Political Attitudes and Sexual Identity in Germany: Examining the Sexuality Gap

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Abstract

The association between LGB+ identity and political attitudes in Europe remains relatively underexplored, despite the growing visibility of LGB+ individuals in electoral politics. Existing research tends to focus on a limited range of political attitudes and seldom uses indicators that reflect LGB+ self-identification. This research note presents new evidence based on original survey data ($N = 1{,}599$) from Germany in 2021, which directly measures sexual identity and its association with political attitudes. It shows that self-identifying as LGB+ (9.63 percent; $N = 154$) is associated with left-liberal political attitudes, confirming previous findings from studies in the US and Western Europe. However, in contrast to those studies, LGB+ individuals in Germany do not exhibit more liberal views on migration or greater solidarity with EU member states in financial need. These findings suggest that LGB+ individuals are not always more liberal than heterosexuals.

KEYWORDS

Germany, LGB+, Political Attitudes, Sexual Identity, Sexuality Gap

Zusammenfassung

Der Zusammenhang zwischen LGB+ Identität und politischen Einstellungen in Europa ist noch relativ unerforscht, obwohl LGB+ Individuen im Wahlverhalten immer sichtbarer werden. Die bisherige Forschung konzentriert sich in der Regel auf eine begrenzte Anzahl politischer Einstellungen und verwendet selten Indikatoren, die die Selbstidentifikation von LGB+ widerspiegeln. Dieser Beitrag präsentiert neue Erkenntnisse auf der Grundlage von Original-Umfragedaten ($N = 1.599$) aus Deutschland aus dem Jahr

2021, die die sexuelle Identität und ihren Zusammenhang mit politischen Einstellungen direkt messen. Er zeigt, dass die Selbstidentifikation als LGB+ (9,63 Prozent; $N = 154$) mit linksliberalen politischen Einstellungen verbunden ist, was frühere Ergebnisse aus Studien in den USA und Westeuropa bestätigt. Im Gegensatz zu diesen Studien vertreten LGB+ Individuen in Deutschland jedoch keine liberaleren Ansichten zur Migration oder eine größere Solidarität mit EU-Mitgliedstaaten in finanzieller Notlage. Diese Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass LGB+-Personen nicht immer liberaler sind als Heterosexuelle.

Résumé

L'association entre l'identité LGB+ et les attitudes politiques en Europe reste relativement peu explorée, malgré la visibilité croissante des individus LGB+ dans la politique électorale. Les recherches existantes se concentrent généralement sur un éventail limité d'attitudes politiques et utilisent rarement des indicateurs reflétant l'auto-identification des personnes LGB+. Cette note de recherche présente de nouvelles données issues d'une enquête originale ($N = 1\,599$) menée en Allemagne en 2021, qui mesure directement l'identité sexuelle et son association avec les attitudes politiques. Les résultats montrent que l'auto-identification en tant que LGB+ (9,63%; $N = 154$) est. associée à des attitudes politiques de gauche, confirmant ainsi les résultats d'études précédentes réalisées aux États-Unis et en Europe occidentale. Cependant, contrairement à ces études, les individus LGB+ en Allemagne n'expriment pas d'opinions plus libérales sur la migration ni une solidarité accrue envers les États membres de l'UE confrontés à des besoins financiers. Ces résultats suggèrent que les personnes LGB+ ne sont pas toujours plus libérales que les hétérosexuels.

Riassunto

L'associazione tra l'identità LGB+ e gli atteggiamenti politici in Europa rimane relativamente poco studiata, nonostante la crescente visibilità delle persone LGB+ nella politica elettorale. Le ricerche esistenti tendono a concentrarsi su una gamma limitata di atteggiamenti politici e utilizzano raramente indicatori che riflettono l'autoidentificazione delle persone LGB+. Questa nota di ricerca presenta nuove evidenze basate su dati originali di un sondaggio ($N = 1.599$) condotto in Germania nel 2021, che misura direttamente l'identità sessuale e la sua associazione con gli atteggiamenti politici. I risultati mostrano che l'autoidentificazione come LGB+ (9,63%; $N = 154$) è associata ad atteggiamenti politici di sinistra-liberali, confermando i risultati di studi precedenti condotti

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negli Stati Uniti e nell'Europa occidentale. Tuttavia, a differenza di questi studi, le persone LGB+ in Germania non mostrano opinioni più liberali sulla migrazione né una maggiore solidarietà verso gli Stati membri dell'UE in difficoltà finanziarie. Questi risultati suggeriscono che le persone LGB+ non sono necessariamente più liberali degli eterosessuali.

