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ActEU Activating European
Citizens' Trust in Times of Crises and Polarisation



Feeling under-represented?

Intersectional differences in emotions toward the Austrian parliament and (mis)perceived representation

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Day of Parliamentary Research

Panel II “How do we perceive differences in representation?”



Citizens judge representation through recognition, agenda-setting and policy benefit

Subjective representation

The survey asks whether citizens feel seen, heard and served by parliament.

Objective representation

We compare these perceptions with descriptive presence in 26th and 27th legislature

Affective representation

The survey asks whether parliament evokes emotions such as hope, pride, worry or anger

Recognition

Do legislators look like me?

Agenda

Do they prioritize issues I care about?

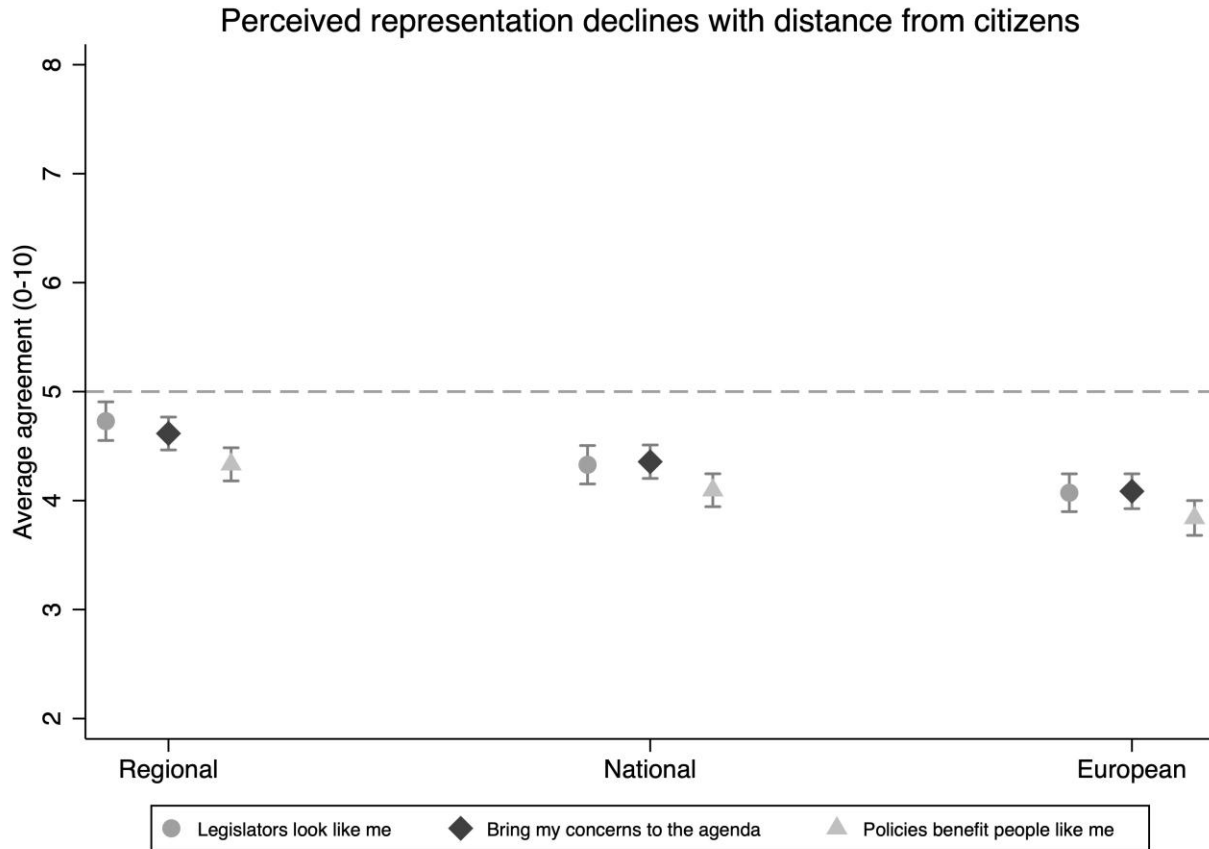
Policy

Do decisions benefit people like me?

