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Political participation in European welfare states: does social investment matter?

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ABSTRACT

The role of the welfare state has expanded beyond passive assistance and decommodificaton. In many countries, social investment policies now actively encourage (re)integration into the labour market. While the effectiveness of these policies is debated, we know even less about their broader social and political effects. In this contribution, we explore the impact of social investment policies on one key aspect of social life: political participation. Combining insights from social psychology with institutional analysis, we investigate the impact of three social investment policies (early childhood education, secondary education, active labour market policies) on two disadvantaged groups: young individuals from low-skill backgrounds; and single parents. Combining the European Social Survey with data on social investment, we find that these risk groups have reduced political efficacy and political participation. Social investment policies can alleviate these participation gaps in some cases, but not all.

KEY WORDS Efficacy; new social risk; political participation; social investment; welfare state.

Introduction

It is a disconcerting observation that those who need public policies most are least likely to make their voices heard in politics (Piven and Cloward 1989). A growing body of research shows that, instead of voicing demands for social protection and redistribution, socio-economically disadvantaged citizens tend to be politically disengaged (Brody and Sniderman 1977; Erikson 2015; Jahoda *et al*. 1972; Marx 2016; Pacheco and Plutzer 2008; Rosenstone 1982). There probably are multiple reasons for this disengagement. One powerful but still under-developed explanation is based on the psychology of economic problems. Economic worries are tremendously stressful and therefore cognitively and emotionally absorbing (Mani *et al*. 2013). Through these mechanisms, they might undermine voters' willingness and capacity to acquire, process and memorize political information. Hence, economic

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problems could impede the cognitive and affective foundations for political efficacy and participation.

However, such a link between objective problems, subjective worries, stress and political behaviour is likely to be moderated by institutions. Modern welfare states are designed (albeit to varying extents) to reduce citizens' economic worries (Sjöberg 2010). And indeed, egalitarian societies achieve a better political inclusion of poor (Solt 2008) and unemployed voters (Marx and Nguyen 2016). Also the policy feedback literature suggests that well-designed social policies can strengthen the political involvement of disadvantaged citizens, while imposing means-testing or conditionality tends to depress it (Bruch *et al*. 2010; Mettler and Stonecash 2008; Swartz *et al*. 2009; Watson 2015).

If welfare states contribute to political empowerment, this might be particularly true for countries adopting a social investment approach (Esping-Andersen 2002) by emphasizing 'policies that aim at creating, mobilizing, or preserving skills' (Busemeyer *et al*. 2018). Besides monetary support, these countries offer a range of educational and care services that (a) have a preventive character lowering the prospect of being trapped in economic problems, (b) signal society's deep commitment to assist people in overcoming their problems, (c) target groups who are particularly vulnerable in their political engagement, and (d) focus on empowerment and capacity-building. In this contribution, we therefore analyse whether social investment (SI) policies can contribute to the political engagement of socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens. While there is a growing interest in the policy preferences underlying SI reforms (Garritzmann *et al*. 2018), this more fundamental question has received limited attention so far.

Building on our earlier comparative research on the political involvement of the unemployed (Marx and Nguyen 2016), we use the European Social Survey and multilevel modelling to analyse how social investment policies influence the relationship between exposure to social risks and political involvement across European welfare states. This yields three findings that are not only socially and academically relevant, they also compliment the findings of this collection. First, on average, there is a significant and substantive 'involvement gap' for the two groups we study (single parents and youths from low-skill backgrounds).[1] This is irrespective of the aspect of political involvement we analyse (internal political efficacy and participation in elections).[2] Second, we show that the effects of SI policies can reach further than the literature has traditionally considered. By changing the effects of social risk exposure on political involvement, SI policies can drive political behaviour more generally. However, we also mirror concerns about Matthew effects outlined in this collection and show that some policies are more beneficial to relatively privileged groups than to disadvantaged ones.

Economic disadvantage and political involvement

One general argument for why socioeconomic disadvantage depresses political involvement relates to stress and distraction induced by economic problems (Rosenstone 1982). Material deprivation comes with concrete experiences that force people to focus on the private domain rather than on abstract social and political issues: the need to raise money for paying bills, worries about job loss and its consequences, straining working conditions and related health issues, living in unsafe neighbourhoods, exhausting family obligations because of unaffordable care services, or struggles to provide decent education for one's children. This does not even include the stress of (not) keeping up in a society that awards status based on consumption. Psychologically, economic problems then create various demands and distractions that contribute to 'cognitive load' (Mani *et al*. 2013). As a result, economically disadvantaged people *inter alia* allocate less attention to non-economic matters, show poorer intellectual performance and have a compromised short-term memory (Deck and Jahedi 2015; Gennetian and Shafir 2015). Experienced or anticipated financial strain also forces people to constantly exercise self-control (fight impulses, delay gratification), which further contributes to depleting mental resources (Vohs 2013). These mechanisms are exacerbated if social problems carry a stigma. Efforts to cope with stigmatization and to sustain self-worth absorb additional cognitive resources (Hall *et al*. 2013; Spencer *et al*. 2016).

Cognitive load can, in principle, stem from neutral or even pleasant tasks that are appraised as a challenge, but the demands and distractions economically disadvantaged citizens typically face are powerful and unpleasant stressors (Haushofer and Fehr 2014). Concretely, this means that they tend to perceive their problems as aversive and uncontrollable (Lachman and Weaver 1998) and respond with negative emotions such as anxiety and helplessness (Gallo and Matthews 2003). One consequence of intense stress can be rumination, that is, a dysfunctional fixation on a problem that impedes thinking about other aspects as well as regulation of negative emotion (Curci *et al*. 2013; Roger 2016). Generally, the physiological response to intense and persistent stress is known to undermine important cognitive functions (Sandi 2013).

Taken together, there is strong evidence that exposure to economic problems absorbs attention as well as cognitive and emotional resources. It thereby undermines the proper functioning of citizens' minds and lowers their self-control and efficacy. Based on these mechanisms, we expect to observe lower cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement with politics among groups that are, on average, disproportionately exposed to economic problems. Concretely, we expect a lack of attention to politics (Rosenstone 1982). As Hassell and Settle (2017: 536) put it: 'every minute spent engaging

in politics is time not spent addressing other financial or personal problems'. Social problems should hence limit exposure and attention to political information as well as the capacity to process them. In addition, it might be that the lack of perceived self-control associated with many social problems spills-over into depressed internal political efficacy (Marx and Nguyen 2016). In any case, based on the discussed mechanisms, we would clearly expect groups with high exposure to economic problems to be less politically efficacious and less likely to participate in politics.

H1: Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups on average have a lower political efficacy and a lower propensity to vote.

If economic problems impede political involvement through stress and emotional and cognitive absorption, a generous welfare state should, in principle, be able to alleviate these effects (Marx and Nguyen 2016; Shore 2014). However, there is little comparative research on the political integration of disadvantaged groups across different welfare states. It is our goal to fill this gap.

Theoretically, there are at least two ways in which welfare states alleviate the outlined mechanisms underlying cognitive and emotional absorption (and political disengagement). First, generous welfare states diminish experienced and anticipated material hardship, thereby lowering stress, worries, the need for absorbing coping strategies, and cognitive load. This function of welfare states has been demonstrated in comparative research on happiness and well-being (DiTella *et al*. 2003; Pacek and Radcliff 2008) – especially for economically vulnerable citizens (Anderson 2009; Anderson and Hecht 2015; Carr and Chung 2014; Sjöberg 2010; Wulfgramm 2014). Second, welfare generosity contributes to lower stigmatization because it gives legitimacy to welfare receipt as a social right. This should further reduce the stress of experiencing economic disadvantage. Hence, welfare states should make social problems less absorbing and distracting and therefore less detrimental to political involvement.

However, we are interested here in a particular aspect of the welfare state. Welfare states differ not only in their overall generosity, but also in how spending is used. As a response to a post-industrial economy and new social risks, there has been much debate in recent years about whether welfare states should move from traditional compensatory to SI policies (Bonoli 2007; Esping-Andersen 2002), which focus more explicitly on skill building, mobilization, and the (re)integration of disadvantaged citizens into the labour (Kuitto 2016). In this way, the SI turn is intended to benefit groups whose risks and problems are covered insufficiently by traditional welfare states: low-skilled, young, or non-standard workers with difficulties to enter the labour market as well as (single-)parents struggling with reconciling work and family life (Busemeyer *et al*. 2018). Could this difference between compensation and investment influence political

involvement? For a number of reasons, SI policies might be particularly facilitating in this regard.

