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Cast a ballot or protest in the street: Did our grandfathers do more of both?

An Age-Period-Cohort Analysis in Political Participation

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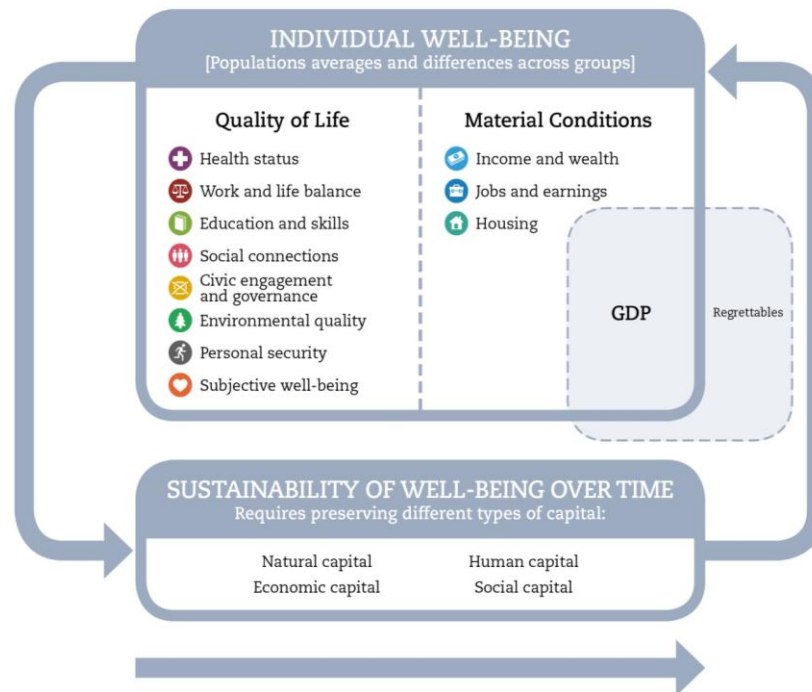
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Why is Political Participation important?

- Political Participation essential for a well-functioning society
- Participation determines political choices that impact upon everyone's lives

Political participation in the OECD Better Life Initiative



- Political participation is included in the civic engagement dimension
- However, the only measure of political participation included among the “How’s Life/BLI” headline indicators is voter turn-out
- Other indicators of political participation exist but they are rarely comparable across countries or based on one-off non-official surveys

The debate on the decline of political participation in Western societies

- In the US, younger cohorts are less inclined to engage in community life and in politics than older cohorts (Putnam, 2000)
- This pattern might not be limited to the US society but reflects a general trend of all Western societies (Lane, 2000)
- Most evidence of declining political participation in European societies refers to party membership and voter turnout (Mair, 1999; Gray, 2000)
- Nevertheless, since political participation goes further than participation in *formal politics*, previous results are not enough to conclude that political participation *in general* is declining in Europe.

Main questions addressed in the paper

- Is political participation declining in Western European societies due to a process of generational replacement?
- Do younger cohorts participate less than the older ones in general? Or do they participate in different ways (“emerging substitutes hypothesis”)?

Defining Political Participation

- “*All voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system*” (Kaase and Marsh, 1979)
- Political participation can take a variety of forms that go further than *formal politics*:
 - Importance of having a typology that encompasses all forms (our paper relies on the one developed by Ekman and Amna, 2009)

Table 1. A Typology of Political Participation (Ekman and Amna, 2009)				
Latent Political Participation		Manifest Political Participation		
Involvement (interest, attention)	Engagement (action)	Formal	Extra-parliamentary (protest behavior)	
			Legal	Illegal
Individual Forms				
Personal interest in politics and societal issues Attentiveness to political issues (e.g. perceiving politics as important)	Activities based on personal interest and attention to politics and societal issues (e.g. recycling, discussing politics)	Electoral participation and contact activities (e.g. voting and contacting a government official)	Make one’s voice heard or to make a difference by individual means (e.g. signing petitions, boycotting and other forms of political consumption)	Politically motivated unlawful acts on an individual basis (e.g. politically motivated attacks on property)
Collective Forms				
A sense of belonging to a group with a distinct political profile or agenda Life-style related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values)	Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others outside the own family and friends (e.g. volunteering in social work, participating in community based organizations)	Organized political participation (e.g. membership in political parties, trade unions and organizations)	Loosely organized forms or network-based participation (e.g. new social movements, demonstrations, strikes, and protests)	Illegal and violent activities and protests (e.g. demonstrations, riots, squatting buildings, damaging property, confrontations with the police or political opponents)

Note: The forms of political participation that are studied in this paper are in bold.
Hence, we focus on Manifest Political Participation in their legal forms.

