



**SOCIAL  
CHANGE  
INITIATIVE**

**Annmarie Benedict Pagliano**



SOCIAL  
CHANGE  
INITIATIVE

sharpen narrative change practice in  
France, Germany, Italy and Greece

- commissioning research,
- building technical capacity
- amplifying learning



# PUBLIC ATTITUDES ON IMMIGRATION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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*Driving Narrative Change on Migration and Integration*

**Annmarie Benedict Pagliano**

Social Change Initiative

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# MORE IN COMMON

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## More in Common

- ⌘ **More in Common** is an initiative begun in 2017 to build open, inclusive and resilient societies by addressing profound threats to democracy such as social fracturing, ‘othering’ and tribalism
- ⌘ We focused on immigration and refugees as authoritarian populists have been rallying the public around a strident hostility against immigrants, against “the other”
- ⌘ We work in partnership with organizations that have large-scale reach and influence
- ⌘ We have developed a powerful survey instrument in partnership with research firms Ipsos, IFOP and YouGov. We’ve adapted each instrument to reflect the social and political landscape of each country. We combine quantitative methods with qualitative interviews and focus groups



# SEGMENTATION

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## Why attitudinal segmentation studies provide such insight

- ❁ National segmentation studies provide unique insights into the landscape of public opinion because they **create a more complete picture of how people see their world**, connecting their views across a wide range of issues to their values, group identity and demographics
- ❁ They provide deep insights into some of the forces disrupting politics and societies:
  - ❁ Identity, religion and nationalism
  - ❁ Anti-immigration and anti-refugee discourse
  - ❁ Rising 'in-group' and 'out-group' tensions
  - ❁ 'Othering' of minorities