Overarching question: ***do feelings of under-representation reflect objective under-representation, negative perceptions of parliament, or both?***

REPRESENTATION ACROSS GOVERNANCE LEVELS

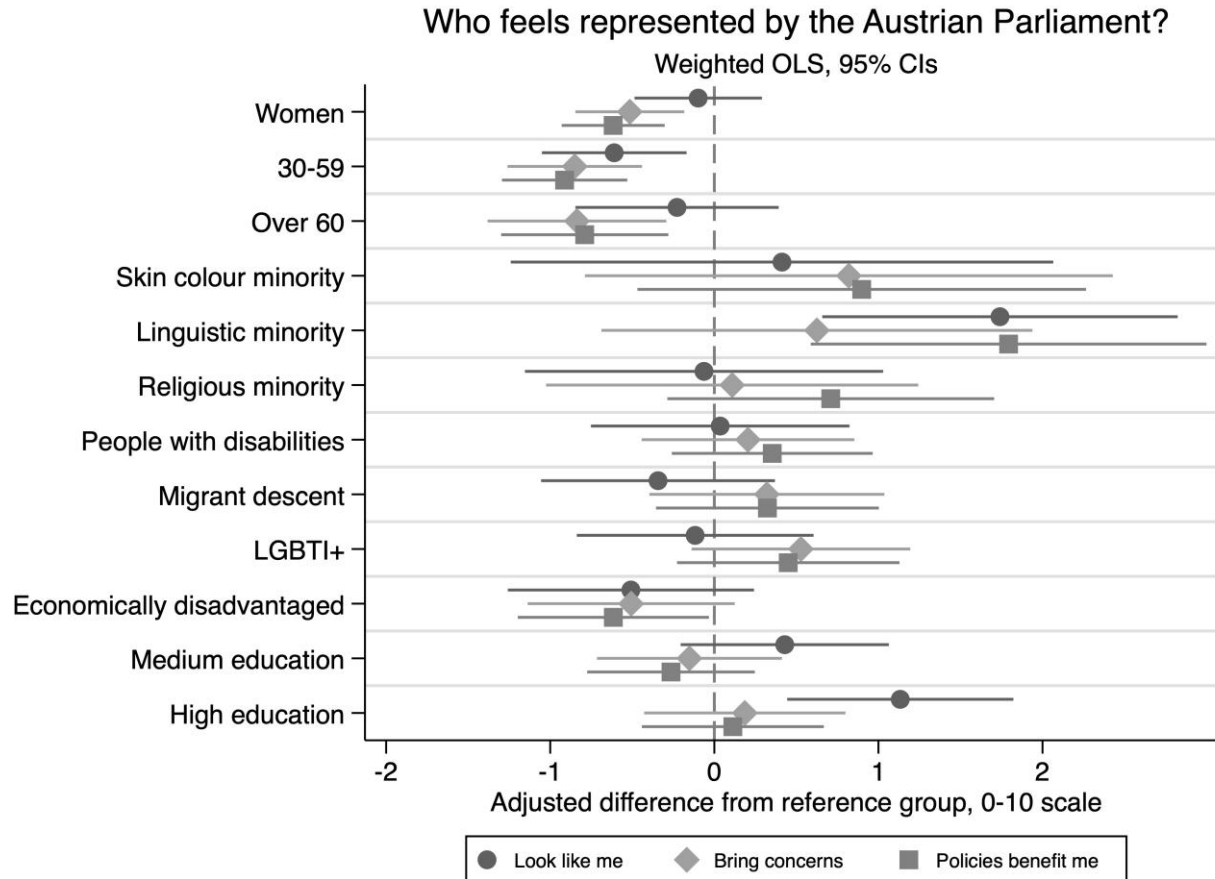
Perceived representation falls as political distance increases



