



## Die LINKE – Left-wing populism made in Germany?

Presentation at the Round Table „Trends in the transformation of the German political party system: Reasons and Consequences“

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### ■ Left wing populism made in Germany?

- ① Populism – an elusive concept in political science
- ② Die LINKE
  - ① Genesis and development
  - ② Electoral outcomes
- ③ Populist characteristics
- ④ Leftist populists in Europe: promise or threat?

## ■ Populism

To each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds.

(Wiles 1967)

An appeal to “the people” against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society.

(Canovan 1999)

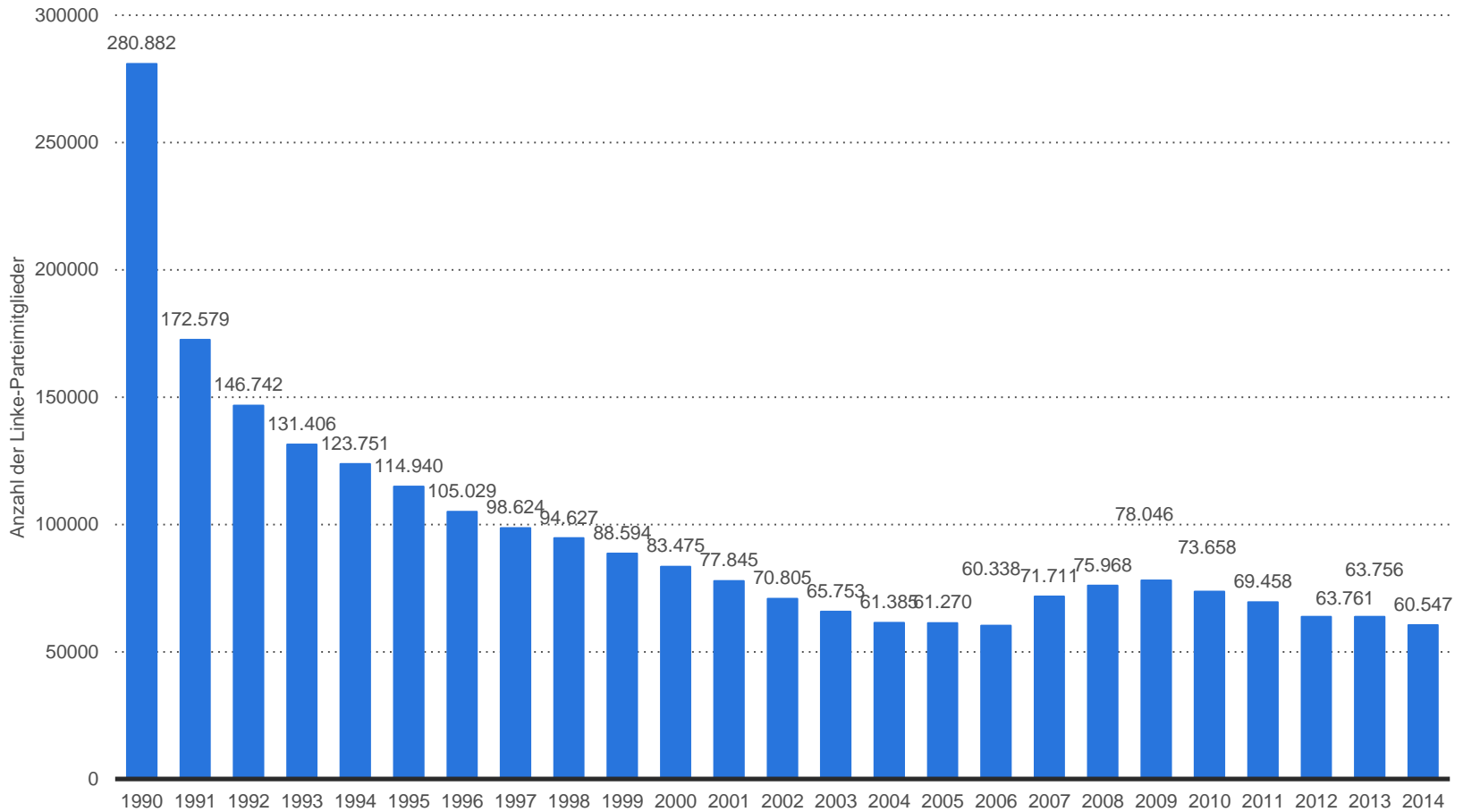
*Discursive strategy:*  
the people against ruling elites