INTRODUCTION: STUDYING LGB+ IDENTITY ASSOCIATION WITH POLITICAL ATTITUDES

The visibility and significance of LGB+[1] individuals in Western electorates are on the rise, prompting political parties from the radical left to the radical right to actively seek their support (Huber, 2022; Proctor, 2022; Turnbull-Dugarte & López Ortega, 2023). Recent findings indicate that LGB+ voters are not only more politically engaged but also more likely to vote (Turnbull-Dugarte & Townsley, 2020), especially for left-wing and liberal parties (Hertzog, 1996; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Guntermann & Beauvais, 2022; Grahn, 2023; Wurthmann, 2023; Hunklinger & Kleer, 2024; Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2024). However, evidence suggests that assumptions about the overall socio-political progressiveness of LGB+ individuals (Denise, 2017; Schnabel, 2018) may be overly simplistic, as some studies highlight reservations within this group, particularly regarding migrants or Muslims (Spierings, 2021; Hunklinger & Ajanović, 2022; Debus & Wurthmann, 2024).

Existing studies, primarily conducted in the US, indicate that LGB+ individuals are notably more supportive of various policies than heterosexuals, such as improved healthcare, liberal abortion rights, reduced religious influence, and increased rights for sexual minorities (Schaffner & Senic, 2006; Denise, 2017; Schnabel, 2018). Additionally, LGB+ individuals in Western Europe tend to favour progressive EU integration policies and view immigration as beneficial for economic development and cultural enrichment (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021). While these findings give some limited insights into a sexuality gap in political attitudes on European integration and immigration policies, a comprehensive multi-dimensional test of this gap is still missing. In the context of an ongoing debate about why LGB+ individuals tend to prioritise left-wing and green parties (Page & Paulin, 2022; Hunklinger & Kleer, 2024), the discussion often centres on the idea that these parties have made a concerted effort to advocate for LGB+ interests (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021; Grahn, 2023). However, the actual political attitudes of LGB+ individuals have received relatively little attention. Recent findings, though, suggest that German LGB+ individuals at the elite level – parliamentary candidates – show significant differences in their political attitudes compared to their heterosexual counterparts, irrespective of party affiliation (Debus & Wurthmann, 2024). It remains uncertain, nevertheless, whether these findings can also be observed at the individual level among ordinary citizens.

In addition to the existing gap regarding sexual identity and political attitudes, there is a further, more methodological issue. Studies conducted in the United States typically rely on measures of LGB+ self-identification (see, e.g., Schaffner & Senic, 2006; Denise, 2017; Schnabel, 2018). This is particularly important because, according to social identity theory, an LGB+ identity can only be recognized if individuals self-identify as part of this group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Self-categorisation can be facilitated by including explicit questions about sexual identity in surveys (Hertzog, 1996; Guyan, 2022). This is crucial because political behaviour is shaped primarily by individuals' subjective

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[1]The author regrets to inform that no conclusions can be drawn for trans* individuals based on the available data source. Therefore, the umbrella term LGB+ is used here, encompassing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and other sexual identities.

self-understanding, rather than external labels, although these labels can still play a role in shaping that understanding. However, existing analyses of the political attitudes of LGB+ individuals in Western Europe often rely on a method that uses respondents' sex and the sex of their partners to infer sexual orientation (see, e.g., Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021). Since many surveys do not directly ask about sexual identity, this approach is frequently the only option (Kühne et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this method introduces distortions in the data, as same-sex partnerships are significantly less common than heterosexual ones (Lengerer & Bohr, 2019). As a result, many respondents are excluded from analyses that focus solely on partnered individuals. Additionally, bisexual individuals in opposite-sex relationships are incorrectly classified as heterosexual using this approach, which can lead to systematic distortions in the findings (Wurthmann, 2023), a limitation that the authors themselves acknowledge (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021).[2]

