

# Fear, Anger, Hope, and Pride: Negative and Positive Emotions in Electoral Behaviour<sup>1</sup>

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## **Fear, Anger, Hope, and Pride: Negative and Positive Emotions in Electoral Behaviour.**

It is becoming increasingly clear that emotions play a crucial role in voting decisions. This is especially true when it comes to choosing populist parties. This article uses a unique dataset to analyse the interplay between emotions and support for various types of populist parties in Slovakia. It contributes to the discourse by testing the competing hypotheses on what kinds of emotions matter in a post-communist country with multiple types of populist parties. Our results show that although previous studies have tended to concentrate on emotions toward the political or economic situation, feelings toward political leaders actually have greater importance, at least in the Slovak, post-communist context. Our study also indicates that the types of emotions differ depending on whether the populist party has already been in power or not. Contrary to expectations, fear has played a more important role than anger and in general, emotions are more important for rightwing and leftwing populist parties than for non-populist or centrist populist parties.

Sociológia 2023, Vol. 55 (No. 2: 153-176)

<https://doi.org/10.31577/sociologia.2023.55.2.5>



**Key words:** *Emotions; voting; populism; political parties; leaders*

## **Introduction**

In recent decades, the social sciences dealing with political participation have experienced an ‘emotional turn’ (Busher et al. 2018; Demeritz 2014; González 2017; Jasper 2011; Goodwin et al. 2001; Manning – Holmes 2014; Magni 2017; Nai 2021). Such scholars, working in the tradition of the sociology of emotions, view political emotions such as joy, fear, hope, anger, shame or pride as the lens through which ordinary citizens interpret politics and perceive politicians (Weber 2013). They no longer see political emotions as irrational or signs of political immaturity. The sociology of emotions has come up with

<sup>1</sup> Work on this paper was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the grant APVV-17-0596 “Politics of Emotions as a Form of Political Inclusion and Exclusion” and the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic grant 19-12289S “Explaining the Support of New forms of Populism: the Czech Republic and Slovakia in a Comparative Perspective”.

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various concepts that allow the transition of analysis from the individual to collective level (e.g. Parrott 2019; Heaney 2019; Hochschild 1979; Nai 2021; Flam – King 2008; Salmela – von Scheve 2017). In the field of politics, these concepts have been used to examine the success of political mobilization by political parties and their leaders and to explain the political behavior of voters.

Yet, so far, such studies of emotions and voting have been rather limited in their scope. Often they are only interested in one type of emotion (such as negative emotions; e.g. Betz 2002; Hameleers et al. 2016; Mancosu 2016), or they are only interested in one area of emotions (such as feelings about the economy; e.g., Conover – Feldman 1986). Moreover, when it comes to populism, the emphasis has mostly been limited to the role of emotions in voting for rightwing populist parties (e.g., Betz 2002; Buštková 2014). In addition, for theories to be valid, they should be applicable to various different contexts. The post-communist countries in Europe have been understudied in the area of emotions and voting; yet, because of the difficulties they face in their transitions to democracy and a market economy and the lack of stability of their party systems, populist parties have found fertile ground in these countries. In some of these countries, a wide variety of populist parties have emerged, making them critical cases for testing our theories of emotions and voting. To the extent that studies of emotions and populism in Central Europe exist, they have concentrated on the radical right (e.g., Buštková 2014; Pytlas 2018), although in this area leftwing and centrist populist parties have not only made it into parliament, they have even led governments. In addition, studies on emotions and voting tend to focus on structural political, economic and cultural issues, but this article shows that the most important emotions in the case of voting behaviour seem to be the emotions that supporters feel towards their leaders.

This article uses a unique dataset to analyse the interplay between emotions and support for various types of populist parties in Slovakia, based on a survey conducted four months before the 2020 general elections. Slovakia presents an excellent case for studying populism, because at the time of the elections, its parliament included the radical-right populist People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS), rightwing populist Slovak National Party (SNS), We are Family (*Smer rodina*), leftwing populist Direction-Social Democracy (*Smer-SD*), as well as centrist populist Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OĽaNO), which allows us to investigate whether emotions play different roles for different types of populist parties. At the time of our survey, there were also three centrist parties that are usually not classified as being populist: Progressive Slovakia/Together (PS/Spolu), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and For the People (*Za ľudí*) as well as the liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS). When the survey was conducted, *Smer-SD* was in a coalition

government with SNS and a Hungarian party that has since fallen out of parliament. Our survey is also more in-depth than previous studies, because it includes both positive and negative emotions and includes a broader group of topics than most other studies. While studies usually concentrate on either emotions toward the political or the economic situation, our study includes both as well as feelings about the situation of immigrants in the country and feelings toward the political leaders.

This article contributes to the discourse by testing the competing hypotheses on what kinds of emotions matter in a post-communist country with multiple types of populist parties. This allows us to see both whether these hypotheses hold up in a different context and whether they hold up to different kinds of populist parties.

This study proceeds by defining populism, followed by some basic background information on the development of political parties in Slovakia. Afterward, it discusses the article's theoretical framework, its methodology, and then the results of the survey before presenting the conclusions.

