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**Popular Reactions to the Great Recession**  
**Clay Room, Nuffield College, Oxford University**  
**June 24-26, 2011**

**THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE FRENCH “WORKING CLASS”:  
MORE TO THE RIGHT?**

This paper explores the electoral impact of the 2008 financial crisis in France, particularly among the working class, economically more vulnerable. The argument we will develop, on the base of survey data<sup>1</sup>, is that the crisis should mainly amplify existing trends, namely the demobilization and the dealignment of the working class, which is shifting from left to extreme right in many European countries (Kriesi et al., 2008; Oesch, 2008). After a short introductory section recalling the theories and models linking economy and vote, a second section outlines the global economic and electoral impact of the 2008 crisis in France at one year of the 2012 presidential election, the third section presents the trends in the working class votes, and a conclusive section questions the boundaries of the working class, in increasingly dual and polarised societies.

## **1. ECONOMIC VOTING**

There are two different ways to approach the effect of economy on the votes. Political economy emphasizes rational choice based on interest and cost benefit calculus, while political sociology gives more importance to group belonging and particularly class. Down's median voter model has been applied to preferences for redistribution (Meltzer and Richard, 1981), seen as tightly linked to the level of income. The more unequal the society, measured by the difference between median and mean income, the more the median income voters will have interest in redistribution and demand more generous, that is to say more left-wing, social policies. At the individual level, it means that the lower the voter's income the higher the probability she will vote for the Left. Because it increases the risk of unemployment and income loss, and fosters inequalities, the recession should amplify support for the left. The

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<sup>1</sup> Mainly the CEVIPOF French National Elections Surveys 1978-2007, among which the French Electoral Panels 2002 and 2007 (funded by the French Home Office), on large samples ( $N \geq 4000$ ) representative of the registered voters in metropolitan France, quota sampling based on the census data and political regions (available on : <http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr/enquetes.php?lang=ANG&idRubrique=enquetesFR&idTheme=>, the website of Sciences Po Centre for socio-political data (CDSP).

model however has aroused many critics (for a review see Anderson, Beramendi, 2008; Kenworthy, McCall, 2008). The main idea is that the argument is oversimplifying, especially at the individual level. People's perceptions may have more influence than the actual income distribution and redistributive policies. Income is not the only variable: one must take into account: class, group solidarity, party identification. Voters with lower incomes are also those who display the lowest level of electoral turnout. And politics cannot be reduced to the Left/Right cleavage, especially in Europe where new radical populist rights are on the rise, which do not reject the welfare state but limit it to the natives (welfare chauvinism).

As for the political sociology literature it has long been dominated by the "class vote" model, or preferential vote of the workers for the left, especially in Europe where the party system was built on a class basis (Lipset, Rokkan, 1967). But the passage to the post industrial society, with the decline of the industrial working class, the rise of the service sector and the development of individualistic post materialist values, has loosened the links between workers and left wing parties, and fuelled a debate about the death of class vote (Evans; 1999) and more generally, of "cleavage voting" (Franklin et al., 2009). The dealignment of the working class is by now a well acknowledged process, only its timing and intensity differ from one country to another. But a second debate has started in Europe about the growing support of workers and more generally "globalization losers" for right-wing populist parties (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Kriesi et al., 2008) on the one side, and the rise of "cultural" voting at the expense of "economic" voting on the other (Achterberger, Houtman et al. 2008; Bornschie, 2010). And cultural issues (national identity, immigration, European integration) are gradually mixing with, if not prevailing over classical economic issues such as wages and employment. The economic recession should increase this tendency.

Combining these two lines of research, the paper goes back to the origin of the French working class dealignment and its shift to the right and to the extreme right. And it explores the growing fragmentation and cleavages inside the group, in a context of dualisation and job polarisation.

## **2. GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND ELECTORAL IMPACT OF THE 2008 FINANCIAL CRISIS IN FRANCE**

### ***The economic shock***

The most obvious and dramatic effect of the 2008 financial crisis has been the rise of unemployment (graph 1).

Graph 1. *The evolution of unemployment rates in France (2003-2010)*



Quarterly data adjusted for seasonal variations, INSEE Employment surveys, unemployment as defined by ILO.

Ever since the oil shocks of 1973-1979, persistent mass unemployment has settled in France with rates climbing from some 3 percent of the gainfully employed in 1975 to above 10 percent in 1993-1999 and a new peak in 2006. The rates had been steadily declining when the financial crisis brought them up again, in the second trimester of 2008 (graph 1). In 2010, the average level of unemployment (ILO definition) in France was 9.6 percent (9.2 in metropolitan France), a little above the EU rate (EU 27: 9 percent). A more contrasted picture appears if one takes into account gender, ethnicity, age and occupation<sup>2</sup>. The recession affected men first, overrepresented in the most exposed sectors (construction and manufacture, interim workers). As a result for the first time since 1975 the number of women unemployed is smaller than the number of men unemployed and the female rates of unemployment, usually much higher than the male ones, have converged (respectively 9.4 and 9.7 percent end 2009). The rates of unemployment are double among foreigners (17.9 percent among men and 17.5 percent among women, compared with 8.3 and 8.9 percent among French citizens), almost triple among the young (23.7 percent between 15 and 24 years old). Broken down by occupation, they rise from respectively 3.7 and 5.3 percent among the higher

<sup>2</sup> INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), Employment Surveys, average of the 4 quarters of 2009).

and lower level service class to 8.7 percent among routine non manual employees and 13.2 percent among workers, with a peak at 20.8 percent among unskilled workers.

The psychological impact of the crisis can be seen through the answers to the following survey questions, immediately after the collapse of the Lehman Brothers Bank. When asked “personally when you think about the financial crisis would you say you are worried or not worried”, 77 percent of the sample express worry, proportion that goes up to 83 percent among the low incomes (versus 68 percent among the well off) (Teinturier, 2008, p.16) and 69 percent of the low incomes say the crisis concerns them personally (vs 57 percent of the well off). Meanwhile unemployment and purchase power have gone up in the hierarchy of the public’s preoccupations (over 73 percent in December versus 57 percent in June 2008 rank them first (ibidem). More generally the feeling that life is more difficult has become predominant. A frequently asked question is “Would you say that people like you live better, less well or that there is no change?”. In 1966, at the time of the “Trente Glorieuses” (the 30 glorious years of economic growth), only 28 percent of the French chose the answer “less well”. By 1981 when the Left won the presidential election they were 50 percent. In the midst of the 1993 recession they were 60 percent, in June 2010 they were 71 percent, and 74 percent among the workers (Michelat, Simon, 2010, p. 141-142). Another useful indicator is the Annual Barometer of the DREES (Department of research, studies, evaluation and statistics of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Health). Since the fall of 2008, the feeling that inequalities are on the rise, that they will increase in the coming years, and that France is an “unfair” rather than a “fair” society, have been steadily rising (table 1), even more so among the working class and especially the unskilled workers.