What determines political participation?

- Traditional determinants of political participation:
 - Predispositions (individual-level determinants)
 - The “cannot do” reasons (e.g. income, education, social class)
 - The “do not want to” reasons (e.g. ideologies, values, beliefs)
 - Social networks
 - Networks create trust and reciprocity among individuals which leads to more engagement and participation
- Contextual determinants of political participation:
 - Political Opportunity Structure: degree of “openness” of the system in order for individuals to take part in the public decisions (e.g. type of electoral system, centralization of power and the administration)
- Time-related determinants (since political participation is a time-specific phenomenon):
 - Age, Period and Cohort effects

Empirical Strategy

- Construct three **measures of political participation** that capture:
 - a) manifest political participation;
 - b) formal political participation; and
 - c) protest behavior
- Create **control variables** for the determinants of political participation according to the literature
- Arrange the data as in an APC accounting model to define the APC groups and create **Age-Period-Cohort variables**
- Specify and solve the regression models:
 - Use the technique of the Intrinsic Estimator (see Yang et al., 2008) to address the issue of linear dependency between age, period and birth cohort variables (*age + birth cohort = period*)
 - Use the method of Maximum-likelihood to estimate the parameters of the models

Data

- Six rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS): Waves 2002-2003, 2004-2005, 2006-2007, 2008-2009, 2010-2011, and 2012-2013
- Sample: 105,023 individual observations distributed across 13 countries and 6 time periods

Table 2. Number of observations per country and period							
Country	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	Total
Belgium	1 214	1 363	1 287	1 311	1 301	1 358	7 834
Switzerland	1 275	1 402	1 122	1 132	930	968	6 829
Germany	2 144	2 074	2 124	2 044	2 182	2 073	12 641
Denmark	1 196	1 102	1 123	1 219	1 170	1 087	6 897
Finland	1 330	1 336	1 255	1 375	1 222	1 659	8 177
United Kingdom	1 382	1 389	1 704	1 735	1 747	1 569	9 526
Ireland	1 325	832	1 007	1 370	1 781	1 960	8 275
Netherlands	1 875	1 455	1 435	1 344	1 399	1 405	8 913
Norway	1 357	1 260	1 229	1 063	1 164	1 200	7 273
Poland	1 518	1 223	1 264	1 158	1 200	1 366	7 729
Portugal	1 063	1 393	1 449	1 438	1 375	1 411	8 129
Sweden	1 309	1 245	1 234	1 121	1 087	1 361	7 357
Slovenia	865	850	956	919	954	899	5 443
Total	17 853	16 924	17 189	17 229	17 512	18 316	105 023

Measures of Political Participation

I) Legal Manifest Political Participation	
II) Formal Political Participation	III) Extra-parliamentary Political Participation/Protest Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voted last national election • Contacted politician or government official • Worked in political party or action group in the last 12 months • Worked in another organization or association in the last 12 months • Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker in the last 12 months • Member of political party • Member of trade union or similar organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed petition in the last 12 months • Taken part in lawful public demonstration in the last 12 months • Boycotted certain products in the last 12 months

Notes: The variables listed above (in bullets) are all dummy variables where 0 = *No* and 1 = *Yes*.

Since there is no theoretical justification to value more or less any political participation activity relative to the others, the dependent variables I, II and III are built as the simple mean of the binary relevant variables.