First, SI should have the potential to foster social and economic inclusion of groups that are not reached by traditional welfare states (Rovny 2014). For example, passive benefits should not necessarily help adolescents from disadvantaged families to experience upward mobility or single parents to take up work. Active labour market policies (ALMP), education spending and public childcare should be more effective. Second, the focus on intervention early in the life-course leads SI to target groups with still fragile political inclusion, because of incomplete political socialization. Young people are disproportionately affected by labour market problems. In addition, these problems should be particularly harmful for political participation, because unlike older workers they cannot rely on the habitual political engagement (Hassell and Settle 2017). Early exposure to hardship could also yield negative long-term effects, because economic problems impede socialization through (stressed) parents (Pacheco and Plutzer 2008) or in the workplace (Emmenegger *et al*. 2017). With its early human-capital-oriented interventions aiming at better labour market integration, SI could counter such problems.

Third, SI policies could be interpreted as signal of a societal and political commitment not to leave any citizen behind. On the one hand, this means concrete organizational support in tasks that would otherwise exhaust physical, emotional, and cognitive resources (e.g., job search and care). On the other hand, SI could contribute to a less stigmatizing situation. Ideally, it is perceived as the expression of an inclusive, enabling approach and solidaristic attitudes towards beneficiaries. This should be the case in particular for programmes that are designed to develop human capital in the long run or benefit recipients across class divides (such as childcare). Also the fact that beneficiaries typically become active in some sense rather than passively receiving benefits should make their status more legitimate. However, it is important to acknowledge that many SI policies do not live up to this ideal and that ALMPs in particular are often imposed on participants as a condition for benefit receipt (we return to this point in the conclusions).

Fourth, to the extent that SI policies succeed in bringing disadvantaged people into work, they can benefit from the latent function of employment such as activity, status, time structure and social contacts (Jahoda 1982) instead of suffering latent deprivation of these factors as it would occur during receipt of passive benefits. These latent functions are likely to spill over into stronger political efficacy (Marx and Nguyen 2016).

> H2: The negative association between socioeconomic disadvantage internal efficacy and voting is weakened by SI policies.

However, we also recognize that SI policies are no panacea. If they do not reach vulnerable groups, for example, their effects may be muted. In fact, if

vulnerable populations do not feel included in these policy frameworks, they could add to the very exclusion they are supposed to address. Moreover, the patterns of uptake and inclusion will likely differ depending on the social group and the type of policy. These Matthew effects can be a problem for both education (Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018) and ALMP (Bonoli and Liechti 2018).

To explore our hypotheses, we study the political involvement of two groups that have a relatively high risk of experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage and that figure prominently in the SI literature: (single) parents; and youth with low-skilled family background. Both groups generally have a relatively high poverty risk and face various every-day problems related to economic scarcity that should make engagement with politics difficult. At the same time, they should benefit more from SI policies such as education, care services and ALMP than from passive benefits. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we therefore believe these two groups are a plausible choice to explore effects of SI on political involvement.

However, both groups differ in their risks and needs. For single parents, the most facilitating policies should be childcare and education. There should be little doubt that it is extremely hard to care for children while being the sole breadwinner. The extent to which the state takes over care responsibilities should directly translate into more time and fewer distracting worries (about organizing everyday life, but also about the education of children and about being a good parent).

> H2a: The gap between single parents and other household types in efficacy and voting is smaller in countries with generous childcare and school systems.

In the context of globalization and the knowledge economy, it has become harder for low-skilled workers to find decent jobs. Particularly young people without experience face difficulties in the labour market. A key component of SI is therefore to invest in the human capital of young people particularly from families with low education (we focus on family background because personal education is an *effect of SI*). This can be done through ALMPs, but should ideally start earlier in school or childcare already. The effect on political involvement should work through two links. First, the higher chance of having a decent job should translate into fewer worries and exposure to latent benefit of employment (see above). Second, better education should directly socialize young people into politics.

> H2b: The gap between youth with low-skill family background and other age and skill groups is smaller in countries with more expansive childcare, school systems, and ALMPs.

Data and methodology

We explore how SI policies moderate the (presumably negative) relationship between membership in our risk groups and political engagement. Our micro-level data is drawn from the first four waves of the European Social Survey (ESS; 2002–2008), covering over 120,000 individual respondents in 25 European countries.[3]

To get closer to the theorized psychological mechanism, we focus on two aspects of political participation: internal political efficacy and electoral participation. Internal efficacy means the subjective ability to make informed political decisions and is an important prerequisite for voters' continued political engagement. To reduce measurement error and increase cross-national concept validity (Morrell 2003), we measure internal efficacy through an additive index of two items included in ESS waves 1 to 4: the perceived complexity of political reality and the ease with which respondents can make up their mind about politics. The index has been rescaled to range between 0 and 10 and is treated as a continuous variable. Actual participation is measured through a self-reported, binary indicator of whether or not respondents voted in the last national election. Using self-reported participation is problematic, since survey results are likely to overstate actual participation. However, this problem is not unique to the ESS, and even alternative data sources that are collected during elections, such as the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, exhibit similar discrepancies between actual and self-reported turnout. We exclude all respondents who were not eligible to vote in the national election.

To measure membership in social risk categories, we rely on information about family composition, age, and the family's skill background. Family composition focuses on two related sources of risk: the absence of a partner and the presence of children in the household. While we are primarily interested in single parents as a risk category, we also include singles without children and couples without children against the reference category of 'traditional' two-parent families with children.[4]

The age–family background similarly considers the intersection between two sources of political exclusion: young age and opportunities for effective socialization during ones' youth. Younger voters are usually less politically engaged (Goerres 2007). This gap should be especially pronounced for young citizens from families with low-skilled background, who on average benefit less from socialization through politically sophisticated parents with higher levels of education. The age-skill variable therefore first differentiates between young (25 and younger), prime age (26–55), and old (56 and older) respondents. In addition, it differentiates respondents based on the highest measure of parental educational, coded into low (International Standard Classification of Education [ISCED] 0 to 2), medium (ISCED 3 and 4) and

high (ISCED 5). This creates nine possible configurations of age and family background. Given our theoretical interests, we will focus on how the three types of young respondents compare to the reference category of prime-age individuals with a medium skill background.[5]

We include several individual-level controls that are either included directly in the ESS or derived from ESS measures. More-educated respondents are likely to have higher levels of engagement, so we include personal education level based on the ISCED. We also include measures of household income, gender, as well as measures of affiliations with trade unions, parties or religious group, who have been found to drive political engagement in previous studies (Marx and Nguyen 2016).

To measure SI policies and other country characteristics, we rely on Eurostat data.

To measure the SI context, we focus on three policies: early childhood education; secondary education; and ALMP. We measure all three through spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), but find similar results when using alternative operationalisations of SI policies (see Appendix). We also include a measure of unemployment benefits, to account for potential overlap with ALMP spending. Additionally, we control for other country-specific characteristics using the logarithm of *GDP/capita* for economic performance, the *Gini* coefficient for economic inequality, and overall *turnout* for other systemic country characteristics that influence political involvement.

Unfortunately, data availability does not allow us to reconstruct past educational spending. This is a problem, because current expenditure levels may not necessarily correspond to spending levels when respondents were actually enrolled in school. However, with little variance explained by the temporal dimension, we focus on between-country variation and average values for all second level variables to (partially) account for the difficulty of matching educational spending with social risk statuses. While this approach assumes relatively stable SI regimes, it is a necessary optimization strategy to allow for between-country comparisons. All models are either linear (internal efficacy) or logit (voting) hierarchical random-intercept models, with individuals nested within countries.

Results

Baseline models

Table 1 reports the results of our two baseline models. The dependent variables are internal efficacy and electoral participation. To facilitate model comparisons, all continuous independent variables have been mean-centred and divided by two standard deviations (Gelman 2008).

Table 1. Social risk and political engagement.

