

## ***Why do they vote for Le Pen?\****

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**Abstract.** The results of a survey conducted after the second round of the 1988 presidential election stress the inadequacy of the classical models of voting behaviour, as far as the Le Pen vote is concerned. The majority of lepenist electors identify themselves neither with the National Front, nor with the extreme-Right; they show no electoral stability, no strong sociological specificity. Less educated than the average, they do not correspond to the profile of the rational voter. With the exception of a small hardcore of regular voters, politicized, extremist and dedicated to the National Front, Le Pen supporters are protest voters that come and go.

### **Introduction**

The most striking political change in the France of the 1980s has been the electoral rise of an extreme right-wing party, the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen. This party, born in 1972 from a federation of several small groups of the extreme-right, remained in political anonymity for ten years (Table 1). In the Presidential election of 1981, for example, its leader couldn't even run as candidate<sup>1</sup> and in the following parliamentary elections it won no more than 0.2 percent of the votes. The picture changed after the left came to power. In 1983, in a number of by-elections, the National Front made good progress, especially in Dreux where, on 4 September, the National Front list led by Jean-Pierre Stirbois won 16.7 percent of the valid votes. In the second round, the victory of a joint UDF-RPR-National Front list opened the doors of the town-hall to the extreme-right-wing councillors. This event can only be understood in the specific political context of the 1980s.

The Mitterrand experiment had disappointed some of its supporters, showing the limits of alternative policies in the social and economic fields. This hopelessness brought about a lack of trust in the traditional parties of both right and left, from which the National Front profited. The latter also benefited from a neo-conservative ideological trend and a radicalization of the French right (Ysmal, 1984) which, stunned by its 1981 defeat, was in search of new political and ideological positions. The alliance between the moderate

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right and the extreme-right legitimized the National Front, liberated the vote in its favour and marked its political rebirth. It was the start of the 'Le Pen phenomenon'. The European elections of 1984 gave the extremist party a national consecration. Since then, the FN has been steadily attracting some 10 percent of voters, reaching a peak of more than 14 percent in the presidential election of 1988 (Mayer, Perrineau, 1989).<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand why so many French electors vote for the National Front's candidates we shall look at who they are. What makes them different from other voters? How specific and how diverse is the Lepenist electorate? Some answers to these questions are provided by data collected in a post-election survey, conducted by a research team from the Centre d'étude de la vie politique française (CEVIPOF) after the second round of the Presidential election (May 9–20 1988), on a representative sample of 4032 French people of voting age.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the actual voting figures for the Presidential first round, the data overestimate the score of François Mitterrand (+ 6%), a classical bandwagon effect. As with most electoral surveys, they underestimate the score of Jean-Marie Le Pen (– 4%). This bias can easily be explained. Lepenist voters come more often than the average from poorly educated and working-class settings, where the proportion of citizens who don't register, don't vote, don't open their door to survey interviewers, or refuse to answer to their questions, is a little higher than the average. And there is a halo of moral indignation and social reprobation around a vote for Le Pen that makes it more difficult to admit. This undersampling was not corrected by an overweighting of the declared Lepenist voters. This would have been to assume that the non-declared Lepenist voters had the same characteristics as the declared ones, thereby introducing a supplementary bias.

*Table 1. Votes for FN during the Fifth Republic (France as a whole)*

Year	Elections	Total valid	% votes
		votes	cast
1973	Legislative (first round)*	122 498	0.5
1974	Presidential (first round)	190 921	0.8
1978	Legislative (first round)	82 743	0.3
1981	Legislative (first round)	44 414	0.2
1984	European	2 210 334	11.0
1986	Legislative	2 705 336	9.7
1988	Presidential (first round)	4 375 894	14.4
1988	Legislative (first round)	2 359 528	9.7
1989	European	2 121 836	11.8

\* In 1973, the Ministère de l'Intérieur did not discriminate between the various elements of the extreme-right. However, most of extreme-right candidates had been nominated by the FN.

The two major approaches of vote choice are the Michigan paradigm and the 'rational choice' model. According to the psycho-sociological model outlined by the Survey Research Centre of Michigan (Campbell et al., 1960) electoral choice is linked to party identification, which creates a stable bond between the voter and the party he or she trusts and believes in. This identification is a permanent feature, determined by the voter's family background, cultural milieu and socio-economic status. In the French context, electoral studies conducted by the CEVIPOF over a thirty year period have shown an association between voting behaviour, identification with the right or the left, and socio-cultural factors such as religion and social class (Michelat Simon, 1977; Capdevielle et al., 1981; Cevipof, 1990). In the 1970s, the decline of party identification and the growing volatility of American electors challenged the Michigan paradigm, and alternative 'rational choice' models were developed. These stressed the importance of issues and candidates positions in the shaping of electoral behaviour (Nie, Verba, Petrocik, 1976; Pomper, 1975; Himmelweit et al., 1984; Crewe, 1985). The elector was no more seen as 'dependent' but rather as 'responsive'. Individualist, utilitarian and free from social, religious or partisan ties, the voter was a 'political shopper', who bought parties as one buys other goods on the market, taking into account the stands of the different candidates on the different issues. And, while the previous model stressed the stability of party identification and votes, the rational choice model stressed change and choice among the most educated and politically sophisticated parts of the electorate. The same debate started in France in the 1980s, in a context of rapid political change (Lavau, 1986; Habert Lancelot, 1988, Cevipof, 1990). How much do the party identification and rational choice models explain of Jean-Marie Le Pen's electoral success in 1988?