- Respondents feel most represented at the regional level and least represented at the European level
- Policy outcomes are perceived as less representative than either legislators or agenda-setting
- Only a minority report high levels of representation, especially on policy outcomes

IIINTERSECTIONAL INTEQUALITIES

Representation is not experienced evenly across social

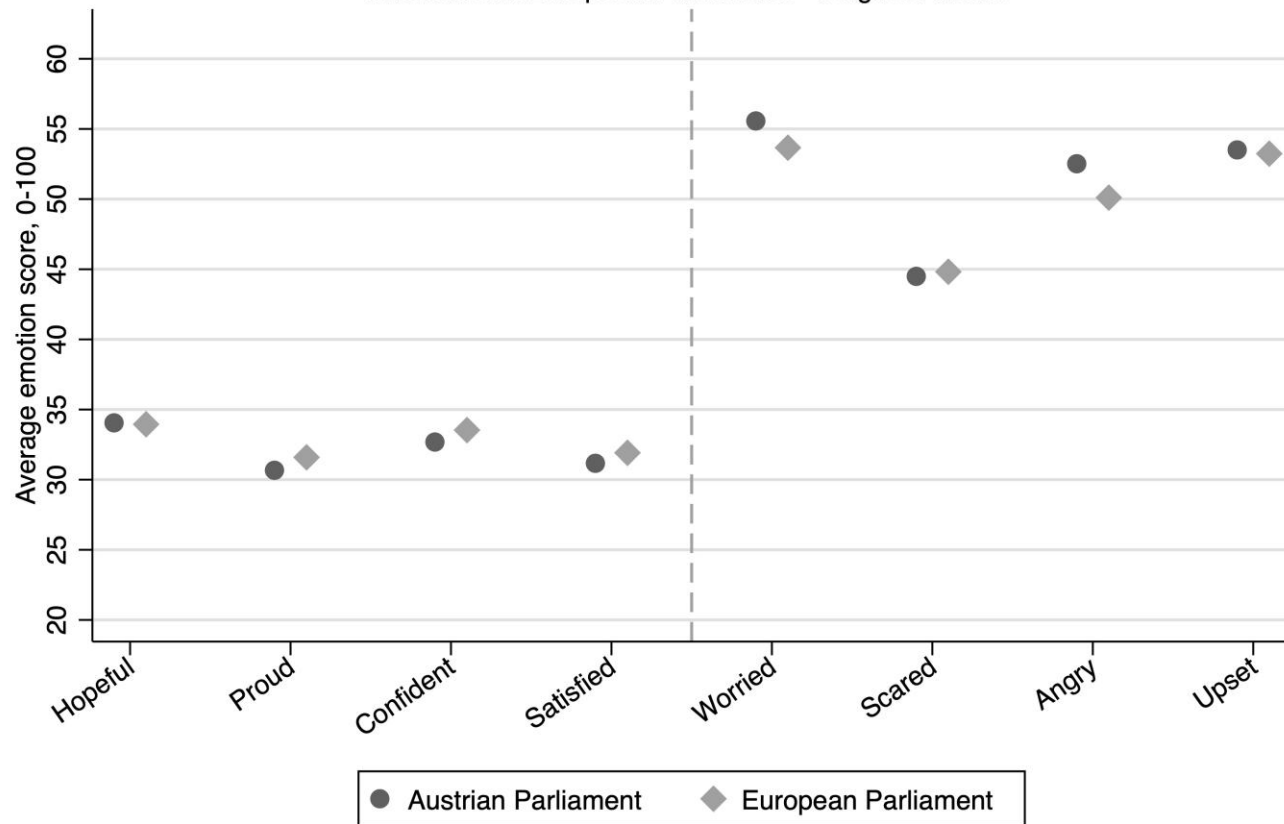


- Representation gaps differ across descriptive, agenda and policy dimensions
- Women: substantive rather than descriptive under-representation
- Economic disadvantage and age (in favour of youth!) emerge as the most consistent divides
- No single group feels uniformly underrepresented across all dimensions and levels of governance

AFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

Parliament evokes more negative than positive emotions

Parliament evokes more concern than pride
Austrian and European Parliaments - weighted means

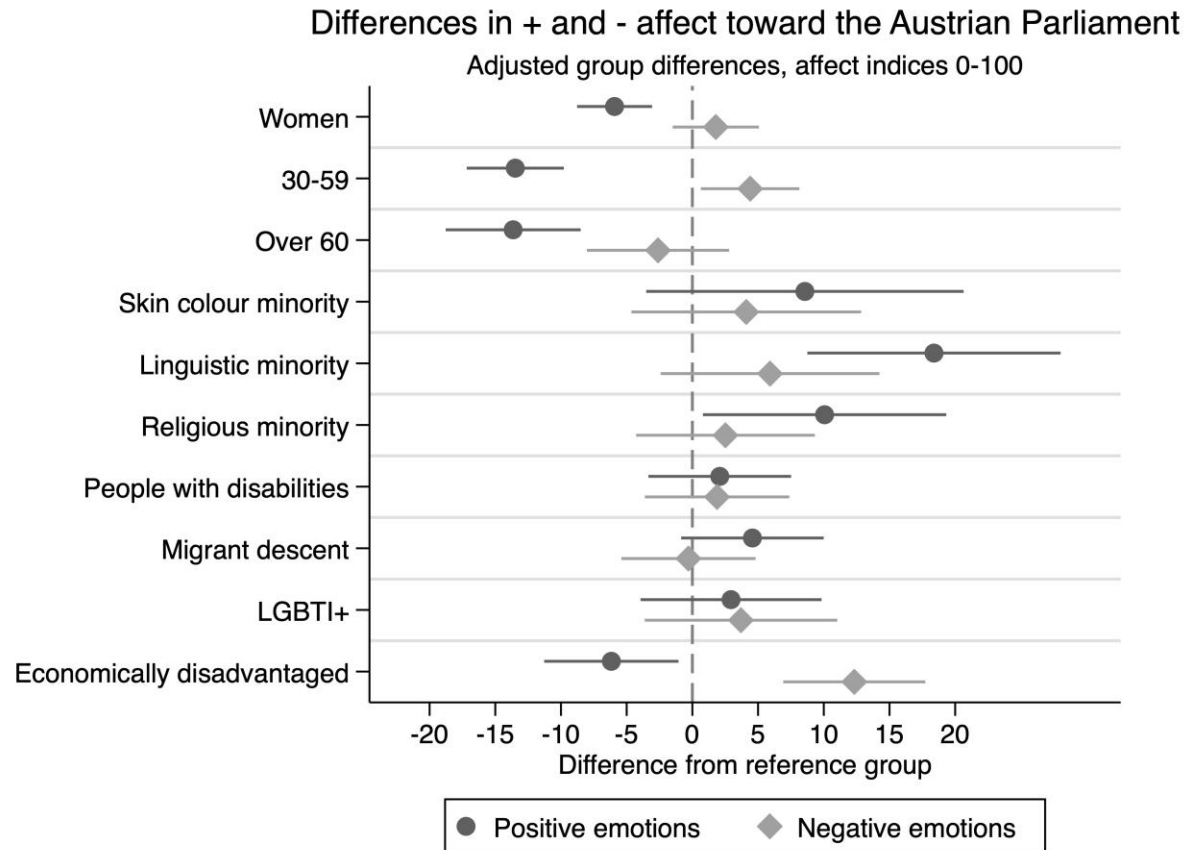


Negative emotions are higher than positive emotions but also more differences within them.

