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Dataset about populist attitudes, social world views, socio-political dispositions, conspiracy beliefs, and anti-immigration attitudes in an Italian sample

Valerio Pellegrini, Luigi Leone, Mauro Giacomantonio



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<b>*Title:</b>	<i>Dataset about populist attitudes, social world views, socio-political dispositions, conspiracy beliefs, and anti-immigration attitudes in an Italian sample.</i>
<b>*Authors:</b>	<i>Valerio Pellegrini</i>
<b>*Affiliations:</b>	<i>Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, SAPIENZA University of Rome</i>
<b>*Contact email:</b>	<a href="mailto:valerio.pellegrini@uniroma1.it">valerio.pellegrini@uniroma1.it</a>
<b>*Co-authors:</b>	Luigi Leone <a href="mailto:luigi.leone@uniroma1.it">luigi.leone@uniroma1.it</a> Mauro Giacomantonio <a href="mailto:mauro.giacomantonio@uniroma1.it">mauro.giacomantonio@uniroma1.it</a>
<b>*CATEGORY:</b>	<i>Social Psychology</i>

## Data Article

**Title:** *Dataset about populist attitudes, social world views, socio-political dispositions, conspiracy beliefs, and anti-immigration attitudes in an Italian sample.*

**Authors:** Valerio Pellegrini, Luigi Leone, Mauro Giacomantonio

**Affiliations:** *Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, SAPIENZA University of Rome*

**Contact email:** [valerio.pellegrini@uniroma1.it](mailto:valerio.pellegrini@uniroma1.it)

## Abstract

This data article provides descriptive and analytic exploration of the links between anti-immigration policies, ideological and political attitudes and voting in an Italian Sample. More specifically, the data set comprises measures of socio-political dispositions (e.g., Right-Wing Authoritarianism), social world views (e.g. Dangerous World Beliefs), populist attitudes, self-reported voting in the last Italian political elections (March 4, 2018), and conspiracy beliefs. The sample consists of 774 participants, mostly non-student adult individuals. Participants completed an anonymous questionnaire.

**Keywords:** populist attitudes, conspiracy beliefs, anti-immigration attitudes, voting behavior

**Specifications Table**

Subject area	<i>Social and Political Psychology</i>
More specific subject area	<i>Ideological Attitudes, Voting Behavior and Immigration Policies.</i>
Type of data	<i>Table, Matrix.</i>
How data was acquired	<i>Data were collected through a snowball sampling procedure, distributing an online survey.</i>
Data format	<i>Raw, analyzed.</i>
Experimental factors	<i>Sample is mainly composed by non-student adult participants.</i>
Experimental features	<i>Participants answered a structured questionnaire containing demographics information, measures of political ideology and orientation, populist attitudes, social world views, voting behavior, and support for immigration policies</i>
Data source location	<i>Rome, Italy</i>
Data accessibility	<i>Data are accessible in this paper</i>
Related research article	<i>Akkerman, A., Mudde, C., &amp; Zaslove, A. (2014). How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. Comparative political studies, 47(9), 1324–1353.</i>

**Value of the Data**

- Data can be helpful for exploring the psychological associates of the current Italian social and political context, which features a growing climate of hostility towards immigrants, support for populist parties, and endorsement of a variety of conspiracy beliefs.
- More in general, data can be used for a better understanding of the way in which different ideological motives are related to out-group prejudice, a polarized view of social groups, and development of Manichean conspiracy beliefs.
- The data could be of relevance for gathering similar data in other European countries and making comparisons with Italian and European representative samples.
- Data could represent a valuable source of information on the linkages of personality and political variables with attitudes about politics, politicians, and/or disadvantaged group, as immigrants and asylum seekers, and therefore the data may be of interest to political scientists, psychologists and sociologists.