### **The psycho-sociological model**

The key concept of the Michigan model is party identification. When asked to select, from a list of parties, the one they feel 'the closest to or at least the least distant from', the majority of French voters choose the party of their preferred candidate. This is true for two thirds of Chiraquists and Communists, more than half of Mitterrandists and Barrists, and 45 percent of the Greens (Table 2). It reaches its lowest point among Jean-Marie Le Pen's electors: only one third answer 'The National Front'. Party-identification is not their primary voting motivation.

The National Front has a short history, it could be that these voters identify themselves with the longstanding extreme right-wing ideological trend more than with Le Pen's party. Asked to place themselves on a left-right scale with seven positions, only 15 percent of Jean-Marie Le Pen's voters chose the

position of the far right. This proportion is five times more than for the sample on a whole (Table 2), yet the number of Lepenist voters who see themselves as right-wing extremists remains very small.

In a multiparty system as France, identification with the right or the left, the old cleavage inherited from the Revolution of 1789, matters more than party identification. On a left-right scale with seven positions, the majority of the Lepenist voters classify themselves as Right-wing (positions 5 to 7 in Table 2). But they are more spread out on the scale than any other electorate. They are equally eclectic in their party choice, one out of five giving a left-wing party preference. The fact that the National Front is a recent party cannot explain this. The Ecologist Movement appeared on the French electoral scene at approximately the same time. Yet these electors are more coherent in their choices, identifying themselves mostly with the Greens or with the Left. Whatever the indicator we use, the political identification of the Lepenist voters seems more diverse than the average.

A second element of the Michigan model is electoral stability. Two indicators allow us to measure this. First, there is a question in the CEVIPOF survey about the votes cast by electors since they have been of voting age. They

Table 2. Political identification

1988 Presidential election (1st round)	Green %	Left %	Barre %	Chirac %	Le Pen %	Total %
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Party proximity</b>						
Left	39	87	10	4	18	47
Green	45	2	2	1	2	4
Center	3	1	54	14	8	11
Right	5	2	23	67	23	18
FN	0	0	0	1	34	4
None, NA	8	9	12	13	14	6
<b>Left-Right Scale</b>						
Extreme-Left (1)	3	5	0	0	0	3
Left (2, 3)	50	73	5	3	12	39
Center (4)	34	18	44	23	29	28
Right (5, 6)	13	2	48	68	43	25
Extreme-Right (7)	0	0	2	4	15	3
None, NA	1	1	1	2	1	3
<b>What counted in their choice</b>						
- Personality of candidate	11	29	27	26	13	24
- His proposal, his ideas	79	61	62	62	79	59
- The parties supporting him	6	9	8	10	5	8
- N.A.	4	2	3	3	4	10
Total (N)	(155)	(1645)	(496)	(636)	(357)	(4032)

were asked whether they had ever voted for candidates of the following parties: Socialist, RPR or Gaullist, Communist, UDF or Centrist, National Front or Extreme-Right, Extreme-Left. A little more than a quarter of the sample said they had voted for candidates of three or more parties. Among Lepenist voters, the proportion reached a maximum of 59 percent. Of course, part of this mobility is structural; because the National Front is a new party, it must inevitably draw voters from other parties. Because it is still a small party, it cannot present candidates in every constituency in local elections and, in spite of its growing electoral strength, most often it cannot maintain its candidates in the second round. But the same could be said of supporters of the Green party, of extreme-left-wing formations, or of small groupings in the Center. Yet volatility among Lepenist voters is greater than among Green voters (25%), Barrists (34%) or left-extremists (41%). A second indicator of volatility is the vote choice of the Lepenist electors in the previous Parliamentary elections of 1986, in the second round of the 1988 Presidential election, and their voting intentions for the Parliamentary elections of the same year. Once more, Le Pen voters have a more mixed electoral profile than any other set of voters, including the Greens (Table 3a). It is not so much that they

Table 3a. Voting patterns 1986–1988

1988 Presidential election (1st round)	Green %	Left %	Barre %	Chirac %	Le Pen %	Total %
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>1986 Parl. election</i>						
Didn't vote	32	21	21	19	21	29
Green	17	1	1	–	1	2
Left	37	73	6	3	16	37
Right	14	5	71	78	35	29
FN	1	–	1	1	28	3
<i>1988 Pres. election (2nd round)</i>						
Didn't vote	12	3	7	2	17	18
Mitterrand	70	95	14	4	27	49
Chirac	18	2	79	94	57	33
<i>1988 Parl. election (voting intentions)</i>						
Won't vote	10	6	10	10	9	15
Green	29	89	9	4	13	46
Left	52	2	2	1	1	5
Right	8	2	78	84	26	29
FN	0	1	1	1	51	6
Total (N)	(155)	(1645)	(496)	(636)	(357)	(4032)

switch from one party to another; so do the Greens. Thus, in the future Parliamentary elections only half of Lepenists and one third of Green voters intend to vote for the National Front or the Green candidate. What makes Le Pen voters different is that they cross the left-right divide more often than any other electorate.

