

# Socio-demographic factors and participation of the European youth: A multilevel analysis

## Abstract

*This study draws on a transnational research project called MYPLACE (Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement) which received funding from the European Commission. Survey data from almost 17000 young people from fourteen European countries were used to identify socio-demographic factors which are linked to young people's participation. Male, upper social class, higher self-perceived discrimination, greater diversity in social network, higher political socialization in family, and higher political knowledge are significantly related to greater level of political, and civic participation. In addition, higher civic participation is significantly associated with greater satisfaction with life, higher level of trust for politicians and parliament. Moreover, those in education, rated high in household income, reported greater trust for political parties and those from conservative state appeared to have significantly greater political participation. These findings are discussed in the context of previous empirical studies and theories on participation and well-being. Suggestions for future research are also put forward.*

**Key words:** Participation, Youth, Young people, Well-being, Civic engagement, Europe

## Introduction

Youth participation is a process by which the young people get involved with the institutions and decisions that affect their lives. In defining the concept, Checkoway (2011) emphasises on the active engagement and real influence of young people, not just their passive presence or token roles in adult agencies. Head (2011) identified a number of benefits that participation brings for the young people as well as the wider society. At the individual level, benefits include various forms of skills, self-esteem, and self-development. At the societal level, higher youth participation broadens civic activity and contributes to citizenship (Zeldin et al., 2003).

These developmental benefits and increasing influence of rights-based perspective of youth participation have resulted in a growing interest among academics and policy makers in countries within the EU and beyond. However, research on youth participation, like any other areas of research (e.g., youth subjective well-being) appears to be influenced by research on participation among adults (O'Toole et al., 2003). It is reflected firstly on the way participation is narrowly measured (e.g., by voting behaviour) and secondly on the limited number of domains and/or items used for measuring those domains which do not necessarily address the changing nature of youth participation (Smith, 2000). O'Toole et al. (2003) criticised this 'top-down' approach and asked

researchers to place young people at the centre of research and define participation, and associated measure by collecting youth centric views.

Over the past decade, there appears to be a paradigm shift on youth participation research as researchers are now aware of the uniqueness of youth participation especially the diverse modes or avenues through which this specific group of population participates in the decision making processes. This theoretical shift has also influenced recent surveys (e.g., Eurobarometer, European Social Survey) that aim to identify factors linked to youth participation. Previous studies on participation identified a number of demographic correlates of participation including age (Fieldhouse et al., 2007) gender (Norris et al., 2004), education, economic condition, class (Marti et al., 2014). Although these demographic factors play significant roles in participation, they do not explain much variation when used alone in the participation model. Influenced by a number of psychosocial theories including social capital and civic voluntarism some researchers (e.g., Norris, 2003) identified statistically significant association of socialisation function in family, perceived trustworthiness of institutions, interest in politics, sense of political efficacy, satisfaction with national government, satisfaction with democracy, and trust in politicians with participation.

Parallel to this development, the recent growth of cross-cultural comparative surveys influenced researchers to include a number of contextual factors as antecedents to participation. Morales (2009) emphasised on the political context especially the existence and networks of politically active organisations that enable mobilisation of citizens.

Each of these three strands has its own strength since they greatly contribute to our understanding of factors linked to participation. However, there is a growing tendency among researchers to combine factors from multiple strands to fit a better model. When Mannarini et al., (2008) added psychosocial factors to their original model containing only demographic factors, the model provided to be a better fit for the participation of Italian youth as the adjusted  $R^2$  changed from 20% to 55%. In this regard, Norris (2003) developed this approach further when she modelled citizen-oriented and cause oriented participation in 15 European countries by combining demographic and psychosocial factors. Although Norris identified a number of important factors including age, education, income, interest in politics, closer affiliation to a political party, satisfaction with national government, internal and external efficacy, her participation models (with adjusted  $R^2$  of 22%) did not explain as much variation as Mannarini et al. model did.