The Austrian and European Parliament show broadly similar profiles

AFFECTIVE DIVIDES

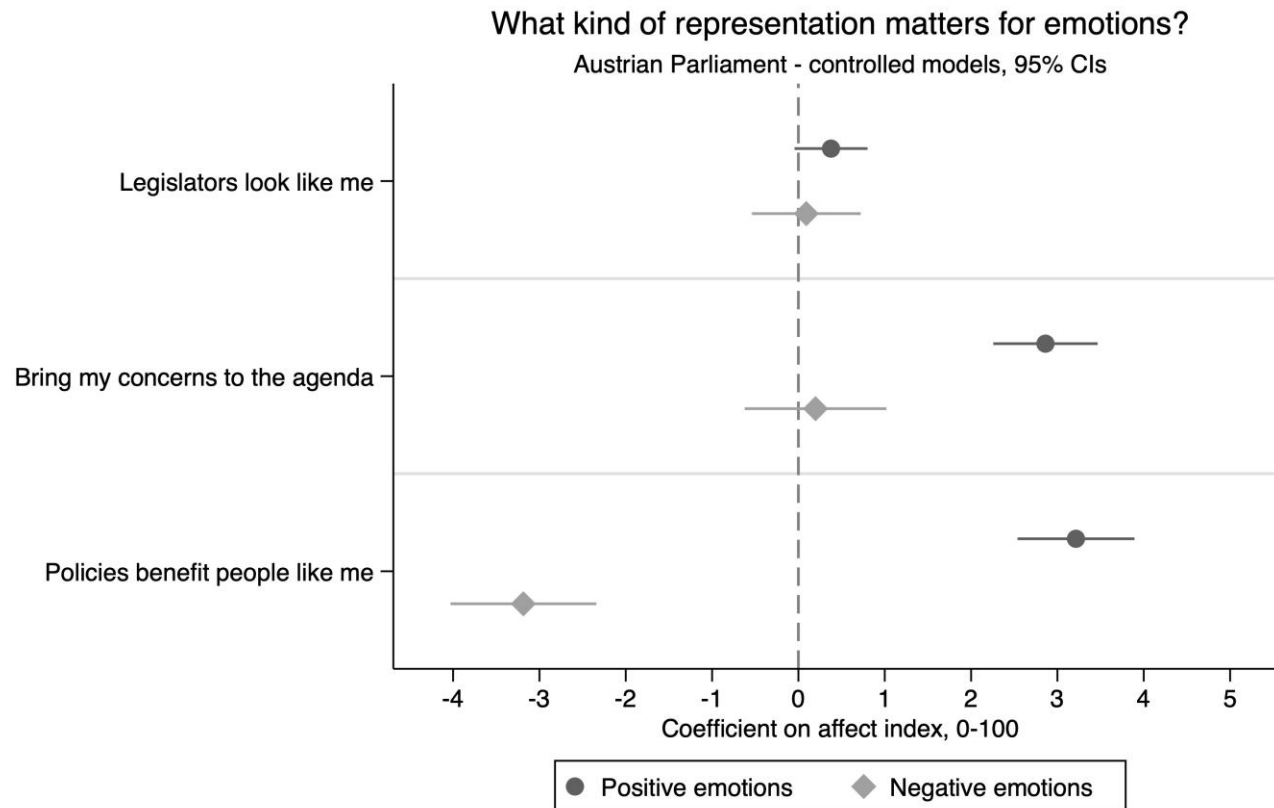
Economic disadvantage is the sharpest emotional divide



- Positive affect = hopeful, proud, confident, satisfied
- Negative affect = worried, scared, angry, upset
- Economic disadvantage strongest emotional divide (especially > negative)
- Age patterns mirror subjective representation: younger > positive
- Women: only < positives

REPRESENTATION TO EMOTIONS

Representation is strongly linked to citizens' emotional relationship with parliament

