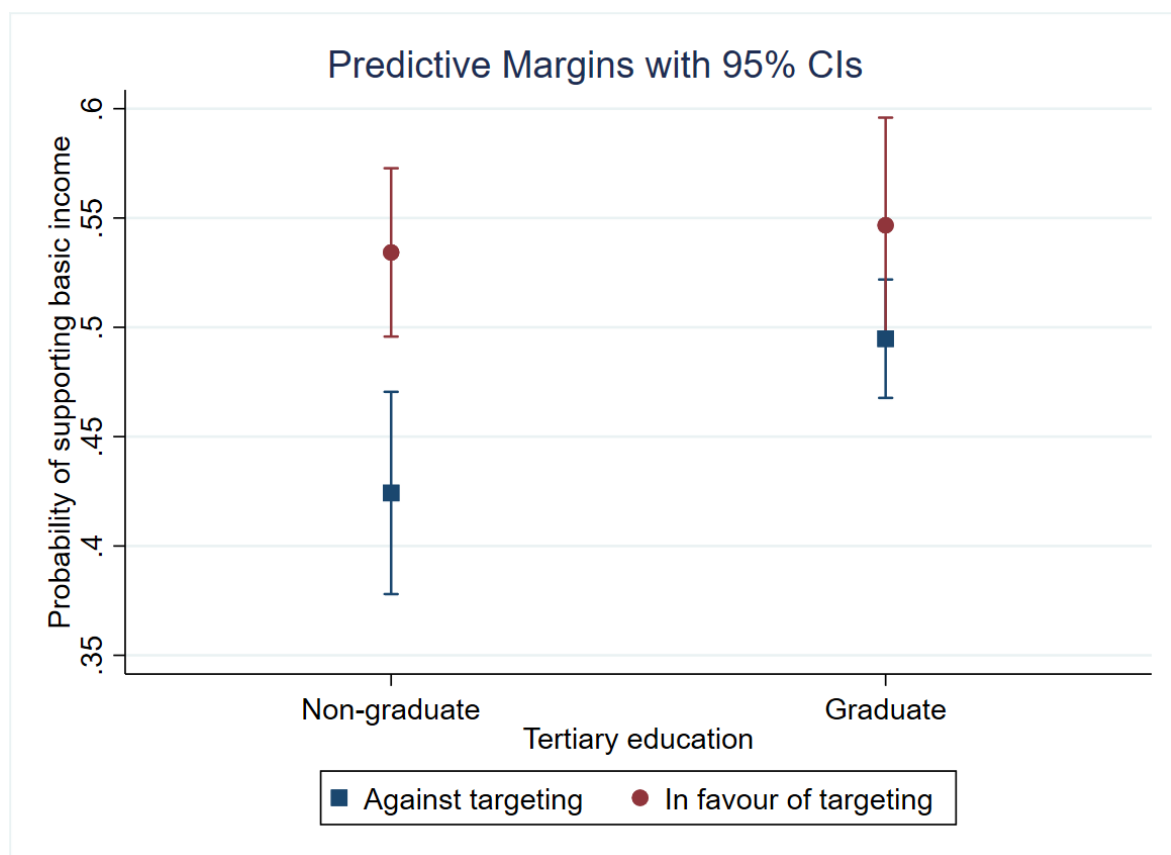


Figure A9: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by education (university) and support for targeting