One of the reasons for Norris's (2003) model to explain lower level of variation might be linked to the fact that Norris used OLS regression to analyse cross-European data on participation that had some structures/layers. There is a growing consensus among researchers that for robust modelling of structured data, especially in modelling a phenomenon using cross-cultural data, multilevel analysis is required (Field, 2013). In this regard, Fieldhouse et al., (2007) were probably the first who used the sophisticated multilevel analysis to take into account the structured/layered data to model participation using data from 22 European countries. They examined national variations in turnout for young people across Europe, and used multilevel logistic regression models to understand these variations, and to test the extent to which they were attributable to the characteristics of young people and the electoral context in each country. Variations in turnout among young people were partially accounted for by the level of turnout of older voters in the country and partly by the characteristics of young voters, including the level of political interest and civic duty.

Although Fieldhouse et al., provided additional insights on youth participation in Europe by bringing demographic, psychosocial, and contextual factors within a single framework, their analysis focused only on voting behaviour of young people. Their study needs to be extended further not only to examine other areas of youth participation but also to test some other potential factors which previous studies did not explore. For example, research on youth well-being identifies participation as an important aspect of youth life (Goldin et al., 2014). However, there is still no systematic evidence on how youth's well-being is linked to their participation when examined with demographic, psychosocial, and contextual factors in cross European context. This article aims to identify (a) the demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors that are linked to the participation of European youth, and (b) how youth well-being is associated with participation when examined in the context of those demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors

## **Data and analysis**

Data for this article were obtained from the survey component of the research project called MYPLACE (Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement) which received funding from the European Commission (<http://www.fp7-myplace.eu>). Using a semi-structure interview, data were collected from around 17,000 young people living in two contrasting locations in fourteen European countries: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Russia, Slovakia, Hungary, Georgia, Greece, Croatia, Germany (four locations in total—two from the East Germany and two from the West Germany), Denmark, United Kingdom, Portugal, and Spain.

Ethical issues relating to this survey such as data protection, confidentiality and informed consent were subject to specific procedures agreed by the MYPLACE Ethics Committee. IBM SPSS is used for cleaning and analysing data. For descriptive analysis at the aggregate level, bar diagram is used. Since the data collected in the survey have structured nature or layers (individual respondent nested in a location), multilevel modelling is used.

## **Measures**

### **Dependent variable(s): Participation**

Conventionally, participation is measured by voting behaviour. However, it is now widely recognised that this approach fails to capture a range of areas in which young people participate (White et al., 2000). In this article, two broad dimensions of youth participation are considered: political activism, and civic participation (Norris et al., 2004).

In order to measure political activism, respondents were given a list containing 20 activities (such as signing a petition, collecting signatures). They were asked to say how often ('never', 'once', 'twice', 'three times or more') they did each of these activities during the last 12 months. Number of activity done at least once were counted which resulted in an index ranging from 0-20 (higher score indicating greater political activism).

For measuring civic participation, young people were asked the types of involvement ('member', 'participated in activity', 'done voluntary work', 'none') they had with 15 organisations such as a political party, religious organisation during the last 12 months. Respondents who said they were members or participated in activity or did some voluntary work for these organisations were

counted to develop an index ranging from 0-15 (higher score indicating greater level of civic engagement). In the subsequent analysis, these two indices on participation will be explored separately.

## **Independent variables**

### *Demographic characteristics*

Respondents were asked about their date of birth from which their age was calculated. Age of the respondents ranged from 16 to 25. Gender is dummy coded. Female is the reference category with code 0, whereas 1 is used for male. Four categories for occupation used in the analysis were employed, in education, unemployed, and other. Employed was used as a reference category. In order to measure the household solvency, respondents were asked to describe current household income situation on a four-point rating scale ranging from 0 (finding it very difficult on present income) to 3 (living comfortably on present income).

The measure of parental class was derived from scores on four input variables: father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's occupation. For the education variable, young people who had a parent with education at the level of Degree and above received score 1 and a parent with education below Degree level received score 0. Respondents who had a parent working in the professional or higher administrative sector received score 1 and those with a parent working in the other job sectors received score 0. The way the index was constructed is weighted by the number of parents as well as parents without an occupation or where the educational level was not known. The four point scale is therefore the product of a re-processed seven point scale ranging from weighted values as follows: 0,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{2}{3}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , 1.

