

Populist or Socialist Voters? Understanding the Mamdani Moment in New York City

Jack Santucci
Rodrigo Castro Cornejo
Joshua J. Dyck

August 2026

Abstract

Why did New Yorkers vote for Zohran Mamdani? Does the emerging democratic socialist moment in NYC reflect a populist turn on the American left, a socialist one, or some combination of the two? We compare explanations based on populism, socialism, and policy views using an original survey of New York City likely voters (August 2025, N=800). Logistic regression analyses show that socialist attitudes and support for Mamdani's pro-redistribution policy agenda are the strongest predictors of support for Mamdani, whereas populist attitudes are associated with support for Mamdani only when compared with Andrew Cuomo supporters. Socialism and populism are related, but socialism is the more important factor. These results have implications for the study of American populism and give reason to track both sets of attitudes in the public.

Keywords: Democratic Party, democratic socialism, populist attitudes, socialist attitudes, urban politics

Introduction

Democratic socialism is resurgent in American politics. Once on the margins of the party system, candidates who identify with this social movement are competing in Democratic primaries across the country. Some are winning nominations and elections at the local, state, and national levels. This transformation is especially visible in major American cities like Portland (OR), the District of Columbia, and New York City. No candidate better symbolizes this shift than Zohran Mamdani, whose rise in the 2025 New York City mayoral election attracted national attention and became emblematic of the broader political moment. Running on a redistributive agenda that included fare-free buses, rent freezes, government-owned grocery stores, expanded affordable housing and childcare, and a higher minimum wage, Mamdani combined an explicitly democratic-socialist program with strong criticism of the Democratic political establishment. His success therefore raises a question about the political foundations of his electoral appeal: is support for Mamdani best understood as an expression of left-wing populism, democratic socialism, neither, or some combination thereof?

Though some may use the terms interchangeably, populism and socialism can represent different foundations of political support. Populism is most widely understood as a thin-centered ideology that divides society between a virtuous people and a corrupt elite and maintains that politics should express the ‘general will’ of the people (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Socialism rests on more substantive principles concerning economic inequality, redistribution, and the role of government in the economy (Mudde 2004). The populism/socialism distinction is particularly relevant in the United States because research disagrees about the former’s partisan direction there, but it is common to find a left-wing populist constituency elsewhere (see, e.g., Castro Cornejo [2020] on AMLO in Mexico, Visconti and Argote [2025] on Boric in Chile,

Ramiro and Gomez [2017] on Podemos in Spain, or Stavrakakis and Katsambekis [2014] on SYRIZA in Greece, among others). The rise of democratic-socialist candidates in the U.S. therefore raises the question of whether their electoral appeal reflects the emergence of left-wing populist demand or is instead rooted more fundamentally in socialist principles and policy preferences.¹

The 2025 New York City mayoral election provides a useful setting in which to compare competing attitudinal factors. Mamdani entered the race as a democratic socialist with a strongly redistributive economic agenda. However, he used rhetoric that contained recognizable elements of populism (cf. Fahey 2021), particularly anti-elite rhetoric against the New York City Democratic establishment. At the same time, voters could choose among several other political styles: Andrew Cuomo (Democratic establishment, non-incumbent), Eric Adams (Democratic establishment, incumbent), and Curtis Sliwa (Republican).² This context allows us to move beyond asking simply who supported Mamdani and instead examine which political attitudes distinguished his supporters from voters attracted to different kinds of alternatives.

We study support for mayoral candidates using an original survey of likely New York City voters during the 2025 mayoral campaign. Our survey included a previously validated populism index (Hawkins et al. 2012; Akkerman et al. 2014; Geurkink et al. 2020; Jung 2025), several items tapping attitudes toward socialism, and several more on policy. We use factor analysis to construct indices, then use the indices in logit models of candidate support. Socialist attitudes and support for Mamdani's pro-redistribution policy agenda are the strongest predictors of his support, whereas populist attitudes are associated with Mamdani support only when compared

¹ Notably, Barber and Davies (2026) find that "political alienation" (low external efficacy) has declined among Trump supporters since the end of his first term in office. Compare Allamong (2024) on earlier elections.

² Our data also include Jim Walden, a pro-business independent, but too few respondents supported him to make reliable inferences.

with Andrew Cuomo supporters We conclude with thoughts on future research directions (compare Hawkins and Littvay 2019).

The study of American mass populism

The behavioral study of populism grew out of two earlier traditions in American politics. One of these, called ‘stealth democracy,’ focused on attitudes toward political compromise and who might support rule by NSIDS (non-self-interested decision makers) like “unelected experts” and “successful business people.” At the time, such attitudes were correlated with support for Ross Perot and rejection of party identification (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). The other, termed ‘political discontent,’ focused on views about “elites” and the overall political system’s responsiveness to “people like me” (Craig et al. 1990). Earlier work had shown for college students that high levels of political discontent (technically, low levels of external efficacy) were correlated with positive views of protest and political violence [CITE]. Together, these traditions informed the development of the current populism index (Hawkins et al. 2012), now widely used in comparative politics.