No possible consensus

## Historical overview

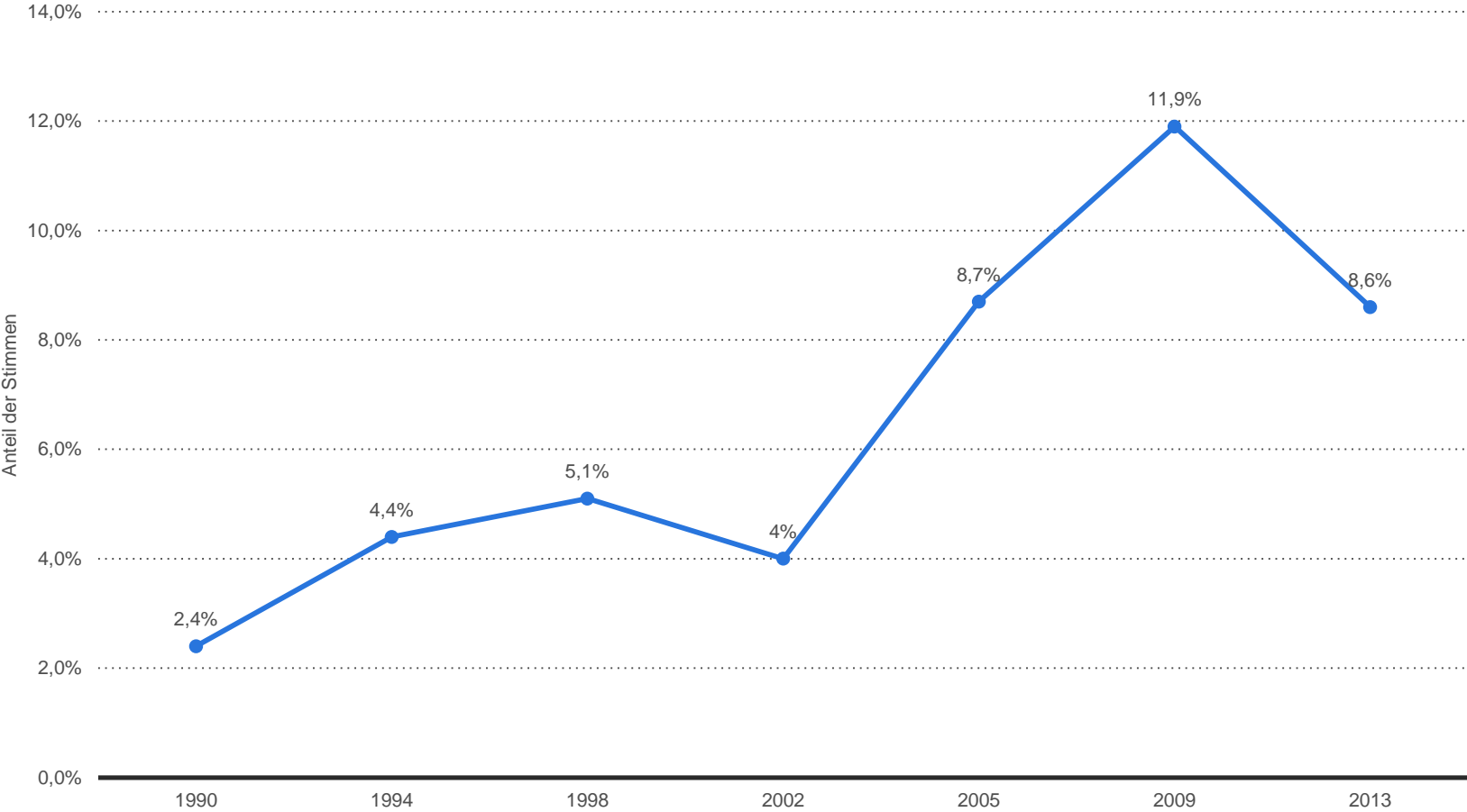


## Party membership 