Control Variables

Table 3. Control Variables	
Type of Variable	Variable
Social Capital	Trust in People
	Confidence in Institutions
	Social Connections
	Personal relationships
Human Capital	Level of Education
	High responsibility Job
Personal/Household Characteristics	Gender
	Lives with a Partner in Household
	Number of children in Household
Ideology	Important to help people and care for others well-being
	Important to make own decisions and be free
	Important to do what is told and follow rules
Main activity Status	Employed
	Student
	Housework
	Retired
	Disable
	Other than previous activities
Civic Status	Citizen
	Immigrant
Country fixed effects	

Age, Period and Cohort variables

- To control for age, period and cohort membership we create dummy variables for each age, period and cohort included in our analysis. Since we have $a = 26$ age groups and $p = 6$ periods, we will obtain $[a + p - 1] = k = 31$ cohorts.

Table 4. Data Structure for the APC analysis						
Age	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
18-19	1983-1984 (C26)	1985-1986 (C27)	1997-1988 (C28)	1989-1990 (C29)	1991-1992 (C30)	1993-1994 (C31)
20-21	1981-1982 (C25)	1983-1984 (C26)	1985-1986 (C27)	1997-1988 (C28)	1989-1990 (C29)	1991-1992 (C30)
22-23	1979-1980 (C24)	1981-1982 (C25)	1983-1984 (C26)	1985-1986 (C27)	1997-1988 (C28)	1989-1990 (C29)
24-25	1977-1978 (C23)	1979-1980 (C24)	1981-1982 (C25)	1983-1984 (C26)	1985-1986 (C27)	1997-1988 (C28)
26-27	1975-1976 (C22)	1977-1978 (C23)	1979-1980 (C24)	1981-1982 (C25)	1983-1984 (C26)	1985-1986 (C27)
28-29	1973-1974 (C21)	1975-1976 (C22)	1977-1978 (C23)	1979-1980 (C24)	1981-1982 (C25)	1983-1984 (C26)
30-31	1971-1972 (C20)	1973-1974 (C21)	1975-1976 (C22)	1977-1978 (C23)	1979-1980 (C24)	1981-1982 (C25)
32-33	1969-1970 (C19)	1971-1972 (C20)	1973-1974 (C21)	1975-1976 (C22)	1977-1978 (C23)	1979-1980 (C24)
34-35	1967-1968 (C18)	1969-1970 (C19)	1971-1972 (C20)	1973-1974 (C21)	1975-1976 (C22)	1977-1978 (C23)
36-37	1965-1966 (C17)	1967-1968 (C18)	1969-1970 (C19)	1971-1972 (C20)	1973-1974 (C21)	1975-1976 (C22)
38-39	1963-1964 (C16)	1965-1966 (C17)	1967-1968 (C18)	1969-1970 (C19)	1971-1972 (C20)	1973-1974 (C21)
40-41	1961-1962 (C15)	1963-1964 (C16)	1965-1966 (C17)	1967-1968 (C18)	1969-1970 (C19)	1971-1972 (C20)
42-43	1959-1960 (C14)	1961-1962 (C15)	1963-1964 (C16)	1965-1966 (C17)	1967-1968 (C18)	1969-1970 (C19)
44-45	1957-1958 (C13)	1959-1960 (C14)	1961-1962 (C15)	1963-1964 (C16)	1965-1966 (C17)	1967-1968 (C18)
46-47	1955-1956 (C12)	1957-1958 (C13)	1959-1960 (C14)	1961-1962 (C15)	1963-1964 (C16)	1965-1966 (C17)
48-49	1953-1954 (C11)	1955-1956 (C12)	1957-1958 (C13)	1959-1960 (C14)	1961-1962 (C15)	1963-1964 (C16)
50-51	1951-1952 (C10)	1953-1954 (C11)	1955-1956 (C12)	1957-1958 (C13)	1959-1960 (C14)	1961-1962 (C15)
52-53	1949-1950 (C9)	1951-1952 (C10)	1953-1954 (C11)	1955-1956 (C12)	1957-1958 (C13)	1959-1960 (C14)
54-55	1947-1948 (C8)	1949-1950 (C9)	1951-1952 (C10)	1953-1954 (C11)	1955-1956 (C12)	1957-1958 (C13)
56-57	1945-1946 (C7)	1947-1948 (C8)	1949-1950 (C9)	1951-1952 (C10)	1953-1954 (C11)	1955-1956 (C12)
58-59	1943-1944 (C6)	1945-1946 (C7)	1947-1948 (C8)	1949-1950 (C9)	1951-1952 (C10)	1953-1954 (C11)
60-61	1941-1942 (C5)	1943-1944 (C6)	1945-1946 (C7)	1947-1948 (C8)	1949-1950 (C9)	1951-1952 (C10)
62-63	1939-1940 (C4)	1941-1942 (C5)	1943-1944 (C6)	1945-1946 (C7)	1947-1948 (C8)	1949-1950 (C9)
64-65	1937-1938 (C3)	1939-1940 (C4)	1941-1942 (C5)	1943-1944 (C6)	1945-1946 (C7)	1947-1948 (C8)
66-67	1935-1936 (C2)	1937-1938 (C3)	1939-1940 (C4)	1941-1942 (C5)	1943-1944 (C6)	1945-1946 (C7)
68-69	1933-1934 (C1)	1935-1936 (C2)	1937-1938 (C3)	1939-1940 (C4)	1941-1942 (C5)	1943-1944 (C6)