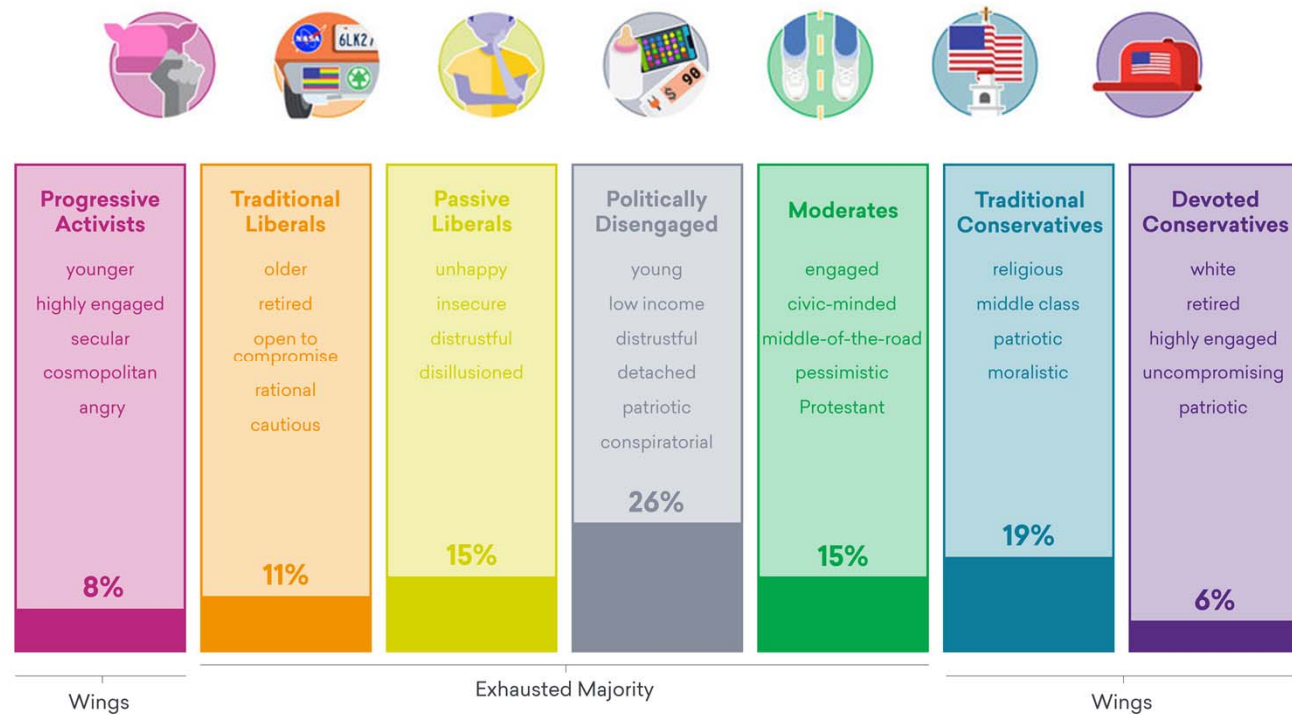


- **Multivariate groupings** rather than single variable cross tabulations
- Groups are **defined by attitudes and beliefs** not demographics
- **Groupings are based on detailed data analysis**, not prior associations



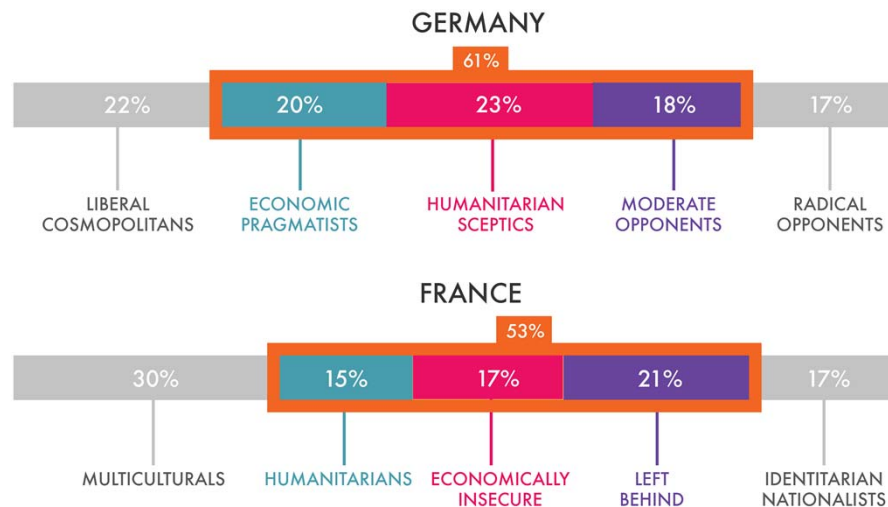
# Hidden Tribes:

