

# HAS THE PANDEMIC MADE US BETTER? COVID-19 EFFECTS ON CITIZENS' POLITICAL ATTITUDES

## INTRODUCTION

### The problem: What is happening?

Two years of **COVID-19 pandemic**: challenges for democracy.  
How has the population reacted to the COVID-19 threat and its consequences?

### What do we know about it?

- Population **attitudinal change** due to:
  - COVID-19 health threat
  - First restriction measures
  - Non-health related COVID-19 consequences

- Existence of a **"rally-around-the-flag" effect**: increase in government approval, institutional trust and satisfaction with democracy in the first stages of the pandemic (e.g., Bækgaard et al., 2020; Bol et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2020; Esaiasson et al., 2020).
- First evidence of a **fade-out of this increase** (Johansson et al., 2021).

### What is missing?

Accounting for: **PANDEMIC FATIGUE** Haktanir et al. (2021), Lilleholt et al. (2021), World Health Organization (2020).

What are the population's attitudes after two years of pandemic?

## MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected citizens' political attitudes?

### PAPER 1

**RQ:** What is the effect of living in or near a high-risk infection area on support for radical right parties (RRPs)?

#### ANALYSIS 1

Observational

- Hypothesis:** The higher the COVID-19 infection rates are in a given region, the higher the support for RRP will be in that same area.
- **Cross-country analysis** of RRP support in European countries with RRP in the opposition and that have held elections in the last year.
  - **DV:** RRP vote share in that region
  - **IV:** COVID-19 incidence the week before the elections
  - **Method:** Multivariate Regression

#### ANALYSIS 2

Observational

- Hypothesis:** The closer an individual lives to a high-risk area for COVID-19 infection, the more likely they are to vote for RRP.
- **Case study:** Analysis of Catalonia's 2021 elections using individual-level data from the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió
  - **DV:** Reported vote intention for Vox
  - **IV:** COVID-19 incidence the week before the elections
  - **Method:** Multivariate Regression

### PAPER 3

**RQ:** Do government restriction measures decrease satisfaction with democracy among the population?

#### ANALYSIS

Quasi-experimental

- **Hypothesis:** *Ceteris paribus*, people living in areas which enforce COVID-19 prevention measures will be more likely to have lower satisfaction with democracy than the ones who live in non-restricted areas.
- **Case study:** Catalonia's December 2021 municipal restrictions
- **DV:** Satisfaction with democracy
- **IV:** Implementation of government restrictions
- **Method:** Regression Discontinuity Design

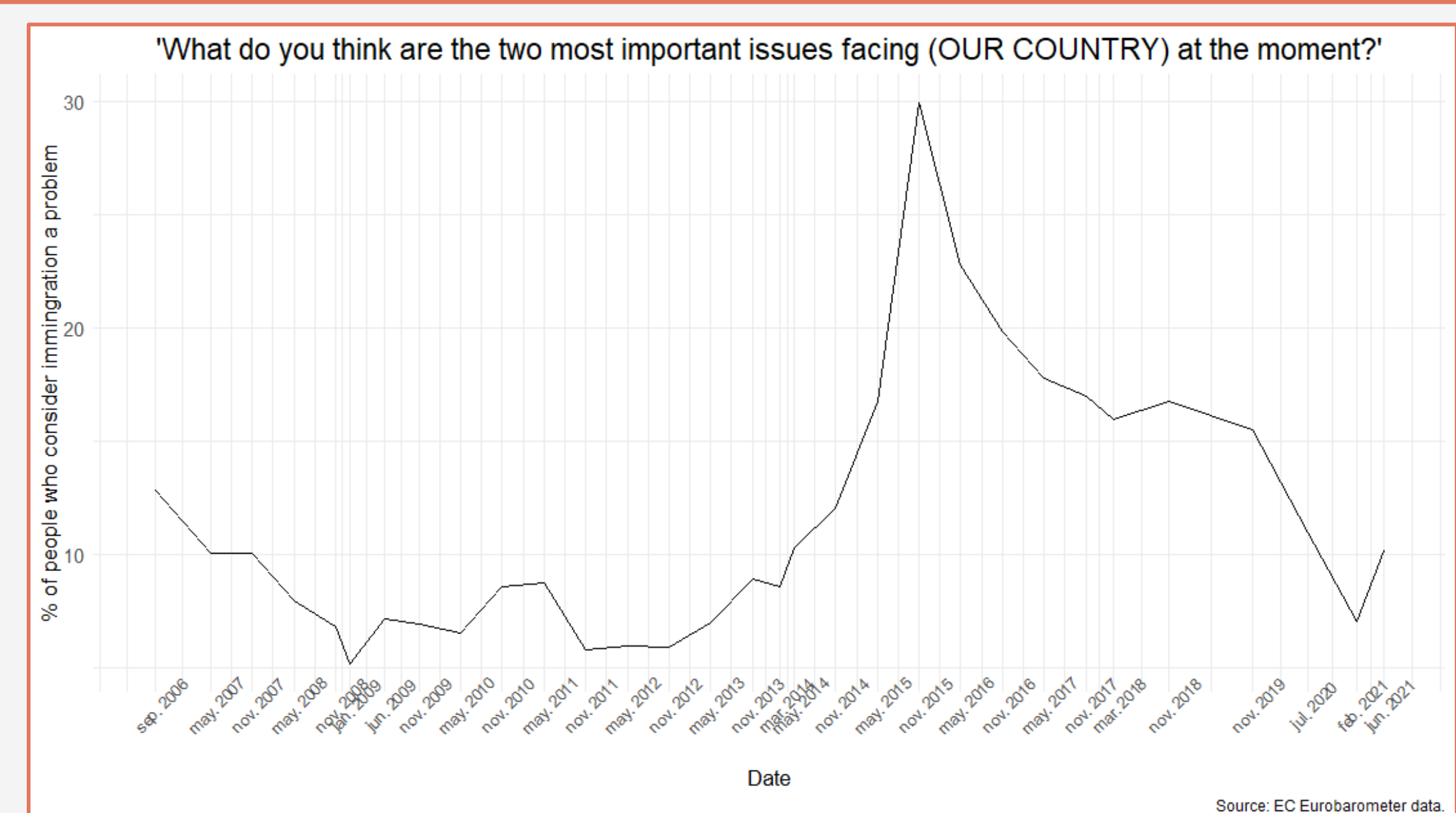
### PAPER 2

**RQ:** Does personal exposure to COVID-19 affect citizens' attitudes towards immigration? If so, how?

#### ANALYSIS 1

Observational

- Hypothesis:** Those individuals more severely affected by the virus will have more negative attitudes towards immigration
- **Data:** ESS Round 10 (2020-2021)
  - **DV:** Attitudes towards immigration
  - **IV:** Personal exposure to COVID-19
  - **Method:** Multivariate Regression



#### ANALYSIS 2

Experimental

- **Method:** Survey priming experiment
- **Objective:** Explore the mechanisms through which attitudes towards immigrants have potentially changed
- **(Preliminary) Prime topics:**
  - Immigration as a health threat
  - Immigration as an economic burden
  - Immigration benefitting from the public health system
- **Countries included:** Germany, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom.