

KANTAR PUBLIC

The rise of the BBB

What can explain the sudden rise of the BoerBurgerBeweging in the Netherlands and what should the climate movement learn from it?

Bart Koenen and Joep Keuzenkamp
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Content of presentation

- The rise of the BBB
- Profiling the BBB-voter
- How to explain the BBB-win
- The reaction by Dutch climate groups

The presentation was given at the request of Parlons Climat on June 21, 2023.



The rise of the BBB



May 2019: the Council of State has ruled that the government's Nitrogen Approach Program is in conflict with European legislation, the Netherlands had to limit nitrogen emissions



- The nitrogen debate, referred to as the nitrogen crisis, is seen as the single most important point of conflict in this context.

- September 2019: government party D66 proposed to halve the livestock in order to reduce nitrogen emissions.



- Farmers opposed the proposal, saying that the agricultural sector was being tackled too harshly and - for example - the industrial and construction sectors were not.

October 2019: the start of massive farmers protests all over the country, publicly friendly at first, but later grim and even violent

2019



- Well organized: Farmers' interest groups were founded. Agractie (moderate) and Farmers Defence Force (radical). LTO (branch organization) already existed.

2022



- Period 2019 – 2022: when the protests became grimm and violent, the farmers are losing public support. In 2019, 89% of the Dutch supported farmers or understood their actions. By 2022, public support has fallen to 26%.

November 2019: foundation of the BoerBurgerBeweging (BBB) wich means farmer citizen movement



BBB Party leader Van der Plas

Popularity Van der Plas: 29% of the Dutch people thinks she is the best politician at this moment. But 30% don't think she's a good politician at all. So that draws the divide among the Dutch public.

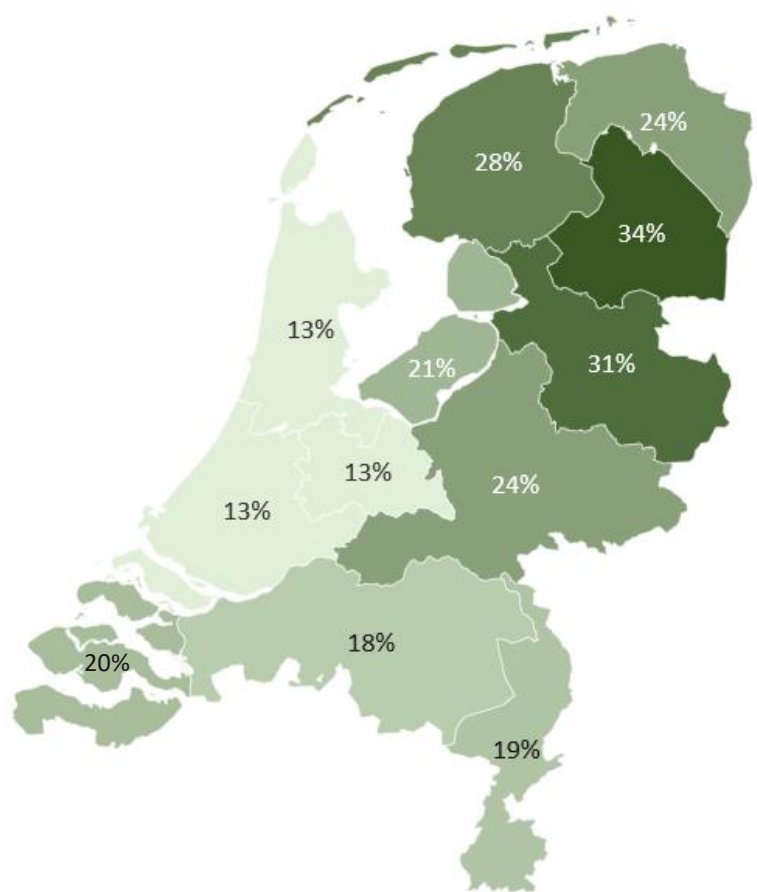
- Founded by two marketeers and an agricultural journalist, Caroline van der Plas.
- National elections March 2021: BBB wins one seat in the parliament.
- Huge win in the provincial elections March 2023: 15 seats in the senate (biggest party).
- Political positions: strong focus on agricultural topics water management, healthy and affordable food production and nature management.
- Left on social-economic viewpoints, but rightwing on other viewpoints.

- Less strict nitrogen policy.
- Stimulating innovation.
- Less strict manure policy.
- Against windmills (for nuclear energy).
- Lifting the ban on pulse fishing.
- Dutch nature is doing well (according to the BBB)

spearheads in agricultural policy

BBB is most popular in rural provinces, but in absolute numbers are living more often in the more urban and densely populated west

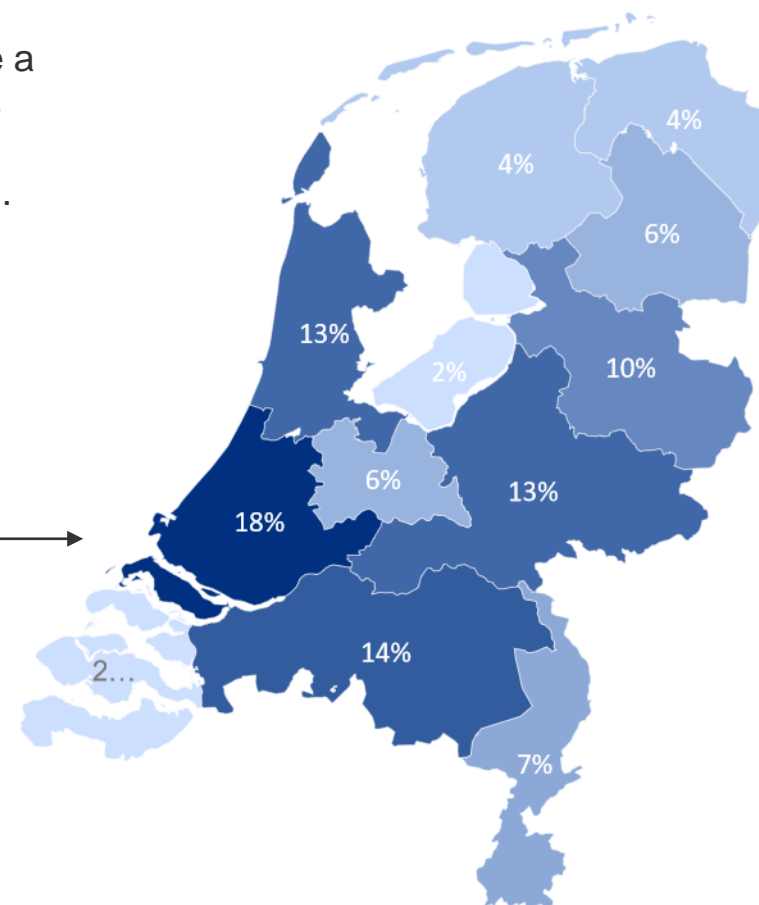
BBB voters per province



BBB-voters per province: we see a higher percentage of BBB-voters in the rural areas of the Netherlands (North, East, South).

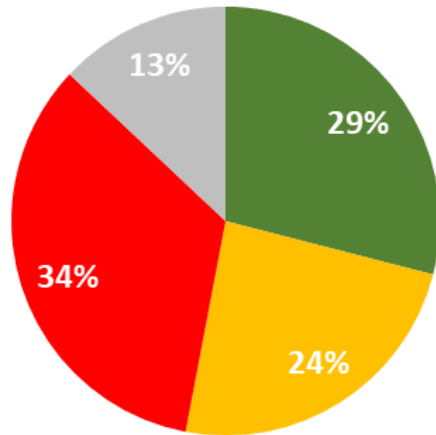
If we look at the absolute numbers we see that more BBB-voters live in the more urban and densely populated west.

BBB voters per province



There is a lot of disagreement in the Netherlands when it comes to the subject of sustainable agriculture

Statement: *The agricultural sector in the Netherlands is currently doing enough in sustainable livestock farming, agriculture and horticulture*



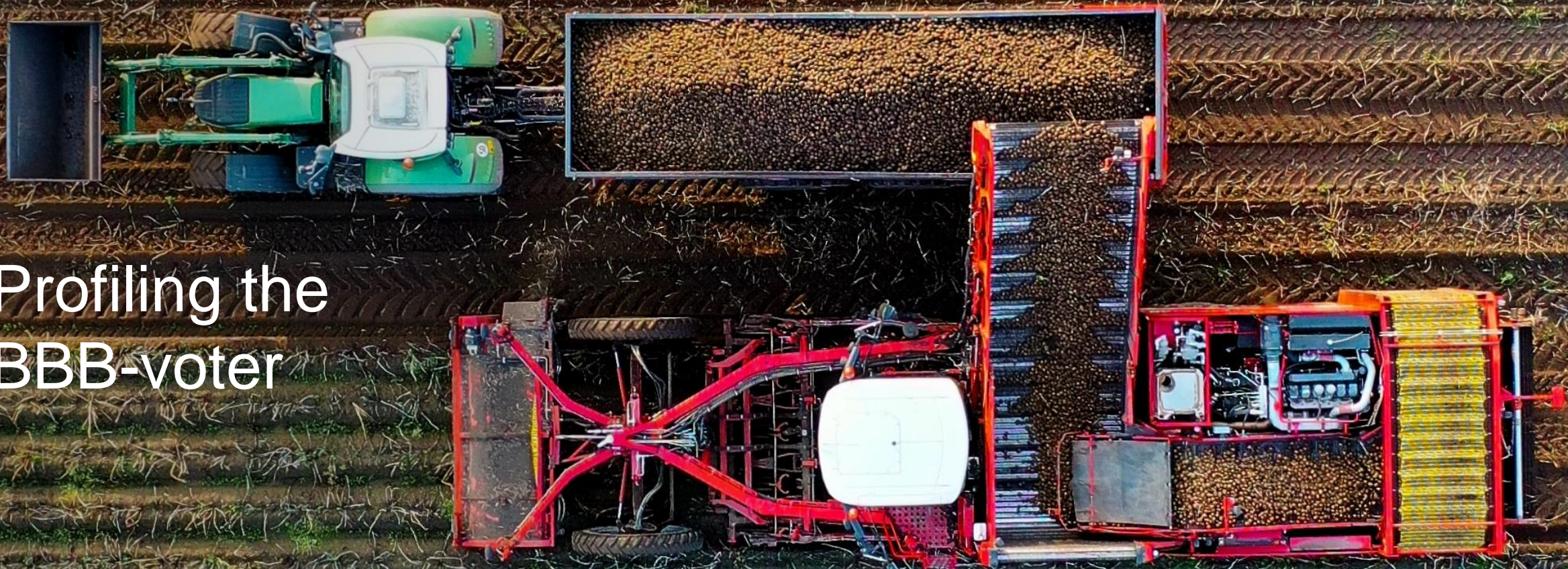
Pro: 43% low educated, 38% rural areas.

Contra: 52% high educated.

Kantar Public has done a lot of public research into intensive livestock farming and agriculture. The last ten years (roughly) we have seen a slow movement towards a more critical attitude of the Dutch public towards intensive livestock farming. The number of 'advocates' has declined in recent years.