Daniel Boy has studied the electoral volatility of voters in the same four elections as above, reducing them to members of five political families, the extreme left (Communists and other extreme-left formations), the Greens, the Socialist left, the moderate right (UDF, RPR) and the extreme right (FN). He finds 281 electoral patterns, reduced to five broad classes (Table 3b). The 'stable abstentionists' never went to the polls. The 'stable left', including Greens, and the 'stable right' voted all four times for candidates of the same political family. These three groups account for two thirds of voters. The 'mobile left' electors voted for another party of the Left, the 'mobile right' voters for another party of the Right.<sup>4</sup> The last group of 'left-right mobile' voters switched at least once from left to right or vice-versa. This group only represents 12 percent of the registered electors who could vote at all four elections. There are 32 percent of the group among Lepenist voters in 1988, more than in any other electorate.

The Michigan model assumes a socio-cultural determinism of party-identification and vote. The Lepenist electorate does indeed show some specific social characteristics (Table 4). It is predominantly masculine, a little older and less educated than the average, living mostly in large towns, Catholic but not church-going. Yet the differences are not very sharp. If one measures the correlation between the different indicators listed in Table 4 and the proportion of Le Pen votes, it is never significant, varying between  $-0.16$  (educa-

Table 3b. Voting patterns 1986-1988\*

1988 Presidential election (1st round)	Stable Abst.	Stable Left	Stable Right	Mobile Left	Mobile Right	Left-Right Mobile	Total 100% (N)
	4	37	32	11	4	12	
Abstention	30	28	27	7	1	7	( 567)
Extreme Left	0	35	0	56	0	10	( 342)
Left	0	85	0	8	0	7	(1297)
Green	0	30	0	45	0	25	( 155)
Right	0	0	85	0	1	14	(1129)
Extreme Right	0	0	31	0	36	32	( 357)
Total (N)	4	37	32	11	4	12	(3847)

\* Parliamentary elections 1986, Presidential election 1988 (2 rounds), Parliamentary elections 1988 (1st round, voting intentions), electors registered at the time of the four elections considered.

tional level) and 0.14 (income).<sup>5</sup> The so-called 'sociological' variables do not predictive the Lepenist vote.

The main conclusion one can draw from Table 4 is that Jean-Marie Le Pen attracts voters from all groups of the population, old and young, rich and poor, Catholics and non-Catholics, rural and urban, upper and working class. This is a distinctive feature of the Le Pen vote. In 1988, religion and social class clearly differentiate traditional right-wing from left-wing or Green voters (Table 4). The right are more often self-employed, or owners of a business, shop or land. The majority are Catholic and church-goers. The left are more detached from religion and come more often from the working-classes. But Jean-Marie Le Pen voters stand somewhere in between (Table 4).<sup>6</sup> They are better-off than Left-wing voters. They have higher incomes, they more often own their house or their business. They are more educated, with at least a technical degree. When they are blue-collarers they more often are foremen or skilled workers,

Table 4. Sociology of the presidential electorate

1988 Presidential election (1st round)	Green %	Left %	Barre %	Chirac %	Le Pen %	Total %
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	43	47	46	47	57	47
Female	57	53	54	53	43	53
<b>Age</b>						
18-40 years	73	51	40	37	45	49
55 years & more	12	30	36	43	32	32
<b>Education</b>						
CAP or less*	31	58	45	51	62	55
Baccalaureate or more	45	24	33	27	19	25
<b>Size of town</b>						
Rural area	30	26	30	36	23	28
100.000 or more	32	36	34	31	45	36
<b>Income, property</b>						
More 7500 F monthly	52	51	62	51	57	51
Own their house	31	34	48	52	39	38
Own their business	19	13	25	32	23	19
<b>Occupation</b>						
Shopkeepers	5	5	11	9	10	7
Blue collars	17	30	13	13	29	24
<b>Religion</b>						
Church goers	24	22	48	52	30	32
Non-Church goers, non-catholics	76	78	52	48	70	68
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>(155)</b>	<b>(1645)</b>	<b>(496)</b>	<b>(636)</b>	<b>(357)</b>	<b>(4032)</b>

\* Lower technical degree.

though their rate of unemployment is not lower than average (8%). On the whole, they are not underprivileged electors. In the light of this socio-economic profile, it seems excessive to qualify the Le Pen vote as merely 'a desperation vote, where downwardly mobile categories or in a difficult position express their discontent' (Jaffré, 1986). Rather, they have some cultural and economic resources, and socially they are upwardly mobile or stable more than downwardly mobile.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, compared to moderate Right-wing electors the Lepenist electorate is predominantly male and urban, younger, less educated, more detached from the Catholic Church and far more working-class.