	Internal political efficacy	Vote
Family status: ref- family with children		
Single	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.42 (0.02)***
Couple, no kids	0.05 (0.02)**	−0.09 (0.02)***
Single parent	**0.01 (0.03)**	**−0.43 (0.03)*** **
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background		
Old – high	0.37 (0.04)***	0.64 (0.07)***
Old – medium	0.18 (0.03)***	0.45 (0.04)***
Old – low	−0.10 (0.03)***	0.61 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.12 (0.03)***	0.03 (0.03)
Prime – low	−0.22 (0.02)***	0.06 (0.03)*
Young – high	−0.13 (0.04)**	−0.32 (0.05)***
Young – medium	−0.37 (0.03)***	−0.43 (0.04)***
Young – low	**−0.66 (0.04)*** **	**−0.66 (0.05)*** **
Country level variables		
LogGDP	−0.14 (0.22)	−0.38 (0.14)**
Early childhood education	−0.17 (0.20)	−0.17 (0.13)
Secondary education	0.06 (0.15)	−0.07 (0.10)
ALMP generosity	0.31 (0.38)	0.52 (0.24)*
Passive support generosity	−0.48 (0.37)	−0.14 (0.24)
Gini	0.13 (0.19)	0.05 (0.12)
Turnout	0.42 (0.23)	1.03 (0.15)***
Num. observations	125447	125447
Num. countries	25	25
Var: country (intercept)	0.16	0.06
Var: residual	4.40	

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.
Additional control variables omitted (see Appendix). Key categories of interest are bolded.

The results of Table 1 largely support hypothesis 1 that membership in social risk categories lead to reduced political involvement. While all young voters suffer from reduced internal efficacy and a reduced probability to vote, this effect is noticeably larger for respondents from families with lower skill backgrounds. And while this table does not find a direct relationship between single-parenthood and efficacy, later analyses will show that this is an artefact because it obscures differences between low and high SI countries. Similar patterns emerge for electoral participation.

Interaction results

The results in Table 1 show a direct relationship between membership in social risk groups and political engagement. To investigate to what extent these relationships are moderated by various SI policies, we interact the two categories with the three SI indicators: spending on early childhood education, secondary education, and ALMP spending. The results of these 10 additional models are summarized in Tables 2 and 3, as well as Figures 1 and 2. (Full results can be found in the Appendix.) Figures 1 and 2 summarize graphically how SI investment policies moderate the relationship between risk groups and political participation. Each depicts the direct effect of

Table 2. Main and moderation effects for family status on political involvement.

	Internal efficacy			Electoral participation		
	Main effect	Child. educ.	Second. educ.	Main effect	Child. educ.	Second. educ.
Single	–	+	+	–	+	0
Couple, no children	+	0	+	–	0	0
Single parent	0	+	+	–	0	0

membership in a risk category, as well as the moderated effects when the listed policy variable is at 25 per cent and 75 per cent of its distribution. Tables 2 and 3 similarly summarize the main and interaction effects of risk-group membership on political involvement, in light of different SI policy configurations.

Focusing on policy moderation highlights that investigating main effects alone obscures considerable between-country heterogeneity. As Figure 1 demonstrates, for instance, the main effect of being a single parent is not associated with reduced internal efficacy. A more nuanced model, however, reveals the importance of early childhood education for single parents. All other things being equal, being a single parent in Austria (which spends roughly 0.4 per cent of its GDP on early childhood education) is associated with reduced political efficacy, while a single parent in Norway (which spends roughly 0.66 per cent of its GDP on early childhood education) no longer loses internal efficacy. As expected, this moderation effect is exclusive to single parents. Secondary education is more universally beneficial. While single parents benefit more noticeably, secondary education spending even helps childless singles.

Although internal efficacy is an important component of political engagement, electoral participation remains the most important channel to influence politics. Given the negative associations between social-risk categories and voting behaviour shown in Table 1, identifying SI policies that can alleviate

Table 3. Main and moderation effects for age-skill background on political involvement.

	Internal efficacy				Electoral participation			
	Main effect	Educ.	Second. educ.	ALMP	Main Effect	Child. educ.	Second. educ.	ALMP
Old high	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0
Old medium	+	0	+	+	+	0	0	0
Old low	–	–	+	+	+	–	0	0
Prime high	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	0
Prime low	–	–	+	+	+	0	–	0
Young high	–	+	0	0	–	+	0	0
Young medium	–	0	0	0	–	+	–	–
Young Low	–	0	+	+	–	+	0	0

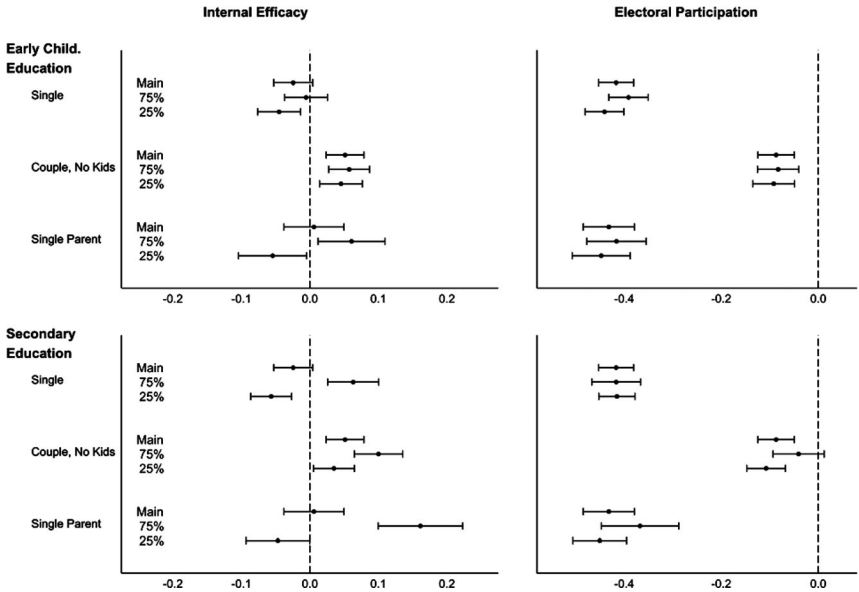

Figure 1. Coefficient comparison: marginal effect of family composition on political involvement moderated by educational policy.

this relationship is both normatively appealing and policy relevant. However, the link between SI policies and social risk is more complicated when it comes to voting. While singles, regardless of parenthood, are less likely to vote, neither form of educational support is associated with any meaningful changes in voting behaviour for single parents.

Similar patterns emerge for the intersection of age and family-skill background. Figure 2 shows vividly how crucial respondents' family background is for their sense of efficacy. While young voters from high-skilled families suffer from relatively minor decreases in efficacy, those from low-skill backgrounds exhibit a far more severe gap. However, SI policies can help alleviate this discrepancy. Both secondary education and ALMP spending do help young respondents from low-skill family backgrounds to develop a sense of internal efficacy, though they never reach the level of political efficacy of their more privileged peers or older voters. Indeed, even with very generous educational and ALMP policies, young respondents from low-skill backgrounds have considerably lower efficacy than other groups .Unfortunately, similar to the findings for family composition, these gains in efficacy do not seem to spill-over into greater electoral participation. Neither secondary education nor ALMP spending significantly improves the probability of voting for young and disadvantaged respondents. Indeed, while not central to this analysis, the results for young voters from medium-skill family backgrounds suggest that these measures may even harm young voters' likelihood to vote. However, one