### **What makes parties populist?**

The most common definitions of populism include two essential elements: anti-elitism and a thin ideology. Populist leaders claim to represent 'the people' against the 'corrupt elite' (e.g., Jagers – Walgrave 2007; Stanyer et al. 2016). Such parties lack a clear ideology, such as liberalism, socialism, and conservatism; instead they have a 'thin' or 'thin centered' ideology (Mudde 2007; Stanley 2008). Their 'thin' ideological stance is very adaptable. It allows populist parties to borrow ideas from various political traditions, making them 'catch-all' parties that appeal to people from multiple backgrounds (Capoccia 2002; Decker 2000; Heinisch 2003; Ignazi 1996). In the Slovak case, this includes rightwing extremist populism, rightwing populism, centrist populism and leftist populism. Now we define these different types of populism before discussing the Slovak parties.

#### ***Rightwing populism***

Among rightwing populism, Mudde (2007) differentiates between radical rightwing populist parties (which oppose liberal democracy) and non-radical populist rightist parties (which accept liberal democracy). Rightwing extremist populist parties do not accept democratic principles. They have a staunch anti-EU and anti-immigrant stance. Rightwing populist parties that accept democracy still tend to be nationalist, xenophobic, anti-immigrant and critical of the EU, but do not campaign for leaving the EU.

### ***Leftwing populism***

In contrast to rightwing populist parties, leftwing populist parties tend to embrace state intervention in the economy, and they claim to have socialist or social democratic principles. While not normally opposing EU membership, they usually oppose the EU's austerity policies and engage in some amount of economic nationalism. As Kriesi (2014: 370) notes, rather than emphasizing the nation, leftwing populists emphasize the defense of the national welfare state against Europe (we would add against globalization) and aim to defend "the economic privileges of domestic sectors of the economy and of domestic production sites".

Defending the national welfare state, egalitarianism (in contrast to rightwing populism), and anti-globalization (similar to rightwing populism) form parts of the populist left. The window of opportunity for left-wing populism has increased in recent years as social democratic parties have often supported measures resulting in welfare state retrenchment (March – Mudde 2005; March – Rommerskirchen 2015).

### ***Centrist populism***

The literature on welfare attitudes has largely ignored voters for centrist populist parties. We can assume that because these parties place themselves in the centre, their voters are ideologically close to the centre. One study examining centrist populist parties in Austria and the Czech Republic states that their voters resemble social liberals in that they support generous welfare benefits. Still, they are less like social democratic voters because they are sceptical toward the public provision of welfare services. Furthermore, they might be less willing to support higher taxes. In contrast to rightwing populists, they tend not to be xenophobic or Eurosceptic (Heinisch – Saxonberg 2017). Stanley (2017: 149) discusses the emergence of centrist populism in Central and Eastern Europe, where "attacking the elites from a distinct thin-ideological position restricted the electoral potential of new parties". Such parties lack a clear leftwing or rightwing ideology and sometimes have a technocratic, apolitical orientation (cf. Engler et al. 2019; Pop-Eleches 2010; Učeň 2003 etc.).

### **Background: the Slovak political landscape**

Slovakia presents a unique case for studying the varieties of populism, as populist parties have dominated post-communist politics (cf. Deegan-Krause – Houghton 2009; Engler et al. 2019). Parties representing different modes/variants of populism – from the left (*Smer-SD*), centre (*OĽaNO*), right

(SNS, *Sme rodina*) and extreme radical right (ĽSNS) – have been represented repeatedly in parliament as well as in government. Four of these parties are also denoted as ‘populist’ in the highly regarded PopuList database of populist parties (Rooduijn et al. 2019). ĽSNS is the one exception, as the PopuList classifies (Rooduijn et al. 2019) it as being far-right but not populist. However, we consider the party to be populist, since one of its main themes is the typically populist claim to represent ‘the common people’ against the ‘corrupt elite’.

Smer-SD, founded in 1999, started as a centrist populist party, but later moved to national populism using leftist appeals (Henderson 2017; Marušiak 2021). Since 2006, *Smer-SD* has been the country’s dominant party, having been in power from 2006-2010 and then again from 2012-2020 before losing the February 2020 elections. Despite the party’s leftist self-identification, its leader, Robert Fico, has often emphasized issues that we usually associate with the ethno-populist right, such as anti-Roma and anti-immigrant views. Nevertheless, the party has positioned itself on the left-side of the political spectrum in emphasizing its opposition to liberal economic reforms and in advocating increased spending on social benefits. Thus, the party has remained a catch-all populist party with an anti-elitist thin ideology, combining ‘leftist’ economic stances and criticisms of the political and economic elite with conservative views on cultural issues and projecting an anti-Roma sentiment (cf. Frič and Gyárfášová 2019; Stanley 2017). Since *Smer-SD* has placed itself to the left and allies itself with the socialist group in the European parliament, we consider it a leftwing populist party.

On the right side of the spectrum, the Slovak National Party (SNS) has been the most successful, having participated in two governments. It began as a rightwing nationalist party, with the type of populist profile that Mudde (2007) calls a populist rightwing party that accepts democracy. It was a minority party in *Smer-SD*-led governments in 2006-2010 and again in 2016-2020. Its years in government moderated its xenophobic stances – especially since its last coalition government included the ethnic Hungarian *Most-Híd* party.