■ (totally) agree ■ neutral ■ (totally) disagree ■ don't know

Profiling the BBB-voter

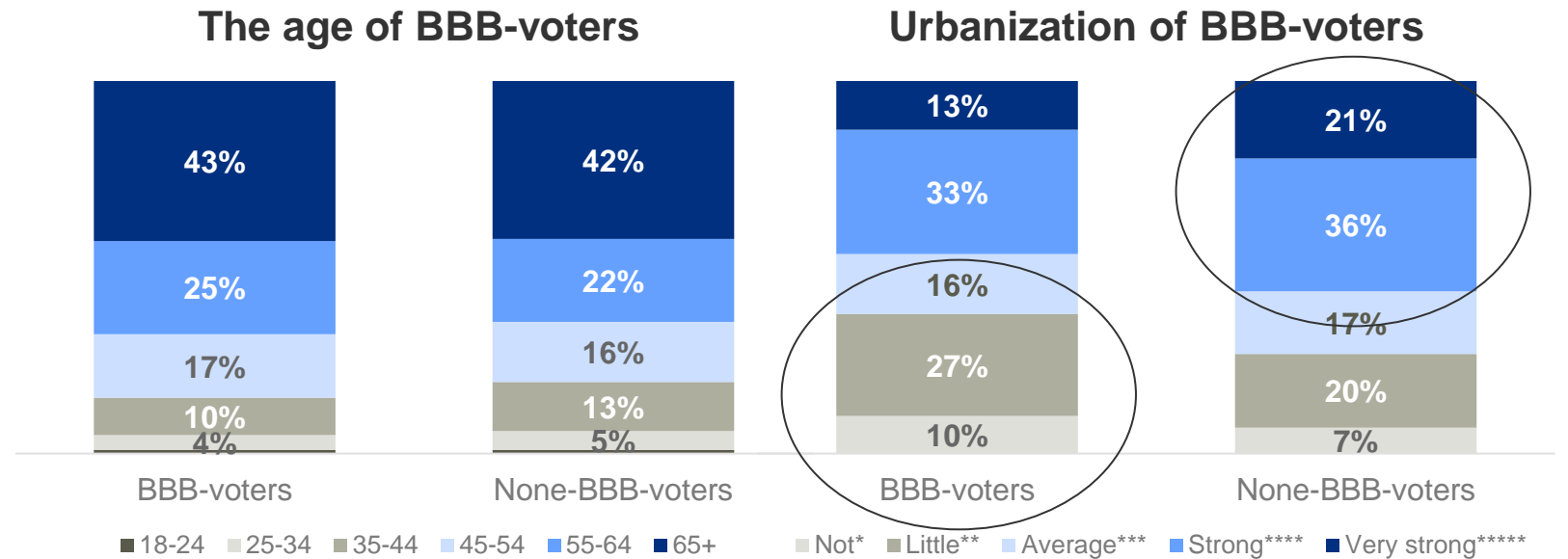


The BBB-voter: Myths and Stereotypes

BBB has a broad support base in the Netherlands. They adhere to a certain extent to the stereotype of country-side, aged, farmer.

Stereotypes that are not completely true:

- BBB-voters are farmers.
- BBB-voters only come from rural provinces.
- BBB-voters are older.



* <500 residences/km²
 ** 500-1000 residences/km²
 *** 1000-1500 residences/km²

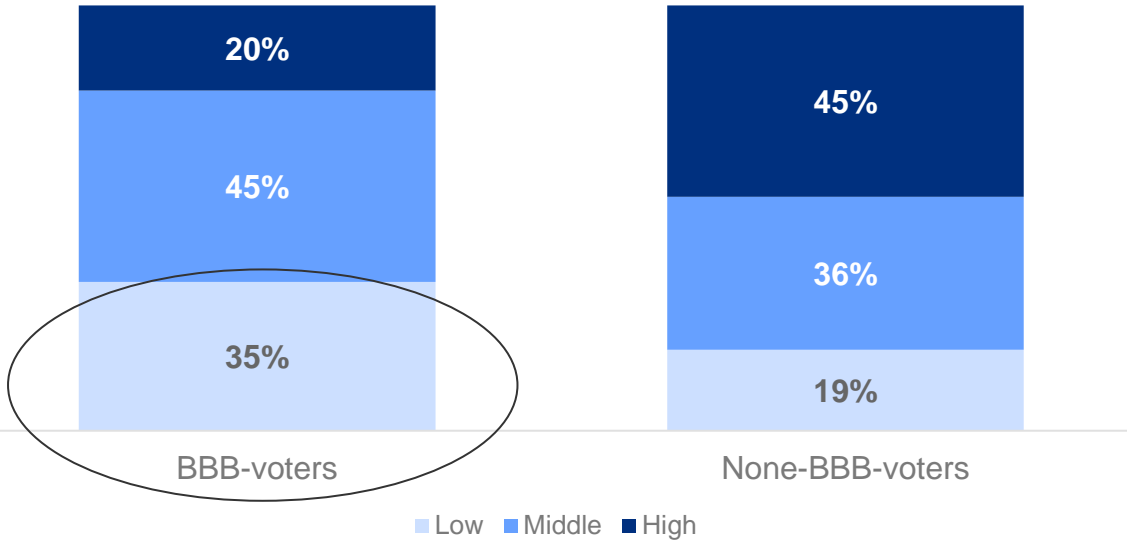
**** 1500-2500 residences/km²
 ***** >2500 residences/km²