Table 1. *Perception of inequalities and social justice in 2007-2010 (%)*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	Increase
France is an unfair society	69	71	73	78	+9
Inequalities have been rising in the last 5 years	77	80	85	87	+10
Inequalities will be rising in the coming 5 years	72	78	81	84	+12

DREES Annual Barometer

A recent survey on reactions to inequalities and social justice conducted just after the beginning of the recession, in the fall of 2008, shows it very clearly. It’s among manual workers and routine non manual employees that the feeling of being disadvantaged as far as unemployment and precariousness are concerned is the most frequent (42 instead of 34 percent) and as far as their income is concerned the proportions are respectively 64 and 51 percent (Forsé, Galland, 2011 p.54). Compared to other Europeans (Great Britain, Germany,

Spain, Poland), the French in 2011 appear as the most pessimistic of all, 59 percent declaring that in the next twelve months they expect the economic situation of the country to get worse (55 percent in Great Britain, 30 percent in Germany), and 72 percent that in ten years the financial situation of their fellow citizens will be worse (54 percent in Germany, 38 percent in Poland)<sup>3</sup>

### ***The political impact***

To evaluate the political impact at the aggregate level, we can rely on the results of the three mid term elections that have taken place since the recession<sup>4</sup> hit Europe after the Lehman Brothers collapse, a year after the presidential and the parliamentary elections of 2007 won by Nicolas Sarkozy and his party, the UMP (Union for a popular movement): the European (June 2009), regional (April 2010) and local elections (“cantonales”, March 2011). The first observation one can make is that the strong electoral remobilization that marked the presidential election of 2007, dominated by the duel between the socialist candidate Ségolène Royal and the UMP candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, was short lived. In all the following elections one sees a sharp rise in the abstention rates (table 2), the highest ever observed in the same type of election. This drop in turn out goes with a deep political disenchantment, the feeling that one can trust neither the left nor the right to govern the country rising from 48 percent in July 2007 to 69 percent three years later (Michelat, Simon, 2011, p. 158).

Table 2. *Abstention rates since 2007 (% of registered voters)*

	Presidential 2007	Parliamentary 2007	European 2009	Regional 2010	Cantonal 2011
	16.2	39,6	<b>59,4</b>	<b>53.7</b>	<b>55.7</b>
EVOLUTION	-12,2	+4	<b>+2,2</b>	<b>+14,5</b>	<b>+19,6</b>
(rate in previous similar election)	(28.4)	(35.6)	<b>(57,2)</b>	<b>(39.2)</b>	<b>(36.1)</b>
BY OCCUPATION					
Abstention rates among workers	21*	49*	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>67</b>
Difference from average	+4	+4	<b>+9.6</b>	<b>+15.3</b>	<b>+11.3</b>

French Electoral Panel (FEP) wave 2 for 2007, Tns-Sofres survey 7 June 2009 and 19-20 March 2010, Ipsos-Logica, 14-18 March 2011. \*Extrapolation on the base of the declared abstention in French Electoral Panel 2007 (16 and 21 percent in the working class, versus an average of 12 and 17 percent).

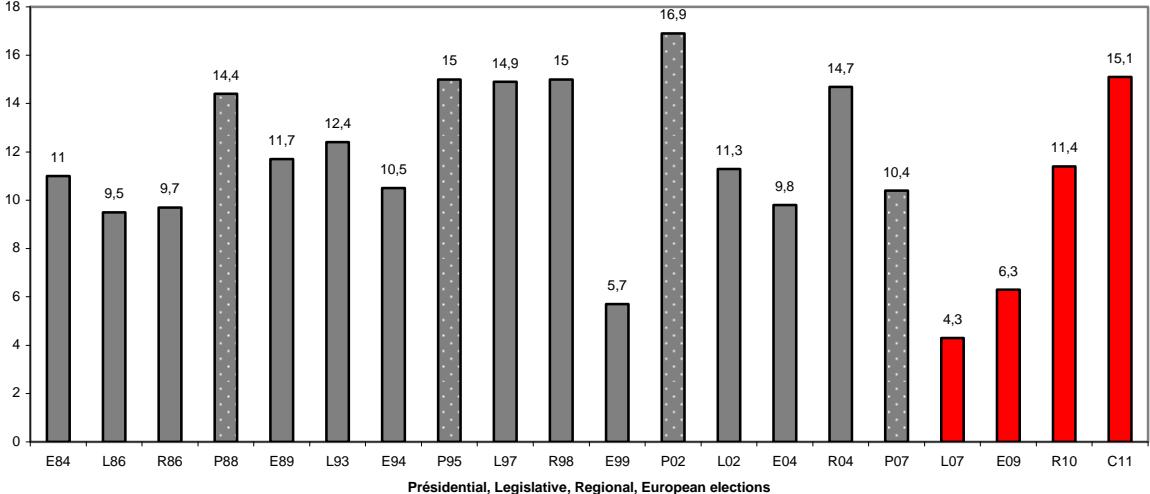
The second change is the electoral dynamic of the National Front. Since 1984 Le Pen’s party has settled in the French electoral scene (graph 2). Between 1988 and its split in 1998, its

<sup>3</sup> IMC Research survey for *The Guardian* and a group of European newspapers, 14 March 2011, sample of 5000 adults, *Le Monde*, 15 March 2011.

<sup>4</sup> France’s GDP fell by 1.2 percent between the second and the third quarter of 2008 and by 1.2 percent again between the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009.

scores stabilized gradually at some 15 percent of the votes, first in the presidential elections (1988 and 1995), then in the parliamentary elections (1997) and last in the regional elections (1998). It reached its electoral climax in the first round of the presidential election of 2002. Drawing 16.9 percent of the valid votes, Jean-Marie Le Pen came ahead of the socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, qualifying himself for the second round where he was beaten with 17.8 percent of the votes. But in the first round of the 2007 presidential election, he drew but 10.4 percent of the valid votes, his lowest score in a presidential race. Half of his 2002 voters abandoned him in 2007, one out of four turning to Nicolas Sarkozy (Mayer, 2007). And in the following parliamentary election, the score of the FN plummeted at 4.3 percent. But since, a new electoral dynamic seems to have started (graph 2), culminating in the last local elections (*cantonales*)<sup>5</sup>. In the 2026 cantons where the general council was to be renewed, the FN drew 15.1 percent of the votes in the first round, a record, and in the second round, in the 400 cantons where it could maintain its candidates, the number of his voters almost doubled (from 620 000 votes in the first round to 915 000). Besides the voting intentions for its new leader, the daughter of Le Pen, elected president in the Congress of Tours in January, are taking off, from 13 percent in July 2010 to 20 percent in March-April 2011. In the latest polls, Marine Le Pen in the first round draws as many voting intentions, if not more, than Nicolas Sarkozy, and most probably should qualify for the second round (IFOP/Paris Match survey, 20-21 April 2011), like her father in 2002.