## A study of America's Polarized Landscape



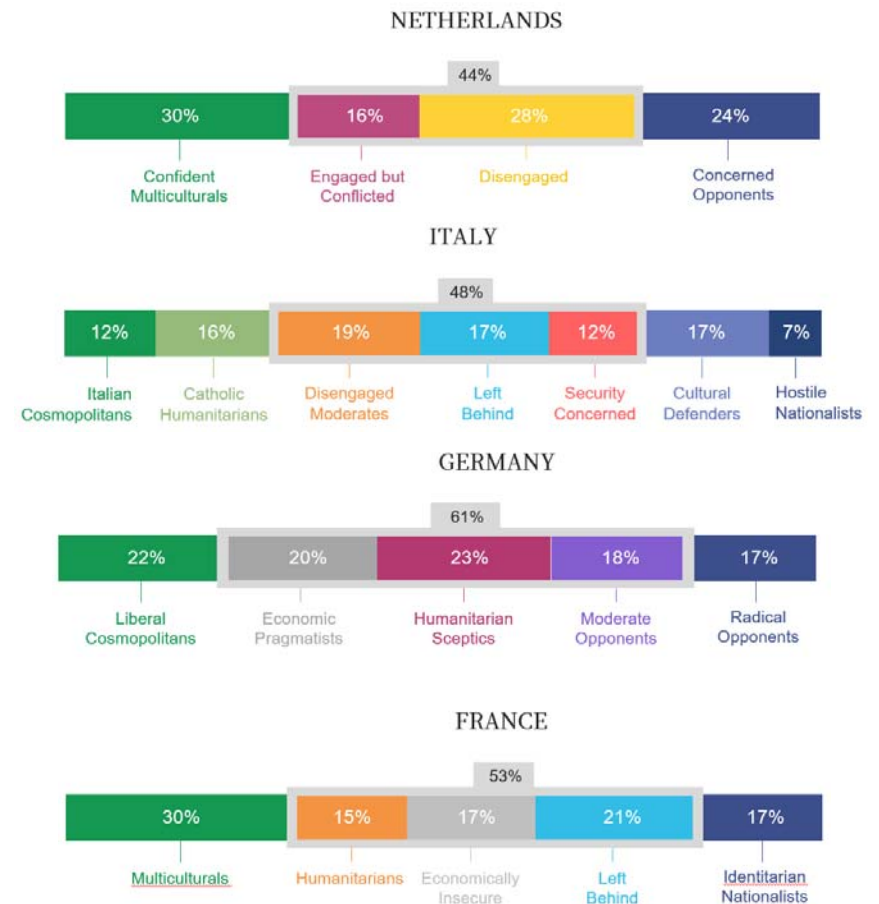
## Insight 1: It's not a 50:50 world

- ✿ Around half of the public is neither open (globalist/cosmopolitan) nor closed (nationalists/nativist). They are the 'conflicted middle' or Exhausted Majority. They are less vocal but could wield influence

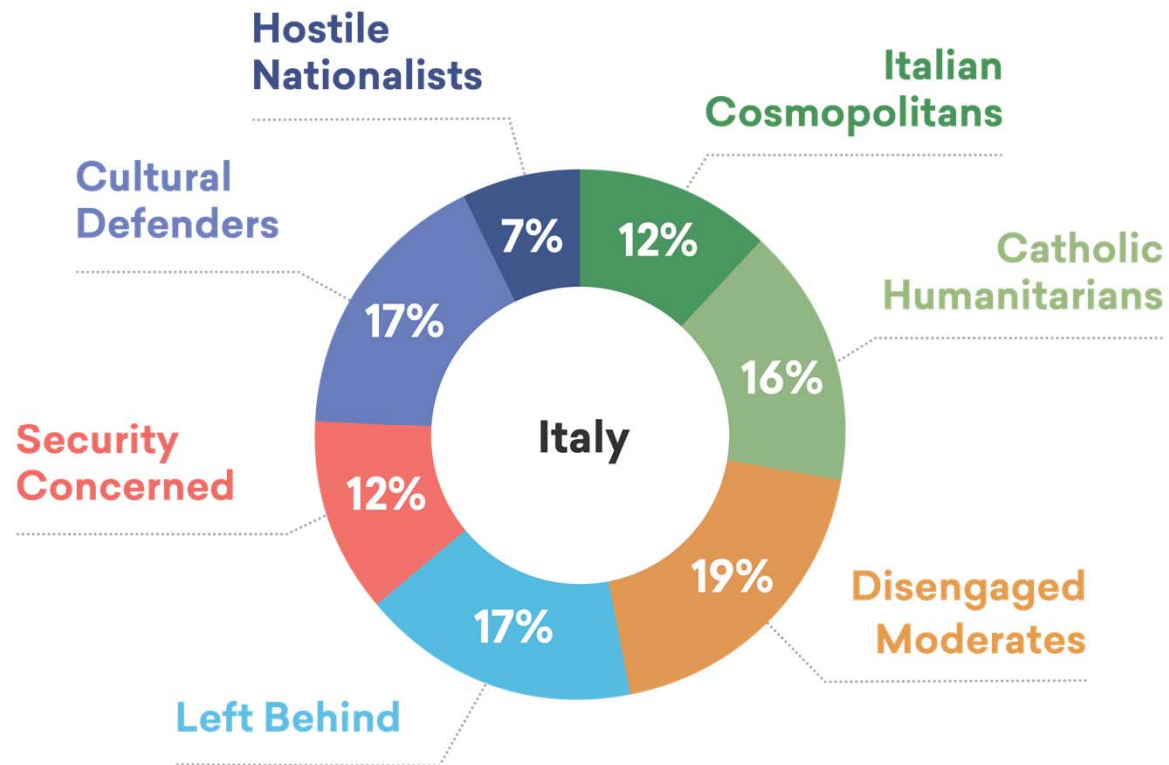


## Insight 2: “Conflicted” Middle Groups

- There are generally two or three distinctive conflicted middle groups, and some are more open to persuasion than others
- They are consistently less ideological, less deeply engaged in issues and often hold conflicting views
- We’re finding disengaged groups and a ‘moderately opposed’ middle group anxious about group identity and we’re worried about them