### *Psychosocial factors*

#### **Self-perceived discrimination**

Respondents were asked whether they felt ever threatened because of the followings: (i) supporting a particular political movement, (ii) being a member of an ethnic or religious minority, (iii) a sexual orientation, (iv) belonging to a subculture (punk/skinhead/Goth etc.), and (v) gender. Respondents who reported either 'occasionally' or 'regularly' for each aspect was counted to construct an index ranging from 0-5. Higher score indicates greater level of discrimination.

#### **Diversity in social network**

For measuring the diversity in social network, respondents were asked how many (none, one, two, three or more) of their close friends were (have come) from the following groups: (a) members of a different race/ethnic/minority group, (b) a different social status/class to them, (c) different political views, (d) different religious beliefs, (e) a different sexual orientation, and (f) a different sex/gender. Original responses to each of these questions were coded in the following way to create a rating scale: none = 0, one = 1, two = 2, three or more = 3. The summated scale ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ) ranges from 0 to 18, a higher score indicates a greater level of diversity in social network.

#### **Political knowledge**

Respondents were asked to name the head of Government, foreign Minister, and main ruling party in their country. The number of correct answers for each respondent was counted to construct a

political knowledge index ranging from 0 (all incorrect answers) to 3 (all correct answers). Higher score indicates a greater level of political knowledge.

### **Political socialisation in family**

Respondents were asked how often they discussed political issues when they got together with (a) mother, and (b) father. Responses to each item were coded in the following way: never = 0, rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3, and always = 4. The summated scale ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ) ranges from 0 to 8, a higher score indicates a greater level of political socialisation in family.

### **Human rights situation**

Respondents were asked how much respect they thought their country had for the human rights situation. Responses were collected on a four-point scale and were scored as follows: 'No respect at all' (score = 0), 'Not much respect' (score = 1), 'A fair degree of respect' (score = 2), and 'A great deal of respect' (score = 3).

### **Subjective well-being**

Over the past few decades, a wide variety of measures has been developed for measuring subjective well-being (Cummins and Lau, 2005; Huebner, 1991). For this study, an eleven-point rating scale (0 = extremely dissatisfied; 10 = extremely satisfied) is used to measure young people's satisfaction with life as a whole.

### **Satisfaction with democracy**

For measuring satisfaction with democracy in the country, respondents were asked to score on an eleven point rating scale ranging from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

### **Trust for politicians**

Respondents were asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'politicians are corrupt'. Responses were collected on a five-point scale and were scored as follows: 'Strongly agree' (score = 0), 'Agree' (score = 1), 'Neither agree nor disagree' (score = 2), 'Disagree' (score = 3), and 'Strongly disagree' (score = 4). Higher score indicates greater level of trust for politicians.

### **Trust for political parties**

Respondents were asked to score on an eleven-point single item scale to express their level of trust for political parties in the country. The scale ranged from 0 (No trust at all) to 10 (complete trust).

### **Trust for parliament**

A single item scale with eleven points ranging from 0 (do not trust at all) to 10 (complete trust) was used to measure respondents' trust for parliament.

## *Contextual factors*

### **Youth unemployment rate in the country**

Youth unemployment rate is defined as the number of unemployed youth (15-24 years) divided by the youth labour force (employment + unemployment). Data on youth unemployment for each country were collected from the World Bank for year 2012 when the survey was conducted.

### **Welfare state type**

Following the typology proposed by Kaariainen and Lehtonen (2006), participating counties were grouped under five categories: Post-socialist, Nordic, Conservative, Mediterranean, and Liberal. These were dummy coded and liberal country was used as a comparison group.

