

# Trade Union Membership and Women's Right to Work: From Gender Antagonism to Inclusive Solidarity?

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## Abstract

The notion that women do not have the equal right to work as men underlies gender antagonism in early trade unionism. While unions have been increasingly promoting gender equality in the workplace, it remains unclear whether individual members' attitudes towards women's work have changed over time. In this study, I provide the first large-scale, comparative, and quantitative analysis of this question, focusing on more than 25,000 workers across 16 Western European countries from 1990 to 2020. The results suggest a complex picture. Specifically, in the early 1990s, union members did not differ significantly from non-members in their attitudes towards women's right to work. Since the late 1990s, union members exhibited more egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members. However, by 2020, the union-nonunion gap in gender attitudes appeared to have vanished. Further analysis indicates that a breadwinner ideology, in which manhood is defined in relation to wage labor, is the primary driver for less egalitarian gender attitudes among union members. In addition, the dramatic uprisings of the populist right have possibly contributed to the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap by gendering contemporary European politics.

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## Introduction

The labor movement has a long and intertwined history with the struggle for gender equality, featuring instances of both positive and negative interactions. In recent decades, trade unions have increasingly established themselves as prominent advocates for gender equality in the workplace, leading to a growing body of research examining the strategies and policies of unions in this endeavor (e.g., Bruno et al., 2021; Budd & Mumford, 2006; Gregory & Milner, 2009; Hebson & Rubery, 2018; Williamson, 2012). However, there remains a notable lack of perspectives from individual union members on gender equality issues. Acknowledging this limitation highlights a potential challenge in trade unions' advance of gender justice, namely a possible divergence between the positions of unions and their members. This divergence may stem from a persistent masculine culture still shared by some union members (Ledwith, 2012), as well as insufficient promotion of gender equality campaigns undertaken by unions (Kirton, 2019).

In light of these concerns, the present paper examines individual union members' attitudes towards women's right to work. As demonstrated later, the belief that women do not have the equal right to work as men has underpinned gender antagonism in nineteenth-century trade unionism and continues to be relevant in contemporary times. To provide a complete picture, I draw on four waves of the European Values Study (EVS) data spanning from 1990 to 2020, focusing on more than 25,000 workers from 16 Western Europe countries. These repeated cross-sectional data allow me to take a comprehensive view of union members' attitudes toward women's right to work, as well as track their evolution over time and across countries. I further extend my analysis to 26 Eastern and Southern European countries whenever appropriate.

When pooling across waves, I find that union members in Western Europe hold more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work than non-members on average. However, a detailed examination of the data reveals a more complex picture. Specifically, in the early 1990s, union members did not differ significantly from non-members in their gender attitudes. Since the late 1990s, union members showed more egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members. This union-nonunion gender attitude gap, however, appeared to have vanished in recent years. By 2020, union members did not exhibit more support for women's right to work than non-members. Robustness tests indicate that these results are not driven by changes in country composition in the data, by a

single country experiencing a temporal shock, or by workers of a particular gender. The same time trend persists when further including 26 Eastern and Southern European countries.

Two additional analyses are performed to unpack the intricate pattern. First, I examine two underlying mechanisms that may influence union members' gender attitudes: the ideal worker ideology, which emphasizes complete devotion to work, and the breadwinner ideology, which underscores the realization of manhood through wage labor. The results support the relative importance of the breadwinner ideology over the ideal worker ideology. Second, I explore the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap in relation to the widespread populist uprisings in recent years. Drawing on the insights from feminist studies and European politics, I argue that the closed union-nonunion attitude gap may be attributed to the gendered influence of right-wing populism, which strategically invoke conservative and progressive gender values to mobilize male and female voters, respectively. The thirty-year trend thus reflects complex dynamics between gender, labor, and politics in Europe.

The present paper contributes to the study of gender equality in industrial relations in both micro and macro aspects. At the micro level, I provide the first large-scale, comparative, and quantitative analysis to understand individual union members' attitudes towards women's right to work. This analysis reveals an intricate evolution of union members' gender attitudes in Europe over the last three decades. At the macro level, I take a *longue-durée* perspective to examine the issue of gender equality in relation to organized labor, tracing it back to gender antagonism in early trade unionism during the nineteenth century. This approach uncovers nuanced mechanisms that influence union members' gender attitudes. The findings are further connected back to several broad trends in contemporary political economies, situating the relationship between gender equality and organized labor within the process of liberalization.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. **Section 1** reviews the literature on gender equality in relation to trade unions and introduces the research question. **Section 2** describes the EVS data, key variables, and the changing demographics of union members. **Section 3** presents the baseline results for union members' gender attitudes, as well as time dynamics, country heterogeneity, and gender differences. **Section 4** explores the potential mechanisms and the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap. **Section 5** concludes.

# 1 Trade Unions and Women's Right to Work

## 1.1 Gender Antagonism in Early Trade Unionism

Early trade unionism was often characterized by strong gender antagonism, as organized labor—mostly male—adopted various exclusionary strategies to restrict women's employment. Rose (1988) presents a vivid example of such animosity in Kidderminster, England in 1874:

When they [employers] put women to work on the new looms, the male weavers . . . went on strike and were supported by all of the male carpet weavers in Kidderminster. The strike lasted only one week and resulted in victory for the union; the women lost their jobs and carpet weaving in Kidderminster remained men's work. (p. 199)

Along with these exclusionary strategies was the "gendering of machinery," a practice in which certain machines were to be worked by one gender only (Rose, 1986, p. 120). Furthermore, it was common that men monopolized the bulk of cutting-edge technologies, while women's machines were confined to low-paid, unskilled, and exploitative jobs (Honeyman & Goodman, 1991). Consequently, gender inequality persisted throughout the nineteenth century in the form of both industrial and occupational segregation.

The hostility of early trade unionists towards female workers has garnered scholarly attention from different fields. It has been shown that the notion of women as cheap labor, thereby posing a threat to men's wages and control over work, cannot fully explain the pronounced gender antagonism in early trade unionism. This is evidenced by the fact that early trade unionists often attempted to include other types of low-cost labor, such as rural workers, into their unions (Rose, 1988). Hence, women's employment constituted a particular source of resentment among male trade unionists, beyond merely being cheap labor. As Baker and Robeson (1981, p. 24) similarly note, "the interesting question is why men did not quickly include women in their unions and insist that women be paid the same wages as men thus eliminating the threat."

Two alternative accounts have been further developed to understand gender antagonism in early trade unionism: the ideal worker ideology and the breadwinner ideology. Despite their nuanced differences, both theories focus on the conceptualization of work as an exclusive sphere for men, with women being denied the equal access and right to work. Specifically, on the ideal worker side, the narrative centers on the interplay between work devotion and craft unionism. As a cultural

idea that emerged during the nineteenth century, the ideal worker ideology highlights a strong work ethic, characterized by an unswerving commitment to prioritize work above other aspects of life (Williams, 2018). Not surprisingly, this orientation has contributed to the masculinization of work by intensifying the gendered division of labor, where men focus on their careers while women shoulder family responsibilities.

Importantly, the ideal worker ideology coincides with the philosophy of craft unionism, which is founded on the notion of skills as the basis of work (Milkman, 2016). Specifically, members of craft unions regard skills as a vital part of their identities and take pride in their ability to perform high-quality work. The preservation and elevation of skills through rigorous training and continuous practice are, therefore, of critical importance. Given the traditional expectation that women will withdraw from work upon marriage, craft union members often perceive women as lacking genuine commitment to skill development and long-term employment. Furthermore, women have been stigmatized as physically and emotionally inferior to men, leading to the conviction that women are unable to undertake demanding and complex craft work (Drury, 1987). The exclusion of women from skilled jobs is thus justified on the premise that women are not ideal workers and may result in the degradation of work.

On the other side, the breadwinner ideology highlights the realization of manhood in wage labor instead of full commitment to work. While a detailed examination of its origin is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to recognize how early trade unionists used the breadwinner ideology to advance their material interests. As Fraser and Gordon (1994) note, working-class men in the nineteenth century increasingly sought economic independence after they shed their socio-legal and political dependence by winning civil and electoral rights. However, rather than seizing the means of production, working-class men claimed a new form of economic independence by rejecting wage slavery and demanding a family wage—“a wage sufficient for a male head to maintain a household and to support a dependent wife and children” (p. 316). Critically, the idea of a family wage presupposed women’s confinement to the domestic sphere.

As the concept of the family wage gained increasing prominence within the labor movement, women were gradually regarded as non-workers. In contrast, manhood was redefined as being a breadwinner—an independent worker who was the sole provider for his family. This shift made the presence of women in the labor market particularly bitter for men: not only did women compete

for jobs, potentially lowering wages, but they also threatened men's ability to live up to their expectations as breadwinners (Rose, 1988). The exclusion of women from employment is, thereof, also normatively grounded on the basis that women are to be wives and mothers rather than capable providers.

Although historically intertwined, the ideal worker and the breadwinner ideologies underscore distinct reasons for gender antagonism in early trade unionism.<sup>1</sup> In the ideal worker discourse, early trade unionists were opposed to women's employment, due to the concern that women would undermine work ethics and devalue skilled crafts. Implicit in this argument is a strong sense of devotion to work, as work is construed not only as a practical necessity but a sacred duty that requires dedication, skill, and discipline. In the breadwinner discourse, early trade unionists exhibited hostility towards women's work, as they believed that it was unacceptable for "female labour be made scarce and men's labor be left idle" (Rose, 1988, p. 200). The perceived threat that women pose to men's identity as breadwinners is the crucial factor behind gender antagonism in early trade unionism. Despite these differences, both the ideal worker and breadwinner ideologies encompass the same notion that work is for men rather than women. In other words, both ideologies conceptualize work in a profoundly gendered and unequal manner, whereby women are falsely excluded and have less right to work as men.

## 1.2 Towards Gender-Inclusive Solidarity?

The landscape of work has dramatically transformed since the nineteenth century, with women's employment being increasingly prevalent. Despite differences across countries, Goldin and her colleagues (1992, 1994, 2006, 2013, 2014) have identified several factors underlying this grand transformation. To name a few, the expansion of education has increased women's enrollment and human capital. This improvement has led to higher marginal productivity, inducing a strong substitution effect that encourages women's participation in paid work. Concurrently, the arrival of new information technologies has increased the demand for office and clerical workers, while electric household technologies have lightened women's domestic burden. Major historical events

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<sup>1</sup> Formally, the ideal worker ideology can be modeled as men's disutility from working with female workers who are perceived to be less devoted. By contrast, the breadwinner ideology can be represented through models of income elasticity and substitution elasticity, similar to Goldin's (1994, 2006) analysis of the social stigma attached to women's paid work.

and social movements, such as World War II and the second-wave feminism, have also reduced the social stigma attached to women's employment. On a more pessimistic account, the neoliberal turn taken by many countries has also contributed to women's labor force participation by forcing wives to take part-time jobs and supplement household income (Fraser, 2013).