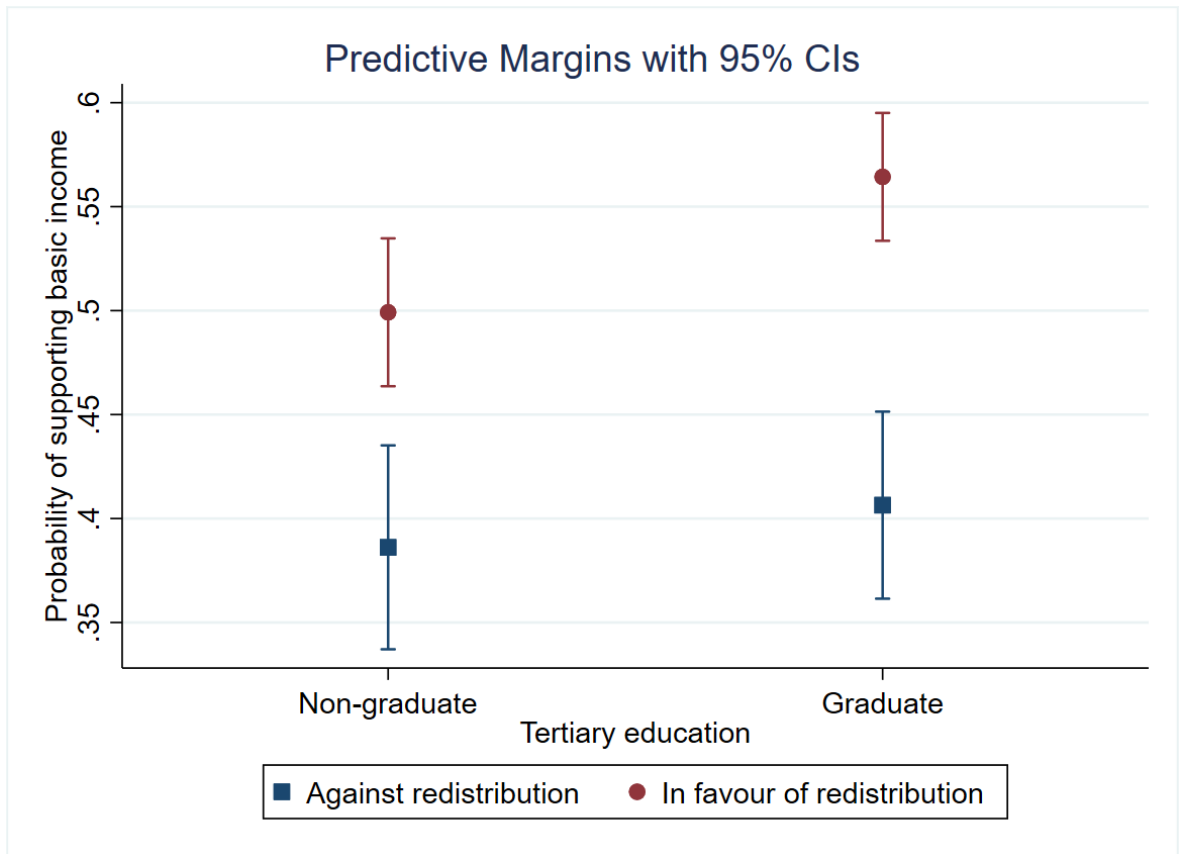


Figure A10: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by education (university) and support for redistribution