At the far right, there is the authoritarian ĽSNS. Mudde (2007) would consider it a radical rightwing populist party, because it does not accept political democracy; yet, it is still populist in that it sees a conflict between ‘the people’ and the ‘corrupt’ ruling elite. Because of its extremist views and anti-system profile, it has never been able to join a coalition government (Gyárfášová 2018). Nonetheless, it has received around 8% of the vote in the last two elections, making it the fourth largest party in the 2020 parliament.

The third party on the populist right is *Sme rodina*. It is one of the more bizarre parties, as its leader Boris Kollár has claimed to support the ‘traditional

family’ and the ‘traditional values’, as well as strong anti-migration appeals; yet, he has had anything but a traditional family having fathered 11 children with 10 different women. In the 2020 elections, it received slightly more than 8% of the vote, making it the third largest party in parliament, and it has joined the ruling government coalition.

On the centre-right, OĽaNO represents yet another populist party. It is conservative on gender issues, opposing abortions and gay rights, but it comes closer to centrist parties in other matters. After gaining 25% of the vote in the 2020 elections, making it the largest party, its leader, Igor Matovič, became the prime minister (although he stepped down approximately one year later). It is a typical protest party that attracted voters who had become disillusioned with the established political parties. Moreover, OĽaNO portrayed itself not just as an anti-party but as an antipode to a political party. Thus, OĽaNO consistently refused to evolve into a political party or build its own organizational structures or membership base; therefore, it does not even have party members (Gyárfášová 2018; Gyárfášová – Učeň 2020; Haughton et al. 2022). We consider it a centrist-populist party because at the time of our survey, it held moderate or eclectic attitudes on many political issues. For example, it was moderately pro-EU and it was not xenophobic or against ethnic minorities. Moreover, it refused to define itself in accordance with traditional ideological left-right dimensions.

In summary, we consider *Smer-SD* to have been a leftwing populist party, OĽaNO a centrist-populist party, *Sme rodina* and SNS rightwing populist parties, and ĽSNS to have been a radical-right populist party. Therefore, Slovakia represents an excellent case for investigating the types of emotions that are important for voters of different types of populist parties, as it had five populist parties in parliament at the time of our survey that represented four different types of populism.

Finally, Slovakia also had some parties that scholars normally have not characterized as populist. Yet, as already pointed out, there are varying degrees of populism, so even if scholars have not claimed that these parties fulfill the criteria for being ‘populist’, it is possible that their voters were still somewhat motivated by the same emotional pull as voters of more clearly populist parties. The KDH has claimed to be a mainstream Christian Democratic party. It played a significant role in Slovakia’s politics, having been a member of three coalition governments from 1992 to 2012. However, since 2016 it has not been in the national parliament, but it still has had a strong position at the regional and local levels. Another non-populist party was PS/Spolu, a coalition of two social-liberal parties. It needed 7% of the vote to enter parliament as a coalition, which it just missed by 0.04% in the 2020 general election. However, the party did succeed in getting its candidate elected president in the 2019

presidential election and won the European Parliament elections in 2019. A third non-populist party was *Za ľudí*, a centrist political party that former President Andrej Kiska founded in 2019. Another party that we classify as non-populist is the SaS. Because only about 3% of the respondents in our survey said they would vote for SaS, we include this party in the group of ‘other’, as the number of supporters was too small to be able to make any valid conclusions based on their voters. Still, we should note that this party was able to pass the 5% threshold in the 2020 elections in order to remain in parliament and join a centre-right coalition government.

### **Emotions and voting for populist parties: The role of anger, fear, hope, pride**

Even though emotions also matter for voters of non-populist parties, emotions have perhaps been most significant in explaining the success of populist parties (Canovan 1999; Flinders 2020; Salmela – von Scheve 2017). For example, Minogue (1969: 197) claims that to “understand the (populist) movement is to discover the feelings which moved people”. Strong political emotions are mainly associated with the political style of populist leaders, which, precisely because of their emotional undertones, differs significantly from the cold, technocratic style of leaders of standard political parties. The appeal of populist parties in the eyes of voters has been attributed to the ability of their leaders to establish intense emotional relationships with their followers (Canovan 2002; Wodak 2015).

Populism tends to be primarily associated with disseminating negative rather than positive emotions and abusing them for one’s political ends (Betz 2002; Hameleers et al. 2016; Mancosu 2016). Several authors claim that fear leads to demobilization, while anger leads to support for populist parties (e.g., Rico et al. 2017; Conover – Feldman 1986). The reason being that when people feel fear, it is because they feel it is something that is beyond their control or the control of politicians, so electing a different party would not change things. However, when they feel anger it is because they believe that politicians or other groups within the country have done bad things and feel that other people could change the situation for the better. Salmela and Scheve (2017) argue that fear and shame can transform into anger, which in turn leads to support for rightwing populist parties.