Studies deploying populism indices in the U.S. tend to find it more strongly related to conservative than liberal self-identification (Hawkins et al. 2012; Jung 2025). Oliver and Rahn (2016) also connect populism to Christian fundamentalism and Trump support.³ An extension of this work also finds that black and white respondents’ relative levels of external efficacy (two of the three items) reversed during the Obama presidency (Rahn 2019). Other research on ‘stealth democracy’ connects it both to symbolic (Medvic 2019; Bloeser et al. 2024) and operational

³ Related work by Donovan and Redlawsk (2018) takes Trump’s populism as given and compares the attitudes of his supporters to those of right-wing populists in Australia and Canada.

conservatism (Santucci and Dyck 2022). These studies do not necessarily measure populism (Geurkink et al. 2020), but their conclusions point in the same direction as that work.

However, studies also find at least some populism among ‘extreme’ liberals and/or Sanders supporters (Hawkins et al. 2012; Sawyer and Moore 2021; Jung 2025). Dyck and Santucci (2022) further show external-efficacy items cross-cutting the party system in 2016, and that one of them predicts Sanders support in the primaries. This comports with the view that populism is ‘thin-centered,’ habitually appearing in combination with different ideological traditions (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013), or is “chameleonic” as Paul Taggart (2000) has argued.⁴

Measuring populist and socialist attitudes in the 2025 New York City mayoral campaign

This paper analyzes data from a pre-election online survey conducted by the Center for Public Opinion at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and YouGov between August 19 and September 2, 2025. At the time, vote intention showed that Zohran Mamdani was leading the mayoral race with 44 percent, followed by Andrew Cuomo (25 percent), Curtis Sliwa (17 percent), the incumbent mayor at the time, Eric Adams (8 percent), plus 8 percent undecided.

To test the paper’s two major hypotheses, we rely on three different batteries of questions included in the poll. To test whether socialist attitudes drive vote choice, we constructed two different indices that tap distinct dimensions of socialist attitudes. The first index captures more general redistributive and economic principles (SOCIALISM INDEX)—e.g., beliefs about individual responsibility for poverty, progressive taxation, and whether extreme wealth is morally acceptable in a society with substantial poverty. The second index (MAMDANI

⁴ See related work by Uscinski et al. (2021) on “anti-establishment orientations,” plus Dyck et al. (2018), who show that low “political trust” was predictive of Trump and Sanders support in the New Hampshire primaries and nationally. It is instructive to compare Geurkink et al. (2020) on measurement when consuming these studies.

PROPOSALS INDEX) captures agreement with Mamdani's pro-redistribution policy agenda, including: fare-free buses, rent freezes, government-owned grocery stores, housing, childcare, the minimum wage, and congestion pricing, as well as ending NYC cooperation with ICE. In Table A1 of the Appendix, we report a factor analysis of these eight items showing that they load on the same underlying factor.

To measure voters' populist attitudes (POPULISM INDEX), we replicate populist items from major comparative surveys (see Comparative Study of Electoral Systems as well as Hawkins et al. 2012; Akkerman et al. 2014; Geurkink et al. 2020; Jung 2025; Castro Cornejo et al. 2020). The populism index captures anti-elite attitudes: the belief that the people, rather than politicians, should make important policy decisions; that politicians should follow the will of the people; that differences between elites and the people are greater than differences among the people; a preference for representation by an ordinary citizen rather than a specialized politician; and the view that elected officials talk too much and act too little. Three items from the same battery—politics as a struggle between good and evil, excessive interest-group influence, and compromise as selling out one's principles—were excluded from the final index because the factor analysis indicated that these items were not part of the same underlying dimension. See Table A2 in the Appendix for further information.

Figure 1 orients the reader by putting the paper's moving parts into just one plot. Each respondent is represented by a dot. Their answers to the survey items determine the dots' locations. We used principal-components analysis of all populism, socialism, and policy items together to arrive at the locations (regardless of the factor analyses above). Arrows for the items can be thought of as 'directions of agreement,' and the longer the arrow, the more strongly the respective item is related to the respective dimensions (top and right axes). The equal-length

arrows for the candidates of interest are based on linear regression of candidate support (binary) on respondents' X and Y coordinates (with valence intercept, treating support and leaning as equivalent). If a candidate's arrow goes in the same (or opposite) direction as the arrow for an item, answers to the item may predict candidate support.

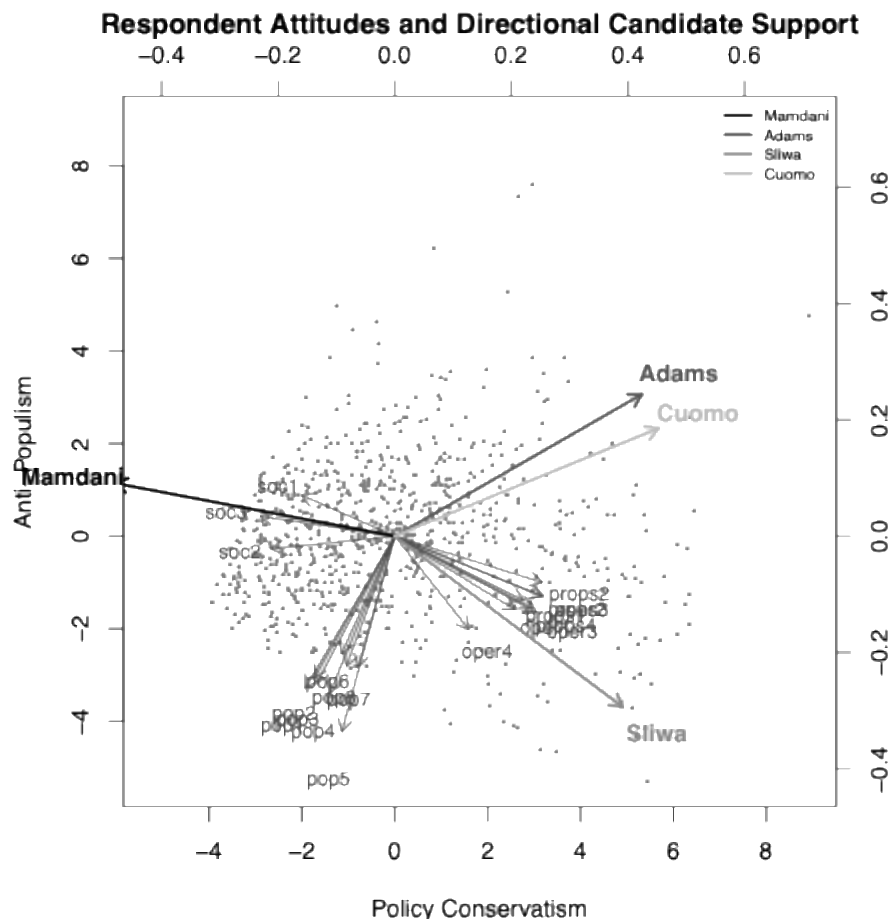


Figure 1: First- and second-dimension respondent scores from principal-components analysis with implied directions of candidate support. Analysis by author with plotting assistance from Claude Sonnet 5 (August 2026).

The plot hints at a few potential conclusions. First, policy attitudes define the first dimension of the data analyzed. Conservative positions on the policy items (PROPS and OPER) go with opposition to socialist principles (SOC) and vice-versa. Second, the second dimension mostly captures populism (POP) with anti-populists toward the top. Third, the directions of candidate support evoke a “three-cornered” contest. Adams and Cuomo supporters combine anti-

populism and conservatism, Sliwa supporters combine populism and conservatism, and Mamdani supporters are unambiguously anti-conservative (thus socialist). Also, Mamdani supporters appear to hold a mix of populist and anti-populist attitudes.

Models of candidate support

We now turn to modeling candidate support. As Figure 2 shows, all three attitudinal measures are skewed toward the upper ends of their respective scales. The mean of each index indicates that respondents exhibit relatively high levels of populist attitudes (mean = 0.76) and socialist attitudes (mean = 0.75) and are generally supportive of Mamdani's pro-redistribution policy agenda (mean = 0.68).

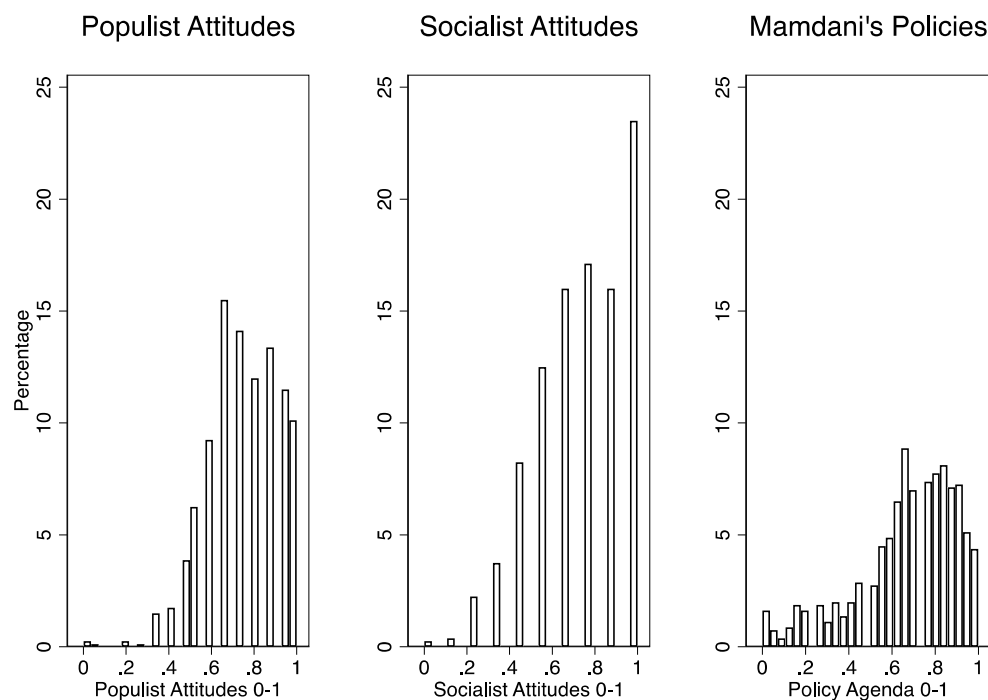


Figure 2: Populism and socialism among NYC respondents.