## **Results**

### ***Univariate Analysis***

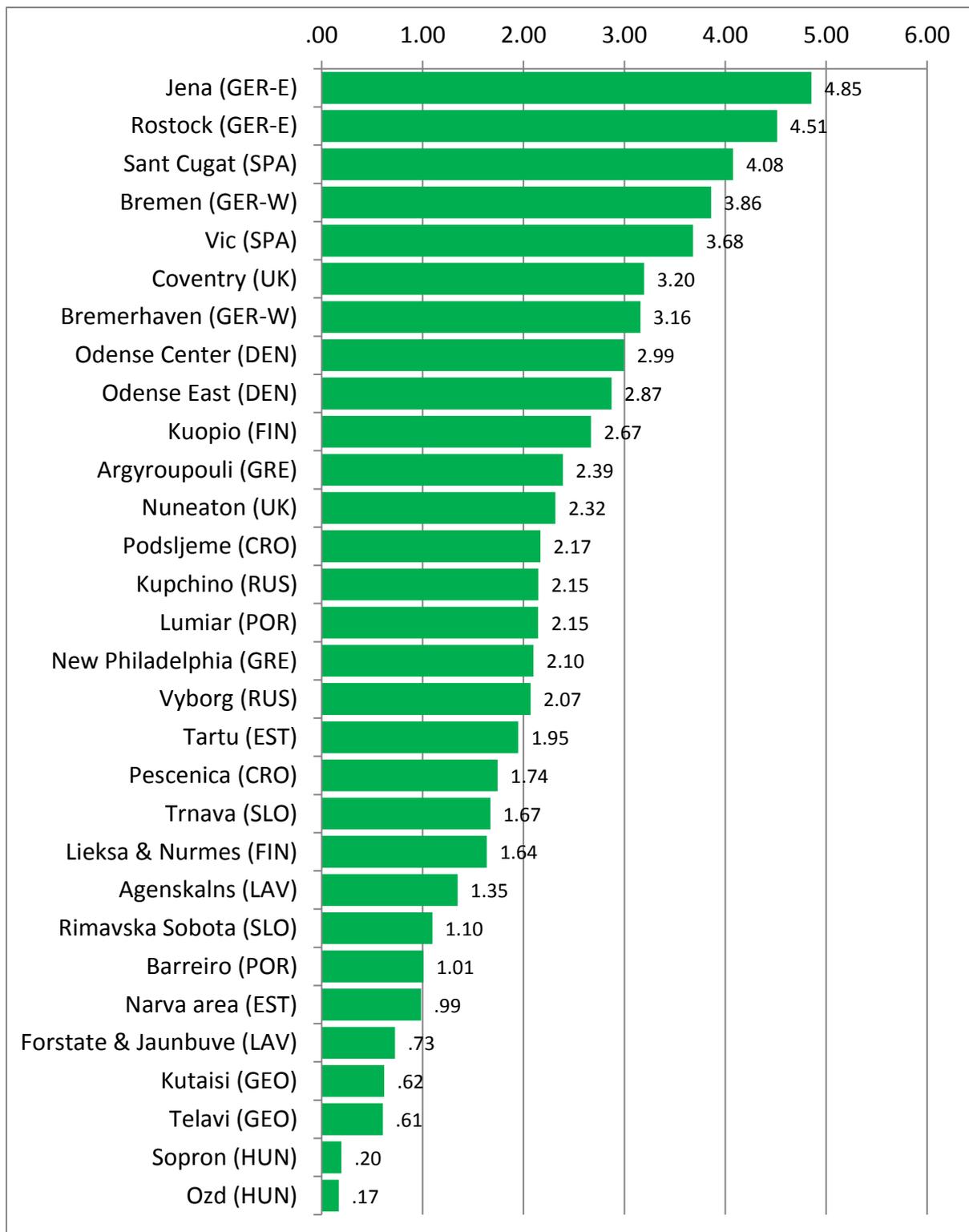
Almost equal number of females (50.3%) and males took part in the survey. On average, they were almost 21 years old (standard deviation = 2.85). Slightly more than half (57%) and one-quarter of them were in education and employment respectively. One in ten reported to be unemployed. When asked to describe their household income, almost one-quarter of the respondents reported it difficult to live with that income.

### ***Bivariate Analysis***

#### **Political activism of European youth by locations**

Results of the analysis on aggregate level data in Figure 1 suggest a wide difference on political activism of the young people living in different European locations. Young people in Jena and Rostock (East Germany) reported to have the highest level of political activities, whereas the young people from Sopron and Ozd (Hungary) reported the lowest participation among all locations.