Accompanied by these social changes, women's rights as equal participants in the labor market have been increasingly recognized. Notably, such recognition may be more pronounced within trade unions. As an important employment relations actor, unions have acknowledged the systematic discrimination and unequal treatment faced by many working women, realizing that some of these issues have been perpetuated by unions themselves (Cockburn, 1984; Colgan & Ledwith, 2000). Meanwhile, regulatory reforms at various levels have bestowed upon unions important responsibilities in advancing gender equality. In France, equality bargaining between firms and unions has been mandatory since 2006 (Gregory & Milner, 2009). In the United Kingdom, unions have also leveraged the EU law to protect workers' interests, with many legal cases pertaining to gender equality and women's rights (Hebson & Rubery, 2018).

Structural changes in the economy have also fueled the inclusion of women into trade unions. As the manufacturing sector—the traditional stronghold of organized labor—continues to decline amidst globalization, trade unions have been actively seeking to rebuild their power by organizing underrepresented groups, such as female workers in service and administrative jobs (Ibsen & Tapia, 2017). Consequently, unions have become a prominent actor in advancing women's rights and improving their working conditions. An illustrative example is the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), a federation of education unions representing more than 11 million workers in 51 countries. The ETUCE has undertaken a list of comprehensive measures to advance gender equality in the workplace and regularly monitored their implementation at the national, regional, and local levels across Europe (ETUCE, 2024a).

Within this broad context, employment relations scholars have examined various union policies and practices aimed at promoting gender equality and female-friendly workplaces. For example, Park et al. (2019) show that unionized female workers in the United States are more likely to take paid maternity leave. Similarly, Budd and Mumford (2006) find that family-friendly policies are more prevalent in unionized workplaces in Great Britain. A study on French unions demonstrates that collective bargaining improves gender equality when women are proportionately represented

(Bruno et al., 2021). Likewise, evidence suggests that unions can increase women's chance of completing apprenticeship training programs and reduce the gender pay gap in the manufacturing industries (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2000; Elvira & Saporta, 2001). Besides material benefits, trade unions in the United Kingdom also offer customized education programs to empower female workers (Greene & Kirton, 2002). Furthermore, Canadian unions have incorporated clauses in their negotiations to address sexual harassment with additional resources to make such protections more accessible (Barnacle et al., 1994).

Nevertheless, there has been little research on individual union members' attitudes towards women's right to work, which was once at the heart of gender antagonism in early trade unionism. This issue remains relevant nowadays, as several studies have suggested that both work and unions are still often masculinized. For instance, Lurie (2014) finds that Israeli unions negotiate wage increases for fathers but flexible hours for mothers. This practice has inadvertently pushed women out of the workplace, resulting in a widened gender pay gap. As a different example, Saari (2013) notes that the seemingly gender-neutral bargaining approach of Finnish unions reinforces a male-centric norm, thereby impeding gender pay equity. Moreover, even within trade unions, female officers are found to earn less than their male counterparts, further demotivating women's representation in labor organizations (Aleks et al., 2021). These findings corroborate Ledwith's (2012) observation that a profound culture of exclusionary masculinity is still hard-wired into the structure, practices, and norms of many unions.

These less favorable views reveal a potential challenge in trade unions' efforts to advance gender equality. As Howcroft and Rubery (2019) note, "if gender bias is not addressed directly, not only the predictions of change but also the outcomes of change are likely to be gender biased, potentially exacerbating rather than closing gender equality gaps" (p.4). Moreover, even if union leaders have overcome these implicit biases, it is uncertain whether individual members share the same perspective. This is an important question as a less liberal base may eventually reduce unions' engagement with gender parity. Recognizing these issues, I seek to directly examine whether union members hold less or more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work compared to non-members. In the next section, I describe the data and sample used for this analysis within the European context.



## 2 European Values Study Data and Measures

### 2.1 Sample Construction and Distribution

I analyze data from the European Value Study Waves 2-5 (hereafter EVS 2-5), spanning from 1990 to 2020. The EVS is a repeated cross-sectional survey that collects a broad range of information on ideas, preferences, attitudes, and beliefs. It is funded by a consortium of universities, research institutes, and other social organizations from the participating countries. The target population is adult residents in Europe, and the sample for each wave is selected through a single or multi-stage probability sampling. The response rate for the EVS varies across countries and waves, with most of the countries reporting a cumulative response rate between 25% and 87% (EVS, 2022). To ensure consistency and comparability, the EVS research team has centralized the translation and monitoring of the survey questions.

To construct an analytical sample, I first restrict the data to respondents who were employed at the time of the survey. I then exclude respondents who were below 18 years old or above 70 years old to approximate the working-age population, throwing about 1.3% of the sample ( $N = 687$ ). Missing values are handled using listwise deletion. This process results in a final sample consisting of 51,820 workers from 45 countries within the broader European region.<sup>2</sup> Given the diverse body of the countries represented in the data, I further split the full sample into two groups: a main sample of 25,738 workers from 16 Western European countries and an extended sample of 26,082 workers from 29 Eastern and Southern European countries.

Table 1 presents the sample distribution by country and wave. Panel A shows that in the Western Europe sample, the number of countries represented in each wave is 12, 13, 15, and 10. Moreover, six countries are consistently surveyed by the EVS: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Meanwhile, panel B shows that in the Eastern and Southern Europe sample, the number of countries in each wave is 7, 16, 28, and 21. Additionally, seven countries are consistently present: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. My subsequent analysis focuses mostly on Western Europe, yet I extend my analysis to include other countries in Eastern and Southern Europe whenever appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> Great Britain and Northern Ireland are grouped as the UK. Switzerland is dropped due to a recent change in the EVS methodology to increase the response rate, which has led to the country to be disproportionately represented in the latest wave (EVS, 2020). The main findings of this study are not sensitive to these sample restrictions.

## 2.2 Key Variables

The EVS data provide a direct measure of individuals' attitudes towards women's right to work. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that "men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce" (1 = agree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, and 3 = disagree). Arguably, those who agreed with the statement have less egalitarian gender attitudes than those who did not. Therefore, higher scores on this question indicate greater support for gender parity regarding women's right to work. I use this single measure as the key dependent variable, because it resembles mostly closely with the idea that work is an exclusive sphere for men. I also introduce alternative measures of both general and non-binary gender attitudes later in the analysis.

Union membership, the key explanatory variable, is a dummy indicator that equals to 1 if the respondent belongs to a trade union. I select a number of control variables that may correlate with both union membership and attitudes towards women's right to work. Key controls include gender, age, self-positioning on the left-right political scale, importance of religion (De Berg & Grift, 2001; Sitzmann & Campbell, 2021), having children or not, education level, income deciles, marital status, and size of town. Information on citizenship (Bedaso et al., 2022; Glas, 2022), supervisor status, and occupations are also available in the EVS 3-5 data.

Table 2 presents the means of these variables for respondents in the 16 Western European countries and by union membership status. Overall, 31.8% of the workers are union members in the pooled EVS sample. The average score for attitudes towards women's right to work is relatively high, which is not unexpected given that the included countries are all rich democracies. Yet union members still exhibit slightly higher raw means of egalitarian gender attitudes compared to non-members, with scores of 2.773 and 2.619, respectively.

## 2.3 Getting the Picture

To further understand the data, Figure 1 plots the raw means of attitudes towards women's right to work in the 16 Western European countries, by wave and union membership. The figure shows that both union members and non-members have gained more egalitarian gender attitudes towards women's work over time, with union members consistently exhibiting higher raw scores

than non-members. A closer look at the figure reveals more details. Specifically, the raw union-nonunion gender attitude gap was relatively narrow in the early 1990s. Yet this gap has since then widened, primarily driven by the relatively rapid growth of egalitarian gender attitudes among union members. In the more recent period of 2017-2020, however, the union-nonunion gender attitude gap seems to have slightly narrowed.<sup>3</sup>

To what extent is this trend consistent with the changing composition of union members? To shed light on this question, I follow Farber et al. (2021) by regressing union membership on a set of demographic and socioeconomic variables during each time period. Figure 2 plots the OLS coefficients of four variables from this exercise: being a female, full-time work, low income, and the left-right political scale. Two patterns are worth noting. First, union members are more likely to be females in recent years, while more likely to be males in the early 1990s. In connection, the positive association between full-time work and union membership is initially attenuated but then rebounds. This may indicate that females were more likely to work part-time when they first had a chance to join unions, but gradually more so when working full-time.

Second, union members are no more economically secure than non-members, as the coefficient of low income has become statistically insignificant in recent years. Meanwhile, the negative association between right-wing political ideology and union membership is weakened over time, although it remains statistically significant. These two patterns may help explain the observed change in the union-nonunion gender attitude gap in Figure 1: While a more feminized labor movement can widen the gap by promoting egalitarian gender norms, a labor movement composed of workers who are economically insecure and less left-leaning can narrow the gap. After all, equality is less tolerated when resources are scarce (Cui et al., 2023), and gender parity often faces resistance from the ideological right (Anduiza & Rico, 2024).

Perhaps more importantly, the above exercise suggests that at least some of the observed differences in gender attitudes between union members and non-members can be attributed to differences in individual characteristics. The critical question then becomes whether union membership, *ceteris paribus*, still has explanatory power for workers' gender attitudes. As the early discussion implies, relative to non-members, union members may demonstrate more egalitarian

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<sup>3</sup> The minor narrowing of the union-nonunion attitude gap may be attributed to the limitation of the gender attitudes variable, which is capped at a maximum value of 3. This truncation problem might obscure the true development and suggest a change that is not substantial. I further discuss this possibility in the next section.

gender attitudes if they are influenced by the progressive positions of union leaders, and/or self-select into unions due to their recognition of labor movements' commitment to gender parity. Conversely, union members may exhibit less egalitarian gender attitudes if they are swayed by conservative work ideologies—the ideal worker norm and the breadwinners norm—that have underpinned much of the labor history, and/or if workers with discriminatory attitudes are attracted by the masculine culture of some unions. I investigate this question using OLS regression in the next section.

### 3 Regression Analysis of Union Members' Gender Attitudes

#### 3.1 A Thirty-Year Overview based on EVS Data

Do trade union members have more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work than non-members, or do they still tend to believe that women lack the equal right to work as men? The OLS regression results in [Table 3](#) lend some support to the first view. Focus on the 16 Western European countries first. Columns 1-3 suggest that when pooling across waves, the coefficient of union membership on gender attitudes is always positive and statistically significant across specifications. This indicates that union members, on average, held more egalitarian attitudes towards women's work compared to non-members during the covered period between 1990 and 2020.

More specifically, column 1 starts with a single variable regression. The estimated coefficient of union membership is 0.154 ( $p < 0.01$ ), simply capturing the raw difference in gender attitudes between union members and non-members in the 16 Western European countries. Column 2 includes all control variables, as well as wave dummies to capture the common time trend. The magnitude of the union membership coefficient drops to 0.115 ( $p < 0.01$ ), corresponding to a 25% change. In addition, column 2 suggests a gender gap in attitudes towards women's right to work, as women tend to hold more egalitarian views than men on average ( $b = 0.145$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Surprisingly, the magnitude of this gender gap is only slightly larger than the gap between union members and non-members in the same specification ( $b_{Female} - b_{Union} = 0.03$ ).