The models include controls for partisanship, left-right ideology (symbolic), retrospective evaluations—if conditions in the city have gotten better or worse (crime, homelessness,

affordability of rent, quality of public schools, commuting time, jobs)—and respondents sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, race, education, income, and religion). Such characteristics often matter in local elections (e.g., Kaufmann 2004; Hajnal and Trounstein 2014; Benjamin 2017). See Table A3 in the Appendix for descriptive statistics.

In Table 1, the first model estimates a binary logit accounting for overall support for Mamdani, while Models 2–5 report multinomial logit estimates that distinguish Mamdani voters from supporters of each of his main opponents. The results provide particularly strong evidence for the role of socialist attitudes. Both the Socialism Index and support for Mamdani's pro-redistribution proposals are positive and statistically significant predictors of voting for Mamdani in the logistic model ($p < 0.01$, model 1), even after controlling for partisanship, left-right ideology, retrospective economic evaluations, and a broad set of sociodemographic characteristics. Populist attitudes are also positively associated with support for Mamdani ($p < 0.05$), although the relationship is weaker than those observed for the two measures capturing socialist attitudes and pro-redistribution policy preferences.

	Support for Mamdani (LOGIT) (1)	Support for (Sliwa/ Mamdani) (MLOGIT) (2)	Support for (Adams/ Mamdani) (MLOGIT) (3)	Support for (Cuomo/ Mamdani) (MLOGIT) (4)
Populism INDEX	1.60** (0.79)	-0.97 (1.25)	-2.28 (1.58)	-1.89** (0.85)
Socialism INDEX	3.04*** (0.90)	-4.32*** (1.24)	-2.75* (1.45)	-2.04** (0.99)
Retrospective Evaluations	-0.05* (0.03)	0.15*** (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	0.05 (0.03)
Mamdani's proposals INDEX	2.61*** (0.90)	-2.12* (1.19)	-3.50*** (1.24)	-3.14*** (0.94)
Lib-Conservative Ideology	-0.27** (0.14)	0.04 (0.20)	0.32 (0.20)	0.31** (0.15)
Partisanship	-0.51*** (0.08)	1.08*** (0.13)	0.52*** (0.12)	0.24** (0.10)
Race (Base=White)				
- Black	-1.26*** (0.35)	0.03 (0.57)	1.02** (0.48)	1.68*** (0.42)
- Hispanic	-0.34 (0.41)	-0.59 (0.77)	-0.17 (0.63)	0.85** (0.43)

- Asian	0.28 (0.50)	-0.97 (0.81)	-1.18 (0.81)	0.22 (0.55)
- Other	0.34 (0.55)	-0.86 (0.81)	-0.60 (0.93)	-0.41 (0.63)
Age	-0.01 (0.05)	0.05 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.07)	0.05 (0.05)
Age^2	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Woman	-0.25 (0.24)	0.84** (0.41)	0.51 (0.40)	0.04 (0.28)
Education (Base=No High School)				
- Some college/2year	-0.00 (0.45)	0.23 (0.71)	1.39** (0.67)	-0.71* (0.43)
- 4-year college	0.62* (0.34)	0.18 (0.54)	-0.43 (0.59)	-0.85** (0.38)
- Post-grad	0.75* (0.42)	0.13 (0.65)	-0.90 (0.83)	-1.13** (0.46)
Household Income	0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)	0.02 (0.04)
Religion (Base=Protestant)				
- Catholic	-0.25 (0.40)	-0.06 (0.58)	-1.58** (0.64)	0.70 (0.46)
- Jewish	-1.51*** (0.49)	0.09 (0.76)	-0.05 (0.72)	2.25*** (0.54)
- Other	-0.39 (0.51)	0.03 (0.83)	-0.18 (0.90)	0.66 (0.57)
- None	0.66 (0.42)	-1.00 (0.72)	-1.12* (0.61)	-0.27 (0.46)
Constant	-1.73 (1.58)	-3.99 (2.71)	3.12 (2.46)	-0.14 (1.71)
Observations	750	750	750	750
r ² p	0.42	0.36	0.36	0.36

Robust standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 1: Logistic regression models of Mamdani support.

The multinomial models further show the central role of socialist attitudes. Higher scores on the Socialism Index significantly reduce the likelihood of supporting each of Mamdani's electoral alternatives—Sliwa, Adams, and Cuomo (p<0.01, model 2-4)—relative to Mamdani. Support for Mamdani's policy agenda produces a similar, although somewhat less consistent pattern: respondents who favor pro-redistribution policies are significantly less likely to support Adams, or Cuomo rather than Mamdani (p<0.01), but this association is weaker when comparing voting for Sliwa rather than Mamdani (p<0.10). In turn, populism has a weaker relationship with

vote choice in the multinomial models. Higher levels of populist attitudes significantly distinguish Mamdani supporters from Cuomo voters ($p < 0.05$) but not from supporters of Sliwa or Adams. In other words, while populism appears to contribute to the electoral divide between Mamdani and Cuomo, socialist attitudes provide a considerably broader explanation of support for Mamdani across the mayoral race.