1990 - 2014



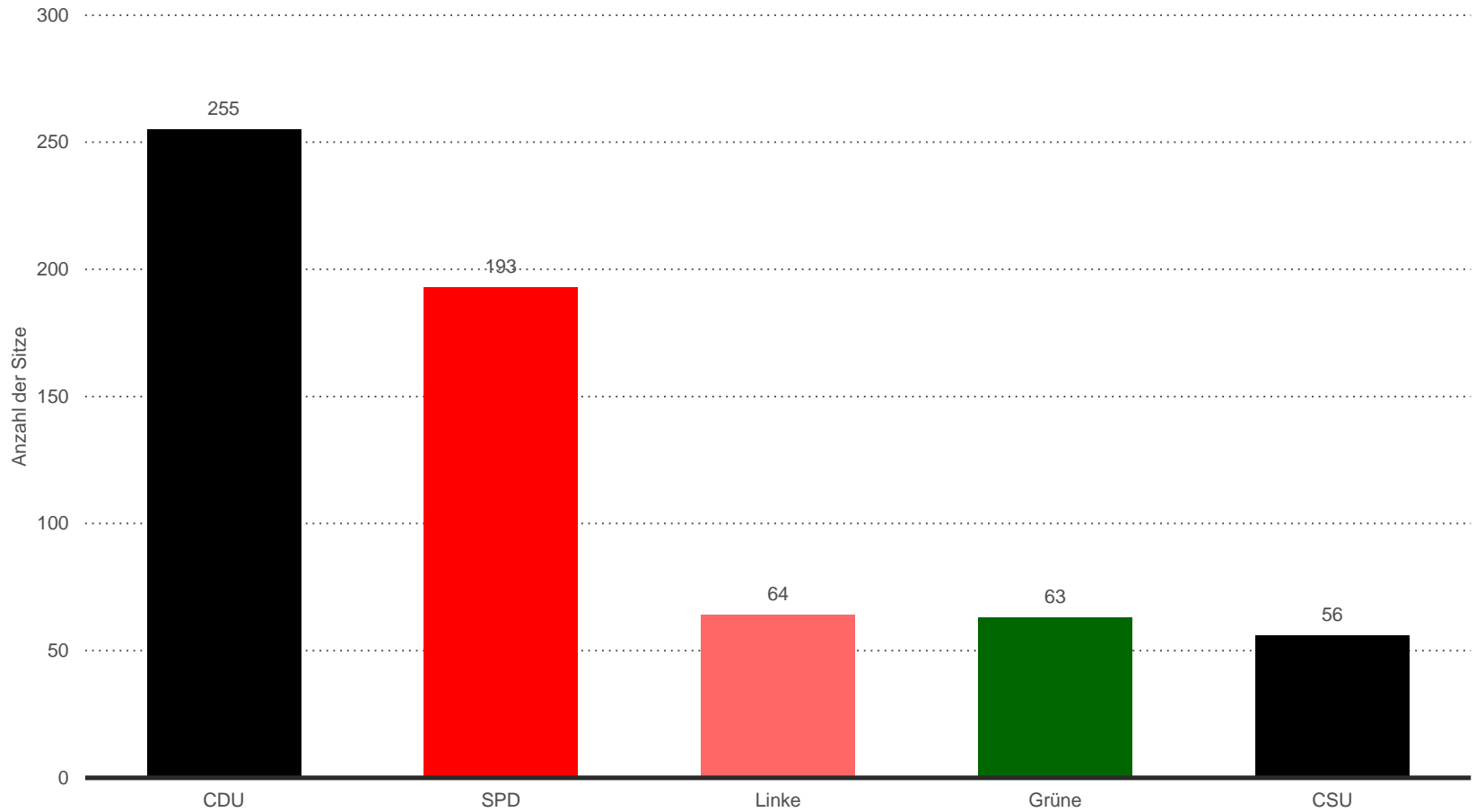
Statista/ FU Berlin (Otto-Stammer-Zentrum) 2014