**Graph 2. Votes for the National Front in first round of elections since 1984 (% valid votes)**



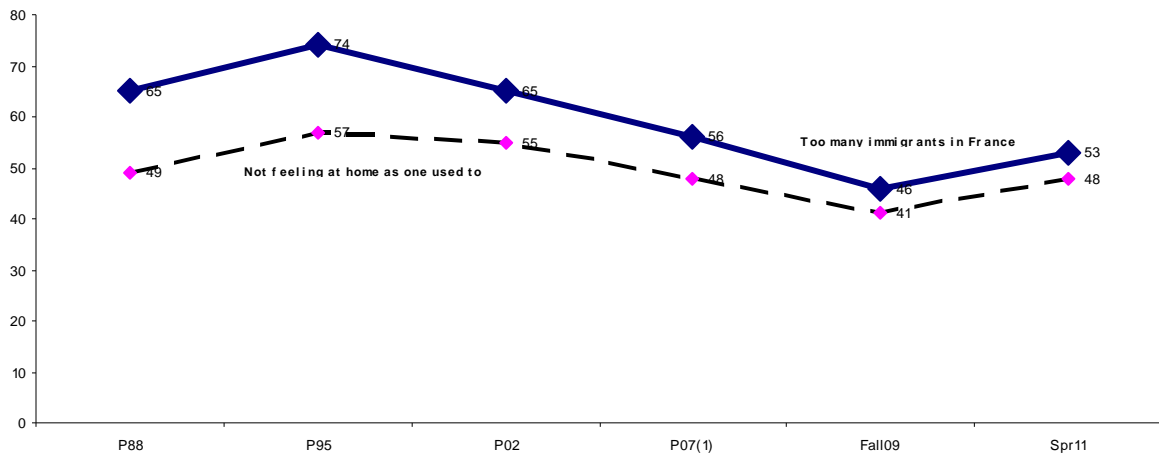
<sup>5</sup> Elections for the General (or departmental) council, one councillor by “canton”, single constituency two ballots plurality system. There are 100 “departments” in France and 4058 cantons. Half the general councils are renewed every three years.

A year away from the presidential race, and not knowing yet for sure who will be candidate, one must be cautious with such polls. Yet they show a real dynamic for the FN and its new president Marine Le Pen. And the political and economic context plays in her favour. Nicolas Sarkozy was elected on the promise “Work more, to gain more” and the recession shattered the dream, bringing about unemployment and precariousness. But besides the recession impact, the very policies adopted by his government have fuelled discontent, such as the “fiscal shield” reducing the income tax of the rich (no one has to pay more than 50 per cent of his or her annual income in tax) or the pension reform bill, seen as unfair for the working classes and for women, which sent to the streets millions of demonstrators (September-October 2010). Several “affairs” of embezzlement and favouritism have tarnished the image of the political class<sup>6</sup>. President Sarkozy’s approval ratings fell to a record low of 30 percent in April, the lowest point since his election (IFOP/*Paris Match*, April 2011). 75 percent of the French population does not want him to run for a second mandate, only 20 percent say they trust him. The Left opposition, mainly the Socialist party could have benefited from this discontent. But it cannot, too absorbed in its divisions and quarrels about the choice of its presidential candidate. The extreme Left was on the rise since 2002 with the good scores of the Trotskyist candidate Olivier Besancenot and the transformation of his party, the LCR (Communist Revolutionary League) into a New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in 2009. But the NPA is in crisis and hindered by the new Party of the Left launched by the socialist Jean Luc Mélenchon (2010). This opens a political space for an anti system movement such as the FN, rejecting both the left and the right, the “UMPS” as it calls them.

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<sup>6</sup> For instance the attempted nomination of Jean Sarkozy at the head of EPAD (Établissement public d'aménagement du quartier d'affaires de la Défense), real estate public agency, or the Woerth –Bettencourt scandal (at the time he was treasurer of UMP, the Ministry of Labour Eric Woerth is supposed to have received money for Sarkozy’ presidential campaign from the Bettencourt family that owns l’Oréal)

Graph 3. Ethnocentrism in France (%)



Meanwhile, the revolutions in the Arab world since December are kindling fears of immigration and of Islamic fundamentalism. The annual Barometer survey on racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia for the National Commission for Human Right (CNCDH), conducted in January 2011, shows that intolerance towards immigrants, foreigners, Muslims, which had been regularly declining since 1990 (Mayer, Michelat, Tiberj, 2010), has seen all its indicators go up again since the last wave (October 2009) . For instance the proportion of respondents who think there are “too many immigrants in France” has gone up by 8 percentage points and the feeling “one does not feel at home as before in France ” by 7 percentage points (table 3). While another survey conducted in January 2011 shows that in one year the proportion of respondents who consider “one gives too many rights to Islam and to Muslims in France” has gone from 43 to 49 percent (TNS-Sofres/ *Le Monde*, Canal +, France Inter, 3-4 January 2011, N=1000).