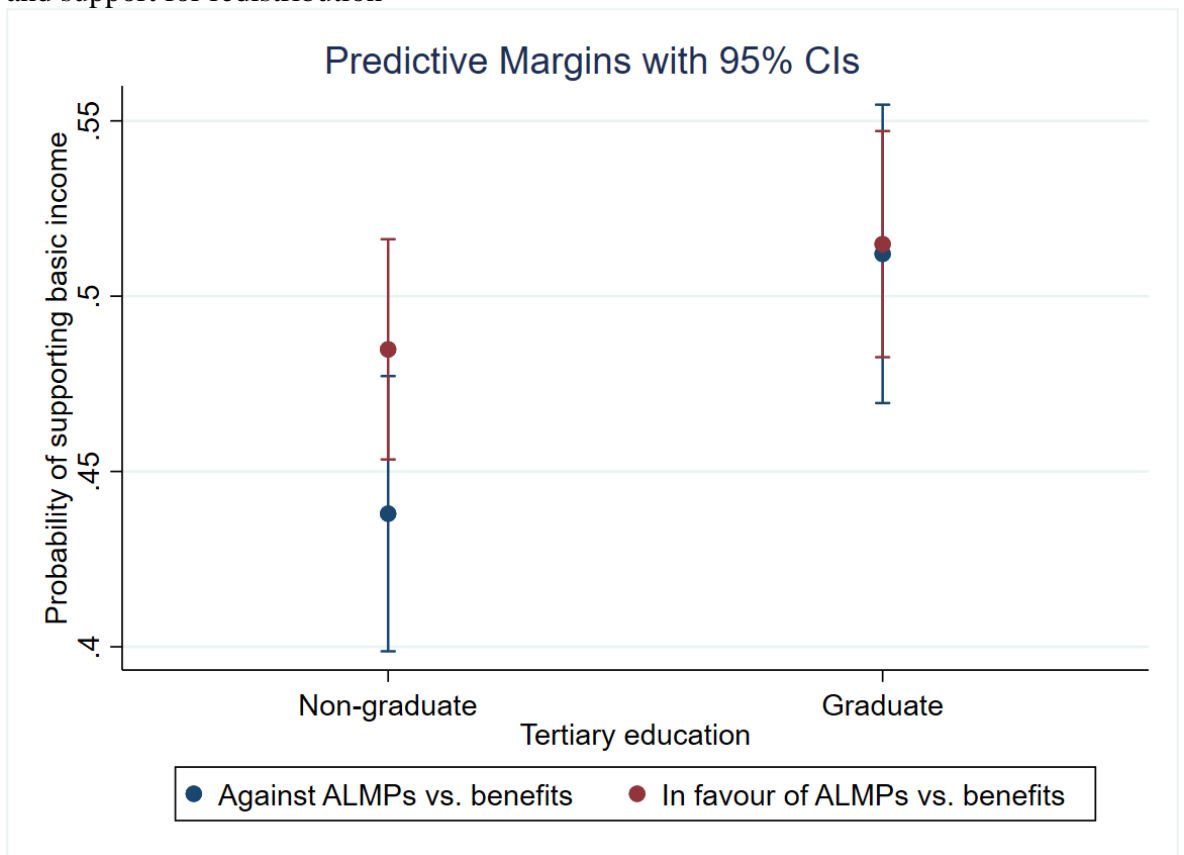


Figure A11: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by education (university) and support for education for the unemployed at the expense of unemployment benefits

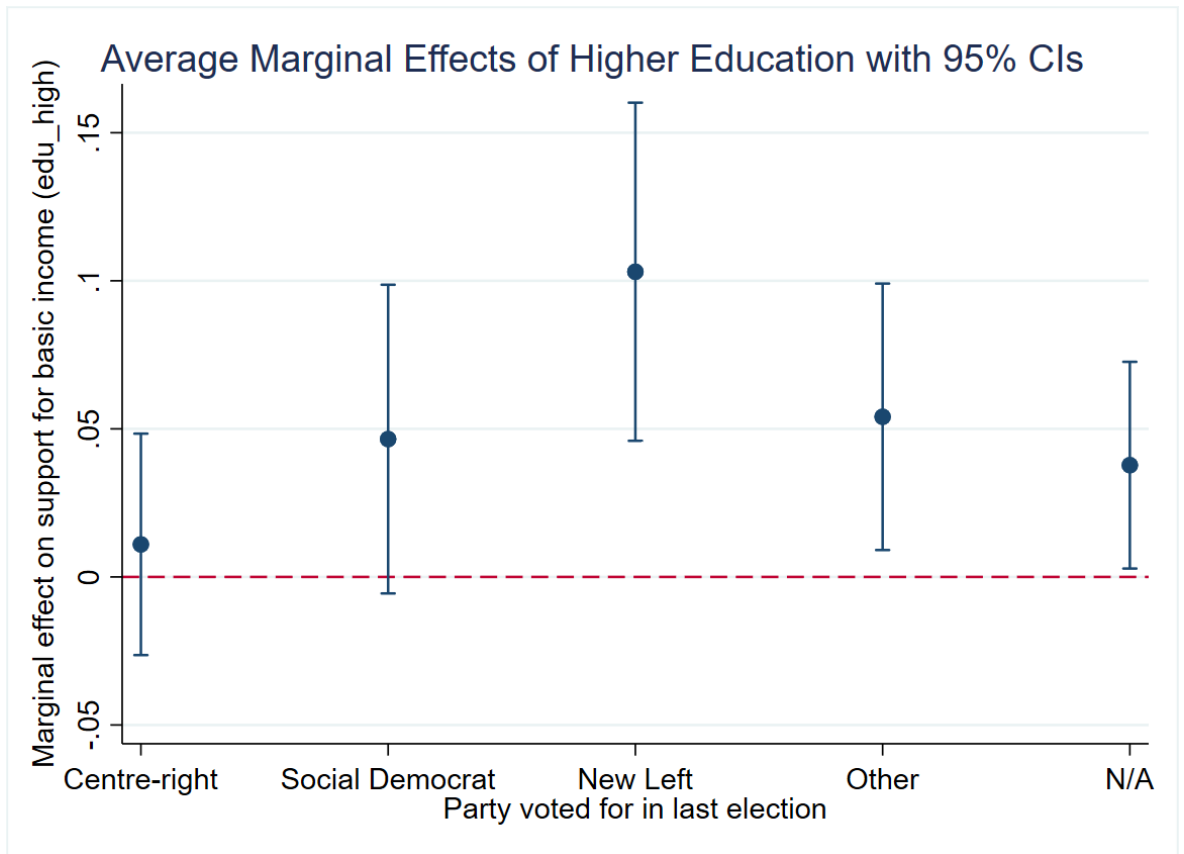


Figure A12: Marginal effect of higher education on support for basic income by party family