These relationships hold even after accounting for political and sociodemographic predictors of vote choice. Partisanship remains a strong and consistent predictor across the models, while several racial, religious, and educational differences are also worth highlighting. Most notably, Black respondents are significantly less likely than white respondents to support Mamdani overall ($p < 0.01$) and more likely to support Adams ($p < 0.05$) and Cuomo ($p < 0.01$). Jewish respondents are likewise less likely to support Mamdani ($p < 0.01$) and substantially more likely to support Cuomo ($p < 0.01$).

Figures 3–5 present predicted probabilities to illustrate the substantive magnitude of these relationships. The results reinforce the central role of socialist attitudes in explaining support for Mamdani. As Figure 3 shows, the predicted probability of voting for Mamdani rises from approximately .07 among respondents scoring at the bottom of the Socialism Index to more than .50 among those at the top—a difference of roughly 45 percentage points. By comparison, socialist attitudes are only modestly related to support for the other candidates. The probability of supporting Sliwa declines somewhat at higher levels of socialist attitudes, while support for Cuomo initially increases but then levels off at around .25, but these relationships are not statistically significant.

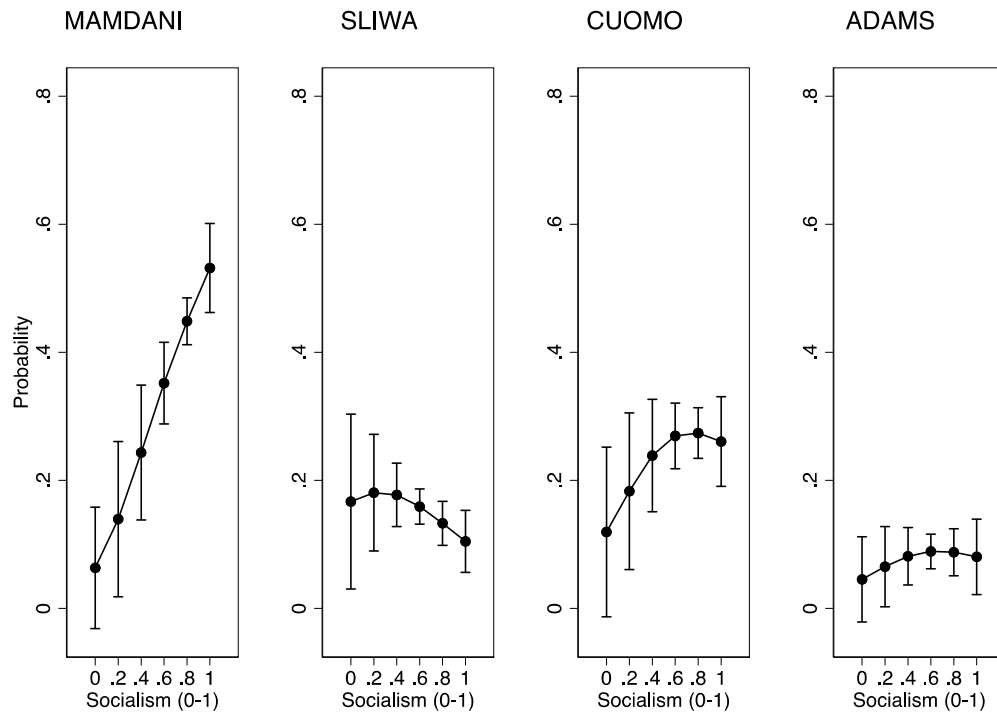


Figure 3: Predicted candidate support across the range of socialism.

Support for Mamdani's policy agenda produces an equally informative pattern (Figure 4). The predicted probability of voting for Mamdani increases from approximately .17 among those least supportive of his proposals to more than .50 among those most supportive. At the same time, policy support sharply reduces the probability of voting for Cuomo, from nearly .50 to about .15, and the probability of supporting Adams also declines substantially. In contrast, support for Sliwa remains comparatively stable across the policy index. In other words, Mamdani's policy agenda appears to distinguish his supporters particularly strongly from his opponents, suggesting that preferences over his specific redistributive policy proposals constituted an important substantive divide in the electorate particularly against the establishment Democratic candidate and the incumbent mayor.

