



WORKING PAPER 1

Working package 2



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1. Introduction

A gender gap in politics - meaning that women on average are less or “differently” involved in political life - remains pervasive today, persisting across countries and over time. First identified in the U.S. in the 1990s (Verba et al., 1995), it continues to be observed in North America and Canada (Wolak, 2020). In Europe, Fraile and de Miguel Moyer (2022) find that this gap extends across all countries, even when accounting for sociodemographic factors and political engagement attitudes. The G-EPIC project aims to tackle gendered political inequality from an intersectional perspective. A first step dealing with this challenge lies in a thorough understanding of the origins of gendered inequalities in political attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, under the broad headline “Identifying the origins and assessing the long-term effects of socioeconomic inequalities on political engagement” and with a focus on gender- and socioeconomic inequalities, it was one of Working Package 2’s (WP2) goals to update previous knowledge on the antecedents and intersection of various inequalities in political involvement. WP2 examined how previous studies, existent databases and new focused analyses, could provide answers concerning the different objectives of our work.

There have been eight objectives guiding the work in WP2: O2.1 To update previous knowledge on the antecedents of various inequalities in political involvement”, O2.2 To identify the origins of inequality in political involvement, O2.3 To examine the interaction between internal and external political efficacy, O2.4 To provide evidence of the long-term impact of such inequalities on political involvement, O2.5 To explore the intersectionality of different characteristics on political involvement, O2.6 To explore the relationship between inequalities and forms of political participation (institutional versus noninstitutional), O2.7 To examine differences and similarities across countries and institutional settings and O2.8 To develop hypotheses guiding WPs 4 & 5 (together with WP3). The results of the work on the several different objectives have found their way in several deliverables, publications and as a theoretical basis for other working packages.

Since large parts of this work have already been published in two articles (García-Albacete et al., 2025; Kleer et al., 2025) and in two previous G-EPIC project reports (Kleer et al., 2023; Smetáčková et al., 2023), together with a dataset (Sánchez et al., 2024), with this working paper, we aim to integrate main findings and conclusions of our work as well as spotlight new but relevant perspectives in a comprehensive report. The results presented in the following sections are either not yet available to the public in previous reports or present findings of already published work in more detail, while for those that are already presented in some outlet we provide a succinct summary of the results.

To examine inequalities in political involvement, WP2 decided to focus mainly on the analysis of two basic political orientations: political interest and internal political efficacy. The first reason for this decision was that, as shown in the systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023), these two political attitudes are key predictors of political engagement - both on an attitudinal and a behavioural level - as individuals perceive that their actions have an impact on the political process. Both have also been associated with political (Cohen et al., 2001) and civic engagement (Weintraub Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). Furthermore, studies demonstrated the connection between internal political efficacy and interest in politics (Caprara et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2001; Morrell, 2003) aligning with Bandura's theory that individuals are interested in issues they believe they can comprehend (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Secondly, these are two basic political orientations that have already been shown to develop early in life (García-Albacete & Hoskins, 2025; Neundorf et al., 2013; Prior, 2010). Finally, political participation, an alternative and relevant dimension of political involvement, is not necessarily accessible for young people yet due to their age (i.e. voting).

The working paper is structured as follows: *Section 2* presents established and updated knowledge on antecedents of political efficacy and political interest. Contrary to the systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023), it summarizes important learnings and results with a focus on adolescents. Since the systematic literature review identified an important research gap regarding the potential intersectionality of gender with other sources of disadvantage, we conducted additional analyses with young citizens that are presented in the *Section 3* of this

working paper. Main sources for our studies were identified after the expert's survey conducted within the WP, and we selected the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) data and data from the European Social Survey (ESS) for this part. In the analysis of ICCS, we included gender, immigration background, cultural capital at home, and student-teacher relations to create intersectional effects that might indicate the accumulation of disadvantages according to individuals' backgrounds. By using data from the ESS, we compared gender effects on political efficacy over time. *Section 4* continues these intersectional approaches with more complex multivariate analyses and additionally provides longitudinal evidence of the influences of inequalities on political involvement. The analysis of long-term developments was done by the dataset *Understanding Society* - the only study that includes indicators on the key dependent variable in the G-EPIC project: internal political efficacy. Furthermore, we were exploring the sources of inequalities, as well as socioeconomic factors such as salary, occupation, or origin, and the effects of family. To examine differences and similarities regarding unequal political involvement across countries and institutional settings, *section 5* investigates if and how institutional characteristics and further contextual factors shape internal political efficacy and political interest. For these analyses, both individual-level data from the European Social Survey and macro-indices of several sources, more precisely the European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE] (2024) and Eurostat (2024). To explore the relationship between inequalities and forms of political participation (institutional versus noninstitutional), we provide analyses with international survey data that allows comparing up to 15 countries over the last 20 years. *Section 6* of the working paper presents the respective findings.

A main result from the systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023) was that internal and external political efficacy are two distinct constructs – theoretically and empirically. For that reason, we realized that the third WP2 objective would not be a fruitful venue for our overall research objectives. Therefore, we decided to invest research effort in addressing two important gaps in the literature identified in the systematic literature review. First, the role of feelings of discrimination in the development of political interest among children of immigrants. Secondly, the absence of evidence on the potential accumulation or

intersection of being a young female and having an immigration history. We use a unique dataset that included sampling for youth among four (CILS4EU) European countries. The second part of *section 6 and section 7* present some of the results of our analyses. Recently two publications in the journal *Politics & Governance* (García-Albacete et al., 2025; Kleer et al., 2025) came out of this.

2. Established knowledge

In social science research, an often-reproduced result is that women or girls display less political involvement than men or boys. As we have shown in a comprehensive systematic literature report (Kleer et al., 2023), political efficacy and political interest are important indicators of political involvement in the political system, and gender gaps have repeatedly been shown, both among research with adults and with youth or adolescents. Bos et al. (2022) pointed out that gendered political socialization occurs at an early age as the source – and stabiliser – of gender inequality in the relationship of citizens to the political system. For the theoretical discussion on political involvement, political interest, and political efficacy, refer to the original text (Kleer et al., 2023).

Our following analyses in this working report focus on inequalities in political efficacy and political interest of youth because the origins of gender gaps in adulthood are rooted in young age. It represents a pointed summary of our findings stemming from a systematic literature review covering studies from more than three decades (Kleer et al., 2023). Additionally, we look at studies which included ethnicity or immigration background as further independent variables to summarise findings regarding possible intersectional effects. This approach guided our analytical steps in the next chapters to explore potential intersectionalities between gender and immigration further.

For political efficacy, we focus on internal political efficacy. Our analysis in Kleer et al. (2023) showed that 17 articles studied this indicator with youth in their analysis. 16 studies used samples of young people, ranging largely in age cohorts and countries. Please refer to the full systematic literature review for a report of the methodological steps and a full discussion of the studies.

Table 2.1 presents study summaries from the literature review of Kleer et al. (2023) filtering for relevant studies including samples of youth or adolescents on internal political efficacy. Thirteen studies showed a significant negative effect for girls/young women, while three studies showed insignificant effects. One study showed mixed effects among the countries analysed with significant positive effects for girls in Denmark and Germany and insignificant effects for girls in England (Hoskins et al., 2016).

Overall, we can assess that there is a clear tendency of a negative gender gap for girls among the presented studies spanning different phases of adolescence. This is an interesting finding since it means that the gender gap arise at an early age, as five studies indicated with samples of participants under the age of 15 (Barber & Torney-Purta, 2009; Arens & Watermann, 2017; Lay, 2017; Machackova & Šerek, 2017; Metzger et al., 2020).

Among the studies analysing internal political efficacy, just two studies analysed potential effects of ethnicity or migration history of youth. These studies showed only insignificant (Levy, 2013) and mixed results among ethnicities compared to white respondents (Wolak, 2020).

Although these studies overwhelmingly point to a negative effect of gender on internal political efficacy for young women, many of them fail to account to further assess possible intersectional effects. With the analyses of our working paper, we address this research lacuna introducing an intersectional perspective and including intersections of disadvantages (such as immigration background, ethnicity, or social class).

Table 2.1. Summary table studies of internal political efficacy

Study	Gender (woman)	Ethnicity	Method	Random?	Data type	Experiment	N
Arens and Watermann (2017)	-	∄	Multiple indicators	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Barber and Torney-Purta (2009)	-	∄	Multilevel regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Chan et al. (2012)	(+)	∄	Multilevel regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 750
Eckstein et al. (2015)	-	∄	Correlation	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Grasso and Smith (2022)	-	∄	Bivariate analysis	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Hoskins et al. (2016)	≈	n.r.	SEM	no	cross-sectional	no	< 750
Lay (2017)	-	∄	Regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Lee (2006)	()	∄	Multilevel regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 250
Levy (2013)	()	()	Regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 250
Machackova and Šerek (2017)	-	∄	SEM	yes	panel	no	< 1500
Marx and Nguyen (2016)	-	∄	Regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Metzger et al. (2020)	-	∄	Correlation	no	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Murphy (2016)	-	∄	Regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 1000
Pruysers and Blais (2014)	-	∄	Test of means	no	cross-sectional	yes	< 250
Strohmeier et al. (2017)	-	∄	Regression	no	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500
Wen et al. (2013)	-	∄	Test of means	no	cross-sectional	no	< 500
Wolak (2020)	-	≈	Regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500

Note: + significant, positive; (+) insignificant, positive; () insignificant, no direction reported; (-) insignificant, negative, - significant negative, ≈ mixed, ∄ not included, n.r. not reported.

Source: Adapted table from Kleer et al. (2023, 73).

Table 2.2 displays the study summary for articles on political interest including youth samples. As for the previous chapter, the data comes from our comprehensive systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023). The studies measured political interest in three different ways: general political interest, index of different levels of political interest (local, state, federal, or international), and an index of interest with other political attitudes or behaviour.

Out of the 16 studies, all reported an effect of gender, but only 4 of them (Alozie et al., 2003; Levy et al., 2016; Wolak, 2020; Wray-Lake et al., 2020) included ethnicity measurements.

Overall, the majority of the studies – although measuring political interest in various ways – reported a clear pattern showing girls and young women expressing less political interest (Bachen et al., 2015; Bos et al., 2022; Cicognani et al., 2012; Datzberger & Mat, 2019; Oberle et al., 2018; Oberle & Leunig, 2016; Shala & Grajcevci, 2018; Stadelmann-Steffen & Sulzer, 2018; Wolak, 2020; Wray-Lake et al., 2020; Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013). From these studies, most of them used samples of high school students or young adults or combined them with young adolescents (university students) (Bachen et al., 2015; Cicognani et al., 2012; Datzberger & Mat, 2019; Mayer & Schmidt, 2004; Oberle et al., 2018; Oberle & Leunig, 2016; Shala & Grajcevci, 2018; Stadelmann-Steffen & Sulzer, 2018; Zeglovits & Zandonella, 2013). In contrast, only a single study included young boys and analysed primary school students' political interest (Bos et al., 2022). This finding underlines the impressive fact that a gender gap in political interest exists across different studies spanning different countries and ages.

In addition, two studies showed a positive effect. In the first case, this might relate to the measurement of political interest combined with indicators of activities (Alozie et al., 2003). In the second case, the effect is positive but insignificant, and the sample size is low (Hahn, 1996). Two other studies showed mixed results throughout their different models leading to non-conclusive decisions on the effect of gender on political interest (Mayer & Schmidt, 2004; Ohme et al., 2020). A further study showed negative but insignificant effects conducting a panel experiment involving high school students from four schools (Levy et al., 2016).

Only four out of these 16 studies reported an effect regarding ethnicity or immigration background. Two studies reported negative effects of minority ethnicities in regard to white respondents (Alozie et al., 2003; Levy et al., 2016; Wolak, 2020), but only in one study the effect was significant (Alozie et al., 2003). A single study reported positive effects (Wray-Lake et al., 2020). Although all four studies were conducted in the US, how to include ethnicity (number of different categories) varied between the studies and, therefore, the varying operationalisation might explain differences in the models.

Altogether, there is a clear picture highlighting a lower political interest for girls/young women, even across studies incorporating different measurements of political interest. However, almost none of the studies tried to intersect these gender effects with other potential confounding effects, such as immigration/ethnicity or social class. The four studies using measures of ethnicity showed no clear pattern regarding the role of migration history for political interest at a young age. This again indicates that further research is needed regarding the possible influences of ethnic characteristics and their potential interplay with gender. In the remainder of this working paper, we therefore further investigate possible intersectional effects on political involvement to detect possible cumulated disadvantages.

Table 2.2. Summary table studies of political interest

Study	Gender (woman)	Ethnicity	Method	Random?	Data type	Experiment	N	Operationalization
Alozie et al. (2003)	+	-	Regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	index of political interest and activities
Bachen et al. (2015)	-	∄	Regression	no	cross-sectional	yes	< 500	index of interest in political issues
Bos et al. (2022)	-	∄	Test of means	no	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	index of excitement, learning, future job
Cicognani et al. (2012)	-	∄	Test of means	no	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	general political interest
Datzberger and Mat (2019)	-	∄	Descriptive statistics	no	cross-sectional	no	< 500	general political interest
Hahn (1996)	(+)	∄	Test of means	no	cross-sectional	no	< 250	index of different levels (not reported)
Levy et al. (2016)	(-)	(-)	Regression	no	panel	yes	< 500	index of political interest on 11 political issues
Mayer and Schmidt (2004)	≈	∄	Regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 1500	general political interest
Oberle and Leunig (2016)	-	∄	SEM	no	cross-sectional	yes	≥ 1500	index of 5 items (learning about politics)
Oberle et al. (2018)	-	∄	SEM	no	cross-sectional	yes	≥ 1500	index of 5 items (learning about politics)
Ohme et al. (2020)	≈	∄	Regression	no	panel	no	< 500	general political interest
Shala and Grajcevcic (2018)	-	∄	Regression	no	cross-sectional	no	< 500	index of political interest and information seeking
Stadelmann-Steffen and Sulzer (2018)	-	∄	Multilevel regression	no	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	index of five levels of political interest
Wolak (2020)	-	≈	Regression	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	general political interest
Wray-Lake et al. (2020)	-	+	Conditional growth model	yes	cross-sectional	no	≥ 1500	general political interest
Zeglovits and Zandonella (2013)	-	∄	SEM	yes	cross-sectional	no	< 1000	index of general political interest & following political news

Note: + significant, positive; (+) insignificant, positive; () insignificant, no direction reported; (-) insignificant, negative, - significant negative, ≈ mixed, ∄ not included.

Source: Adapted table from Kleer et al. (2023).

3. Descriptive intersectional analysis

To complement the findings from the literature review, and after evaluating the datasets available for secondary analyses with the Expert's Survey results, this section presents a descriptive graphical intersectional analysis of political involvement using data from the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and from several waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) for selected European countries. We constructed a model incorporating interaction terms among key variables and generated predictive estimates for a subset of intersectional groups to detect descriptive differences among different groups. In this section, we focus on the graphical representation to discuss implications for further analyses. The dimensions considered for intersectional dynamics were gender, immigration background, cultural capital, and student-teacher relation. For a broader discussion, see the full report already published (Smetáčková et al., 2023).

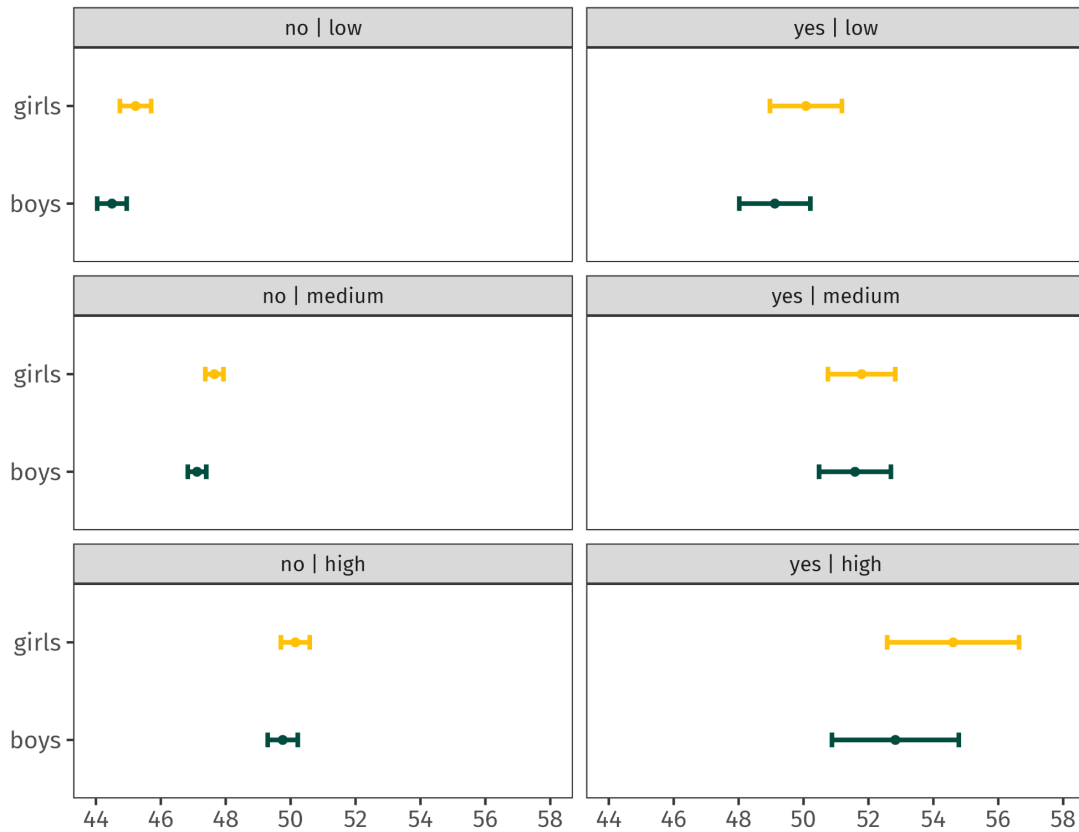
3.1. ICCS

Overall, the ICCS offers data of young people that are prepared to learn their roles as citizens across various countries worldwide. Its focus is on the contexts of democracy and civic participation. Regarding our aims, the ICCS from 2009 (ICCS, 2010) offers the potential to analyse internal political efficacy besides political interests, whereas the ICCS from 2016 and the latest from 2022 do only include an item on civic efficacy which conceptually differs from internal political efficacy.

For this analysis, we subsetted the data from the ICCS 2009 dataset (approximately 72,000 cases), and focused on five European countries relevant to the project: Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom, which resulted in a subsample of about 17,000 cases. We abstained from a random intercept model given the small number of countries included. Consequently, the data were pooled, and a linear regression model incorporating all possible two-way and three-way interactions among the three variables was estimated.

In the first part, we analyse differences among intersections of gender, immigration background (native vs. non-native) and cultural capital (low, medium, and high) on internal political efficacy and in the second part on political interest. Starting with internal political efficacy, Figure 3.1 presents the results of the prediction for each intersectional type on internal political efficacy.

Figure 3.1: Differences by gender across intersections for internal political efficacy (Immigration background | cultural capital)



Data: ICCS (2010).

Overall, we can detect that youth with immigration background (independently from cultural capital) expressed higher levels of internal political efficacy. Additionally, it is obvious that gender differences in each of the six groups (depending on immigration background and cultural capital) do not stand out.

Regarding differences according to cultural capital, the results are clear. Among native youth and youth with immigration background, we can acknowledge a certain rise in the levels of political efficacy with higher levels of cultural capital.

We can see that native girls and boys with low cultural capital expressed the lowest internal political efficacy. In addition, we can also see that among students

with immigration background, those with low cultural capital showed the least internal political interest.

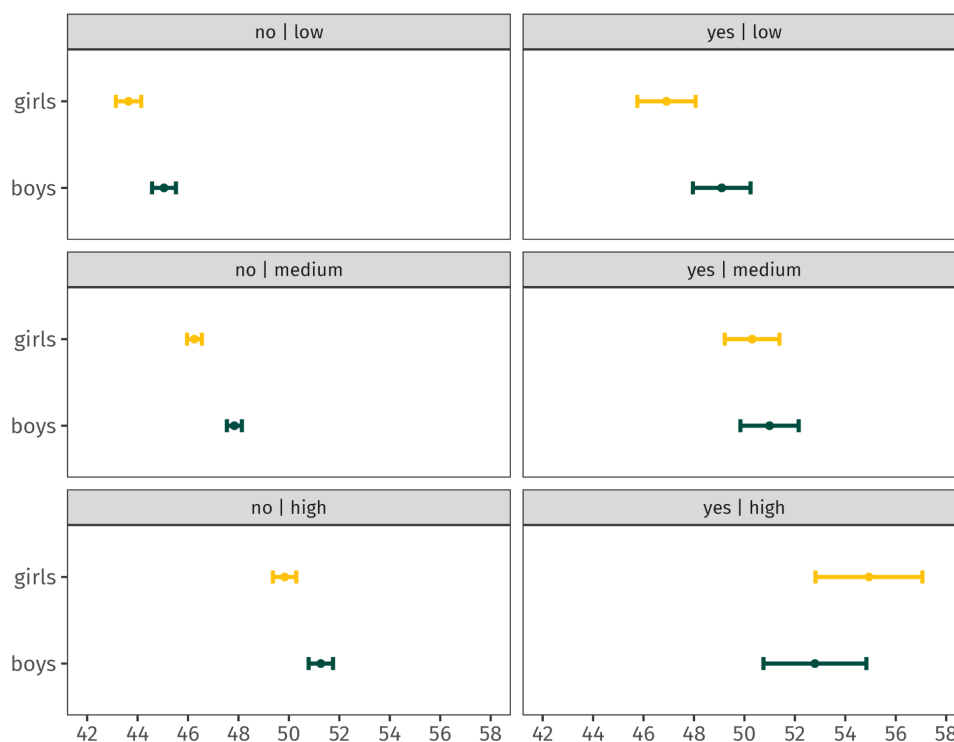
In conclusion, Figure 3.1 shows that differences between genders are neither pronounced for youth with nor without immigration background. Gender gaps are not large and, in most cases, insignificant (CI overlaps with mean estimation).

Regarding this preliminary analysis, it becomes obvious that social class and related factors such as socio-cultural capital might indeed play an important role in predicting political interest and political efficacy among adolescents with and without immigration background.

Figure 3.2 shows the differences in gender across the intersections of immigration background and cultural capital for political interest. Interestingly, we can see that differences between boys and girls are less pronounced among children of immigrants/immigrants than among natives. The gender gap among natives is dependent on the level of cultural capital. Among youth with immigration backgrounds, this clear pattern is not visible. For students with low cultural capital, a descriptive gender gap is visible and significant. However, among students with low cultural capital and immigration background, this gender gap diminished and turned insignificant. Surprisingly, we can lastly see that the gender gap turns toward favoring girls for students with immigration backgrounds and high cultural capital, although it stays insignificant.

As above, we can highlight from Figure 3.2 that in general expressed levels of political interest are higher among students with immigration background than natives independently of cultural capital.

Figure 3.2: Differences by gender across intersections for political interest (Immigration background | cultural capital)



Data: ICCS (2010).

3.2. European Social Survey

With the literature review and analyses conducted using ICCS 2009 data to this point, we know that there is a gender gap when it comes to internal political efficacy and political interest that is visible already at an early age. To first approach the question of potential long-term effects of early inequalities, we look now at data for adults across Europe.

