



# A Statistical Study on Ideological Identity in Albania

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With the establishment of a multi-party system in Albania in the early 1990s, the Socialist Party, as the successor to the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA), identified itself as left-wing. Similarly to other former communist parties in Eastern Europe, it adopted the symbolism of Western socialist and social democratic parties. At the same time, partly as a reaction, the Democratic Party and other newly established parties of that period identified themselves as right-wing.

This “left-right” distinction in political identity—without any precedent in the country’s history—may even constitute one of the purest ex nihilo cases of this phenomenon in Eastern Europe. It is also reflected in the self-identification of Albanian citizens in their political preferences, as well as in public discourse in general. This study analyzes symbolic ideological identity in depth, in order to assess the extent to which it corresponds to the substantial meaning of the “left-right” divide in terms of political values and policy orientations. As a reference framework, we use the political spectrum of Western Europe, which represents the classical context in which this form of ideological identification developed.

The study is based on a stratified sample of 1,119 respondents aged 18 and over residing in Albania. In the first stage, interviews were proportionally distributed across the country’s 12 districts according to population size. In the second stage, they were proportionally allocated between urban and rural areas within each district to reflect geographic distribution. Age and gender quotas were also applied within each stratum. Finally, interview locations were randomly selected using a digital map of Albania. This sampling design ensured a statistically representative sample of the adult population, with a margin of error of  $\pm 2.9\%$  at the national level.

## Key Results

- 41% of respondents identify as left-wing, 31.3% as right-wing, and 24.2% as centrist (3.5% answered “I don’t know”).
- A large majority of respondents (82%–94%) support policies traditionally associated with the left in Western Europe, including public provision in education, healthcare, taxation, social assistance, and state intervention in the economy.
- Even among respondents who identify as right-wing, overwhelming majorities (81%–95%) support these policies.
- Nearly half of respondents (49.3%) consider themselves traditional in family life, while only 17.8% consider themselves liberal.

## Main Conclusions

- Ideological self-identification closely corresponds to party alignment: most self-identified left-wing respondents vote for the Socialist Party (SP), while most right-wing respondents vote for the Democratic Party (DP).
- Despite this alignment, there is broad consensus across all ideological groups in favor of socio-economic policies considered left-wing in Western Europe.
- Respondents with higher family incomes are more likely to vote for the SP than for the DP.
- Ideological self-identification is mostly influenced by family background during the communist period.

## Detailed Results

Respondents were asked about key areas of state social policy—healthcare, education, and support for the poor—which are central indicators of the classical “left-right” divide. While Western Europe has experienced convergence between left and right in these areas, greater public spending remains associated with left-wing ideology.

Responses in Tables 1–3 reveal strong consensus in Albanian society in favor of expansive social policies.

### *Healthcare, Education, and Social Assistance*

- Over 80% support universal, state-funded healthcare and education.
- 93.7% believe the poor should primarily be supported by the state.

### *Taxation*

A strong majority (82.8%) supports progressive taxation, despite relatively low tax rates in Albania compared to Western Europe.

### *State Intervention*

An overwhelming 91.8% support significant state intervention in the economy, despite generally negative perceptions of the state.

## **CULTURAL/SUBJECTIVE VS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS**

While socio-economic attitudes strongly align with left-wing positions, responses to questions concerning personal success and family values reflect a different pattern.

- 53.2% attribute economic success primarily to individual competence.
- Only 4.8% attribute it to chance.

This reflects a more individualistic, neoliberal right-wing worldview.

Similarly, in cultural terms:

- 49.3% identify as traditional in family life.
- Only 17.8% identify as liberal.

Thus, a dual pattern emerges:

- Left-leaning consensus in socio-economic policy
- Right-leaning tendencies in cultural attitudes

## **IDEOLOGICAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND VALUES**

Analysis shows that ideological self-identification does not strongly determine attitudes toward policy:

- Across left, right, and center, support for social policies remains consistently high.
- Even self-identified left-wing respondents often adopt explanations of economic success associated with right-wing ideology.
- Cultural attitudes (e.g., family values) show somewhat stronger alignment with ideological identity, particularly among right-wing respondents.

## **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

### *Education and Income*

- Lower education and income groups tend to favor left-leaning policies more strongly.
- Higher education and income groups show slightly more right-leaning tendencies.

There is a clear correlation between education level and income.

### *Geographic Differences*

- Rural respondents are more supportive of social policies and more traditional in cultural attitudes than urban respondents.

### *Age*

- Older respondents show stronger support for social policies.
- Younger respondents are more liberal in cultural attitudes.

### *Gender*

- Gender differences are minimal, except for housing policy, where women are more supportive of state guarantees.

## **VOTING BEHAVIOR**

Voting patterns strongly align with ideological self-identification:

- 89.6% of left-wing respondents voted for the SP.
- 73.9% of right-wing respondents voted for the DP.

However, among centrist respondents:

- A large share did not vote at all or voted for smaller parties, one of which is left-wing and others are right-wing or centrist.

This suggests that centrism in Albania functions less as an ideological position and more as a rejection of the dominant parties.

## **THE ROLE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND**

Family background during the communist period is by far the strongest predictor of ideological identity:

- 72.2% of respondents from communist families identify as left-wing.
- 57.5% of respondents from persecuted or mixed families identify as right-wing.

This pattern is also reflected in voting behavior.

## **SUMMARY**

Although ideological self-identification in Albania aligns closely with party affiliation, it does not correspond to the substantive meaning of the “left-right” divide as understood in Western Europe.

Across all ideological groups, there is broad consensus in favor of socio-economic policies typically associated with the left. At the same time, cultural attitudes tend to align more closely with right-wing values.

Thus, the Albanian case is characterized by a dual structure:

- A left-leaning socio-economic consensus
- A right-leaning cultural orientation

This divergence reflects the distinct historical and social trajectory of Albania, where ideological labels are shaped less by policy preferences and more by historical memory and family background.

Far more than economic interests, ideological identity is determined by political inheritance. In this sense, the Albanian “left-right” divide remains rooted in the transition from communism rather than in the programmatic distinctions that define it in Western democracies.