The analysis in column 2, however, is a cross-country comparison between union members and non-members. It does not account for any stable institutional differences between countries, such

as variations in capitalist models, cultural traditions, and historical legacies (Hall & Taylor, 1996). The specification in column 3 addresses this concern by including country dummies. As shown in Table 3, the coefficient of union membership dramatically shrinks to 0.018 but remains statistically significant at the 0.1 level. This change is not unexpected, as many countries have relatively stable institutions that may affect both union membership and gender attitudes (e.g., the Nordic model that features both high union density and great gender parity). Interestingly, the gender gap in attitudes towards women’s work does not change much ( $b = 0.136$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that most of the gender gap is within countries rather than between countries.

As an additional check, Table A1 in the appendix presents the OLS coefficients of union membership on seven alternative measures of gender attitudes, controlling for all covariates, wave effects, and country effects. The results again indicate that in the 16 Western European countries, union members have more egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members on average: all seven coefficients are positive and only two are not statistically significant. Finally, in column 4 of Table 3, I further extend the analysis to include the 29 Eastern and Southern European countries. Remarkably, the estimated coefficient of union membership is 0.019 ( $p < 0.1$ ), which is almost identical to the small, positive coefficient estimated for the Western Europe sample.

### 3.2 Is There Any Time Dynamics?

A potential reason for the small within-country union membership coefficient is that the above results are based on the pooled EVS 2-5 data. Recall that union members’ attitudes towards women’s right to work may have changed over time, presumably in a positive direction. Thus, the modest coefficient may simply reflect a weighted average of a smaller coefficient in the earlier period and a larger coefficient in the later period. To examine this possibility, I re-estimate the coefficient of union membership by EVS wave for the 16 Western European countries. The results are presented in Table 4. In the top panel, each row represents a different specification, and each cell is a coefficient of union membership on gender attitudes. Control variables are included in an additive manner, such that each row uses the controls from the previous row. The highlighted results are estimates from specifications with most comprehensive controls. Summary statistics presented in the bottom panel are also based on these specifications.

How have union members’ attitudes towards women’s right to work evolved over time? Table 4

indicates that there is no easy answer. Focusing on the highlighted estimates, column 1 shows that in the early 1990s, union members did not differ significantly from non-members in attitudes towards women's work. The union membership coefficient is positive, but small in magnitude and not statistically significant ( $b = 0.014, p > 0.1$ ). However, in the late 1990s, union members exhibited more egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members, as suggested by the positive and statistically significant coefficient in column 2 ( $b = 0.034, p < 0.05$ ). The magnitude of this coefficient is also non-negligible. As the bottom panel shows, the size is comparable to the conditional differences in gender attitudes (1) between females and males and (2) between those who completed higher education and those who did not.

Column 3 suggests a similar picture. Between 2008 and 2010, union members held more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work than non-members ( $b = 0.025, p < 0.1$ ). While the coefficient is smaller than that in the previous wave, the relative magnitude becomes larger than the conditional difference in gender attitudes between those who completed higher education and those who did, which is only 0.018. The magnitude of the coefficient is also close to the conditional difference between those who were 10 years apart in age, which is 0.034.

However, by 2020, the union-nonunion attitude gap appeared to have vanished. In column 4 of [Table 4](#), the coefficient of union membership again becomes close to zero and statistically insignificant ( $b = 0.004, p > 0.1$ ). As an additional check, I show that this null coefficient is not driven by truncation of the dependent variable. Tobit regression with both left and right censoring yields a point estimate that is still statistically insignificant ( $b = 0.224, p = 0.34$ ). Can this shift be explained by the changing composition of union members as shown in [Figure 2](#)? Note that the within-country specification includes the full set of control variables, effectively addressing the covariance between individual characteristics and both union membership and gender attitudes. However, since the specification is not fully saturated, it might not completely capture changes in the composition of union members. Should the unparameterized compositional differences systematically relate to gender attitudes, it could account for the null within-country OLS coefficient observed for the EVS-5.<sup>4</sup> I formalize this analysis and further explore the vanished

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<sup>4</sup>For example, the increasingly positive association between union membership and low income may be strengthened by right-leaning ideology (i.e., an interaction effect). If this more complicated compositional change is negatively related to gender attitudes, it could lead to a null coefficient. Econometrically, the OLS coefficient captures treatment-variance weighted covariate-specific effects (Angrist & Pischke, 2009). When the percentage of union members in the low-income-right-leaning cell increases to a limited extent (i.e., below 50%), OLS regression gives a larger weight to the potentially

union-nonunion gender attitude gap in [Section 4.2](#).

Also note that the conclusion drawn for the EVS-2 and the EVS-5 depends on whether one focuses on cross-country or within-country dynamics. As shown in the second row of columns 1 and 4, when comparing across countries, unions members still demonstrated more egalitarian gender attitudes on average than non-members in both periods (for the EVS-2,  $b = 0.083$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; for the EVS-5,  $b = 0.091$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, I extend the above analysis to the full sample of 45 countries. A similar pattern is identified after controlling for country effects: the estimated OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes are  $-0.003$  ( $p > 0.1$ ),  $0.052$  ( $p < 0.01$ ),  $0.034$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), and  $-0.017$  ( $p > 0.1$ ) in the EVS 2-5, respectively.

Overall, the within-country analysis of time dynamics reveals an intricate evolution of union members' attitudes towards women's right to work. While the positive change in the early period may be explained by unions' efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace, the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap in recent years has not been anticipated in my previous discussion. Yet before further explaining the evolution of union members' gender attitudes, I will present the results from several robustness tests to bolster the validity of the observed time trend.

### 3.3 Are the Results Driven by Country Composition?

One may be concerned that the intricate time pattern is driven by changes in country composition in the data over time. As shown in [Table 1](#), the countries represented in each wave are not identical. Therefore, it is possible that the changing coefficient of union membership over time may simply reflect different country composition across waves. To address this issue, I re-estimate the coefficient of union membership separately by wave, but only using respondents from countries that are consistently present in all four waves of the EVS data. I perform this analysis for both the Western European sample (i.e., 6 countries) and the full sample (i.e., 13 countries). The specification includes all control variables, as well as country and wave dummies. The estimates are thus comparable to those highlighted in [Table 4](#).

[Table 5](#) presents the results of this analysis. Panel A shows that the overall pattern remains similar even when only considering the 6 Western European countries, with the exception that the coefficient of union membership in the EVS-3 becomes statistically insignificant. Compared 

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small effect in that cell. A fully saturated specification helps decouple these cell-specific effects.

with the estimates obtained from [Table 4](#) for the same period, the new point estimate is deflated by a factor of 0.735, while the standard error is inflated by a factor of 1.8. The change in statistical significance is, therefore, likely driven by the loss of power due to throwing more than half of the Western Europe sample. Moreover, as I discuss in [Section 3.5](#), this positive, small, and insignificant coefficient in the EVS-3 can also be attributed by an interesting interaction between country and gender heterogeneity. Finally, panel B of [Table 5](#) confirms the same time trend in the full sample, after further including the 7 Eastern and Southern European countries that have been consistently represented in the EVS. The overall pattern, therefore, cannot be attributed to changes in country composition across waves.

### **3.4 Are the Results Driven by Country Heterogeneity?**

Is it possible that the observed time trend is driven by a few countries? Recall that the previous analysis has relied on a specification that includes country dummies as controls. This approach partials out stable cross-country differences, but cannot deal with country-specific temporary shocks that may affect both union membership and gender attitudes, such as feminist movements in a particular country at a particular time ([Anduiza & Rico, 2024](#); [Ferguson et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, the validity of the within-country specification depends critically on the assumption that the union effect and country effects are additively separable, which may not always be true as previous research indicates ([Ibsen & Thelen, 2017](#)).

An ideal way to address these concerns is to regress gender attitudes on union membership for each country and by year—a setting that is far away from the EVS data where (1) countries are not consistently represented, (2) surveys are conducted at ten-year intervals, and (3) the size of each country-wave cell is small. As a result, I adopt a more compromising approach by regressing gender attitudes on interactions between union membership and country dummies in each wave. This approach, however, requires a baseline country as the comparison group, against which cross-country differences in the coefficient of union membership are estimated. In the present study, Germany seems to be a natural choice, because not only the country is consistently surveyed, but also the evolution of the German gender regime has followed a relatively clear path since its reunification in 1990 ([Rosenfeld et al., 2004](#)).

Panel A of [Table 6](#) presents the results of this analysis for the Western Europe sample. Focus on



the baseline country Germany first. It appears that in the early 1990s, union members in Germany held less egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members on average ( $b = -0.063, p < 0.01$ ). One possible explanation for this finding is that the German capitalist model may have promoted a strong breadwinner ideology secured by industrial unionism (Hassel, 2007), as well as a strong ideal worker ideology channeled through the vocational training system (Haasler & Gottschall, 2015). In the late 1990s, however, German union members had more positive attitudes towards women's work than non-members, although the difference was not statistically significant ( $b = 0.048, p > 0.1$ ). This change may be driven by German trade unions' efforts to promote gender equality (Kirsch & Blaschke, 2014), together with the socialist legacy of gender parity from Eastern Germany (Rosenfeld et al., 2004). The progress persisted in the next decade. By 2010, union members in Germany were significantly more likely to support women's right to work than non-members ( $b = 0.091, p < 0.1$ ). Nonetheless, this positive union-nonunion gender attitude gap had vanished by the end of 2020 ( $b = 0.016, p > 0.1$ ). The evolution of union members' gender attitudes in Germany thereby closely mirrors the European trend.

How do union members in other countries differ from their counterparts in Germany? Column 2 in panel A of Table 6 shows that for the early 1990s, four countries—Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal—have a statistically different union effect than Germany. Interestingly, all interaction terms between union membership and the four country dummies are positive. Indeed, when only analyzing these four countries, the estimated coefficient of union membership is positive and statistically significant ( $b = 0.151, p < 0.01$ ). However, in the remaining seven countries, the union effects do not statistically differ from that in Germany. These results might indicate that an alliance between the labor and feminist movements was emerging in Europe in the early 1990s, though it had not yet become widespread.

Moving to the late 1990s, column 2 in panel A of Table 6 shows that the effects of union membership on gender attitudes are largely homogeneous across countries. The only exception is the UK, where the interaction term is negative and statistically significant ( $b = -0.098, p < 0.05$ ). The marginal effect of union membership in the UK, however, is not statistically significant ( $b_{union} + b_{union} \times b_{UK} = -0.05, p > 0.1$ ). As some previous research indicates, this lack of progress in the UK may be attributed to the deeply entrenched laissez-faire belief, which prevented the state from actively dismantling obstacles to gender equality, preserving a masculine work culture (Jackson,

2020). In the same panel, column 3 suggests that there is considerable country heterogeneity during the period of 2008-2010: 6 out of the 15 interaction terms were statistically significant and all negative. I further discuss the mechanisms that drive these results in [Section 4.1](#). Finally, column 5 indicates that by 2020, the effects of union membership had once again become homogeneous across countries, with the exceptions of Austria and Spain.

