

Young and vulnerable: Automation Risk and the AfD in Germany

Frieder Mitsch

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Abstract

Technological change is a recent factor identified by researchers in trying to explain populist radical right (PRR) party voting. Combining a new data set on automation risk in German Occupations with German panel data, this paper shows that the previously identified relationship between occupational automation risk and right-wing populist voting among routine workers does not hold for all age groups in Germany. While younger individuals tend to be generally less likely to vote for a right-wing populist party than older ones, young people in high risk occupations are more likely to vote for right wing populist parties than their older counterparts. The findings indicate that the age divergence is the result of the vulnerable labour market position many young labour market participants find themselves in. Previously stable career paths are increasingly perceived to be under threat jeopardizing prospects of upward mobility thus causing status anxiety.

Keywords: AfD, Germany, Automation, Welfare, Technological Change, Populism