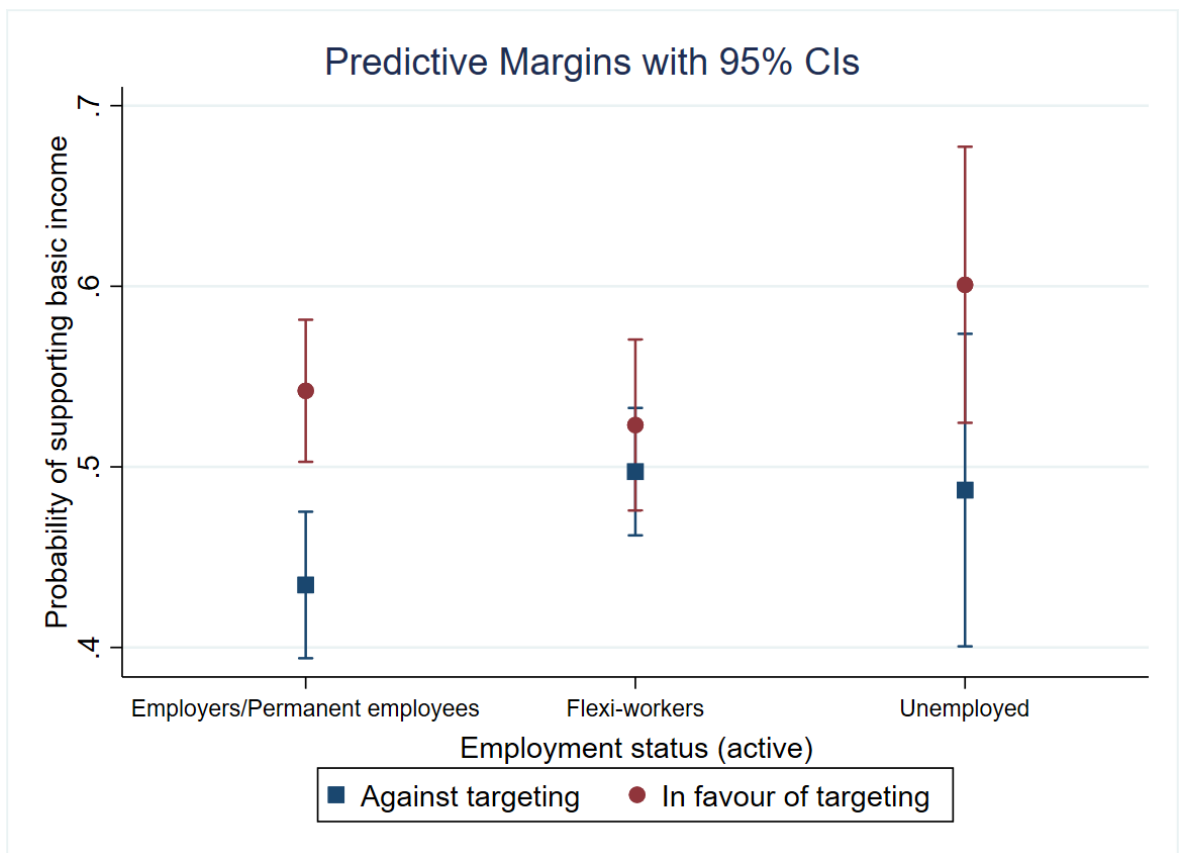


Figure A13: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by labour market status and support for targeting