While analyzing country-specific patterns provides additional insights, it does not directly address the primary concern over the previous analysis. That is, whether the intricate time trend is driven by country heterogeneity. To investigate this, Panel B of [Table 6](#) presents the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes by wave, excluding countries where the union effects are statistically different from that in Germany. The results reaffirm the previously observed time trend, albeit under the assumption that Germany is somewhat representative of other Western European countries.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.5 Are the Results Driven by Female or Male Workers Only?

I also investigate whether the time trend is solely driven by workers of a particular gender. To do so, I re-estimate the coefficient of union membership separately for female and male workers in each wave. I perform this analysis for both the Western Europe sample and the full sample. The results are presented in [Table 7](#). Focus on the Western Europe sample in the top panel first. In the EVS-2, the coefficients of union membership among male and female workers are both close to zero and not statistically significant (for females,  $b = 0.023$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ; for males,  $b = 0.005$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). This finding indicates that in the early 1990s, there were no discernible differences in gender attitudes between union members and non-members among both female and male workers.

In the EVS 3-4, the coefficients of union membership are small and statistically insignificant among females workers (for the EVS-3,  $b = 0.013$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ; for the EVS-4,  $b = -0.002$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). Meanwhile, the coefficients of union membership are positive and statistically significant among males (for the EVS-3,  $b = 0.051$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; for the EVS-4,  $b = 0.057$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, during the period of late 1990s and 2010, only male union members demonstrated more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work than non-members. Moving to the EVS-5, the coefficients of union

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<sup>5</sup> I also repeat this analysis in the full sample. The same pattern still holds: the coefficient of union membership in each wave is  $-0.034$  ( $p > 0.1$ ),  $0.047$  ( $p < 0.001$ ),  $0.052$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), and  $-0.005$  ( $p > 0.1$ ). This exercise, however, is less justified as Germany may not be very representative of Eastern and Southern European countries.

membership become small and statistically insignificant for both genders (for females,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ; for males,  $b = 0.019$ ,  $p > 0.019$ ). Thus, by 2020, there were no significant differences in egalitarian gender attitudes between union members and non-members, among both female and male workers.

The bottom panel of [Table 7](#) shows that the same pattern largely holds in the full sample, except that the coefficient of union membership for females in the EVS-3 is now positive and statistically significant ( $b = 0.052$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). What might explain this cross-sample difference? One possibility is that all Western European countries in the sample are affluent democracies with a high level of gender parity, whereas the full sample includes less developed Eastern and Southern European countries where gender inequality might be more pronounced (Goldin, 1994). Consequently, there might be less room for unions to further improve traditional role-based gender equality (e.g., women's right to work), especially among females in Western Europe.

Motivated by this reasoning, I turn to examine whether unions can promote more progressive, non-binary gender attitudes among females, an area where there is more room for improvement even in Western Europe. [Table A2](#) in the appendix presents the results of this analysis, in which the dependent variable is whether homosexuality is justifiable. The findings indicate that in Western Europe, female union members do have more progressive, non-binary gender attitudes than non-members in the EVS 3-4 (columns 3 and 5 in the top panel of [Table A2](#)). More interestingly, for the full sample, it seems that when female union members stopped demonstrating more egalitarian traditional role-based gender attitudes in the EVS-4 (column 5 in the bottom panel of [Table 7](#)), they began to show more progressive, non-binary gender attitudes at the same time (column 5 in the bottom panel of [Table A2](#)). However, in the EVS-5, none of the coefficients of union membership on non-binary gender attitudes remain positive and statistically significant among females, as shown in column 7 of [Table A2](#).

Based on the above analysis, in the EVS 3-4, the null coefficients of union membership on women's right to work among female workers in Western Europe are likely due to gender issues evolving towards a more progressive, non-binary arena.<sup>6</sup> Although the previously observed time trend is largely attributed to male union members, the conclusion that union members exhibited more egalitarian and progressive gender attitudes since the late 1990s, and that such union-

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<sup>6</sup> For a recent example, see the ETUCE's statement: "LGBTI rights are trade union rights" (ETUCE, 2024b).

nonunion differences no longer exist in recent years, is further strengthened rather than weakened. In the next section, I first explore the mechanisms that may influence union members' gender attitudes. I then turn to explain the vanished union-nonunion gender attitude gap.

## 4 Potential Mechanisms and Unexpected Changes

### 4.1 Ideal Worker or Breadwinner?

What are the underlying reasons that union members do not adopt more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work? Recall that research on gender antagonism in early trade unionism presents two different narratives: the ideal worker story and the breadwinner story. In the ideal worker story, early trade unionists rejected women's employment due to the concern that women would diminish work ethics and devalue skilled crafts. Implicit in this argument is a strong sense of work devotion, in which work is viewed not only viewed as a practical necessity but also a sacred duty that requires unwavering dedication, commitment, and discipline. Alternatively, in the breadwinner story, early trade unionists displayed hostility towards women's employment, due to the concern that women would take jobs away and undermine men's fulfillment of their breadwinner role.

While the two narratives are intertwined, with each implying some elements of the other, their distinct motives for gender antagonism do provide an opportunity to evaluate the relative explanatory power of the ideal worker and breadwinner stories. The key is to identify a scenario where the two narratives might yield conflicting predictions. One example is the presence of job insecurity. On the one hand, job insecurity diminishes the incentive for union members to invest in specific human capital, such as industry or firm-specific skills, since there are fewer opportunities to reap the benefits of training through long-term employment relationships (Estevez-Abe, 2006). In the ideal worker narrative, this reduced commitment to skill development should weaken the justification for excluding women from employment. Consequently, union members may show less hostility and greater support for women's right to work in environments characterized by low levels of job security.

On the other hand, if job insecurity is intensified by worsened labor market conditions, it may reinforce gender antagonism expressed in the breadwinner narrative. For male union members,

losing a job poses a direct threat to their identity as providers. If men perceive that women are occupying jobs they could fill themselves, it could give rise to resentment or even violence towards female workers (Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; McLaughlin et al., 2012). Similarly, when labor market conditions deteriorate, female union members are more likely to feel compelled to leave the workforce and prioritize family responsibilities, not only driven by reduced economic returns to work (Chiappori et al., 2022), but also a resurgence of traditional values during hard times (Duncan et al., 1997; Rodgers et al., 2005; Sales, 1972). Consequently, union members may become less egalitarian towards women's right to work in the presence of job insecurity.

These contrasting predictions motivate my analysis of union members' gender attitudes in relation to job insecurity. For this purpose, I use extended unemployment experience (i.e., previously being unemployed for more than three months) as a proxy for job insecurity. This variable is only available in the EVS-4, but it offers a distinct advantage because it was measured during a period of crisis. This timing increases the exogeneity of the variable, ensuring that it was not simply that workers with more conservative work ideologies self-selected into extended unemployment. However, it is possible that extended unemployment may influence union members' gender attitudes through other mechanisms that do not necessarily involve work ideologies. For instance, psychological research on in-group/out-group bias indicates that equality is less tolerated when resources are scarce (Cui et al., 2023).

To assess this alternative explanation, I estimate the coefficients of union membership on attitudes towards women's right to work under conditions of job security and insecurity, separately for male and female workers. The reason is that the theory of in-group/out-group bias posits an asymmetrical relationship, where bias originates from the in-group and is directed towards the out-group. Consequently, if in-group/out-group bias is the underlying mechanism, in the presence of job insecurity, one would expect male union members to experience a much more severe decline in egalitarian gender attitudes than female union members (i.e., men as insiders vs. women as outsiders). In other words, the difference in the OLS coefficients of union membership under conditions of job security and insecurity should be larger in the male sample than that in the female sample.

**Table 8** present the results of this analysis for both the Western Europe sample and the full sample. Focus on the top panel of 16 Western European countries first. Column 1 indicates that

for male workers who do not have extended unemployment experience, the coefficient of union membership is positive and statistically significant ( $b = 0.042$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ), suggesting more egalitarian gender attitudes than otherwise similar non-members. In addition, column 2 indicates that for male workers with extended unemployment experience, the coefficient of union membership is even more positive although statistically insignificant, possibly due to the relatively small sample size ( $b = 0.094$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). These results thus provide some support for the ideal worker ideology among male union members in Western Europe, corroborating findings from previous research that suggest the ideal worker ideology remains relevant even in affluent democracies (Leslie et al., 2012; Manchester et al., 2013).

The results for female workers in Western Europe, however, suggests a rather different picture. Specifically, column 3 in the top panel of Table 8 shows that female union members without extended unemployment experience do not hold more egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work, compared to otherwise similar female non-members ( $b = 0.015$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). This may not be too surprising given the earlier discussion on gender heterogeneity. However, column 4 in the same panel indicates that among workers with extended unemployment experience, female union members show much less egalitarian gender attitudes than female non-members ( $b = -0.188$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )—a finding that is consistent with the prediction of the breadwinner ideology.

To further rule out the in-group/out-group bias as an alternative explanation, the bottom panel of Table 8 extends this analysis to the full sample, under the assumption that the breadwinner ideology overtakes the ideal worker ideology in prominence when including less developed European countries (Goldin, 1994). Columns 1 and 3 indicate that for both male and female workers, union members without extended unemployment experience show more egalitarian gender attitudes than otherwise similar non-members, albeit not all differences are statistically significant (for males,  $b = 0.050$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; for females,  $b = 0.035$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). By contrast, columns 2 and 4 suggest that for both genders, union members with extended unemployment experience do not exhibit more egalitarian gender attitudes than non-members (for males,  $b = -0.003$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ; for females,  $b = -0.073$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). Most importantly, the drop in the magnitude of the union membership coefficient is much larger in the female sample than in the male sample ( $\Delta b_{Union}^{Male} = 0.053 < \Delta b_{Union}^{Female} = 0.108$ ). This result goes against the theory of in-group/out-group bias, which would predict a larger drop in the male sample than in the female sample.

Overall, the above analysis demonstrates the importance of both the ideal worker and breadwinner ideologies in shaping union members' gender attitudes. Yet it seems that the breadwinner ideology is the more dominant mechanism given its effect size, statistical significance, and widespread occurrence across countries. Perhaps most evidently, the earlier analysis of country heterogeneity—especially column 3 of [Table 6](#)—clearly shows that during the crisis, union members in many countries held less egalitarian gender attitudes compared to non-members, rather than adopting a more egalitarian mindset to foster solidarity in hard times.