**1. Data**

Data consisted in a convenience sample of Italian participants recruited by psychology students instructed to recruit non-student adult participants in exchange for course credits. This

procedure yielded N = 774 participants (418 female, Mage=38.44, SDage = 13.85). Among participants, 78.8% were non-student adults, varying in occupation and employment status (34.2% employed, 15.9% self-employed, 27.7% other occupations). The remaining 22.2% were students. Regarding the educational level, 4.4% had a lower secondary school diploma, 45.2% a high school diploma, 39.5% a degree, while 9.4% had college or post-graduate education. Demographics are presented in Table 1.

## 2. Experimental design, materials, and methods

The present data article aimed at investigating socio-political dispositions, with peculiar emphasis on populist attitudes [1]. Participants filled out a 10-item scale of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; [2]) and an 8-item scale of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; [3]). As measures of social world views, we administered 10 items of Belief in a Dangerous World [4] and 10 items of Belief in a Competitive-Jungle World scales [5]. These four variables are key dimensions in explaining ingroup and outgroup psychological dynamics related to prejudice (e.g., [6]).

Participants answered an 8-item scale of System Justification [7]. System Justification Theory [8] assumes that several underlying needs (e.g., develop a favorable self-image) motivate individuals to justify and defend the established status quo.

Moreover, participants completed a 14-item scale of conspiracy beliefs about several topics as, for instance, economic crises and terrorist attacks [9; 10].

Participants were also asked to answer two scales measuring populist attitudes [1; 11]. These scales were respectively composed by 6 and 12 items. Although one-dimensional, the Akkerman and colleagues' (2014) measure taps on the three core features of the "thin-centered" populist ideology [12]: sovereignty of the people; opposition to the elite; Manichean division between "good" people, and "evil" politicians. Wirth and colleagues' scale (2017) aims to investigate the same conceptual constructs through a multi-dimensional scale and replacing the dualistic Manichean vision (People vs. Elite) with a sub-dimension related to beliefs in a homogeneous and virtuous people. 3 of the 12 items on the Wirth scale are identical to those on the Akkerman scale (i.e., POP1, POP2, POP5). Therefore, to get the total score of the Wirth scale it is also necessary to include these items in the calculation.

All the above measures required participants to provide their answers on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("totally disagree") to 7 ("totally agree").

Participants were asked to indicate for which party (e.g., Democratic Party, Five Star Movement, League) they voted at the Italian political elections of March 4, 2018 (see Table 2). Lastly, participants were asked to answer one item related to their opinion about policies that Italian government should adopt regarding immigration. Specifically, they had to select one of four response alternatives represented by political actions to be implemented about immigration (i.e., "Make irregular immigration a crime and expel regular immigrants to their

countries of origin”; “Adopt a temporary work program that allows regular immigrants to leave in Italy only for a limited period of time”; “Allow irregular immigrants to stay in Italy, but only if they pay taxes, learn Italian and do not commit crimes”; “Allow irregular immigrants to stay in Italy and to apply for citizenship, without penalties”). In order to consider these four options as the points of a scale ranging from permissive to stricter policies about the acceptance of immigrants, we reverse the scores on this measure. The item was taken from the American National Election Studies [13].

The scores on each variable were obtained by averaging items within the pertaining scales. High scores reflected high levels of the investigated construct. To clarify the structure of our data, descriptive statistics of the measures are reported in Table 3.

To describe the data in an exploratory fashion we computed correlations between measures (Table 4). The associations between SDO, RWA, conspiracy beliefs and populist attitudes appear particularly interesting. In order to deepen the analysis of the aforementioned relationships, and explore the associations with voting behavior, we performed a multivariate analysis of variance. We considered the vote as fixed factor and the measures of ideological attitudes, conspiracy beliefs and attitudes on immigration policies as criterion variables. In order to obtain a single variable tapping into populist preferences, we averaged the overall scores of the two populist attitudes scales. As reported in Table 5, voting shows a significant main effect on all criteria. Estimated marginal means (reported in Table 6) are illustrative of the differences among voting groups on ideological attitudes, conspiracy beliefs, and policies towards immigrants.