From the Experts' Survey, we concluded that the European Social Survey provides the most complete dataset for this endeavour. If the disparities observed among children and teenagers persist over time, it would highlight the lasting impact of early inequalities and the fundamental role that gender continues to play in shaping political engagement throughout life.

The analysis includes the 15 countries that have participated in all 10 rounds of the European Social Survey: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. This number and variety of countries enable us to address the gender gap in political involvement while

considering different contexts, encompassing Nordic European, Central European, Southern European, and Eastern European countries and to examine the stability of the results across almost 20 years.

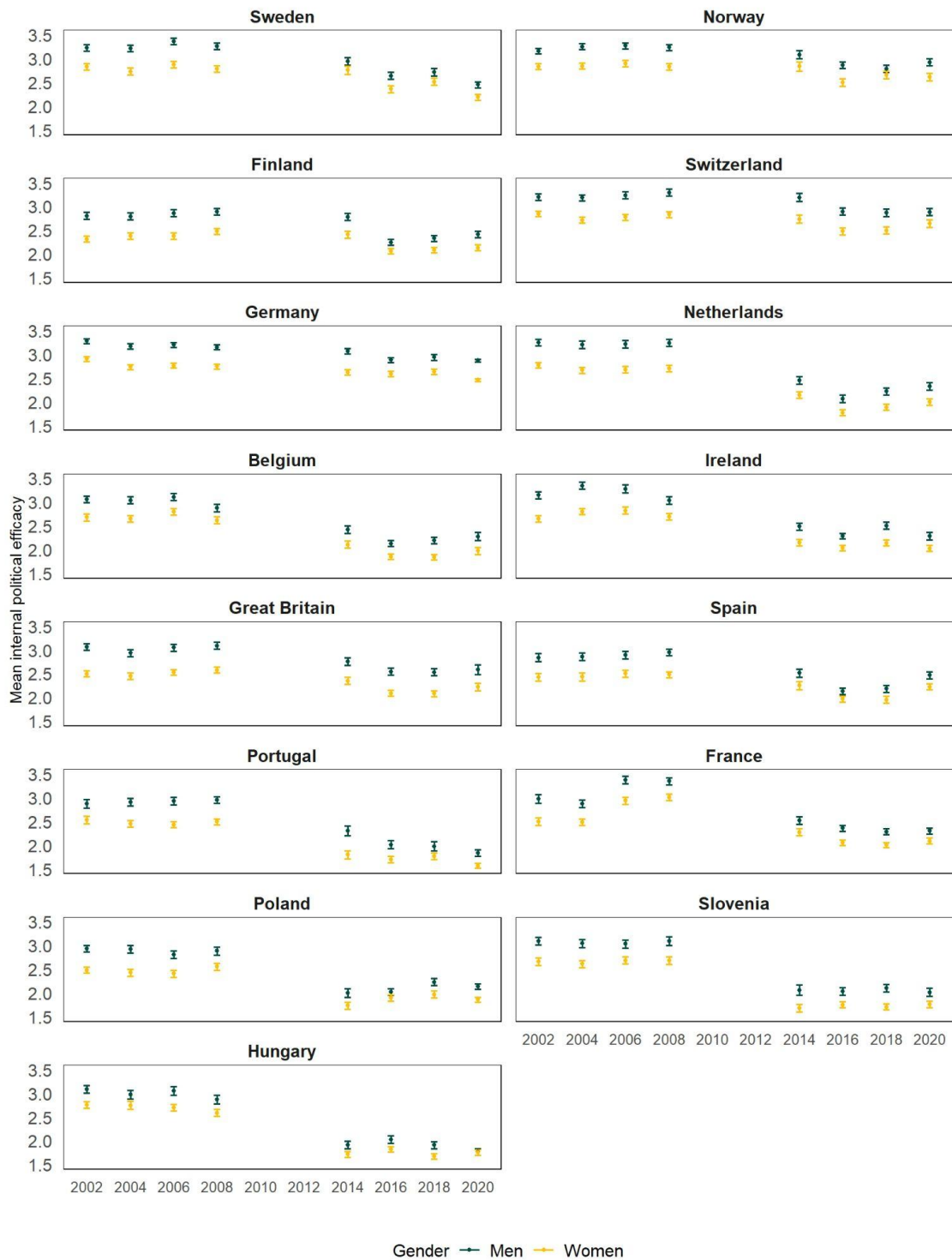
3.2.1. Internal political efficacy

The question on Internal political efficacy has been included in 8 out of the 10 rounds of this cross-sectional survey. Between rounds 1 and 4, internal political efficacy was measured on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "never" and 5 "frequently," capturing the frequency with which individuals felt that "Politics are too complicated to understand." As mentioned above, rounds 5 and 6 ceased to include any measures approximating the concept of political efficacy. In round 7, when it was reintroduced, it switched to a variable on a 1-10 scale, where 1 signified "not at all confident" and 10 "totally confident," in response to the premise: "Confident in own ability to participate in politics." To facilitate longitudinal analysis, the scales have been adjusted to 1-5 for comparability in tracking the evolution of this attitude over time.

In Figure 3.5, we observe that although the overall levels of internal political efficacy vary across countries, the gender gap remains constant in most of them. For example, in Nordic countries like Sweden or Finland, countries with relative higher levels of gender equality, we see that the average levels are high. In Sweden, they are close to 3.5 out of 5, but the gap remains statistically significant, although it seems to have slightly narrowed in recent years. A similar pattern is observed in Central European countries like Germany, which also has high average levels of internal political efficacy, yet the gender gap remains statistically significant.

We also see this trend in Southern European countries such as Spain or Italy, where the overall average levels of internal political efficacy are lower, and with it, the gender gap narrows, but again it remains statistically significant. A similar situation occurs in Eastern European countries, where the average levels decline, and the gap slightly closes but remains significant. Notably, Hungary stands out as an exception, showing no gender gap in the most recent year; however, the political context makes it difficult to compare with the rest.

Figure 3.5. Gender gaps in internal political efficacy across countries and time



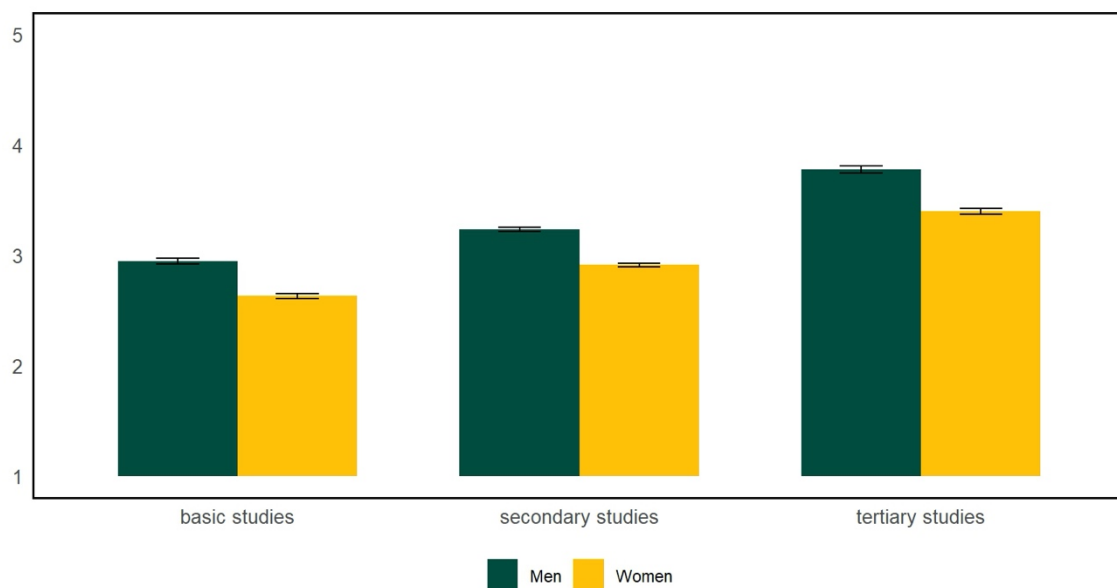
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-10 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Through this analysis, gender gap in internal political efficacy is observed to be consistent over time in all countries, confirming, in line with previous studies (Fraile & de Miguel Moyer, 2022), that the gender gap exists in all countries and contexts.

The intriguing aspect of this evolution, as seen in the graphs, is that the levels of internal political efficacy for men and women have a parallel trend. Mostly, there are moments when levels rise, fall, or remain stable, but women consistently exhibit lower levels compared to men. Thus, beyond the context, it is necessary to delve into the structural factors that systematically place women at lower levels of self-efficacy than men.

In line with the two descriptive graphs have been generated (Figures 3.6 and 3.7), demonstrating the gender gap's existence even when controlling for individual factors such as education and age. We used data from round 9 of the European Social Survey because in the latest round 10 data collection was partially done online due to the pandemic, and, hence, the results from round 9 are considered more robust.

Figure 3.6. Levels of internal political efficacy by education

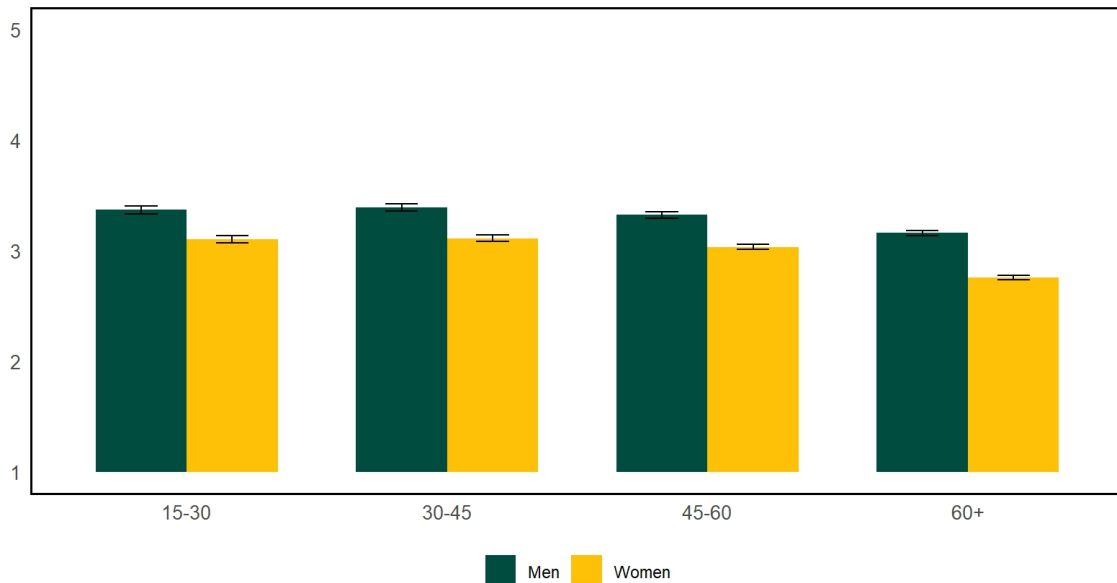


Data: European Social Survey, Round 9 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024). As observed in the graphs, as the educational level of the population increases, the declared level of political efficacy also rises; however, the gender gap persists. Similarly, when controlling for age groups, while it is true that our confidence in our own abilities to participate in politics increases with age, the gender gap persists, with women consistently showing lower levels.

This ESS analysis aims to demonstrate that the gender differences found in the analysis conducted with ICCS children's data are consistent with those found in

adults. These gender differences emerging in childhood persist into adulthood, prevailing across most European countries.

Figure 3.7. Levels of internal political efficacy by age groups



Data: European Social Survey, Round 9 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024). In addition to internal political efficacy, we checked the gender gaps for political interest across the same countries. In the following section, we demonstrate a very similar trend, although the gap is not as evident as it is in internal political efficacy.

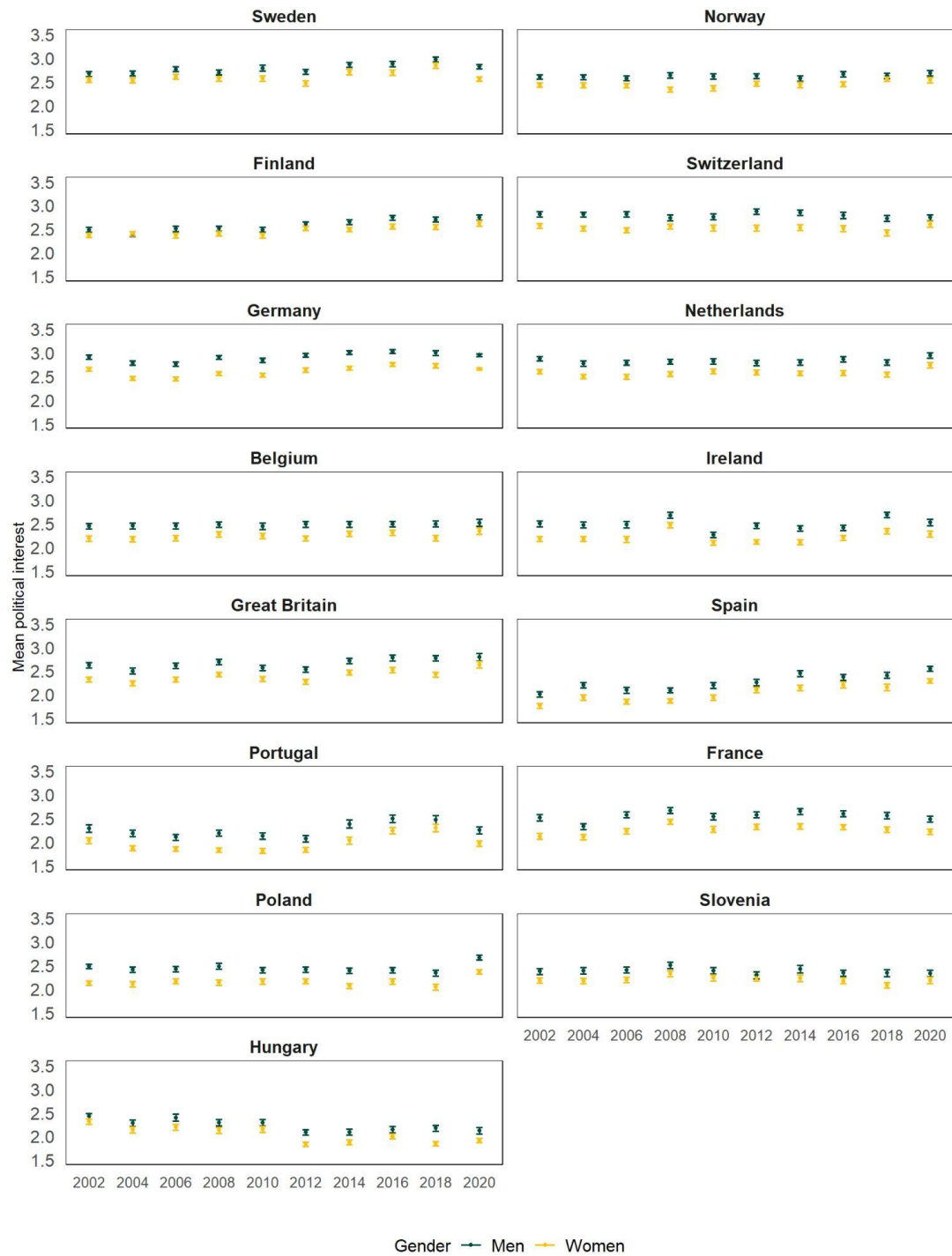
3.2.2. Political interest

Let us now examine political interest. We have included the same countries as before to allow for comparison, although political interest has been measured in all survey waves. Interest in politics is measured using the statement: "How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you..." with response options ranging from "very interested," "quite interested," "hardly interested," to "not at all interested." To facilitate the readability of the graphs, the scale has been reversed.

Figure 3.8 shows the development of political interest over time and across countries. We observe trends like those seen for internal political efficacy: although interest levels fluctuate over time, the gender gap remains relatively constant. As with political efficacy, Nordic and Central European countries show higher average levels of political interest, yet the gap persists. The gap is

particularly evident in Germany and the Netherlands. In Spain and Portugal, it also remains, although it appears to diminish over the years. Eastern European countries once again stand out for having a smaller gap, with Slovenia showing a more closed gap compared to Poland.

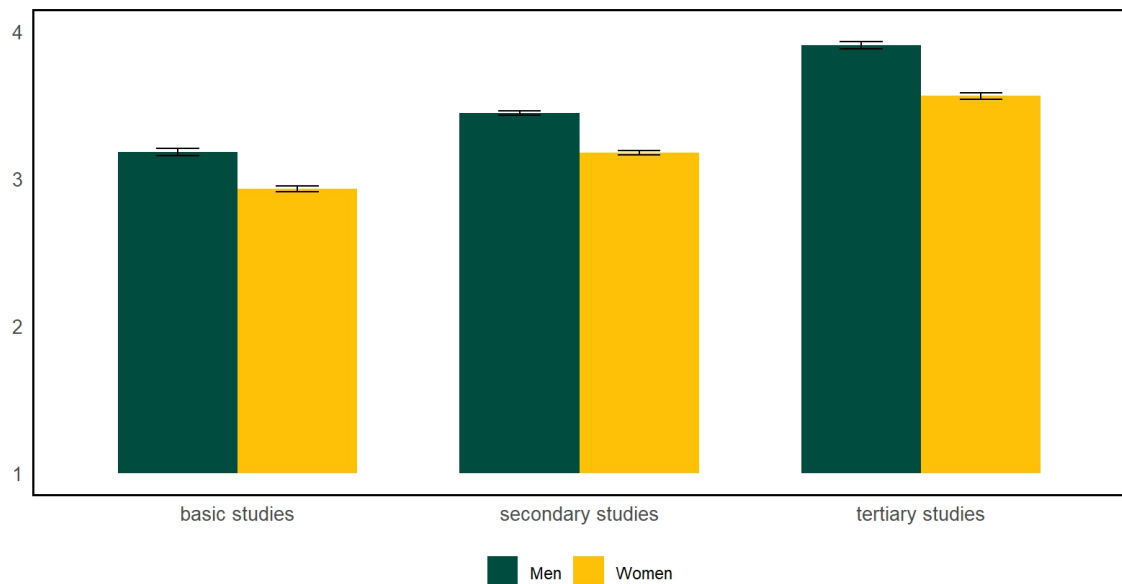
Figure 3.8. Gender gap in political interest across countries and time



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-10 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

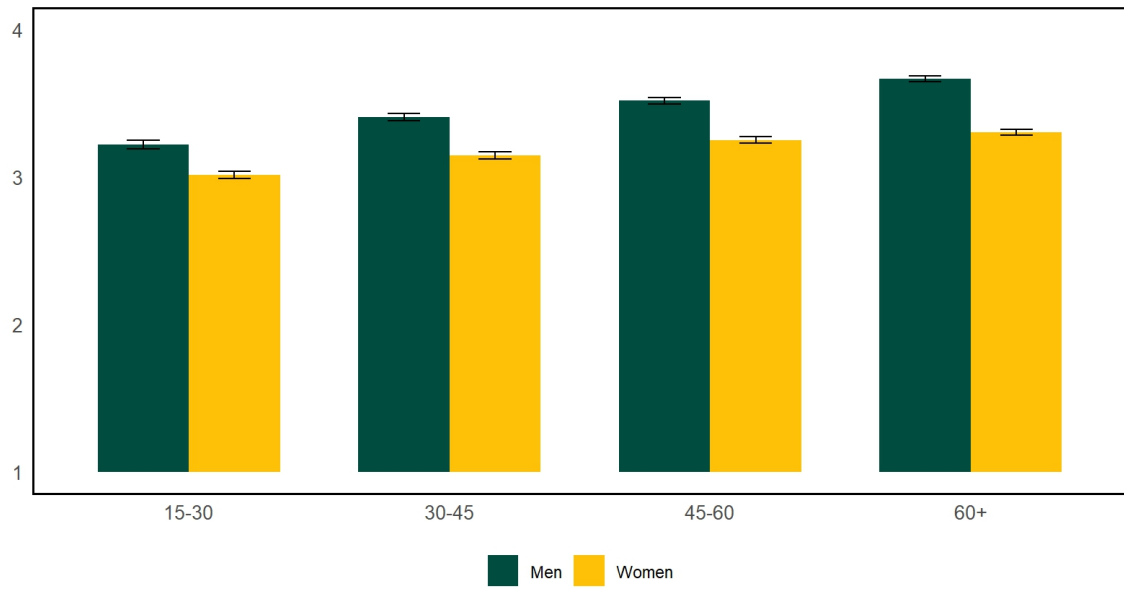
Finally, we analyse again the influence of individual characteristics to check whether factors such as education level (Figure 3.9) or age (Figure 3.10) reduce the gender gap. As seen with internal political efficacy, the gap remains constant. Even as education levels increase, the gender gap in political interest does not close. The same applies to age, where the gap increases, as the increase of men's levels of interest over age are larger than for women. This section on individual characteristics such as education level and age will be further explored in section 4.2 *Trends over the life course*, for both internal political efficacy and political interest.

Figure 3.9. Levels of political interest by education



Data: European Social Survey, Round 9 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 3.10. Levels of political interest by age groups



Data: European Social Survey, Round 9 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

4. Multivariate intersectional analysis

4.1. Intersectional effects of gender and immigration background

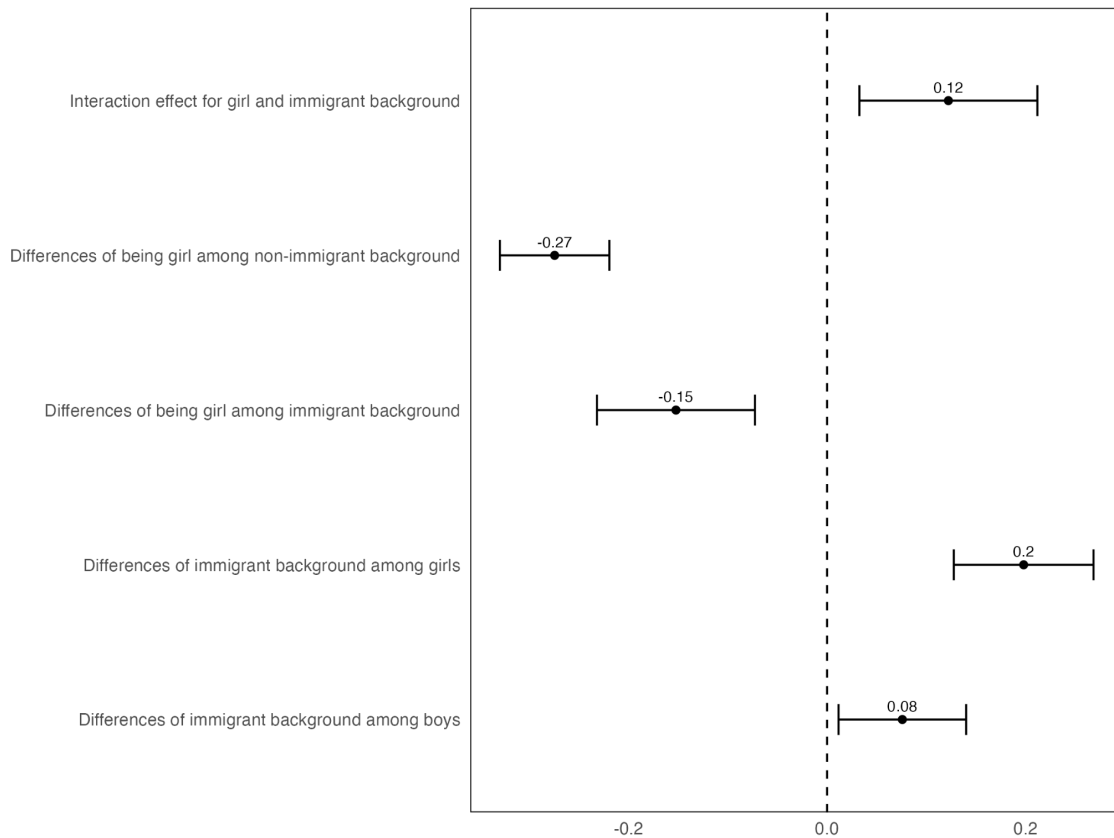
One of the conclusions highlighted in the systematic literature review we conducted (Kleer et al., 2023) was the somewhat limited number of quantitative studies of the potential intersectional dynamics between being a girl or a woman and having a personal or family immigration background. For that reason, and once examined the available datasets, we decided to make an effort to preliminarily address the potential intersectionality of both aspects during adolescence. This exploration resulted in a recently published article (García-Albacete et al., 2025), in which we explored the intersectional effects of gender and migrant background on young people's political interest. In this section we report a summary of the main arguments and findings of the article but encourage the interested reader to read the more detailed published version (see DOI in García-Albacete, 2025).