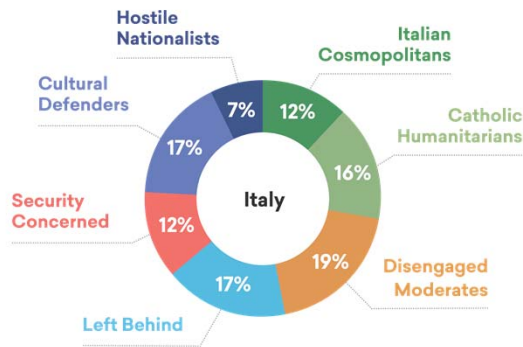


## Case Study: Italy

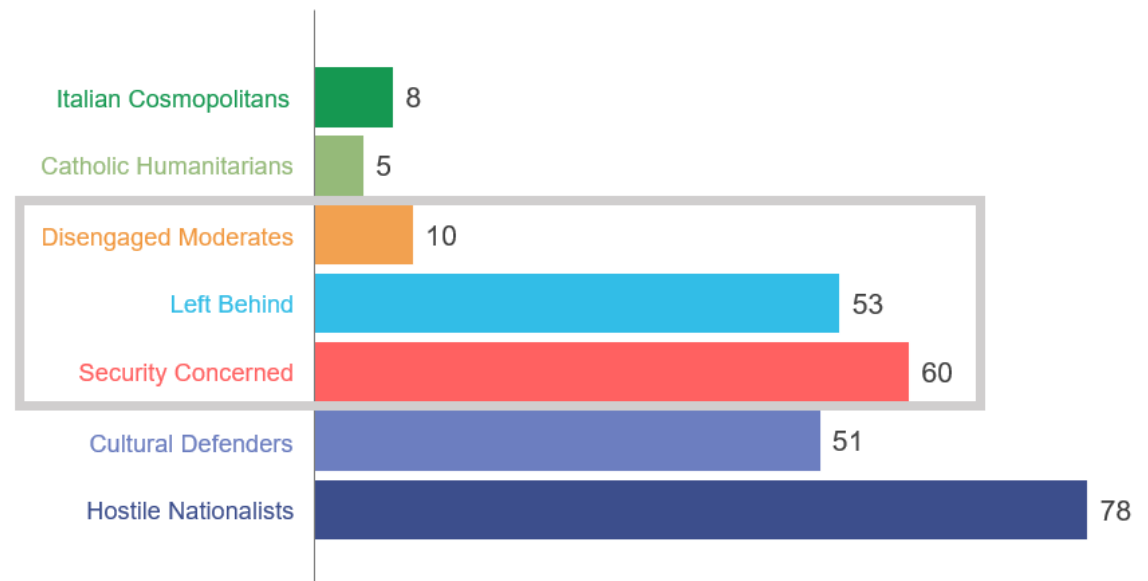


## Insight 2: Conflicted Middle Groups

- Three clusters of opinion take a very strong line against boat arrivals from the Mediterranean (the 'open society de-prioritisers')

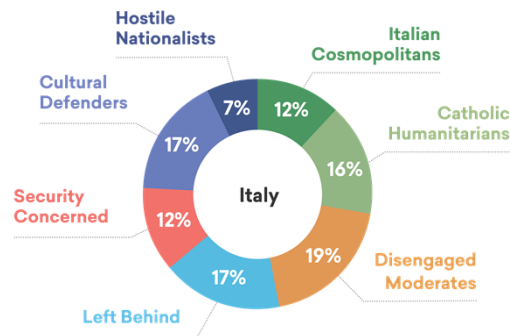


*"Italy should start sending the people smugglers' boats back across the Mediterranean, even if it causes the loss of life" (% total agree)*