## 4.2 Populist Uprisings and the Vanished Gender Attitude Gap

A remaining puzzle, however, is why union members are no longer more supportive of women's right to work than non-members as of 2020. Despite the lack of a definitive clue, the observation that union members exhibit less egalitarian gender attitudes when feeling insecure implies a link to the entrenchment of neoliberalism. At a very general level, the advancement of neoliberalism represents a gradual expansion of market relations both within and across political economies (Streeck & Thelen, 2009). During this process, the traditional goal of democratic capitalism to provide social protection, exemplified by measures to exempt industries from market pressure and secure employment with decent pay, has been supplanted by new objectives to enhance national competitiveness in an increasingly integrated global economy (Streeck, 2017a). Policies and reforms have been carried out to sweep out barriers to privatization and marketization, with the belief that “human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

That being said, the catastrophic financial crisis in 2008 has significantly weakened the credibility of neoliberalism as an economic doctrine, leaving many governors of global capitalism struggling for alternatives (Streeck, 2017b). Ironically, rather than reforming the neoliberal model, Western policymakers have used the crisis to “impose an even more radical neoliberal regime and to push through policies designed to suit the financial sector and the wealthy, at the expense of everyone else” (Mitchell & Fazi, 2017, p. 1). The EU's implementation of austerity policies on member states and the bailout of failing banks are clear examples (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018). Amidst this renewed phase of liberalization, many citizens feel increasingly abandoned and inse-

cure, gradually developing a sense of grievance, especially among male manufacturing workers who have been mostly impacted by the crisis (Bettio et al., 2013).

The decline in economic security, coupled with a cultural transformation fueled by the mobilization of women, racial minorities, and immigrants, has further threatened the dominant status of white males in Western societies (Gidron & Hall, 2017). Globalization and European integration, however, have continued to prioritize the interests of business communities while limiting the regulatory autonomy of national states (Schulze-Cleven, 2018). With little confidence in political institutions' willingness and ability to respond to citizens' needs, radical right-wing populism emerges as a symptom of growing dissatisfaction with democracy (Berman, 2019). The election of Donald Trump represents one of the most dramatic populist uprisings, along with other political events such as the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, the rejection of the Renzi reforms in Italy, and the increasing support for the National Front in France (Brenner & Fraser, 2017).

In many instances, the populist right rally behind traditional gender values, which arises not only from a sincere longing for the "good old days," but also for strategic coalition building with other conservative groups (Sauer, 2020; Smeekes et al., 2021). It is thus no coincidence that the 2016 presidential election in the United States has been found to be the only one in which hostile sexism played a significant electoral role (Ratliff et al., 2019; Valentino et al., 2018), together with the observation that a notable number of white, male union members cast their votes for Donald Trump (Devinatz, 2017). Similarly, in Europe, the populist right have targeted the rights of women and sexual minorities, dismantling gender equality institutions and even criminalizing feminist movements (for country-specific examples, see Cabezas, 2022; Darakchi, 2024; Gera, 2023; Gwiazda, 2021; Lombardo et al., 2021; Möser, 2020; Trappolin, 2022).

Given this broad context, the vanished union-nonunion gender attitude gap might be attributed to the increasing influence of right-wing populism: In a grievance-laden age of liberalization, the dramatic uprisings of the populist right may have reignited the intolerance towards women's work that was once salient in the history of organized labor. To examine this possibility, **Figure 3** plots the ideology distribution of respondents in the EVS 3-5 by union membership and gender. I focus on the full sample first, as my previous analysis indicates that the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap is not confined to Western Europe. As expected, the figure shows a notable increase in the percentage of workers endorsing right-wing ideologies over time, particularly among male



union members.

To formally assess the impact of right-wing populism on union members' gender attitudes, I re-analyze the EVS-5 data by including an interaction term between union membership and the left-right political scale as the predictor. Statistically, if the populist influence hypothesis is true, one would expect union members with right-wing ideologies to exhibit less egalitarian attitudes towards women's right to work on average. However, my empirical results do not support this prediction. The estimated OLS coefficient of union membership, controlling for all covariates and country effects, is of negligible size and does not reach any conventional significance level ( $b = -0.003, p > 0.1$ ).

How can one make sense of this null result? A further reading of the literature suggests that there may be a gendered aspect of the populist influence. While the entrenchment of neoliberalism has crushed men's aspirations and paved the way for populism, the same process has empowered women's economic and political participation. As Fraser (2013) notes, the contest over identity politics within the second-wave feminist movement dovetails with the rise of neoliberalism, which prioritizes overt individualism, self-interest, and negative liberty (e.g., no interference with individual freedom and rights, including those of women's). While skeptical of the true merit of these values, Fraser acknowledges that neoliberalism has (uncritically) facilitated women's emancipation by forging an alliance of social actors who all proclaim their credentials by advocating for diversity, multiculturalism, and women's rights (Brenner & Fraser, 2017). Consequently, Fraser uses the paradoxical term "progressive neoliberalism" to describe this phenomenon.

While the populist right have invoked traditional gender values to mobilize male votes, this approach faces challenges in garnering support from females. In the end, the same politicians have ironically decided to resort to progressive gender values to mobilize female votes. As Farris (2017) and Morgan (2017) indicate, the populist right have strategically deploys "women's rights" to cultivate resentment against non-Western and Muslim immigrants. To co-opt female voters, radical right populist leaders have accused immigrants of violating commonly accepted liberal gender values such as women's rights to dress, to travel, and to work. As long as this gendered aspect of right-wing populism is considered, one would anticipate that female union members on the ideological right may not experience a significant decline in egalitarian gender attitudes as their male counterparts. This hypothesis can be empirically tested by including a three-way

interaction between union membership, gender, and the left-right political scale. For the purpose of comparison, I estimate this specification for both the EVS 3-4 and EVS-5 data.

What does the regression analysis say about the three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and the left-right political scale? In the EVS 3-4, the three-way interaction is positive, small in magnitude, and not statistically significant ( $b = 0.002$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). By contrast, in the EVS-5, the three-way interaction is positive and statistically significant ( $b = 0.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). To further understand this dynamics, I plot the predicted values of attitudes towards women's right to work in [Figure 4](#). It is evident that during the late 1990s and 2010, right-wing ideologies leads to less egalitarian gender attitudes (the left panel). In addition, the negative effects of right-wing ideologies on gender attitudes are largely homogeneous across different groups of workers, regardless of their union membership status and gender.

However, [Figure 4](#) suggests a rather different picture for the period between 2017 and 2020 (the right panel). Two findings are worth noting. First, male union members on the ideological right in the EVS-5 exhibit much less egalitarian gender attitudes than in the EVS 3-4. While female union members on the ideological right in the EVS-5 also show less egalitarian gender attitudes than before, the magnitude of change is much smaller than that among male union members. This pattern is consistent with the gendered influence of right-wing populism discussed earlier, such that the populist right invoke conservative and progressive gender values to mobilize male and female union members, respectively.

Second, there is an unexpected but significant decline in left-wing female union members' egalitarian gender attitudes. One possibility is that females on the ideological left tend to reject the kind of gender equality promoted by the radical right, which is often framed in a neoliberal sense and used against non-Western immigrants. Consequently, the populist right have to adopt a different strategy to suppress dissent from females on the left, such as direct assaults or even criminalization of the feminist movements (Cabezas, [2022](#); Darakchi, [2024](#)). The silencing effect of these attacks may be more pronounced among female union members than non-members, because union members are more likely to engage in political activities and experience the backlash in person (Budd et al., [2018](#)).

As a final check, [Table A3](#) presents the results of several robustness tests. Columns 1 and 2 indicate that the above pattern still holds when limiting the sample to the 13 European countries

that are consistently present in the EVS. Moreover, columns 3-5 show that in Western Europe, the three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and the left-right scale is only positive and statistically significant among low-income respondents in the EVS-5. This finding is robust, as column 6 indicates, when further restricting the sample to the 6 Western European countries that are consistently surveyed. Together, the analysis suggests that the interplay between labor, gender, and right-wing politics is relatively universal in Eastern and Southern Europe. In Western Europe, the impact is predominantly observed among individuals with an income below the fifth step, which likely coincides with a large portion of the working class.

A synthesis can finally be formulated to explain the vanished union-nonunion gender attitude gap in recent years. The entrenchment of neoliberalism, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, has contributed to a surge of male union members who are dissatisfied with their status quo and disappointed by the incumbent political institutions. This grievance has led to the rise of right-wing populism, which often invokes conservative gender values—such as the breadwinner ideology—to mobilize male votes. Ironically, female union members on the ideological right do not experience the same retreat in gender attitudes, as the populist right have strategically deployed women’s rights against non-Western immigrants in order to attract female voters. However, this co-optation is often rejected by females on the left, leading to harsh attacks from conservative groups. Compared to otherwise similar non-members, left-wing female union members may be silenced to a greater extent, as active political participation increases their vulnerability. Consequently, by the end of 2020, the union-nonunion gender attitude gap had vanished due to the complex interplay between gender, labor, and politics.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx (1988) famously asserts the “*estrangement of man from man*” under commodity production (p. 78). Given the intertwined relationship between labor and gender, this declaration may be re-phrased as the “*estrangement of man from woman*”. Men and women are alienated from each other, because work—once an essential feature of human existence—has been construed as an exclusive sphere for men, with women being denied the equal access and right to work. It is this narrowed and masculinized

understanding of work that has catalyzed gender antagonism in early trade unionism. While trade unions as an organization have been increasingly promoting gender equality in the workplace, it remains unclear whether individual members have changed their attitudes towards women's work over time.

The present paper answers this question by analyzing data on more than 25,000 workers in 16 Western European countries, covering the years from 1990 to 2020. The results suggest a complex picture. Specifically, in the early 1990s, union members did not differ significantly from non-members in their gender attitudes. Since the late 1990s, unions members demonstrated more egalitarian gender attitudes. However, by 2020, this union-nonunion gender attitude gap appeared to have vanished. Moreover, this intricate pattern is not driven by changes in country composition in the data, by a single country experiencing a temporal shock, or by workers of a particular gender. Even more surprisingly, the same time trend persists when further including workers from 26 Eastern and Southern European countries into the analysis.

While the positive change in the early period can be attributed to union efforts to promote gender equality, the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap in more recent years has not been anticipated. To better understand this unexpected shift, I first test the relative explanatory power of two underlying mechanisms that influence union members' gender attitudes: the ideal worker ideology and the breadwinner ideology. Although both theories find some support, the breadwinner ideology seems to be the dominant one, as union members tend to hold less egalitarian gender attitudes in the presence of economic insecurity.

This finding helps build a potential connection between the vanished union-nonunion attitude gap and the entrenchment of neoliberalism. It is thus hypothesized that populism, which reflects a broad dissatisfaction with democracy in the neoliberal era, has reduced egalitarian gender attitudes among right-wing union members. Nevertheless, this prediction is not supported by the data. Drawing on the insights from feminist studies and European politics, I further incorporate a gendered aspect of the populist influence, hypothesizing that female union members on the ideological right may not experience the same retreat in gender parity as their male counterparts. The empirical results are largely consistent with this view but further suggest a silencing effect on left-wing female union members.

Altogether, the thirty-year trend in union members' attitudes towards women's right to work

reflects complex dynamics between gender, labor, and politics in Europe. While unions have asserted their position on gender equality, individual members seem to take more faltering steps towards an egalitarian gender mindset. Future research could build upon my analysis by providing more qualitative evidence and investigating country-specific patterns. Meanwhile, trade union leaders might consider paying more attention to their members' gender attitudes, taking into account the roots of these gender values, and carefully monitoring the changing economic and political landscape in relation to gender equality.