Added together these elements offer an exceptionally favourable context of opportunities for the FN. And Marine Le Pen, its new president, has seized them. Her strategy is to renew and “de- demonize” the FN, present it as a party like the others. She is young, she is a women, she firmly condemns anti-Semitism, she is not a nostalgic of Word War two. And she wants to bring her party into government. She wraps up the old themes such as the “national preference” for jobs and social benefits in new clothes, attacking Islam in the name of the republican values of tolerance (Islam is intolerant with women, Jews, homosexuals) and secularity (Islam does not respect the separation between public and private space). She adds a social tone, almost left-wing, to her speech, calling for a stronger and more protective State to help the victims of globalization and recession. And she wants to restore the French



sovereignty against the Europe integration. Omnipresent in the media, called by her surname “Marine”, she is more popular than her father ever was. The image of the FN is indeed, slowly, changing. And the very strategy of her opponents plays in her favour. Sarkozy’s decision to place national identity and immigration at the centre of the political debate, his tough speech in Grenoble (July 30, 2010) assimilating immigration to criminality and stigmatising the Rom (Gypsy) population, are legitimising the FN’s positions, driving part of UMP’s centrist components (Parti radical and Christian democrats) to quit the party and part of the UMP’s voters and supporters to switch to Marine Le Pen and her ideas. Recent surveys confirm the growing porosity between UMP and FN supporters. For instance according to a poll by TNS-Sofres for *Le Monde* (January 12, 2011), conducted just as the Arab revolutions were spreading, 35 percent of the left wing sympathisers, but 74 percent of the right-wingers (69 percent at UMP) agreed « there are too many immigrants in France”, an increase by respectively 4 and 12 percentage points compared to the answers to the same question a year ago. To the idea that « one grants too many rights to Islam and Muslims”, 36 percent of the Left wing sympathisers, but 72 percent of the Right wingers (66 percent of the UMP) agree, respectively 0 and 16 percentage points above the 2010 proportion. And the last TNS-Sofres/*Le Figaro Magazine* Barometer (May 5, 2011) shows that the popularity of Marine Le Pen has jumped since April from 45 to 55 percent among the sympathisers of the right (Centre, UMP and FN)<sup>7</sup>.

### **3. THE ELECTORAL DEALINGMENT AND REALIGNMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS**

These trends are even more salient among the working class, defined here according to the INSEE classification (skilled and unskilled manual workers, in manufacturing and production but also storage, transportation, construction, restaurants and crafts) and representing around a quarter of the French electorate. Workers display the highest level of abstention, two thirds of them did not go to the polls in the last three mid term elections and the difference between their rate of abstention and the national average has been rising, reaching a peak of + 15 percentage points in the regional elections of 2010 (table 2).

As for their support to the FN, it’s higher than in any other occupational group. The latest poll by IFOP end of April evaluates at a record level of 36 percent the proportion of workers intending to vote for Marine Le Pen in the 2012 presidential election (table 4), 17 percentage

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<sup>7</sup> While rising from 25 to 29 in the sample (+4). Popularity is the proportion of respondents wishing a personality to have a more important part to play in the coming months or year. (face to face survey, 29 April-2 May 2011, N=1000).

points above the national average. The leader of the FN alone draws more than the socialist and the UMP candidates together. Not only voting intentions but wishing that Marine Le Pen had a more important part to play in the coming years, sympathy for her, agreement with FN's ideas, on all these questions the workers are always the most favourable to the FN.

Table 3. *Voting intentions for the main candidates in the presidential election of 2012 (%)*

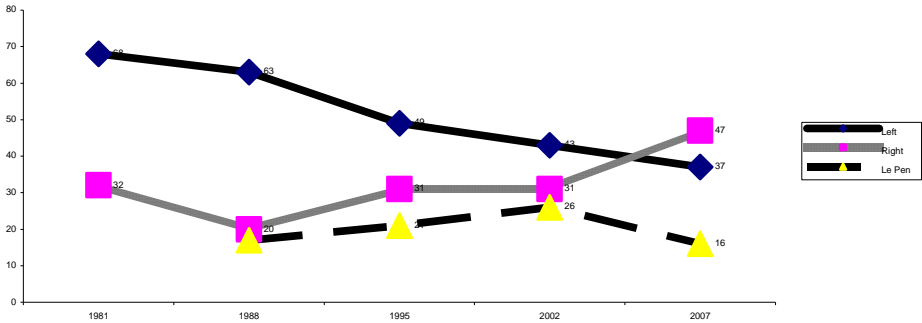
	Average	Workers	≠
Marine Le Pen (FN)	19	36	+17
Strauss-Kahn (PS)	27	17	-10
Sarkozy (UMP)	20	15	-5

IFOP/Europe1, *Paris Match*, 20-21 April 2011, CAPI survey, quota sample, N= 917 registered voters

**Breaking ties with the Left**

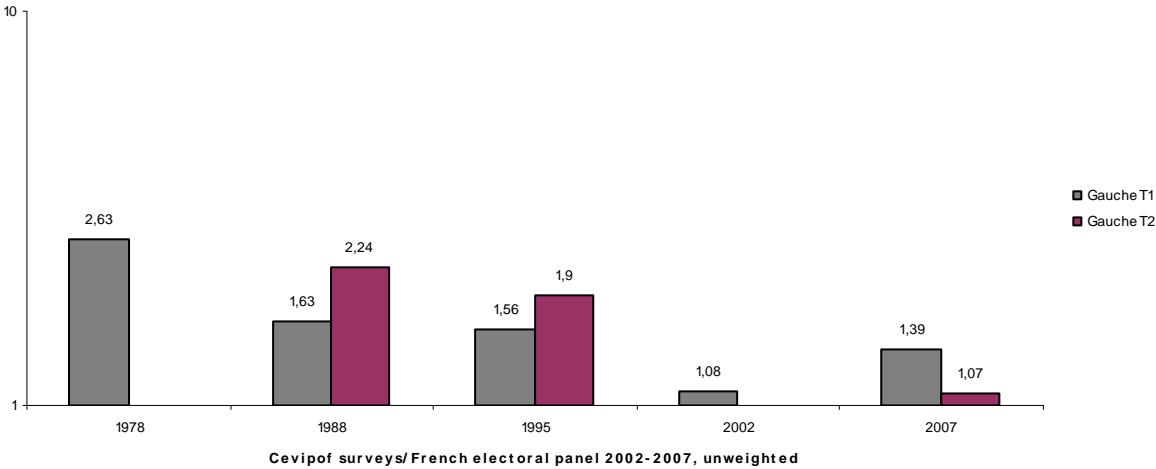
This attraction should not come as a surprise. In the first round of the presidential election of 1995 already, Jean-Marie Le Pen came ahead of all candidates among the working class, drawing 30 percent of their votes, the double of his national score. To understand the present trends one must go back even further. From the mid 60's to the mid 70's there was a strong polarization in France, opposing the Union of the Left (socialist and communist, united until their split in 1977) to the Gaullist right. At that time more than two thirds of the working class voted for the Left. They were 70 percent in the 1978 parliamentary elections which the Left nearly won, and 69 percent in the presidential election of 1981, when the socialist François Mitterrand was elected. But the dealignment process was starting at the very same moment. The first signs, as shown by the very thorough analysis made by Florent Gougou (2007 and 2011) appeared in the European elections of 1984 and the parliamentary elections of 1986, with a first drop in the proportion of workers supporting the Left. A second drop occurred in the 90's. In 1993, for the first time in a parliamentary election, and two years later, for the first time in a presidential election, the Left did not get a majority of the votes among the working class. It has never recovered it (graph 4).