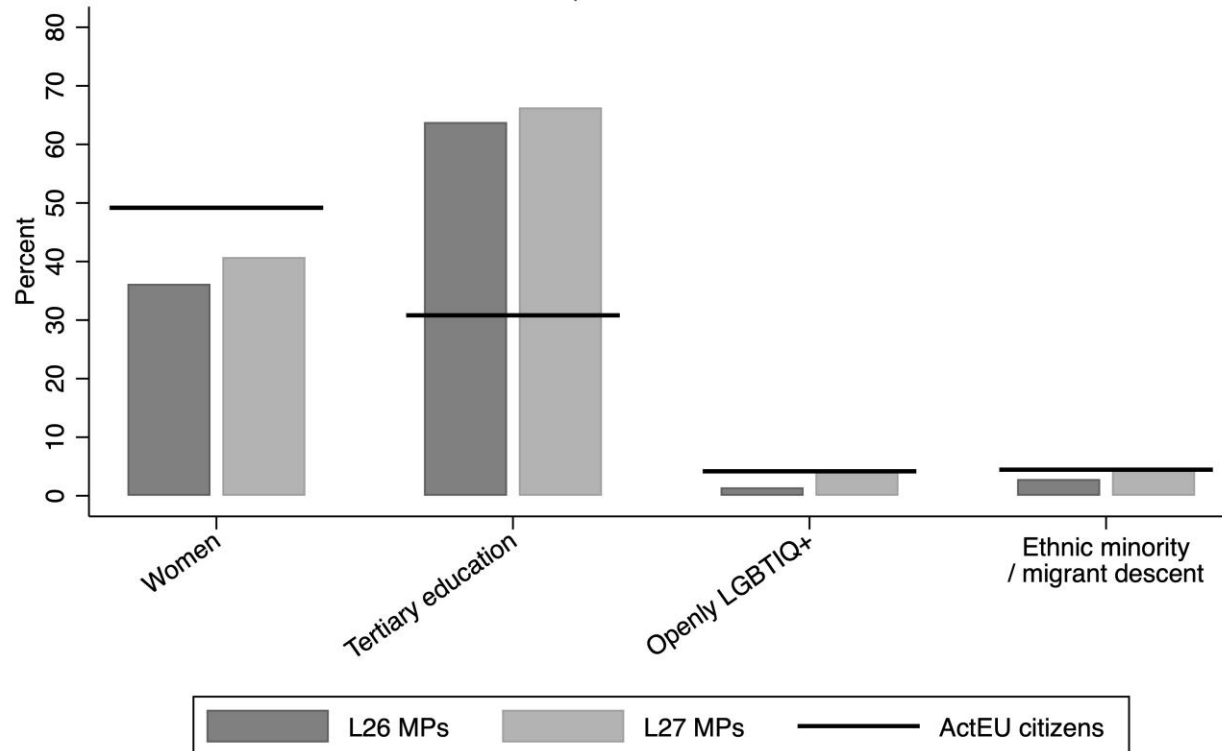


- Agenda and policy representation are closely linked to positive emotions toward parliament
- Policy representation is the strongest predictor of lower negative emotions
- Policy outcomes matter more for emotions than perceived descriptive representation

OBJECTIVE CONTEXT

Objective and subjective representation only partially overlapping

Objective descriptive representation remains uneven
MPs in L26/L27 compared with ActEU citizen benchmark



Citizen benchmark = weighted ActEU Austria sample, citizens only. Ethnic minority/migrant comparison is approximate.

- Women remain under-represented
- Tertiary-educated MPs are strongly overrepresented: low descriptive representation of economically disadvantaged citizens
- Openly LGBTIQ+ and ethnic minority MPs rare, but shares growing toward ActEU citizen benchmarks
- Descriptive does not fully explain who feels represented but may matter for some groups (e.g. socio-economic disadvantage)

Conclusions

Presence

Objective descriptive representation remains uneven and should stay visible in parliamentary monitoring

Process

Citizens report larger gaps in agenda and policy representation than in descriptive representation

Affect

Perceived policy responsiveness is strongly linked to positive and negative emotions toward parliament

Citizens may see themselves in parliament without feeling represented by its decisions