Specification

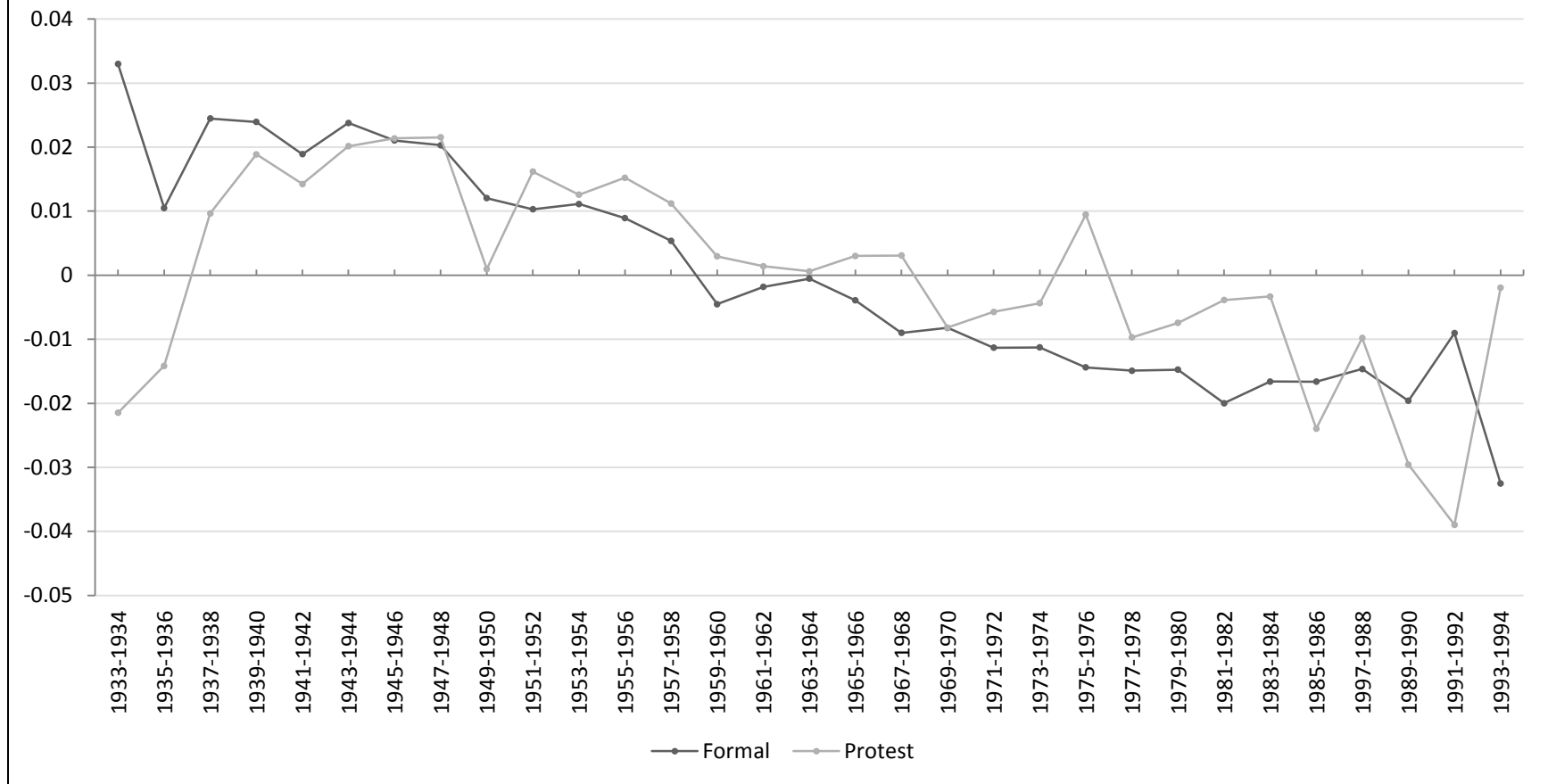
- We explain three types of individual political participation as a function of various controls and age, period and cohort variables.

