

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Feeling overlooked: A rural–urban divide in recognition

Marie Hyland¹  | Massimiliano Mascherini¹  | Michèle Lamont² 

¹European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, Ireland

²Harvard University Department of Sociology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Correspondence

Massimiliano Mascherini, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin, D18 KP65, Ireland.

Email: mam@eurofound.europa.eu

Abstract

The farmers' protests sweeping across Europe during the early month of 2024 have highlighted the discontent felt by many residing in rural areas. Protests have been motivated by increasing input costs, falling prices of agricultural produce and more stringent regulations. In this paper, we go beyond the economic rationale for the protests and ask what broader sociological factors could be driving rural discontent. To this aim, we investigate political 'recognition gaps' between rural residents and their urban counterparts – that is, the differences in the degree to which people feel respected and recognised by their governments. Using data collected in the spring of 2022 across the 27 Member States of the European Union, we document that a sizeable proportion of the sample perceive a lack of fair treatment and respect from their governments. Notably, these gaps in perceived respect are significantly larger in rural compared to urban areas. The differences in perceived recognition between rural and urban areas hold even after controlling for a wide range of sociodemographic characteristics, showing that it is not just differences in the observable characteristics between rural and urban residents that are driving these different levels of perceived recognition.

1 | THE GROWING DISCONTENT OF EUROPE'S RURAL POPULATION

Since late January 2024, a wave of farmer protests has swept across Europe, taking European politicians by surprise and highlighting a rising discontent within rural communities (Hyland et al., 2024). Initially erupting in France (Reuters, 2024), the movement quickly spread to other countries. Hundreds of tractors blocked Brussels city centre while the European Parliament was pelted by eggs (Politico, 2024). While farmers' top concerns vary from country to country, chief among them were economic pressures from surging input costs, competition from imports and stricter environmental regulations (Corriere della Sera, 2024; France24, 2024).

The current farmer protests highlight specific concerns with economic pressures and environmental policies, but tensions between rural and urban communities have existed for a long time. The rural–urban divide is a complex issue driven by economic, social and cultural factors with profound implications for the social cohesion and stability of European societies (European Committee of the Regions, 2022).

Research has documented the significant differences in economic opportunities and social conditions between rural and urban areas (Eurofound, 2023). These include a rural–urban gap in incomes, employment rates, educational attainment, as well as broadband connectivity and the provision of public services. All these gaps are in favour of the urban population. However, the divide is not only seen in material resources but also perceived in recognition and status (Lamont, 2018), and it can affect political and democratic stability (De Moor, 2016; Krause & Wagner, 2021).

This phenomenon is not limited to the European continent. Discontent among rural populations is evident in the United States also, which is associated with an increase in support for the Republican Party (Brown & Mettler, 2023; Cramer, 2016; Mettler & Brown, 2022). Krugman (2024) highlights the role of technological change in the loss of jobs that has been 'devastating' to rural America. He notes that while technological advances have benefited the US economy and society as a whole, they have led to a significant decline in opportunities for rural areas. Moreover, alongside the loss of jobs, there has been

a loss of dignity among rural communities. In a study of the relative degree of backlash towards globalisation in the United States, France and Germany, Abdelal (2020, page 493) argues that 'it's not just about the money'. In France, anti-globalisation and populist sentiment exist despite a significant redistribution of income from the better to the less well-off. Abdelal highlights that what the losers from globalisation have lost is not just financial resources but also dignity and respect.

In this paper, we explore cultural differences between rural and urban areas using the concept of the recognition gap, as developed by Lamont (2018). Using a unique set of data collected in the spring of 2022, we bring new evidence on rural–urban gaps in feelings of recognition and respect with the goal of shedding light on the recent exacerbation of the rural/urban conflicts in the European Union (EU). Our results show that, in almost all countries in the EU, those living in rural areas are less likely than their more urban counterparts to feel that they themselves and their communities are respected and recognised by governments. Moreover, these gaps in political recognition hold even after controlling for a wide range of socio-economic and demographic characteristics that may be associated with feeling of recognition.

The paper proceeds as follows, in the next section we outline the relevant literature on the rural–urban divide as well as on recognition gaps. Following that, we present our conceptual framework and hypotheses to be tested. Next, we describe our data source and methodology to operationalise the 'political recognition gap', as well as our empirical approach. Following this, we present the results of our analysis. In the final section, we discuss the implications of political recognition gaps for social cohesion and political stability in Europe and present some concluding remarks.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Our research is related to two broad strands of literature. The first relates to differences, both economic and cultural, between rural and urban areas. The second is the literature related to the 'recognition gap' (Lamont, 2018).

Recent research (Eurofound, 2023) has shown that, within the continent of Europe, notable differences can be observed in the culture espoused in rural and urban areas. On the one hand, urban areas tend to be more cosmopolitan, meaning that they are more open to diversity, multiculturalism and global influences. Urban dwellers are more likely to embrace liberal and progressive values, such as individualism, secularism, human rights and environmentalism. In contrast, rural dwellers tend to prioritise local and national identity, tradition and sovereignty and are more likely to

Policy Implications

- The growing divide between Europe's rural and urban areas is becoming an increasing threat to political trust and social cohesion.
- Inequalities in living conditions and sentiments of not being recognised or valued may be one of the explanations behind the rise of populist movements in Europe.
- Politicians and decision-makers must urgently deploy place-based policies that ensure the provision of high-quality public services to improve living conditions in rural areas and ensure that rural residents feel valued.
- Opportunities for education, training and employment of young people in rural areas should be provided through the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee.
- Investments such as these would help achieve the goal of geographically balanced economic growth as set out in the Lisbon Treaty that established the legal framework of the European Union and made territorial cohesion the third articulated dimension of European cohesion policy.
- Such investments could also signal to rural communities their importance in terms of overall European economic and social development.

embrace conservative and traditional values, such as family, religion, patriotism and the rural lifestyle. The same research has demonstrated that rural residents have lower average levels of income, employment opportunities and education.

According to the research of Hansen (2006), the fact that rural residents tend to have lower levels of education, income and mobility may limit the exposure of rural residents to diversity and cosmopolitanism. Hansen (2006) also illustrates how tensions between rural and urban areas can be amplified by a phenomenon known as 'urban imperialism'. This refers to the dominance and influence of urban culture, values and institutions over rural areas. Urban imperialism can be seen in the way that urban areas tend to set the standards and norms of culture, the media, education and politics, which are then diffused to rural areas. This can lead to the homogenisation and marginalisation of rural cultures and identities. Urban imperialism can also exacerbate the rural–urban divide, as rural areas may feel excluded or oppressed by urban hegemony who, ultimately, are more likely to design policies for rural

areas, without perfect knowledge of the situation on the ground and therefore re-invigorating the perception of top-down urban predominance (Barca, 2019; Barca et al., 2012).