Following Crenshaw (1991), we understand intersectionality as a lens through which we can see how different forms of inequality -such as gender, immigrant background, and class- interact and intensify each other, creating experiences that are not merely the sum of their parts but distinct forms of disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). As discussed in the article, there are diverse reasons why intersectionality is difficult to address from a quantitative perspective. To start with, intersectionality implies complex dynamics and processes that require qualitative methods to identify. In addition, due to the diversity of countries of origin, differentiated structure of opportunities across reception countries, and historical, social, economic and political elements, the potential variation is huge and almost impossible to reduce to manageable “categories” of analyses. For these reasons, in the article we set a modest goal: to provide some quantitative evidence on the potential interaction between gender and immigration background on adolescents' political interest. This examination was possible thanks to the CILS4EU dataset that contains a subsample of “Children of Immigrants” (CILS4EU).

In the article we combine two sets of studies: first, those examining gender-based inequalities in political interest and secondly, those focusing on migration-background-based inequalities and political interest. The next step was to revise studies that combine both perspectives. We found a larger number of studies for adults than for young people. For that reason, we elaborated descriptive hypotheses. Our results suggest that the interaction between these factors indeed seems to produce differential effects. In particular, we found that being both a girl and having an immigration background had an independent positive relationship with political interest, which pointed to more complex dynamics of political socialisation in migratory contexts (see Figure 4.1). However, the positive “intersectional” effect does not imply that girls with immigrant background have higher levels of political interest than any other group comparison, rather, they are more interested in politics than we could expect from just adding up the negative effects of gender and immigration background, but boys are still more interested in politics than them. The group with the lowest declared level of political interest is girls born in the survey country. Furthermore, we expected differences among girls born in a different country (first generation) and those born in the country of the survey but failed to find differences among them.

Overall, the results provided strong evidence for an intersectional approach to political interest. While girls generally report lower political engagement than boys, this gap is significantly smaller among immigrants. Immigrant girls are more politically engaged than non-immigrant girls, and in some contexts, they even reach levels comparable to boys. These findings challenge the notion of uniform political disengagement among young women and highlight the importance of considering intersectionality in political socialization research. Future research should further explore the mechanisms behind this intersectional effect, particularly the role of experiences with discrimination and cultural socialization in shaping political interest. For a more in-depth understanding beyond this summary, we recommend referring to the original study.

Figure 4.1. Conditional differences of gender and migration background on political interest.



Source: García-Albacete et al. (2025, p. 12).

4.2. Trends over the life course

As part of the goal to examine the long-term effect of early inequalities on the gender gap in political involvement from a quantitative perspective, this section focuses on examining whether the trajectories of men and women regarding these attitudes are similar, diverge, or remain constant throughout the life course. Again, this analysis centres on the two core attitudes addressed throughout WP2: internal political efficacy and interest in politics.

To carry out this analysis, we use data from Understanding Society (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024), a panel survey that tracks the same individuals over time. As one of the main conclusions of our expert's survey, we highlighted that panel databases that allow tracking the same individuals over time are not abundant. Furthermore, the measurement of internal political efficacy is also uncommon in longitudinal datasets. This makes Understanding Society a highly suitable database for our analysis and the reason

we have chosen it, although we acknowledge the limitation that it is restricted to one country, in this case, the United Kingdom. Specifically, four waves of data were analysed, those collected in 2011, 2014, 2017, and 2020, which include our two questions of interest. Using this data, linear mixed-effects models were applied to estimate and explore the trajectories.

In addition to exploring changes over time and across the life course, the analysis goes a step further by investigating which variables or sources of inequality might influence these trajectories. To this end, two main variables were incorporated: education level and immigrant background.

4.2.1. Internal political efficacy

To begin the analyses, a simple linear mixed-effects model has been carried out (Table 4.2), incorporating only internal political efficacy as the dependent variable and age, gender, and their interaction as independent variables. The model's coefficients reveal that age has a significant and positive coefficient (0.005***), indicating that as age increases, internal political efficacy also tends to rise. In contrast, gender shows a significant and negative coefficient (-0.131***), suggesting that women have lower levels of internal political efficacy compared to men.

Table 4.2. Results from linear mixed effects model: Internal political efficacy

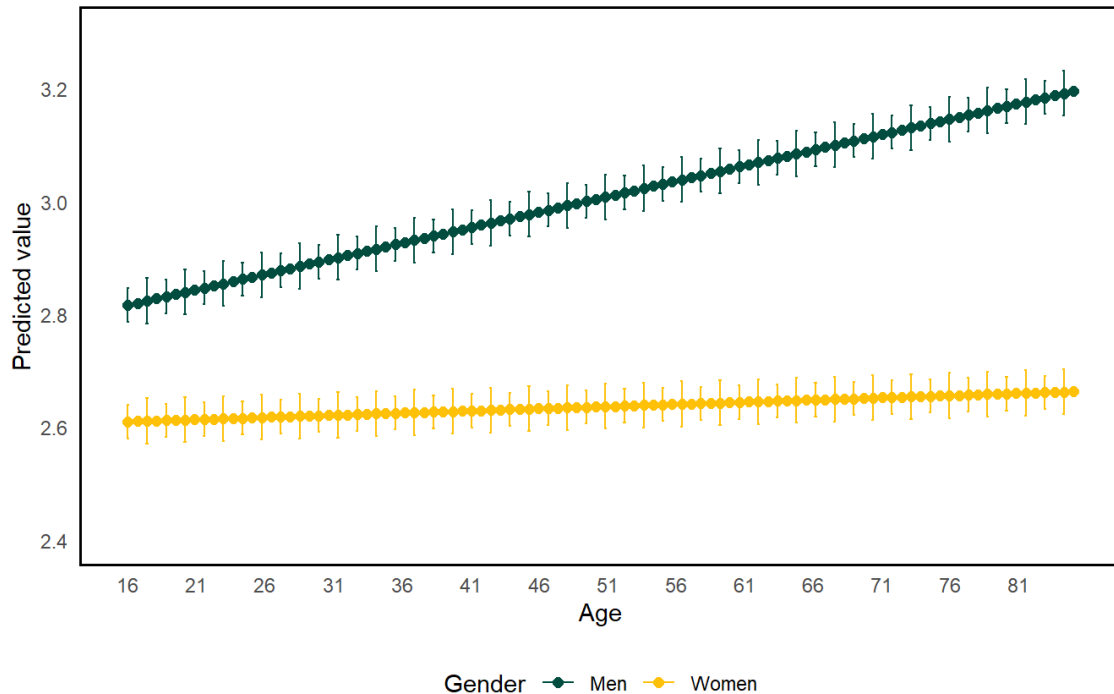
Internal political efficacy	
Age	0.005 *** (0.0003)
Woman	-0.131 *** (0.020)
Age * Woman	-0.005 *** (0.0004)
Observations	143.244
AIC	400.763,500
BIC	400.822,700

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

When examining the interaction between age and gender, the results indicate a negative interaction coefficient (-0.005***, Table 4.1). This suggests that the increase in internal political efficacy with age is weaker for women than it is for men. As shown in Figure 4.4, the upward trend in the internal political efficacy of men (green) throughout their lives is much more pronounced compared to women

(yellow), whose political efficacy remains much more stable with little variation over time.

Figure 4.4. Predicted values of internal political efficacy



Source: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

To examine how political efficacy varies when adding variables considered sources of inequality, the following analyses have been conducted. First, *education level* has been included as a proxy for available resources and overall cultural capital (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.5). The variable is coded as 0 for individuals without university or higher education and 1 for those with university or higher education. It has been treated as dichotomous to facilitate interaction analysis and subsequent interpretation.

As can be seen from Table 4.3, the fixed-effect coefficients continue to align with previous findings for internal political efficacy, showing a positive effect of age and a negative effect of gender. When education level is added, it also shows a positive coefficient (0.645***), indicating that individuals with university education tend to report higher internal political efficacy.

Table 4.3. Results from linear mixed effects model: Internal political efficacy and educational level

Internal political efficacy	
Age	0.074*** (0.006)
Woman	-0.336*** (0.009)
High Education	0.645*** (0.011)
Age * Woman	-0.080*** (0.008)
Age * High Education	0.083*** (0.011)
Woman * High Education	-0.089*** (0.015)
Age * Woman * High Education	0.034* (0.015)
Observations	142,061
AIC	391,248.200
BIC	391,347.000

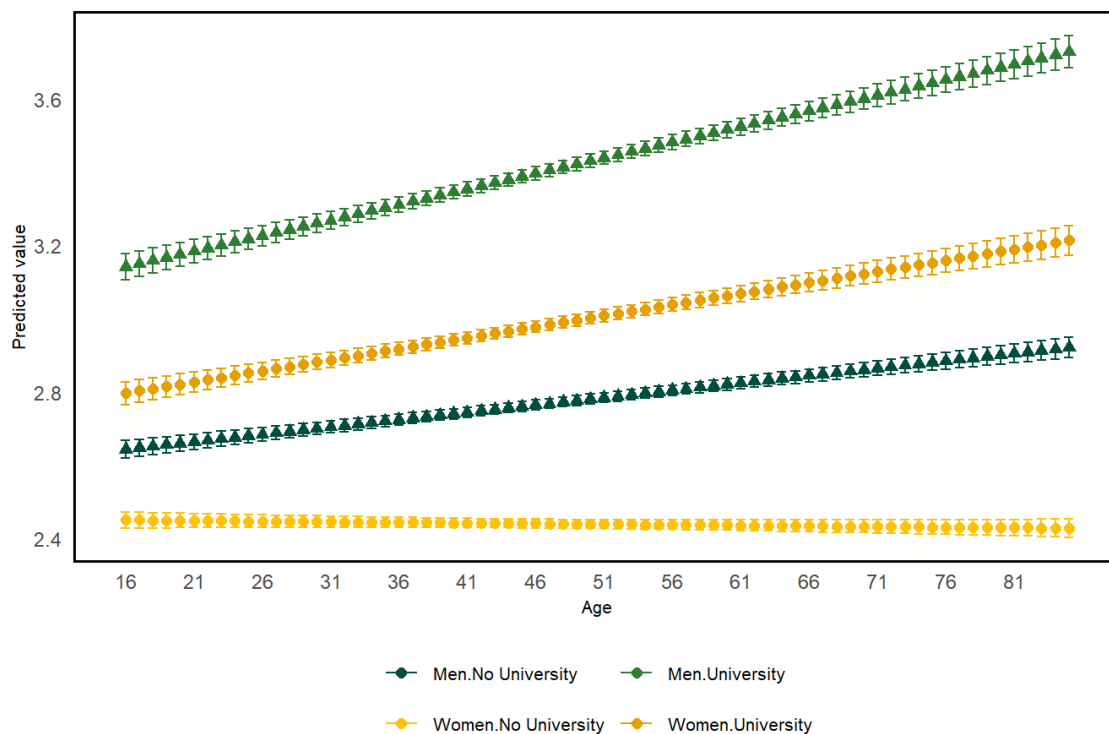
Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

Examining the interactions, the age-by-education interaction is also positive (0.083***), suggesting that individuals with university education experience a greater increase in internal political efficacy with age compared to those without. The gender-by-education interaction, however, is negative (-0.089***), indicating that even with university education, women report lower levels of internal political efficacy. Despite this, women with higher education do experience an increase in their levels of political efficacy over time, while this does not happen for women without higher education, where the effect of age is practically negative, with their levels of internal political efficacy decreasing over the years.

Lastly, the three-way interaction of age, education level, and gender has a positive coefficient (0.0342), suggesting that the effect of age for women with university education is slightly positive.

The regression results are easier to understand when looking at Figure 4.5, which shows the evolution over time of the four groups generated: men with higher education, men without higher education, women with higher education, and women without higher education.

Figure 4.5. Predicted values of Internal Political Efficacy and Educational Level



Data: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2024).

In general, the lines for men (light green and dark green) show an increase in their internal political efficacy over time, although the line for women with higher education (orange) also shows a similar trend. However, women without higher education show even a negative trend, losing internal political efficacy over time. In any case, the gap becomes evident in this graph (Figure 4.5), where we can clearly see not only gender differences but also differences in educational levels.

As another source of inequality, *place of birth* has been added. A dichotomous variable was created, where 0 represents those born in their country of residence and 1 includes those not born in the country of residence or whose parents were both born in a different country, hereafter referred to as ‘immigrant background’.

Using the same type of model, we observe from Table 4.4 that adding the immigrant background variable as a control leaves the other coefficients relatively unchanged, with a positive effect for age (0.081^{***}) and a negative one for gender (-0.387^{***}). The coefficient for immigrant background itself is positive (0.034^{*}), indicating that individuals with an immigrant background report higher levels of internal political efficacy compared to those born in their country of residence.

Table 4.4. Results from linear mixed effects model: Internal political efficacy and immigration background

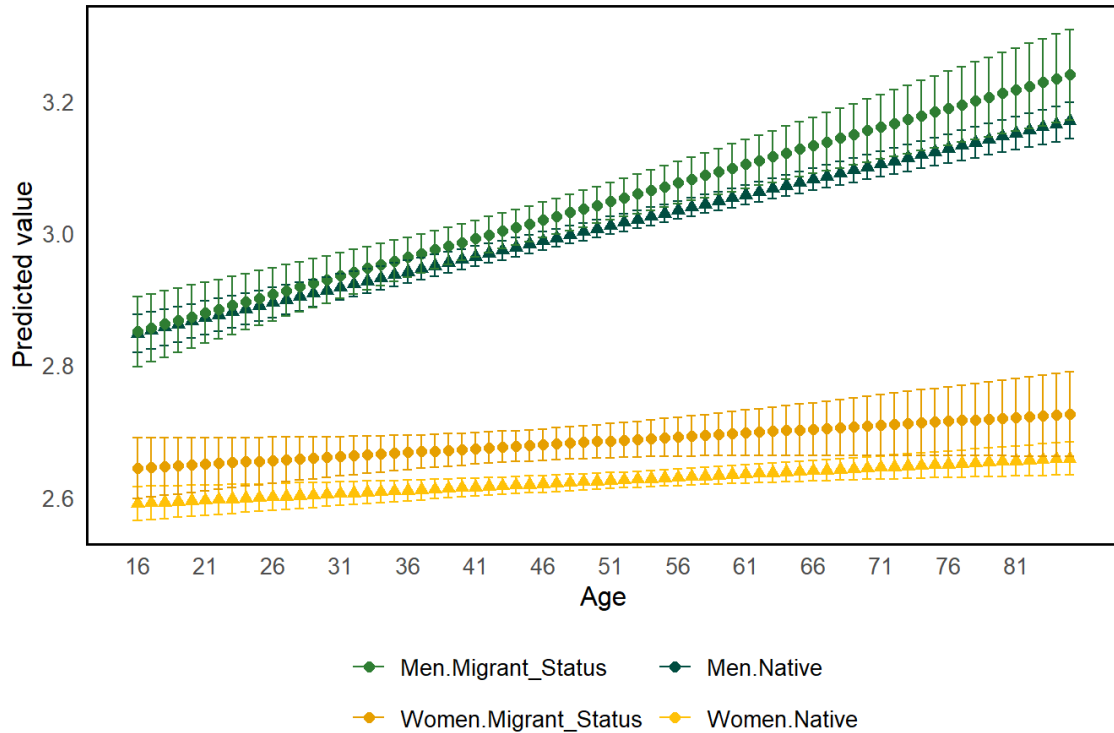
Internal political efficacy	
Age	0.081*** (0.006)
Woman	-0.387*** (0.009)
Immigration background: yes	0.037* (0.016)
Age * Woman	-0.063*** (0.008)
Age * Immigration background	0.017 (0.015)
Woman* Immigration background	0.024 (0.022)
Age * Woman * Immigration background	-0.013 (0.021)
Observations	130.501
AIC	362,813.800
BIC	362,911.600

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

The interaction between age and immigrant background is also positive (0.017) but not significant. Similarly, the interaction between gender and immigrant background is positive (0.024) but neither significant indicating that women with an immigrant background do not necessarily have higher levels of internal political efficacy in comparison with country born women. The three-way interaction of age, gender, and immigrant background is very small (-0.013), showing a minimal combined effect of these three variables on internal political efficacy.

The results we see in the regression are made evident in the graph with the predicted values (Figure 4.6), where we can more clearly observe that there are almost no differences between men, regardless of whether they have a migrant background or not (shown in green on the graph). However, a noticeable difference appears among women, where from the late twenties onward, women with a migrant background show significantly higher levels of internal political efficacy compared to women born in the country of residence.

Figure 4.6. Predicted values of internal political efficacy and immigration background



Data: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

4.2.2. Political interest

In this second section, we analyse in a similar way the effects on political interest. We begin again with the simplest model, using political interest as the dependent variable and gender, age, and their interaction as independent variables (see Table 4.5).

As we can see from Table 4.5, the results are similar to internal political efficacy. We observe a positive effect for age (0.009***), indicating that as age increases, political interest also grows. The gender gap is also present (-0.221***), with a negative coefficient for women. Similarly, the interaction between age and gender reveals that the increase in political interest with age is smaller for women compared to men.

Figure 4.7 shows that the effect of age is much greater than the one from internal political efficacy (Figure 4.4), consistently increasing political interest over time for both men and women. However, this is not the case for efficacy, which remains much more stable, especially for women, indicating that, despite the passage of time, they do not manage to increase their levels of internal efficacy.

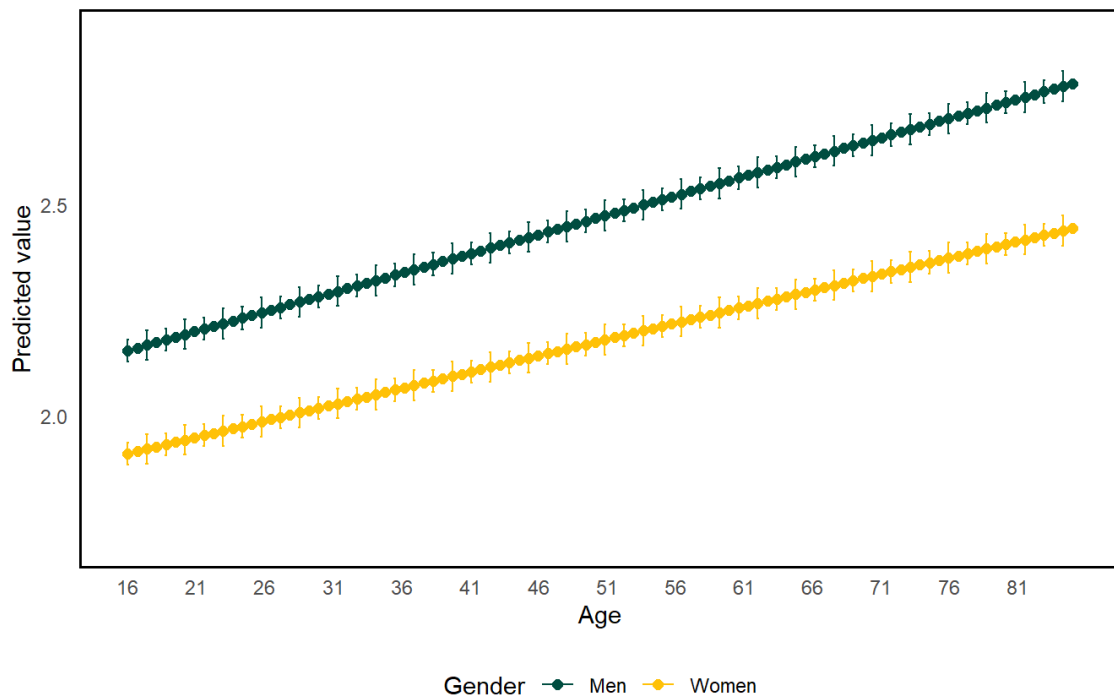
For men, there is an upward trend, though it is still lower than in interest. Nevertheless, the average levels of internal political efficacy are higher on average than those of interest in politics.

Table 4.5 Results from Linear Mixed Effects Model: Political Interest

Political interest	
Age	0.009*** (0.0003)
Woman	-0.221*** (0.018)
Age * Woman	-0.001*** (0.0004)
Observations	139565
AIC	322,917.700
BIC	322.976,700

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

Figure 4.7. Predicted values of political interest



Data: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

To continue with the sources of inequality, we also included higher education and immigration background with the same operationalisation as above in this analysis. First, we added educational level as an independent variable and in

interaction with gender and age. We can see from Table 4.6 that the effects of age, gender, and education are like those we saw in internal political efficacy.

Looking at the interactions, the gender by education interaction is again negative (-0.026), indicating that the increase in political interest associated with university education is smaller for women. The three-way interaction shows a positive effect (0.056***), suggesting that the combined effect of age, gender, and university education on political interest is still significant. This indicates that the relationship between age and political interest varies slightly depending on both gender and educational background.

In general, we see that for those with higher education, the effect of age is greater, with interest levels increasing over time. Meanwhile, for those without higher education, the effect of age is smaller, with little to no variation over time.