The BBB-voter: Truths and Statistics

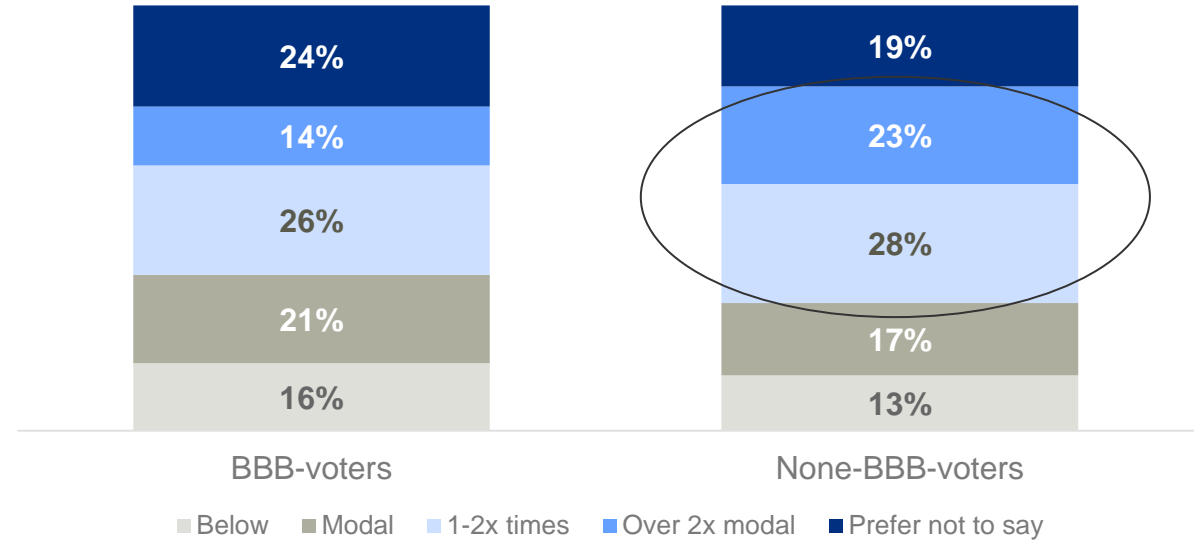
BBB has a broad support base in the Netherlands. They can best be characterized as lower-educated and lower-income Dutch people.

- When we look at income of Dutch people, we see that BBB-voters are more likely to have a modal income or below that. On the other hand, voters of other parties are more likely to have voters with more than a modal income.
- The strongest correlation is visible in the education level. BBB-voters are more likely to have a low or middle education level than voters of other parties.
- These correlations are reflected in similar metrics like social class and welfare level, where BBB-voters are more likely to be on the lower end of both metrics.