Finally, in order to better discriminate the differences between voters of the Italian populist parties (the League, the 5 Star Movement), which share a populist sentiment but are otherwise distinct in many of their political priorities, we conducted a Sidak post-hoc comparisons. Table 7 shows how the League (vs. M5S) electorate are characterized by higher adherence to ideological motives related to hierarchy (i.e., SDO) and traditionalism (i.e., RWA). Instead, there are no notable differences in populist attitudes, conspiracy beliefs, and support for more tight immigration policies between the two groups.

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Table 1. *Sample demographics: Gender, residence region, educational level and job position of participants.*

Variables	Category	Frequency	
		Number	Percent
Sex	Female	418	54.0
	Male	352	45.5
Region	North	198	25.6
	Center	462	59.7
	South	92	11.9
	Islands	22	2.8
Education	No qualification	2	0.3
	Primary school diploma	3	0.4
	Secondary school diploma	34	4.4
	High school diploma	350	45.2
	Degree	306	39.5
	Higher-level qualification	73	9.4
Job Position	Student	172	22.2
	Worker	27	3.5
	Office worker	265	34.2
	Seller	11	1.4
	Entrepreneur	35	4.5
	Freelancer	123	15.9
	Homemaker	18	2.3
	Pensioner	22	2.8
	Unemployed	25	3.2
	Other	70	9.0

Table 2. *Frequencies: Self-reported Voting. Table reports the number and the percentage of participants who declared to vote for different parties in the last Italian Political Election (4 March 2018).*

Political Party	Frequency	
	Number	Percent
Five Star Movements (M5S)	180	23.3
Democratic Party (PD)	154	19.9
League	67	8.7
Forza Italia (FI)	47	6.1
Fratelli d'Italia	33	4.3
Free and Equal (LeU)	58	7.5
Others Right-Wing Parties	41	5.3
Others Left-Wing Parties	95	12.3
Abstained	99	12.8
Total	774	100



Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics: Dangerous World Beliefs, Competitive-Jungle Beliefs, Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, System Justification, Conspiracy Beliefs, Populist Attitudes, and Support for Anti-Immigration Policies measures.*

Variables	Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	N
Dangerous World Beliefs	.82	4.05	1.0	.042	-.054	774
Competitive Jungle Beliefs	.85	2.51	.98	.422	-.511	774
Social Dominance Orientation	.87	2.47	1.1	.429	-.693	774
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	.83	3.54	1.2	-.107	-.463	774
System Justification	.78	6.25	.92	.337	-.175	774
Conspiracy Beliefs	.90	2.46	.75	-.100	-.463	774
Populist Attitudes [10]	.80	4.67	1.2	-.164	-.540	774
Populist Attitudes [11]	.82	4.49	.98	-.026	-.224	774
Support for Anti-Immigration Policies		2.45	.78	.487	-.303	774

Table 4. *Correlations among Dangerous World Beliefs, Competitive-Jungle Beliefs, Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, System Justification, Populist Attitudes, and Support for Anti-Immigration Policies.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Dangerous World Beliefs								
2. Competitive Jungle Beliefs	.078*							
3. Social Dominance Orientation	.043	.541**						
4. Right-Wing Authoritarianism	.459**	.254**	.232**					
5. System Justification	-.438**	.133**	.128**	-.110**				
6. Conspiracy Beliefs	.298**	.205**	.147**	.353**	-.151**			
7. Populist Attitudes [10]	.423**	-.079*	-.183**	.367**	-.410**	.240**		
8. Populist Attitudes [11]	.398**	-.105**	-.197**	.397**	-.315**	.252**	.793**	
9. Support for Anti-Immigration Policies	.224**	.197**	.189**	.323**	-.066	.139**	.171**	.160**

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 5. One-way ANOVA: *Main effect of Voting Behavior on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Conspiracy Beliefs (CB) Populist Attitudes (POP), and Support for Anti-Immigration Policies (IMM).*