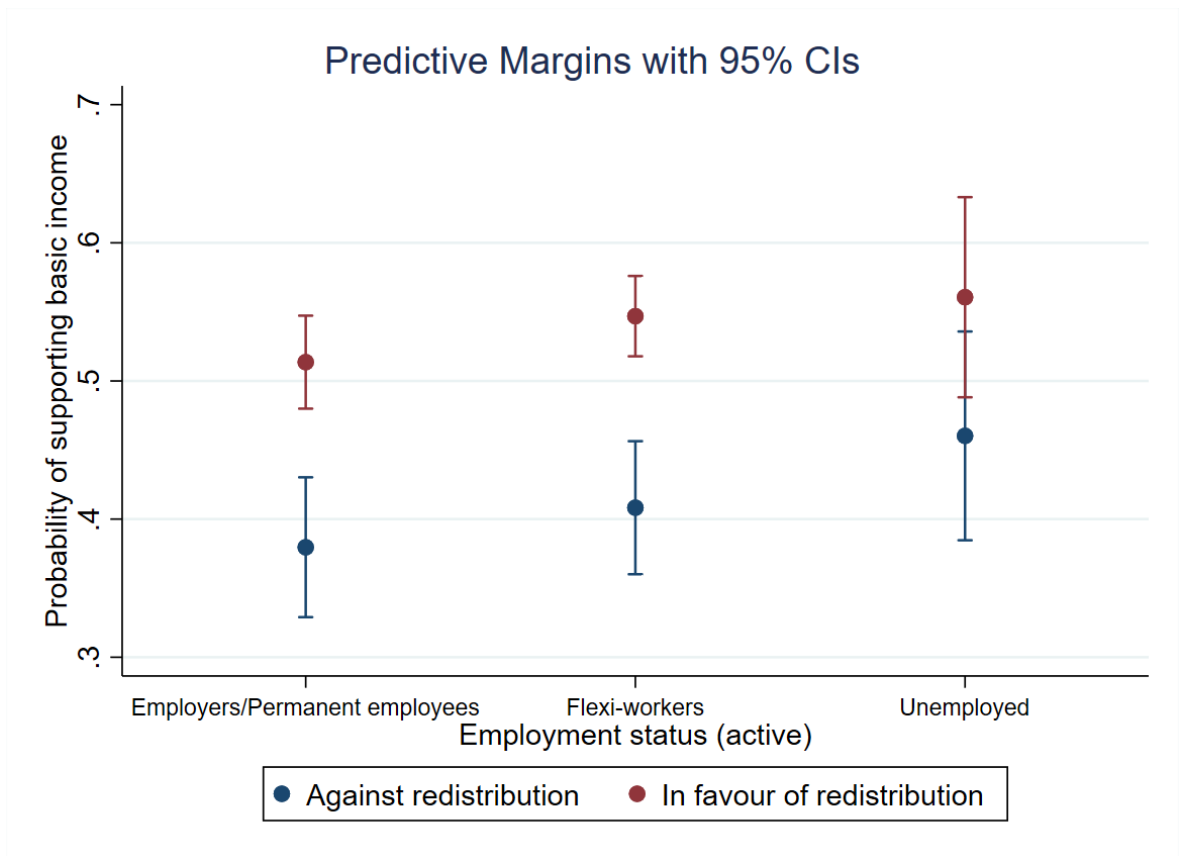


Figure A14: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by labour market status and support for redistribution

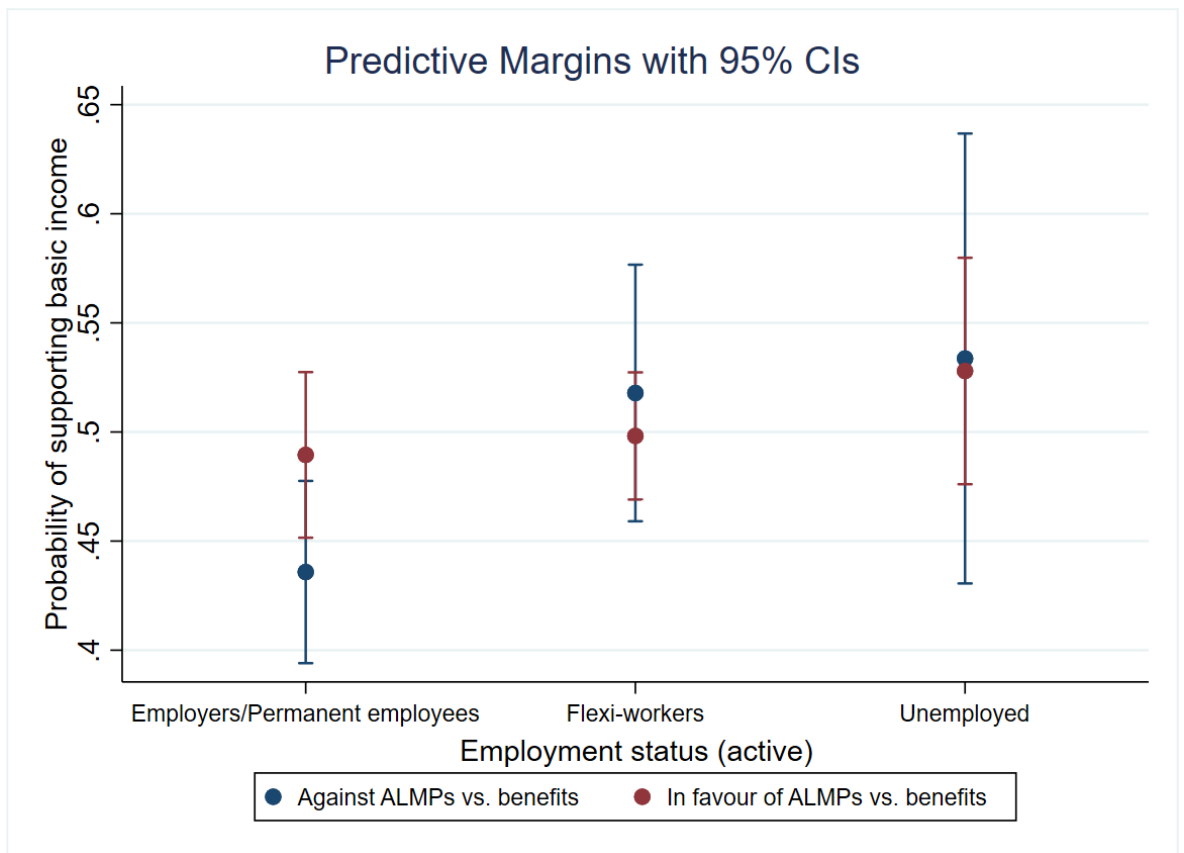


Figure A15: Predicted probabilities of support for basic income by labour market status and support for education for unemployed at the expense of benefits