**Figure 1: Mean score on political activism index by locations**

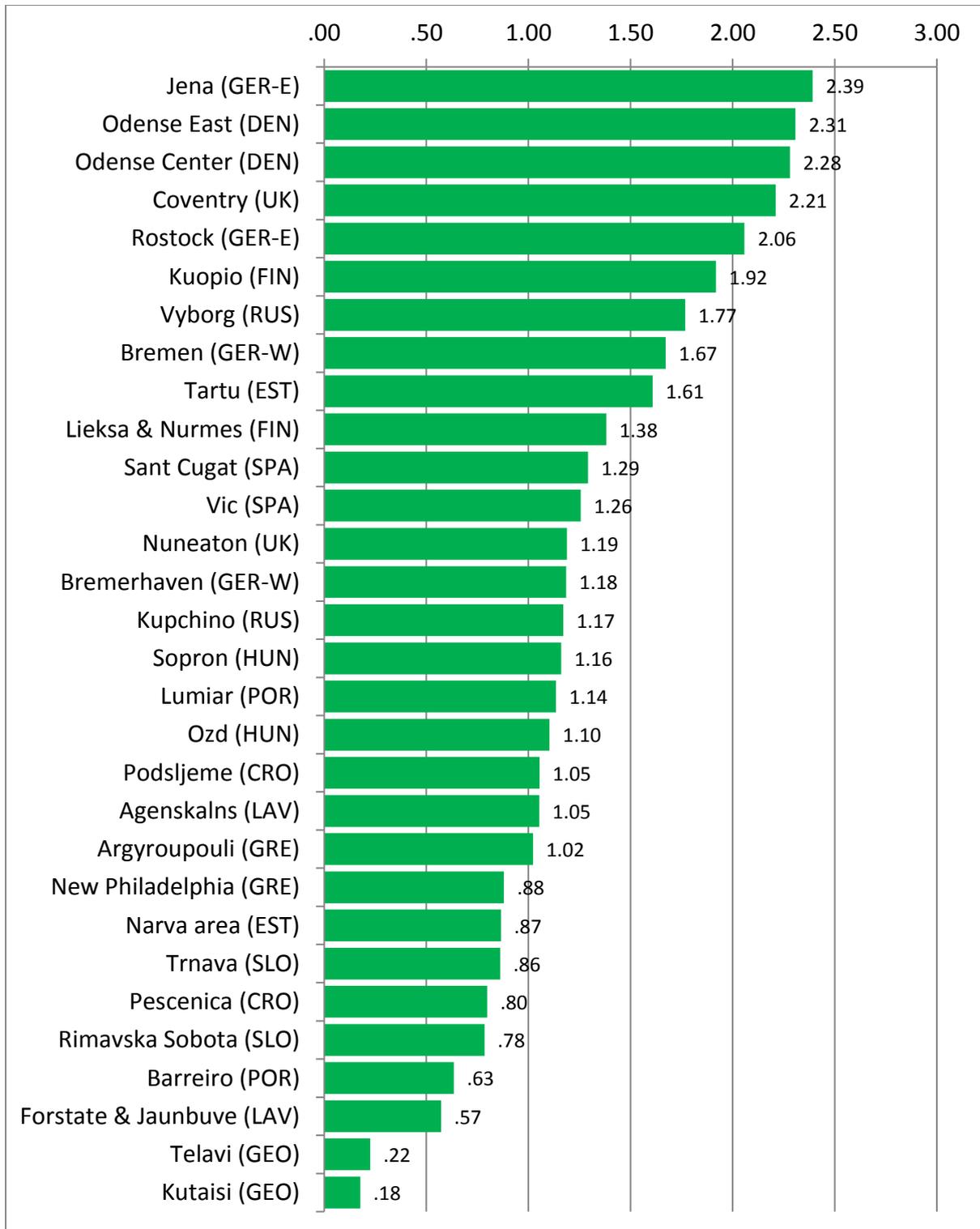


**Civic activism of European youth by locations**

In terms of civic activities, the participation of the young people appeared to vary by locations. Young people from Jena (East Germany), Odense East and Centre (Denmark) reported higher civic

involvement, whereas their counterpart from Telavi and Kutaisi (Georgia) reported lower civic activities

**Figure 2: Mean score on civic activism index by locations**



### Multivariate analysis

In order to examine how the demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors are related to youth participation in Europe, two multi-level models were tested. This section presents results of these analyses.