However, it is important to note that while the binary rural–urban categorisation is useful lens through which to analyse gaps in income and living conditions and attitudes, it is also an oversimplification. Kenny and Luca (2021) examine rural–urban differences in social and political attitudes across 30 countries and find that, while rural residents are more likely to be disenchanted with politicians and democracy, the spatial divide should not be characterised as binary. Instead, they highlight, the spatial divide is better viewed as a continuum that runs from inner cities to metropolitan suburbs, towns and villages, to the open countryside. Their results also underscore that differences in attitudes – for example, towards migration, democracy and the EU – cannot be explained by differences in demographic characteristics, including age, gender, migrant and economic status, and that geography plays a separate and distinct role in explaining these differences. McNamara (2017) also highlights the role that geography can play in the formation of cleavages between different groups of voters; as urban areas become more prosperous and rural ones suffer from economic decline, class bubbles are formed. The author argues that this has played an underappreciated role in the rise of political polarisation and populism in the United States.

Harteveld et al. (2022) discuss the increasing support for radical right-wing parties in parts of the Netherlands. The authors highlight that such support has increased in some cities, some towns and some rural areas, but not in others. The authors argue that, across the board, anxiety in the face of social change can drive support for right-wing parties, but that the forces of social change differ between rural and urban areas. In cities, increases in immigration can give rise to such anxieties, whereas in rural areas, marginalisation – driven by outward migration of the young and educated, accompanied by a decline in services – can provoke increased anxiety and, thus, support for radical right-wing parties.

The perceived marginalisation of rural communities as well as the economic and social inequalities between rural and urban areas may drive a surge in what Lamont (2018) calls the ‘recognition gap’. Societal worth depends on whether individuals meet the criteria for cultural membership; if they do, then they are perceived as valued members of the community. As outlined by Lamont (2018), the recognition gap is a concept that refers to the subjective experiences of individuals and groups who feel that their cultural identities are not valued or recognised, in particular social contexts. This can manifest in feelings of disrespect, stigmatisation or exclusion, which can in turn have a significant impact

on individuals’ self-esteem, social mobility, political participation and discontent.

The political recognition that we examine relates to the idea, proposed by Murray Edelman (1967), of politics being ‘symbolic’. This means that the actions of governments can, in addition to allocating resources, influence what people want and how they feel (Edelman, 1967; Mendelberg, 2022; Sears et al., 1980). According to this theory, the very allocation of resources can signal a relative position in society. As Tali Mendelberg puts it ‘Political systems allocate not only valued material resources but also collective social value’ (Mendelberg, 2022, p. 51). Mendelberg (2022) emphasises that political ‘symbols’ signal the worthiness of certain groups of people or types of behaviour in the eyes of society as a whole and convey the message of who is stigmatised and who is esteemed by both the political system and the nation. The political implications of this are underscored by the research of Gidron and Hall (2017), who show that lower levels of social status are linked to support for right-wing populist parties. The authors highlight how changes in economic circumstances (such as the decline in decent low-skilled jobs in Western economies) and changes in cultural values (such as the decline in the importance of being ‘hardworking’ in favour of being ‘high skilled’) can bring about these declines in social status. Feelings of respect and recognition matter because human dignity and social justice have an intrinsic value, and also because recognition has a direct impact on both physical and subjective well-being (Lamont, 2018).

3 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our analysis focuses on political recognition, that is, recognition by political institutions. Other related and complementary forms of recognition include that between people (interpersonal recognition) or between groups (intergroup recognition). Political recognition matters because government policies can be interpreted as signalling the relative importance of different segments of the population. This signalling is conveyed by the relative distribution of resources across different groups. The political recognition gap can manifest in rural communities being overlooked by policymakers and other decision-makers who typically reside in national capitals or other major urban settings. Because of their lower population sizes (and associated lower voting power), rural areas can be seen as less important or less relevant than urban areas, which can lead to a lack of investment in infrastructure, education and other public services. This can further reinforce feelings of marginalisation and exclusion among rural residents, who may feel that their needs and interests are not being taken seriously by those in power. Indeed,

research has shown important differences between rural and urban areas in terms of the quality as well as access to essential services, including digital and physical infrastructure, education, healthcare and other care services (Eurofound, 2023).

In the framework of symbolic politics, the opposition that we are witnessing to the policies and regulations, often designed by urban elites, that disproportionately impact rural communities in Europe are not only about the material implications of these policies but they are also a reaction to the social rank inferred by these policies. As discussed by Lamont (2018), recognition gaps occur when there is a mismatch between individuals' perception of themselves and their perceptions of the way they are treated by society. Focusing on treatment specifically by governments, to determine whether a recognition gap exists in this regard and whether it differs among urbanisation levels in Europe, we investigate whether urbanisation levels are predictive of political recognition gaps and if the magnitude of recognition gaps increases as the degree of urbanisation decreases.

We propose that the relative allocation of resources and impacts of policies and regulations may affect the perceived level of respect and recognition that people feel is given to both themselves as individuals and towards their wider communities. As such, we explore potential 'individual' and 'community' recognition gaps. Given that the literature in this area is not well developed, we do not have strong priors as to whether rural–urban differences in recognition may be more pronounced at the individual or the community level. This is an open question that we seek to answer empirically by testing the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Residents of rural areas are less likely to feel that they themselves are respected and recognised by policymakers.

Hypothesis 2. Residents of rural areas are less likely to feel that their communities are respected and recognised by policymakers.

4 | DATA

4.1 | Living, working and COVID-19 online survey

In April 2020, Eurofound first launched the e-survey, *Living, working and COVID-19*. To date, seven waves of data collection have been completed, with the most recent in spring of 2024. The current study uses the fifth round of the e-survey, which was fielded from the 29th of March and the 2nd of May 2022. The e-survey aims to capture the far-reaching implications of the pandemic for the way people live and work across the EU, with the

aim of helping policymakers bring about an equal recovery from the crisis. The survey examined quality of life during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. According to the World Health Organisation, quality of life refers to 'individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns' (WHOQOL Group, 1995). As such it is a broad concept and the *Living, working and COVID-19* aims to assess it through a wide array of questions, ranging from life satisfaction, happiness and optimism to health and levels of satisfaction with governments and trust in institutions. While a core set of questions were asked in every round, different aspects of quality of life and work in Europe were explored in different survey rounds. The fifth round, used in our analysis, included questions related to housing, living and financial conditions, and reflections on teleworking and work–life balance. The questionnaire also helped to understand the social impact of the war in Ukraine as well as the record- high inflation and sharp rises in the cost of living. It also asked, for the first time, about people's perceptions of how they were treated by their governments. The survey provides an operationalisation of the political recognition gap in five items, Lamont (2018).