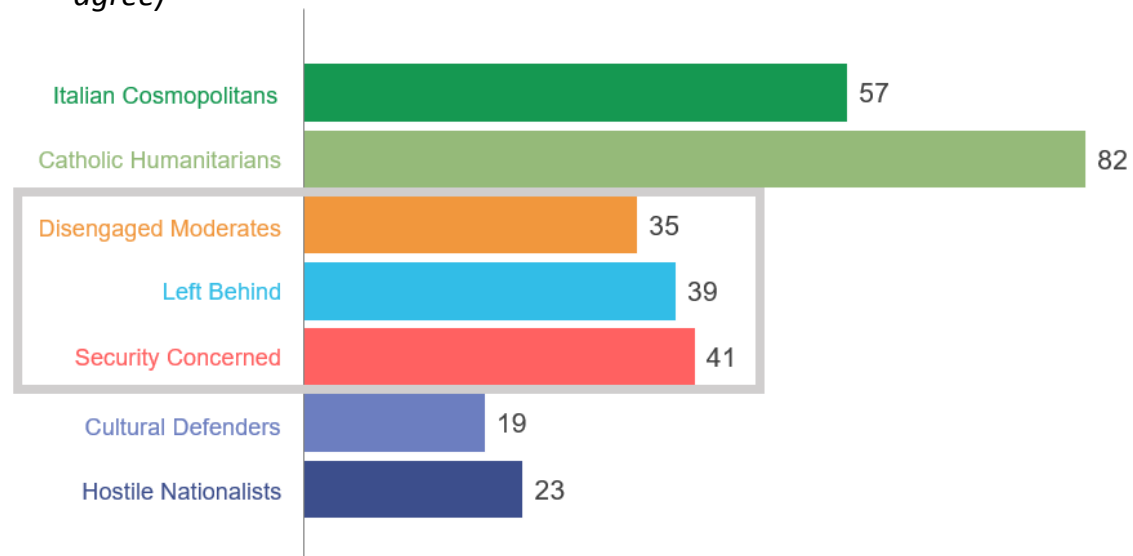


## Insight 2: Conflicted Middle Groups

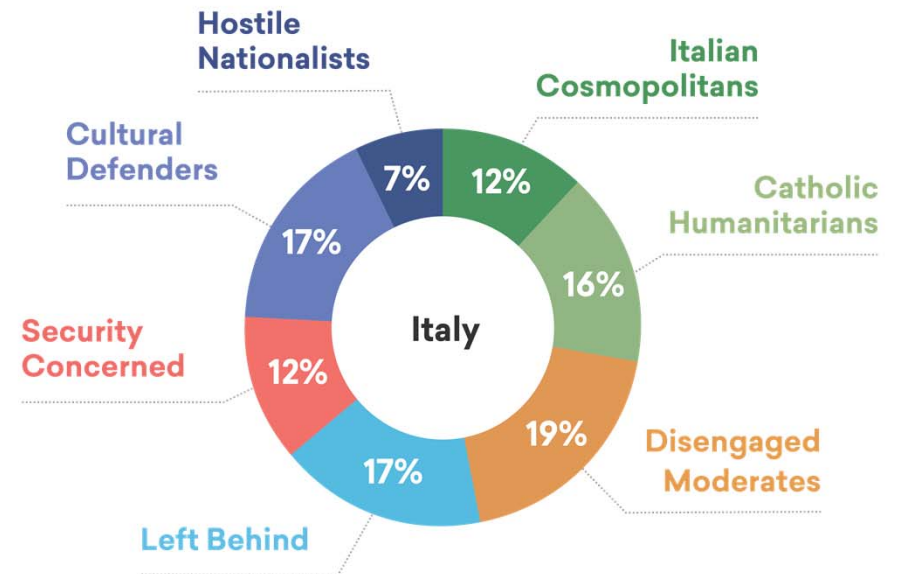
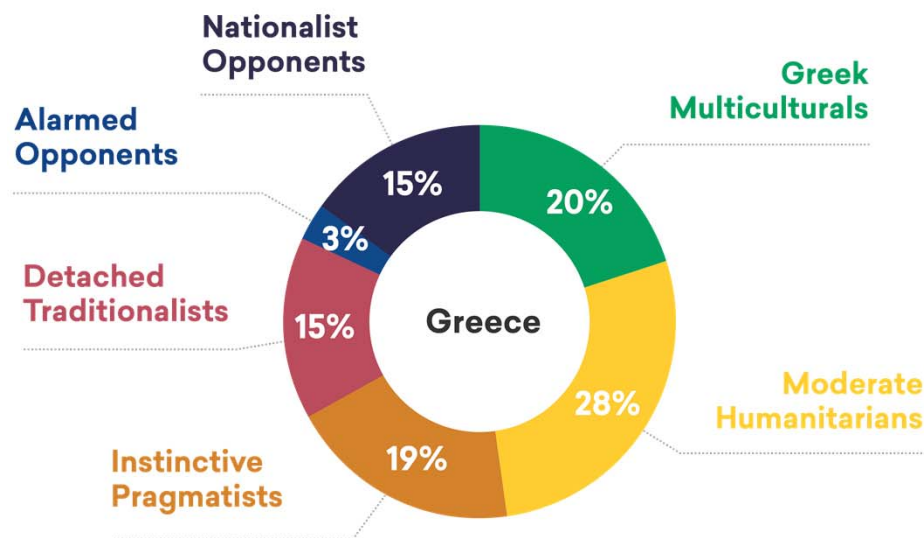
Many in the conflicted middle believe Italy, as a Catholic country, has a duty to help migrants