# Electoral outcomes, national level



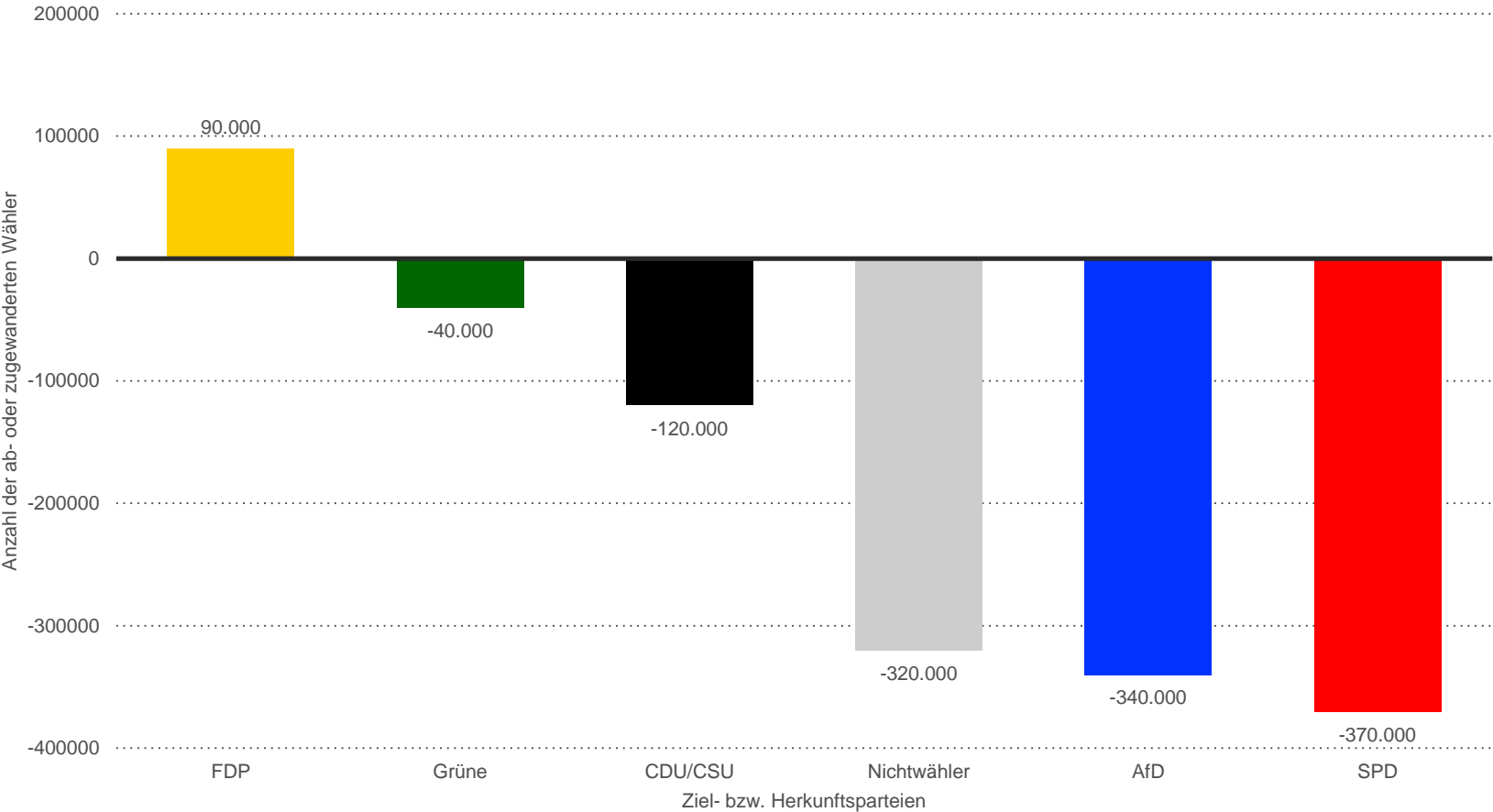
Der Bundeswahlleiter 2013

## Die LINKE - seats in the current