$$\text{Measure of Political Participation}_h = \alpha_{ih} + \beta_{jh} + \gamma_{kh} + Z\theta + \varepsilon_h$$

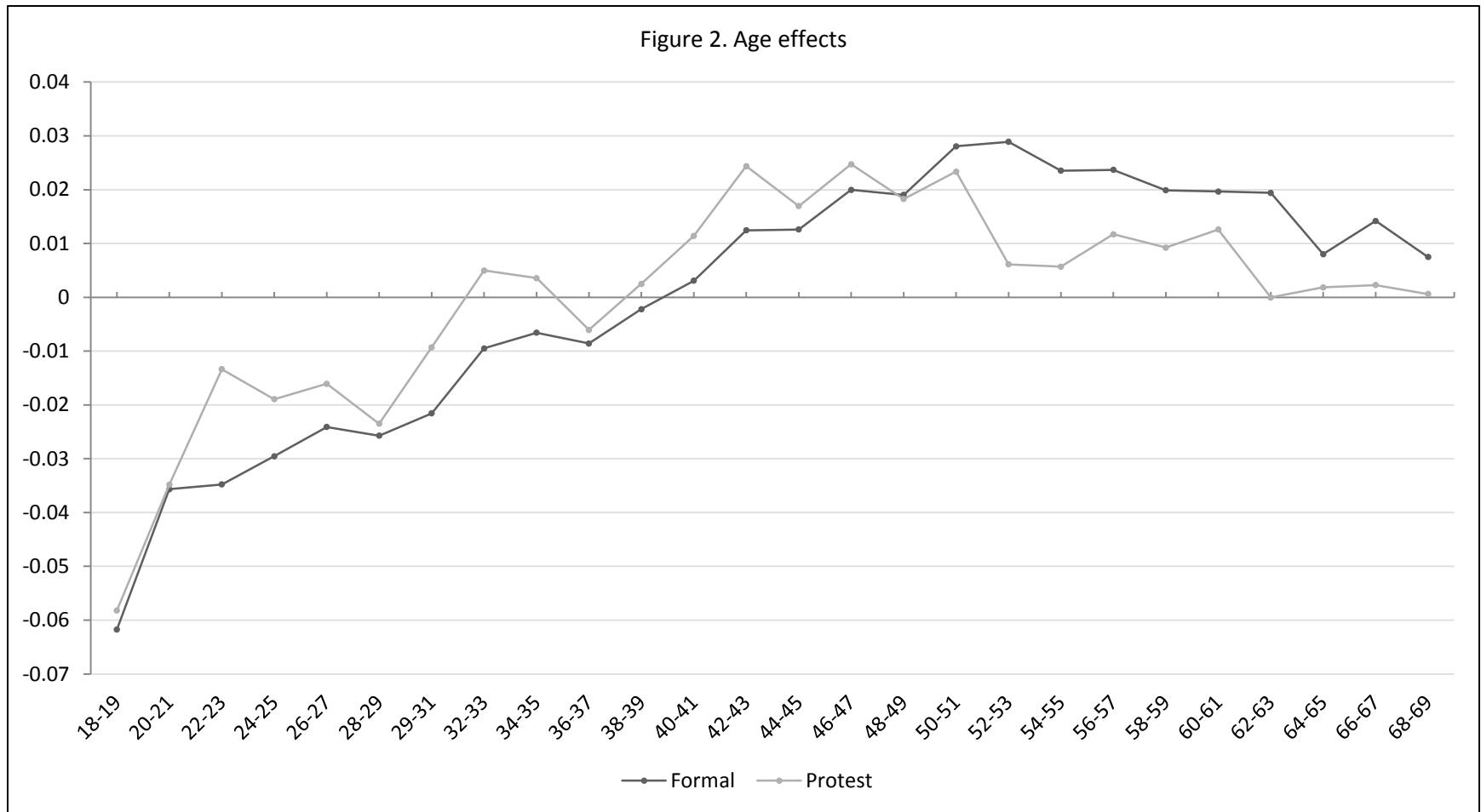
- $i = 1, \dots, a = 26$ (age groups)
- $j = 1, \dots, p = 6$ (period groups)
- $k = 1, \dots, a + p - 1 = 31$ (cohort groups)
- $h = 1, \dots, N = 105023$ (individual observations)
- θ is the vector of coefficients of the control variables
- ε_h represent the error term
- α_{ih} , β_{jh} and γ_{kh} account for the age, period and cohort effects respectively (for the individual h)