The education of BBB-voters

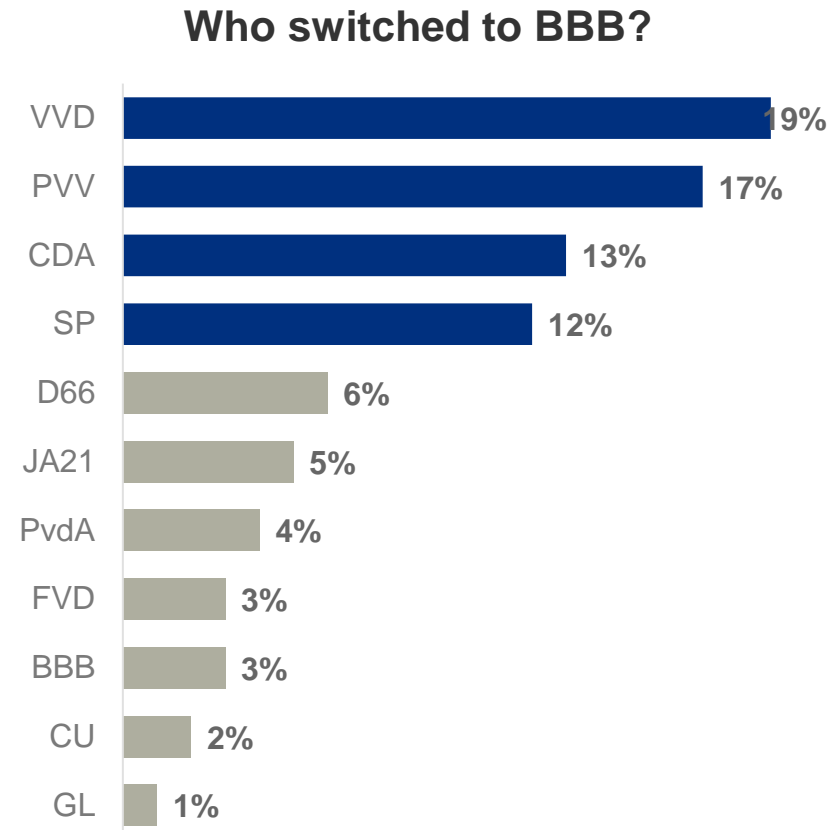
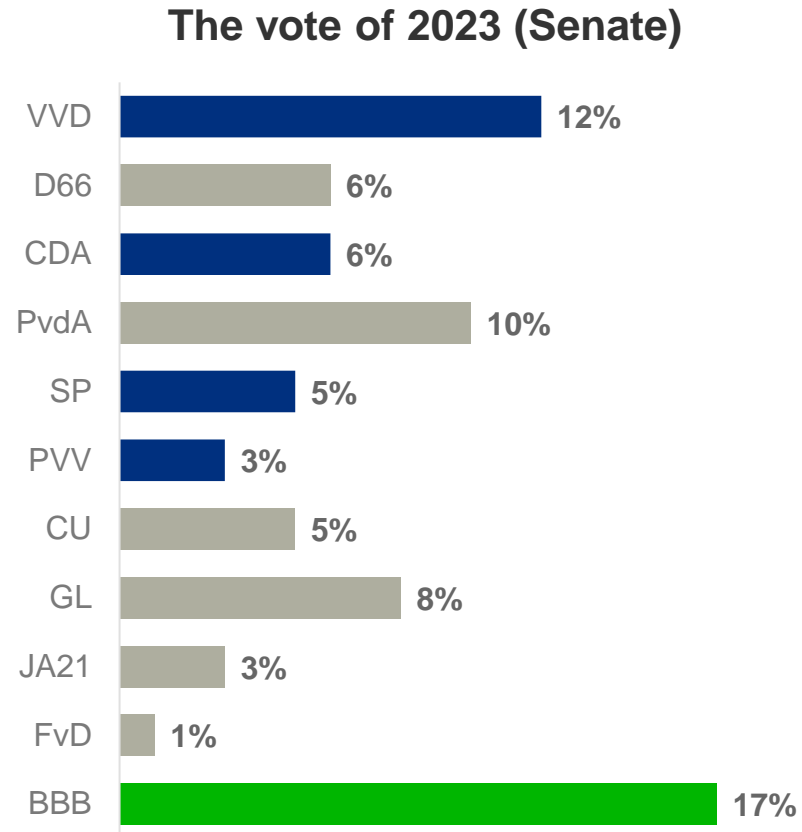