This contribution, therefore, investigates the following research question: *How is LGB+ self-identification associated with the adoption of political attitudes?*

This research note aims to address the existing empirical gap by examining how LGB+ identity, as directly recorded in surveys, is linked to the adoption of specific political attitudes across a broader range of issues, in contrast to heterosexuals. To achieve this, it utilises the case study of the Federal Republic of Germany before the 2021 federal elections. I anticipate notable distinctions in attitudes between LGB+ individuals and heterosexuals relying on a set of ten indicators, including attitudes towards migration, gender equality, rights of homosexuals, religion, financial solidarity within the EU, state-organized reduction of income disparities, market interventionism, higher taxes for the wealthy, nuclear energy as a power source, and community service for the unemployed. These indicators reflect the socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions that constitute Germany's two-dimensional party system conflict lines (Wurthmann, 2023; Debus & Wurthmann, 2024). Until now, no investigation of attitude differences outside the US has been as comprehensive (see Schnabel, 2018).

Given the endorsement of migration-critical views by LGB+ individuals in various studies (Spierings, 2021; Hunklinger & Ajanović, 2022; Wurthmann, 2023), Turnbull-Dugarte's (2021) assumption of overall LGB+ progressiveness in Western Europe may require reconsideration. Radical right-wing parties have actively courted the LGB+ electorate, framing anti-migrant narratives as supportive to the free lifestyle of homosexuals (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2023; Turnbull-Dugarte & López Ortega, 2023), influencing both electoral choices and attitudes. Debus and Wurthmann's (2024) finding that LGB+ candidates in Germany favour liberal policies, without pro-migration stances, further supports this.

This research note provides new evidence that self-identifying as LGB+ has no significant effect on attitudes towards migration, gender equality, market interventionism, and financial solidarity within the EU. LGB+ individuals are – on average – as supportive of migrant assimilation as heterosexuals. However, clear differences emerge regarding views on the rights of homosexuals, religion, state-led income disparity reduction, higher taxes for the wealthy, nuclear energy as a power source, and mandatory community service for the unemployed.

How I arrived at this conclusion will be explained in the following. First, I will provide a detailed explanation of the research design in the next section. I will then present the findings of the analysis, followed by a discussion that summarises the results and provides an outlook for future research.[3]

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[2]For a more extensive discussion on how the omission of sexual and gender identities in surveys contributes to the systematic suppression of knowledge, see Paternotte (2018) and Ayoub (2022), among others.

[3]All analyses were conducted using the software R (version 4.4.1) (R Core Team, 2024) and RStudio (version 2024.9.0.375) (RStudio Team, 2024). The following packages were used for the analyses: ordinal (Christensen, 2023), Hmisc (Harrell, 2024), stargazer (Hlavac, 2022), ggpubr (Kassambara, 2023), jtools (Long, 2022), RColorBrewer (Neuwirth, 2022), corrplot (Wei & Simko, 2024), ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016), dplyr (Wickham, François, et al., 2023), haven (Wickham, Miller, et al., 2023), tidyr (Wickham et al., 2024), sandwich (Zeileis, 2004, 2006; Zeileis et al., 2020), and lmtest (Zeileis & Hothorn, 2002).

RESEARCH DESIGN: SEXUAL IDENTITY GAP AND POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Germany stands out as an intriguing and pertinent case due to the structure of its party competition, mirroring that of many Western European nations, as highlighted by Hunklinger and Ajanović (2022) or Wurthmann (2023). Consequently, insights from Germany hold potential for application to other countries. Initial research indicates that the equality of homosexuals does not cause their political demobilisation (Grahn, 2023). Nonetheless, the fact that marriage equality was only implemented in Germany as recently as 2017, trailing behind other Western European countries (Ahrens et al., 2022), implies that it may be premature to assume – although unexpected to occur – any differences in attitudes to diminish until 2021.

Observing differences in Germany in 2021 gains further weight given the heightened politicisation of LGBTQ* community issues during the 2021 federal election. Notably, the new government's coalition agreement committed to global action for enhancing rights for sexual minorities, underscoring the ongoing relevance of this issue (Ayoub, 2023). Hence, the current case is an illustrative example for examining how LGB+ individuals in a nation navigate their orientations based on attitudes within the context of progressive liberalisation and simultaneous active representation of interests by numerous political parties.