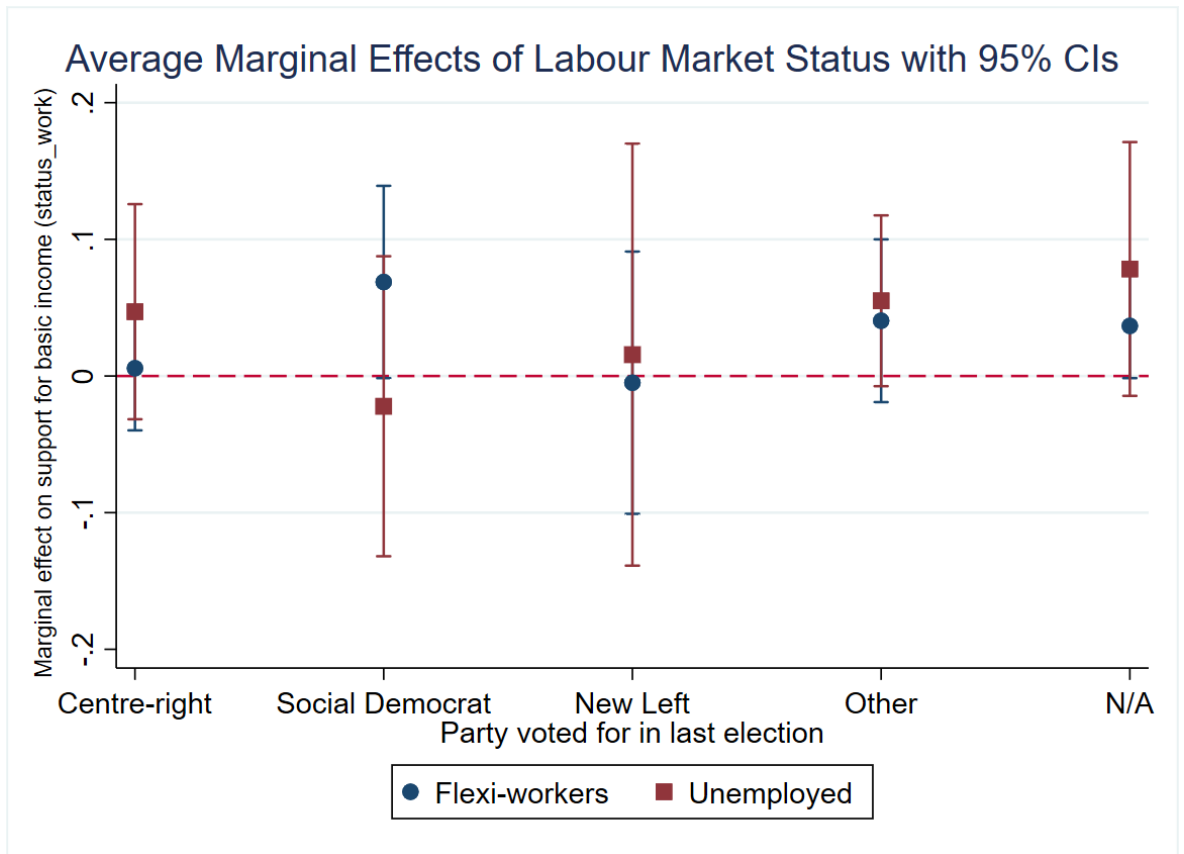


Figure A16: Marginal effect of labour market status (ref: Permanent employees/ Employers) on support for basic income by party family