Some authors, by contrast, claim that fear can lead to support for populist parties. Marcus and MacKuen (1993) find that those who feel anxiety are more motivated to start paying attention to political issues and switch parties, as they feel less complacent than those who feel enthusiasm. Nabi and Myrick (2018) argue that fear can lead to political mobilization, but only when combined with

hope. That is, if voters feel fear, but political parties offer them hope, they are likely to vote for the party, which gives them hope.

Other scholars disagree with emphasizing only negative emotions and point out that politicians can also mobilize around positive emotions. In their view, positive emotions such as enthusiasm, pride, hope or confidence can strengthen the collective identity (e.g., Jensen – Bang 2016; Searles 2017). For instance, hope may help motivate advantaged groups to support social change (Greenway et al. 2016). Feeling hopeful connects a positive outlook with the desire to change the status quo. The use of hope is an effective method of mitigating persistent and intractable conflicts. Communication emphasizing hope and conflict-solving may increase the acceptance of proposed solutions even if outgroup members have tabled them (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017).

Some studies have concentrated on voters' emotions toward the economic situation (e.g., Conover – Feldman 1986), while others (mentioned above) investigate emotions toward the political situation. Questions about feelings toward the political situation are also an essential question for considering how emotions influence support for populism, since a cornerstone of populism has been the tirade against the allegedly corrupt political elite. We have added a question about feelings toward immigration, because it is a topic that most rightwing and also some leftwing populist parties (such as *Smer-SD*) have emphasized since the increase in refugees coming to Europe due to the civil war in Syria. The fact that very few of these immigrants have come to Slovakia does not seem to matter, since politics is often about perception rather than facts, and the 2015 wave of migration was highly securitized before the 2016 general election (Kazharski – Tabosa 2018). The securitisation of migration had at least two consequences: 1) the rise of eurosceptic sentiment because of the EU Commission's requirement to implement the re-allocation scheme; and 2) the radicalization of the political discourse which played on fear. For these reasons we decided to include questions in our survey about emotional feelings toward immigrants in addition to the more common questions about the political and economic situation. We did not include questions about emotions toward corruption in the survey because previous surveys have not dealt with emotions toward this issue, the issue of corruption is already encompassed by the question about emotions toward the political situation (i.e. corruption is likely one of the factors respondents will likely include in their evaluation of their emotions toward the political situation), and it is difficult to imagine that anyone would have positive emotions toward corruption, but they could have positive emotions toward the overall political, economic or immigration situation.

Finally, we also take into account the emotions that voters feel toward political leaders. Studies in personalization and emotionalization of politics stress



that leaders really do matter (e.g., da Silva Garzia – De Angelis 2021; Silke – Maier 2010). Leaders give voters an important emotional stimulus to vote for them (Scherer et al. 1983). Political leaders serve as regulators (amplifiers or attenuators) of the emotional reactions of their followers to relevant emotional stimuli. A prerequisite for political leaders to play this role is their ability to build mutual trust and loyalty between them and their followers.

The political affiliation concept (Manning – Holmes 2013) and attachment theory (Mayseless 2010; Popper – Mayseless 2003) offer explanations for these mechanisms. In the first case, political leaders try to build strong ties with followers by resembling them, acting like those who have the same life experiences and, therefore, can understand their needs, moods, and problems. The similarity of personal traits (Aischholzer – Willman 2020) and the commonality of personal experiences (McDonald 2020) create easier conditions for potential followers' positive emotional identification with the political leaders. According to attachment theory, political leaders try to establish emotional relationships with their followers by treating them like children in many ways. As powerful protectors, they offer potential followers a secure attachment to their strong persons. Voters under pressure from various threats then tend to seek protection and develop emotional intimacy with political leaders. This trend toward personalization has led populist leaders often to transform their parties into 'personal parties', in which all political life and marketing centers around the leader (McDonnell 2013).

Thus, our hypotheses are as follows:

*H1) The demobilization hypothesis:* We expect anger to be more important than fear in the decision to vote for populist parties as fear is demobilizing;

*H2) The anxiety hypothesis:* even if fear is demobilizing when it comes to support for mainstream parties, it can become mobilizing when it comes to populist parties, because anxiety causes voters to switch to populist parties; this is especially likely if fear is combined with feelings of hope;

*H3) The collective identity hypothesis:* if people feel hope or pride, they will feel more part of society and be more likely to support mainstream parties;

*H4) The leadership hypothesis:* regardless of political views and regardless of their emotions toward the political or economic or immigration situation, voters are more likely to support a party whose leader gives them hope or pride;

*H5) Populist emotions hypothesis:* even if emotions might matter for non-populist voters they will be more important for populist voters.

To test these hypotheses, we will investigate the role of the two most commonly used negative emotions (anger and fear) and the two most commonly used positive emotions (hope and pride).

### **Research design**

The survey was conducted in October 2019 by the FOCUS agency. The representative sample of the adult population included 1521 respondents, who were interviewed face-to-face. We did not ask the respondents whom they voted for in the previous elections, as their emotions might have been different in 2016 than they were in 2019 when we conducted the survey. Consequently, we asked them instead which party they would vote for if the election were held the coming weekend. All of the parties that sat in parliament were included as possible choices, as were the most important parties that had a good chance of coming into parliament, such as PS/Spolu and KDH. The survey was carried out roughly four months before the 2020 elections.