The data utilised in this research note were obtained in August 2021 as part of an online access panel survey (Wurthmann, 2024). The sample was stratified based on sociodemographic characteristics outlined in the German census. While it is noteworthy that older respondents are increasingly represented among online access panel users, the sample was restricted to individuals between 18 and 74. Through this approach, it was possible to obtain a data set that demonstrated only minor deviations from the population parameters (see Online Appendix, Table A1).

Out of the 2,264 participants in the survey, 52 respondents were excluded from the analysis due to insufficient answers regarding their sexual identity. Among the remaining 2,212 respondents, 1,992 individuals (90.05 percent) identified as heterosexual, while 220 individuals (9.95 percent) identified as LGB+. Additionally, participants who declined to answer further pertinent questions or responded with "don't know" were excluded from the final analysis, leaving 1,599 individuals for consideration. 154 (9.63 percent) of these identify as LGB+ and further 1,445 (90.36 percent) as heterosexual. The study employs linear regression models, operationalising the indicators outlined below.

Main Explanatory Variable

This research note intends to investigate the effect of a self-attributed sexual identity on the adoption of specific attitudes. Following the inquiry, "How would you describe yourself: Are you…", participants were provided with the option to identify as (1) heterosexual, (2) homosexual, (3) bisexual, or to utilize (4) an open field to provide their own response. Moreover, they had the choice to refuse to answer. A total of 14 people used the open text box, seven of whom could be classified as heterosexual. Another five respondents were able to be recorded as asexual or pansexual. Two further open-text box statements contained derogatory statements and were therefore excluded. Respondents who refused to answer were excluded from the analysis (see Table 1).

Although bisexuals are distinct from homosexuals in their attitudes (Jones, 2021; Wurthmann & López-Ortega, 2024), due to the case number sexual identity was recoded into a new binary variable in which the expression (0) represents all heterosexuals, whereas homosexuals, bisexuals, asexuals, and pansexuals were combined into the expression (1) LGB+. This approach differs from previous analyses, all of which did not directly query sexual identity – in those

TABLE 1 Sexuality of the respondents after data cleansing.

Categories of Sexuality	N	Male	Female
Heterosexual	1992	971	1021
Homosexual	95	67	28
Bisexual	120	56	64
Asexual	3	-	3
Pansexual	2	1	1
Refused to answer	50	24	26
Insulting response	2	2	-

Source: Author's own calculation and presentation.

analyses, the sexual identity was reconstructed via the sex of the respondents and the sex of their partners (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020, 2021). On the one hand, this previous approach excluded people who were not in a partnership from the analysis; on the other hand, it led to bi- or pansexual individuals becoming completely invisible or even being falsely assigned as heterosexual (Kühne et al., 2019). Likewise, this externally assigned attribution as same-sex-oriented does not mean the respondents also adapt this identity themselves (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020). To adequately address the dimensions of the implications that arise from an assumed social identity, it is precisely the individual self-disclosure of what an individual self-identifies as that is of central importance (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Kühne et al., 2019). If it is assumed that sexual identity influences the adoption of political attitudes (Hertzog, 1996; Schnabel, 2018), a direct measurement is indispensable and is applied in the following, leaving 154 LGB+ individuals and 1,445 heterosexuals due to data cleansing.

Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge that some LGB+ respondents might incorrectly identify as heterosexual, as they may feel that their sexual identity is a private matter and not for disclosure.

Dependent Variables

In order to capture respondents' attitudes on a range of issues, they were asked to express their attitudes on a scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The following ten statements were presented to the respondents for assessment:

a. Immigrants should be obliged to adapt to German culture.
b. There should be a statutory quota for women on the boards of large companies.
c. Marriage should only be possible between a man and a woman.
d. People should be more oriented towards the commandments of God.
e. Germany should provide financial support to EU member states that are experiencing severe economic and financial difficulties.
f. The government should take measures to reduce income inequality.
g. The state should stay out of the economy.
h. Higher-earning citizens should pay more taxes than before.
i. The energy supply should also be secured using nuclear power.
j. The unemployed should perform community service to continue receiving state support.