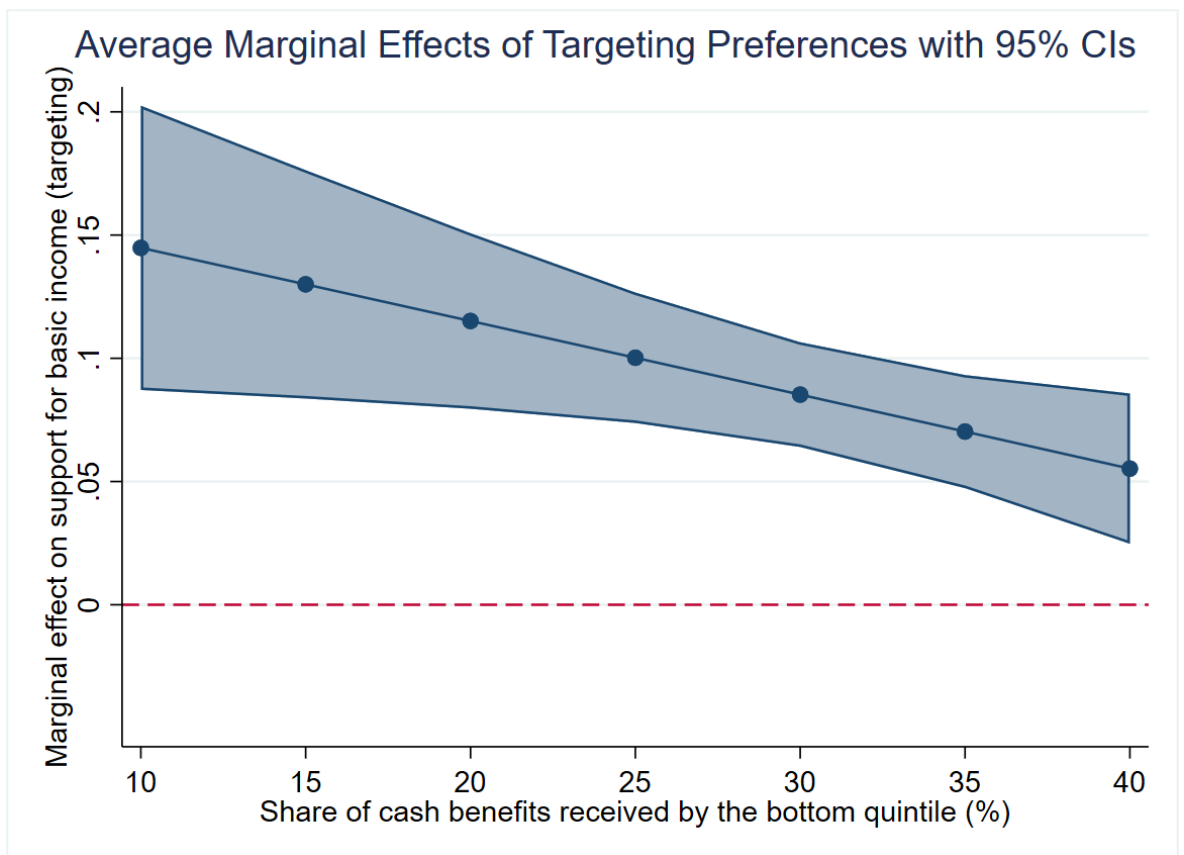


Figure A17: Marginal effect of targeting preferences on support for basic income by the level of cash targeting at the country-level