Given that Europe was still reeling from the aftermath of the pandemic and facing new crises brought about by the war in Ukraine and associated cost of living and energy price spikes, the survey was administered during a time of heightened stress for many living in Europe. Thus, in the middle of this polycrisis (Morin & Kern, 1999), the survey may record more negative responses among respondents in general, and potentially heightened feelings of negativity towards governments. However, given that questions on perceptions of treatment by governments were only posed in a single survey round, this is something that we cannot compare across waves.

The e-survey uses snowballing methods to recruit respondents, including the use of mailing lists, by publishing a link to the survey on Eurofound's website and by advertising on social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn and X. Furthermore, partners and stakeholders of Eurofound were asked to share a link to the survey through their own websites, mailing lists and social media platforms. The resulting sample, of individuals aged 18 and over, is not representative of the underlying population; however, the e-survey is corrected for the population structure in the EU Member States by weighting the data by age, gender, urbanisation, education level and country size. For the rural–urban analysis, the survey goes beyond the simple binary rural–urban categorisation and adopts a perception-based indicator where the respondent declares their living place, which broadly corresponds to Eurostat's classification of the degree of urbanisation. Therefore, the spatial divide is investigated from inner cities to metropolitan suburbs,

towns, villages and the open countryside as per Kenny and Luca (2021). Descriptive statistics based on the sample are presented in Table A1 of the Appendix.

4.2 | Operationalising the ‘recognition gap’

The concept of a political recognition gap is operationalised in the fifth wave of Eurofound's *Living, working and COVID-19* through five items. In particular, e-survey respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with five statements on their perception of how they are treated by their governments. The five statements are listed in Table 1.

These five items are an extension of previously tested items included in the World Values Survey 2017–2020 (Haerpfer et al., 2022), as well as in previous studies (Devine et al., 2020; Jennings et al., 2021, 2023).

The items tap into the complex and multidimensional construct of political recognition and explore the relationship among individuals, communities and the government, particularly focusing on perceptions of fairness, respect and inclusivity within the political system.

The first three items (‘The government acts unfairly towards people like me’, ‘The government doesn't respect people like me’ and ‘The government usually ignores people like me’) reflect an individual's subjective experience of being acknowledged, valued and recognised within the political system. They encapsulate the concept of symbolic politics (Edelman, 1964), which emphasises how individuals interpret and understand government actions through a lens of personal experience. The perception of unfair treatment, disrespect and neglect can be seen as symbolic cues that signal a lack of recognition and consideration from those in power.

The last two items (‘The government cares less about people in my area than about people in other parts of the country’ and ‘The government usually ignores my community’) reflect a broader sense of recognition and exclusion experienced at the community or geographical level. They explore the perceptions of geographic or communal neglect, potentially leading to a collective sense of alienation and detachment from the broader political community (Seeman, 1959; Gamson, 1968).

Factor analysis was used to determine whether the five variables could be aggregated into fewer categories and reflect the theoretical construct above. As the variables included in the factor analysis were categorical (i.e. on a Likert scale) rather than continuous, a polychoric factor analysis was applied (Lee et al., 1995). The superior performance of the polychoric correlation matrix compared to the standard Pearson approach has been illustrated in Holgado-Tello et al. (2010), among others. The polychoric factor analysis confirmed that the five questions presented in Table 1 could be aggregated into two groups: questions 1–3 and questions 4–5 (see detailed results in Table A2 of the Appendix). Following the theoretical framework above these two factors can be described as, respectively, political recognition gaps towards the individual and political recognition gaps towards the community.

The first factor, what we refer to as the ‘individual recognition gap’, measures respondents' perception that their government acts fairly towards ‘people like them’. The second factor, the ‘community recognition gap’, measures respondents' perception that the government acts fairly towards their communities. Hence, for the five variables presented in Table 1, two factors were created comprising the variables falling within each factor, showing the degree of respect respondents perceive towards themselves or their communities. For ease of exposition, in the descriptive statistics presented below, the individual recognition gap is a simple average of the responses to the first three questions listed in Table 1, and the community recognition gap is the simple average of the second two questions. For the regression analysis presented in the next section, the predicted values from the factor analysis are used as the dependent variables.

TABLE 1 Operationalising the concept of political recognition gaps – survey questions.

E-survey question	Response options
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	5-Point Likert scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’
1. The government acts unfairly towards people like me.	
2. The government doesn't respect people like me.	
3. The government usually ignores people like me.	
4. The government cares less about people in my area than about people in other parts of the country.	
5. The government usually ignores my community.	

Source: Eurofound e-survey on ‘Living, working and COVID-19’, spring 2022.

4.3 | Recognition across degrees of urbanisation

Figures 1 and 3 present overviews of how well-respected people felt, both at the individual (Figure 1) and community (Figure 3) levels, across urbanisation levels and Member States, as of spring 2022.

Figure 1 shows that, in all but two Member States (Malta, which has a very small rural population, and Hungary), those living in cities perceive higher levels of

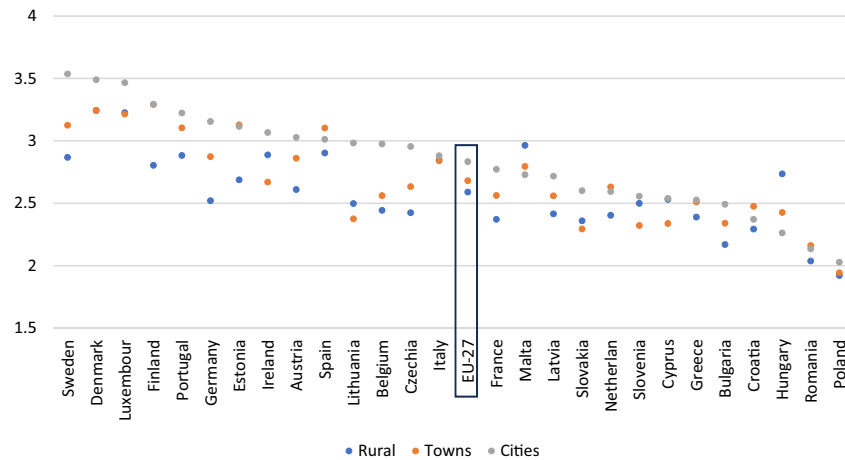


FIGURE 1 Individual recognition by Member State and degree of urbanisation. The figure represents the overall score on the individual recognition variable, which is calculated as the average of how strongly respondents disagree with the following three statements: (1) 'The government acts unfairly towards people like me', (2) 'The government doesn't respect people like me' and (3) 'The government usually ignores people like me'. Member States are ordered from the highest to lowest recognition scores. *Source:* Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey (spring 2022).