Table 4.6. Results from linear mixed effects model: Political interest and educational level

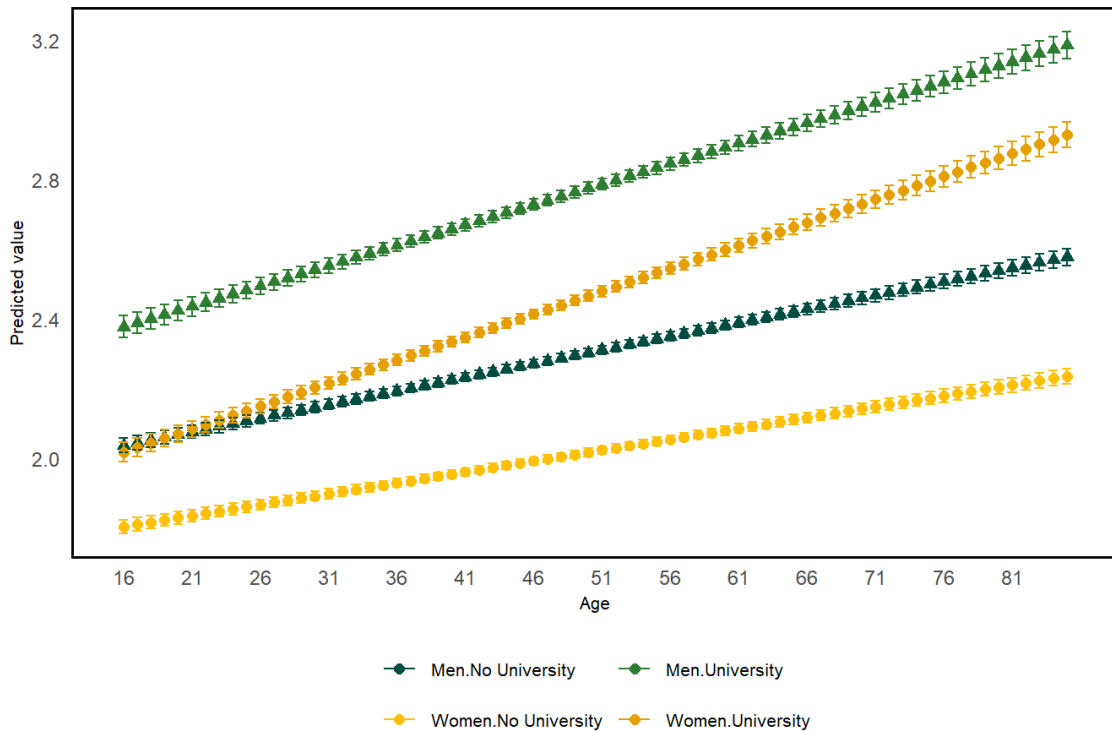
Political interest	
Age	0.144*** (0.005)
Woman	-0.285*** (0.008)
High Education	0.468*** (0.010)
Age * Woman	-0.029*** (0.008)
Age * High Educated	0.071*** (0.009)
Woman* High Educated	-0.026 (0.014)
Age * Woman* High Educated	0.056*** (0.013)
Observations	139.565
AIC	318,627.100
BIC	318,725.500

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

In Figure 4.8, we can better see the results from the table. As was the case with internal political efficacy, by adding the variable of educational level, four distinct groups are created, differentiated by gender and education. Although in this case, until the age of 30, there are almost no differences between women with higher education and men without higher education. In general, all groups increase their

political interest with age. However, the gender and educational gaps remain throughout the entire life cycle.

Figure 4.8. Predicted values of political interest and educational level



Data: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

In line with the different sources of inequalities, we also conducted the analysis for immigration background on political interest, which reveals similar trends (see Table 4.7). Age has a positive effect (0.148***), gender a negative effect (-0.0308***), and immigrant background has a positive effect (0.016), but not significant meaning that there is not a significant difference between individuals with an immigrant background and those born in the country of residence.

The interactions of both age and gender with immigrant background are also positive, indicating that women with an immigrant background show higher levels of political interest compared to women born in the country of residence. The three-way interaction estimate is -0.037, suggesting a small reduction in political interest when age, gender, and immigrant background are considered together. However, this effect is not statistically significant.

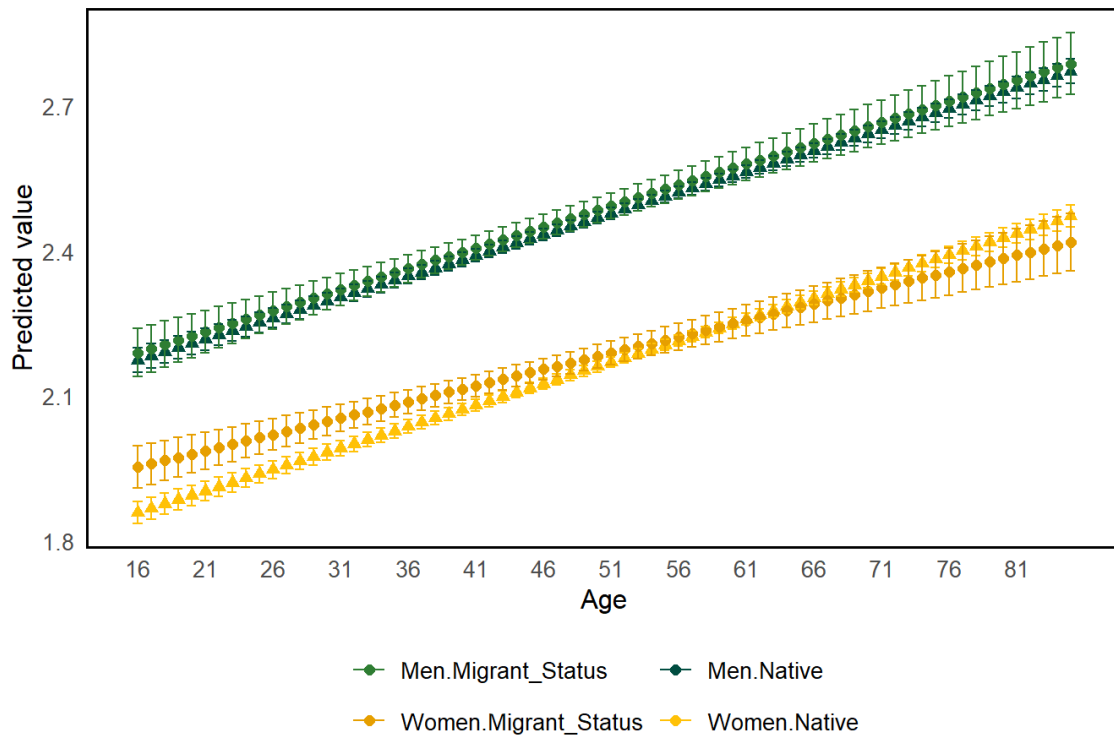
Table 4.7. Results from linear mixed effects model: Political interest and immigration background

Political interest	
Age	0.148*** (0.006)
Woman	-0.308*** (0.008)
Immigration background: yes	0.016 (0.015)
Age * Woman	0.004 (0.007)
Age * Immigration background	0.00002 (0.014)
Woman * Immigration background	0.003 (0.020)
Age * Woman * Immigration background	-0.037 (0.019)
Observations	126.197
AIC	289,357.500
BIC	289,454.900

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

If we compare the results of political interest with the results of political efficacy, we recognize that there are hardly any significant differences among men between those with or without a migrant background. However, for women, two groups can be distinguished based on their origin (see Figure 4.9). For political interest, the gap remains significant from age 16 through the early 40s, with women of immigrant background consistently showing higher levels of interest compared to women born in the country of residence. For internal political efficacy, this gap is noticeable starting in the late twenties (around age 28) and extends to nearly age 70, with women of immigrant background again showing higher levels. As with previous comparisons, the average levels of political interest remain significantly lower than those of internal political efficacy.

Figure 4.9. Predicted values of political interest and immigration background



Data: Own elaboration from Understanding Society, Waves 3, 6, 9, 12 (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024).

4.2.3. Comparison

The evolution of political attitudes over time shows that internal political efficacy remains stable for women, with minimal change as they age, while political interest follows a more exponential growth, particularly for men. This raises the question of whether a sense of political qualification is needed to foster political interest. Despite both attitudes being theoretically related, political efficacy remains more constant with a lower slope, whereas political interest increases significantly over time for both genders.

In terms of sources of inequalities in political engagement, education plays a critical role, with clear divides between those with and without higher education. This divide is further exacerbated by gender differences, creating four distinct groups. Notably, women with and without university education experience similar disparities in political engagement as men, underscoring education as a key source of inequality. However, higher education alone does not close the gender gap; in fact, it is wider among those without higher education.

Additionally, migrant women show higher levels of political interest and internal political efficacy than native women. This difference becomes more evident after age 30, likely due to increased workforce participation and independence. Conversely, the political interest gap between migrant and native women narrows over time, possibly due to initial exposure to political stimuli that diminishes as attitudes stabilize. These findings offer valuable insights into how gender and migration background intersect to influence political attitudes.

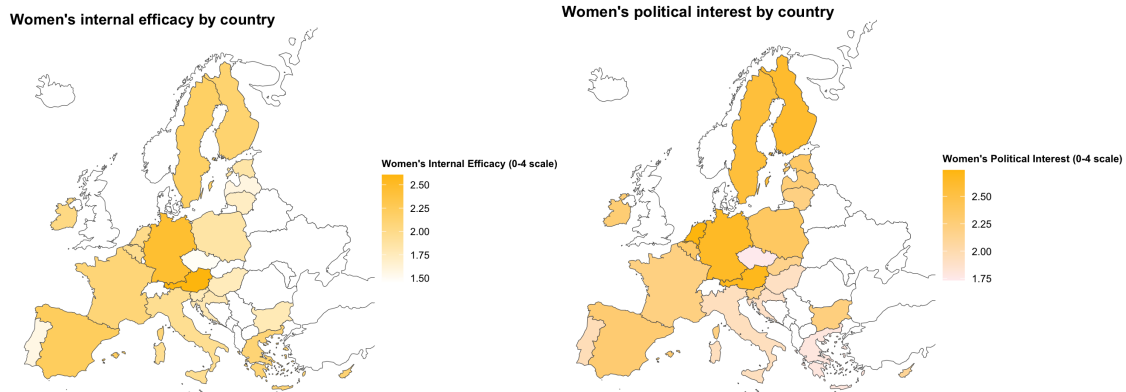
5. Cross-national variation

Having identified the gap in intersectional analyses and conducted an in-depth examination of this dimension at the individual level, the subsequent analysis focuses on exploring gender gaps across European countries to preliminary examine if institutional settings and contextual factors shape internal political efficacy and political interest.

For this analysis, we use data from the European Social Survey (rounds 8, 9, and 10). Our goal is to examine whether levels of overall gender equality correlate with the gender gap on internal political efficacy, for that reason, the main independent variable is the country-specific level of gender equality, measured using the EIGE Index (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2024). The EIGE Index assesses national equality levels using a large array of indicators and looking at different areas of social, economic and political life. We included control variables related to the socioeconomic structure of each country from Eurostat (Eurostat, 2024) for the corresponding years. The sample includes the 27 European Union member states following the United Kingdom's departure. Finally, we include the percentage of women in parliament, obtained from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al., 2024).

From an exploratory perspective we first compare aggregate women's levels of internal political efficacy with women's aggregate levels of political interest. With this strategy we can start exploring whether institutional settings may affect these two basic political orientations differently. Figure 5.1 illustrates that the aggregate levels of internal political efficacy closely align with the overall levels of political interest among women in European countries. In terms of political interest, Central and Northern European countries exhibit higher levels compared to their Southern European counterparts. However, when analysing internal political efficacy, a different pattern emerges: the primary divide is observed between Eastern European countries, which report lower levels of efficacy, and the rest of Europe.

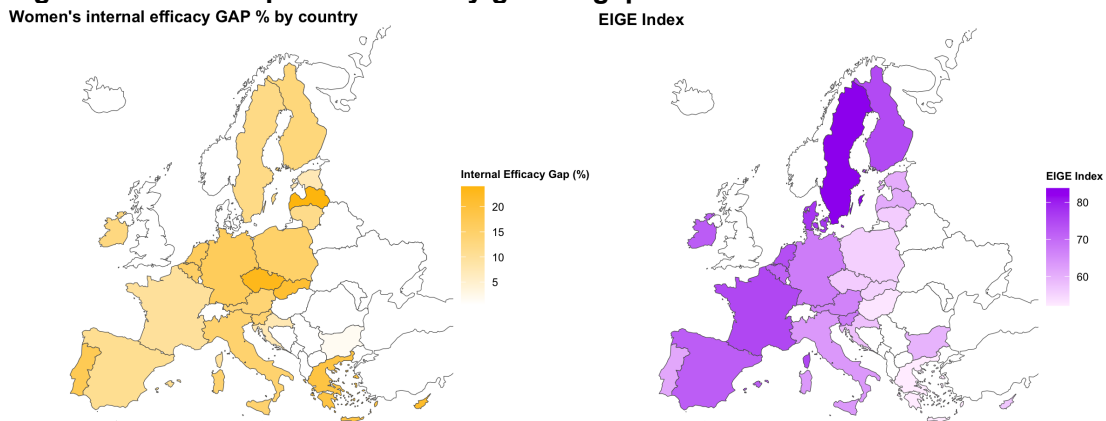
Figure 5.1. Women’s internal political efficacy and political interest in EU countries



Data: European Social Survey, Round 9, 10, and 11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

When we compare levels of internal political efficacy to overall levels of gender equality in the country (see Figure 5.2) a clear pattern emerges: countries with higher levels of gender equality—represented by a deeper shade of purple in the right-hand figure—correlate with those exhibiting a smaller gender gap in internal political efficacy. This is reflected in the left-hand map, where countries with a less intense yellow hue indicate a narrower disparity in political efficacy between men and women.

Figure 5.2. Internal political efficacy gender gap and EIGE Index



Data: European Social Survey, Round 9, 10, and 11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024) and EIGE Index 2020 (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2024).

Table 5.1 provides a multivariate linear regression analysis examining the country-level aggregated mean of internal political efficacy among women, men, and the overall gender effect on internal political efficacy. The findings indicate that higher standards of living, measured through GDP per capita, are associated with increased levels of internal political efficacy among women. Conversely, variables such as the unemployment rate, the percentage of women with higher

education, and the proportion of women living in poverty show no discernible impact on this variable. A similar pattern emerges for men.

A particularly robust effect with a significant positive impact on internal political efficacy is the level of gender equality in each country. This is measured using the EIGE *Gender Equality Index*, a composite indicator developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2024), an agency of the European Union, which aggregates various gender equality indicators. Regarding internal political efficacy, the gender equality index exhibits a consistently significant positive effect across all models for both men and women, except for the final model, which incorporates the percentage of women in parliament. In this case, higher levels of female parliamentary representation have a significant positive impact on efficacy. This suggests that the EIGE Index may be capturing an effect like the one controlled for by this variable. Higher levels of gender equality in a country also contribute to narrowing the gender gap in political efficacy. This effect may be driven by a greater increase in efficacy among women compared to men.

The strategy used here also allows a first glimpse at the dynamics by which macro-level indicators result in higher or lower levels of gender gap. For instance, we can see that the economic level of the country, measured by the GDP has no effect on the overall gender gap (see last two columns in Table 5.1) because it increases levels of internal political efficacy similarly for men and women (see models 2 and 5 in Table 5.1). Overall levels of gender equality measured with the EIGE index, however, do result in a decrease in the gender gap because they imply higher levels of internal efficacy for both men and women, but the gain is larger for women, reducing the distance between the two groups.

Let us move to the same analysis for political interest. Table 5.2 presents the results of linear regressions analysing the country-level aggregated mean of political interest among women, men, and the overall political interest gender gap. The patterns observed in internal political efficacy are also evident in political interest, but with greater intensity. That is, beyond the effects of sociodemographic structure, higher levels of gender equality have a significant and positive impact in all models for women and in all but the final model for men. Likewise, greater gender equality significantly reduces the gender gap in political

interest across all models. Once again, this effect may be explained by a more pronounced increase in political interest among women compared to men.

Overall, in this section we examined the relationship between gender equality and internal political efficacy in Europe, using data from rounds 8, 9, and 10 of the European Social Survey and the EU Gender Equality Index. It explored how institutional and contextual factors influence political efficacy and political interest, finding that countries with higher levels of gender equality exhibit greater internal political efficacy and political interest, particularly among women. Additionally, higher female parliamentary representation has a positive impact on political efficacy. Geographically, Central and Northern European countries show higher levels of political interest, while Eastern European countries report the lowest levels of internal political efficacy. Regression analysis indicates that higher GDP per capita is associated with greater political efficacy, whereas other socioeconomic variables, such as female unemployment or poverty, show no significant effects. Overall, higher levels of gender equality in a country increase women's and, to a lesser extent, men's internal political efficacy and political interest, thus contributing to reducing the gender gap in two key political attitudes that determine political engagement.

Table 5.1. Results on women’s and men’s aggregate internal political efficacy and on internal political efficacy gender gap

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	Women's aggregate internal efficacy			Men's aggregate internal political			Internal efficacy gender gap		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
EIGE	0.021*** (0.004)	0.012** (0.005)	0.001 (0.008)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.010* (0.005)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.112 (0.082)	-0.215** (0.103)	-0.182 (0.162)
GDP per capita		0.004** (0.002)	0.004*** (0.002)		0.005*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)		0.025 (0.031)	0.022 (0.033)
% Women unemployment		0.004 (0.009)	0.002 (0.009)		0.003 (0.010)	0.001 (0.010)		-0.140 (0.189)	-0.134 (0.192)
% Women university students		-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)		-0.005 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)		-0.106* (0.062)	-0.109* (0.064)
% Women poverty rate		-0.001 (0.009)	-0.004 (0.009)		-0.005 (0.009)	-0.008 (0.009)		-0.202 (0.172)	-0.192 (0.178)
% Women MP			0.011* (0.006)			0.012* (0.006)			-0.032 (0.124)
Constant	0.572** (0.236)	0.872** (0.339)	1.180*** (0.373)	0.797*** (0.260)	1.357*** (0.350)	1.690*** (0.384)	21.297*** (5.235)	33.450*** (6.799)	32.533*** (7.702)
Observations	63	60	60	63	60	60	63	60	60
R ²	0.354	0.394	0.429	0.324	0.415	0.452	0.030	0.144	0.145
Adj. R ²	0.343	0.338	0.365	0.313	0.360	0.390	0.014	0.065	0.048
AIC	6.78	9.6	7.99	19.13	13.4	11.43	397.32	369.44	371.36

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Data: European Social Survey, Round 9, 10, and 11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024) and European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE] (2024).

Table 5.2. Results on women’s and men’s aggregate political interest and on political interest gender gap

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	Women's aggregate political interest			Men's aggregate political interest			Political interest gender gap		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
EIGE	0.024*** (0.003)	0.025*** (0.004)	0.013** (0.006)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.008 (0.006)	-0.207*** (0.062)	-0.355*** (0.073)	-0.323*** (0.115)
GDP per capita		0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)		0.002 (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)		0.024 (0.022)	0.022 (0.024)
% Women unemployment		-0.023*** (0.007)	-0.026*** (0.007)		-0.017** (0.008)	-0.020*** (0.007)		0.402*** (0.135)	0.408*** (0.137)
% Women university students		-0.001 (0.002)	-0.0003 (0.002)		-0.001 (0.002)	-0.0001 (0.002)		0.014 (0.044)	0.011 (0.045)
% Women poverty rate		0.015** (0.007)	0.011* (0.007)		0.005 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)		-0.567*** (0.123)	-0.557*** (0.127)
% Women MP			0.012** (0.005)			0.013*** (0.005)			-0.032 (0.088)
Constant	0.709*** (0.198)	0.511* (0.269)	0.849*** (0.288)	1.072*** (0.194)	1.114*** (0.273)	1.471*** (0.290)	24.280*** (4.005)	36.664*** (4.841)	35.750*** (5.481)
Observations	63	60	60	63	60	60	63	60	60
R ²	0.499	0.595	0.640	0.467	0.545	0.601	0.153	0.427	0.429
Adj. R ²	0.491	0.558	0.600	0.458	0.503	0.555	0.139	0.374	0.364
AIC	-15.35	-18.08	-23.18	-17.83	-16.41	-22.21	363.6	328.68	330.53

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Data: European Social Survey, Round 9, 10, and 11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024) and European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE] (2024).

6. Political involvement and political participation

Although early on in WP2 work we decided to focus on two basic political attitudes for the reasons explained above, we did not want to completely overlook the potential inequalities in political participation. In this section, we examine the evolution of the gender gap in political participation, distinguishing between institutional and non-institutional forms of engagement. To do so, we use data from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2002 to 2023. Our analysis focuses on 15 countries with complete data for all survey waves: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

We build on previous proposals on how to conceptualize political participation. Fuchs and Klingemann (1995, p. 18) already distinguished between institutional and non-institutional participation. As explained by van Deth's (2014) institutional participation refers to all actions carried out within the sphere of government, politics, or the state, which he refers to as minimalist political participation. For non-institutional participation, we consider any action that: a) is directed towards the political sphere, even if carried out outside it (targeted political participation); b) aims to solve collective or community problems (collective problem-solving participation); and c) seeks to express political objectives, even if not directed towards the political sphere (motivational participation).

In this sense, for each type of participation, we consider five items. For non-institutional participation, we analyse displaying a campaign badge or sticker, boycotting, posting about politics, signing a petition, and participating in a public demonstration. For the last item, we account for both lawful public demonstrations and public demonstrations, as the survey phrasing varied over the years. For institutional participation, we include items related to contacting a politician, donating to or participating in a party or pressure group, voting, ever being a member of a trade union, and being a member of a political party. For the trade union item, we consider both current and past membership, as the survey provides information on both.

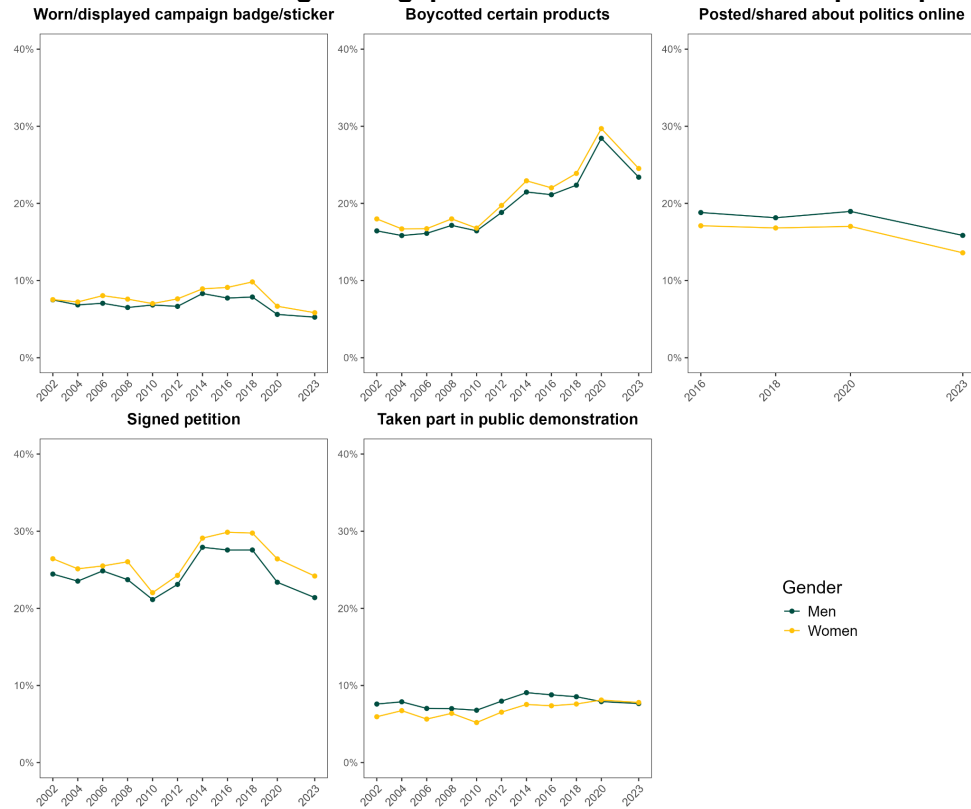
6.1. Gender gap across different forms of participation and countries

From a descriptive perspective, we look at the evolution of levels of participation for men and women over time and for the different forms of political participation. Figures 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate distinct patterns of political participation based on the type of engagement. Women are more active in non-institutional political activities, while men tend to participate more in institutional forms, consistent with findings in the literature (see Coffé & Bolzendah, 2010). These differences may be attributed to variations in resources, political attitudes, socialization patterns and gender roles dynamics in society. Consequently, women are more likely than men to engage in activities that integrate into daily life, are less visible and formal, and require fewer resources, such as signing petitions or political consumerism (that is, buying or boycotting products for social, political or environmental reasons). This may also explain why, in non-institutional participation, men are more likely to join demonstrations, although the gender gap in the latter has narrowed in recent years, and men are also more likely than women to post about politics online.