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Table 1: Sample Distribution, EVS 2-5

	EVS-2 1990-1993	EVS-3 1999-2001	EVS-4 2008-2010	EVS-5 2017-2020	Total
<i>Panel A. Western Europe</i>					
<b>Austria</b>	481	478	490	645	2094
Belgium	551	554	673		1778
<b>Denmark</b>	488	469	598	840	2395
Finland		317	445	394	1156
<b>France</b>	270	503	666	624	2063
<b>Germany</b>	1668	460	658	838	3624
Iceland		499		868	1367
Ireland	377	300	65		742
<b>Italy</b>	552	486	281	459	1778
Luxembourg		242	561		803
Netherlands	369	500	587		1456
Norway	594		600	633	1827
Portugal	484		280		764
<b>Spain</b>	710	233	364	350	1657
Sweden			383	492	875
UK	678	400	281		1359
Total	7222	5441	6932	6143	25738
<i>Panel B. Eastern and Southern Europe</i>					
Albania			184	192	376
Azerbaijan				305	305
Armenia			326	533	859
Bosnia and Herzegovina			189	383	572
<b>Bulgaria</b>	451	300	347	341	1439
Belarus		340	465	506	1311
Croatia		333	331	442	1106
Cyprus			280		280
Northern Cyprus			101		101
<b>Czech Republic</b>	1060	730	477	425	2692
Estonia		319	560	381	1260
Georgia			215	363	578
Greece		344	303		647
<b>Hungary</b>	391	297	554	494	1736
Latvia		287	448		735
Lithuania		289	413	461	1163
Malta		312	127		439
Moldova			273		273
Montenegro			256	101	357
<b>Poland</b>	361	354	353	406	1474
<b>Romania</b>	450	241	227	273	1191
Russia		793	401	522	1716
Serbia			235	409	644
<b>Slovakia</b>	418	571	310	352	1651
<b>Slovenia</b>	334	284	277	324	1219
Turkey			137		137
Ukraine		324	337	484	1145
North Macedonia			290	233	523
Kosovo			153		153
Total	3465	6118	8569	7930	26082

NOTES: The sample includes respondents who were employed and aged 18-70 years old in the EVS 2-5. Panel A shows the distribution of respondents in 16 Western European countries (i.e., main sample). Panel B shows the distribution in 29 Eastern and Southern European countries (i.e., extended sample). In the full sample, 13 countries highlighted in bold are represented in all four waves of the EVS, including Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

Table 2: Means of Variables, EVS 2-5 (Western Europe)

	Main Sample	Union Members	Non-Members
Attitudes towards Women's Right to Work	2.668	2.773	2.619
Union member	0.318		
Female	0.437	0.439	0.437
Age	40.188	42.156	39.271
Left-right scale (1 = left, 10 = right)	5.197	5.103	5.241
Importance of religion (4-point scale)	2.184	2.118	2.215
Full-time job	0.858	0.899	0.838
Having children	0.660	0.726	0.629
<i>Education Level</i>			
No elementary education	0.022	0.010	0.028
Elementary education	0.384	0.321	0.414
Secondary education	0.418	0.475	0.391
Higher education	0.176	0.194	0.167
<i>Income Decile</i>			
Lowest step	0.026	0.018	0.030
Second step	0.052	0.038	0.059
Third step	0.090	0.075	0.097
Fourth step	0.115	0.098	0.122
Fifth step	0.123	0.121	0.125
Sixth step	0.144	0.158	0.138
Seventh step	0.149	0.166	0.141
Eighth step	0.120	0.125	0.118
Ninth step	0.086	0.100	0.080
Tenth step	0.093	0.102	0.089
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Single, never married	0.296	0.249	0.317
Married or cohabitation	0.601	0.648	0.580
Divorced, separated, or widow	0.103	0.102	0.103
<i>Size of Town</i>			
Under 5,000	0.212	0.207	0.215
5,000-20,000	0.230	0.243	0.224
20,000-100,000	0.262	0.275	0.256
100,000-500,000	0.170	0.180	0.165
500,000 and more	0.126	0.095	0.140
Citizen	0.947	0.970	0.935
Supervisor	0.327	0.340	0.320
Extended unemployment	0.128	0.098	0.143
Observations	25738	8318	17420

NOTES: The table reports means of variables for respondents in the main sample (i.e., 16 Western European countries) and by union membership. *Attitudes towards women's right to work* is based on respondents' agreement with the statement that "men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce," wherein 1 = agree (less gender parity), 2 = neither agree nor disagree, and 3 = disagree (more gender parity). *Union member* is a dummy variable indicating union membership status (0 = no, 1 = yes). *Citizen* and *supervisor* are only available in EVS 3-5. *Extended unemployment* is a dummy variable, which is only available in EVS-4, indicating whether the respondent had previously experienced unemployment for more than three months. The remaining variables are available in all waves. In addition, information on occupations are available in EVS 3-5. Results are weighted using the EVS weights.

Table 3: OLS Regression of Gender Attitudes on Union Membership, EVS 2-5

	Attitudes towards Women's Right to Work (1-3)			
	Western Europe (1)	Western Europe (2)	Western Europe (3)	European Region (4)
Union member	0.154*** (0.030)	0.115*** (0.023)	0.018* (0.011)	0.019* (0.010)
Female		0.145*** (0.018)	0.136*** (0.018)	0.200*** (0.014)
Age		-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.000)
Left-right scale		-0.015*** (0.005)	-0.021*** (0.005)	-0.012*** (0.003)
Importance of religion		-0.045*** (0.010)	-0.035*** (0.006)	-0.043*** (0.005)
Full-time job		0.006 (0.016)	0.009 (0.016)	0.009 (0.015)
Having children		-0.004 (0.015)	-0.027* (0.014)	-0.013 (0.012)
<i>Education Level</i>				
Elementary education		0.089 (0.081)	0.087 (0.065)	0.124** (0.058)
Secondary education		0.270*** (0.082)	0.232*** (0.065)	0.245*** (0.057)
Higher education		0.330*** (0.077)	0.294*** (0.066)	0.363*** (0.057)
<i>Income Decile</i>				
Second step		0.014 (0.039)	0.043 (0.036)	0.044 (0.032)
Third step		-0.041 (0.039)	-0.001 (0.040)	0.034 (0.030)
Fourth step		-0.006 (0.044)	0.037 (0.043)	0.044 (0.032)
Fifth step		0.030 (0.043)	0.058 (0.041)	0.059** (0.030)
Sixth step		0.082* (0.044)	0.095** (0.041)	0.101*** (0.031)
Seventh step		0.085* (0.046)	0.095** (0.043)	0.092*** (0.031)
Eighth step		0.110** (0.049)	0.130*** (0.046)	0.116*** (0.032)
Ninth step		0.121** (0.049)	0.131*** (0.045)	0.133*** (0.032)
Tenth step		0.152*** (0.052)	0.157*** (0.047)	0.164*** (0.032)
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Married or cohabitation		-0.039*** (0.012)	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.032*** (0.012)

Divorced, separated, or widow		0.039** (0.019)	0.053*** (0.017)	0.035** (0.016)
<i>Size of Town</i>				
5,000-20,000		0.050** (0.022)	0.040** (0.017)	0.031** (0.014)
20,000-100,000		0.040* (0.024)	0.018 (0.015)	0.031** (0.013)
100,000-500,000		0.094*** (0.030)	0.054** (0.023)	0.035* (0.021)
500,000 and more		0.053* (0.030)	0.052** (0.022)	0.080*** (0.016)
Wave Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	25738	25738	25738	51820
R-squared	0.011	0.123	0.156	0.167

NOTES: The table presents the OLS regression results of *attitudes towards women's right to work* on union membership and other covariates. Column 1-3 reports the estimated coefficients using the main sample (i.e., 16 Western European countries). Column 4 reports the estimated coefficients using the full sample, further including 29 Eastern and Southern European countries into the analysis. Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.



Table 4: Estimated Coefficients of Union Membership, by Wave (Western Europe)

	Attitudes towards Women's Right to Work (1-3)			
	EVS-2: 1990-1993 (1)	EVS-3: 1999-2001 (2)	EVS-4: 2008-2010 (3)	EVS-5: 2017-2020 (4)
No Controls	0.106* (0.057)	0.169*** (0.036)	0.153*** (0.035)	0.130*** (0.032)
Full Controls	0.083** (0.041)	0.172*** (0.034)	0.117*** (0.024)	0.091*** (0.027)
Country Effects	<b>0.014</b> <b>(0.030)</b>	0.037** (0.016)	0.025* (0.015)	0.001 (0.016)
Occupation Effects		<b>0.034**</b> <b>(0.015)</b>	<b>0.025*</b> <b>(0.015)</b>	<b>0.004</b> <b>(0.016)</b>
Mean of Dep. Var.	2.438	2.641	2.777	2.837
Diff: Female - Male	0.243	0.036	0.096	0.084
Diff: High Educ - Sec Educ	0.057	0.036	-0.018	0.047
Diff: Ten Years Older	-0.075	-0.044	-0.034	-0.010
Observations	7222	5441	6932	6143
R-squared	0.148	0.143	0.149	0.143

NOTES: The top panel of the table reports the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes in the main sample (i.e., 16 Western European countries). Each cell is an OLS coefficient of *union member* on *attitudes towards women's right to work* estimated from the specification indicated by the row. Covariates are included in an additive manner. Models are estimated using the EVS weights. Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported are in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. The bottom panel reports the raw means of the gender attitudes variable, as well as the differences in conditional means between (1) females and males, (2) those who completed higher education and those who completed secondary education, and (3) those who were ten years older.