Graph 4. Workers votes in 1st round of presidential elections since 1981 (% valid votes)



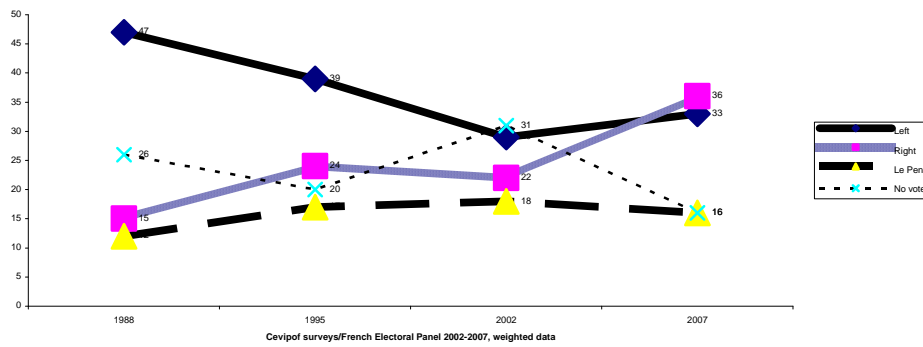
Of course the workers votes only make sense compared to the average support for the Left in the electorate. If one computes the odds ratios of the workers (versus non workers) votes for the Left (versus non Left), the picture is even clearer. In the 70's the workers had over two and a half more chances to vote for the Left than the non workers. If one looks just at the presidential elections, by 1988 the odds ratio dropped to one and a half and by 2002 there were no more differences, the slight rise in the first round of the 2007 presidential election disappearing in the second round (graph 5).

**Graph 5. Odds ratio of the workers vote for the left in 1st- 2d round of presidential elections**



This workers’ growing detachment from the Left is a generational phenomenon as shown by the cohort analysis done by Gougou (2007, 2011). The cohorts born during the baby boom who came of age to vote in a period of growth and employment, which stabilised the economic and social condition of the blue collars, helped bring the socialist and communist into office and remained faithful to the parties of the Left. It’s the new cohorts, first hit by deindustrialization and mass unemployment, that turned to the right or the extreme right, or just stopped going to the polls. In the first round of the presidential election of 2002, the “first working class party” was abstention, not voting being chosen by 31 percent of the group, before any other electoral choice (graph 6).

Graph 6. Workers vote in 1st round of presidential elections since 1988 (%registered voters)



### *The growing attraction of the National Front*

As for the working class support for the National Front, it started also long before the recession, and before the emergence of Marine Le Pen, as soon as 1986. By 1995 it's among the workers that Le Pen makes his best scores (table 4). When in 2007 support for Le Pen receded, it was still among the workers that he drew the more votes (16 percent).

Table 4. *The Le Pen vote by socio-demographics (%)*

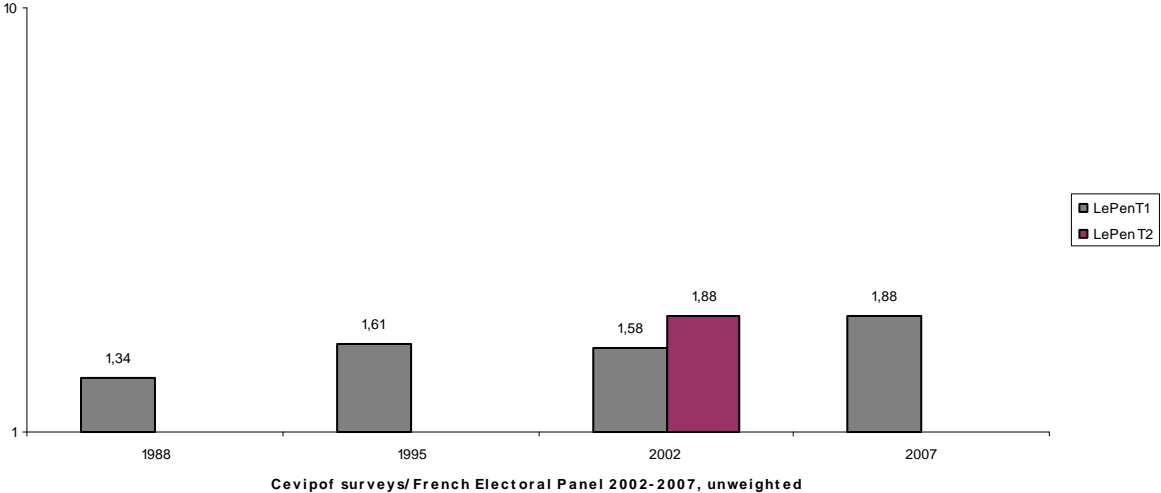
	Pres88	Pres95	Pres02	Pres07
Average	15	15	17	11
<i>Gender</i>				
Men	18	19	20	12
Women	11	12	14	9
<i>Age</i>				
18-24	14	18	13	10
25-34	15	20	17	10
35-49	15	16	18	11
50-64	14	14	20	12
65 years +	16	10	15	9
<i>Degree</i>				
Primary	15	17	24	13
Secondary	17	20	21	13
Baccalaureate	13	12	15	8
Bac + 2	10	13	11	3
Higher education	9	4	7	4
<i>Occupation of respondent</i>				
Farmer	10	10	22	10
Petty bourgeoisie	19	19	22	10
Upper service class	14	4	13	7
Lower service class	15	14	11	5
Routine non manual	14	18	22	12
Manual Worker	17	21	23	16

Source: Cevipof post-electoral surveys, French electoral Panel 2002-2007 wave 1 weighted

Compared to the rest of the voters, the odds ratio of the workers vote for the FN has been steadily going up. Since 2002 workers are almost twice as likely as non workers to vote for the extreme right in the presidential election (graph 7). If one relies on the voting intentions

for 2012, which of course need to be taken with caution, the odds ratio reach an unprecedented level of 3.8<sup>8</sup>. A worker would have almost four times more chances than non workers to vote for Marine Le Pen in the first round of the coming presidential election. The trend was there before, it’s just aggravated by the context of recession, of which workers are the first victims.