This hybrid character of Lepenist voters in 1988 is a consequence of their electoral mobility, reflecting their previous voting history. Voters for Le Pen come from both left and right, and their socio-economic profile reflects this.

### **The rational choice model**

The rational choice model insists on the role of particular political factors in shaping electoral decisions, including the identity of the candidates and the salient issues of the campaign. French voters were asked what counted most for them when they voted (Table 2). Only 13 percent of the Lepenist voters, half as many as the average, answered that it was the 'personality of their candidate'. The overwhelming majority of those who cast a vote in favour of Jean-Marie Le Pen declared they did not vote for the man, no more than for his party. What mattered, according to them, were 'his proposals, his ideas' (79% vs 59% in the sample) (Table 2).

To explore the ideas of voters a battery of questions explored values and opinions in the fields of economics, sexuality, politics, religion and education. These were used to construct a set of synthetic attitudinal scales, described in Appendix 1. These scales were systematically related to voting behaviour and the results are reported in Table 5.

In spite of the National Front's anti-abortion campaigns, and its support by Catholic fundamentalists, Table 5 shows that the Lepenists appear slightly more permissive in sexual matters – abortion, homosexuality, having a partner, unfaithfulness in married life – than the moderate right.

Although the National Front is nationalist and in favour of law and order, on matters such as national pride, confidence in the Police, the Army, the Catholic Church, its voters are far less traditionalist than the electors of Raymond Barre or Jacques Chirac.

In economic matters such as free enterprise, privatization and nationalization, the reestablishment of the tax on wealth (*impôt sur les grandes fortunes*), Lepenist voters appear less liberal, far more in favour of state



interventionism than the Barrists or the Chiraquians. And they are a little more in favour than other right wing voters of socialism and social rights such as the right to go on strike, social security and unions.

On all these issues, on which appear to be clear-cut left-right cleavages, the Lepenist voters stand in between left and right. Those who previously voted for the Left appear more in favour of state interventionism and social rights; those who voted for the Right favour more traditionalist and conformist positions.<sup>8</sup> On only two issues do FN voters distinctly stand apart. These are immigration and law and order, the two dominant themes of the National Front campaigns. On the ethnocentrism scale, with questions about the number of immigrants, the power of Jews, the rights of Muslims, the feeling that 'we are not at home any more', half of the Lepenist voters have a score of 3 or more, many more than supporters of all the other parties. It is on the matter of immigration, however, that one finds the greatest differences. A total of 75 percent of Jean-Marie Le Pen electors think there are too many immigrants (as opposed to 35 percent in the sample as a whole); 55 percent of FN supporters thoroughly disagree with the idea that Muslims living in France should have mosques to practice their religion (against 24 percent overall). On the authoritarianism scale with questions about the death penalty, the subordination of women, discipline at school, and the necessity for chiefs and hierarchy, Le Pen supporters have the highest scores (Table 5). The differences are particularly

Table 5. Attitudes and values

1988 Presidential election (1st round)	Green %	Left %	Barre %	Chirac %	Le Pen %	Total %
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<hr/>						
Attitudinal scales* (% with high scores)						
Sexual permissivity	37	28	16	14	21	24
Traditionalism	24	29	53	57	40	38
Anti-interventionism	12	3	33	42	29	17
Defense of social rights	48	57	21	19	23	38
Pessimism	45	51	45	41	62	49
Authoritarianism	25	45	60	72	76	55
Ethnocentrism	11	16	17	19	50	20
Interest in politics	64	68	69	66	62	63
Support for democracy	68	72	73	75	66	70
Total (N)	(155)	(1645)	(496)	(636)	(357)	(4032)

\* Were considered as 'high scores' 2 or more on the 'Pessimism', the 'Interest in politics' and the 'Democracy' scales, 4 on the 'Traditionalism' Scale and 3 or more for all the other scales (see Appendix).

striking on the matter of capital punishment: 70 percent of the lepenist voters are 'very much' in favour of its reestablishment (against a sample average of 34 percent).

There has been a general rise in the number of people who hold these values in French society since the end of the 1970s (Mayer and Perrineau, 1989) but the rise seems to have been greater among National Front voters. These people are more likely to live in urban settings, where both the proportion of immigrants and crime rates are higher (Jaffré, 1984). Yet their rejection of immigrants and their call for law and order does not seem linked with a personal experience of insecurity, or with actual neighbourhood difficulties with ethnic communities.