**Table 1: Variance components of regression models explaining political activism, and civic activism**

<b>a. Political activism</b>			
	Empty model (random intercept only)	With individual level explanatory variables	With country level explanatory variables
$\sigma$ (Individual level)	7.63	6.37	6.37
$\sigma$ (Location level)	1.64	0.88	0.30
Intra-class correlation	0.18	0.12	0.04
Loglikelihood	49802.00	48019.99	47993.50
<b>b. Civic activism</b>			
	Empty model (random intercept only)	With individual level explanatory variables	With country level explanatory variables
$\sigma$ (Individual level)	2.61	2.39	2.39
$\sigma$ (Location level)	0.35	0.22	0.12
Intra-class correlation	0.12	0.08	0.05
Loglikelihood	38841.11	38025.26	38016.64

### Overall model of political activism

The initial analysis of variance components reveals that 82% of variance in political activism can be explained by differences between individual young people, whereas 18% of the variance lies at the level of localities [intra-class correlation (ICC) = 0.18] (Table 1a). The substantial variation at the level of localities means that it is necessary to search for contextual variables that would help to explain it.

Inclusion of the individual level variables (demographic and psychosocial) resulted in a 16.6% decrease of residual, individual level variance, and led to an even larger 46% in intercept variance. It means that much of the observed differences between localities are due to the composition effect. In the next step, two contextual variables (welfare state types and youth unemployment rate of the country), were added which helped to achieve a massive 66% reduction of intercept variance compared to the model containing only the individual level predictors – again, an improvement that is highly significant. This means that the contextual variables are capable of explaining a huge portion of the unexplained variation in political activism between localities. Only 4% of unexplained variance (ICC = 0.04) remains at the level of localities, although it is still significant at 0.01 level.

*Overall model of civic activism*

The Intra-class Correlation (ICC) of 0.12 in the empty model for civic activism in Table 1 suggests that local areas explain 12% of the variance, whereas the remaining 88% of the variance in civic activism is due to the differences between individual young people. Individual level variables e.g., demographic and psychosocial variables reduced 8% of the residual or individual variance. In this regard, these variables contributed to reducing 35% of the intercept variance. However, further 45% reduction in intercept variance indicates a great contribution of contextual variables in explaining variance in civic participation from the model development point of view.

**Table 2: Parameter estimates of regression models explaining political activism, and civic activism**

Predictors	Political activism index (n1 = 10, 212; n2 = 30)		Civic activism index (n1 = 10,199; n2 = 30)	
	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	-0.68	0.58	0.61	0.36
<b>Demographic variables</b>				
Age	0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Male (Ref. Female)	0.14 *	0.05	0.10 *	0.03
Occupation (Ref. Employed)				
Unemployed	0.06	0.10	-0.02	0.06
In Education	0.19 **	0.07	0.04	0.04
Other	-0.03	0.12	-0.08	0.07
Household income	0.09 **	0.03	0.03	0.02
Parental class	0.21 ***	0.03	0.08 ***	0.01
<b>Psychosocial variables</b>				
Self-perceived discrimination	0.83 ***	0.03	0.38 ***	0.02
Diversity of social network	0.08 ***	0.01	0.04 ***	0.01
Political knowledge	0.26 ***	0.03	0.11 ***	0.02
Political socialisation	0.26 ***	0.01	0.08 ***	0.01
Assessment of human rights situation	-0.06	0.04	-0.01	0.02
Satisfaction with life	0.02	0.01	0.02 *	0.01
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.10 ***	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Trust for politicians	0.04	0.03	0.04 *	0.02
Trust for political parties	0.08 ***	0.01	0.01	0.01
Trust for parliament	-0.02	0.01	0.02 *	0.01
<b>Contextual variables</b>				
Youth unemployment rate	0.01	0.01	-0.02	.01
Welfare state type (Ref. Liberal)				
Post-socialist	-1.20 *	0.45	-0.32	0.28
Nordic	0.21	0.50	0.24	0.31
Conservative	1.33 *	0.53	-0.24	0.33
Mediterranean	-0.43	0.62	0.03	0.39

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

### *Factors associated with the participation of European youth*

Table 2 presents results of multilevel analysis on demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors that are associated with young people's participation on both political and civic activities. This section identifies those factors focusing first on political activism.