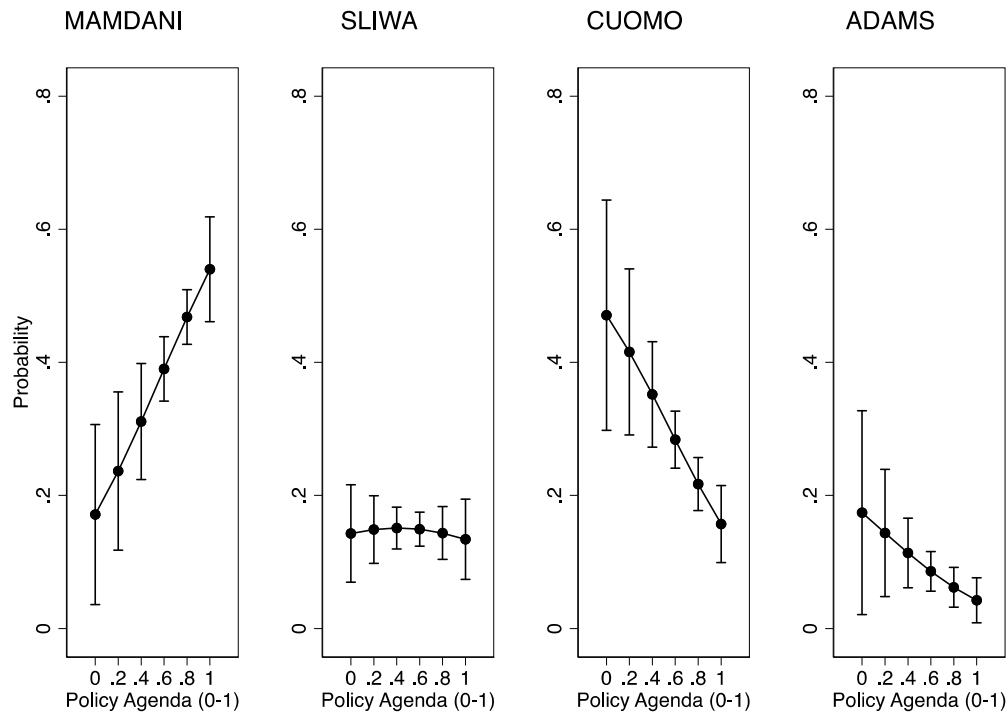


Figure 4: Predicted candidate support across the range of an index of support for Mamdani's policy proposals.

Populist attitudes display a different pattern (Figure 5). High levels of populism increase the predicted probability of supporting Mamdani, from roughly .27 at the bottom of the scale to almost .50 at its highest level. However, the clearest pattern is among Cuomo voters: their predicted probability declines from around .40 to .20 as populist attitudes increase. Support for Adams also declines, but is not statistically significant, whereas the probability of supporting Sliwa remains essentially unchanged. These results suggest that populism matters for Mamdani support, but less broadly than socialist attitudes and policy preferences. Instead, its most distinctive role appears to be in separating Mamdani supporters from those of Cuomo.

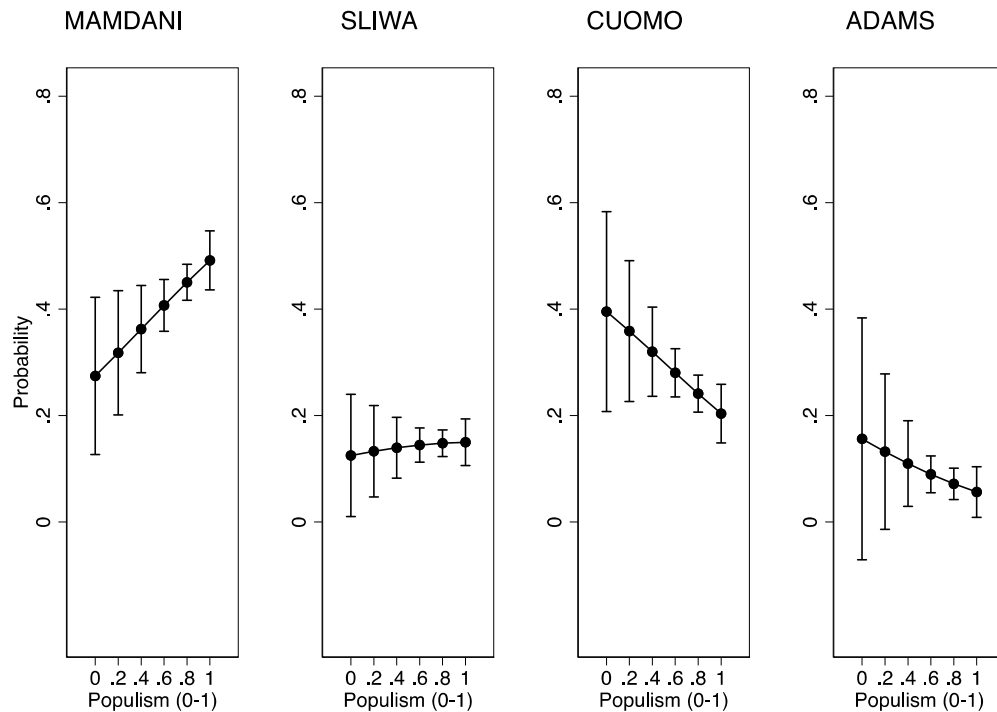


Figure 5: Predicted candidate support across the range of the populism index.

Taken together, these results reveal distinct attitudinal divides separating Mamdani from each of his main opponents. Compared with Cuomo, Mamdani support is distinguished by all three dimensions: stronger socialist attitudes, greater support for Mamdani's redistributive policy agenda, and higher levels of populism. Compared with Adams, the clearest distinction lies in support for Mamdani's policy proposals, alongside the strong association between socialist attitudes and Mamdani support. The contrast with Sliwa is somewhat different. Neither populist attitudes nor support for Mamdani's policy agenda substantially predicts support for Sliwa, while socialist attitudes provide the clearest ideological distinction between the two candidates. Overall, then, Mamdani's coalition appears to have been anchored most consistently in socialist

attitudes, while his specific policy agenda and populist appeal differentiated him more selectively from his Democratic opponents, Andrew Cuomo.