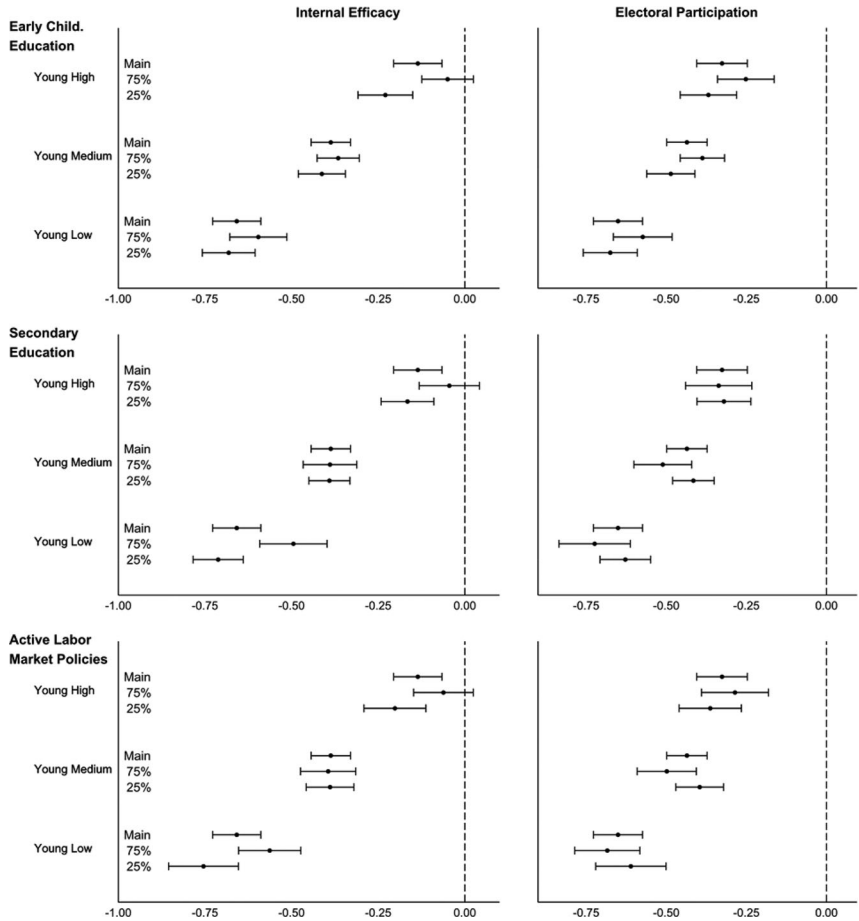

Figure 2. Coefficient comparison: marginal effect of age and family-skill background on political involvement moderated by educational policy and ALMP.

policy does consistently improve the electoral participation of young individuals. As Figure 2 shows, our results find that higher spending on early childhood education correlates with higher probability of electoral participation across all groups of young voters. Although this increase is universal, and therefore does not fully address the participatory gap among young voters from different backgrounds, it nevertheless encourages disadvantaged youths to vote.

Conclusion

In this article, we were interested in the extent to which membership in social risk groups depresses political engagement. Our hypothesis that social risk

leads to lower political engagement is clearly supported. Both social risk groups we analysed, single parents and young voters from lower-skill family backgrounds, feel less confident in their ability to understand politics and are less likely to vote in national elections.

More importantly, we asked whether SI policies can make a difference in alleviating this disadvantage. Here, our results are far more mixed. While SI policies do appear to facilitate risk groups' sense of internal efficacy, this increase does not appear to translate into greater electoral participation. For instance, single parents' gap in efficacy is smaller in countries with generous SI. This is in line with our argument that SI policies can lower absorption through social problems and therefore free resources for engagement with politics (which should, in turn, lead to higher subjective capacity to make meaningful political decisions). However, to our surprise, this SI-induced efficacy boost does not also lead to a greater likelihood of voting. This is even more surprising because the single parents in SI countries should have reasons to perceive the political system as responsive to their needs. The results for young citizens' similarly show that SI policies can help build efficacy, but that this increase does not necessarily translate into greater electoral participation. Countries investing in secondary education and ALMPs have a lower efficacy gap for young citizens with low-skilled parents. However, as with single parents, this increase does not simultaneously lead to an increased likelihood that young people will actually participate in national elections.

One explanation for the non-findings on electoral participation might be that our retrospective participation variable is not ideal, because it reduces important variation through over-reporting. But given the widespread support for the relationship between internal efficacy and voting in the literature, more work is required to identify the factors that block the translation of internal efficacy into voting, and the ways in which public policies, social investment and otherwise, can be used to resolve the participation gap.

One starting point for this research may rest in early childhood education, which does appear to lower the voting gap between prime age and young citizens. Although there is less evidence that early childhood education can reduce the discrepancy among young voters, the importance of early childhood education is an important finding and certainly the one that sticks out from our analysis. If verified by future research, it would provide a strong additional justification for expanding early childhood education as a tool to increase political participation. However, more research is necessary to eliminate potential confounding factors on the macro level (such as party system characteristics, social norms to vote, etc.).

Finally, our results also highlight the dangers of relying solely on SI policies to reduce the gaps in political engagement. Our results show that in some instances, ALMP may even amplify these gaps. Two reasons might contribute to this. First, as discussed by Bonoli and Liechti 2018, ALMP could simply be

channelled to other groups than our risk category of youth with low-skill background. Public employment services, for instance, might decide to prioritize training for older workers who lost their jobs and have obsolete skills. Second, ALMP spending could be coupled with strict activation measures. In the worst case, participants might even experience participation in measures as stigmatizing and degrading rather than empowering (e.g., Bruch *et al*. 2010 and Watson 2015 for similar arguments).

In sum, we could show that welfare state characteristics matter for political involvement of disadvantaged citizens, even if these gains do not always translate into actual participation. Future comparative research should go beyond our exploratory approach and zoom in on the effects of specific policies on specific groups. Finer-grained information on actual policy design could elucidate why gains in efficacy do not reliably lead to more electoral participation. Ideally, this research will rely on actual election studies with more detailed and possibly accurate information on voting behaviour. It will also be important to include mediating factors. We have argued that the stress-reducing capacity of social policies should be particularly important. While we neither had space nor appropriate data to analyse this link in the present paper, more research on mechanisms is necessary to fully understand how welfare states influence political behaviour.

Notes

1. Given the enormous importance of education and age for participation, the latter category certainly is one of the most problematic with regard to political engagement. Single motherhood is an important and growing risk factor for experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage in post-industrial societies, which is why it plays a prominent role in the SI literature. An advantage of both groups is that they are measured based on fundamental socio-structural characteristics that are not endogenous to countries' social policy approach (the risk of long-term unemployment should, for instance, depend on whether or not a SI approach is in place). However, there certainly are other disadvantaged groups whose involvement could benefit from SI and which we cannot cover in this article.
2. Internal political efficacy can be defined as citizens' subjective assessments about their ability to influence politics, which is usually seen as an important prerequisite for political participation. We include this aspect of political involvement, because it provides a plausible psychological mechanism linking social problems and participation (Marx and Nguyen 2016). This is not to suggest that other aspects, such as external efficacy, are irrelevant.
3. Specifically, we cover Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, The Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia and Slovakia.
4. We use mutually exclusive and jointly sufficient categorical variables to allow for easier interpretation and representation of the results. However, using three-way interactions yields equivalent results.

5. For the full results that cover the moderation effects of SI policies on all age-skill groups, please consult the Appendix.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

Dependent variable constructions

Index of political efficacy – rescaled sum of

- How often does politics seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on? – 5 point Likert scale
- How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues -5 point Likert scale

Distribution: (Mean = 4.85, median = 5 , SD = 2.33248)

Voting

Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]? – yes/no

Summary Statistics

Table A1. Mean values by country (continuous variables).

	Efficacy	logGDP	Early childhood education	Secondary education	ALMP %GDP	Passive support % GDP	Gini	Turnout
Austria	5.63	10.32	0.5	2.62	1.97	1.52	26.58	79.81
Belgium	4.45	10.26	0.72	2.67	2.85	3.3	27.11	90.51
Bulgaria	5.37	9.12	0.77	1.79	0.62	0.45	30.69	59.67
Cyprus	5.93	10.04	0.36	3.11	0.86	1.13	30.03	87.01
Czech Republic	4.34	9.86	0.54	2.06	0.5	0.66	25.1	62.97
Germany	5.4	10.24	0.49	2.34	2.53	1.7	28.3	75.91
Denmark	5.7	10.3	1.06	2.9	3.51	2.11	25.64	86.71
Estonia	4.74	9.57	0.41	2.41	0.55	0.36	33.49	60.44
Spain	4.26	10.07	0.56	1.74	2.86	2.57	32.59	71.66
Finland	4.67	10.23	0.36	2.66	2.58	2.23	25.79	67.55
France	4.4	10.17	0.66	2.72	2.39	1.91	28.59	62.11
Great Britain	4.84	10.23	0.35	2.49	0.58	0.64	32.93	63.15
Greece	4.73	9.93	0.16	1.33	0.64	1.06	33.69	79.31
Croatia	4.82	9.53	0.56	0.92	0.68	0.44	29.65	61.46
Hungary	5.09	9.61	0.94	2.29	0.93	0.67	26.58	65.48
Ireland	5.18	10.38	0.04	2.09	2.46	2.1	30.41	66.19
Italy	4.14	10.15	0.46	2.15	1.49	0.98	31.62	80.6
Luxemburg	5	11	0.63	1.7	1.08	1.05	27.71	90.11
Netherlands	4.87	10.38	0.4	2.2	2.62	1.35	26.69	77.46
Norway	5.17	10.63	0.66	2.25	1.04	0.61	24.77	76.79
Poland	4.6	9.48	0.51	1.89	0.96	0.54	31.59	48.31
Portugal	4.06	9.84	0.52	2.23	1.82	1.21	35.82	61.11
Sweden	4.91	10.31	0.59	2.63	2.06	1.42	24.09	82.36
Slovenia	4.79	9.9	0.54	1.48	0.87	0.69	23.25	64.01
Slovakia	4.81	9.63	0.54	1.94	0.69	0.73	25.45	64.14

Table A2. Frequencies of categorical variables.