When all potential factors are entered into multilevel analysis together, eleven out of seventeen variables appear to have statistically significant association with political activities of the youth in Europe. Young people from post-socialist countries reported to have significantly lower political engagement compared to those from liberal countries. However, compared with the liberal countries, young people from conservative countries reported significantly higher participation. Males and those in education (as opposed to those employed) were significantly more engaged with political activities. Young people who positioned themselves high on household income and class had significantly greater political engagement. In addition, higher political knowledge, political socialisation in family, diversity in social network, trust for political parties, and self-perceived discrimination were significantly associated with greater level of political activism. However, young people with higher level of satisfaction with democracy in the country appeared to have significantly lower political activism. Controlling the effects of other independent variables in Table 2, young people's level of engagement with political activities was not significantly related to their age, assessment of human rights situation for the country, life satisfaction, trust for politicians and parliament, and youth unemployment rate of the country.

Results from Table 2 on civic activism identified nine factors that are significantly related to civic engagement of the European youth. Taking into account the effects of all sixteen variables in the analysis, higher level of satisfaction in life appeared to be significantly related to the greater level of civic engagement of young people. Males and those had parents from higher class appeared to have significantly greater level of civic engagement. Moreover, higher score on self-perceived discrimination, political knowledge, diversity in social network, political socialisation in family, trust for politicians, and trust for parliament, appeared to be significantly associated with greater civic engagement. However, results of multivariate analysis in Table 2 also identified that age, occupation, household income, assessment of human rights situation, satisfaction with democracy, and trust for political parties, welfare state type, and unemployment rate of the country were not significantly related to the civic activities.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This article aimed to identify demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors that are associated with participation among European youth. It also explored whether young people's satisfaction with life was significantly related to their participation. This section highlights the main findings and discusses them in the context of previous studies and theories on participation.

Except age, the four demographic factors (gender, occupation, household income, and parental class) were significantly related to youth participation. Males reported to have significantly higher participation than females. This finding supports the claim made by Inglehart and Norris (2003) that women in several Western countries participate less in the political process. However, some studies (Lowndes, 2004; Lorenz, 2003) argue that gender gap is attributable to different participatory styles

and meanings people attach to participation. In this regard, Lorenz (2003) argued that females participate more to those types of participation which are informal and aim to address practical and daily issues. These claims need to be tested for their wider generalizability on European female population in future studies.

Similar to Marti et al. (2014), this study identified significant association between occupation and participation. Young people who were in education reported higher level of participation than those who were employed. This aspect may be linked to the wider macro level situation of European countries especially in the rise of youth unemployment and tuition fees in many educational institutions. Statistically significant association of household income and class reinstated the implication of poverty on youth participation. In this regard, Flanagan and Levine (2010) opined that young people who have parents of high socio-economic status get better access to community and education resources which increases the likelihood of greater level of participation.

Political socialisation within family especially through parents appeared to play a key role in both civic and political activities among youths in this study. However, Mannarini et al, (2008) in their study found the association significant only for conventional type of political participation. It is argued that the prospect of sharing opinions and gathering information on politics within family circle increases the likelihood of being more involved with participation (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2001). Thus, family—an important primary agent of socialisation—stimulates youth participation.

Guided by the legitimacy approach, this article examined the association of trust for three pillars of political institutions (political parties, parliament, and politicians) with youth participation. Higher level of trust of young people for each of them appeared to be significantly associated with greater participation. Reciprocal trust between young people and those political institutions foster level of participation. However, this finding contradicts with Mannarini et al. (2008) study where they reported a statistically significant negative association of institutional trust with both conventional and unconventional political participation. Dalton (2002) argues that distrust does not need to be considered as a negative factor for participation because it can encourage people to participate non-traditional (e.g., protest) form of participation.

Higher level of discrimination appeared to be significantly related with greater level of both political and civic participation among youth in this study. This link might be explained by conflict theory that argues that inequality should fuel debates about the direction of political priorities which results in higher rates of mobilisation (Solt 2008). Furthermore, research on group mobilisation has documented that perceptions of discrimination increases the likelihood of various forms of participation, including voting and signing petitions (DeSipio, 2002).