In contrast, institutional participation shows a gender gap favouring men across all items. This gap is most pronounced in items such as being a member of a trade union and contacting a politician, while the differences in the other items are relatively small. When it comes to voting, the gender gap is minimal. As previously explored in various studies, party politics continues to be a male dominated sphere of politics and women are less likely to participate in it (Coffé & Bolzendah, 2010; Ferrín et al., 2020).

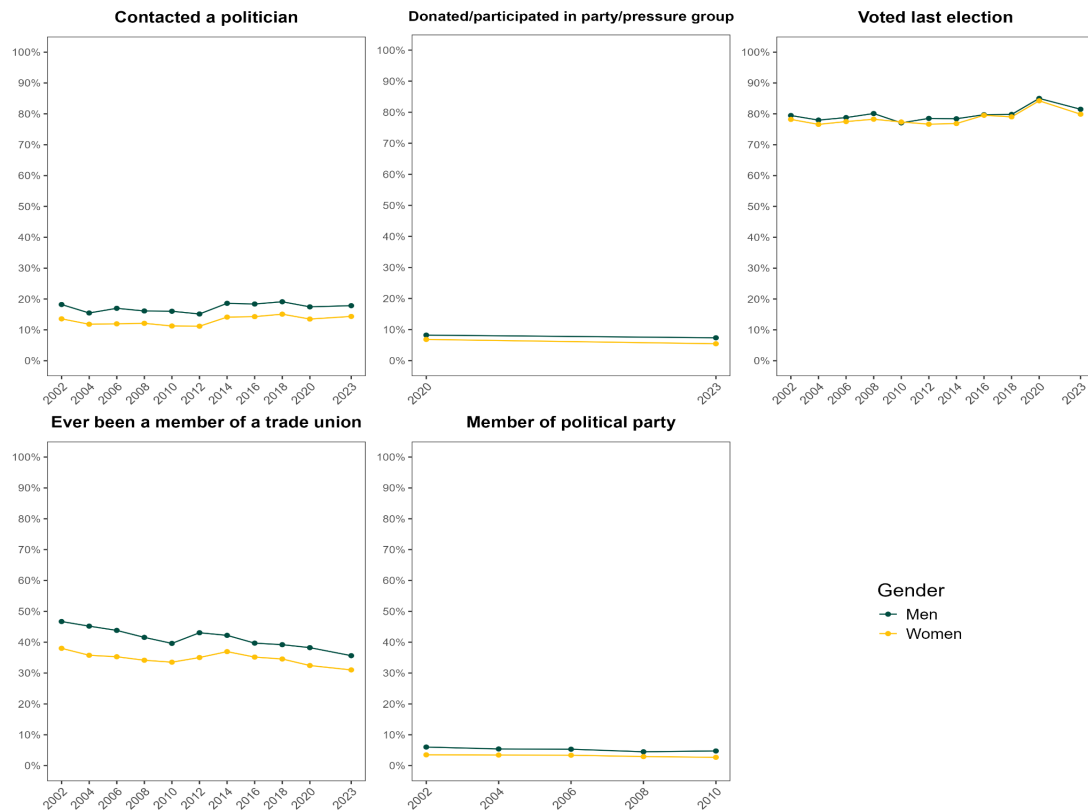
In addition, we examine variations in the gender gap by country and over time. This enables us to identify how the gender gap in political participation differs across different political, social, and cultural contexts, as well as how these differences have evolved over the years.

Figure 6.1. Evolution of the gender gap in non-institutional forms of participation



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.2. Evolution of the gender gap in institutional forms of participation

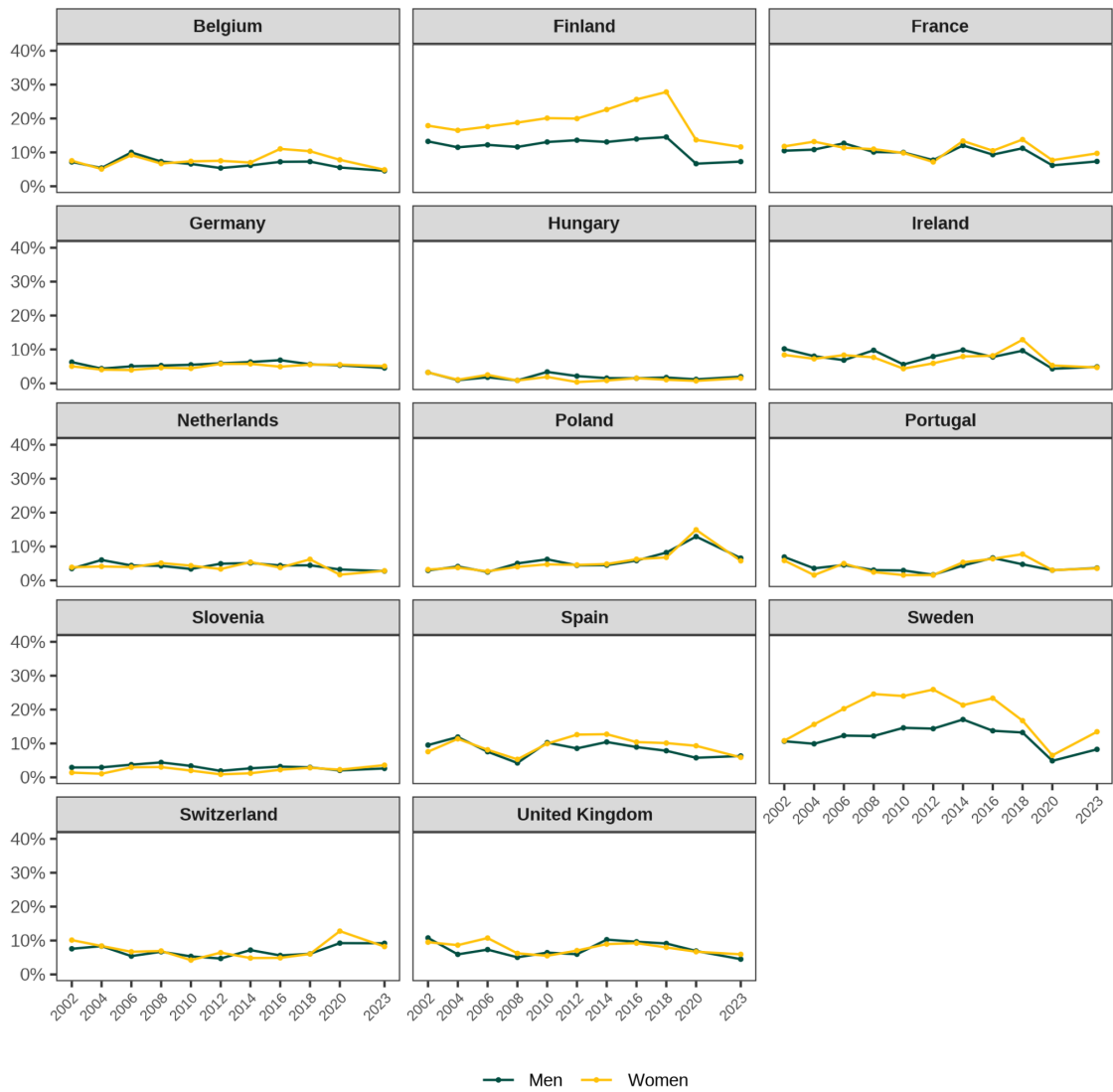


Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

In the context of non-institutional participation, Figures 6.3 to 6.7 (at the end of this section) show that, overall, Nordic countries exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to other countries, except for two modes of action: online participation, which remains relatively consistent across all the countries studied, and protests participation, a form of participation more prominent in Spain and France. Additionally, it is noteworthy that, in these Nordic countries, the gender gap favouring women is considerably wider. In fact, in other countries, gender differences are relatively small across most items, except signing petitions, where larger gender gaps are observed compared to other forms of participation.

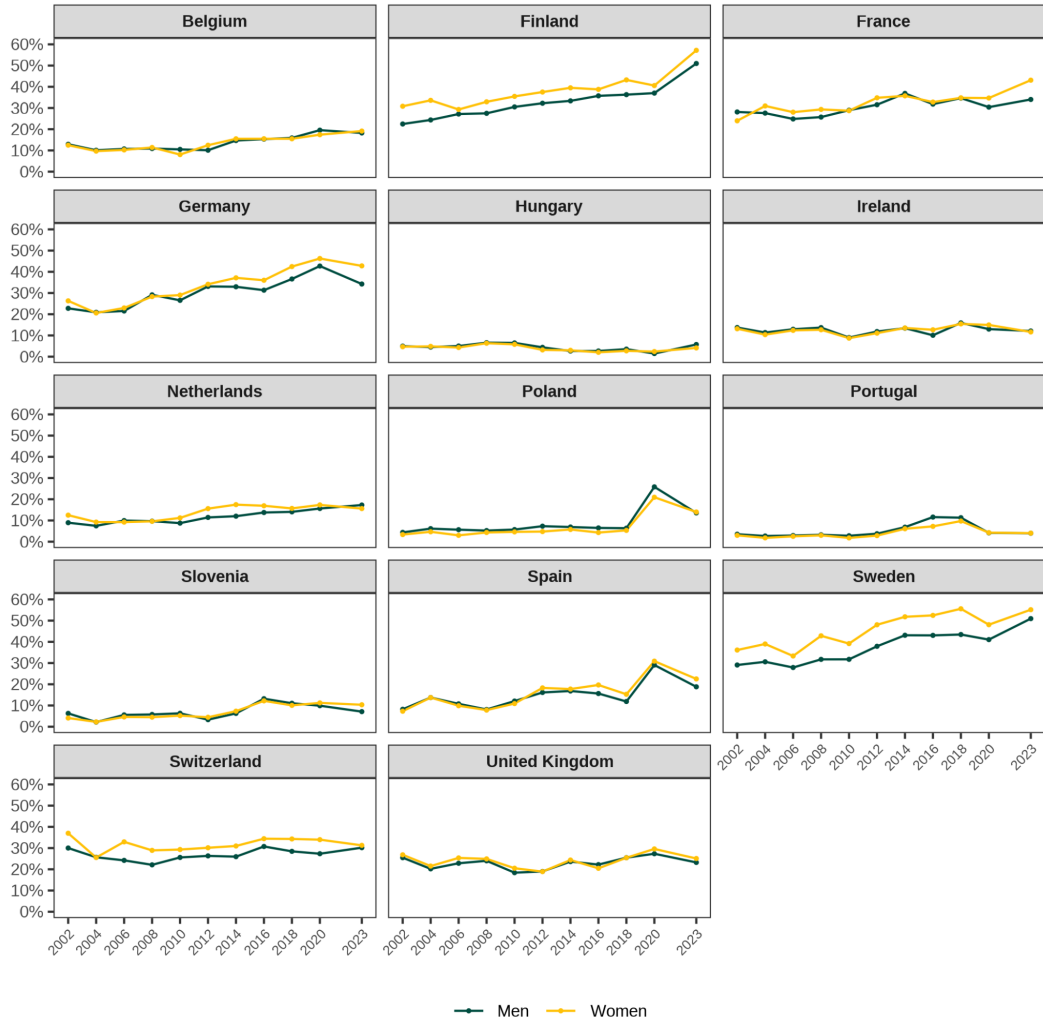
In contrast, distinct patterns emerge in institutional forms of participation as we can see in Figures 6.8 to Figure 6.12. While membership in trade unions is significantly higher in the Nordic countries, differences in other forms of participation are minimal across countries. Regarding gender differences, we find the largest disparities in contacting a politician and being a member of a political party, while differences in voting are minimal. For the rest of the items, notable gender differences are observed only in certain countries. In donations to parties, they appear in Switzerland and the UK, whereas in trade union membership, the differences are more pronounced in the Nordic countries.

Figure 6.3. Displaying badges or stickers by sex across countries and over time (percentage)



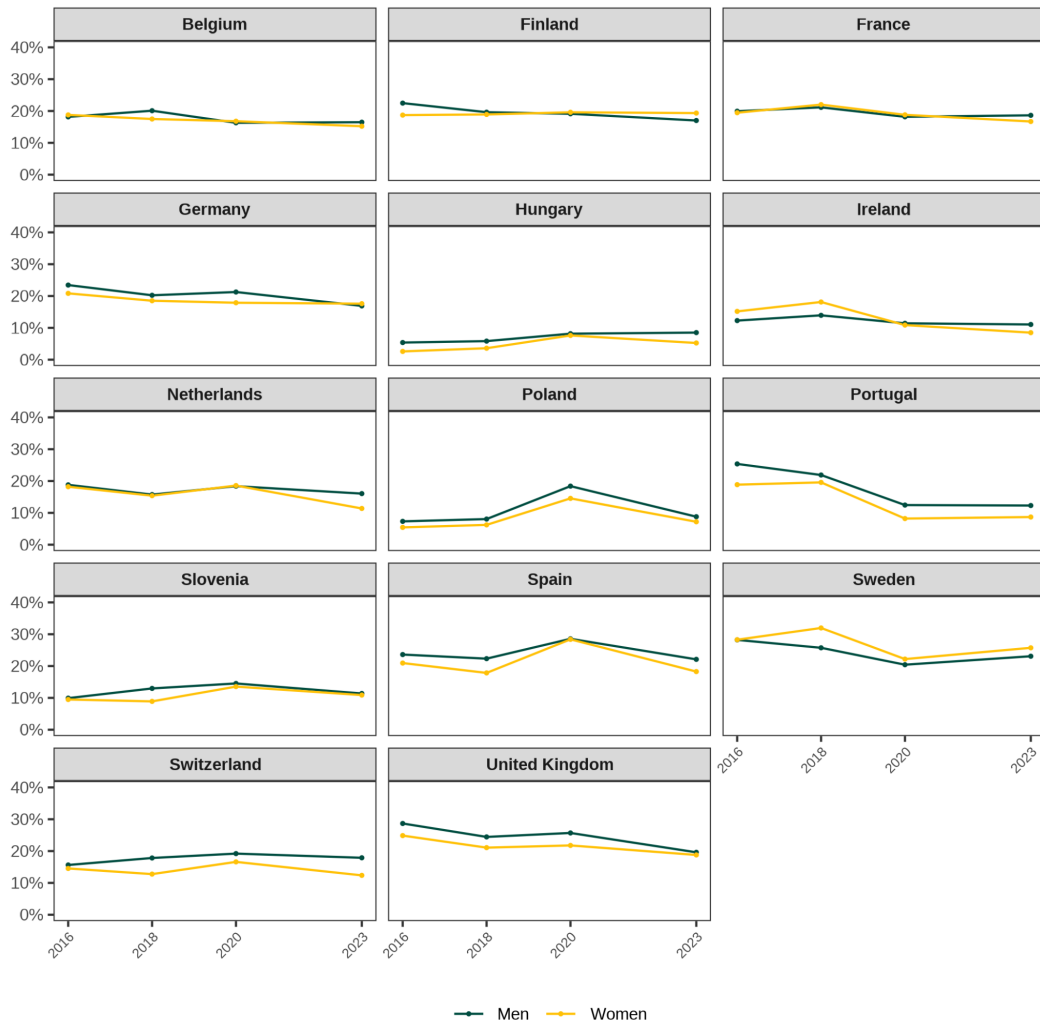
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.4. Boycotting products by sex, across countries and over time (percentage)



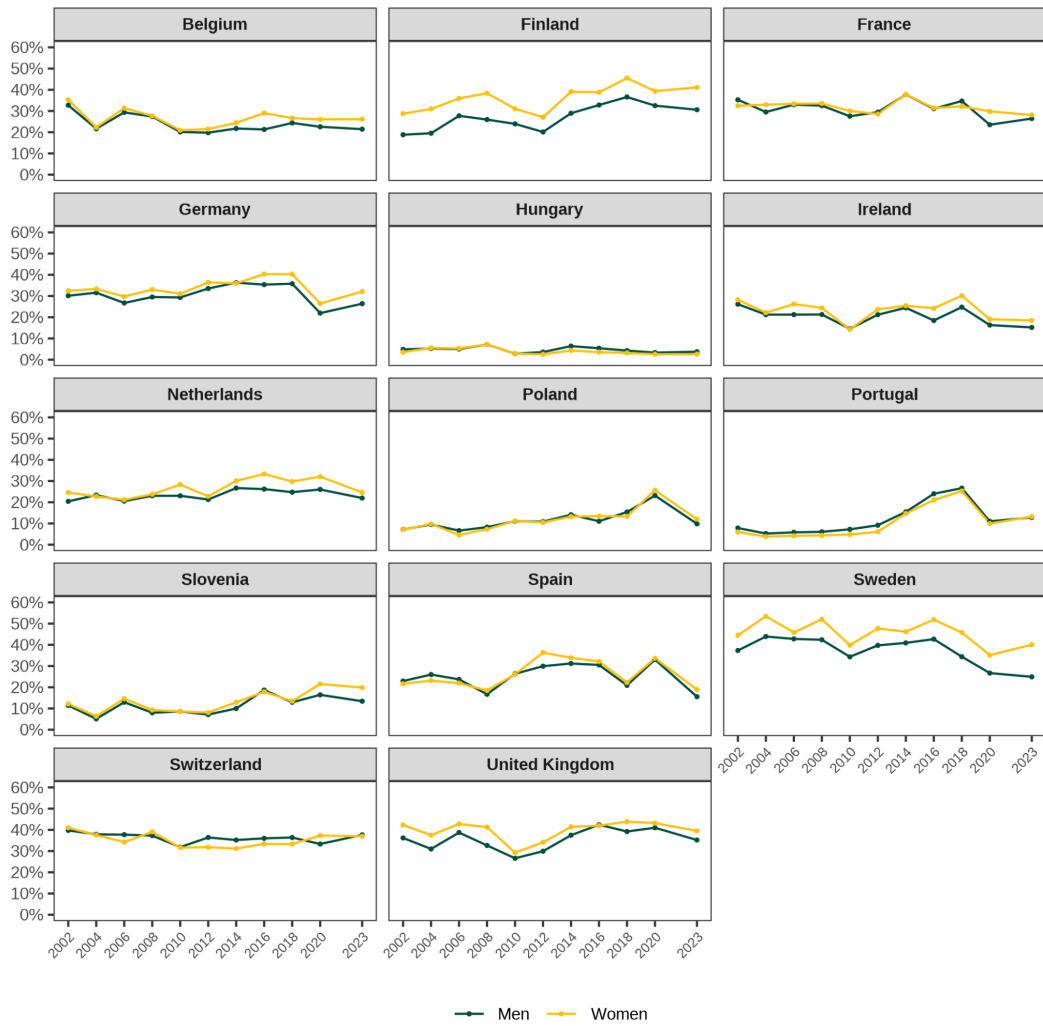
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.5. Posting about politics online by sex, across countries and over time (frequency)



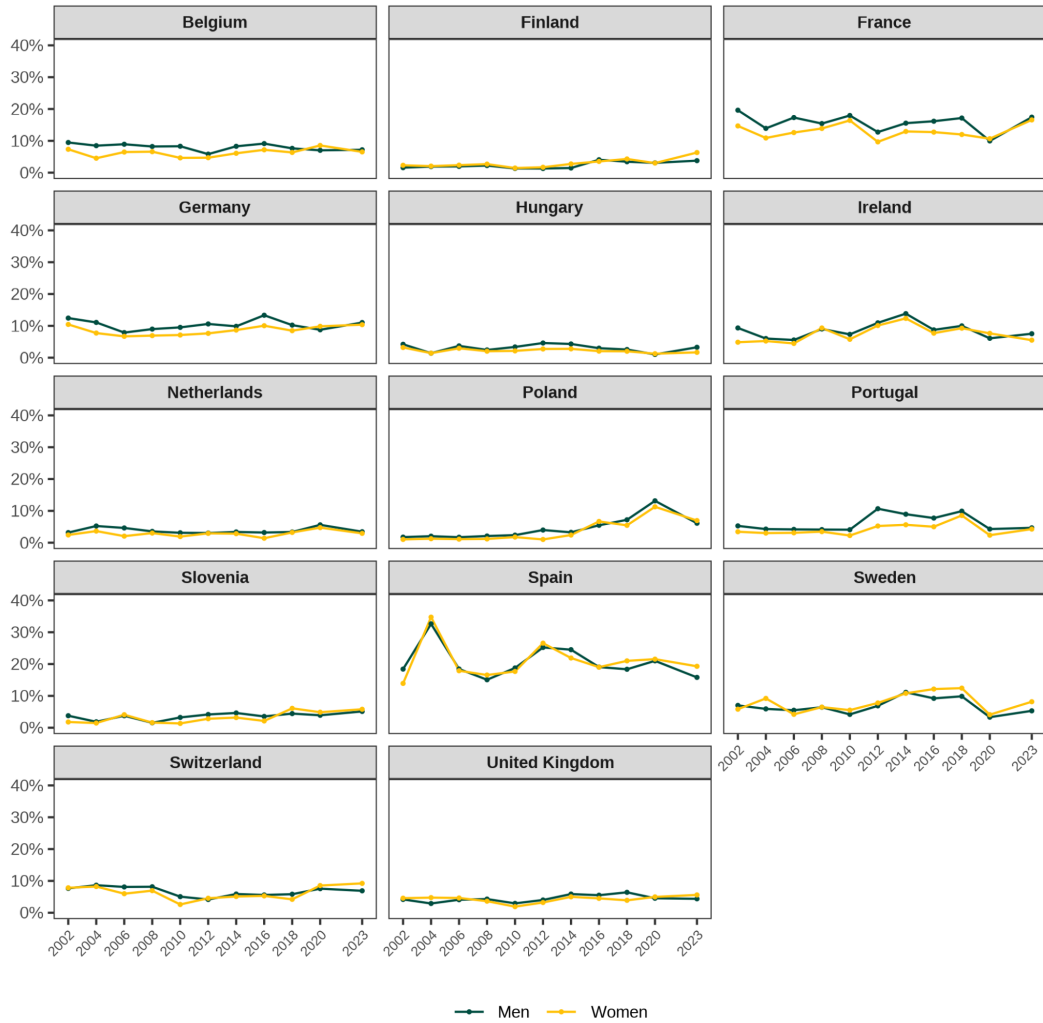
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.6. Signing petitions by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



