

# Economic Conditions and Far-Right Support Places or People?

Charlotte Bartels

University of Leipzig, SOEP, CEPR, CESifo

[charlotte.bartels@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:charlotte.bartels@uni-leipzig.de)

Thomas Rieger

DIW Berlin/SOEP, FU Berlin

[trieger@diw.de](mailto:trieger@diw.de)

February 2025

## Abstract

Regional economic decline is argued to be a major factor behind the recent rise of far-right support in liberal democracies. We generalize this finding using a unique county-level panel covering the fall (1949-1972) and rise (1972-today) of far-right voting in West Germany. Our results show that regional economic ascent predicts the initial fall of the far-right just as economic decline predicts its rise. We then combine the county-level panel with individual-level survey data to – for the first time – test the relative importance of regional (places) and individual (people) economic conditions for far-right support. Changes of household income are more predictive of changes in far-right support than regional growth. Regional growth, although salient, matters only for the 65+. People, it therefore seems, matter for far-right support more than places.

*Keywords:* Spatial inequality, income inequality, economic growth, far-right voting

*JEL Classifications:* D31, D72, R11