A survey conducted in Grenoble in 1986, dealing with the feeling of insecurity, shows that Lepenist voters tend to overestimate insecurity in general but that 'in the last three months' they were less often than average the victims of a robbery, a theft, threats or violence. And analysis done by Perrineau in Grenoble, Rey in Seine Saint Denis, and Mayer in Paris shows that there is no relation between the electoral success of the National Front and the proportion of immigrants in the population (Lagrange and Roche, 1987; Perrineau, 1985; Rey and Roy, 1986; Mayer and Perrineau, 249–267). Nonetheless more than other voters, FN supporters have a feeling of insecurity, even at home. They tend to exaggerate the number of aggressions and robberies they or people they know have experienced. More than the others, they lock themselves up at home before eight o'clock, and have spy holes and chains on their doors (Mayer and Perrineau, 1989; chap. 11). Whether they are imaginary or real the issues of immigration and insecurity, are very important electoral motivations of the Lepenists, in 1988, as well as in the previous elections.

### **A third model, the protest vote**

The Le Pen voters obviously fit more into the 'rational choice' approach than in the Michigan model. They have a weak party identification to the National Front and split political attachments; they are electorally mobile; they cross the left-right divide; they have no specific religious or socio-professional identity; and they vote on specific issues. These are the characteristics of the 'political shopper'. Yet this mobility is not quite in line with a consumer-oriented model based on a new type of voter, young and educated. In our survey, however, the most mobile are the older voters and the less educated. The Lepenist voters prove more mobile whatever their age and level of education. The most mobile of all, with the exception of Green voters are those who combine old age and lack of education. These results are more in conformity with the classical concept of the 'floating-vote'. In addition to this,

neither the rational choice or party identification approaches take into account the protest dimension of the Le Pen vote. A week before the first round of voting, when asked 'in the bottom of their heart' which candidate they wished to see elected President of the Republic, only 28 percent of the potential Lepenist voters answered 'Jean-Marie Le Pen'; 26 percent preferred Jacques Chirac, 17 percent François Mitterrand, 10 percent Raymond Barre. In contrast, half of André Lajoinie supporters, 81 percent of the Barrists, 84 percent of the Chiraquist supporters, and 91 percent of the Mitterrandist potential voters wished the victory of their own candidate.<sup>9</sup> Today more than 40 percent of the people who share Jean-Marie Le Pen's ideas about immigration think he has 'no solution to the problem'; only 36 percent of those who feel close to the National Front consider it 'capable of governing France'.<sup>10</sup> Even those who declare themselves 'very close' to the National Front see the Le Pen vote mostly as a protest against the political system (Table 6).

This protest is linked to the political upheavals of the 1980s, the Socialist victory in 1981 after twenty three years of right-wing domination, the Socialist defeat in the 1986 Parliamentary elections, two years of subsequent 'cohabitation' between a left-wing President and a right-wing Prime Minister, the reelection of François Mitterrand in 1988 and the absence of a clear majority in the following parliamentary elections. These rapid changes have blurred the left-right division, brought about disappointments and resentments, worn out the parties of government and helped the electoral rise of a protest party such as the National Front among the least politically and socially integrated segments of the electorate.

Thus the Lepenist voters seem to have less confidence in the social and political process than others. Indeed, they are the less confident in all of the main institutions: justice, education, television, religion, parliament and administration. With the exception of the police and the army, they are less

*Table 6.* A protest vote: 'Do you think that people who vote for a candidate or a list of the National Front do so rather. . .

	Total electorate 100%	Close to FN 100%	Very close to FN 100%
To protest against today's political system	59	67	52
Because they trust the ideas supported by Jean-Marie Le Pen	34	27	41
N.A.	7	6	7

IFOP-*Journal du Dimanche*, 26th September – 7th October 1988, national sample representative of French people of voting (1949 interviews), *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 14 October 1988.

favourable towards any kind of associative life, and less prone to any form of collective action (such as demonstrations, strikes, occupations) to defend their interests. This distrust goes with a general feeling of uncertainty a fear of the future (Table 5). On a scale of pessimism, based upon questions about the way democracy functions in France, the feeling that people like them were 'better off before', that with what they earn 'it is impossible to lead a normal life', they have the largest proportion of high scores, along with the Communists. Also with the Communists, they are the most willing to agree that 'When I think about the future, often I feel afraid'. And the more pessimistic, the more ethnocentric, and the more in favour of law and order, the more receptive they are to Jean-Marie Le Pen's ideas.

Overall, the Lepenist vote of 1988 appears not to be a vote for the National Front, nor a vote for its leader, nor a vote for the extreme-right. It is more a vote 'against' things; against immigrants and delinquents who are but the scapegoats of their fears, against the political establishment and the parties of government. It is a protest vote, an 'exutory' vote as Jérôme Jaffré calls it, more expressive of resentment than instrumental.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically the National Front plays the same part in the French political system as the Communist Party did yesterday. It too had a fringe of protest voters who did not believe in Communist values but saw in the party a defender of the little people and 'a party of the discontents'. Georges Lavau called this the 'tribunitian function' of the Communist Party, acting rather like the Tribune of the Plebs in ancient Rome (Lavau, 1969). At the other extremity of the political board, the National Front appears to be doing the same thing.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion: the regular, the occasional, the potential Lepenist voters**