To ascertain the influence of emotions, we asked the respondents whether they felt any of the following emotions toward the political situation, the economic situation, and the situation of immigrants: anger, fear, hope and pride. For example, concerning the political situation, we asked the respondents: “I would like to ask you how you feel when you think about the political situation of Slovakia, i.e., not about your personal economic situation. Please tell me if in the last six months, you have had the following feelings when you thought about the political situation in Slovakia: ...” and then they had to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ if they felt anger, fear, hope or pride. We also asked similar questions about what emotions they feel toward the main political leaders: Andrej Danko (leader of SNS), Marian Kotleba (leader of ĽSNS), Robert Fico (leader of *Smer-SD*), Andrej Kiska (leader of *Za ľudí*), and Michal Truban (leader of *PS-Spolu*) – that is whether they feel fear, anger, hope or pride toward these leaders, which were again coded as ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each emotion.

As control variables, we added the following demographic questions: gender (female=1, male=0), educational level, nationality (Slovak as the reference group), and age group. For educational level, our reference group is those who did not go to a secondary school. Then we have those who went to a vocational school but do not have the ‘maturita’ degree that allows them to study at a university, those who have the maturita degree, and finally those who have a university education.

Since we are interested in the role of emotions in voting for several types of parties, multinomial regression is the most appropriate method as it enables us

to simultaneously see which variables are significant for voting for all the political parties.

*PS/Spolu* is the baseline party for the multinomial regressions because it is the most liberal, pro-European party that promotes human rights the most, and we deem it to be the least populist party among those in the survey that received over 5% of the votes. Even though the group barely failed to receive the 7% that coalitions need to make it into parliament, it was the second most popular party among those participating in the survey, with 8.35% claiming they would vote for the party if the elections were today. Given their strong showing among the survey respondents, we decided to keep them in the analysis.

Furthermore, we decided to use this one party – which we consider to be the least populist of all the parties in our survey – rather than creating a baseline consisting of all the non-populist parties, because we are interested in looking at the country's emotional landscape (Ford 2021; Frie 2014). We agree with Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009) that populism is not a simple dichotomous variable as there are degrees of populism. Thus, parties that most scholars do not categorize as populist might still exhibit some populist tendencies, as might their voters. Although, it is beyond the scope of this article to determine the degrees of populism among the parties, for this article it is important to investigate whether even non-populist parties might have similar emotional appeals to the voters that the populist parties have.

Our multinomial regressions then include one's voting intention for the five populist parties as well as the non-populist, Christian democratic KDH and the centrist *Za Ludi*, with *PS/Spolu* as the baseline. In the regressions, we grouped voters for all the other parties together as 'other'. Even though we included 'other' in the regressions, we do not report the results in the table as it is difficult to interpret these results, since they include a wide variety of small, insignificant parties. We kept them in the regression, however, to keep the number of respondents higher.

To deal with missing variables, we applied the chain method for multiple imputations for all variables in which there were at least 45 missing cases. It would have been difficult to get the regressions to converge if we imputed all variables, so given the starting point of 1521 cases, the 45-case cut-off point meant that we imputed if more than 3% of the cases were missing. Since we did not impute the variables with only small numbers of missing cases, the number of respondents decreased slightly from 1521 to 1370.

## Analysis of the results

The aggregate statistics show that anger was the most frequent emotion when it comes to the economic and political situation, but when it comes to migration fear was equally important (see Table 1). Regarding economics and politics fear was strong, but anger prevailed. Respondents were more likely to feel hope toward the political and economic situation but not migration. Meanwhile, few felt pride toward any of these topics.

Table 1: **Please tell me whether, when thinking about (economic, political, immigration) situation in Slovakia, you had or did not have the following feelings. % of responses “yes, I had this feeling within last 6 months”.**

	Anger	Hope	Fear	Pride
Economic situation	60	42	48	22
Political situation	73	38	52	18
Immigrants	58	14	59	10

To reveal how emotions affect voting preference for different parties we applied multinomial regressions.

Table 1 shows the results of the multinomial regression when the party-leader is excluded. Then Tables 2 shows the multinomial regressions when one party leader is included. We did not run one regression with questions about whether one feels anger, fear, pride or hope for all five party leaders because there would be too many variables, making it difficult to interpret the results as the table would be several pages long and we would lose many degrees of freedom, making the results less robust. To make it more readable, we only include the results in Table 2 for those who voted for that particular party. The full multinomial regression for each party leader are available on the on-line appendix. Thus, for example, in Table 2 we only show the importance of emotions toward Fico for those who voted for *Smer-SD*, but not the negative emotions of those who did not vote for his party, while in the Appendix one can see what emotions voters of other parties had toward Fico.