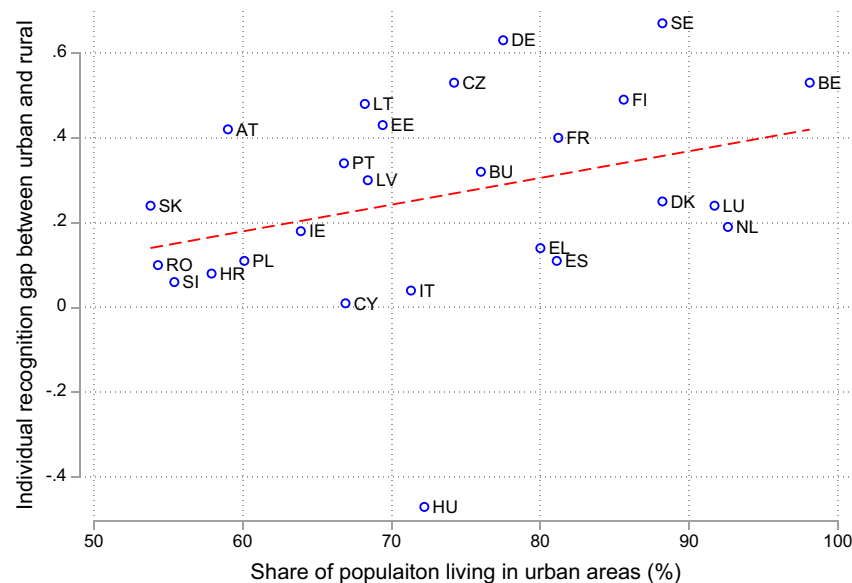


FIGURE 2 The relationship between the individual recognition gap and degree of urbanisation, 2022. The y-axis plots the difference between the average individual recognition score between urban and rural areas. The x-axis is the urban share of a country's population, according to World Bank data for 2022. Malta is excluded from the graph because the share of the rural population in Malta is less than 5%. *Source:* Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey (spring 2022), and World Bank Databank.

recognition and respect than those living in rural areas. Those living in areas of intermediate population density (medium-to-large towns) generally express levels of perceived recognition that fall between that of cities and rural areas. At EU level, perceived recognition increased with the degree of urbanisation. The recognition gap between cities and rural areas is highest in Sweden. Other Member States where the individual recognition gap is notably higher than the EU average include Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Lithuania. In each of these Member

States, the individual recognition gap between rural and urban areas is approximately twice the EU average.

In general, the gap in individual recognition between rural and urban areas is higher in more urbanised countries (Figure 2).

Looking at perceptions of recognition towards one's community (Figure 3), European residents perceive higher levels of recognition at the community level. However, the advantage is greater for urban compared to rural residents, resulting in an overall larger community (relative to individual) recognition gap. Perceptions

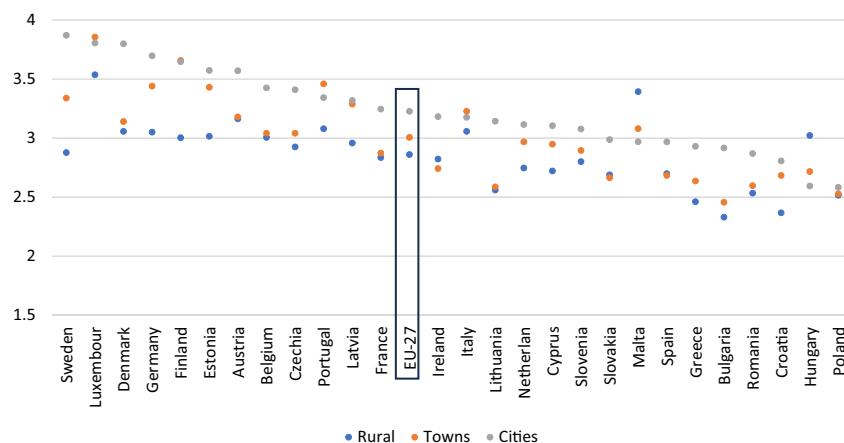


FIGURE 3 Community recognition by Member State and degree of urbanisation. The figure represents the overall score on the community recognition variable, which is calculated as the average of how strongly respondents disagree with the following two statements: ‘The government cares less about people in my area’ and ‘The government usually ignores my community’. Member States are ordered from the highest to the lowest community recognition scores. *Source:* Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey (spring 2022).

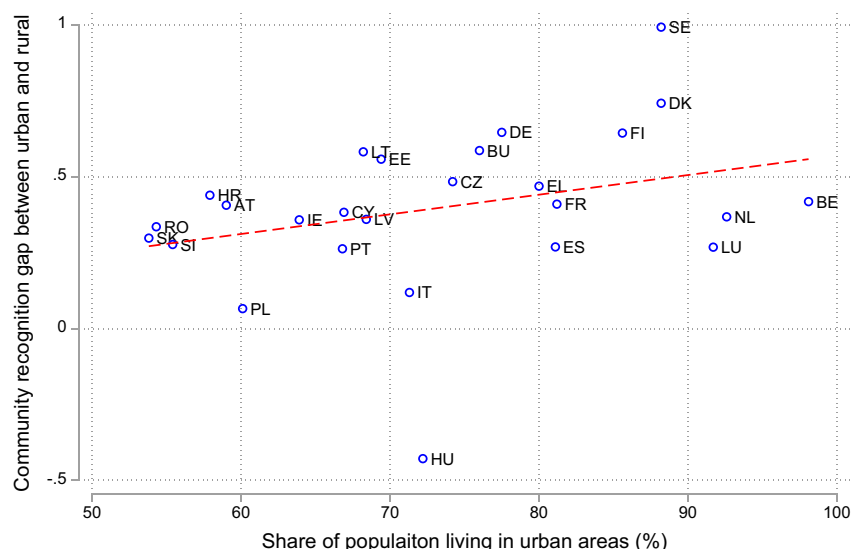


FIGURE 4 The relationship between the community recognition gap and degree of urbanisation, 2022. The y-axis plots the difference between the average community recognition score between urban and rural areas. The x-axis is the urban share of a country's population, according to World Bank data for 2022. Malta is excluded from the graph because the share of the rural population in Malta is less than 5%. *Source:* Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey, and World Bank Databank.

of community recognition are higher in all but two Member States, with the exceptions being, again, Hungary and Malta. The community recognition gap is largest in Sweden, followed by Denmark, Germany and Finland. The perceived recognition of communities at an intermediate level of urbanisation (medium-to-large towns) falls in between that of rural and urban areas. The gaps in recognition between urban and rural areas are generally larger in countries where the overall average perceived levels of recognition are higher. Furthermore, as with gaps in individual recognition, the community recognition gap is generally increasing in the degree of urbanisation (Figure 4).