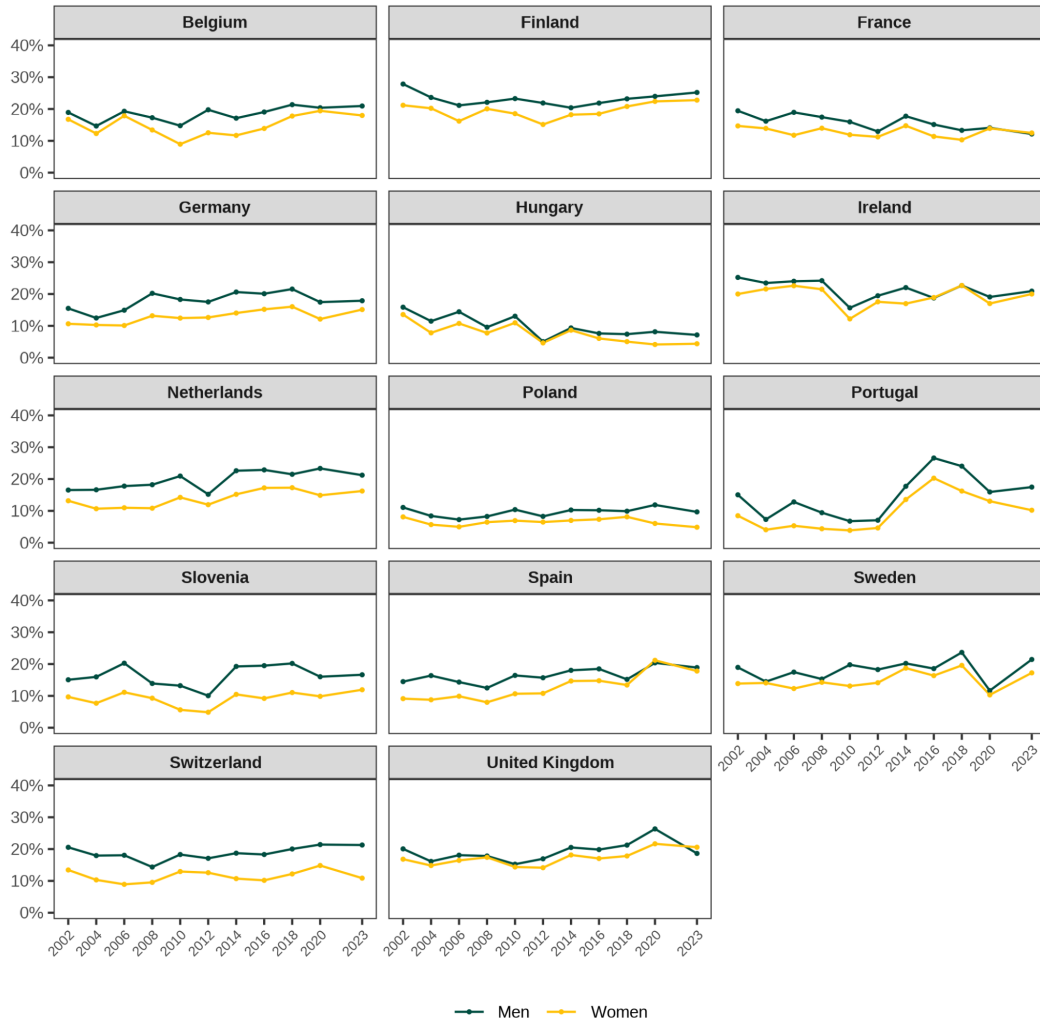
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.7. Taking part in demonstrations by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



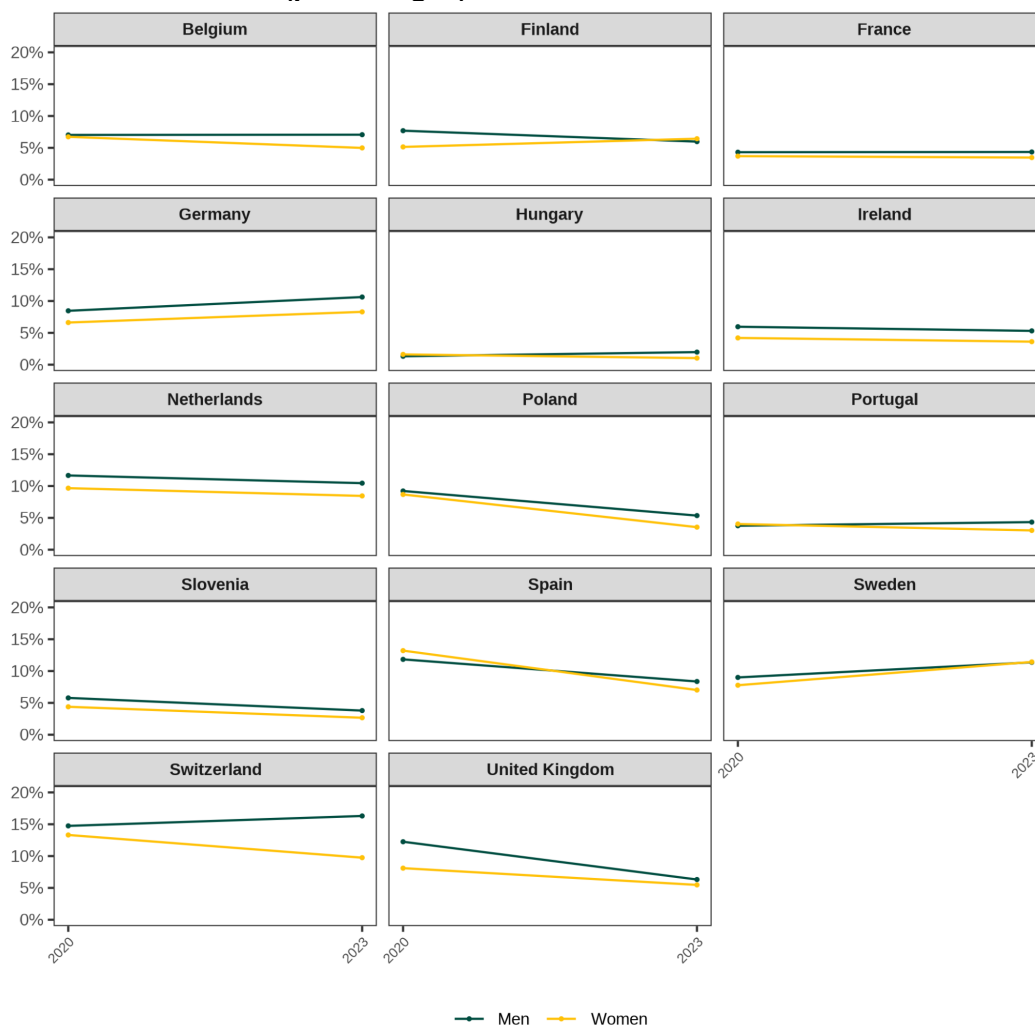
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.8. Contacting a politician by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



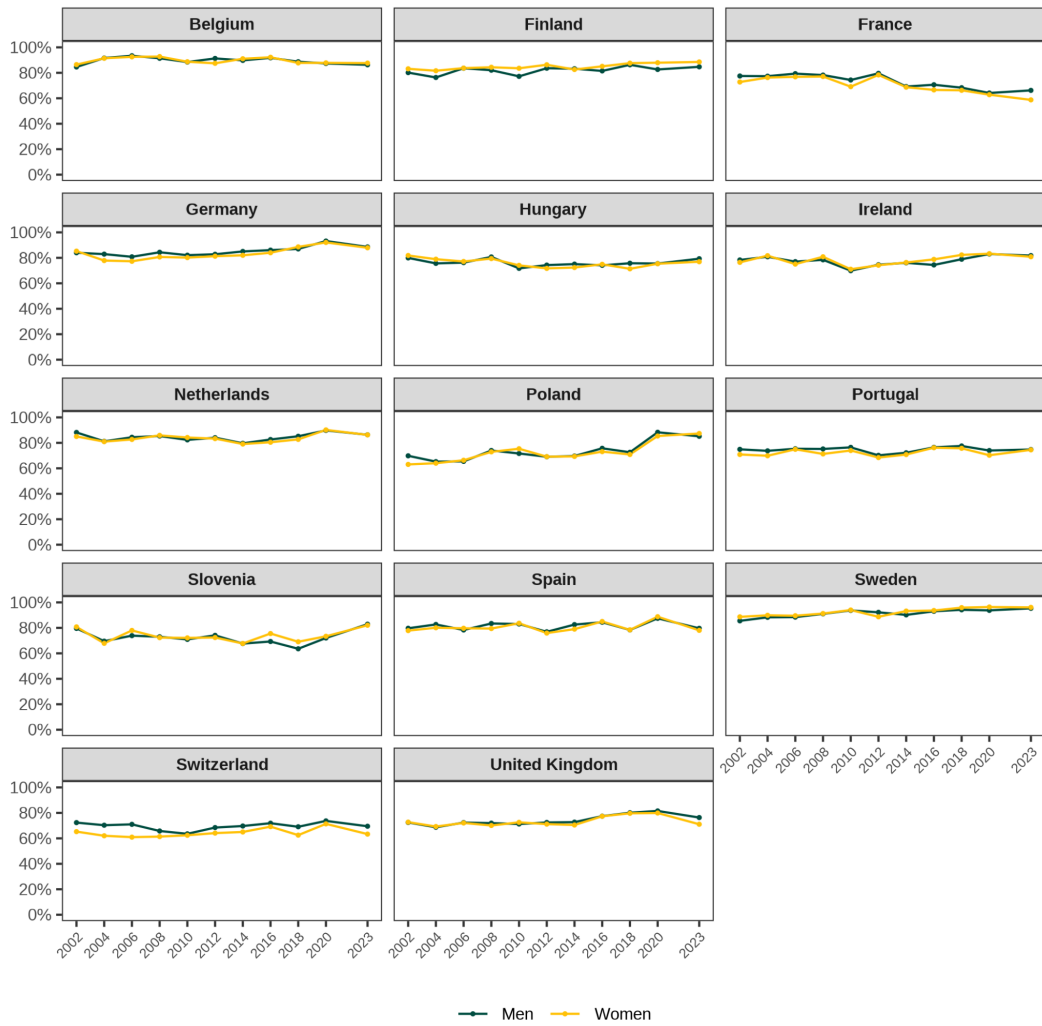
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.9. Donating or participating in a party or pressure group by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



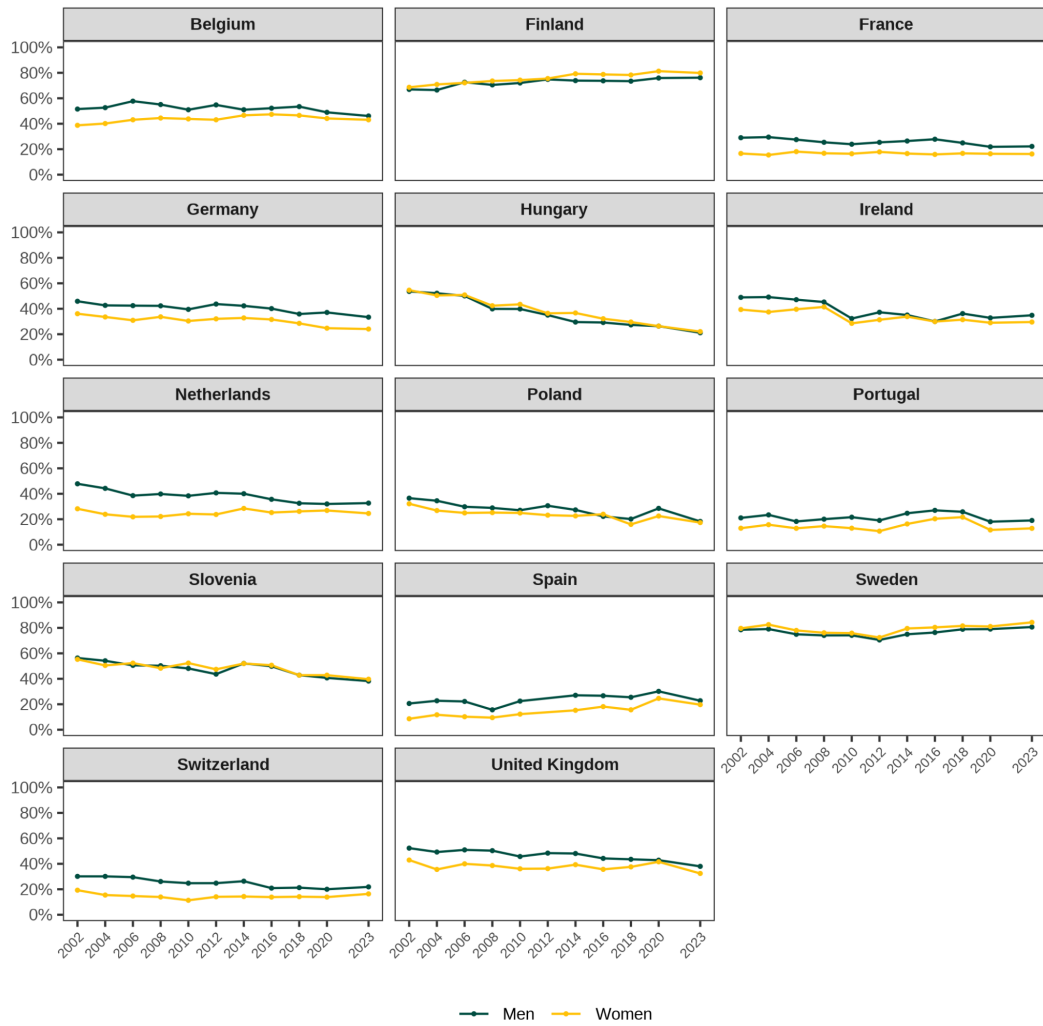
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.10. Electoral turnout by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



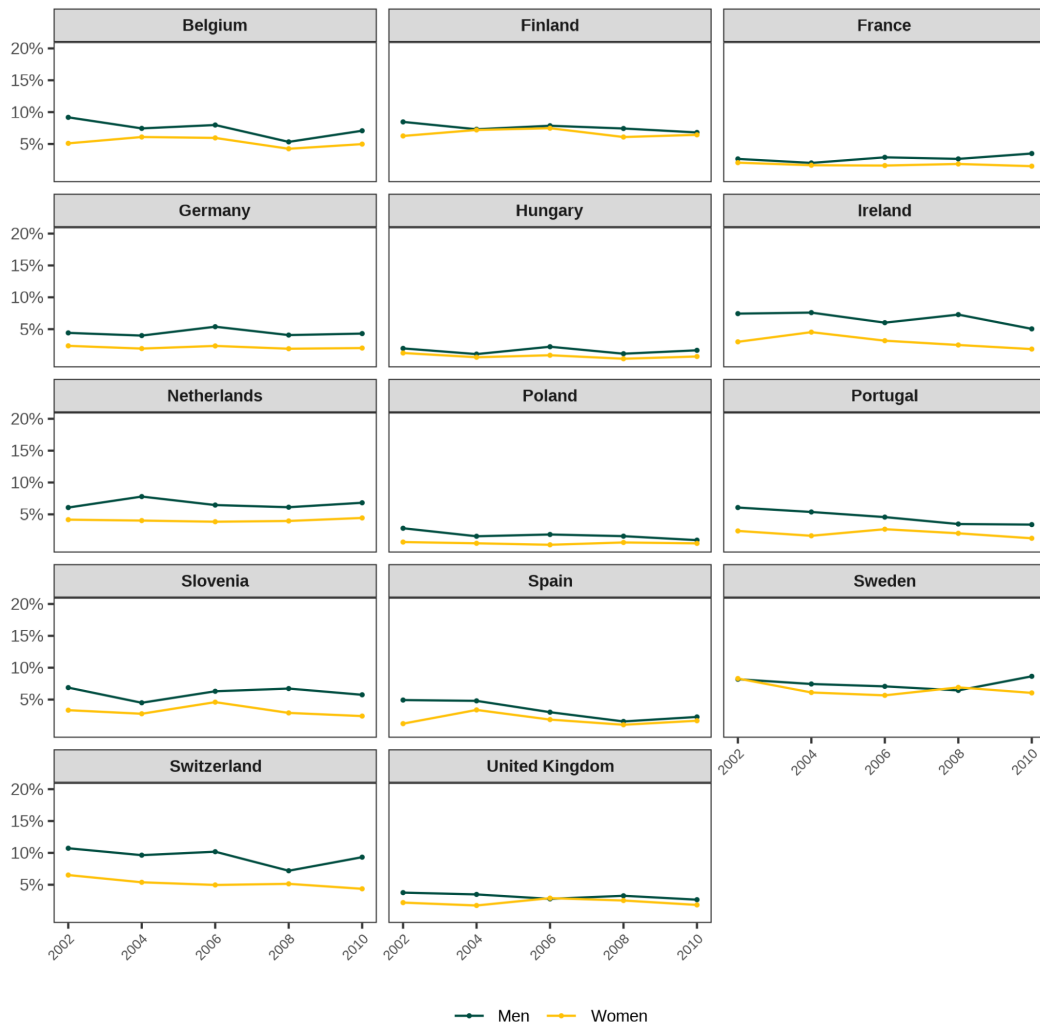
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.11. Trade union membership by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.12. Party membership by sex, across countries and over time (percentages)



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

6.2. Intersectional dynamics in political participation

Following the overall aim of this report we now look at levels of political participation by immigration background. Immigrants often have fewer resources to participate, such as lower socioeconomic status, economic vulnerability, and limited social and mobilization networks (de Rooji, 2012). Integration-related factors also play a crucial role, including language barriers, lack of knowledge about regulations and the political system, and broader structural constraints shaped by the political and institutional context at both the national and local levels (Kassam & Becker, 2023). These factors can also impact the political participation of second-generation immigrants. However, the evidence on this is mixed—while some face similar barriers, their heightened awareness of social

inequalities may also serve as a catalyst for political engagement (Spierings & Vermeulen, 2024).

In addition, we want to explore if gender and immigration background interact in shaping political engagement differently depending on the type of participation. To do so, we conduct logistic regression analyses using the data from the European Social Survey (2002-2023). To answer intersectional claims, we follow Block, Golder, and Golder (2023) and run the models with interaction terms, followed by post-estimation calculations.

We use the items described earlier as dependent variables, distinguishing between institutional and non-institutional forms of participation, all of which were coded as dichotomous. That is, the dependent variables indicate whether respondents have participated in at least one of the modes of participation in the institutional or non-institutional categories respectively. The main independent variables are gender and immigration background. Gender has been coded in a binary manner, while immigration background is studied using two variables. The first variable indicates whether the respondent was born in the country where she currently resides. The second variable reflects whether the respondent's parents were born outside the country of residence. This latter variable is also coded dichotomously, meaning that we group together those individuals with either one or both parents born in a foreign country. As control variables, we include age and whether the respondent has a university degree. The results for non-institutional forms of participation are shown in Table 6.1.

The results show that being a woman is associated with higher participation in wearing a party badge, boycotting, and signing a petition, and is negatively associated with posting online and protesting, as was anticipated in the graphs. Age is negatively associated with all forms of participation while attending university is positively associated with all of them.

Table 6.1. Results of logistic regressions in non-institutional forms of participation

	Badge	Boycott	Post	Petition	Protest
Intercept	-2.389*** (0.029)	-1.539*** (0.019)	-0.572*** (0.027)	-0.949*** (0.018)	-1.993*** (0.028)
Woman	0.147*** (0.020)	0.046*** (0.013)	-0.154*** (0.019)	0.097*** (0.012)	-0.129*** (0.020)
Age	-0.009*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.026*** (0.000)	-0.010*** (0.000)	-0.015*** (0.000)
Attended university	0.602*** (0.018)	0.931*** (0.012)	0.663*** (0.017)	0.902*** (0.011)	0.635*** (0.018)
Not born in country	-0.239*** (0.061)	-0.425*** (0.037)	-0.115** (0.050)	-0.434*** (0.036)	0.027 (0.052)
Foreign-born parents	-0.014 (0.048)	0.203*** (0.029)	0.133*** (0.040)	0.107*** (0.028)	0.099** (0.043)
Woman*Not born in country	-0.074 (0.082)	-0.063 (0.051)	-0.135* (0.069)	-0.073 (0.049)	-0.348*** (0.074)
Woman*Foreign-born parents	0.003 (0.064)	0.120*** (0.040)	0.166*** (0.056)	0.083** (0.039)	0.155*** (0.059)
Observations	182,783	182,424	101,979	182,542	182,824
R2	0.016	0.035	0.051	0.039	0.024
Adj. R2	0.016	0.035	0.051	0.039	0.024
AIC	95034.2	187273.6	88744.6	199669.0	96235.6

Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

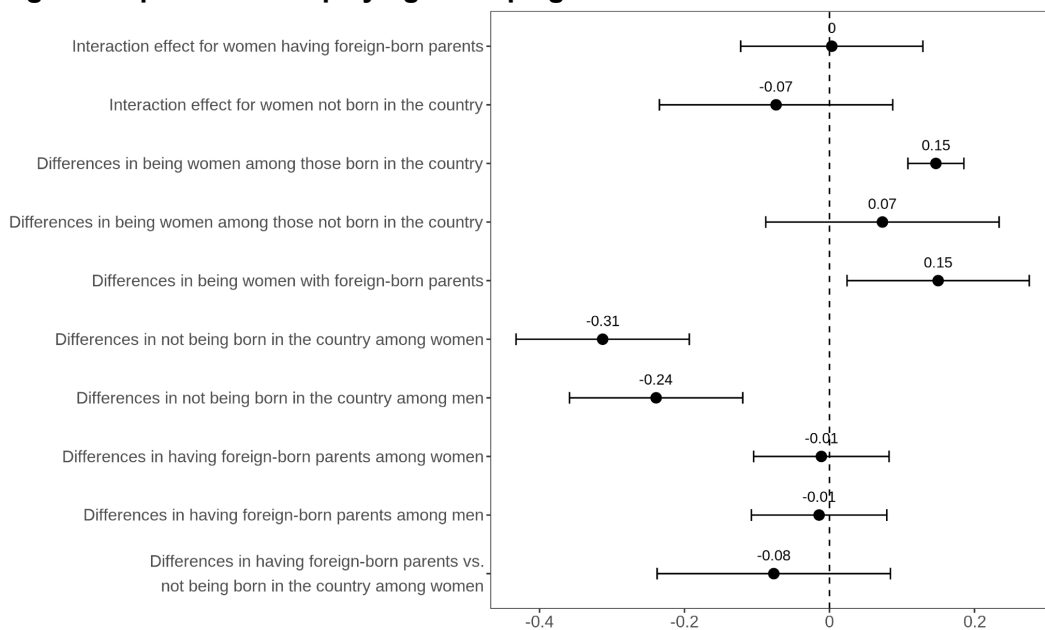
Regarding immigration background variables, opposing effects are observed. While being an immigrant is negatively associated with all forms of participation except protesting, being a second-generation immigrant is positively and significantly associated with boycotting, posting, signing petitions, and protesting. The interactions also reflect this. Immigrant women are less likely to protest while being a daughter of immigrants shows positive effects for all forms of participation except wearing a party badge. However, to test intersectional claims, postestimation calculations are needed. To do this, we calculate the following: the effect of gender among people with an immigrant background, the effect of gender on the immigrant background of the parents, the effect of immigrant background on gender, the effect of the parents' immigrant background on gender, and the interaction effects. The post estimations are presented in Figures 6.13 to 6.17.

The results indicate that being a woman has a negative effect on posting online and taking part in demonstrations, regardless of whether the individual was born in the country. However, this effect is stronger for immigrants (Figure 6.3). For other forms of participation, no significant effects are observed, except for wearing a badge or sticker, where being a woman has a substantial and positive

impact on those born in the country. Regarding second-generation immigrants, positive effects of gender are observed in relation to displaying a badge or sticker, boycotting certain products, and signing petitions.