German Bundestag



Der Bundeswahlleiter 2013

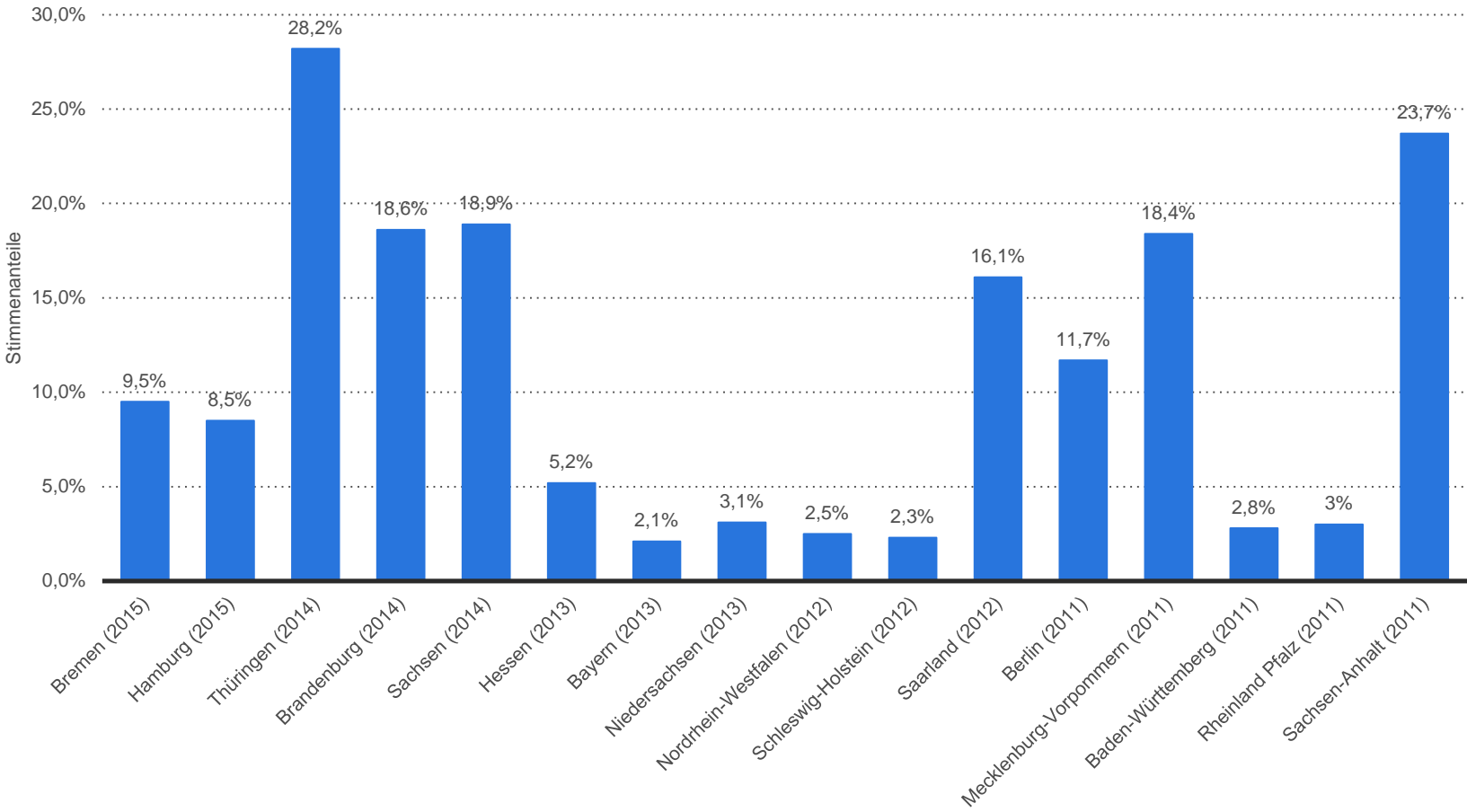
# Gains and losses in the national elections 2013