**Graph 7. Odds ratio of the workers vote for Le Pen in 1st round presidential elections**



Workers combine all the factors that explain support for the FN (Perrineau, 1997; Mayer, 2002 and 2007). Le Pen voters stand apart by their high level of intolerance towards immigrant, foreigners, “others” combined with an authoritarian and repressive vision of society. Contrary to the vote for the left and the moderate right, the best predictor of the Le Pen vote are not the scores on a scale of economic liberalism, but the scores on a scale of ethnocentric-authoritarianism, even before their position the Left right scale (see multinomial logistic regression, annexe 1). “Cultural” issues are more important here than purely “economic” issues (Achterberg, Houtman, Van der Waal, 2008 and Van der Waal et al., 2010). The main socio-demographic variables statistically significant are not the usual suspects, class and religion, the “variables lourdes” as one calls them in France, but gender and education. Women are more reluctant than men to support a movement like the FN, associated with a traditional vision of gender relations and surrounded by an aura of violence. While education opens up on the world, allows for the discovery of other societies and different cultures and weakens prejudice. Le Pen since 1984 makes better scores among the less educated voters (table 4), receptive to the simple and tough solutions he advocates to

<sup>8</sup> Computed on the base of the April IFOP survey mentioned above (table 3), assuming that workers represent a quarter of the respondents and 36 percent vote for MLP, the rest of the sample will vote MLP in the proportion of 13 percent, the odds ratio is  $3.77 : .562 (36/64) / .149 (13/87)$ .

solve the complicated issues of politics, targeting the immigrants as the only cause to all the problems of France. Whatever the election men give more support than women to the extreme right and the lower the level of education, the higher the probability to have a high score on scales of ethnocentric-authoritarianism, and vote Le Pen. It's not surprising that workers give more support to the FN, they are mostly men (over 80 percent), with lower levels of education, strong law and order and anti immigrant attitudes, and their growing detachment from the parties of the Left has made them receptive to the National Front's political offer.

### ***Working class support for FN ideas in 2011***

The most recent available data we have at our disposal since the start of the recession is a TNS-Sofres survey conducted in January 2011 on a national sample representative of the French population age 18 or more, exploring the image of the FN and agreement with its ideas (table 5).

*Table 5. Opinions about FN and ethnocentrism by occupation (%)*

	Too many immigrants	Too many rights Islam/Muslims	Not feeling at home	Restore death penalty	Agree FN's ideas	National preference for jobs
Petty bourgeoisie	67	62	43	27	34	17
Upper service class	31	38	22	15	8	9
Lower service class	44	47	30	20	18	12
Routine non manual	56	55	48	35	22	20
<b>Working class</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Total sample</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>WClass ≠ average</b>	<b>+16</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>+17</b>	<b>+12</b>	<b>+12</b>	<b>+10</b>

TNS-Sofres/Le Monde, Canal +, France Inter, face to face, 3-4 January 2011, N=1000, not weighted

Last January, 22 percent of the respondents « absolutely » or « somewhat agreed with the ideas defended by the National Front, a 4 percentage points rise compared to last year, although not the highest point in the long run (24 percent in 2005, 26 percent in 2006, 28 percent in May 2002 after the first round of the presidential election) <sup>9</sup>. More specifically, 50 percent consider “ there are too many immigrants in France” (+6 percentage points since 2010), 42 percent do not feel at home in their country as they used to (+5 points), 49 percent

<sup>9</sup> Mind that before 2011 the wording was slightly different, asking about agreement with « Jean-Marie Le Pen's ideas ».

think Islam and Muslims in France are granted too many rights (+6 ), 30 percent are in favour of restoring the death penalty and 20 percent are on a “national preference” line, ready to give employment priority to the French over legal immigrants (+2). On all these issues except the death penalty (-1 percentage point), the proportion of intolerant answers has slightly risen since last year (respectively +6, +5 , +6, and +2 ), although never going back to the high levels of 2000. On all these issues, the blue collar workers appear as the most intolerant, and, with the small shopkeepers and artisans (petty bourgeoisie), the most supportive of the National Front’s ideas (table 5).

A logistic regression allows us to test the predictive variables of agreement with the FN’s ideas (“absolutely/somewhat agree” versus “somewhat not/not at all”). There are no questions about economic interventionism but there is one about placement on the left right scale (7 positions) and one can build the same ethnocentric authoritarianism scale than in Cevipof surveys, combining opinions about death penalty, number of immigrants and not feeling at home (Cronbach alpha .81). If one enters into the model scores on the left right and ethnocentric authoritarianism scale, with age, gender and education as control variables, one finds the same results as in 2007. A high level of ethnocentric authoritarianism is the best predictor of support for the FN, followed closely by a “non left” position on the Left right scale (positions 4-7 on the scale), all things being equal. The predicted probabilities to support the FN rise from 1 to 40 percent as one goes from the two far left positions to the far right position on the left right scale, and from 9 to 76 percent as one goes from the low scorers to the very high scorers (10) on the ethnocentric authoritarianism scale (table 6). Of the three socio-demographic variables, only gender and education have a statistically significant effect (annexe 2).

Table 6. *Predicted probabilities to support FN ideas in January 2011 by score on left-right and ethnocentric authoritarianism scales (%)*

Scores on scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Left right *	9	13	23	30	51	40				
Ethnocentric/authoritarianism	1	3	5	10	18	28	37	50	67	76

Logistic regression controlling for age, gender, education, TNSs-Sofres survey January 2011.

\*Position 1 and 2 are combined on the 7 point left right scale.

The survey allows us to determine precisely what ideas are behind support for the FN. Controlling for age, gender and education, anti-Islam feelings come first by far, followed by anti-immigrant attitudes (annexe 3). If one enters occupation in our logistic regression models instead of the three socio-demographic variables, it has a statistically significant impact on support for FN ideas, opposing the upper service class on the one side, the most reluctant, to

the manual workers on the other, the most supportive of FN ideas (base line: lower service class). Occupation is still significant if one enters age and gender. But when education is entered, it loses all predictive power. Education is the main socio-demographic variable, with gender, explaining agreement with the Front national ideas and eventually electoral support, according to the political context when time comes to vote.