Table 2: Multinomial regression of voting intention

	ĽSNS	Sme rodina	SNS	OĽaNO	Smer-SD	KDH	Za ľudí
<b>Feelings about the national situation</b>							
Anger economy	-.67 (.41)	-.14 (.42)	-.59 (.42)	-.24 (.41)	-1.17*** (.38)	-.69 (.44)	-.04 (.44)
Hope economy	.58 (.38)	-.18 (.39)	.61 (.4)	.68 (.4)	.79* (.36)	-.08 (.4)	.16 (.39)
Fear economy	.87* (.41)	-.09 (.41)	.12 (.42)	.56 (.41)	-.13 (.36)	.09 (.46)	.15 (.48)
Pride economy	-.49 (.42)	.58 (.43)	.65 (.45)	-.48 (.45)	.58 (.35)	.73 (.46)	-1.00 (.64)
Anger political	.52 (.45)	-.53 (.45)	-.26 (.47)	.65 (.47)	-.25 (.37)	.05 (.47)	-.39 (.44)
Hope political	-.58 (.38)	-.15 (.4)	-1.01* (.43)	-.92* (.43)	-.32 (.33)	-.21 (.41)	.08 (.38)
Fear political	-.53 (.40)	-.09 (.41)	-.3 (.44)	-.51 (.41)	-.1 (.36)	.01 (.45)	.15 (.45)
Pride political	-.02 (.46)	-.31 (.49)	.89 (.48)	.01 (.52)	.28 (.37)	-.81 (.53)	-.29 (.49)
Anger immigrants	.99* (.39)	.36 (.38)	.55 (.37)	-.41 (.38)	.67* (.32)	.59 (.44)	-.15 (.4)
Hope immigrants	-.59 (.45)	.09 (.52)	.41 (.47)	-.21 (.49)	-.04 (.39)	.38 (.50)	.46 (.5)
Fear immigrants	.33 (.39)	1.3*** (.40)	.38 (.36)	.86* (.4)	.33 (.32)	.13 (.43)	.37 (.4)
Pride immigrants	1.44** (.53)	-.34 (.75)	-.29 (.66)	.45 (.62)	.51 (.5)	.76 (.63)	.6 (.7)
<b>Socio-demographic indicators</b>							
Female	-1.1*** (.31)	.96** (.33)	-.53 (.33)	-.78* (.33)	.01 (.28)	.82* (.35)	.46 (.33)
<b>Educational level: reference group =basic education</b>							
vocational	.17 (.53)	-.59 (.59)	.05 (.60)	-.08 (.65)	-.17 (.49)	.08 (.59)	-.11 (.63)
secondary school with maturita	-.47 (.52)	-.22 (.54)	.05 (.58)	.16 (.63)	-.72 (.47)	-.4 (.58)	-.2 (.58)
university	-.46 (.54)	-1.14* (.57)	-.78 (.63)	-.31 (.66)	-1.23* (.5)	-.67 (.61)	-.13 (.62)
<b>Age group: reference group 18-24</b>							
25-34	-.47 (.42)	-.02 (.50)	.46 (.79)	.1 (.57)	1.07 (.65)	-.52 (.81)	.52 (.59)
35-44	-.87 (.46)	.34 (.57)	1.64 (.74)*	.76 (.56)	1.59* (.64)	.54 (.73)	.52 (.57)
45-54	-.64 (.52)	.27 (.57)	2.18 (.78)**	1.13 (.61)	2.24*** (.66)	1.24 (.74)	.95 (.64)
55-64	-.69 (.53)	-1.10 (.7)	2.37** (.77)	.63 (.62)	2.81*** (.66)	1.48* (.74)	.72 (.63)
65 or older	.78 (.89)	1.47 (.92)	4.54*** (1.0)	2.14* (.94)	5.33*** (.92)	4.02*** (.98)	2.9 (.9)
<b>Nationality: reference group = Slovak</b>							
Hungarian	.43 (1.25)	1.56 (1.31)	-.23 (1.41)	-.45 (1.48)	.33 (1.12)	.35 (1.29)	1.23 (1.16)
Other	1.28 (1.23)	1.67 (1.16)	1.68 (1.16)	1.01 (1.21)	1.98 (1.12)	1.29 (1.21)	1.13 (1.25)

Prob > F = .0000

Note: The category 'other' includes also the liberal SaS party (Freedom and Solidarity), which got over 5% of the votes in the 2020 election and is one of the coalition parties in government, but it only had the support of 3% of the respondents in our survey.

When it comes to the radical righting populist LSNS, voters felt fear over the economy, but both anger and pride toward the situation concerning immigrants. Those who felt fear over the economic situation were almost 2.4 times more likely to vote for the party than to vote for *PS-Spolu* (the odds ratios are not shown in the table). However, attitudes toward immigrants seemed to have mattered even more as those who felt anger over the situation were 2.7 times more likely to vote for the party, while those who felt pride were over 4 times more likely to vote for the party. How can we explain this seemingly contradictory emotional landscape, whereby LSNS supporters feel both pride and anger at the situation? A possible explanation is that they were angry that there are any immigrants at all in the country; yet, they also feel pride that the government refused to accept the EU quotas for asylum seekers from the Middle East. Contrary to the hypothesis that anger is a greater motivating factor for voting than fear, both emotions seem important, but for different issues.