Variable	Category	Number	%
Voting	Yes	25647	20.4
	No	99800	79.6
Family status	Family	43513	34.7
	Single	37608	30
	Couple, no kids	36613	29.2
	Single parent	7713	6.2
Age–skill nexus	Prime medium	22888	18.2
	Old high	3360	2.7
	Old medium	9649	7.7
	Old low	32414	25.8
	Prime high	11394	9.1
	Prime low	33093	26.4
	Young high	3636	2.9
	Young medium	5773	4.6
	Young low	3240	2.6
Gender	Male	58816	46.9
	Female	66631	53.1
Main activity	Paid employment	65796	52.5
	Education	6379	5.1
	Unemployed, looking for a job	4218	3.4
	Unemployed, not looking for a job	1962	1.6
	Permanently sick or disabled	3008	2.4
	Retired	29915	23.9
	Community or Military Service	163	0.1
	Housework, looking after Children	12695	10.1
	Other	1311	1
Income group	Medium	42958	34.2
	High	23989	19.1
	Low	25783	20.6
	No information	32717	26.1
Education	I: Less than lower secondary	18611	14.8
	II: Lower secondary	21946	17.5
	III: Upper secondary	50563	40.3
	IV: Advanced vocational	3109	2.5
	V–VI Tertiary	31014	24.7
	Other	204	0.2
Trade union member	Yes, currently	28403	22.6
	Yes, previously	30905	24.6
	No	66139	52.7
Party affiliation	No	60516	48.2
	Strong identifier	48956	39
	Weak identifier	15975	12.7
Religious	No	92551	73.8
	Yes	32896	26.20

Full tables for paper results

Table A3. Social risk and political engagement – full table.

	Internal political efficacy	Vote
Intercept	4.70 (0.08)***	1.41 (0.06)***
Family status: ref- family with children		
Single	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.42 (0.02)***
Couple, no kids	0.05 (0.02)**	−0.09 (0.02)***
Single parent	0.01 (0.03)	−0.43 (0.03)***
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background		
Old – high	0.37 (0.04)***	0.64 (0.07)***
Old – medium	0.18 (0.03)***	0.45 (0.04)***
Old – low	−0.09 (0.03)***	0.61 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.11 (0.03)***	0.02 (0.03)
Prime – low	−0.22 (0.02)***	0.06 (0.03)*
Young – high	−0.14 (0.04)**	−0.33 (0.05)***
Young – medium	−0.39 (0.03)***	−0.43 (0.04)***
Young – low	−0.66 (0.04)***	−0.65 (0.05)***
Female	−0.89 (0.01)***	0.07 (0.02)***
Main activity: ref – full-time employed		
Education	0.27 (0.03)***	−0.38 (0.04)***
Unemployed – looking	−0.13 (0.03)***	−0.37 (0.04)***
Unemployed – inactive	−0.25 (0.05)***	−0.45 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	−0.26 (0.04)***	−0.35 (0.05)***
Retired	−0.18 (0.02)***	0.01 (0.03)
Community or military service	−0.17 (0.17)	0.16 (0.20)
Housework	−0.21 (0.02)***	−0.14 (0.03)***
Other activity	−0.04 (0.06)	−0.38 (0.07)***
Household income: ref – medium		
High	0.20 (0.02)***	0.23 (0.03)***
Low	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.11 (0.02)***
Missing	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.10 (0.02)***
Education (ISCED): Ref – ISCED 2		
I: Less than lower secondary	−1.00 (0.02)***	−0.42 (0.03)***
II: Lower secondary	−0.50 (0.02)***	−0.42 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.27 (0.04)***	0.26 (0.05)***
V–VI: tertiary	0.64 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***
Other	0.22 (0.15)	−0.22 (0.17)
Trade union: ref – yes		
Yes, previously	0.18 (0.02)***	−0.20 (0.03)***
No	0.01 (0.02)	−0.39 (0.02)***
Party affiliation		
Strong	0.80 (0.01)***	1.42 (0.02)***
Weak	0.25 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***
Religious	−0.10 (0.02)***	0.37 (0.02)***
Country-level variables		
LogGDP	−0.21 (0.23)	−0.45 (0.14)**
Early childhood education	−0.19 (0.20)	−0.19 (0.13)
Secondary education	0.07 (0.15)	−0.07 (0.10)
ALMP generosity	0.28 (0.38)	0.50 (0.24)*
Passive support generosity	−0.46 (0.37)	−0.12 (0.23)
Gini	0.12 (0.19)	0.05 (0.12)
Turnout	0.42 (0.23)	1.03 (0.15)***
AIC	542300.49	106578.47
BIC	542719.29	106987.54
Log likelihood	−271107.25	−53247.24
Num. obs.	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.16	0.06
Var: residual	4.40	

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

Interaction Results – Internal Efficacy

Table A4. Interaction: internal efficacy, family status, and education spending.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	4.70 (0.08)***	4.69 (0.08)***
Family status: ref – family with children		
Single	–0.02 (0.02)	–0.02 (0.02)
Couple, no kids	0.05 (0.02)**	0.06 (0.02)***
Single parent	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Age-family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background		
Old – high	0.37 (0.04)***	0.37 (0.04)***
Old – medium	0.18 (0.03)***	0.18 (0.03)***
Old – low	–0.09 (0.03)***	–0.09 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.11 (0.03)***	0.12 (0.03)***
Prime – low	–0.22 (0.02)***	–0.22 (0.02)***
Young – high	–0.14 (0.04)**	–0.14 (0.04)**
Young – medium	–0.39 (0.03)***	–0.38 (0.03)***
Young – low	–0.66 (0.04)***	–0.65 (0.04)***
Female	–0.89 (0.01)***	–0.89 (0.01)***
Main activity: ref – full-time employed		
Education	0.26 (0.03)***	0.27 (0.03)***
Unemployed – looking	–0.12 (0.03)***	–0.13 (0.03)***
Unemployed – inactive	–0.25 (0.05)***	–0.26 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	–0.26 (0.04)***	–0.26 (0.04)***
Retired	–0.18 (0.02)***	–0.18 (0.02)***
Community or military service	–0.17 (0.17)	–0.18 (0.17)
Housework	–0.21 (0.02)***	–0.21 (0.02)***
Other activity	–0.04 (0.06)	–0.04 (0.06)
Household income: ref – medium		
High	0.20 (0.02)***	0.22 (0.02)***
Low	–0.18 (0.02)***	–0.18 (0.02)***
Missing	–0.03 (0.02)	–0.03 (0.02)
Education (ISCED): ref – ISCED 2		
I: Less than lower secondary	–1.00 (0.02)***	–1.00 (0.02)***
II: Lower secondary	–0.51 (0.02)***	–0.50 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.27 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.04)***
V–VI: Tertiary	0.64 (0.02)***	0.64 (0.02)***
Other	0.22 (0.15)	0.22 (0.15)
Trade union: ref – yes		
Yes, previously	0.18 (0.02)***	0.18 (0.02)***
No	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Party affiliation		
Strong	0.80 (0.01)***	0.80 (0.01)***
Weak	0.25 (0.02)***	0.25 (0.02)***
Religious	–0.10 (0.02)***	–0.10 (0.02)***
Country-level variables		
logGDP	–0.20 (0.23)	–0.21 (0.23)
Early childhood education	–0.23 (0.20)	–0.19 (0.20)
Secondary education	0.07 (0.15)	–0.03 (0.16)
ALMP generosity	0.28 (0.38)	0.28 (0.38)
Passive support generosity	–0.46 (0.37)	–0.46 (0.37)
Gini	0.12 (0.19)	0.12 (0.19)
Turnout	0.42 (0.23)	0.42 (0.23)
Interaction– early childhood education		
Single	0.07 (0.03)*	
Couple, no kids	0.02 (0.03)	
Single parent	0.22 (0.05)***	