	Mamdani vs Sliwa	Mamdani vs Adams	Mamdani vs Cuomo
Populist Attitudes			✓
Socialist Attitudes	✓		✓
Mamdani's policy proposals		✓	✓
Economic Retro Evals	✓		
Lib-Conservative Ideology			✓
Partisanship	✓	✓	✓
Race: Black vs White		✓	✓
Gender: Woman	✓		
Education: College vs No College			✓
Religion: Jewish vs Protestant			✓
Income			

Table 2: Summary of statistical significance from models predicting candidate support.

Discussion

This paper gives evidence that specifically socialist attitudes were distinct from populism in the historic election of Zohran Mamdani. Populism mattered in the race between Mamdani and the Democrats' establishment candidate (Cuomo), but socialism was the bigger factor overall. Race meanwhile mattered in the contests between Mamdani and each establishment figure (Adams outgoing, Cuomo incoming). The race findings are consistent with past work on American local elections (Hajnal and Trounstein 2014), especially the role of racial-group endorsements therein (Benjamin 2017; Boudreau et al. 2019). However, to the extent that local elections are a sign of things to come in the wider party system (Trounstein and Hajnal 2024), it is interesting to see the Democratic Party divided *both* by socialism and populism. Finally, the populism findings support the view that it need not be 'left' or 'right.' Socialism and populism

are distinct but related, both theoretically and empirically, and worth tracking in future work on American public opinion.

References

- Akkerman, Agnes, Cas Mudde, and Andrej Zaslove. 2014. "How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (9): 1324-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013512600>.
- Allamong, Maxwell B. 2024. "Political Alienation and the Trump Vote in the 2016 and 2020 US Presidential Elections." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 88 (1): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad065>.
- Argote, Pablo and Giancarlo Visconti. 2025. "Chile 2024: The Resilience of Ideology and the Rise of Anti-Elite Attitudes." *Revista de Ciencia Política* 45 (2): 187-203. <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090x2025000200187>.
- Barber, Michael, and Maverik Davies. 2026. "The Rise and Fall of Political Alienation in Predicting Trump Support." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 56: e70055. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.70055>.
- Benjamin, Andrea. 2017. *Racial Coalition Building in Local Elections: Elite Cues and Cross-Ethnic Voting*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108233644>.
- Bloeser, Andrew J., Tarah Williams, Candaisy Crawford, and Brian M. Harward. 2024. "Are Stealth Democrats Really Committed to Democracy? Process Preferences Revisited." *Perspectives on Politics* 22 (1): 116-30. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722003206>.
- Boudreau, Cheryl, Christopher S. Elmendorf, and Scott A. MacKenzie. 2019. "Racial or Spatial Voting? The Effects of Candidate Ethnicity and Ethnic Group Endorsements in Local Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 63 (1): 5-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12401>.
- Castro Cornejo, Rodrigo, Sandra Ley, and Ulises Beltrán. 2020. "Anger, Partisanship, and the Activation of Populist Attitudes in Mexico." *Política y gobierno* 27 (2): 1-37. <https://scielo.org.mx/pdf/pyg/v27n2/1665-2037-pyg-27-02-ePYG1281-en.pdf>.
- Donovan, Todd, and David Redlawsk. 2018. "Donald Trump and Right-Wing Populists in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 28 (2): 190-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2018.1441844>.
- Dyck, Joshua J., Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, and Michael Coates. 2018. "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (2): 351-57. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517002505>.
- Fahey, James J. 2021. "Building Populist Discourse: An Analysis of Populist Communication in American Presidential Elections, 1896-2016." *Social Science Quarterly* 102 (4): 1268-88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12951>.
- Geurkink, Bram, Andrej Zaslove, Roderick Sluiter, and Kristof Jacobs. 2020. "Populist Attitudes, Political Trust, and External Political Efficacy: Old Wine in New Bottles?" *Political Studies* 68 (1): 247-67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719842768>.

- Hajnal, Zoltan, and Jessica Trounstein. 2014. "What Underlies Urban Politics? Race, Class, Ideology, Partisanship, and the Urban Vote." *Urban Affairs Review* 50 (1): 63-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087413485216>.
- Hawkins, Kirk A., Scott Riding, and Cas Mudde. 2012. "Measuring Populist Attitudes." Political Concepts Committee on Concepts and Methods Working Paper Series, no. 55. https://www.concepts-methods.org/Files/WorkingPaper/PC_55_Hawkins_Riding_Mudde.pdf.
- Hawkins, Kirk A. and Levente Littvay. *Contemporary US Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108644655>.
- Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jung, Yujin J. 2025. "Navigating Populism in America: Unveiling the Socioeconomic and Ideological Roots of Populist Attitudes." *Social Science Quarterly* 106 (2): e13488. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13488>.
- Kaufmann, Karen M. 2004. *The Urban Voter: Group Conflict and Mayoral Voting Behavior in American Cities*. University of Michigan Press.
- Medvic, Stephen K. 2019. "Explaining Support for Stealth Democracy." *Representation* 55 (1): 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2019.1581076>.
- Mudde, Cas. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 541-63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780190234874.001.0001>.
- Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2013. "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America." *Government and Opposition* 48 (2): 147-174. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.11>.
- Oliver, J. Eric, and Wendy M. Rahn. 2016. "Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667 (1): 189-206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216662639>.
- Ramiro, Luis and Raul Gomez. 2017. "Radical-left Populism During the Great Recession: Podemos and its Competition with the Established Radical Left." *Political Studies* 65 (1_suppl): 108-126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321716647400>.
- Santucci, Jack, and Joshua J. Dyck. 2022. "The Structure of American Political Discontent." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 86 (2): 381-92. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac009>.
- Sawyer, Patrick S., and Alex Moore. 2021. "Populism on the American Left: How Populist Is the Sanders Electorate?" *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Populism* 2: 7-29. <https://www.lawpop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/1.-How-Populist-is-the-Sanders-Electorate-Sawyer-Moore.pdf>.