#### **4. REDEFINING THE WORKING CLASS**

One can however question the very concept of “working class” because of the emergence of a post industrial economy, with a predominant service sector, and a declining old industrial working class which in France today represents less than 17% of the gainfully employed. A large body of literature has outlined the segmentation of the labour market, with the rise of an unskilled service proletariat, and a dualisation process opposing insiders to outsiders. The latter are less skilled, less paid, with short term contracts, no perspectives of career, and little or no social protection in “continental” welfare systems such as in France. Among them women, young, immigrants, are overrepresented. Several authors thus call for a redefinition of the class boundaries, considering the standard classifications such as Goldthorpe and Erikson’s class schema as obsolete (Oesch, 2006a and b). In the same line in France the traditional separation between manual workers (*ouvriers*) and manual routine employees (*employés*) made by the standard occupation classification (INSEE) and used by opinion polls is questioned. Two workers out of five are employed in the service sector (transportation, cleaning, storage) while a growing proportion of employees do unskilled repetitive subordinate tasks not so different from manual workers on the production line. Amossé and Chardon (2004) suggest that a new social class of “unskilled workers” is emerging, representing some 20 percent of the gainfully employed, unskilled blue collars on the one side, mostly men, unskilled employees on the other, mostly women (cashiers at the supermarket, hotel cleaning women). They share difficult work conditions, long hours, low wages, social precariousness and isolation. They form a class without class awareness, fragmented, socially and politically isolated, as shown by the large scale survey “Histoire de vie/Life story” (INSEE, 2003). Compared to the skilled ones, these unskilled workers and employees declare less often a party identification (27 and 31 percent versus 35 and 47 percent), they are or have been less often engaged in a party, a political movement or a union (17 and 14 versus 20 and 23 percent) (Amossé, Chardon, 2006, p. 212). At the same time, because they lack class identification, they put forward the defence of their identity, the immigrant-born insisting on their religion and its transmission to their children, the non



immigrant defining themselves before all as “French”. Such lines of cleavages breed a “racism of resentment” (ibidem, p. 223, and Michelat, Simon, 2004) that could fuel support for the extreme right, in France as in other European countries such as Switzerland, Denmark or Austria (Oesch, 2008). One should therefore use different occupational classifications than the standard ones to make this group of “unskilled” workers visible. The 2007 French Electoral Panel which allows us to breakdown the groups of manual workers and non manual routine employees in five subgroups, indeed shows some interesting voting pattern differences and convergences, although not as clear-cut as one would imagine (table 7).

Table 7. *Working class votes by occupation in the 2007 Presidential election (% valid votes)*

	First round				
	ExtremeLeft	Left	Center	Right	Le Pen
Sales clerk	7	27	<b>18</b>	39	9
Office clerk	9	27	<b>18</b>	34	12
Service employees	<b>13</b>	26	16	33	13
Skilled worker	<b>14</b>	25	15	30	<b>16</b>
Unskilled worker	<b>13</b>	28	11	29	<b>18</b>
<i>Total sample</i>	9	27	19	34	11

French Electoral Panel 2007, wave 2, weighted. ExL: trotskyst/communist candidates.

Left: Voinet, Royal. Centre: Bayrou. Right: Sarkozy, de Villiers, Nihous.

At the eve of the first round of the 2007 presidential election, the skilled and unskilled manual workers and the service employees vote more for the extreme left, a feature already noticed by Sperber in his study on the Trotskyist votes in the 2002 presidential election (Sperber, 2010). Sales and office clerks are more likely to support parties of the centre and of the right (respectively 57 and 52 percent, versus 49, 45 and 40 percent). While Le Pen draws more voting intentions among the blue collars, skilled or unskilled (also Dargent 2007 and Cautrès 2007).

\*

The 2008 financial crisis seems to have maximised ongoing trends, the decline of voting turnout and support for the FN, especially among workers. Yet all this could change in the coming year before the 2012 election takes place. Our post electoral national survey, scheduled just after the second round of the presidential election, should allow us to pinpoint more precisely an eventual recession effect, linking the objective and subjective economic situation of the voters to their vote choice, and exploring in details the group of “unskilled” service workers, both manual and non manual.

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Annexe 1. Correspondence between the class scheme of Goldthorpe and Erikson and the French classification of occupations (INSEE)

Erikson, Goldthorpe (1992)	<i>Groupe Socioprofessionnel de l'INSEE</i>
Self employed	<i>Agriculteurs, commerçants, artisans, chefs d'entreprise</i>
Upper service class	<i>Cadres, professions intellectuelles supérieures</i>
Lower service class	<i>Professions intermédiaires</i>
Routine non manual employees	<i>Employés de commerce et de bureau</i>
Skilled workers	<i>Ouvriers qualifiés</i>
Unskilled workers	<i>Ouvriers non qualifiés</i>

Annexe 2. Oesch's post industrial class scheme

*Table 1 The Dimensions at the Basis of the Three Different Work Logics of Employees*

	Technical work logic	Organizational work logic	Interpersonal work logic
1. <i>Setting of work process</i>	Work process determined by technical production parameters	Bureaucratic division of labour	Service setting based on face-to-face exchange
2. <i>Relations of authority</i>	Working outside the lines of command for higher grades, working within a clear-cut command structure for lower grades	Working within a bureaucratic command structure that corresponds to a career sequence	Working largely outside the lines of command
3. <i>Primary orientation</i>	Orientation towards the professional community or group of trades	Primary orientation towards the employing organization	Orientation towards the client, student, patient or petitioner
4. <i>Skill requirements</i>	Scientific expertise for higher grades, crafts and manual skills for lower grades	Coordination and control skills for higher grades, clerical skills for lower grades	Expertise and communicative skills for higher grades, social skills for lower grades

*Coming to Grips with a Changing Class Structure. An Analysis of Employment Stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, Oesch, 2006b, p.267*

### Annexe 3. Multinomial logistic regression on the presidential votes in 2007

We limited our analysis to the voters of the main candidates: the Trotskyist Olivier Besancenot, the socialist Ségolène Royal, the centrist François Bayrou, the UMP (Union for a popular movement) candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, and the National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The dependent variable is the declared voting intention for the first round, taking the vote for Sarkozy as the base line modality, to which one compares the four other choices. The explanatory variables are the scores on three ideological scales– left/right scale in ten positions, economic liberalism scale in 8 (combining two questions on the positive or negative connotations attached to the words « profit » and « privatization », one on the choice between two priorities in the coming years, improving “the situation of workers » or « the competitiveness of the French economy ») and ethnocentric authoritarianism scales in ten (combining questions about restoring the death penalty, feeling there are too many immigrants in France and not feel at home as one used to in France), and three socio demographic variables: age, gender and educational degree. The model shows, all things being equal, the most predictive factors of the choice between these five candidates.