For better comparability, indicators b), e), f), and h) were recoded so that agreement with these indicators, similar to the other items, represents a more economically liberal or socially conservative stance. The positions on the respective indicators show weak to moderate

correlations with each other. The strongest correlation is between the attitude towards taxing the rich and the reduction of inequalities, with r = 0.50 (see Figure A1 in the Online Appendix).

Control Variables

As control variables, a range of factors are included that have been found to shape political behaviour – including for LGB+ individuals. These factors comprise age, sex, formal educational attainment, the impact of place of residence, the former division between East and West Germany, subjective social class membership, as well as membership in trade unions, frequency of church attendance, and assessment of one's socioeconomic situation (Cramer Walsh, 2012; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020, 2021; Shorrocks, 2021; Wurthmann, 2023). A detailed overview of the operationalization can be found in Table A2 in the Online Appendix.

Analytical Strategy

This analysis relies on mean comparisons and linear regression models, where the dichotomous independent variable is regressed on ten dependent variables. A Bonferroni correction is applied to ensure statistical validity and account for multiple comparisons (Field et al., 2012, pp. 428–431). Consequently, any effects described as significant refer to Bonferroni-corrected values.

RESULTS: LIBERAL – BUT NOT IN ALL REGARDS?

Identifying as LGB+ is associated with greater support for marriage among same-sex couples (β = −0.741, $p < 0.001$), and a stronger rejection of adherence to God's commandments (β = −0.301, $p < 0.005$) (see Figure 1). These findings align with previous research on LGB+ identity and attitudes in the US (Denise, 2017; Schnabel, 2018).

However, it is noteworthy that LGB+ individuals do not consistently demonstrate greater liberalism towards migrants than heterosexuals despite sharing experiences of marginalisation. The effect of LGB+ self-identification on attitudes towards the assimilation of migrants is minor and insignificant (β = −0.146, $p > 0.05$). Like heterosexuals, LGB+ individuals are very much in favour of migrants assimilating to German culture. Overall, when only comparing mean values, LGB+ individuals differ significantly from heterosexual respondents on only a few issues: same-sex marriage, religious influence, and higher taxes for the wealthy. However, their views are not universally progressive or liberal. On average, LGB+ individuals also favour mandatory labour services for the unemployed and express views ranging from neutral to supportive regarding Germany withholding financial aid to other EU member states in times of need (see Online Appendix, Table A3).

Contrary to the findings of Turnbull-Dugarte (2021) and Schnabel (2018), which imply a general openness towards other minorities, these findings suggest otherwise – at least within the context of Germany at the time of the survey. It also sheds light on why Debus and Wurthmann (2024) did not observe a more liberal attitude towards migration among LGB+ candidates compared to their heterosexual counterparts. In fact, LGB+ individuals in Germany are just as supportive of migrant assimilation as heterosexuals, not only in terms of their average position (see Online Appendix, Table A3) but also in the overall distribution of their views (see Online Appendix, Figure A2a).[4] The data shows that around 58 percent of

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[4]However, this is not unusual, as men and women also do not exhibit any substantial differences in the overall distribution (see Online Appendix, Figure A2b). Additionally, no significant differences can be identified.
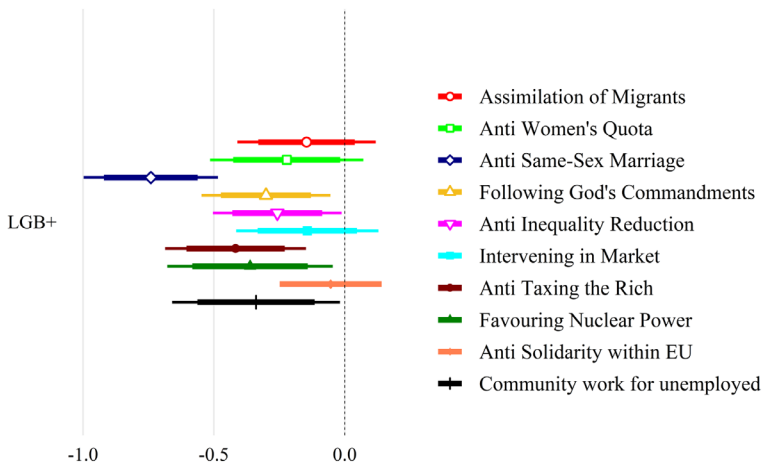
FIGURE 1 Association of LGB+ Identity on Policy Position Adaptation.
Note: The graph displays the beta coefficients of regressions calculated within a 95 percent confidence interval, using robust standard errors. The 95 percent interval represents the inner confidence range, whereas the Bonferroni-corrected interval, which accounts for multiple comparisons, represents a broader 99.5 percent confidence interval. For the full models, see Table A5 in the Online Appendix. $N = 1,599$. Author's own calculation and presentation.