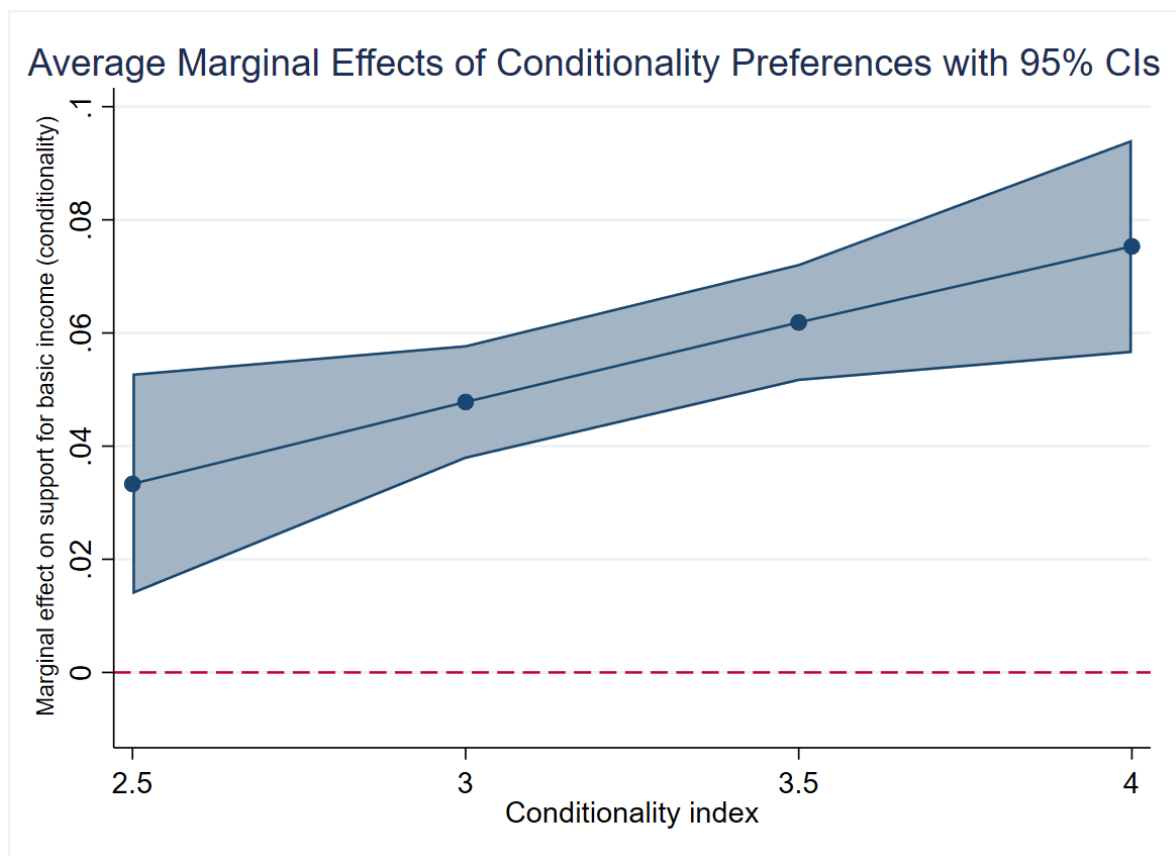


Figure A18: Marginal effect of conditionality preferences on support for basic income by the strictness of conditionality at the country-level

Table A30: YLE survey of parliamentary candidates 2015 (MPs elected on 19th April 2015 only)

Party*	Completely agree	Agree	Completely agree	Partly agree	Cannot say	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	Total	Score
KESK	10.2%	79.6%	5	34	2	8	0	49	0.68
PS	2.6%	57.9%	1	21	2	13	1	38	0.55
KOK	2.7%	24.3%	1	8	1	20	7	37	0.34
SDP	0.0%	11.8%	0	4	0	24	6	34	0.26
VIHR	100.0%	100.0%	15	0	0	0	0	15	1.00
VAS	66.7%	100.0%	8	4	0	0	0	12	0.92
RKP	0.0%	22.2%	0	2	0	4	3	9	0.28
KD	0.0%	20.0%	0	1	1	2	1	5	0.35
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.25
Total	15.0%	52.0%	30	74	6	72	18	200	0.53

*KESK = Centre Party; PS = Finns Party; KOK = National Coalition Party; SDP = Social Democrat Party; VIHR = Green League; VAS = Left Alliance; RKP = Swedish People's Party; KD = Christian Democrat Party

Table A31: YLE survey of parliamentary candidates 2019 (MPs elected on 14th April 2019 only)

Party*	Completely agree	Agree	Completely disagree	Partly disagree	Partly agree	Cannot say	Completely agree	Total	Score
SDP	0.0%	10.0%	0	4	2	20	14	40	0.23
PS	2.6%	23.1%	1	8	1	13	16	39	0.28
KOK	0.0%	5.3%	0	2	0	18	18	38	0.16
KESK	3.2%	25.8%	1	7	0	18	5	31	0.35
VIHR	80.0%	100.0%	16	4	0	0	0	20	0.95
VAS	50.0%	93.8%	8	7	0	1	0	16	0.84
RKP	0.0%	11.1%	0	1	0	6	2	9	0.25
KD	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	1	4	5	0.05
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.13
Total	13.0%	29.5%	26	33	3	78	60	200	0.36

*See Table A30

Table A32: Public support for basic income in the UK by party preference (European Social Survey wave 8 data)

Party	Support	Oppose	DK
<u>Conservative</u>	45%	52%	3%
<u>Labour</u>	53%	43%	4%
<u>Lib Dem</u>	48%	47%	5%
<u>SNP</u>	36%	59%	5%
<u>Green</u>	56%	38%	6%
<u>UKIP</u>	42%	54%	4%

Table A33: Public support for basic income in Finland by party preference (European Social Survey wave 8 data)

Party*	Support	Oppose	DK
SDP	56%	41%	3%
<u>KOK</u>	44%	53%	3%
<u>KESK</u>	43%	54%	3%
<u>PS</u>	57%	41%	2%
<u>VIHR</u>	70%	29%	1%
<u>VAS</u>	73%	23%	4%
<u>KD</u>	41%	55%	4%
<u>RKP</u>	49%	49%	2%

*See Table A32