*"As a Catholic country, we should help provide for the needs of those entering Europe as migrants" (% total agree)*

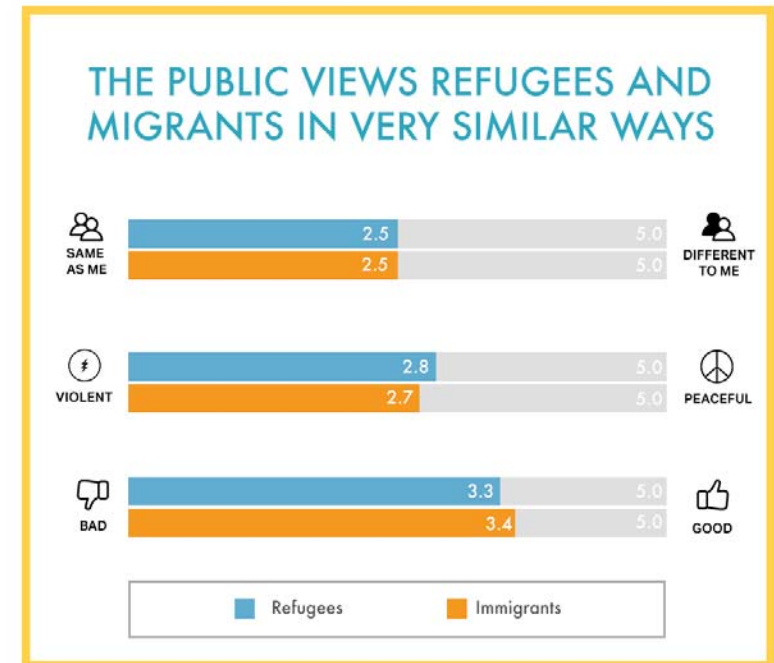


## Insight 3: The characteristics of each of the middle segments differ by country



## Insight 4: Conflicted middle groups are vulnerable to us versus-them narratives

- ❖ Populists are turning anger at the system into anger against minorities, creating a story of a narrower 'us' who have been treated with contempt for too long
- ❖ Populist narratives focus on the threat of 'them' against us - whether it's refugees, migrants or other minorities
- ❖ Our research confirms that people see the 'other' in similar ways



Sources: "Attitudes Towards National Identity, Immigration, and Refugees in Germany" Research Reports Published by More in Common, 2017.