Der Bundeswahlleiter 2013/ spiegel.de

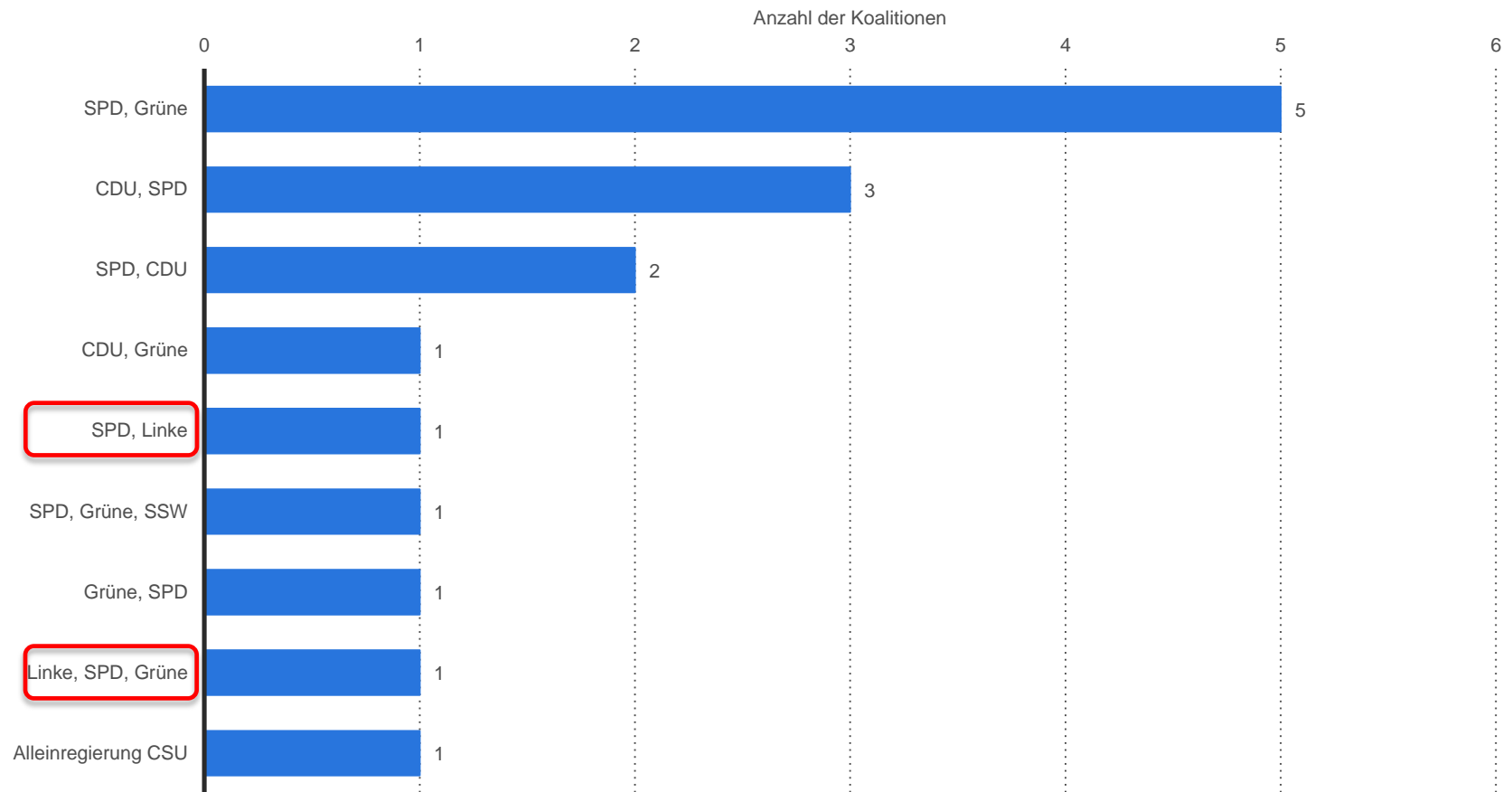


Results in regional elections (Landtagswahlen) until May 2015



Source: wahlrecht.de/ Landeswahlleiter (diverse)

## Government role



Source: Bundesrat ([www.bundesrat.de](http://www.bundesrat.de))

### ■ Partial populism

established party

identification of a powerful elite, apart and cut off from a popular majority

but: rarely “the people”, rather: heterogeneity

Die Mehrheit des Volkes lehnt die von den Eliten in Parteien und Medien vertretene neoliberale Politik ab.

(Lafontaine 2005)

### ■ Populism – here to stay?

However, because of the structural changes, and the consequent move away from legal authority and toward charismatic authority, as well as the demystification of politics in Western liberal democracies, *populism will be a more regular feature of future democratic politics*, erupting whenever significant sections of ‘the silent majority’ feels that ‘the elite’ no longer represents them.

(Mudde 2004)

## Sources

Canovan, Margaret (1999): Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy, in: Political Studies XLVII, 2-16;

Lafontaine, Oskar (2005): Politik für alle. Streitschrift für eine gerechte Gesellschaft. Econ, Berlin;

Mudde, Cas (2004): The Populist Zeitgeist, in: Government and Opposition Vol. 39 No. 4, 541-563

Wiles, Peter (1969): A Syndrome, not a Doctrine. Some Elemental Theses on Populism, in: Ionescu, Ghita/ Gellner, Ernest (Eds.), Populism; its meaning and national characteristics. Macmillan, New York, 166-179.

## ■ Statistics and graphs can be found at

Slide 4

<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/192246/umfrage/mitgliederentwicklung-der-linken>

Slide 5

<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/368864/umfrage/stimmenanteile-der-linken-bei-den-bundestagswahlen>

Slide 6

<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/273040/umfrage/endergebnis-der-bundestagswahl>

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<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/37834/umfrage/waehlerwanderung-bei-die-linke-bei-der-bundestagswahl>

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<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/73680/umfrage/koalitionen-in-den-bundeslaendern>

Slide 9

<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/249923/umfrage/ergebnisse-der-linken-bei-den-landtagswahlen>