Votes in the 1st round of the 2007 presidential election	Predictors	B	
		B	Exp(B)
Besancenot	Constant	5,796	
	Left Right Scale (0-10)	-1,034	,356
	Ethnocentrism-authoritarianism scale	-,184	,832
	Economic liberalism scale (1-8)	-,452	,636
Royal	Constant	6,537	
	Left Right Scale (0-10)	-,866	,421
	Ethnocentrism-authoritarianism scale	-,198	,820
	Economic liberalism scale (1-8)	-,306	,736
Bayrou	Constant	3,654	
	Left Right Scale (0-10)	-,451	,637
	Ethnocentrism-authoritarianism scale	-,163	,849
	Economic liberalism scale (1-8)	-,164	,848
Le Pen	Constant	-3,165	
	Left Right Scale (0-10)	,180	1,197
	Ethnocentrism-authoritarianism scale	,283	1,328
	Economic liberalism scale (1-8)	-,257	,774

Reference modality: Nicolas Sarkozy. All predictors are statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke) 0.48.

If one enters in the model the three ideological variables, they all have a statistically significant impact on the voting intentions for Le Pen in the first round. But the score on the scale of ethnocentric-authoritarianism is by far the best predictor of such a choice. The leading drive in the support for Le Pen is the rejection of the “other”, at a level found in no other electorate. The placement on the Left Right scale, which is the best predictor of the votes for all the other candidates, comes second. Voting intentions in his favour rise sharply as one gets near to the far right. The Le Pen followers are far less concerned by economic issues. But contrasted with the Sarkozy voters (our baseline modality), they appear more interventionist. This explains why one finds a significant negative correlation between scores on the economic scale and support for the leader of the FN. If one adds the socio demographic variables as categorical variables (taking as reference modality a man, between 50 and 64, and with a level of education around the baccalaureate), gender and education have a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.01$ ). As for the ideological variables, the three of them preserve a significant impact on vote choice, once controlling for the socio demographic variables.

Annexe 4. Logistic regression on support for FN's ideas in 2011 by age, gender, education, position on left right scale and level of ethnocentric-authoritarianism

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> LeftRight	,263	,070	13,994	1	<b>,000</b>	1,301
Ethn/Author	,531	,049	116,245	1	<b>,000</b>	1,701
Education			14,225	4	,007	
etud5r(1)	-,314	,336	,872	1	,350	,731
etud5r(2)	-,005	,293	,000	1	,985	,995
etud5r(3)	-1,165	,467	6,210	1	<b>,013</b>	,312
etud5r(4)	-,954	,382	6,258	1	<b>,012</b>	,385
Age			4,664	4	,324	
agereg(1)	-,192	,451	,180	1	,671	,826
agereg(2)	,431	,349	1,522	1	,217	1,538
agereg(3)	,411	,357	1,322	1	,250	1,508
agereg(4)	,065	,382	,029	1	,866	1,067
Sex (1)	-,677	,205	10,850	1	<b>,001</b>	,508
Constant	-4,715	,479	96,912	1	,000	,009

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: echgd, ethautreg, etud5r, agereg, sexreg.

Left right and ethnocentric- authoritarianism scale are metric variables, the others categorical, baseline modality a man, age 25-34, high school (bac or pre-bac level), R2 Nagelkerke .46

Annex 5. Logistic regression on support for FN's ideas by opinions about number of immigrants, death penalty, not feeling at home in France and too many rights granted to Islam and Muslims

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> Immigrants			19,592	3	,000	
e1_2(1)	1,865	,752	6,150	1	<b>,013</b>	<b>6,454</b>
e1_2(2)	1,287	,743	3,001	1	,083	3,621
e1_2(3)	,026	,785	,001	1	,973	1,027
Death penalty			7,421	3	,060	
e1_3(1)	,608	,311	3,818	1	<b>,051</b>	1,837
e1_3(2)	,555	,280	3,933	1	<b>,047</b>	1,741
e1_3(3)	-,004	,300	,000	1	,989	,996
Not at home			5,786	3	,122	
e1_4(1)	,995	,547	3,310	1	<b>,069</b>	2,704
e1_4(2)	1,057	,519	4,143	1	<b>,042</b>	2,877
e1_4(3)	,574	,536	1,144	1	,285	1,775
Islam rights			32,816	3	,000	
e1_8(1)	2,478	,751	10,885	1	<b>,001</b>	<b>11,916</b>
e1_8(2)	1,773	,751	5,571	1	<b>,018</b>	5,888
e1_8(3)	,409	,794	,266	1	,606	1,506
Constant	-4,964	,771	41,475	1	,000	,007

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: e1\_2, e1\_3, e1\_4, e1\_8.

Categorical variables, 4 degrees of agreement from absolutely to not at all, base line modality the 4<sup>th</sup> "not at all", pseudo R2 Nagelkerke .49

Annexe 6. Logistic regression on support for FN's ideas by opinions about immigrants, death penalty, not feeling at home, too many rights for Muslims, adding, age, gender and education

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> Immigration			17,965	3	,000	
e1_2(1)	1,720	,759	5,139	1	<b>,023</b>	<b>5,583</b>
e1_2(2)	1,099	,747	2,162	1	,141	3,000
e1_2(3)	-,106	,796	,018	1	,894	,899
Death penalty			7,955	3	,047	
e1_3(1)	,669	,328	4,160	1	<b>,041</b>	1,952
e1_3(2)	,656	,300	4,796	1	<b>,029</b>	1,927
e1_3(3)	,069	,313	,048	1	,826	1,071
Not at home			5,523	3	,137	
e1_4(1)	,991	,570	3,027	1	,082	2,694
e1_4(2)	1,036	,541	3,675	1	<b>,055</b>	2,819
e1_4(3)	,516	,557	,858	1	,354	1,676
Rights Islam			30,455	3	,000	
e1_8(1)	2,569	,766	11,252	1	<b>,001</b>	<b>13,056</b>
e1_8(2)	1,932	,767	6,352	1	<b>,012</b>	6,902
e1_8(3)	,539	,809	,443	1	,506	1,714
Age			4,599	4	,331	
agereg(1)	-,093	,503	,034	1	,853	,911
agereg(2)	,526	,379	1,929	1	,165	1,692
agereg(3)	,436	,387	1,267	1	,260	1,546
agereg(4)	,070	,409	,030	1	,864	1,073
Sex (1)	-,743	,219	11,535	1	<b>,001</b>	,476
Education			8,853	4	,065	
etud5r(1)	-,406	,359	1,280	1	,258	,666
etud5r(2)	-,007	,316	,000	1	,983	,993
etud5r(3)	-1,029	,497	4,279	1	<b>,039</b>	,357
etud5r(4)	-,704	,407	2,991	1	,084	,495
Constant	-4,565	,878	27,038	1	,000	,010

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: e1\_2, e1\_3, e1\_4, e1\_8, agereg, sexreg, etud5r.

Base line modality man, 25-34 years old, high school level bac or pré bac