#### *True believers and others*

The main cleavage among Jean-Marie Le Pen voters in 1988 is closely linked to the protest dimension of their vote (Table 7). The regular voters, those who voted for the National Front in 1986 and for Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1988, form a politicized, partisan and extremist hardcore representing some two percent of the French voting age population. That is approximately the electoral level of the extreme-right wing in France, at low tide. These people are in sharp contrast to the newcomers who voted Le Pen in 1988 but not in 1986. They are older, predominantly male, more educated, with more often a secondary school qualification or even a higher-education degree. They also have more income and property. While the new Lepenist voters are mostly Catholic non church-goers, regular supporters are more often regular church-goers or, on the contrary, atheists. This contrast is evocative of the cleavage, among the

National Front, between fundamentalist Catholics and the pagan New Right. They are far more interested in politics. They show a strong party-identification to the National Front (74 as opposed to 19 percent). They position themselves five times more often at the extreme right of the left-right scale. A total of 47 percent of them admit that since they are of voting age they have 'often' voted for extreme-right wing or National Front candidates (7 percent of newcomers say this).

Table 7. Regular and occasional Le Pen voters<sup>a</sup>

Vote FN 1986 (Parliament) Vote Le Pen in 1988 (President)	Regular (1986 + 1988) 100%	Occasional (1988 only) 100%
<b>Sociology</b>		
Men	67	54
Age 45 or more	55	46
Towns 100,000 or more	54	42
Income 7500 F or more	64	55
Own their business	29	20
Shares in privatized companies	27	17
Regular church goers	18	12
Atheists	14	6
<b>Attitudes and values<sup>b</sup></b>		
Pessimistic	18	11
Authoritarian	82	73
Ethnocentric	61	46
High interest in politics	41	22
<b>Political identification</b>		
FN's closest Party	74	19
Extreme-right position on Scale	37	7
<b>Votes</b>		
1988 Presidential election (2nd round)		
Didn't vote	28	12
Mitterrand	16	31
Chirac	56	57
1988 Parliamentary election (voting intentions)		
Won't vote	2	12
Left, Green	2	19
Right	3	34
FN	93	35
Total (N)	(99)	(258)

<sup>a</sup>The group who voted FN in 1986, and did not vote Le Pen in 1988 is too small to appear in the table.

<sup>b</sup>Scored 2 or more on 'Pessimism' and 'Interest in politics' scales, 3 or more in the others (Appendix 1).

In terms of future intentions, 93 percent of regular supporters are ready to vote FN again in Parliamentary elections (versus 35 percent of others). As shown by their high level of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism, regular supporters are the most receptive to the ideas of Jean-Marie Le Pen. They are true 'believers' in the sense of the Michigan model (Table 7).<sup>13</sup> Every election adds ephemeral new voters to this stable core. One third of the 1984 National Front voters who went to the polls in 1986 didn't reiterate their vote. And if the 1986 voters were more faithful (90 percent of them voted for Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1988) they were not for long. After the Presidential election was over only half of the 1988 Lepenist voters considered voting for National Front candidates in the subsequent Parliamentary elections, a proportion that dropped to one third among the newcomers (Table 7).

These successive waves of National Front voters have different characteristics and different motivations. According to the same exitpolls, the National Front electors of 1984, unfaithful in 1986, were predominantly bourgeois, educated, Catholic church-goers and Right-wing. In the second round of the Presidential election of 1981, 75 percent of them had voted for Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. They switched to the National Front in protest against the 'socialo-communist' victory. The European elections were the ideal opportunity to vent their discontent. But, in the decisive parliamentary elections of 1986 most switched from an expressive to an instrumental vote in favour of the traditional right, and 88 percent of them voted for RPR – UDF candidates.

Compared to the 1984 voters, those who rallied the National Front in 1986 were younger, socially and politically less integrated. They included twice as many blue collar workers and three times more unemployed. On May 10, 1981, one third voted for François Mitterrand and another third did not vote. Their support for the National Front expressed their disappointment with the Socialist government, which had not kept its promises.

Those who joined Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1988 were a more diversified lot, more right-wing and petit-bourgeois. They were more critical than all of the other voters of the period of 'cohabitation' between a left-wing President and a right-wing Prime Minister. In the second round of the Presidential election they went back to the parties they had come from. Of the formerly left-wing FN voters, 76 percent supported François Mitterrand in the second round and of the formerly Right-wing FN voters, 87 percent supported Jacques Chirac. In the subsequent Parliamentary elections, 53 percent of FN supporters with a left-wing voting history declared they would vote for the candidates of the left, and 58 percent of those with a right-wing voting history that they would vote for candidates of the traditional right.

*Regular, occasional and potential voters*

There is a large pool of potential voters for Jean-Marie Le Pen and his party in the French electorate. When asked: 'Among the following parties, can you tell me any for which you wouldn't vote in any circumstance?', 65 percent of the sample excluded voting for the National Front, a figure confirmed by recent polls.<sup>14</sup> This means that one third of the electorate does not rule out the possibility of such a vote. If one excludes those who have already voted for the National Front or its President (1986 or 1988), one can get a clear image of who these potential voters are (Table 8). The majority of those who rule out voting for the National Front declare left-wing choices and affinities, and come more often from the upper class or the salaried middle class. Among executives, professionals and teachers who voted for the left in the first round of the Presidential election, the proportion of those who exclude voting FN amounts to more than 95 percent.