Three conclusions can be drawn from the descriptive statistics on perceived individual and community recognition. Firstly, at both European and Member State levels, a large share of the population is experiencing recognition gaps (Figures 1 and 3). For example, in Poland, across all degree of urbanisation, the average score on the individual recognition variable is less than 2 of a maximum of five points (Figure 1). At the EU level, the score is 2.7 of a possible 5 points, which is also low. It is important to note that the data were collected in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis (in spring 2022), which may have worsened negative feelings in certain areas. Secondly, at European level

and for most Member States, residents of rural areas express lowest levels of perceived recognition by governments, both towards themselves and towards their communities (Figure 3). Finally, the recognition gap between those living in rural areas and their urban counterparts is increasing in the degree of urbanisation at the country level (Figures 2 and 4).

5 | EMPIRICAL APPROACH AND RESULTS

We ran multivariate regression models with fixed effects to determine whether areas' degrees of urbanisation are predictive of recognition gaps after controlling for other factors. The model controls for a range of sociodemographic factors: gender (men or women), age, migration background (native or not native), educational attainment (lower than secondary, secondary or tertiary), poverty (difficulty in making ends meet) and employment (current employment status, spells of unemployment and sector of employment). Country fixed effects are also included to account for unobserved differences at the country level (Lamont, 2018, p. 423; Kenny & Luca, 2021). No information on the political ideology of the respondents was available in the survey. The model can be summarised as follows:

$$Recognition_i = \alpha + \beta Urbanisation_i + \gamma X_i + Ctry_j + \varepsilon_i. \quad (1)$$

It explains the individual or community recognition score of individual i as a function of the degree of urbanisation of the area in which they live ($Urbanisation_i$), a vector of sociodemographic control variables (X_i), country fixed effects ($Ctry_j$) and a random error term (ε_i). Survey weights are applied in the estimation of the regression model.

The results of the estimation of Equation (1) are presented in Table 2 below. They show that inhabitants of rural areas perceive significantly lower levels of recognition, both towards themselves and towards their communities, relative to those living in cities. The recognition gap is notably large in terms of perceived recognition of their communities. Inhabitants of areas of intermediate population density (i.e. towns and suburbs) are not more likely to perceive lower levels of recognition towards themselves although they do perceive lower levels of recognition towards their communities. It is important to highlight that these results hold even after controlling for a range of sociodemographic characteristics, as well as country fixed effects, suggesting that differences in recognition between rural and urban areas are not just explained by differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of their residents.

TABLE 2 Estimation results – perceived individual and community recognition.

	Individual recognition	Community recognition
Degree of urbanisation (ref=urban)		
Rural	−0.140*** (0.0411)	−0.194*** (0.0345)
Medium-to-large town	−0.0423 (0.0507)	−0.125*** (0.0411)
Female	0.0930*** (0.0354)	0.0681** (0.0305)
Age	0.00379 (0.00898)	−0.0109 (0.00818)
Age squared	−1.44e-05 (9.38e-05)	0.000149* (8.50e-05)
Non-native born	−0.231*** (0.0627)	−0.0734 (0.0467)
Economic status (ref=employed)		
Short-term unemployed	−0.0599 (0.105)	−0.134 (0.123)
Long-term unemployed	−0.131 (0.110)	−0.213** (0.0835)
Inactive	−0.0967 (0.0868)	−0.0154 (0.0725)
Retired	−0.0529 (0.0656)	−0.142** (0.0550)
Student	0.189 (0.125)	0.0850 (0.106)
Sector of occupation (ref=other services)		
Primary sector	0.108 (0.106)	0.0349 (0.0968)
Secondary sector	−0.176*** (0.0550)	−0.0141 (0.0497)
Public services (Transport, Public Admin., Education and Health)	0.0673 (0.0443)	−0.00118 (0.0364)
Commerce, hospitality and financial services	−0.0263 (0.0570)	−0.0135 (0.0505)
Education (ref=less than secondary)		
Secondary	−0.0899 (0.0838)	0.277*** (0.0806)
Tertiary	0.0840 (0.0839)	0.364*** (0.0810)
Ability to make ends meet (ref=With great difficulty)		
With difficulty	0.321*** (0.0670)	0.191*** (0.0664)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	Individual recognition	Community recognition
With some difficulty	0.629*** (0.0625)	0.304*** (0.0608)
Fairly easily	0.913*** (0.0643)	0.474*** (0.0629)
Easily	1.301*** (0.0680)	0.487*** (0.0651)
Very easily	1.404*** (0.0782)	0.604*** (0.0769)
Observations	25,044	25,044

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$. Survey weights applied.

Turning to the coefficient and standard errors on the sociodemographic characteristics themselves, we see that women perceive higher levels of recognition both towards themselves and their communities. Age, on the other hand, is not predictive of perceived recognition. Those who were not born in the country in which they reside perceive lower levels of recognition towards ‘people like them’ but not lower levels of recognition towards people living in the same areas as them. Considering economic status, while being short-term unemployed (unemployed for less than 12 months) is not significantly correlated with a lack of perceived recognition at the individual level, being long-term unemployed is associated with significantly lower levels of community recognition. Similarly, people who are retired experience lower levels of perceived community recognition. Those working in secondary activities (manufacturing and construction) perceive that they receive lower levels of individual recognition, but there is no difference in terms of community recognition. People with higher levels of education perceive higher levels of recognition towards their communities. Finally, income is a strong predictor of recognition at both the individual and community levels. Relative to those who find it very difficult to make ends meet (the reference category), perceived individual and community recognition is higher for all other groups, with recognition increasing monotonically as relative affluence increases. The effect of income appears to be particularly important for perceived individual recognition.

To highlight the differences in recognition based on level of urbanisation, [Figure 5](#) visualises the results of [Table 2](#), predicting the likelihood of perceived individual and community recognition as a function of the degree of urbanisation, after controlling for the aforementioned sociodemographic characteristics.

As a robustness check, we also test for a recognition gap according to each of the five individual questions presented in [Table 1](#). The results, displayed in [Table A3](#) of the Appendix, confirm that rural residents experience

lower levels of perceived recognition according to each of the five variables. Lower levels of perceived recognition are most pronounced in terms of the consideration for people living in their area (column (4) of [Table A3](#)).

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The protests of farmers that shook Europe in the early months of 2024 reveal how heightened the polarisation between rural and urban communities has become. While the demonstrations of farmers are spurred mainly by economic reasons, the drivers of the rural discontent go beyond the mere economic argument and embed a social and cultural component.

In this paper we investigated political recognition, that is, a mismatch between individuals' perception of themselves and their perceptions of the way they are treated by society and governments, and how the lack of political recognition is perceived among inhabitants of rural and urban areas. Our results show that as an area becomes more urban, its residents express higher levels of perceived political recognition, meaning that people living in rural areas perceive lower levels of recognition towards themselves and their communities relative to their urban counterparts. Importantly, the statistically significant relationship between degree of urbanisation and recognition holds even after including a rich set of control variables in our model. This shows that the recognition gap associated with living in a rural area exists independently of the sociodemographic characteristics that are associated with rural residents, including demography (age and ethnicity), human capital (employment and education) and economic resources (sector of occupation and income). This is important because it illustrates how the effect of ‘place’, that is, how the actual geographic location in which people live, impacts their lived experience independently of observed differences in the characteristics of rural compared to urban populations.