Concerning the populist right that accepts democracy, *Sme rodina* and OĽaNO voters were only motivated by fear of immigrants. This is interesting because, similar to LSNS voters, fear was significant for at least one variable, which contradicts theories that claim that anger motivates people to vote for certain parties while fear makes them passive. Nevertheless, the exact issue in which fear matters differs as for LSNS, fear of economy was significant, while for *Sme rodina* voters, fear of immigrants was significant. OĽaNO supporters also were less likely than others to feel hope for the political situation. It is interesting that the few times that positive emotions were significant, the correlation was usually negative.

In the case of leftwing populist *Smer-SD*, positive emotions mattered. This party's voters were significantly less likely to feel anger over the national economic situation and significantly more likely to feel hope. Those who felt hopeful about the economic situation were 2.2 times more likely to support the party. Whether this is because the party is leftwing or because it was the incumbent party is not clear. Nonetheless, a very plausible explanation is the fact that if one has a positive feeling toward the direction that the economy is going, one is more likely to vote for the incumbent party than for other parties.

On the other hand, SNS was also an incumbent party, but the only emotive value that was significant was the negative emotion of lacking hope in the political situation. This could mean that there really is a difference between the types of emotions that leftwing and rightwing populist voters display. However, another important factor could be that *Smer-SD* was the larger, dominating party in the coalition government, and it had also previously been in power without the aid of SNS. Consequently, since SNS was the smaller party with less influence, its voters might have had rightwing attitudes, and

they could have been disappointed that their party had joined a coalition with a leftwing government. In addition, since the party was a nationalist party with a previously strong anti-Hungarian stance, SNS voters could have been disappointed that the Hungarian party Most-Híd had also joined the coalition government.

*Smer-SD* voters, however, also were motivated by a negative emotion: anger at the situation concerning immigrants. Thus, their emotions were in line with Fico's ethno-populist line, in which he opposed EU quotas for asylum seekers while being prime minister as well as his anti-Roma stance, which created a nationalist atmosphere against accepting 'outsiders'.

Among the non-populist parties, none of the emotion variables were significant for the Christian Democratic KDH or for the centrist *Za Ludi*.

When only looking at emotions toward the national situation, it is difficult to find strong patterns. Fear was more important than anger as it was significant in three cases, while anger was only significant in two cases, although *lack* of anger was also significant in a third case (anger toward the economy was negatively correlated with voting for *Smer-SD*). Negative emotions seem to be more important than positive emotions, as the only positive value was feeling hopeful about the economic situation among *Smer-SD* supporters. Even if, contrary to expectations, fear was more important than anger, we do not find support for Nabi and Myrick's (2018) claim that fear can lead to political mobilization when combined with hope, as hope was only significant for voting for *Smer-SD*, yet fear was not significant for any of the variables for voting for this party. We also see that emotions were less important for voters of non-populist parties as none of the emotive variables were significant.

To investigate whether emotions toward leaders matter more than emotions about the country's situation, as a next step, we conducted multinomial regressions for the same variables but each time asking about the emotions respondents feel toward a particular party leader. Table 3 shows a summary of the regressions by only showing what emotions the voters of that party feel toward its leader. It shows that the supporters of each party also have positive emotions toward their party leader, as in every case, feeling hopeful toward that leader was a significant predictor of voting for that party. Feeling pride was positively correlated for every party leader except for Kiska (the leader of *Za Ludi*). For reasons of space, we do not display the tables for each multinomial regression for every party leader, but the results that are available on the online appendix show that although the voters have positive emotions toward that party's the leader of the party that they vote for, they also have negative emotions toward other party leaders.

**Table 3: Condensed multinomial regression - the emotions only towards a candidate among those who voted for that candidate's party**

	Voted for ESNS (Kotleba)	Voted for SNS (Danko)	Voted for Smer-SD (Fico)	Voted for Za ľudí (Kiska)
Hope for leader of their party	1.81*** (.26)	1.34*** (.24)	1.82*** (.21)	.54* (.23)
Anger for leader of their party	.01 (.15)	-.6** (.19)	-.18 (.14)	-.05 (.15)
Pride for leader of their party	.66*** (.21)	.45* (.2)	.4* (.19)	.38 (.22)
Fear for leader of their party	-.23 (.14)	-.07 (.18)	-.5*** (.13)	.08 (.15)
Anger economy	-.69 (.54)	-.23 (.45)	-.93* (.4)	-.05 (.22)
Hope economy	.63 (.48)	.10 (.45)	.17 (.38)	-.02 (.41)
Fear economy	1.04* (.48)	.14 (.4)	.22 (.39)	.16 (.5)
Pride economy	-1.0 (.53)	.1 (.45)	.24 (.41)	-.95 (.72)
Anger political	1.05 (.6)	-.16 (.48)	-.04 (.43)	-.54 (.47)
Hope political	-.88 (.5)	-1.15* (.46)	-.83* (.38)	-.03 (.39)
Fear political	-.77 (.46)	-.02 (.50)	.27 (.42)	.13 (.47)
Pride political	-.33 (.56)	.69 (.5)	-.53 (.44)	-.38 (.55)
Anger immigrants	.74 (.45)	.63 (.4)	.41 (.37)	-.06 (.41)
Hope immigrants	-.53 (.54)	.38 (.51)	.23 (.43)	.23 (.52)
Fear immigrants	-.45 (.49)	.16 (.4)	.33 (.36)	.41 (.38)
Pride immigrants	1.2* (.61)	-.58 (.69)	.4 (.57)	.72 (.83)
Female	-1.27*** (.37)	-.81 (.33)	-.52 (.32)	.53 (.35)
Vocational	.42 (.62)	-.2 (.66)	.11 (.58)	.07 (.71)
Secondary school with maturita	.25 (.59)	.06 (.62)	-.34 (.57)	-.07 (.67)
University	-.24 (.63)	-.86 (.69)	-.82 (.63)	.05 (.7)
25-34	-.21 (.52)	.27 (.87)	.93 (.69)	.42 (.6)
35-44	-.26 (.57)	1.64 (.86)	1.34 (.69)	.37 (.6)
45-54	-.7 (.69)	1.84* (.86)	2.1** (.7)	.82 (.67)
55-64	-.7 (.69)	2.38** (.85)	3.05*** (.7)	.95 (.64)
65 or older	.83 (.9)	3.91*** (1.05)	5.02*** (.96)	2.95** (.94)
Hungarian	.48 (1.34)	-.46 (1.42)	1.1 (1.14)	1.2 (1.15)
Other	1.13 (1.35)	1.79 (1.27)	2.18* (1.08)	.99 (1.28)