(*Continued*)

Table A4. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2
Interaction – secondary education		
Single		0.18 (0.03)***
Couple, no kids		0.10 (0.03)**
Single parent		0.31 (0.05)***
AIC	542300.57	542265.78
BIC	542748.60	542713.81
Log likelihood	−271104.29	−271086.89
Num. obs.	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.16	0.16
Var: residual	4.40	4.40

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

Table A5. Interaction: internal efficacy, age–family skill background, and skill building.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	4.69 (0.08)***	4.70 (0.09)***	4.69 (0.09)***
Family status: ref – family with children			
Single	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.04 (0.02)*	−0.03 (0.02)
Couple, no kids	0.06 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.02)*	0.05 (0.02)**
Single parent	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background			
Old – high	0.37 (0.04)***	0.38 (0.04)***	0.36 (0.04)***
Old – medium	0.17 (0.03)***	0.18 (0.03)***	0.18 (0.03)***
Old – low	−0.09 (0.03)***	−0.09 (0.03)***	−0.08 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.11 (0.03)***	0.14 (0.03)***	0.12 (0.03)***
Prime – low	−0.22 (0.02)***	−0.22 (0.02)***	−0.21 (0.02)***
Young – high	−0.13 (0.04)**	−0.13 (0.04)**	−0.13 (0.04)**
Young – medium	−0.39 (0.03)***	−0.39 (0.03)***	−0.39 (0.04)***
Young – low	−0.64 (0.04)***	−0.64 (0.04)***	−0.65 (0.04)***
Female	−0.89 (0.01)***	−0.89 (0.01)***	−0.88 (0.01)***
Main activity: ref – full-time employed			
Education	0.26 (0.03)***	0.26 (0.03)***	0.27 (0.03)***
Unemployed – looking	−0.12 (0.03)***	−0.13 (0.03)***	−0.12 (0.03)***
Unemployed – inactive	−0.25 (0.05)***	−0.26 (0.05)***	−0.25 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	−0.25 (0.04)***	−0.26 (0.04)***	−0.26 (0.04)***
Retired	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.18 (0.02)***
Community or military service	−0.17 (0.17)	−0.16 (0.17)	−0.16 (0.17)
Housework	−0.21 (0.02)***	−0.20 (0.02)***	−0.21 (0.02)***
Other activity	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.04 (0.06)
Household income: ref – medium			
High	0.20 (0.02)***	0.22 (0.02)***	0.21 (0.02)***
Low	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.17 (0.02)***	−0.18 (0.02)***
Missing	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)
Education (ISCED): ref – ISCED 2			
I: Less than lower secondary	−1.02 (0.02)***	−0.99 (0.02)***	−1.00 (0.02)***
II: Lower secondary	−0.50 (0.02)***	−0.50 (0.02)***	−0.50 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.27 (0.04)***	0.26 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.04)***
V–VI: tertiary	0.64 (0.02)***	0.64 (0.02)***	0.64 (0.02)***
Other	0.21 (0.15)	0.22 (0.15)	0.22 (0.15)
Trade union: ref – yes			
Yes, previously	0.18 (0.02)***	0.18 (0.02)***	0.19 (0.02)***
No	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)

(*Continued*)

Table A5. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Party affiliation			
Strong	0.80 (0.01)***	0.80 (0.01)***	0.80 (0.01)***
Weak	0.25 (0.02)***	0.25 (0.02)***	0.25 (0.02)***
Religious	−0.11 (0.02)***	−0.09 (0.02)***	−0.10 (0.02)***
Country-level variables			
LogGDP	−0.20 (0.23)	−0.22 (0.23)	−0.21 (0.23)
Early childhood education	−0.14 (0.21)	−0.18 (0.21)	−0.19 (0.21)
Secondary education	0.07 (0.15)	−0.11 (0.16)	0.07 (0.16)
ALMP generosity	0.27 (0.38)	0.30 (0.38)	0.16 (0.39)
Passive support generosity	−0.45 (0.37)	−0.47 (0.38)	−0.47 (0.38)
Gini	0.12 (0.19)	0.14 (0.19)	0.13 (0.20)
Turnout	0.40 (0.23)	0.44 (0.23)	0.43 (0.24)
Interaction – early childhood education spending			
Old – high	0.03 (0.07)		
Old – medium	0.01 (0.06)		
Old – low	−0.18 (0.04)***		
Prime – high	0.12 (0.05)*		
Prime – low	−0.10 (0.04)**		
Young – high	0.34 (0.07)***		
Young – medium	0.09 (0.07)		
Young – low	0.16 (0.08)		
Interaction – secondary education spending			
Old – high		0.06 (0.09)	
Old – medium		0.13 (0.06)*	
Old – low		0.45 (0.04)***	
Prime – high		−0.07 (0.05)	
Prime – low		0.12 (0.04)**	
Young – high		0.18 (0.07)*	
Young – medium		0.00 (0.06)	
Young – Low		0.32 (0.08)***	
Interaction – ALMP spending			
Old – high			0.20 (0.07)**
Old – medium			0.16 (0.05)***
Old – low			0.22 (0.04)***
Prime – high			0.06 (0.05)
Prime – low			0.12 (0.04)**
Young – high			0.16 (0.07)*
Young – medium			−0.01 (0.06)
Young – low			0.21 (0.09)*
AIC	542242.83	542124.75	542303.81
BIC	542739.55	542621.47	542800.53
Log likelihood	−271070.42	−271011.37	−271100.91
Num. obs.	125447	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.15	0.16	0.16
Var: residual	4.40	4.39	4.40

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

Interaction results – voting

Table A6. Interaction: voting, family status, and education spending.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	1.41 (0.06)***	1.41 (0.06)***
Family status: ref – family with children		
Single	−0.41 (0.02)***	−0.42 (0.02)***
Couple, no kids	−0.09 (0.02)***	−0.09 (0.02)***
Single parent	−0.43 (0.03)***	−0.42 (0.03)***
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background		
Old – high	0.64 (0.07)***	0.64 (0.07)***
Old – medium	0.45 (0.04)***	0.45 (0.04)***
Old – low	0.61 (0.03)***	0.61 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Prime – low	0.06 (0.03)*	0.06 (0.03)*
Young – high	−0.33 (0.05)***	−0.33 (0.05)***
Young – medium	−0.44 (0.04)***	−0.44 (0.04)***
Young – low	−0.65 (0.05)***	−0.65 (0.05)***
Female	0.07 (0.02)***	0.07 (0.02)***
Main activity: ref – full-time employed		
Education	−0.38 (0.04)***	−0.38 (0.04)***
Unemployed – looking	−0.37 (0.04)***	−0.37 (0.04)***
Unemployed – inactive	−0.45 (0.05)***	−0.45 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	−0.35 (0.05)***	−0.35 (0.05)***
Retired	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Community or military service	0.16 (0.20)	0.16 (0.20)
Housework	−0.14 (0.03)***	−0.14 (0.03)***
Other activity	−0.38 (0.07)***	−0.37 (0.07)***
Household income: ref – medium		
High	0.23 (0.03)***	0.23 (0.03)***
Low	−0.11 (0.02)***	−0.11 (0.02)***
Missing	−0.10 (0.02)***	−0.10 (0.02)***
Education (ISCED): Ref – ISCED 2		
I: Less than lower secondary	−0.42 (0.03)***	−0.42 (0.03)***
II: Lower secondary	−0.42 (0.02)***	−0.42 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.26 (0.05)***	0.26 (0.05)***
V–VI: Tertiary	0.34 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***
Other	−0.22 (0.17)	−0.22 (0.17)
Trade union: ref – yes		
Yes, previously	−0.20 (0.03)***	−0.20 (0.03)***
No	−0.39 (0.02)***	−0.39 (0.02)***
Party affiliation		
Strong	1.42 (0.02)***	1.42 (0.02)***
Weak	0.79 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***
Religious	0.37 (0.02)***	0.37 (0.02)***
Country-level variables		
LogGDP	−0.45 (0.14)**	−0.45 (0.14)**
Early childhood education	−0.23 (0.13)	−0.19 (0.13)
Secondary education	−0.07 (0.10)	−0.10 (0.10)
ALMP generosity	0.50 (0.24)*	0.50 (0.24)*
Passive support generosity	−0.12 (0.23)	−0.12 (0.23)
Gini	0.05 (0.12)	0.05 (0.12)
Turnout	1.03 (0.15)***	1.03 (0.15)***
Interaction – early childhood education		
Single	0.09 (0.04)*	
Couple, no kids	0.02 (0.05)	
Single parent	0.06 (0.07)	