Stavrakakis, Yannis and Giorgos Katsambekis. 2014. "Left-wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19 (2): 119-142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2014.909266>.

Taggart, Paul. 2000. *Populism*. Open University Press.

Trounstein, Jessica, and Zoltan Hajnal. 2024. "Urban Affairs Review: A Retrospective on the 2010s." *Urban Affairs Review* 60 (6): 1622-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874241280196>.

Uscinski, Joseph E., Adam M. Enders, Michelle I. Seelig, Casey A. Klofstad, John R. Funchion, Caleb Everett, Stefan Wuchty, Kamal Premaratne, and Manohar N. Murthi. 2021. "American Politics in Two Dimensions: Partisan and Ideological Identities versus Anti-Establishment Orientations." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (4): 877-95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12616>.

Appendix

Table A1: Mamdani's redistributive policy agenda Battery (Factor Analysis)

Variables	Factor 1	Uniqueness
UML920a Housing	0.6486	0.5793
UML920b Childcare	0.7555	0.4292
UML920c Minimum Wage	0.7778	0.395
UML920d Congestion Pricing	0.4385	0.8077
UML924a Free City Bus	0.711	0.4945
UML924c Freeze Rents	0.7594	0.4233
UML924b Govt Owned Grocery Stores	0.7876	0.3796
UML924d Stop Cooperation with ICE	0.7045	0.5037

A factor analysis of the eight policy items indicates that they largely capture a common underlying dimension. Seven of the eight items load strongly on the first factor, with factor loadings ranging from .65 to .79, while one item exhibits a more moderate loading (.44). We therefore combine these items into an index capturing support for Mamdani's redistributive policy agenda.

Table A2: Populism Battery (Factor Analysis)

Variables	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
UML921a People should make decisions	0.6910	-0.0304	0.5217
UML921b Politicians should follow will of the people	0.6238	-0.2948	0.524
UML921c Diff between elite/people larger than among people	0.6238	-0.1061	0.5996
UML921d Be represented by a citizen than specialized politician	0.6293	0.0944	0.5951
UML921e Officials talk too much, but too little action	0.6894	-0.1988	0.4852
UML921f Politics is the struggle between good and evil	0.4908	0.5836	0.4186
UML921g Interest Groups have too much influence	0.4687	-0.5579	0.469
UML921h Compromise is just selling one's principles	0.5053	0.641	0.3338

Factor 1 appears to capture the people-versus-political-elite core of populism. Items a–e all load strongly on this factor (.62–.69), and they share a clear conceptual theme: political authority should reside with ordinary people rather than professional politicians, politicians should follow the popular will, elites are separated from the people, ordinary citizens are preferable to professional politicians, and elected officials are ineffective. This combines the people-centrism and anti-elitism that are generally treated as central components of populist attitudes.

Factor 2 seems closer to a Manichean or anti-pluralist conception of politics. The strongest positive loadings are for the idea that politics is a struggle between good and evil ($f = .58$) and that political compromise amounts to selling out one's principles ($h = .64$). Those items capture the moralization of political conflict and rejection of compromise, both closely related to the Manichean component of populism. Item g—interest groups have too much influence—also loads substantially on Factor 2 but negatively ($-.56$).

Table A3: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Choice: Sliwa	800	0.15	0.35	0	1
Vote Choice: Adams	800	0.08	0.27	0	1
Vote Choice: Cuomo	800	0.25	0.43	0	1
Vote Choice: Others/Undecided	800	0.08	0.28	0	1
Vote Choice: Mamdani	800	0.44	0.50	0	1
Populism INDEX	800	0.76	0.16	0	1
Socialism INDEX	800	0.75	0.22	0	1
Mamdani's Proposals INDEX	800	0.68	0.24	0	1
Retrospective Evaluations	800	0.65	0.20	0	1
Left-Right Ideology	800	2.71	1.23	1	6
Party ID	791	2.73	2.14	1	7
Race: Black	800	0.22	0.41	0	1
Race: Hispanic	800	0.13	0.34	0	1
Race: Asian	800	0.09	0.28	0	1
Race: Other	800	0.08	0.27	0	1
Age	800	50.52	17.30	18	94
Woman	800	0.56	0.50	0	1
Education: Some college	800	0.14	0.35	0	1
Race: 4-year college	800	0.33	0.47	0	1
Race: Post-grad	800	0.27	0.44	0	1
Family Income	750	7.44	3.64	1	16
Religion: Catholic	800	0.34	0.47	0	1
Religion: Jewish	800	0.11	0.31	0	1
Religion: Other	800	0.08	0.27	0	1
Religion: None	800	0.26	0.44	0	1