Results Cohort effects: In general, we observe a decline in both formal participation and protest behavior with the younger birth-cohorts. However, this decline is clearer for formal participation.

Figure 1. Cohort effects



Results Age effects: Political participation is low at early ages, increasing during the adulthood (due to an accumulation of experiences) until it reaches a maximum in the middle age, and finally decreasing in the latter stages of life (due to physical limitations)



-Protest behaviour is found to be higher at younger ages than formal political participation, while the converse is true at older ages

Results Period effects: Political participation have increased largely in the years that have followed the detonation of the financial crisis (2007-08) and the Eurozone crisis (2010)

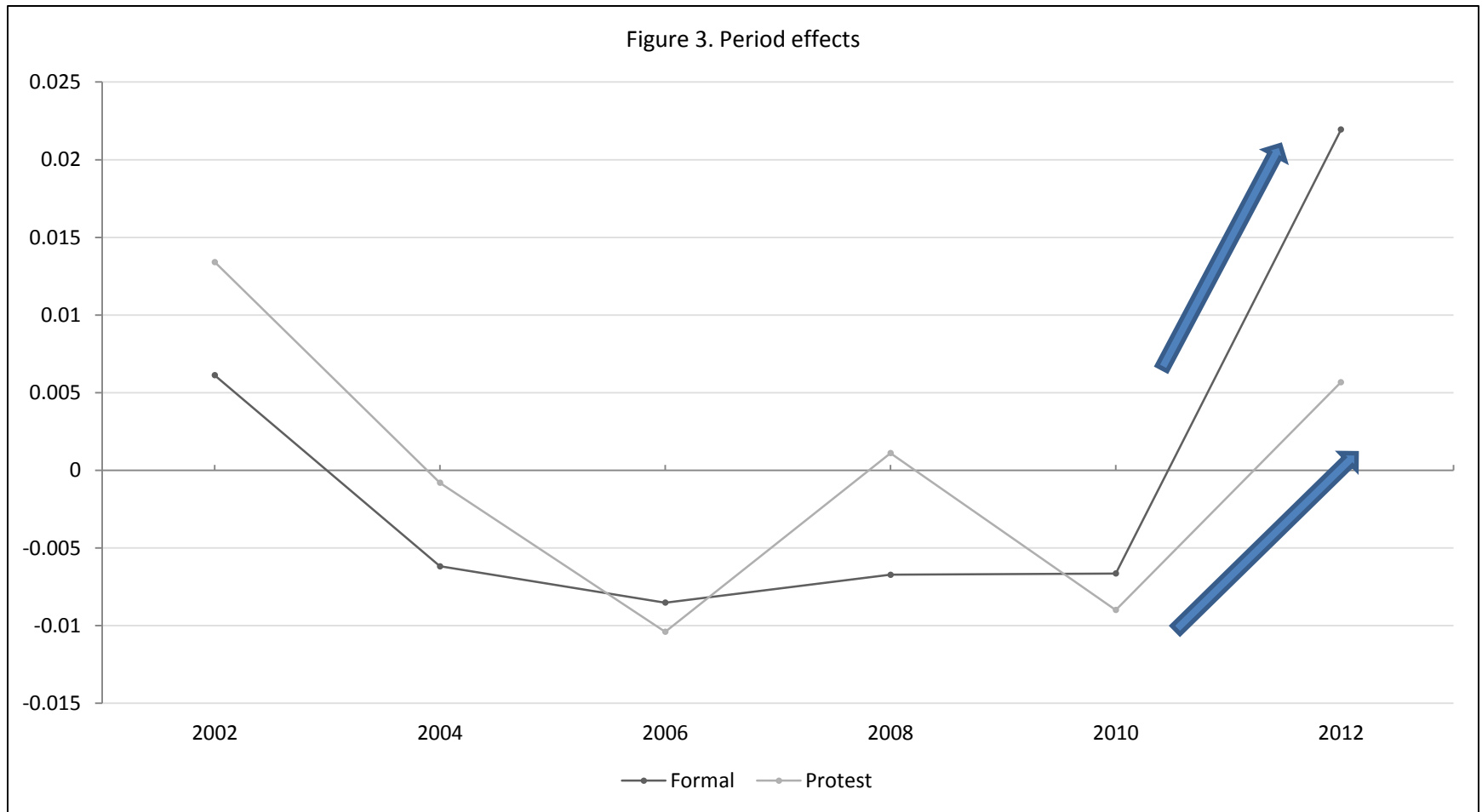
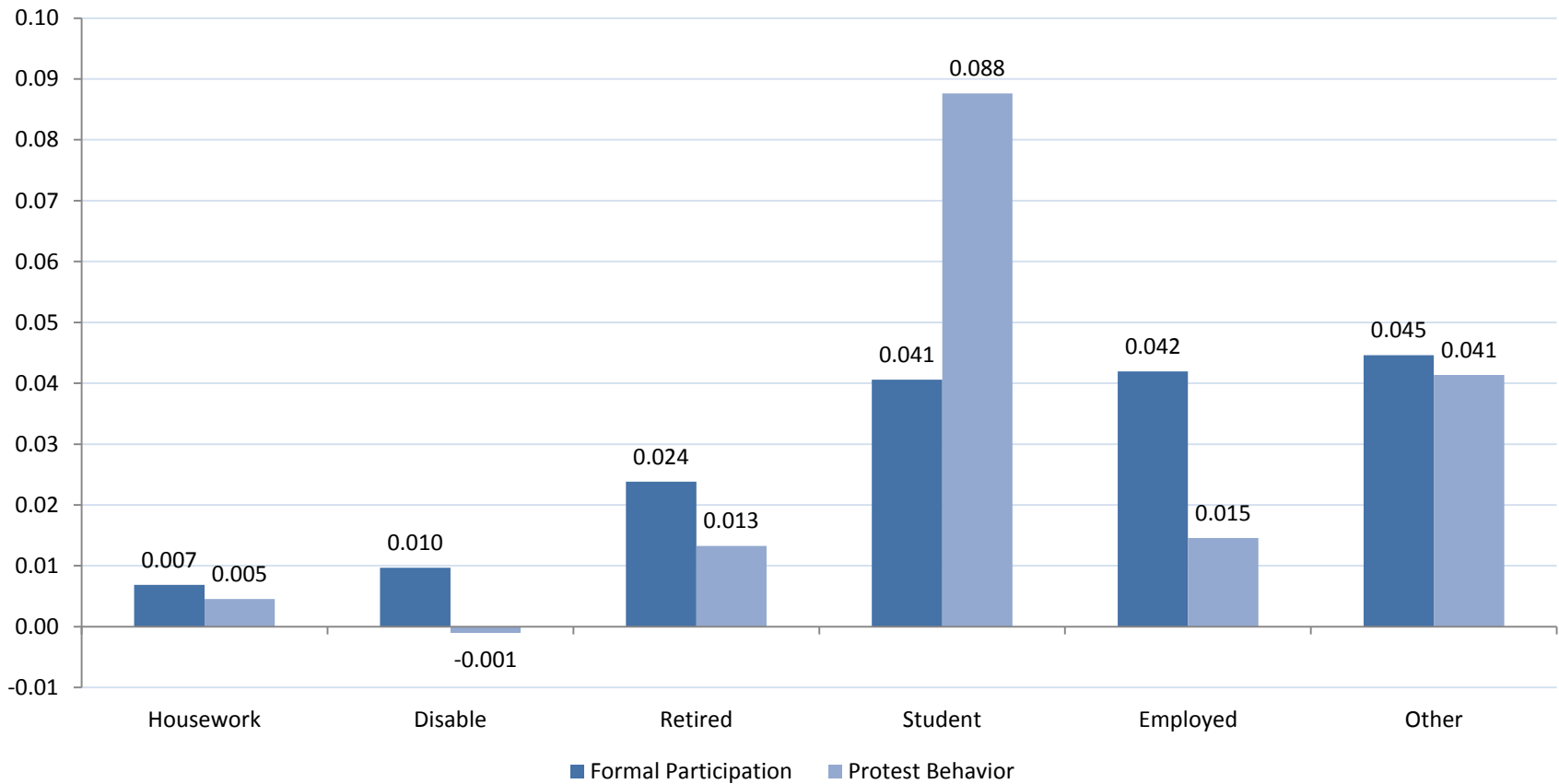