heterosexuals support assimilation, compared to a somewhat lower 48 percent of LGB+ individuals. However, a significantly larger share of the LGB+ group is neutral on the issue. Approximately 13 percent of heterosexuals and 17 percent of LGB+ respondents oppose cultural assimilation. Overall, there is broad consensus on the topic, with most respondents being either neutral or supportive. A potential explanation for these findings is proposed in a recent study, which suggests that right-wing parties strategically target sexual minorities to fuel anti-migrant sentiments (Turnbull-Dugarte & López Ortega, 2023). This strategy might influence attitudes within the LGB+ community.

Additionally, LGB+ individuals are more likely to support reducing social inequalities ($\beta = -0.257$, $p < 0.005$), favour higher taxation of the wealthy ($\beta = -0.417$, $p < 0.001$), and less in favour of compulsory community service for the unemployed ($\beta = -0.339$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that LGB+ individuals exhibit a more socio-economically left-wing profile compared to heterosexuals, aligning with findings for parliamentary candidates in Germany (Debus & Wurthmann, 2024) and LGB+ individuals' attitudes in some Western European countries (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020, 2021). They also exhibit a stronger aversion to nuclear power as an energy source ($\beta = -0.362$, $p < 0.005$). With regard to mandatory labour services for the unemployed, LGB+ individuals are less supportive than heterosexual respondents but still show approval (see Online Appendix, Table A3). Therefore, being more liberal on certain issues does not automatically equate to being consistently liberal.

However, LGB+ individuals do not show significantly greater support for a women's quota ($p < 0.05$)[5] or for advocating a strong state with explicit market regulation ($\beta = -0.143$, $p > 0.05$), which contrasts with Schnabel's (2018) findings. Similarly, they are not significantly more likely to express solidarity with countries experiencing economic difficulties ($\beta = -0.054$, $p > 0.05$). This partly contradicts the EU enthusiasm described by Turnbull-Dugarte (2021), wherein an expansion of the EU integration process was favoured. It is essential to note that rejecting financial aid and supporting the EU integration process are not mutually exclusive.

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[5]This interpretation is based on the significance levels after applying the Bonferroni correction.

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One possible explanation for these findings, particularly regarding views on the EU, is that media discourses on EU solidarity are often associated with higher financial burdens and crisis-driven narratives (Wallaschek et al., 2020).

The findings regarding the socioeconomic left-wing profile of LGB+ individuals, as observed at the European aggregate level (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021), are now confirmed in Germany for the first time, following similar findings among parliamentary candidates (Debus & Wurthmann, 2024). This inclination towards left-wing socioeconomic positions likely reflects solidarity with the socioeconomically disadvantaged and the marginalised – a sentiment possibly rooted in their own experiences of marginalisation and concerns about the socioeconomic vulnerability of sexual minorities (Schnabel, 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Grahn, 2023).

Nevertheless, this solidarity does not extend to EU member states facing financial difficulties or necessarily translate into unequivocal support for state intervention in the market. It is worth noting that advocating for socioeconomic redistribution and supporting the less privileged does not necessarily stem from acute financial or economic marginalization experienced by LGB+ individuals themselves. Notably, LGB+ individuals tend to classify themselves similarly to heterosexuals in terms of their own class affiliation and economic situation (see Online Appendix, Figures A3a and A3b).