## Insight 5: Anti-migrant populist arguments succeed because they engage middle groups' anxieties

- ❖ Extremists connect on an emotional level with anxieties about the loss of identity and sense of belonging and prey on three key fears about migrants and refugees:
  - ❖ Threats to traditional **culture and values** from rapid change - ***"It feels like [my country] is disappearing"***
  - ❖ **Terrorism and crime** – due to recent incidents, many associate refugees with increased physical threats
  - ❖ **Economic uncertainty** – at a time of insecurity, refugees may take jobs, undercut wages and put pressure on scarce resources (eg hospitals, schools, transport and welfare)
- ❖ Authority figures are distrusted; the most credible messengers are people like them
- ❖ We need to show that the populists are working against their values e.g. populists are trying to divide our country, take advantage of us

## General observations

- ✿ The public does not divide into a group of 'open' versus 'closed' values – most people have mixed values
- ✿ They are not necessarily the 'moveable middle' i.e. they are mostly not unresolved or in a state of indecision
- ✿ The explanatory power of socio-demographics and the left/right spectrum is declining
- ✿ Holding traditional values does not make you an opponent of migrants. Many people with traditional values have a strong humanitarian impulse
- ✿ National differences are significant, we need country-specific approaches
- ✿ Demographic factors are less important than often assumed

- ✚ The **conversation is not necessarily about immigration alone**— for many it is connected to identity and about **a broken system**, rigged for the rich and influential
- ✚ **Insights from social psychology** can also help explain some of the underlying factors for high proportion of mixed views groups e.g. group identity dynamics and moral foundations theory
- ✚ **Group identity dynamics** are ‘upstream’ in human psychology and shaping our views. For example, among middle groups, almost all reject racism but very few see ‘the other’ (especially Muslims) as being like them
- ✚ **Moral foundations theory** helps us understand the interaction between different values (eg authority value vs care value)

## What drives people? Understanding core beliefs



### The Core Beliefs Driving Polarization

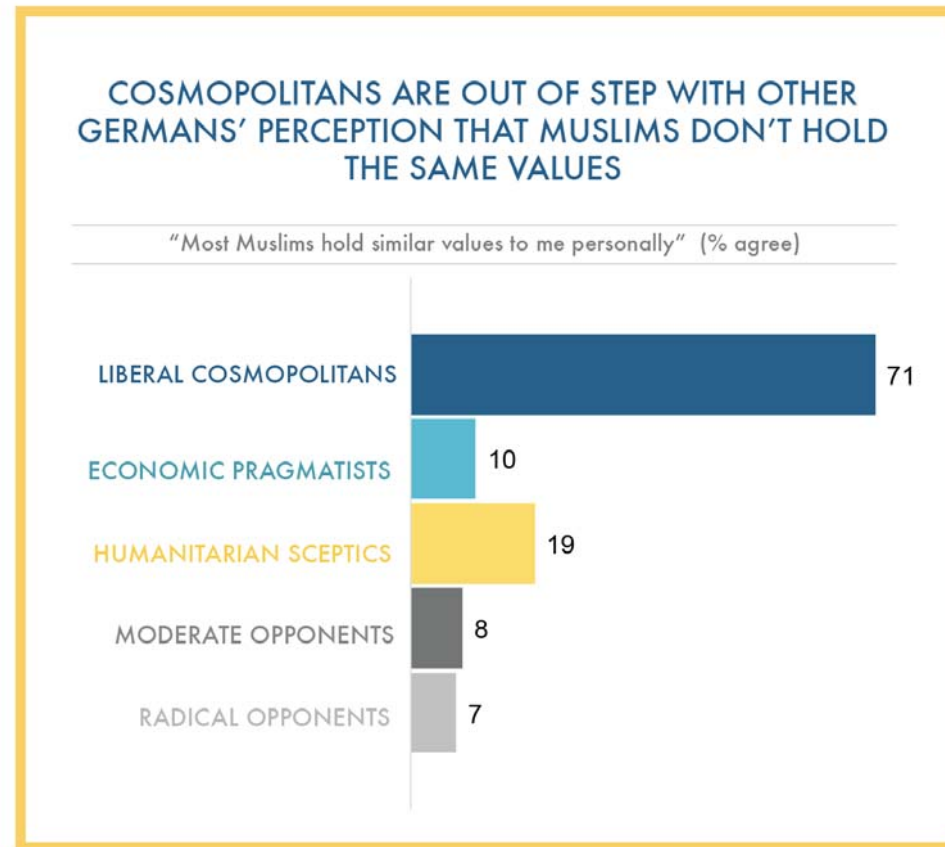
- ✿ Tribalism
- ✿ Agency and causality
- ✿ Moral Foundations
- ✿ Perception of threat
- ✿ Authoritarianism and parenting