We hypothesise that the lower levels of recognition that rural residents perceive relates to the ‘symbolic’ nature of politics (Edelman, 1967), meaning that decisions by governments regarding spending – in addition to allocating resources – influence people's perceived sense of value. The gaps in recognition that we uncover between rural and urban areas could have profound implications for social cohesion. The state in which Europe and the Western world find itself has been described as a ‘permacrisis’ (Collins, 2022), whereby the continent is forced to tackle challenge after challenge, and citizens are constantly having to adapt to a ‘new normal’. Tackling short-term crises – including energy price spikes, as well as longer-term challenges – such as conflict, demographic change and global warming, requires the trust and support of Europe's citizens. But

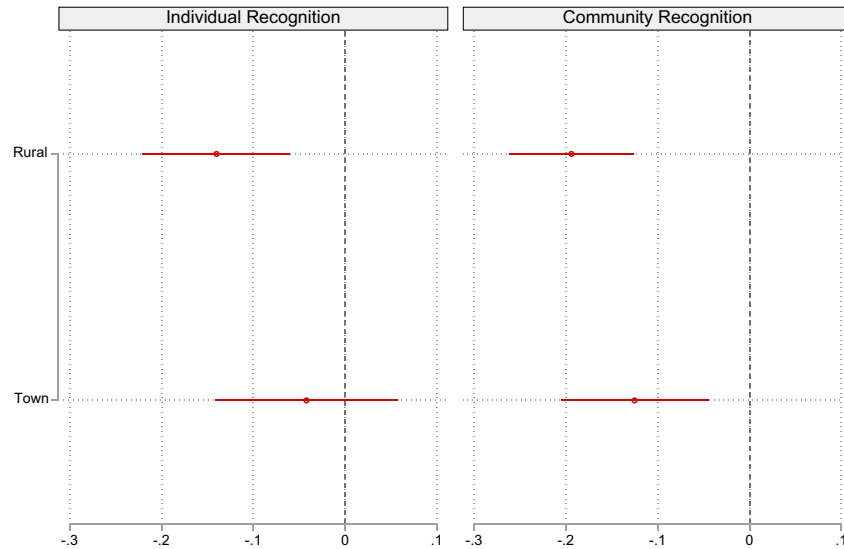


FIGURE 5 Individual and community recognition. Graphs plot marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for the 'degree of urbanisation' variable from Table 2. Reference category: Urban areas.

the growing divide between Europe's rural and urban areas is becoming an increasing threat to political trust and social cohesion, as exemplified in the recent farmers' protests.

In the European Union, the Treaty of Lisbon establishing the legal framework of the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2012) made territorial cohesion a third articulated dimension of cohesion policy, but the growing gaps in income, opportunity and public service provision between rural and urban areas highlight the difficulties of achieving geographically balanced development. Across Europe, rising inequality appears to be breeding discontent. Far-right political movements are taking advantage of these sentiments to win seats in parliaments and shape the policies of more mainstream political parties (Brown et al., 2023). An alternative explanation is that, beyond (or, perhaps, compounding) the rise in inequality of material resources, perceived threats to status are leading to reactionary movements and fuelling the rise of the far right (Parker, 2021). Indeed, if these gaps – including that of political recognition – continue to grow, the threat of populism in Europe looms larger. This poses a serious threat to European democracy. As Bonikowski (2016) highlights, in Hungary and Poland in the recent past, populist politicians have threatened the independence of the judiciary. Other consequences of populism highlighted by Bonikowski (2016) are that it ignores political arguments in favour of moral outrage and that it encourages political actions based on fear and resentment, rather than informed discourse and debate. The results of the European Parliament elections that took place in June 2024 confirmed these concerns and resulted in a significant rise of populist and extremist political parties that could harm the stability of European democracies for many years to come.

For these reasons, politicians and decision-makers cannot afford to ignore the growing rural–urban divide. They should urgently deploy place-based policies that go beyond mere infrastructure investments, prioritising the provision of high-quality social services to revitalise and include rural communities. By ensuring accessible and comprehensive healthcare, reliable transportation, robust social protection and adequate childcare services, governments can address the specific needs and challenges faced by rural residents, fostering a sense of value and belonging.

Expanding educational and employment opportunities for young people, such as through the reinforced Youth Guarantee (Council of the European Union, 2020), is essential for reversing rural depopulation and promoting economic growth. Additionally, bridging the digital divide by ensuring high-speed internet access in rural areas is crucial for enabling participation in the digital economy and capitalising on new opportunities like remote work (Eurofound, 2023).

These investments not only align with the goal of geographically balanced economic growth as set out in the Lisbon Treaty but also signal to rural communities their vital importance in overall European economic and social development (Edelman, 1967). By acknowledging and valuing the contributions of rural areas, policymakers can reverse the perceived lack of recognition, rebuild social trust and foster cohesion across all segments of society.

Much remains to be learned about the political recognition gaps between rural and urban areas in Europe, and how they may be fuelling discontent and protests across the continent. One of the limitations of our current analysis is that the data we have used are not representative of the European population and that did not allow us to distinguish between national or local

governments. However, in 2026, Eurofound will conduct the *European Quality of Life Survey*, which would allow us to refine the items and examine recognition gaps across regions and populations using a representative as well as a much larger data set. This data set will also allow us to examine what specific factors may drive gaps in recognition. Through this planned future work, we hope to build on the findings of the research presented here.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge Garance Hingre for her valuable contributions during the initial stages of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Massimiliano Mascherini, upon request.

ORCID

Marie Hyland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2927-4334>

Massimiliano Mascherini  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5440-222X>