Those who do not explicitly exclude voting for the National Front are more often working-class or lower middle class electors. They are less educated and less interested in politics, declare a party proximity less frequently, are more abstentionist. When they declare a party proximity, and when they vote, it is more often in favour of the RPR. Among the unskilled workers who didn't go to the polls in the first round of the Presidential election or voted for Jacques Chirac, the potential National Front voters are the majority. Compared to those who have already voted for the National Front, the potential FN electorate is more feminine, more rural, more observant of the Catholic religion. On the other it is more proletarian, with less property and less education. The party of Jean-Marie Le Pen can still draw voters from the underdogs, the least politically and socially integrated, as well as from the well-off conservative right.

Yet, until now, Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Front have not succeeded in aggregating, in the same election, the different elements of their potential electorate. The faithful extremist hard core, the disappointed voters of the classical right, and the social protest voters have never yet come together in the same electoral gathering. Handicapped by its extremist position, and by its lack of governmental and presidential credibility, the National Front and its leader have remained in a protest role and do not appear as a positive political alternative.<sup>15</sup> The National Front presented its 8th Congress in Nice (30th March – 1st April 1990) as the Congress of the 'March to power'. For the moment, however, it is far from having the electoral means to realise its political ambitions.

Table 8. Voters, non-voters and potential voters for the National Front<sup>a</sup>

FN Vote	Voters 100%	Non-voters 100%	Potential voters 100%
<b>Sociology<sup>b</sup></b>			
Women	43	52	58
Rural area	31	33	40
CAP or less	62	50	67
2 or more elem. property	50	50	41
Church goers	29	29	38
<b>Attitudes and values<sup>c</sup></b>			
Pessimistic	63	45	53
Authoritarian	74	45	73
Ethnocentric	49	12	31
Interest in politics	27	36	21
<b>Party proximity</b>			
Left, Green	21	64	31
UDF	8	11	11
RPR	22	14	26
FN	34	0	2
None, N.A.	15	11	30
<b>Left-right scale</b>			
Extreme-Left (1)	0	3	2
Left (2, 3)	11	50	22
Center (4)	30	27	31
Right (5, 6)	41	18	35
Extreme-Right (7)	16	1	2
N.A.	1	2	8
<b>1988 Presidential vote</b>			
Lajoinie, Extreme-Left		12	4
Mitterrand		41	23
Waechter		5	2
Barre		13	15
Chirac		14	26
Didn't vote		16	30
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>(380)</b>	<b>(2591)</b>	<b>(1061)</b>

<sup>a</sup> Voters = Vote FN in 1986 or Le Pen in 1988. Non-Voters = have not voted FN or Le Pen and exclude voting for the National Front. Potential voters = have not voted FN or Le Pen but do not exclude voting for the National Front.

<sup>b</sup> CAP: Lower technical degree. Elements of property: transferable securities, stocks bonds, real estate (property of house or business not included).

<sup>c</sup> Notes 2 or more on 'Pessimism' Scales, 3 or more on the others (Appendix 1).



## Appendix: attitudinal scales

These attitudinal scales are hierarchical scales constructed according to the Loevinger method. For each scale, we list the questions on which the scale is based and the value of the homogeneity Loevinger coefficient (in brackets). For a more detailed account see CEVIPOF (1990), *L'électeur français en questions*, pp. 229–236.

### Anti-interventionism (0.48)

- 'Privatizations': 'Very positive' (11%)
- 'The Tax on wealth should be reestablished': 'Rather' or 'Strongly disagrees' (20%)
- 'Nationalizations': 'Very' or 'Rather negative' (43%)
- 'To face economic difficulties the State should trust companies and give them more freedom': (60%)

### Defense of social rights (0.50)

- 'Socialism': 'Very positive' (15%)
- 'If one abolished Unions': 'Very serious' (50%)
- 'If one abolished the right to strike': 'Very serious' (51%)
- 'If one abolished Social Security': 'Very serious' (88%)

### Sexual permissivity (0.61)

- 'To be unfaithful to ones wife or husband': 'Morally not wrong at all' (17%)
- 'Homosexuality': 'Morally not wrong at all' (28%)
- 'Abortion': 'Morally not wrong at all' (39%)
- 'Living together without being married': 'Morally not wrong at all' (67%)

### Traditionalism (0.44)

- 'The Church': 'Rather trust' (56%)
- 'The Army': 'Rather trust' (62%)
- 'The police': 'Rather trust' (74%)
- 'I am proud to be French': 'Rather' or 'Strongly agrees' (89%)

### Anti-Authoritarianism (0.49)

- 'In a society one needs a hierarchy and leaders': 'Strongly disagrees' (5%)
- 'The death penalty should be reestablished: Strongly disagrees' (24%)
- 'School should primary develop a sense of discipline and effort': (39%)
- 'Women are essentially made to bear children and bring them up': 'Rather agrees', 'Rather' or 'Strongly disagrees' (89%)