Fixed Factor	DV	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Voting Behavior	SDO	6.14	765	< .001	.06
	RWA	23.45	765	< .001	.20
	CB	11.46	765	< .001	.11
	POP	13.92	765	< .001	.13
	IMM	7.73	765	< .001	.07

Pillai-Bartlett Multivariate Test: .404, *F* = 6.900, Hyp. *df* = 48.00, Err. *df* = 4590.00, *p* < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .067

Table 6. *Estimated marginal means of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Conspiracy beliefs (CB), Populist Attitudes (POP), and Support for Anti-Immigration Policies (IMM) between voters of each party candidates for the election of 4 March 2018.*

DV	Vote	Mean	SE	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
SDO	PD	2.43	.09	2.250	2.603
	M5S	2.37	.08	2.208	2.535
	FI	2.96	.16	2.643	3.282
	Others R-W	2.61	.17	2.270	2.955
	League	2.89	.14	2.626	3.161
	Fratelli d'Italia	3.11	.19	2.725	3.488
	Others L-W	2.00	.11	1.778	2.228
	LeU	2.36	.15	2.072	2.648
	Abstained	2.44	.11	2.222	2.662
RWA	PD	3.06	.09	2.896	3.233
	M5S	3.68	.08	3.524	3.835
	FI	4.01	.15	3.710	4.320
	Others R-W	4.39	.17	4.061	4.714
	League	4.43	.13	4.176	4.687
	Fratelli d'Italia	4.13	.18	3.766	4.494
	Others L-W	2.83	.11	2.612	3.041
	LeU	2.96	.14	2.687	3.237
	Abstained	3.69	.11	3.477	3.897
CB	PD	2.15	.06	2.033	2.259
	M5S	2.73	.05	2.625	2.834
	FI	2.42	.10	2.217	2.625
	Others R-W	2.62	.11	2.400	2.837
	League	2.69	.09	2.516	2.859
	Fratelli d'Italia	2.41	.12	2.165	2.653
	Others L-W	2.15	.07	2.010	2.298
	LeU	2.35	.09	2.163	2.531
	Abstained	2.66	.07	2.524	2.805
POP	PD	4.01	.08	3.861	4.170
	M5S	5.01	.07	4.867	5.152
	FI	4.69	.14	4.413	4.972
	Others R-W	4.89	.15	4.592	5.191
	League	4.82	.12	4.584	5.053
	Fratelli d'Italia	4.84	.17	4.506	5.173
	Others L-W	4.36	.10	4.164	4.558
	LeU	4.22	.13	3.964	4.468
	Abstained	4.67	.10	4.493	4.879
IMM	PD	2.35	.06	2.231	2.470
	M5S	2.58	.06	2.467	2.689
	FI	2.57	.11	2.358	2.791
	Others R-W	2.56	.12	2.329	2.793
	League	2.85	.09	2.669	3.032
	Fratelli d'Italia	2.64	.13	2.378	2.895
	Others L-W	2.14	.08	1.984	2.289
	LeU	2.07	.10	1.874	2.264
	Abstained	2.48	.08	2.335	2.634

Table 7. Sidak multiple comparisons between League and Five Stars Movement voters on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Conspiracy Beliefs (CB), Populist Attitudes (POP), and Support for Anti-Immigration Policies (IMM).

DV	Vote (I)	Vote (j)	Mean Diff. (I-J)	SE	p	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
SDO	League	M5S	.52	.16	< .05	.0106	1.0337
RWA	League	M5S	.75	.15	< .01	.2637	1.2401
CB	League	M5S	.04	.10	> .05	-.3691	.2849
POP	League	M5S	-.19	.14	> .05	-.6387	.2565
IMM	League	M5S	.28	.11	> .05	-.0739	.6198

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Author Disclosure Statement: No competing financial interests exist.

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Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.