Young people reported higher level of diversity in their social network had greater participation. Ikeda and Boase (2011) argue that diverse networks supplies access to diverse sources of information and alternative perspectives, which in turn stimulates political interest and increases political efficacy. Since political interest and efficacy are positively associated with participation (Best and Krueger 2005), diverse youth networks foster participation. Leighley and Matsubayashi (2009) proposed that the race/ethnicity and social class of the network membership could have implications for how individual members engage politically and perceive political information. They concluded that the political behaviours of racial and ethnic groups tend to be disadvantaged by their distinctive social networks. Social networks that were made up primarily of minority members tended to have smaller less informed networks and access to fewer resources that in turn resulted in lower participation.

Political knowledge is regarded as a crucial element of democratic citizenship. Young people with higher political knowledge were reported to have significantly greater participation. This result supports a number of previous studies which also observed a positive association between political knowledge and participation (Andersen et al., 2001). Delli Carpini & Keeter (1996) argue that political knowledge fosters citizens' enlightened self-interest—the ability to connect personal or group interests with specific public issues and to connect those issues with people who are more likely to share their views and promote their interests. Thus, political knowledge is a key determinant of instrumental rationality (Zaller 1992).

Satisfaction with democracy appeared to be associated negatively with youth participation. This contradicts with the traditional literature which identified a positive relation between democracy and participation. For full review, see Clarke et al., 2004. The reason for the negative association might be linked to the fact that when people are satisfied with the democracy in the country they do not feel the need for change and therefore less inclined to participate especially in political activism.

Civic activity is one of the important domains of youth well-being (Goldin et al., 2014). Young people scored high on life satisfaction appeared to have higher level of civic engagement. Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2008) used the concept 'procedural utility' to explain the link between participation and well-being. The approach argues that people have preferences not only over the end result of decisions but also over the way in which those decisions are made (Frey et al., 2004). Studies from psychology indicate that people want to feel autonomous, related to other people and competent in their lives, and some processes are more capable of bringing about these states of mind than others. To the extent that certain behaviours can create these feelings, they create procedural utility. Political participation is one of the behaviours that increase individual procedural utility by creating an individual's senses of autonomy, relatedness and competence which in turn increases psychological well-being.

This article identifies a wide variation on the level of participation among the youth living in 30 European localities. This differential rate of participation was also observed in some previous studies. For full reviews, see Almond and Verba, 1989). In this regard, Schofer and Gourinchas (2001) argued that the variation can be explained by two institutional distinctions: (a) statist vs. non-statist (liberal), and (b) corporate vs. non-corporate. These dimensions reflect the differences in state structure and political institutions that foster or hinder the growth of participation.

To sum up, the multilevel analysis in this article identifies gender, occupation, household income, and parental class as significant demographic factors of youth participation in Europe. Among the psychosocial factors, the study finds self-perceived discrimination, diversity of social network, political knowledge, political socialisation in family, satisfaction with democracy, trust for politicians, political parties, and parliament, and satisfaction with life (well-being) as significant factors of youth participation. Analysis of contextual factors further identifies country of living as an important factor of youth participation in Europe. These findings should be useful in formulating policies for fostering youth participation in Europe.

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. **Firstly**, it uses correlational design. Therefore, causal connections cannot be established between demographic, psychosocial, and contextual factors and youth participation. For identifying cause-effect relationship, longitudinal study can be considered in future.

**Secondly**, analysis of data for this article examined only 17 factors and tested their association with participation. There is a range of other demographic and contextual or situational factors such as

ethnic background, disabilities, citizenship status. Future studies need to include them in the analysis.

**Thirdly**, this article tested two-level models (individual nested within locations). It might be worthy to check whether a better model can be developed using a three-level analysis (individual nested within locations that are further nested in countries) in future.

**Fourthly**, for measuring participation this article focuses on civic and political activities. Future study can explore the association of the same sets of independent variables for modelling voting behaviour of the European youth.

**Finally**, a number of variables used in this analysis had a large number of missing cases. For fitting better models with greater precision power and generalizability, imputation method can be considered before modelling the data.

## **Acknowledgements:**

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