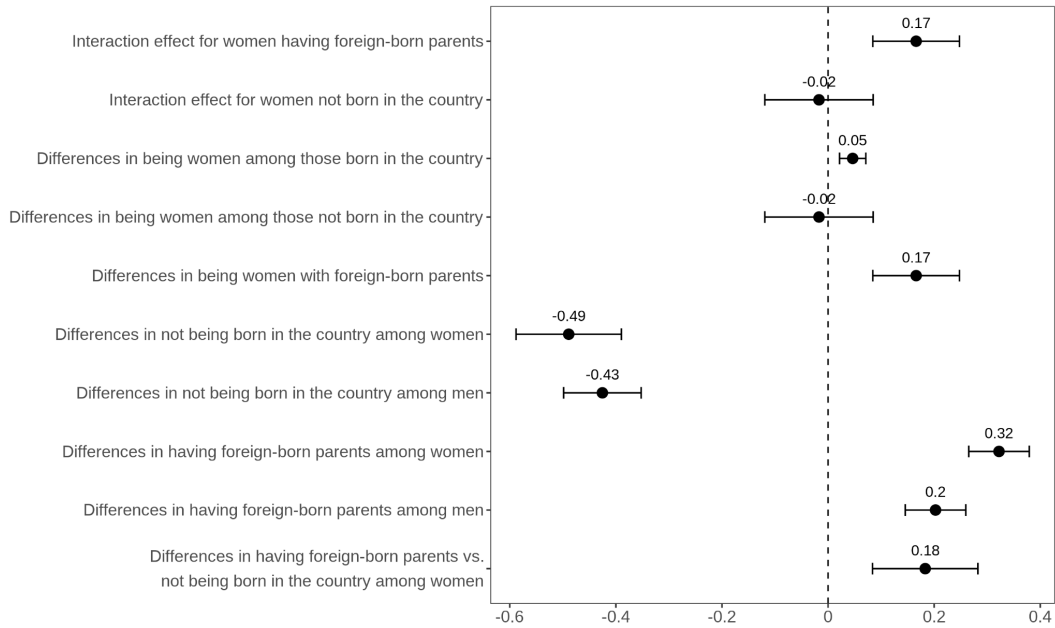
Being an immigrant, on the other hand, has a negative effect on all types of participation, with the largest impact for women. The only exception is participation in a demonstration, where the effect is significant and negative for women but not significant for men. Being a second-generation immigrant has the opposite effect, showing significant and positive effects on boycotting, posting online, signing petitions, and protesting, with a stronger effect observed among women. These findings underscore the importance of an intersectional perspective in political participation. While women engage more in non-institutional forms of participation, its effects vary depending on immigrant background. Immigrant women participate less, whereas those whose parents are foreign-born tend to engage more.

Figure 6.13. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in displaying a campaign sticker



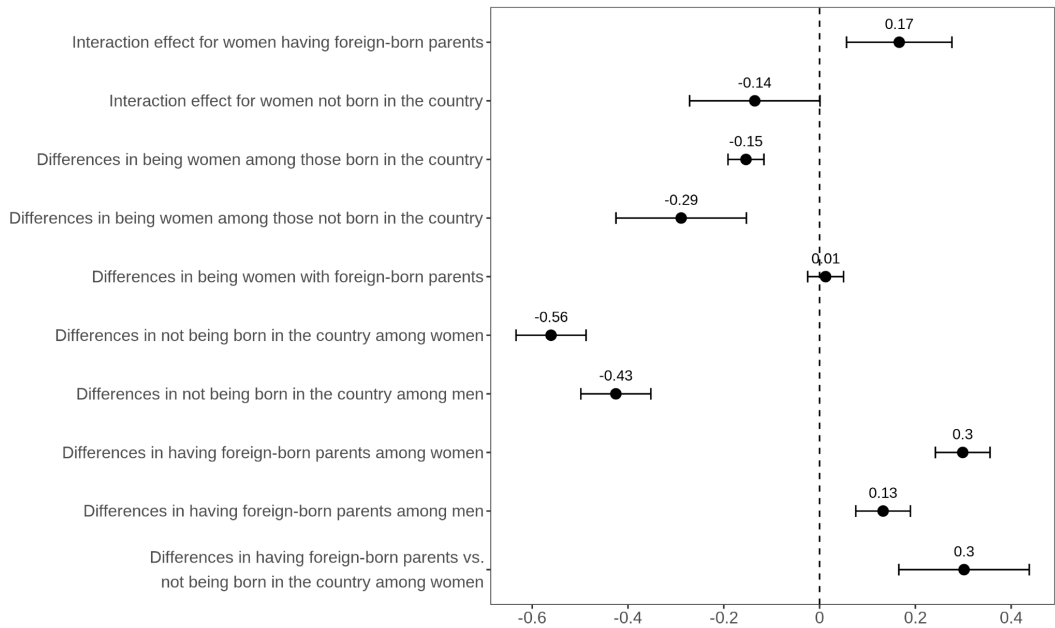
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.14. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in boycotting certain products



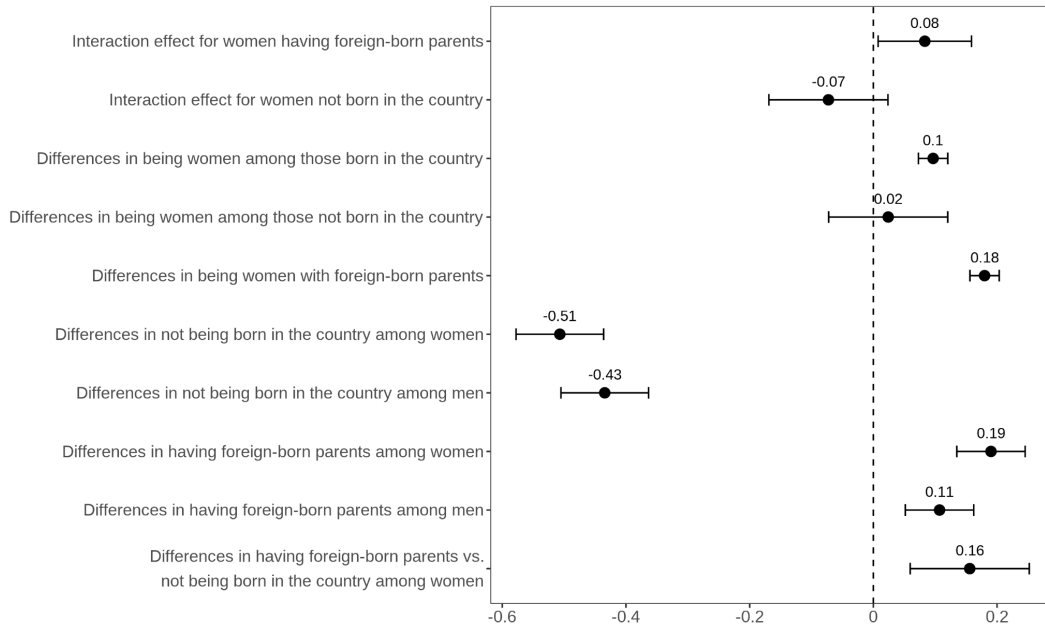
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.15. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in posting online



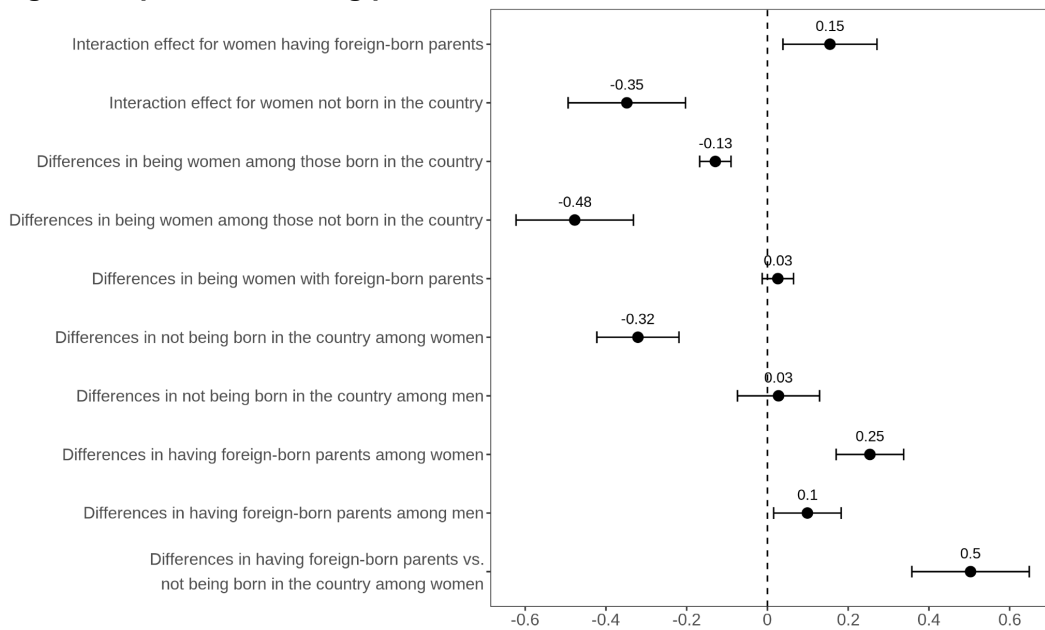
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.16. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in signing a petition



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.17. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in taking part in demonstration



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Next, we apply the same strategy to explore interactions of gender and immigration background on institutional participation modes of action. First, we present the results of the logistic regression models in Table 6.2, followed by the post-estimation calculations.

The regression results indicate that being a woman is associated with lower institutional participation across all items, with the strongest effect observed in political party membership. Unlike non-institutional participation, age is positively and significantly associated with all forms of institutional engagement, as is having a university education.

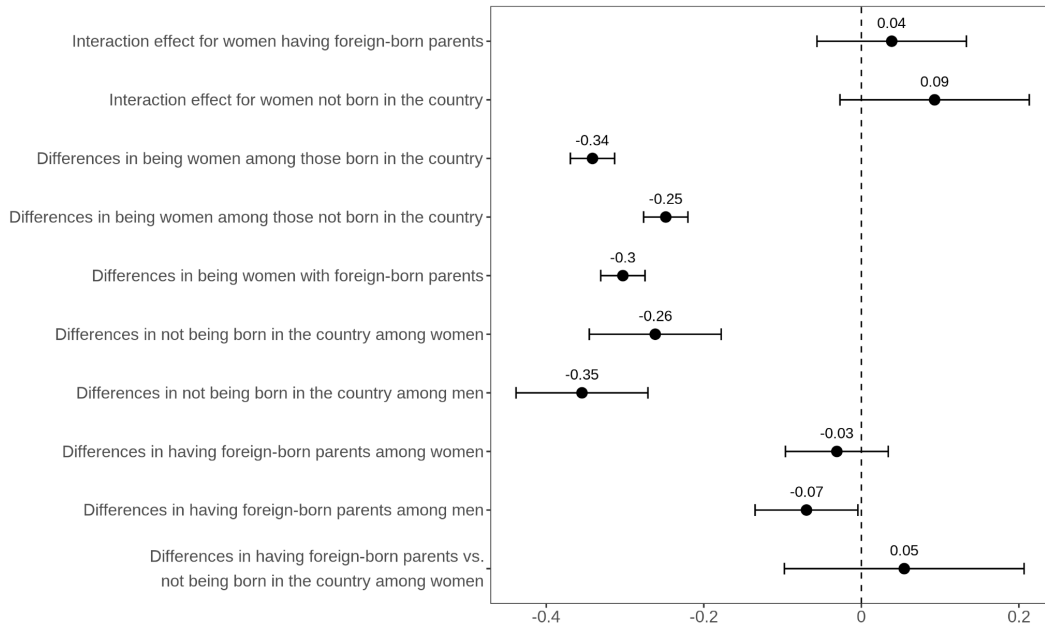
The findings also show that immigrants are less likely to participate institutionally, with the larger negative effects observed in political party membership and voting. Similarly, being a second-generation immigrant is associated with a lower likelihood of contacting a politician, voting, and joining a trade union. However, interaction effects suggest a more nuanced pattern: while being an immigrant woman has a negative effect on trade union membership, daughters of immigrants are more likely to donate to political causes, join parties or pressure groups, and vote. However, to fully understand the results, it is necessary to consider the post-estimation calculations.

Table 6.2. Results of logistic regressions in institutional forms of participation

	Contacted	Donate/ Participate	Vote	Trade Union	Party Member
Intercept	-2.111*** (0.022)	-3.094*** (0.061)	0.032 (0.021)	-2.067*** (0.018)	-4.387*** (0.118)
Woman	-0.341*** (0.014)	-0.271*** (0.038)	-0.106*** (0.014)	-0.273*** (0.011)	-0.598*** (0.071)
Age	0.006*** (0.0004)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.0004)	0.030*** (0.0003)	0.024*** (0.002)
Attended university	0.851*** (0.013)	0.915*** (0.035)	0.957*** (0.015)	0.557*** (0.011)	0.682*** (0.069)
Not born in country	-0.355*** (0.043)	-0.383*** (0.106)	-0.867*** (0.038)	-0.224*** (0.033)	-0.868*** (0.251)
Foreign-born parents	-0.070** (0.033)	0.097 (0.081)	-0.461*** (0.031)	-0.134*** (0.027)	0.063 (0.167)
Woman*Not born in country	0.093 (0.061)	-0.148 (0.151)	0.065 (0.052)	-0.086* (0.047)	0.111 (0.395)
Woman*Foreign-born parents	0.039 (0.048)	0.241** (0.115)	0.081* (0.043)	0.034 (0.038)	-0.087 (0.269)
Observations	182,767	52,500	166,465	180,509	26,651
R2	0.032	0.030	0.073	0.063	0.043
Adj. R2	0.390	0.029	0.073	0.063	0.041
AIC	151,659.900	25,972.040	155,867.400	222,580.600	8,025.837

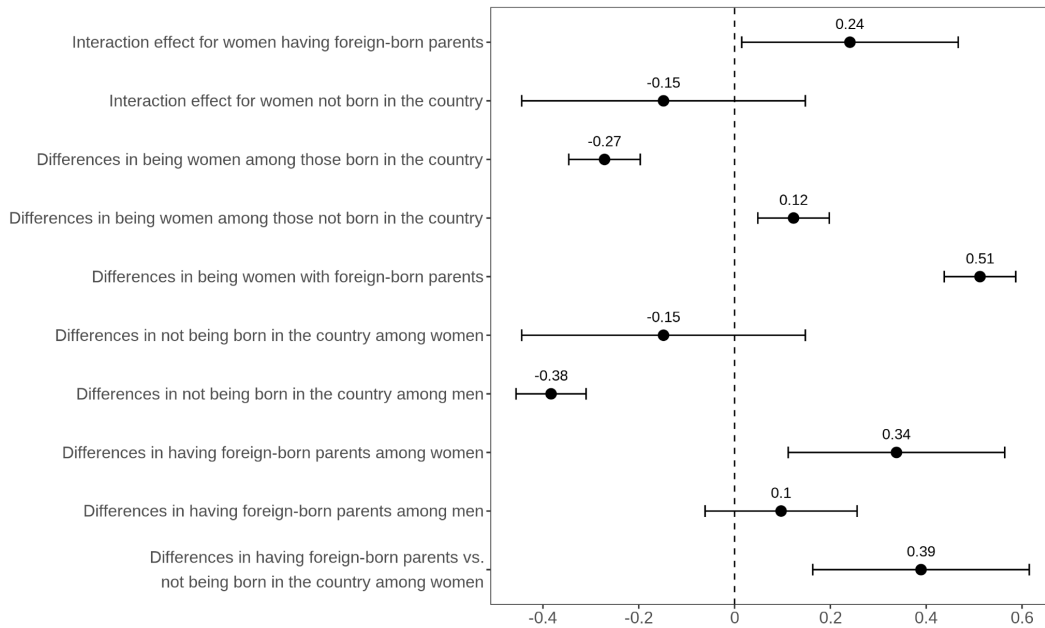
Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.18. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in contacting a politician



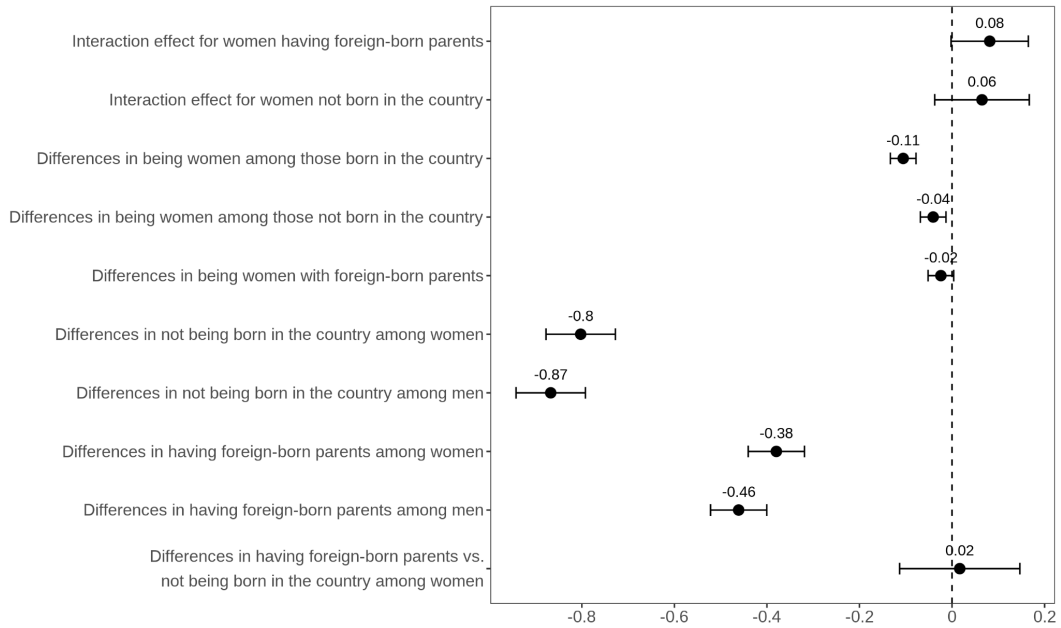
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.19. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in donating or participating in party/pressure group



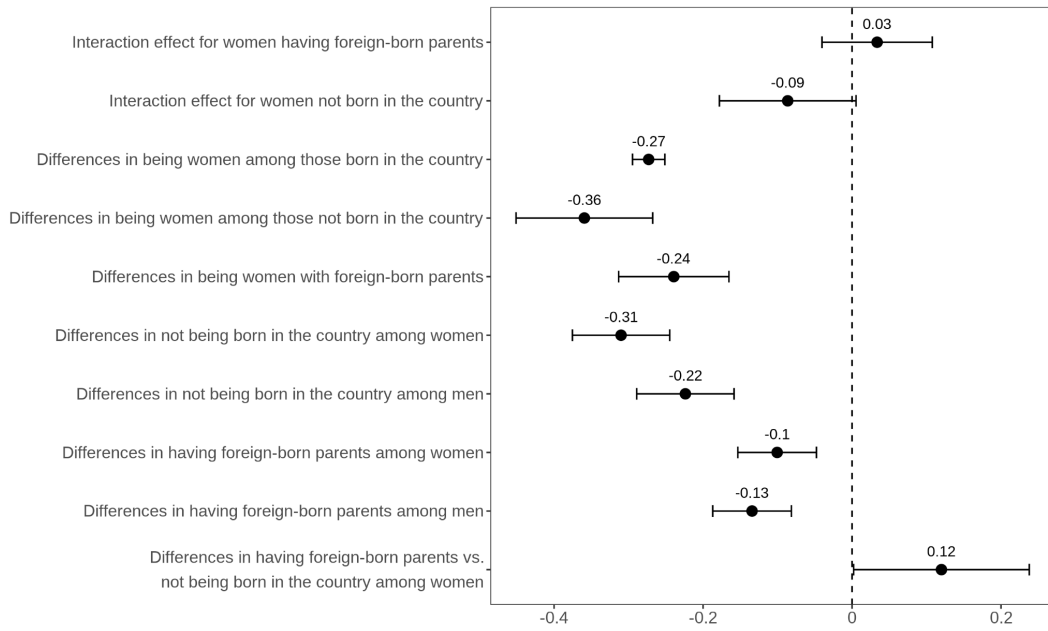
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.20. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in voting



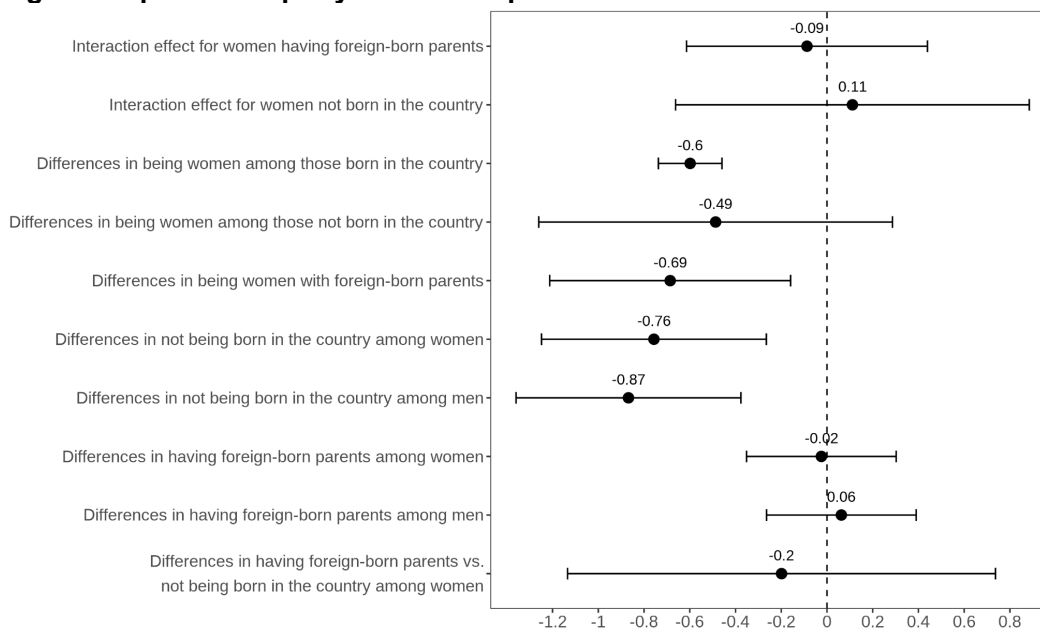
Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.21. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in trade union membership



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

Figure 6.22. Conditional differences of gender, being foreign-born, and having foreign-born parents in party membership



Data: European Social Survey, Rounds 1-11 (European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure, 2024).

The results indicate that being a woman has a negative effect on contacting a politician, voting, and joining a trade union, independently of the country of birth. However, when it comes to donating or participating in political parties or pressure groups, as well as being a party member, negative effects are observed for immigrants, while the effect is not significant for individuals born in the country. Being a woman also has a negative effect on all forms of participation for second-generation immigrants, in contrast to the patterns observed in non-institutional participation.

Being an immigrant or second-generation immigrant negatively affects both men and women, especially when it comes to voting, as well as union membership. Nonetheless, being born outside the country shows larger negative effects than having foreign-born parents. Regarding the other items, being an immigrant has negative effects on both men and women in contacting a politician and being a member of a political party, with the effects being larger for men. However, being a second-generation immigrant does not have significant effects on either men or women. For the item of donating or participating in a party or pressure group, negative effects of being an immigrant are observed for men, while being a second-generation immigrant shows positive effects for women.

In this regard, what is observed in institutional participation is that, while being a woman is associated with lower levels of participation, being an immigrant represents a greater source of political inequality. Moreover, unlike non-institutional participation, being a second-generation immigrant is also associated with lower participation, which may be since this type of participation requires a higher level of resources and presents more political barriers, although the effect is generally stronger for men than for women.