Michèle Lamont  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0221-0402>

REFERENCES

- Abdelal, R. (2020) Dignity, inequality, and the populist backlash: lessons from America and Europe for a sustainable globalization. *Global Policy*, 11(4), 492–500.
- Barca, F. (2019) Place-based policy and politics. *Renewal*, 27(1), 84–95.
- Barca, F., McCann, P. & Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2012) The case for regional development intervention: place-based versus place-neutral approaches. *Journal of Regional Science*, 52(1), 134–152.
- Bonikowski, B. (2016) Three lessons of contemporary populism in Europe and the United States. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 23(1), 9–24.
- Brown, K., Mondon, A. & Winter, A. (2023) The far right, the mainstream and mainstreaming: towards a heuristic framework. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 28(2), 162–179.
- Brown, T. & Mettler, S. (2023) *Sequential polarization: the development of the rural-urban divide, 1976–2020*. Perspectives on Politics: Published online. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723002918>
- Collins. (2022) *A year of 'permacrisis'*. Available from: <https://blog.collinsdictionary.com/language-lovers/a-year-of-permacrisis/>
- Corriere della sera. (2024) The Tractor Revolt. Whose fault is it? Available from: <https://www.corriere.it/dataroom-milena-gabanelli/rivolta-trattori-chi-colpa/797ffea-c81d-11ee-bbeb-1a8d2ebebe3f-va.shtml>
- Council of the European Union. (2012) Consolidated version of the treaty of Lisbon. *Official Journal of the European Union*. 2012/C 326/13.
- Council of the European Union. (2020) Council recommendation of 30 October 2020 on a bridge to jobs – reinforcing the youth guarantee. *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2020/C 372/01.
- Cramer, K.J. (2016) *The politics of resentment: rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago, IL, Available from: <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=7661222331971924600&btnl=1&hl=en>: University of Chicago Press.
- De Moor, J. (2016) External efficacy and political participation revisited: the role of perceived output structures for state-and non-state-oriented action forms. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 69(3), 642–662.
- Devine, D., Gaskell, J., Jennings, W. & Stoker, G. (2020) Exploring Trust, Mistrust and Distrust. 1st Digital Workshop of the ESRC “TrustGov” Project.
- Edelman, M.J. (1964) *The symbolic uses of politics*. Champaign–Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, M.J. (1967) *The symbolic uses of politics*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Eurofound. (2023) *Bridging the rural–urban divide: addressing inequalities and empowering communities*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Committee of the Regions. (2022) *EU annual report on the state of regions and cities 2022*. LU: Publications Office. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2863/26960>
- France24. (2024) French farmers protest: What are their demands and why are they angry? Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hundreds-tractors-enter-paris-protest-against-pesticide-bans-2023-02-08/>
- Gamson, W.A. (1968) *Power and discontent*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- Gidron, N. & Hall, P.A. (2017) The politics of social status: economic and cultural roots of the populist right. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68, S57–S84.
- Haerpfer, C., Inglehart, R., Moreno, A., Welzel, C., Kizilova, K., Diez-Medrano, J. et al. (Eds.). (2022) *World values survey: round seven – country-pooled datafile version 6.0*. Madrid, Spain & Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.14281/18241.24>
- Hansen, L.A. (2006) *Space wars and the new urban imperialism*, PhD thesis. Lund: Lund University.
- Harteveld, E., Van Der Brug, W., De Lange, S. & Van Der Meer, T. (2022) Multiple roots of the populist radical right: support for the Dutch PVV in cities and the countryside. *European Journal of Political Research*, 61(2), 440–461.
- Holgado-Tello, F.P., Chacón-Moscoso, S., Barbero-García, I. & Vila-Abad, E. (2010) Polychoric versus Pearson correlations in exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of ordinal variables. *Quality & Quantity*, 44, 153–166.
- Hyland, M., Mascherini, M. & Lamont, M. (2024) Europe's invisible provinces, how the urban-rural divide drives political polarization. *Foreign Affairs*, May 23, 2024. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/europe/europes-invisible-provinces>
- Jennings, W., Stoker, G., Valgarðsson, V., Devine, D. & Gaskell, J. (2021) How trust, mistrust and distrust shape the governance of the COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(8), 1174–1196.
- Jennings, W., Valgarðsson, V., McKay, L., Stoker, G., Mello, E. & Baniamin, H.M. (2023) Trust and vaccine hesitancy during the

- COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-national analysis. *Vaccine*, X, 14, 100299.
- Kenny, M. & Luca, D. (2021) The urban–rural polarisation of political disenchantment: an investigation of social and political attitudes in 30 European countries. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 14(3), 565–582.
- Krause, W. & Wagner, A. (2021) Becoming part of the gang? Established and nonestablished populist parties and the role of external efficacy. *Party Politics*, 27(1), 161–173.
- Krugman, P. (2024) The Mystery of White Rural Rage. *The New York Times*, 26 February. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/26/opinion/white-rural-voters.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare> [Accessed 27 February 2024].
- Lamont, M. (2018) Addressing recognition gaps: Destigmatization and the reduction of inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 83(3), 419–444.
- Lee, S.-Y., Poon, W.Y. & Bentler, P.M. (1995) A two-stage estimation of structural equation models with continuous and polytomous variables. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, 48(3), 339–358.
- McNamara, K.R. (2017) Explaining the new class cleavages: geography, post-industrial transformations and everyday culture. *Post-Industrial Transformations and Everyday Culture* (August 31, 2017).
- Mendelberg, T. (2022) Status, symbols, and politics: a theory of symbolic status politics. *RSF: the Russell Sage Foundation. Journal of the Social Sciences*, 8(6), 50–68.
- Metler, S. & Brown, T. (2022) The growing urban-rural political divide and democratic vulnerability. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 699(1), 130–142.
- Morin, E. & Kern, A.B. (1999) *Homeland earth: a manifesto for the new millennium*. East Hampton, NY: Hampton Press.
- Parker, C.S. (2021) Status threat: moving the right further to the right? *Daedalus*, 150(2), 56–75.
- Politico. (2024) Europe's farmer protests are spreading. Here's where and why. Available from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/farmer-protest-europe-map-france-siege-paris-germany-poland/>
- Reuters. (2024) *French farmers block roads across the country in protest*. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-wants-eu-law-changes-this-week-help-protesting-farmers-minister-2024-01-29/>
- Sears, D.O., Lau, R.R., Tyler, T.R. & Allen, H.M. (1980) Self-interest vs. symbolic politics in policy attitudes and presidential voting. *American Political Science Review*, 74(3), 670–684.
- Seeman, M. (1959) On the meaning of alienation. *American Sociological Review*, 24(6), 783–791.
- WHOQOL Group. (1995) The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): position paper from the World Health Organization. *Social Science & Medicine*, 41(10), 1403–1409.

How to cite this article: Hyland, M., Mascherini, M. & Lamont, M. (2024) Feeling overlooked: A rural–urban divide in recognition. *Global Policy*, 00, 1–16. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13454>

APPENDIX A

Table A1 provides descriptive statistics based on the sample used in our analysis.

TABLE A1 Descriptive statistics based on wave 5 of the *Living, working and COVID-19* e-survey.