# IMPLICATIONS

## Implication 1: Talk to the segments

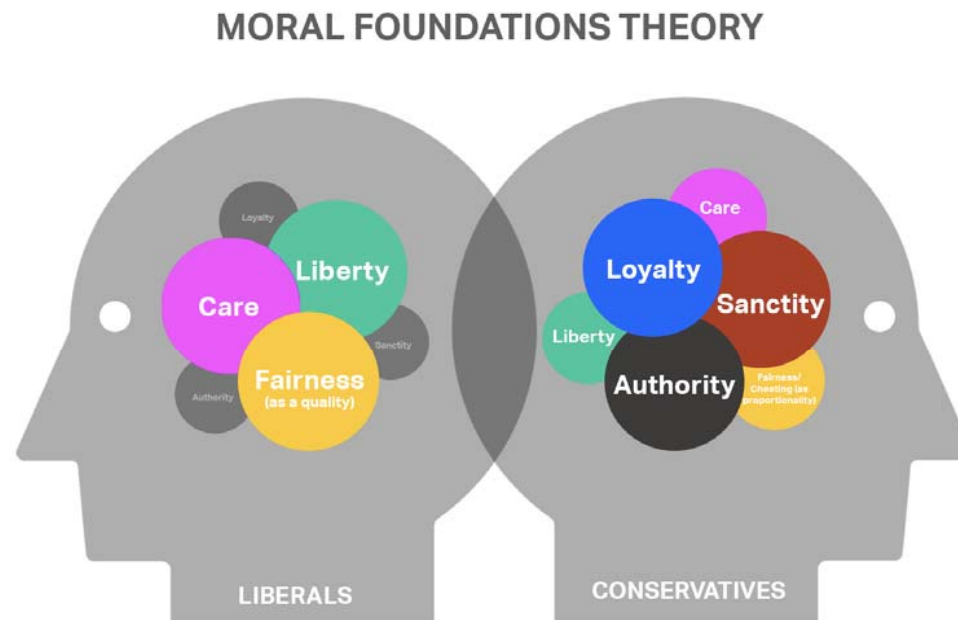
- ✿ We have moved into an age where there is no 'general public', instead there are multiple audiences, multiple worldviews and multiple channels of communication
- ✿ Typically around 25-35% are in the 'open' group, 15-20% are in the 'closed' group, and 40-55% are in the 'conflicted middle' groups
- ✿ There are generally 2-3 distinctive 'conflicted middle' groups. They hold mixed open and closed views – some more concerned about economic issues, others cultural issues, and some disengaged
- ✿ Each of the middle groups is different and needs a different strategy to appeal to their worldview

## Implication 2: On some issues, Cosmopolitans are profoundly different



Source: "Attitudes Towards National Identity, Immigration, and Refugees in Germany." Research Report Published by More in Common, 2017.

## Implication 3: We need to engage all of the moral values of 'middle' groups, not just 'care'







## Takeaways

- ❁ Traditional opinion research and traditional messaging and campaign strategies are not working as they once did
- ❁ We need to find ways to **address the gap** between the metropolitan urban middle class and the declining industrial base
- ❁ Engage people more through **identity, culture, emotion and values** (and less transactional politics) through the frame of a 'bigger us'
- ❁ Tap into the themes of **solidarity, inequality, corruption and the rigged system**
- ❁ Frame authoritarian populists as playing one group against each other
- ❁ Speak to **people's loss of agency and their desire to be empowered**

## Conclusion: To turn the tide, people in middle groups must hear compelling new narratives that speak to their concerns, and have positive experiences with ‘others’

- ✿ Use trusted messengers who are seen as credible or independent, not professional spokespeople
- ✿ Inclusive narratives need to engage people through values and emotion rather than facts and reason
  - ✿ *“This is not about who they are, it’s about who WE are”*
  - ✿ *Focus on what we have in common not how we differ*
- ✿ We need to speak to people’s identity and values holistically (e.g. their anxiety about the loss of belonging and loss of control, perception of threat, as well as inclusion and compassion)



**Thank you!**

**Questions & Comments**



# GET IN TOUCH



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