Table 5: Testing the Country Composition Effect, EVS 2-5

	EVS-2 (1)	EVS-3 (2)	EVS-4 (3)	EVS-5 (4)
<i>Panel A. Western Europe, 6 Countries</i>				
Union member	-0.022 (0.044)	0.025 (0.027)	0.051* (0.029)	-0.004 (0.026)
Observations	4169	2628	3056	3755
R-squared	0.156	0.167	0.159	0.149
<i>Panel B. European Region, 13 Countries</i>				
Union member	-0.027 (0.024)	0.056** (0.021)	0.050** (0.021)	-0.007 (0.028)
Observations	7634	5406	5602	6371
R-squared	0.144	0.125	0.148	0.241
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

NOTES: Panel A presents the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes, by EVS wave, in 6 Western European countries that are consistently represented in the survey over time: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Panel B repeats the analysis by including another 7 Eastern and Southern European countries that are consistently surveyed: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. Results are identical when using wild bootstrap clustered standard errors to adjust for the small number of clusters. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table 6: Insepecting Country Heterogeneity, EVS 2-5 (Western Europe)

	EVS-2 (1)	EVS-3 (2)	EVS-4 (3)	EVS-5 (4)
<i>Panel A - Baseline: Germany</i>				
Union member	-0.063*** (0.018)	0.048 (0.031)	0.091* (0.047)	0.016 (0.044)
<i>Interaction: Union member × ...</i>				
Austria	0.162 (0.158)	0.033 (0.047)	-0.215*** (0.044)	-0.204** (0.104)
Belgium	0.145*** (0.026)	-0.039 (0.058)	0.006 (0.048)	
Denmark	0.069 (0.049)	-0.021 (0.033)	-0.074* (0.043)	0.019 (0.054)
Finland		0.018 (0.055)	-0.136*** (0.050)	-0.076 (0.054)
France	0.154* (0.079)	-0.077 (0.085)	-0.020 (0.055)	-0.019 (0.073)
Iceland		0.011 (0.056)		-0.002 (0.052)
Ireland	0.053 (0.046)	-0.050 (0.060)	-0.424** (0.203)	
Italy	0.084 (0.181)	0.011 (0.127)	0.088 (0.076)	0.059 (0.219)
Luxembourg		0.156 (0.129)	-0.042 (0.052)	
Netherlands	0.231*** (0.055)	-0.043 (0.038)	-0.102** (0.048)	
Norway	0.037 (0.033)		-0.114** (0.046)	-0.026 (0.054)
Portugal	0.460*** (0.136)		0.080 (0.164)	
Spain	-0.185 (0.125)	-0.136 (0.089)	0.040 (0.169)	0.165*** (0.059)
Sweden			-0.070 (0.045)	0.058 (0.059)
UK	0.054 (0.036)	-0.098** (0.046)	-0.011 (0.057)	
<i>Panel B - Restricted Sample</i>				
Union member	-0.020 (0.031)	0.038* (0.017)	0.078** (0.023)	0.012 (0.013)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

NOTES: Panel A reports the OLS regression results, by EVS wave, in which union membership is interacted with dummy indicators for Western European countries, with Germany serving as the baseline. Panel B shows the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes, leaving out any country that shows a statistically significant interaction term in each corresponding wave (e.g., column 1 excludes Belgium, France, Netherlands, and Portugal). Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table 7: Examining Gender Heterogeneity, EVS 2-5

	EVS-2		EVS-3		EVS-4		EVS-5	
	Female (1)	Male (2)	Female (3)	Male (4)	Female (5)	Male (6)	Female (7)	Male (8)
<i>Western Europe: 16 Countries</i>								
Union member	0.023 (0.031)	0.005 (0.036)	0.013 (0.024)	0.051** (0.022)	-0.002 (0.026)	0.057** (0.025)	-0.010 (0.013)	0.019 (0.027)
Observations	3004	4218	2436	3005	3399	3533	3111	3032
R-squared	0.150	0.132	0.159	0.150	0.115	0.194	0.105	0.192
<i>European Region: 45 Countries</i>								
Union member	0.0002 (0.026)	-0.008 (0.025)	0.052** (0.026)	0.047** (0.021)	0.021 (0.021)	0.049** (0.023)	-0.034 (0.022)	0.008 (0.027)
Observations	4482	6205	5341	6218	7631	7870	7223	6850
R-squared	0.168	0.142	0.125	0.132	0.136	0.182	0.233	0.311
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

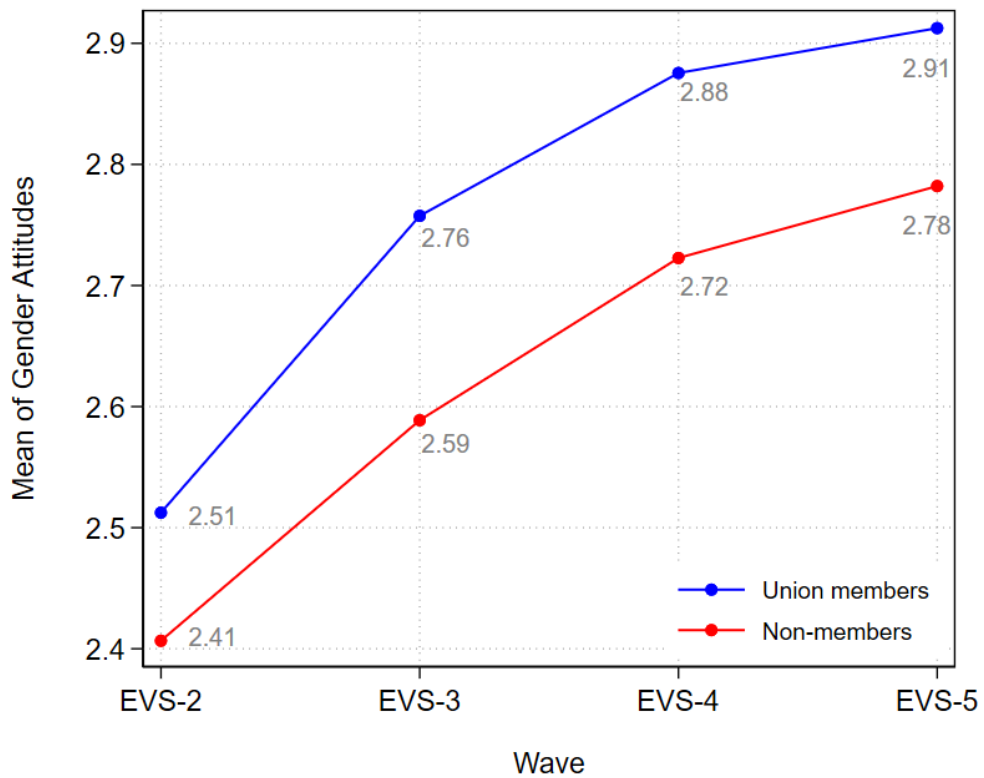
NOTES: The table shows the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes for females and males in each wave. The analysis is performed for both the main sample (i.e., 16 countries in Western Europe) and the full sample (i.e., additionally including 29 countries in Eastern and Southern Europe). Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table 8: Ideal Worker or Breadwinner, EVS-4

	Male Sample		Female Sample	
	No Extended Unemployment (1)	Extended Unemployment (2)	No Extended Unemployment (3)	Extended Unemployment (4)
<i>Western Europe: 16 Countries</i>				
Union member	0.042* (0.025)	0.094 (0.070)	0.015 (0.025)	-0.188** (0.078)
Observations	3101	432	2979	420
R-squared	0.214	0.290	0.125	0.231
<i>European Region: 45 Countries</i>				
Union member	0.050** (0.022)	-0.003 (0.067)	0.035 (0.022)	-0.073 (0.079)
Observations	6460	1410	6375	1256
R-squared	0.187	0.233	0.137	0.219
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

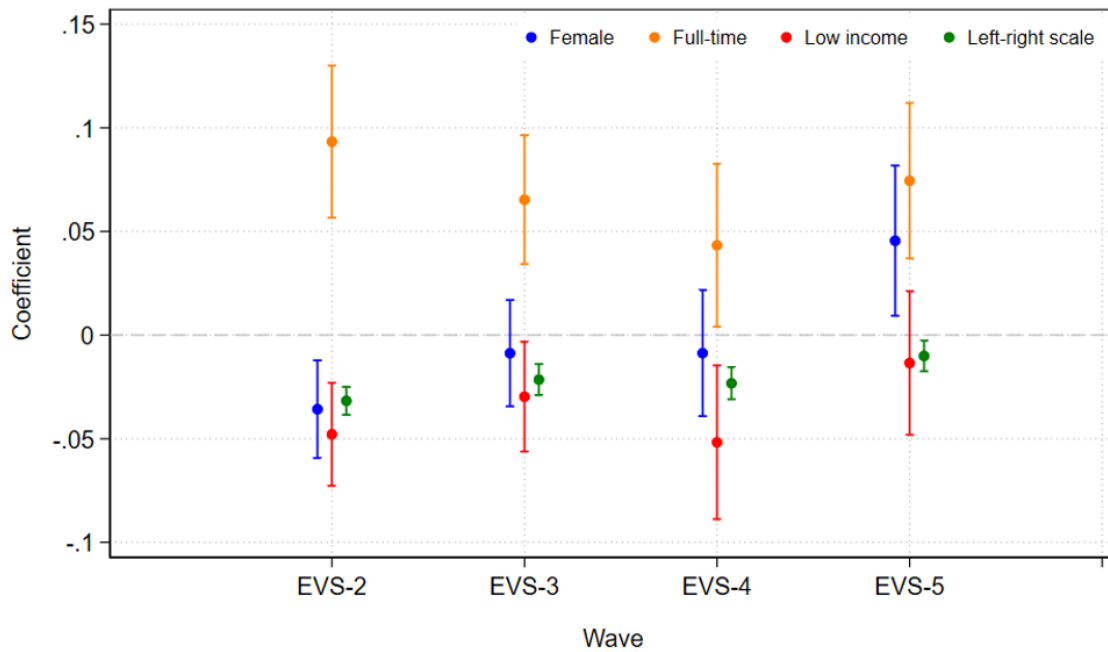
NOTES: The table reports the OLS coefficients of union membership on gender attitudes for respondents who had and had not experienced extended unemployment (i.e., longer than three months) in the EVS. The analysis is performed for males and females separately, using both the main sample (i.e., 16 countries in Western Europe) and the full sample (i.e., additionally including 29 countries in Eastern and Southern Europe). Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Figure 1: Trend in Gender Attitudes, EVS 2-5 (Western Europe)



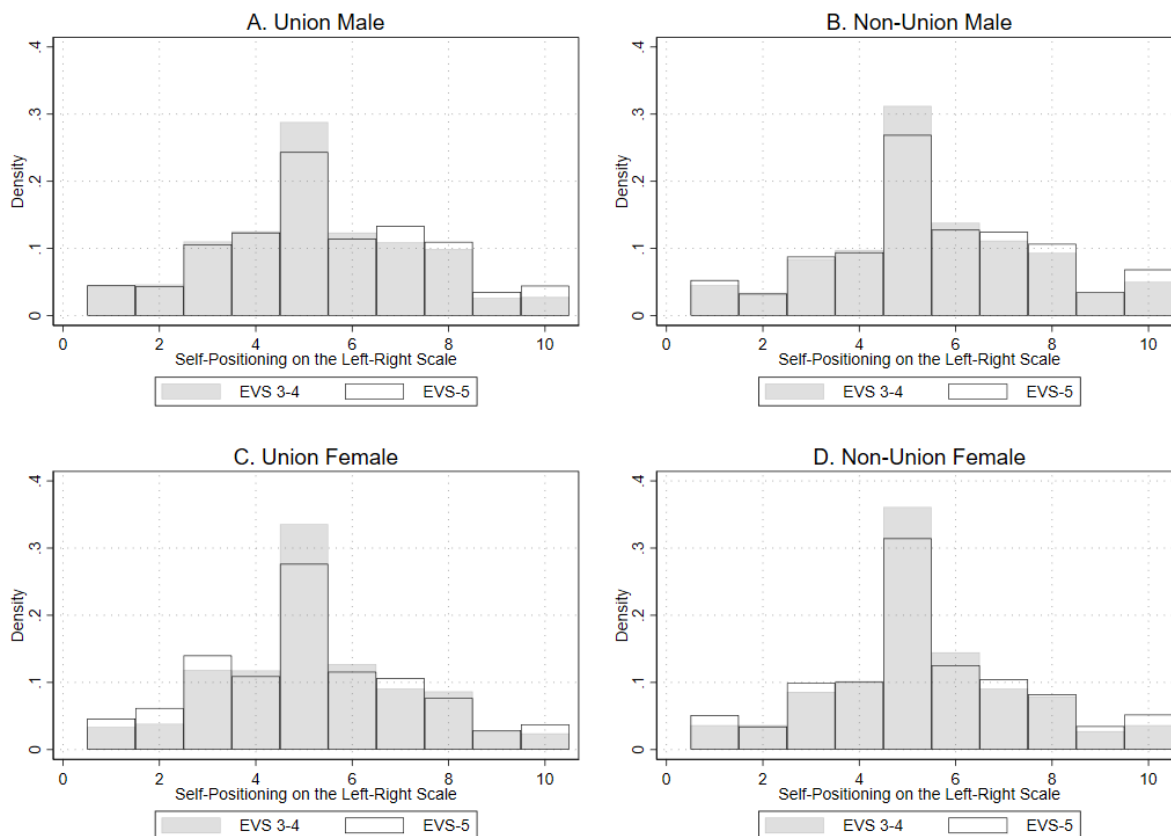
NOTES: The figure plots the raw means of attitudes towards women's right to work in the main sample (i.e., 16 Western European countries). The red line indicates the evolution of gender attitudes among non-members, while the blue line indicates that among union members. The four waves represent periods 1990-1993, 1999-2001, 2008-2010, and 2017-2020, respectively. Results are weighted using the EVS weights.