	Mean	Std. dev.
Sex		
Male	0.481	0.500
Female	0.519	0.500
Highest education level		
Primary or less	0.052	0.222
Secondary	0.682	0.466
Tertiary	0.266	0.442
Employment status		
Employed	0.505	0.500
Short-term unemployed	0.026	0.159
Long-term unemployed	0.054	0.225
Inactive	0.079	0.270
Retired	0.281	0.450
Student	0.054	0.227
Broad sector of employment		
Primary	0.022	0.146
Secondary	0.168	0.374
Public services (transport, public administration, education and health)	0.353	0.478
Commerce, hospitality and financial services	0.139	0.346
Other services	0.318	0.466
Ability to make ends meet		
With some difficulty to with great difficulty	0.472	0.499
Fairly to very easily	0.528	0.499
Degree of urbanisation		
Rural	0.541	0.498
Town	0.198	0.399
City	0.260	0.439
Household type		
Couple without children	0.318	0.466
Couple with children	0.231	0.421
One person household	0.271	0.445
Single parent	0.055	0.228
Extended family	0.126	0.331
Main source of news		
Television programmes (web or broadcast)	0.272	0.445
Press (web or printed)	0.335	0.472
Radio	0.077	0.267
Social media or blogs (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube)	0.194	0.396
Other	0.122	0.327
Health status		
Poor	0.874	0.332
Good	0.126	0.332
Born abroad		
Yes	0.138	0.345
No	0.862	0.345

Note: Survey weights applied.

TABLE A2 Statistical results of factor analysis.

Factor analysis/correlation: Number of obs = 38,282				
Method: principal factors: Retained factors = 2				
Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off): Number of params = 9				
Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	2.61125	1.13817	0.6738	0.6738
Factor2	1.47307		0.3801	1.0539
LR test: Independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(10) = 2.0e+05$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$				
Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances				
Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness	
Govt acts unfairly towards people like me	0.8719	0.3335	0.1285	
Govt doesn't respect people like me	0.8888	0.3546	0.0842	
Govt usually ignores people like me	0.8308	0.3993	0.1502	
Govt cares less about people in my area than about people in other parts of the country	0.373	0.7300	0.3280	
Govt usually ignores my community	0.4811	0.7374	0.2247	

TABLE A3 Recognition gap according to each individual question that is comprised within the ‘individual’ and ‘community’ recognition gaps.

	Probability of perceiving that the government:				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Acts fairly towards people like me	Respects people like me	Does not ignore people like me	Does not have less consideration for people in my area	Does not ignore my community
Degree of urbanisation (ref = urban)					
Rural	–0.0568*** (0.0152)	–0.0898*** (0.0153)	–0.0482*** (0.0141)	–0.134*** (0.0171)	–0.0861*** (0.0159)
Medium-to-large town	–0.00655 (0.0185)	–0.0319* (0.0184)	0.0102 (0.0179)	–0.0798*** (0.0200)	–0.0356* (0.0189)
Female	0.00176 (0.0132)	0.0207 (0.0130)	0.0313** (0.0126)	0.0191 (0.0141)	0.0299** (0.0139)
Age	–0.00257 (0.00347)	–0.00406 (0.00345)	0.00144 (0.00328)	–0.00761** (0.00377)	–0.00529 (0.00377)
Age squared	2.36e-05 (3.63e-05)	4.10e-05 (3.64e-05)	–3.51e-06 (3.48e-05)	8.64e-05** (4.01e-05)	6.69e-05* (3.97e-05)
Non-native born	–0.0911*** (0.0241)	–0.0885*** (0.0245)	–0.0604** (0.0241)	–0.0743*** (0.0251)	–0.0465** (0.0233)
Economic status (ref = employed)					
Short-term unemployed	–0.0637* (0.0340)	–0.0208 (0.0449)	–0.0678* (0.0386)	–0.0502 (0.0487)	–0.0598 (0.0454)
Long-term unemployed	–0.0142 (0.0374)	–0.0465 (0.0325)	–0.0703*** (0.0222)	–0.0748** (0.0341)	–0.0582** (0.0262)
Inactive	0.0410 (0.0351)	0.0303 (0.0354)	–0.0406 (0.0270)	0.0157 (0.0359)	0.00421 (0.0342)
Retired	–0.0172 (0.0236)	–0.0266 (0.0236)	–0.0281 (0.0234)	–0.0529** (0.0264)	–0.0391 (0.0260)
Student	0.0390 (0.0443)	0.0790* (0.0444)	0.00759 (0.0424)	0.119** (0.0468)	0.0203 (0.0479)
Sector of occupation (ref = other services)					
Primary sector	0.0426 (0.0478)	0.0400 (0.0479)	0.0666 (0.0558)	0.0344 (0.0536)	0.0351 (0.0493)
Secondary sector	–0.0424** (0.0192)	–0.0393** (0.0195)	–0.0441** (0.0185)	–0.0381* (0.0224)	–0.0263 (0.0219)
Public services (transport, public admin., education and health)	0.0299* (0.0160)	0.00126 (0.0157)	–0.00638 (0.0150)	0.00952 (0.0173)	0.0157 (0.0164)
Commerce, hospitality and financial services	–0.00454 (0.0212)	–0.0272 (0.0207)	–0.0208 (0.0206)	–0.0292 (0.0226)	–0.0134 (0.0219)
Education (ref = less than secondary)					
Secondary	0.0473 (0.0312)	0.0625** (0.0298)	0.0234 (0.0299)	0.0732** (0.0324)	0.0731** (0.0320)
Tertiary	0.119*** (0.0318)	0.135*** (0.0304)	0.107*** (0.0307)	0.154*** (0.0327)	0.139*** (0.0324)
Ability to make ends meet (ref = With great difficulty)					

(Continues)

TABLE A3 (Continued)

	Probability of perceiving that the government:				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Acts fairly towards people like me	Respects people like me	Does not ignore people like me	Does not have less consideration for people in my area	Does not ignore my community
With difficulty	0.0455** (0.0211)	0.0789*** (0.0203)	0.0488*** (0.0171)	0.0425* (0.0254)	0.0664*** (0.0218)
With some difficulty	0.127*** (0.0203)	0.151*** (0.0184)	0.114*** (0.0166)	0.107*** (0.0241)	0.141*** (0.0206)
Fairly easily	0.223*** (0.0212)	0.240*** (0.0194)	0.209*** (0.0186)	0.225*** (0.0256)	0.257*** (0.0224)
Easily	0.378*** (0.0250)	0.401*** (0.0233)	0.345*** (0.0227)	0.271*** (0.0279)	0.328*** (0.0255)
Very easily	0.415*** (0.0277)	0.438*** (0.0260)	0.404*** (0.0256)	0.333*** (0.0303)	0.387*** (0.0277)
Observations	26,462	26,461	26,451	25,911	25,704

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Survey weights applied. Regressions also include country fixed effects.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Marie Hyland is a research officer in the Social Policies unit at the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Prior to joining Eurofound in 2023, Marie spent several years as an economist at the World Bank. Marie holds a PhD in Economics from Trinity College Dublin.

Massimiliano Mascherini holds a PhD in Applied Statistics from the University of Florence. Since 2019, he has been Head of Social Policies unit at the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. He was visiting researcher and the University of Sydney, Aalborg University and the Pontifical Academy of Social Science.

Michèle Lamont is Professor of Sociology and African and African American Studies and the Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies at Harvard University. A cultural and comparative sociologist, she is the author or coauthor of a dozen books and edited volumes and over 100 articles and chapters on a range of topics.