Note: The category 'other' includes also the liberal SaS party (Freedom and Solidarity), which got over 5% of the votes in the 2020 election and is one of the coalition parties in government, but it only had the support of 3% of the respondents in our survey.



## Conclusion

We carried out the survey before the 2020 elections that brought about a change of government and before the COVID outbreak. This means that if we were to conduct the survey today, our results might have differed somewhat. We could imagine that the COVID outbreak, for example, would increase the feeling of fear among the population.

Our results lead to the following conclusions concerning our starting hypotheses: First, *fear is more important than anger* in voting for centrist and rightwing populist parties, which gives support to the anxiety hypothesis (H2) over the demobilization hypothesis (H1). One explanation as to why fear seems to be more important than anger and why immigration is more important than the political or economic situation is the securitization of migration that has taken place in Slovakia, despite the lack of immigrants and especially the lack of refugees from the Middle-East coming from the war in Syria (e.g. Gazarek 2019; Kazharski – Tabosa 2018: 78).

Second, *negative emotions are more important* than positive emotions for populist parties that are *in opposition*, while *positive feelings are more important* for populist parties that are *in power* (and have been in power for long periods). This requires us to modify the collective identity hypothesis (H3), because our study shows that positive emotions are more associated with being in power rather than being a mainstream party, while negative emotions are more associated with being in opposition rather than being a populist party.

Third, the most important emotion is the feelings that voters have toward political leaders, as feeling *hope in a leader* is significant for voting for all parties, while feeling pride is significant for voting for most parties, which supports hypothesis 4 (H4) about leadership.

Fourth, *emotions are less important for supporters of non-populist parties*, and they are less important for supporters of centrist populist parties than for either leftist or rightist populist parties. This supports hypothesis 5 (H5) about emotions being more important for voters of populist parties than voters of mainstream parties.

We also have an interesting result that is not directly connected to our hypotheses:

*Negative emotions toward immigration are more important* than negative emotions toward the economic or political situation, as fear over the situation of immigrants and anger are significant four times, while the only other negative emotion to be significant is fear of the economic situation among ĽSNS voters. We attribute this to the *securitization* argument: fear can be mobilizing for populist parties if it is connected to an issue that the country's political discourse has securitized.

Our results have implications for the general discourse on emotions and populism. First, it shows the importance of the national context: although anger is normally a greater mobilizing force than fear when the political discourse in a country securitizes an issue like immigration, then fear can be a more powerful factor for voting for populist parties than is anger. Second, at least in the Slovak case, it turns out that emotions do matter more for populist voters than mainstream voters, so this should be theorized more in future studies. Third, emotions toward leaders are more important than emotions toward issues. This finding clearly undermines the notion that structural conditions such as economic, political or identitarian crises lead directly to the election of populist parties. On the contrary, it shows the importance of the ability of political leaders to elicit and animate the emotions of their constituents. Our findings thus support the validity of an interactional rather than structural approach to examining the role of emotions in citizens' voting behavior.

Future studies will be needed to determine whether Slovakia represents a special case or whether these findings can hold up for other countries with several kinds of populist parties in parliament. We could imagine that theories about the role of fear and anger might have to be revised and it could turn out that fear has become increasingly important in motivating voters in other countries as well, both because Slovakia is not the only country where the immigration issue has become securitised and because the COVID pandemic might have increased the role of fear in European societies. We also think it is very likely that emotions toward leaders is more important than emotions toward other topics in European countries, as politics has become increasingly person-fixated throughout the continent. An example is the ability of Emmanuel Macron to found a new party that is strongly tied to his person and win two elections, in a country that for decades had the same parties in parliament or the success that Giuseppe Conte had in creating a new centrist populist party in Italy (the Five Star Movement) that got him elected prime minister while Silvio Berlusconi had succeed in getting elected prime minister several times in the same country while heading various rightwing, entrepreneurial populist parties.

#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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