(*Continued*)

Table A6. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2
Interaction – secondary education		
Single		–0.00 (0.04)
Couple, no kids		0.10 (0.05)*
Single parent		0.12 (0.07)
AIC	106578.62	106575.83
BIC	107016.91	107014.12
Log likelihood	–53244.31	–53242.92
Num. obs.	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.06	0.06

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

Table A7. Interaction: voting, age–family skill background,and skill building.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	1.40 (0.06)***	1.42 (0.06)***	1.41 (0.06)***
Family status: ref – family with children			
Single	–0.41 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***
Couple, no kids	–0.08 (0.02)***	–0.09 (0.02)***	–0.09 (0.02)***
Single parent	–0.43 (0.03)***	–0.43 (0.03)***	–0.43 (0.03)***
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background			
Old – high	0.63 (0.07)***	0.63 (0.07)***	0.65 (0.07)***
Old – medium	0.45 (0.04)***	0.45 (0.04)***	0.45 (0.04)***
Old – low	0.60 (0.03)***	0.62 (0.03)***	0.61 (0.04)***
Prime – high	0.04 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Prime – low	0.07 (0.03)**	0.06 (0.03)*	0.06 (0.03)*
Young – high	–0.31 (0.05)***	–0.33 (0.05)***	–0.32 (0.05)***
Young – medium	–0.43 (0.04)***	–0.45 (0.04)***	–0.45 (0.04)***
Young – low	–0.62 (0.05)***	–0.66 (0.05)***	–0.65 (0.05)***
Female	0.08 (0.02)***	0.07 (0.02)***	0.08 (0.02)***
Main activity: ref – full time employed			
Education	–0.39 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***
Unemployed – looking	–0.37 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***	–0.37 (0.04)***
Unemployed – inactive	–0.45 (0.05)***	–0.45 (0.05)***	–0.45 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	–0.34 (0.05)***	–0.35 (0.05)***	–0.35 (0.05)***
Retired	0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Community or military service	0.15 (0.20)	0.17 (0.20)	0.17 (0.20)
Housework	–0.13 (0.03)***	–0.13 (0.03)***	–0.14 (0.03)***
Other activity	–0.37 (0.07)***	–0.37 (0.07)***	–0.38 (0.07)***
Household income: ref – medium			
High	0.23 (0.03)***	0.23 (0.03)***	0.23 (0.03)***
Low	–0.12 (0.02)***	–0.11 (0.02)***	–0.12 (0.02)***
Missing	–0.10 (0.02)***	–0.10 (0.02)***	–0.10 (0.02)***
Education (ISCED): ref – ISCED 2			
I: Less than lower secondary	–0.44 (0.03)***	–0.42 (0.03)***	–0.42 (0.03)***
II: Lower secondary	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.26 (0.05)***	0.26 (0.05)***	0.27 (0.05)***
V–VI: Tertiary	0.34 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***
Other	–0.23 (0.17)	–0.21 (0.17)	–0.22 (0.17)
Trade union: ref – yes			
Yes, previously	–0.20 (0.03)***	–0.20 (0.03)***	–0.20 (0.03)***
No	–0.40 (0.02)***	–0.40 (0.02)***	–0.40 (0.02)***
Party affiliation			
Strong	1.42 (0.02)***	1.42 (0.02)***	1.42 (0.02)***
Weak	0.79 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***

(*Continued*)

Table A7. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Religious	0.37 (0.02)***	0.38 (0.02)***	0.37 (0.02)***
Country-level variables			
LogGDP	−0.46 (0.14)**	−0.46 (0.14)**	−0.45 (0.14)**
Early childhood education	−0.12 (0.13)	−0.19 (0.13)	−0.19 (0.13)
Secondary education	−0.07 (0.10)	−0.02 (0.10)	−0.07 (0.10)
ALMP generosity	0.48 (0.24)*	0.50 (0.24)*	0.51 (0.24)*
Passive support generosity	−0.11 (0.23)	−0.12 (0.23)	−0.11 (0.23)
Gini	0.06 (0.12)	0.05 (0.12)	0.05 (0.12)
Turnout	1.02 (0.15)***	1.04 (0.15)***	1.03 (0.15)***
Interaction – early childhood education spending			
Old – high	−0.22 (0.14)		
Old – medium	−0.16 (0.09)		
Old – low	−0.36 (0.06)***		
Prime – high	0.18 (0.07)*		
Prime – low	−0.08 (0.06)		
Young – high	0.22 (0.09)*		
Young – medium	0.19 (0.08)*		
Young – low	0.19 (0.10)*		
Interaction – secondary education spending			
Old – high		0.25 (0.16)	
Old – medium		−0.06 (0.09)	
Old – low		0.06 (0.05)	
Prime – high		−0.09 (0.08)	
Prime – low		−0.14 (0.05)**	
Young – high		−0.02 (0.09)	
Young – medium		−0.14 (0.07)*	
Young – low		−0.14 (0.09)	
Interaction – ALMP spending			
Old – high			0.22 (0.13)
Old – medium			0.01 (0.07)
Old – low			0.05 (0.05)
Prime – high			−0.06 (0.06)
Prime – low			−0.05 (0.05)
Young – high			0.09 (0.08)
Young – medium			−0.11 (0.07)
Young – low			−0.08 (0.10)
AIC	106467.94	106566.49	106580.44
BIC	106954.93	107053.47	107067.43
Log likelihood	−53183.97	−53233.24	−53240.22
Num. obs.	125447	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.06	0.06	0.06

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

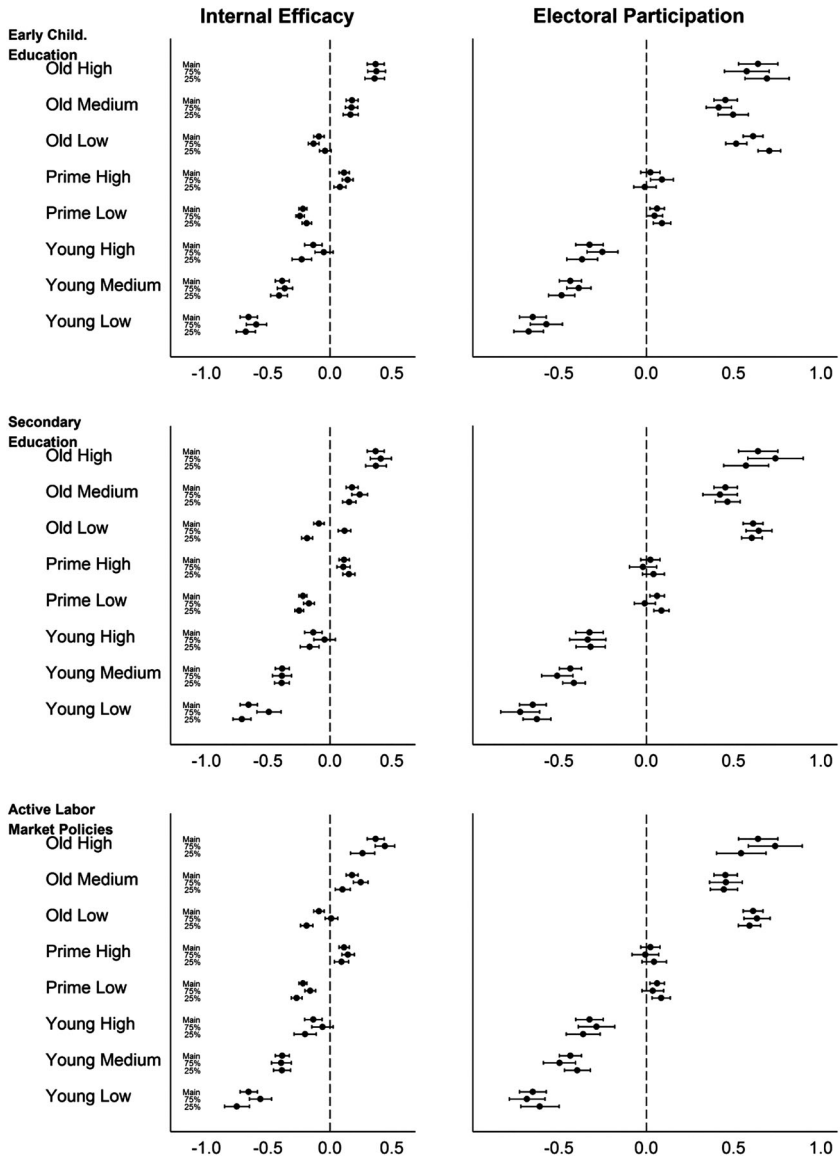

Figure A1. Full Figure – Age – Family / Skill Background

Robustness check: using alternative measure of employment and unemployment support generosity

We here replace the simple spending as percentage of GDP data with the amount spent on passive and active support measures per recipient, as a percentage of GDP. Results are consistent with our overall findings.