Figure 2: Selection into Union Membership, EVS 2-5 (Western Europe)



NOTES: The figure plots several selected OLS coefficients from regression of union membership on demographic and socioeconomic variables, controlling for country effects and by EVS wave (i.e., periods 1990-1993, 1999-2001, 2008-2010, and 2017-2020). The blue dots represent the estimated coefficients of female (0 = no, 1 = yes), the orange dots represent the estimated coefficients of full-time work (0 = no, 1 = yes), the red dots represent the estimated coefficients of low income (i.e., falling in the three lowest income deciles), and the green dots represent the estimated coefficients of self-positioning on the left-right scale (1 = left, 10 = right). The bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals calculated from heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Results are weighted by the EVS weights.

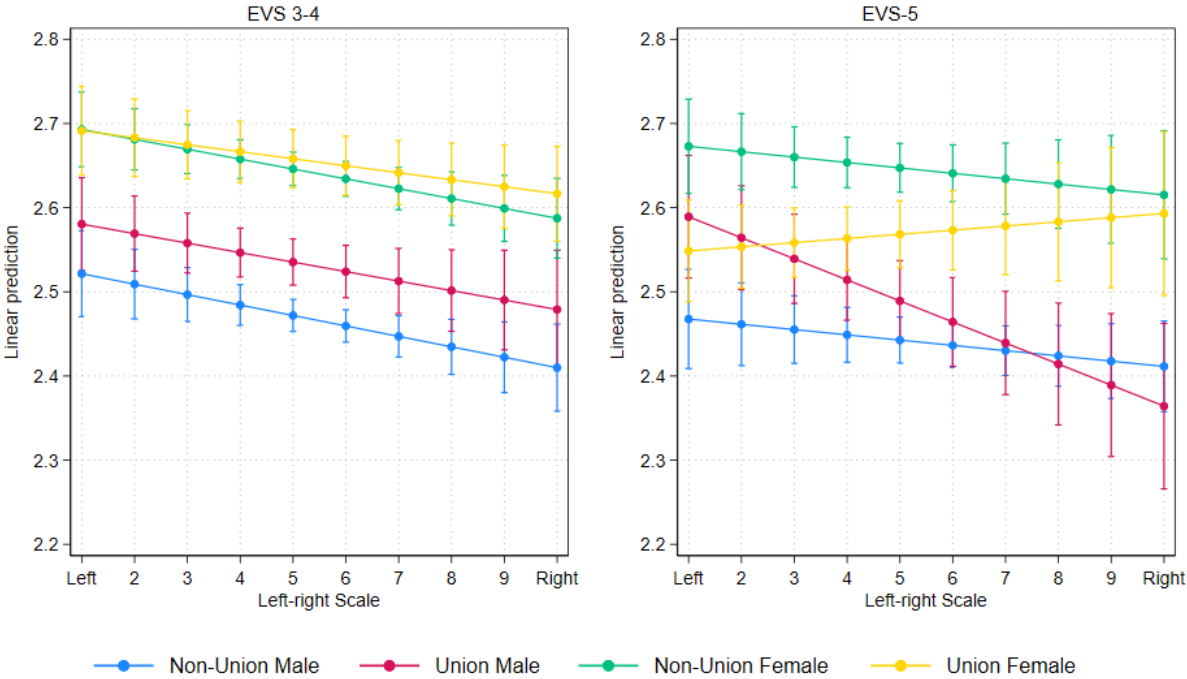
Figure 3: Ideology Distribution by Union Membership, Gender, and Wave (Full Sample)



NOTES: The figure plots the ideology distributions of union members and non-members by wave and gender. The sample includes respondents from all 16 countries in Western Europe and 29 countries in Eastern and Southern Europe. Panels A, B, C, and D present the distribution for male union members, male non-members, female union members, and female non-members, respectively. The horizontal axis is respondents' self-positioning on the left-right scale, measured on a 10-point scale (1 = far left, 10 = far right). The vertical axis is density. The shaded bars represent the results from the EVS 3-4, and the white bars represent the results from the EVS-5.



Figure 4: Interaction between Union Membership, Gender, and Ideology, EVS 3-5 (Full Sample)



NOTES: The figure plots the predicted values of gender attitudes, by EVS wave, from the OLS regression that includes a three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and self-positioning on the left-right scale in the full sample. All covariates are included and country effects (or country-wave effects in the pooled EVS 3-4 sample) are controlled. The bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals constructed from clustered standard errors. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table A1: OLS Regression of Alternative Measures of Gender Attitudes on Union Membership (Western Europe)

	Belong to Women's Groups (1)	Volunteer for Women's Groups (2)	Women Want Home and Children (3)	Being a Housewife is Fulfilling (4)	Job Leads to Independence (5)	Men Make Better Business Executives (6)	Men Make Better Political Leaders (7)
Union member	0.021*** (0.005)	0.007** (0.003)	0.049*** (0.017)	0.008 (0.026)	0.034* (0.019)	0.050** (0.019)	0.030 (0.026)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Observations	12365	11460	16759	10530	11122	6079	6080
R-squared	0.040	0.017	0.180	0.083	0.139	0.124	0.132
Availability	EVS 3-4	EVS 3-4	EVS 3-5	EVS 3-4	EVS 3-4	EVS-5	EVS-5

NOTES: The table reports the coefficients of union membership on alternative measures of gender attitudes for respondents in 16 Western European countries. The dependent variables are (1) belonging to women's groups (0 = no, 1 = yes), (2) volunteering for women's groups (0 = no, 1 = yes), (3) women wanting a home and children (1 = agree strongly, 4 = disagree strongly), (4) being a housewife is fulfilling (1 = agree strongly, 4 = disagree strongly), (5) job as the best way for women to be independent (1 = disagree strongly, 4 = agree strongly), (6) men making better business executives than women (1 = agree strongly, 4 = disagree strongly), and (7) men making better political leaders than women (1 = agree strongly, 4 = disagree strongly). Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table A2: Estimated Coefficients of Union Membership on Non-binary Gender Attitudes

	EVS-2		EVS-3		EVS-4		EVS-5	
	Female (1)	Male (2)	Female (3)	Male (4)	Female (5)	Male (6)	Female (7)	Male (8)
<i>Western Europe: 16 Countries</i>								
Union member	0.148 (0.122)	-0.120 (0.111)	0.396*** (0.128)	-0.020 (0.163)	0.203* (0.116)	0.097 (0.129)	0.008 (0.149)	0.154 (0.133)
Observations	2881	4091	2365	2918	3193	3310	3052	2973
R-squared	0.274	0.241	0.267	0.234	0.242	0.230	0.236	0.254
<i>European Region: 45 Countries</i>								
Union member	0.144 (0.094)	-0.004 (0.095)	-0.017 (0.116)	-0.039 (0.109)	0.137* (0.082)	0.128 (0.092)	0.028 (0.096)	0.127 (0.092)
Observations	4325	6039	5119	5993	7268	7517	7045	6684
R-squared	0.303	0.231	0.398	0.335	0.532	0.442	0.612	0.594
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

NOTES: The table shows the OLS coefficients of union membership on non-binary gender attitudes for females and males in each wave. The dependent variable is whether homosexuality is justifiable, measured on a 10-point scale (1 = never justifiable and 10 = always justifiable). The analysis is performed for both the main sample (i.e., 16 countries in Western Europe) and the full sample (i.e., additionally including 29 countries in Eastern and Southern Europe). Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.

Table A3: Robustness Test of Three-Way Interaction between Union Membership, Gender, and Ideology, EVS 3-5

	Full Sample			Western Europe Sample				
	EVS 3-4 (Consistent)		EVS-5 (Consistent)		EVS-5		EVS-5 (Consistent)	
	All (1)	All (2)	All (3)	High Income (4)	Low Income (5)	Low Income (6)	Low Income (6)	
Union member	0.063 (0.076)	0.316*** (0.099)	0.043 (0.046)	0.023 (0.050)	0.078 (0.073)	0.259* (0.128)		
Female	0.144*** (0.047)	0.180*** (0.066)	0.034 (0.038)	0.006 (0.048)	0.054 (0.062)	-0.016 (0.056)		
Left-right scale	-0.013 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.009)	-0.024*** (0.007)	-0.014** (0.007)	-0.038*** (0.013)	-0.047*** (0.015)		
Union member × Female	-0.016 (0.087)	-0.371*** (0.096)	-0.107*** (0.052)	-0.008 (0.060)	-0.251*** (0.078)	-0.417*** (0.125)		
Union member × Left-right scale	0.003 (0.015)	-0.049** (0.021)	-0.000 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.000 (0.012)	-0.049 (0.035)		
Female × Left-right scale	0.000 (0.009)	-0.000 (0.010)	0.016** (0.008)	0.012 (0.009)	0.024* (0.013)	0.040*** (0.013)		
Union memebr × Female × Left-right Scale	-0.008 (0.017)	0.044** (0.017)	0.005 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.011)	0.027* (0.014)	0.073* (0.040)		
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Country-Wave Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Observations	11008	6371	6143	3910	2233	1525		
R-squared	0.134	0.245	0.146	0.114	0.183	0.194		

NOTES: The table present the OLS coefficient of the three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and ideology on attitudes towards women's right to work, by sample and wave. Columns 1-2 include respondents from the 13 countries that are consistently surveyed in the full sample of the EVS, including 6 countries in Western Europe and 7 countries in Eastern and Southern Europe. Column 3 includes respondents from the 16 Western European countries, who are further split by income level in columns 4 and 5 (i.e., below or above the fifth step). Finally, column 6 restricts the low-income sample to respondents from the 6 Western European countries that are consistently represented in the EVS. Standard errors are clustered at the country-education level and reported in parentheses. \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Models are estimated using the EVS weights.