Income of BBB-voters

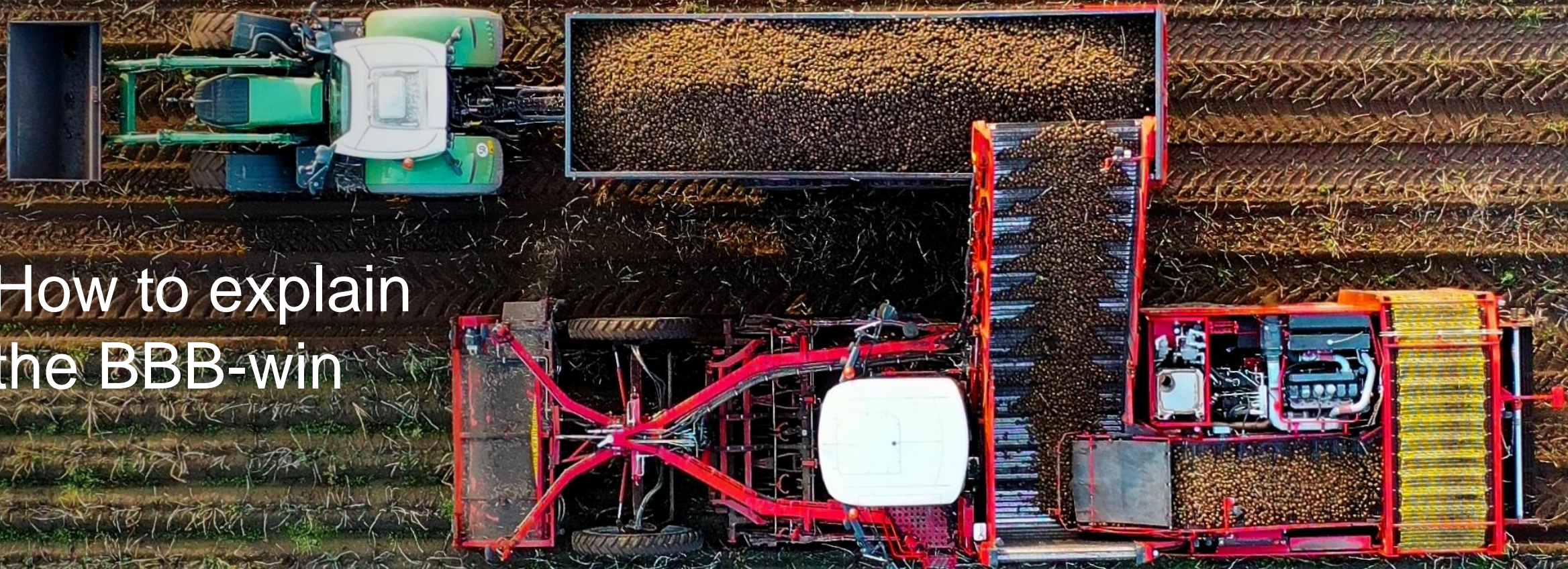


The BBB-voter: What did they vote before?

BBB got most votes from former VVD-voters (right wing liberals). Coalition-parties CDA (Christian conservative) and D66 (left wing liberals) also lost to BBB. Unexpectedly, PVV (far right) and SP (socialists) lost large parts of their electorate to the BBB as well.



How to explain
the BBB-win



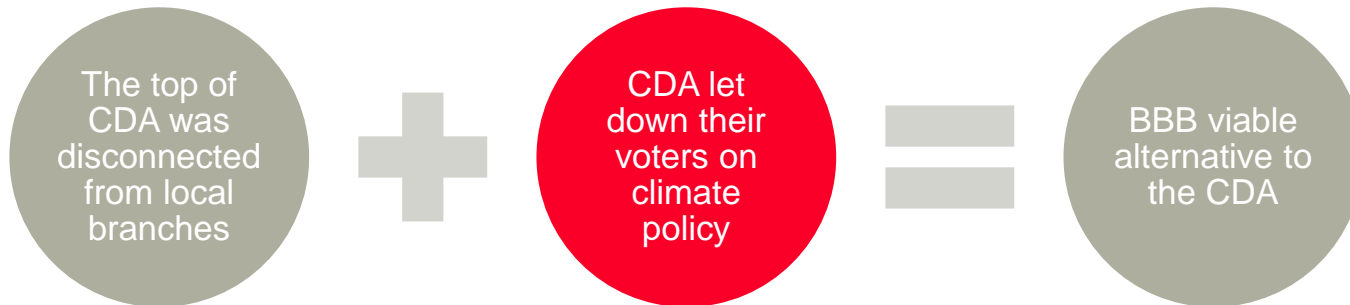
BBB was not merely a protest or anti-climate policy vote (1/2)

Although there were certainly BBB-votes out of protest, we recognize at least three other major **motivators of BBB-votes**:

1. A **protest-vote**, the Rutte-administrations handled several hot cases / crises very poorly. As a result people vote for a party who promises change.