Table 5. Results

Type of Variable	Variable	General Political Participation	Formal Political Participation	Protest Behavior
Social Capital	Trust in People	0.0065072***	0.0051898***	0.0094865***
	Confidence in Institutions	0.0039225***	0.0091196***	-0.0078629***
	Social Connections	0.0060362***	0.0056278***	0.0070097***
	Personal relationships	0.0132187***	0.0133274***	0.0132756***
Human Capital	Level of Education	0.0106092***	0.0090348***	0.0141666***
	High responsibility Job	0.0023111***	0.0029374***	0.0008736
Personal/Household Characteristics	Gender	0.0097429***	0.0198823***	-0.0133295***
	Lives with a Partner in Household	0.0119707***	0.0153704***	0.0042857**
	Number of children in Household	0.0036681***	0.0046959***	0.0012884
Ideology	Important to help people and care for others well-being	0.0056281***	0.005287***	0.0064487***
	Important to make own decisions and be free	0.0017902***	0.0007468***	0.0041491***
	Important to do what is told and follow rules	-0.0040091***	-0.00172***	-0.0092227***
Main activity Status	Employed	0.0336132***	0.0419484***	0.0145755***
	Student	0.0548888***	0.0406043***	0.0876176***
	Housework	0.0062465	0.0068595***	0.0045717
	Retired	0.0206421***	0.0238277***	0.0132873***
	Disable	0.0065933**	0.009691***	-0.0009997
	Other than previous activities	0.0437109***	0.0446035***	0.0413828***
Civic Status	Citizen	0.0582609***	0.0753762***	0.0200211***
	Immigrant	-0.0435164***	-0.0379905***	-0.0560151***
Country fixed effects		Yes	Yes	Yes
Age, period and cohort effects		Yes	Yes	Yes
Statistics	Adj. R-squared	0.2267	0.2121	0.1596
	Observations	105023	105023	105023

Results Main activity: All the activities have a positive and significant effect on formal political participation compared to the unemployed. For protest behavior, only the effects of being disabled or being a housekeeper are not statistically different from zero compared to the unemployed

Figure 4. Effect of main activity on political participation



Note: The reference category is being *Unemployed*

Conclusions

- Political Participation is declining in Europe due to generational replacement
 - Not only in terms of formal political participation, but also extra-parliamentary participation (i.e. protest behavior)
- No evidence for the “emerging substitutes” hypothesis

Limitations and future research

- Open questions
 - Should we use a scale of political participation that gives weights to the various types of participation?
 - Could it be possible that both formal participation and protest behavior activities are currently being replaced with other forms of political participation?
- Research agenda
 - Identify and measure new forms of political participation; in particular, “latent” or non-manifest forms

Thank you for your attention!

For comments and questions please contact:

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