### Pessimism (0.48)

- 'Today democracy in France works. . .': 'Not well at all' (9%)
- 'The daily life of people like you is': 'Worse than before' (49%)
- 'The money one brings home is not enough to live decently': 'Strongly' or 'Rather agrees', 'Rather disagrees', or does not answer (90%)

### Ethnocentrism (0.54)

- 'Jews have too much power in France': 'Strongly agrees' (9%)
- 'It would be normal if Muslims living in France had mosques to practice their religion': 'Strongly disagrees' (24%)
- 'Nowadays one does not feel at home as much as before': 'Strongly' or 'Rather agrees' (49%)
- 'There are too many immigrants in France': 'Strongly' or 'Rather agrees', does not answer (71%)

### Interest in politics (0.47)

- 'Are you interested in politics?': 'Very' (10%)
- 'Very' or 'Rather close of one political party in particular': (42%)
- 'Recently have you followed political programs on television or on the radio?': 'Very' or 'Rather often' (59%)

'Some people say of politics that it is too complicated and that one has to be an expert to understand it': 'Strongly' or 'Rather disagrees', 'Rather agrees' (80%)

Support for democracy (0.66)

'Today democracy in France works. . .': 'Very well' (8%)

'If one abolished political parties': 'Very serious' (39%)

'If one abolished the National Assembly': 'Very serious' (66%)

'If one abolished the right to vote': 'Very serious' (89%)

## Notes

1. Failing to get the 500 signatures of elected representatives required.
2. On the electoral history of the National Front see Mayer and Perrineau, 1989: Chap. 2. If there were parliamentary elections today, the National Front would draw 15% of the votes (BVA-Paris-Match survey, 4th–7th and 15–20th November 1991; national representative sample of 3632 French people of voting age).
3. 4032 interviews. See CEVIPOF, 1990.
4. For instance a Green elector voting for the Socialists, the Communists or the extreme-left candidates, a National Front voter voting for the RPR or the UDF candidate.
5. With the gamma statistic that varies between 1 (perfect association, all the cases are in the diagonal) and 0 (none, all the cases are out of the diagonal). See CEVIPOF, 1990, chap. 8, Table 1.
6. There is by now considerable data on the sociological profile of the Lepenist voters (See Mayer and Perrineau, 1990: 61 & 266–267). Unfortunately it often comes from exit-polls which show specific biases. Because the polling stations must have a minimum number of registered voters the smaller rural polling stations are excluded from the sample and the farmers are underweighted. Because the interview form is self-administered it discourages elder people which are also underweighted. The self-declared occupations are very approximately defined. Our data, based upon a long post-electoral survey, administered at home by trained interviewers, is all together more detailed and more reliable.
7. If one takes into account the father's occupation of the small shopkeepers who vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen, compared to all shopkeepers, they are more often working-class or lower middle class (36% were workers vs 27%, 39% owned a small business or a farm vs 42%) than upper or middle class (14% vs 21%). And among the workers voting for Jean-Marie Le Pen, 52% of the fathers were working-class (vs 54%), 22% small business or farm owners (vs 19%) and 10% upper or middle class (vs 13%).
8. 81% of the 1988 Lepenist voters who voted for the moderate Right in 1986 have a high score on the 'Authoritarianism' scale versus 71% of those who voted for the Left; 58% have a high score on the 'Traditionalism' scale versus 27%; 22% have a high score on the 'Social Rights' scale versus 38%; 46% have a high score on the 'Sexual permissivity' scale versus 36%; and 75% have a high score on the 'Anti-interventionism' scale versus 34%.
9. Survey conducted by the SOFRES for a group of local newspapers, 1st–2nd April 1988. See Jaffré, 1988.
10. SOFRES-*Le Figaro* survey, 10–14th March 1990, quota sample of 1000 French people of voting age. (*Le Figaro*, 28th March 1990).
11. By many aspects the electors of the National Front are typical of the 'men of resentment' described by Max Scheler at the beginning of the century (Scheler, 1970; Taguieff, 1990).
12. That does not mean that the Communist voters turn to the National Front. See Mayer and Perrineau, 1989: chap. 13.

13. The electors who voted for the National Front in 1984 and in 1986, compared to the newcomers of 1986, presented exactly the same characteristics than the 1986–1988 regular voters according to the exit polls conducted by BULL-BVA for RMC, *Libération*, Antenne 2 and *Paris-Match*, March 16th 1986, on a sample of 4564 voters and for Antenne 2, Europe 1, *Paris-Match*, April 24th 1988, on a sample of 2837 voters. See Mayer and Perrineau, 1989: 261–263.
14. 64% according to the SOFRES-*Le Figaro* survey (10–14 March 1990) already quoted.
15. In a SOFRES poll of March 1990, 81% of the people questioned considered that the FN was a racist party (against 9% who declared that it was not), 78% that it was sectarian (8% tolerant), and 72% a danger for democracy (16% not dangerous).

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