As part of a diagnostic test, the regression models were examined for multicollinearity, using the VIF value as an indicator, which was significantly <2. Additionally, LGB+ individuals were replaced with respondents who refused to answer the question about their sexual identity before running all regressions once more. The results indicate that these respondents do not share opinions significantly different from those of heterosexuals. These findings suggest that the effects described in this research note are indeed attributable to LGB+ self-identification (see Online Appendix, Tables A4 and A5). Whether these findings apply solely to exclusively heterosexual individuals or also to conservative individuals who choose not to disclose their sexual identity in a survey cannot be determined from this analysis.

Given that the dependent variables are ordinally scaled, but I initially treated them as metric, I re-ran all the models using ordinal regression analysis. The findings do not differ from those of the linear models when Bonferroni-corrected significance levels are used as the benchmark criteria (see Online Appendix, Table A6). Finally, to address the potentially suppressed effects caused by including numerous control variables, I conducted additional analyses where only the dichotomous independent variable was regressed on the dependent variables, excluding the controls. These findings do not differ from those previously reported, except for some variations in effect sizes (see Online Appendix, Table A7).

DISCUSSION

Sexual identity as LGB+ has an evident influence on the political attitudes a person adopts (Schnabel, 2018) and on the parties a person votes for (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Grahn, 2023; Wurthmann, 2023; Hunklinger & Kleer, 2024). However, the fact that sexual identity is rarely included as part of standardised surveys presents a major challenge. For this reason, previous analyses primarily relied on indicators using bridge constructs to reconstruct the respondent's sexual identity. As a result, these studies on political attitudes could sometimes only make statements based on individuals in a partnership, which limited their significance for non-partnered LGB+ individuals (e.g., Turnbull-Dugarte, 2021).

This research note addresses this issue by employing a direct measure of respondents' sexual identities to explore its effects on specific political attitudes. For the first time within the European context, this methodology enables an investigation into whether the political attitudes of individuals self-identifying as LGB+ differ significantly from those of individuals

self-identifying as heterosexuals, and into the extent to which sexual identity influences these attitudes.

Indeed, self-identified LGB+ individuals demonstrate significantly greater support for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups compared to heterosexuals: they advocate for higher taxes for the wealthy, pay equity, and are less in favour of mandatory community service for the unemployed. They also exhibit less support for nuclear energy, and oppose religious influences on the state and everyday life. However, there are no significant differences in attitudes towards women's quotas, state interventionism in the market, solidarity between EU member states, and anti-immigration attitudes favouring assimilation of migrants.

It is essential to recognise that the insights from this research note are limited to a particular region and period in time, and that non-significant differences in the results might be due to the overall sample size of 1,599 respondents with 154 individuals identifying as LGB+. Increasing the total number of respondents, especially LGB+ individuals, would facilitate a more in-depth analysis of sexual minorities in the future. Although some of the effects are statistically insignificant, the strength and direction of the coefficients suggest that, with a larger sample size, statistically significant differences could emerge for some of the political attitudes analysed.

However, the findings underscore the need for further research, particularly concerning the future behaviour of LGB+ individuals. It is possible that radical right-wing parties, with their appeals to social groups (Huber, 2022), may gain even more traction in the future (Turnbull-Dugarte & López Ortega, 2023). This is all the more relevant given that current findings suggest a growing decoupling of attitudes towards migration from the traditional categorisation into sociocultural and socioeconomic conflicts. Openness towards sexual minorities, whilst maintaining hostility towards migration, is emerging as a new conflict in party competition (Lancaster, 2020, 2022). Homonationalism (Spierings, 2021; Turnbull-Dugarte & López Ortega, 2023) might become a significant issue within the LGB+ community, potentially influencing electoral outcomes.

While Worthen (2020) questioned whether "all gays are liberal," this research note concludes that they are not necessarily. Although LGB+ individuals tend to be more liberal than heterosexuals on most issues, they still strongly support – on average – the assimilation of migrants and mandatory community service for the unemployed. Nevertheless, there remains much to explore. It remains unclear, for example, how many people identifying as LGB+ did not disclose their sexual identity in the survey, either due to privacy concerns or a conservative inclination to avoid discussing the topic. As a result, the described effects may underestimate the actual differences. Despite the remaining data limitations that continue to constrain research to date, the findings presented here clearly provide a strong foundation for further investigation in this area.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at https://osf.io/ra894/.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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