7. Political involvement and discrimination experiences

Related to the question of antecedents of inequalities in political involvement is, in our view, the question of the role of discrimination experiences for political socialization of adolescents. Especially social minorities can be assumed to be discriminated against in different sectors of public life. These negative experiences could also compromise political socialization and result in less political efficacy, interest, and engagement. Therefore, in this section we explore the relationship between discrimination experiences and political involvement among youth. For this purpose we rely on the data of the project CILS4EU (Kalter et al., 2017) which is publicly available via [GESIS](#). Although the data represents a panel among four European countries of youth with a focus on immigrated youth, the relevant variables for our approach are not measured separately in all waves. Therefore, we cannot use the panel structure of the data and have to rely on cross-sectional data for our purposes. Part of our analyses have recently been published in Kleer et al. 2025. In this section we 1) report a summary of the main arguments and findings of the article but encourage interested readers to read the more detailed published version. 2) share a more explorative analysis regarding the role of political discussion and social participation as potential mediators of the effect of discrimination experiences on political interest.

So far, research on minority groups showed that lower levels of political interest occur for individuals from minority ethnicities and lower socioeconomic status (Alozie et al., 2003; Wray-Lake et al., 2020). These lower levels might be caused by negative experiences of these groups with the social and political system, especially when made during important stages of their political socialization, in childhood and youth. Especially social minorities (immigration background, race/ethnicity or low socioeconomic status) might be targeted by discriminative acts. Overall, discrimination is a major source that potentially influences youth's attitudes, involvement and participation in the social and political system. As shown by Flanagan et al. (2007; see also Jungkunz & Weiss, 2024; Weiss & Parth, 2022) these experiences of non-acceptance or maltreatment from institutions, actors, or fellow citizens profoundly affect adolescents' political attitudes and social participation which might result in political apathy. Therefore,

discrimination is a threat for the participation of marginalised youth and represents a major drawback in nurturing political involvement (Arikan & Turkoglu, 2023; Just & Anderson, 2014).

Regarding discrimination experiences, we know that many social organizations empower disadvantaged groups, especially confronting the social or political system and its institutions. Furthermore, participation research repeatedly shows that voluntary work, formal or non-formal participation in social or school organizations, positively influence political participation (Verba et al., 1995) and also political interest (Cicognani et al., 2012; Quintelier & Van Deth, 2014). Additionally, research showed that discrimination experiences led citizens to be more engaged in civic organizations (Ballard, 2015; Christophe et al., 2022; Riley et al., 2021) to combat discrimination causes. To sum up, social participation offers learning opportunities and experiences and increases civic skills that might equip citizens to combat discrimination and raise interest in changing society and politics. In this sense, social participation could be able to compensate for potential negative effects of discrimination.

As a second potential mediator between perceived discrimination and political interest, we explore political discussions. Engaging in political talks at schools, within families, or with peers has been shown to positively influence political interest (García-Albacete, 2013; Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019; Jennings et al., 2009; Quintelier, 2015; Sheata & Amna, 2019). As discussed above, experiencing discriminatory acts influence youth's attitudes but might also influence their tendency to discuss these experiences with peers, families, or in schools.

In the following, we present two analyses: The first is based on our published work that applied a regression model and analysis of moderation effects (see DOI in Kleer et al., 2025). The second presents an explorative step considering a structural equation model and possible mediation effects of political discussions and social participation.

7.1. Data and operationalisation

We assessed the abovementioned steps with data from the CILS4EU project (Kalter et al., 2017). Our main independent variable, discrimination experience, was measured in wave 1 with four items on a five-point Likert scale: How often

do you feel discriminated against or treated unfairly ... 1) ... in school?, 2) ... in trains, buses, trams, or the subway?, 3) ... in shops, stores, cafes, restaurants, or nightclubs?, and 4) ... by police or security guards?. It is important to notice here, that concerning the item on possible discrimination in schools, it is not clear who is responsible for creating this experience. Either teachers and principals or fellow classmates and peers could be the source for discrimination in schools. Regarding Oskooii (2016, p. 616), item 1 and 4 might refer to political discrimination (assuming teachers/principals are responsible for discrimination). Items 2 and 3 can be seen as societal discrimination in this sense. Table 7.1 presents the descriptive statistics of the respective items on the original scale. We see that discrimination was perceived as highest in schools although, on average, discrimination experience is low (0.494/0.486 schools).

Table 7.1. Descriptive statistics of continuous variables.

Variables	Origin	Min	Q1	Mean	Median	Q3	Max	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	n	% Valid
Discrimination in schools	wave 1	0	0	0.49	0	1	3	0.65	1.17	0.93	10594	98.71
Discrimination in public transportation	wave 1	0	0	0.14	0	0	3	0.42	3.30	12.38	10579	98.57
Discrimination in public areas	wave 1	0	0	0.15	0	0	3	0.42	2.98	9.96	10575	98.54
Discrimination by police or security guards	wave 1	0	0	0.20	0	0	3	0.55	3.21	10.54	10571	98.50
Political interest	wave 3	0	1	1.53	2	2	4	1.20	0.35	-0.74	10935	98.11
Political discussion	wave 2	0	1	1.90	2	3	4	1.22	-0.01	-1.03	9854	88.18
Social participation	wave 3	0	00	0.76	0	1	4	1.03	1.26	0.36	10875	97.57
Socio-economic background (SEB)	wave 1	11.01	28.48	44.83	43.28	58.58	88.83	18.42	0.33	-0.91	994	89.19

Data: CILS4EU (Kalter et al. 2017).

Political interest, the primary dependent variable, was measured on a five-point scale as general interest in the survey country's politics. Average levels of political interest were 1.532 in wave 3 (see Table 7.1). For political discussions, we included the variable on how often respondents discuss political or social issues. On average, adolescents showed a frequency of political discussions of 1.899 on a 5-point scale (see Table 7.1). For measuring social participation, we used the variable on how often respondents do voluntary or community work. Adolescents showed low levels of engagement in community organizations (0.756, in between responses never and less often).

7.2. Regression models and moderation

In this section, we present a condensed version of our published work (Kleer et al., 2025) and explore a possible mediation of discrimination experience via social participation on political interest. We started our analysis with a regression model

with political interest as a dependent variable and discrimination experiences as the most important independent variable. We also look at a possible interaction (moderation) between discrimination experience and social participation. We added several control variables to the model that in the past have consistently shown to be determinants of political interest: socio-economic background and immigration background (for a comprehensive discussion, information on measurement issues and control variables please consult Kleer et al., 2025).

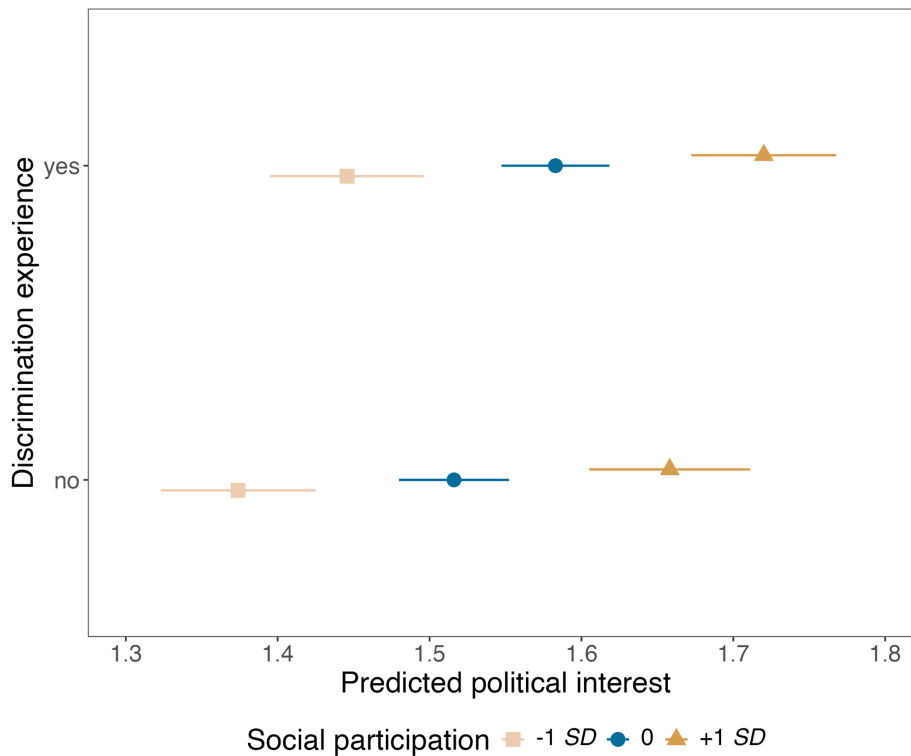
We conducted pooled linear regression models, with a particular focus on the effects of discrimination experience, social participation, and their interaction on political interest. The analysis revealed that discrimination experience had a direct and positive association with political interest among youth. This finding aligns with prior research (Dollmann, 2022; Fischer-Neumann, 2014; Takyar, 2019), underlining that rather than leading to political alienation, young individuals who experienced discriminatory acts further engage and probably combat the discrimination in the political system.

Social participation consistently exhibited a positive relationship with political interest across all models. This pattern supports the notion that involvement in social organizations serves as a "school of democracy," reinforcing political involvement through participatory experiences. That behaviour influences cognitive orientations, might be an unusual finding for psychologists, however, both participation and especially socialization research have emphasized this pathway in adolescent development (Cicognani et al., 2012; Dahl & Abdelzadeh, 2017; Quintelier & Van Deth, 2014).

However, we did not see a significant interaction term between discrimination experience and social participation. You can find the full regression tables in the publication (Kleer et al., 2025, p. 10). Figure 7.1 reproduces the relevant results regarding discrimination experience and social participation.

Since we centred social participation, the chosen values in Figure 7.1 represent youth that show social participation at mean level (value 0), at 1 standard deviation lower than mean (-1), and 1 standard deviation higher than mean (1).

Figure 7.1. Marginal effects of being discriminated against among social participation.



Note: Estimates are based on model 2. Data: CILS4EU (Kalter et al., 2017).
 Source: Adapted Figure from Kleer et al. (2025, p. 11).

We see that although political interest is generally higher among socially engaged youth—regardless of discrimination experience—the interaction effect remains negligible. The increase in political interest remained quasi-constant in each category of discrimination experience and was based on the main effect of social participation. In other words, the relationship between discrimination experience and political interest did not meaningfully differ across levels of social participation.

Furthermore, Figure 7.1 highlights the substantive impact of social participation: youth frequently engaged in voluntary organizations exhibit, on average, a 0.28 scale-point higher political interest than those with lower participation levels. This suggests that active social participation fosters political interest broadly, rather than amplifying the effect of discrimination experience.

Regarding differences among discriminated or not discriminated youth at each indicated level of social participation, we can see differences in the mean of predicted political interest. Table 7.1 shows the results of hypothesis tests

between estimated coefficients for discriminated and not discriminated youth for each level of social participation. We can see that for not engaged youth (value -1) and on average engaged youth (value 0), the political interest is significantly higher for youth that experienced discrimination compared to youth that did not experienced discrimination. However, as also indicated by the global interaction term, the differences are rather negligible on the 0 to 4 scale of political interest ($\Delta_{-1} = 0.072$; $\Delta_0 = 0.067$).

Table 7.1: Differences between marginal effects at specific values of social participation

Level of social participation	Δ
-1	0.072***
0	0.067**
1	0.062†

Note: †p=0.1, *p=0.05, **p=0.01, ***p=0.001.

In conclusion, the analyses conducted in Kleer et al. 2025 and summarized here confirm that both discrimination experience and social participation positively influence political interest among youth. We find no evidence, however, that social participation moderates the relationship between discrimination experience and political interest. In the following section, we explore if a statistical mediation rather than a moderation is at work.

7.3. SEM and mediation

This section explores the connection between discrimination experience and political interest further. We use a structural model here to explore possible pathways combining discrimination experiences with political interest. We need to highlight that we investigate potential mediating relationships via structural equation modelling (SEM). However, we employ and interpret these models in a correlational rather than causal manner since we rely on cross-sectional data.

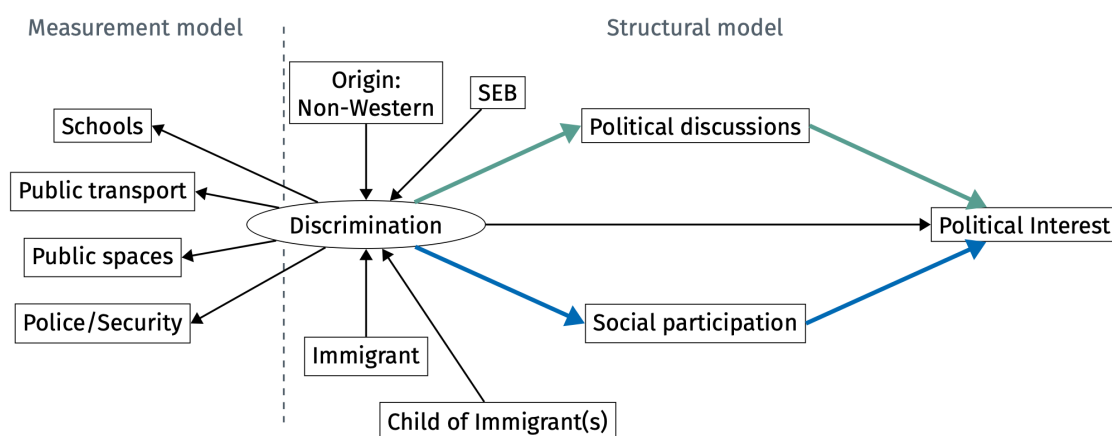
Whereas most research examines if and how political interest influences participation, research on adolescents and their social and political development suggests that participation can also boost cognitive orientations such as political interest (Cicognani et al., 2012; Dahl & Abdelzadeh, 2017; Quintelier & Van Deth, 2014) for a more detailed discussion see Kleer et al. 2025. This indicates that the established attitudes - behaviour pathway might not fully work for adolescents who are still learning to behave and engage in the social and political world.

Voluntary work could especially be seen as a “school of democracy” that nurtures the political interest of young citizens and might be able to compensate for negative experiences such as discrimination. Therefore, our further analyses focus on the relationship of social participation and political discussions to political interest. Hereby, we can exploratively assess to what extent they can increase the political interest of youngsters.

Figure 7.2 shows the theoretical structural model with indirect and direct paths between discrimination experience, political interest, frequency of political discussions, and social participation. For a better understanding, we also marked the paths in different colours. The measurement model included four manifest items regarding experience of discrimination.

As theorised in the previous paragraph, we built a structural model regarding the possible correlations of discrimination experience to political involvement, including political discussions, social participation, and the main dependent variable political interest. As explanatory variables for discrimination experience, we included minority status concerning the immigration status (being immigrant, being child of immigrant(s)), origin of immigration (non-Western against Western), and socio-economic background (SEB).

Figure 7.2. Theoretical model



We built paths starting from the latent concept of discrimination experience. We included direct paths from discrimination experience towards political interest, social participation, and political discussions. We also included direct paths from social participation and political discussions on political interest. By constructing these direct paths, we can estimate and assess a possible mediation of

discrimination experiences by social participation (blue path in Figure 7.2) and political discussions (petrol path in Figure 7.2).

For the latent concept of discrimination, there were four manifest indicators in the data available: in schools, in public spaces, in public spaces, or by police/security guards. We tested this latent concept upfront in an exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as suggested for not yet established concepts (Hurley et al., 1997; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). EFA indicated a single-factor solution for discrimination. However, considering Oskooii's (2016) distinction between political and societal discrimination, we tested competing models of a single and 2-factor solution in the CFA. The model fits among the single and 2-factor solutions did not differ in both waves. Due to the high correlation between the two factors ($r = 0.88$) and the reliance on only two indicators for the estimation of the two factors, we included the single factor solution into the SEM, since estimating a latent factor on four indicators is more robust. The results of EFA and CFA are available on [OSF](#).

For the path analyses, all continuous variables were scaled by 2 SD and centered, as suggested by Gelman (2008) to better compare effects of dichotomous and continuous variables within a model. We focus on paths from discrimination experience towards political discussions, social participation, and political interest (wave 3).

We introduced social participation and political discussion as potential mediators of discrimination experience. Figure 7.3 presents the final model, which we developed based on the model depicted in Figure 7.2. While the initial model showed sufficient global model fit, we explored possible modifications. The modification indices suggested a direct path from socio-economic background to political discussions, a finding that is related to prior studies (García-Albacete, 2013; Sheata & Amna, 2019). Hence, we included this single additional path into the model.

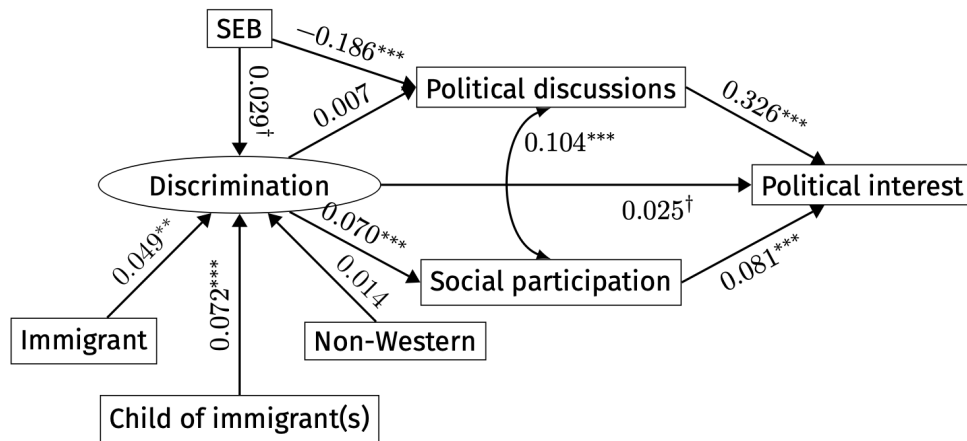
From the direct paths of discrimination experience, we see that non-Western origin did not influence the level of discrimination experience. However, being an immigrant or child of immigrants also captured this relation to some extent. This indicates that among immigrants and children of immigrants, there exist no further regional differentiation in the frequency of discrimination experiences.

In contrast, being an immigrant or child of immigrant(s) positively and significantly correlated with the frequency of discrimination experiences. Immigrant respondents and children of immigrant(s) reported significantly higher discrimination experiences. In addition, lower socio-economic background (SEB) correlated positively with discrimination experience; however, this correlation was only significant on $p=0.1$. Regarding political discussions, we see a significant and negative correlation of SEB and political discussions, indicating that adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds discuss political topics less frequently.

Regarding the direct paths toward political interest, Figure 7.3 shows a positive correlation of discrimination experience on political interest, which is significant on $p=0.1$. However, we must consider that discrimination experiences were highly right-skewed and only a few cases exist with frequent experiences of discrimination. In addition, we must consider that the measurement of discrimination frequency was measured in wave 1 and political interest in wave 3, indicating a time difference that we also need to consider. Again, this suggests that discrimination experience leads to more interest instead of apathy.

All in all, the analyses show that the direct paths of discrimination experience to the two possible mediators differ: Discrimination experience is positively and significantly connected with social participation but not with political discussion. Regarding the mediations, we acknowledge a significant and positive indirect path via social participation (0.01^{***} , see Table 7.2), which showed an existing but small complementary mediation of discrimination experience. This means that discrimination experiences led to more social participation, which in turn increased political interest. Confirming other studies, we found positive paths of political discussions and social participation on political interest.

Figure 7.3. Results of the structural equation model on political interest.



Notes: Standardised coefficients. Model statistics: df: 33, logl: -39303.725, AIC: 78667.449, BIC: 78878.590, χ^2 : 197.207, CFI: 0.969, RMSEA: 0.025, SRMR: 0.017. Significance indicated as *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, † $p \leq 0.1$. Data: CILS4EU (Kalter et al., 2017).

The insights and interpretation of these results are limited. We used the data in a cross-sectional sense and therefore, we cannot interpret the results in a causal way. To interpret causal paths, we would need to rely on panel data that collected each variable at each time point (which is not available). Instead, we analysed correlations in an explorative way based on the above discussed findings on discrimination experiences.

Table 7.2. Indirect and total effects (wave 2)

Effect	Coef.	SE	95% CI
Indirect: Discrimination > political discussion > political interest	0.004	0.008	(-0.012, 0.021)
Indirect: Discrimination > social participation > political interest	0.010***	0.003	(0.005, 0.015)
Total: Discrimination (via political discussion)	0.046†	0.025	(-0.004, 0.096)
Total: Discrimination (via social participation)	0.052†	0.026	(0.002, 0.102)

Notes: † $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. Data: CILS4EU (Kalter et al., 2017).

However, our exploratory steps can highlight that it might be worthy to further disentangle mechanisms at work that lead to political engagement among youth. This approach could also be fruitful for political socialization research.

8. Main findings

One of the first conclusions and main limitation to go deeper in some aspects is the lack of panel data available to study socialization processes and long term effects of early inequalities. Furthermore, there are even less longitudinal datasets that include questions on political interest and internal political efficacy or other political attitudes and behaviours. The scarcity of studies focusing on migrant populations or specific ethnic groups is important, too.

Overall, we found overwhelming evidence, from previous analyses and our own, on the gender-based gap in political engagement, as well as the cultural capital/family education gap, while the role of ethnicity and immigration background has been significantly less explored.

Despite the scarcity of panel data that allows to address long-term effects of early inequalities, available studies and our own analyses corroborate that gender and immigration background inequalities are already visible at an early age on both political interest and internal political efficacy. Data for adults show the gaps are similarly visible during adulthood across countries and over time. Furthermore, our own exploration of one of the few longitudinal datasets available (with all needed variables) confirms that the development of interest and efficacy over the life span differs significantly between men and women. Women's internal political efficacy remains stable over time, while men's grow. Political interest increases exponentially with age for both men and women, but particularly for men. We interpret all these findings as confirmation of the long-term effect of early inequalities.

The sources of inequalities (gender, socioeconomic status or ethnicity/origin) are mostly treated as separate dimensions and little attention to the interactions among them. Qualitative and theoretical work is richer here, probably due to the difficulties capturing all the important characteristics of intersectional experiences.

We provided preliminary evidence of the positive intersectional effect of being a girl and having an immigration background in levels of political interest among adolescents. This intersection does not imply that girls with immigrant background have higher levels of interest than any other group, but it does imply

that they have higher levels of political interest that we could expect by adding the impact of being a girl and having immigrant background on their own. Given the lack of studies addressing intersectionality, we believe this approach is an important venue for future research and should include other sources of inequality such as socioeconomic status and others.

Despite the variation in levels of political interest and efficacy across countries and over time, the gender gap is a pervasive finding that is present in all countries and time points. Some contextual elements such as a higher level of overall general equality in a country correlate with smaller gaps between men and women. However, the large correlation between levels of political interest and political efficacy, as well as overall gender equality, implies that other, more specific, institutional characteristics could be studied to identify those policies that help reduce gender gaps in political involvement.

Corroborating previous studies, we found that women participate more in non-institutional forms of participation, while men participate more in institutional ones. When using an interaction perspective, in non-institutional forms of participation, women not born in the country are the least likely to participate, whereas having foreign parents provides a boost for some forms of actions. In institutional forms of participation, both not being born in the country and having foreign parents are associated with less participation, although in the case of having foreign parents, the effect is greater for men. Further addressing the intersection of sources of inequalities in political participation is an important venue for future research.

Finally, we explore the potential effect of discrimination experiences on levels of political involvement, finding that perceived discrimination leads to higher levels of political interest. Contrary to our expectations, we could see a non-significant interaction effect between discrimination experience and social participation, indicating that political interest remains quasi-constant across levels of social participation, regardless of discrimination experience.

To sum up, WP2 could highlight and illuminate the gender gap in different forms of political involvement. It also brought forward first evidence on the complex intersectional dynamics at play when different social disadvantages come together. Future research should make an effort to better capture the complex intersectional interplay of antecedents of political engagement.

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