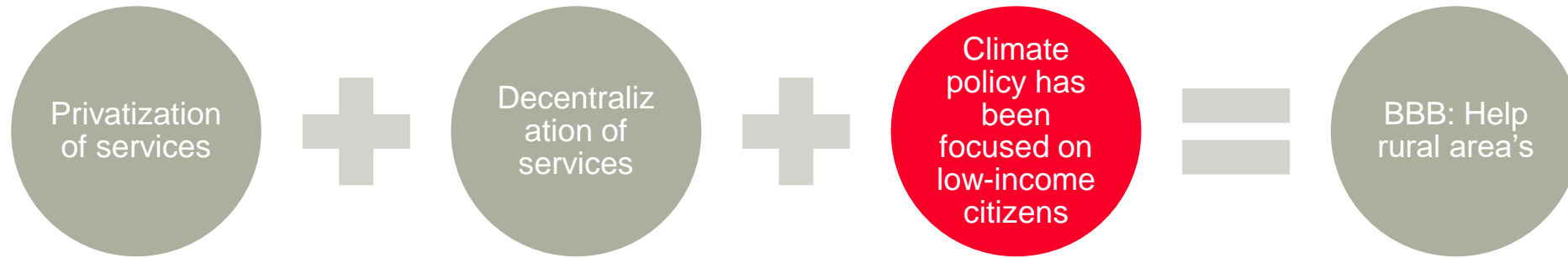
2. The traditional Christian party CDA (strongly strongly represented in rural areas) was no longer a viable option for many traditional CDA-voters. BBB is seen as **a good alternative**.



BBB was not merely a protest or anti-climate policy vote (2/2)

Although there were certainly BBB-votes out of protest, we recognize at least three other major **motivators of BBB-votes**: an alternative to the CDA, and an alternative to the ruling parties policy, and an alternative to the PVV and SP economically.

3. The BBB offers an **alternative policy** to recent government policy.



4. BBB has a **left-oriented socioeconomic agenda**. This makes BBB attractive for left wing voters with lower incomes.





The reaction by
Dutch climate
groups

A cautious response from climate groups in BBB-vocabulary

Dutch climate groups have responded cautiously to the BBB-win to not push them into opposition on all climate related topics.



- *“Both BBB-voters and climate activists feel **unheard** by the current government.”*
- *“Policy should focus on Tata Steel and similar large polluting industries to regain trust in politics.”*



- *“The honest story about farming should be told.”*
- *“The human should be made central in policy.”*
- *“Stop targeting the reduction of farmers and start targeting the reduction of cattle, whilst providing the farmer with sufficient income.”*



- *“Startled by BBB-win as they turn their back on nature and science.”*
- Filed a court case to determine whether under current policy Natura-2000 parks are threatened by collapse in 2025.
- Greenpeace is critical, but still looks for cases to cooperate with BBB.

The political play: some green political parties seem to be willing to cooperate, D66 is side-lined

During the formations in the provinces the GL and PvdA are discussing to be in a coalition with BBB. The D66 is not invited to any formation talks. This process is currently running (June 2023) and will therefore be updated.

Senate:

- The D66 is in the coalition with VVD, CDA, and CU. This coalition has the opportunity to cooperate either with the BBB or with the PvdA and GL combined party to get a majority.
- So, the BBB and PvdA/GL are truly framed as directly opposing forces.
- D66 tries to keep coalition bound to formation accord with its' strict policies on climate.

Provinces:

- The BBB is the largest party in every province. To become part of the coalition, parties cannot go around BBB.
- D66 is side-lined.
- GL and PvdA are forming coalitions with BBB in several provinces.
- Coalition-forming around economic subjects and climate policy targeting large polluting industry.



Wrap up / food for thought

- **Timing:** many Dutch citizens want a different political course and a different form of politics, the BBB meets that need (although they still have to put it into practice).
- **BBB voters:** the BBB has a diverse electorate, but will the party be able to keep all those groups happy as voters in the future?
- **Cooperation:** the BBB works constructively with green parties (and vice versa) but will this also be the case in the future?
- **Future:** will the future show whether the BBB is about fresh new politics or populism?