Table A8. Summary of results.

	Internal efficacy				Electoral participation			
	Main effect	Early childhood education	Secondary education	ALMP generosity	Main effect	Early childhood education	Secondary education	ALMP generosity
Old high	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
Old medium	+	0	+	+	+	0	0	0
Old low	−	−	+	+	+	−	0	0
Prime high	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	0
Prime low	−	−	+	+	+	0	−	0
Young high	−	+	0	0	−	+	0	0
Young Medium	−	0	0	−	−	+	−	−
Young low	−	0	+	+	−	+	0	0

Table A9. Interaction: internal efficacy, age–family skill background, and skill building.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	4.70 (0.09)***	4.71 (0.09)***	4.71 (0.09)***
Family status: ref – family with children			
Single	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.04 (0.02)*	−0.03 (0.02)*
Couple, no kids	0.06 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.02)*	0.04 (0.02)*
Single parent	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background			
Old – high	0.37 (0.04)***	0.38 (0.04)***	0.39 (0.04)***
Old – medium	0.17 (0.03)***	0.18 (0.03)***	0.18 (0.03)***
Old – low	−0.09 (0.03)***	−0.09 (0.03)***	−0.09 (0.03)***
Prime – high	0.11 (0.03)***	0.14 (0.03)***	0.15 (0.03)***
Prime – low	−0.22 (0.02)***	−0.22 (0.02)***	−0.21 (0.02)***
Young – high	−0.13 (0.04)**	−0.13 (0.04)**	−0.11 (0.04)*
Young – medium	−0.39 (0.03)***	−0.39 (0.03)***	−0.41 (0.04)***
Young – low	−0.64 (0.04)***	−0.64 (0.04)***	−0.64 (0.04)***
Female	−0.89 (0.01)***	−0.89 (0.01)***	−0.89 (0.01)***
Main activity: ref – full time employed			
Education	0.26 (0.03)***	0.26 (0.03)***	0.27 (0.03)***
Unemployed – looking	−0.12 (0.03)***	−0.13 (0.03)***	−0.13 (0.03)***
Unemployed – inactive	−0.25 (0.05)***	−0.26 (0.05)***	−0.26 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	−0.25 (0.04)***	−0.26 (0.04)***	−0.25 (0.04)***
Retired	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.16 (0.02)***
Community or military service	−0.17 (0.17)	−0.16 (0.17)	−0.13 (0.16)
Housework	−0.21 (0.02)***	−0.20 (0.02)***	−0.19 (0.02)***
Other activity	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.03 (0.06)
Household income: ref – medium			
High	0.20 (0.02)***	0.22 (0.02)***	0.23 (0.02)***
Low	−0.18 (0.02)***	−0.17 (0.02)***	−0.17 (0.02)***
Missing	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)
Education (ISCED): Ref – ISCED 2			
I: Less than lower secondary	−1.02 (0.02)***	−0.99 (0.02)***	−0.99 (0.02)***
II: Lower secondary	−0.50 (0.02)***	−0.50 (0.02)***	−0.51 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.27 (0.04)***	0.26 (0.04)***	0.25 (0.04)***
V–VI: Tertiary	0.64 (0.02)***	0.64 (0.02)***	0.64 (0.02)***
Other	0.21 (0.15)	0.22 (0.15)	0.21 (0.15)
Trade union: ref – yes			
Yes, previously	0.18 (0.02)***	0.18 (0.02)***	0.17 (0.02)***
No	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	−0.01 (0.02)
Party affiliation			
Strong	0.80 (0.01)***	0.80 (0.01)***	0.80 (0.01)***
Weak	0.25 (0.02)***	0.25 (0.02)***	0.24 (0.02)***
Religious	−0.11 (0.02)***	−0.09 (0.02)***	−0.10 (0.02)***
Country-level variables			
LogGDP	−0.19 (0.26)	−0.22 (0.26)	−0.20 (0.27)
Early childhood education	−0.09 (0.21)	−0.13 (0.21)	−0.11 (0.21)
Secondary education	0.03 (0.17)	−0.16 (0.17)	0.02 (0.17)
ALMP generosity	0.06 (0.21)	0.09 (0.21)	−0.10 (0.22)
Passive support Generosity	−0.06 (0.31)	−0.03 (0.31)	−0.05 (0.31)
Gini	0.11 (0.20)	0.13 (0.20)	0.14 (0.21)
Turnout	0.32 (0.24)	0.36 (0.24)	0.35 (0.24)
Interaction – early childhood education spending			
Old – high	0.03 (0.07)		
Old – medium	0.01 (0.06)		
Old – low	−0.18 (0.04)***		
Prime – high	0.12 (0.05)*		

(*Continued*)

Table A9. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Prime – low	–0.10 (0.04)**		
Young – high	0.34 (0.07)***		
Young – medium	0.09 (0.07)		
Young – low	0.16 (0.08)		
Interaction – secondary education spending			
Old – high		0.06 (0.09)	
Old – medium		0.13 (0.06)*	
Old – low		0.45 (0.04)***	
Prime – high		–0.07 (0.05)	
Prime – low		0.12 (0.04)**	
Young – high		0.18 (0.07)*	
Young – medium		0.00 (0.06)	
Young – low		0.32 (0.08)***	
Interaction – ALMP generosity			
Old – high			0.07 (0.08)
Old – medium			0.20 (0.05)***
Old – low			0.55 (0.04)***
Prime – high			–0.02 (0.05)
Prime – low			0.08 (0.04)*
Young – high			0.04 (0.07)
Young – medium			–0.13 (0.06)*
Young – low			0.24 (0.09)**
AIC	542244.96	542126.77	542010.82
BIC	542741.69	542623.49	542507.55
Log likelihood	–271071.48	–271012.38	–270954.41
Num. obs.	125447	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.17	0.17	0.17
Var: residual	4.40	4.39	4.39

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.

Table A10. Interaction: voting, age–family skill background, and skill building.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	1.40 (0.06)***	1.42 (0.06)***	1.41 (0.06)***
Family status: ref – family with children			
Single	–0.41 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***
Couple, no kids	–0.08 (0.02)***	–0.09 (0.02)***	–0.09 (0.02)***
Single parent	–0.43 (0.03)***	–0.43 (0.03)***	–0.43 (0.03)***
Age–family skill background: ref – prime age/medium-skill background			
Old – high	0.63 (0.07)***	0.63 (0.07)***	0.65 (0.07)***
Old – medium	0.45 (0.04)***	0.45 (0.04)***	0.45 (0.04)***
Old – low	0.60 (0.03)***	0.62 (0.03)***	0.61 (0.04)***
Prime – high	0.04 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Prime – low	0.07 (0.03)**	0.06 (0.03)*	0.06 (0.03)*
Young – high	–0.31 (0.05)***	–0.33 (0.05)***	–0.32 (0.05)***
Young – medium	–0.43 (0.04)***	–0.45 (0.04)***	–0.45 (0.04)***
Young – low	–0.62 (0.05)***	–0.66 (0.05)***	–0.65 (0.05)***
Female	0.08 (0.02)***	0.07 (0.02)***	0.08 (0.02)***
Main activity: ref – full time employed			
Education	–0.39 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***
Unemployed – looking	–0.37 (0.04)***	–0.38 (0.04)***	–0.37 (0.04)***
Unemployed – inactive	–0.45 (0.05)***	–0.45 (0.05)***	–0.45 (0.05)***
Sick or disabled	–0.34 (0.05)***	–0.35 (0.05)***	–0.35 (0.05)***
Retired	0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Community or military service	0.15 (0.20)	0.17 (0.20)	0.17 (0.20)
Housework	–0.13 (0.03)***	–0.13 (0.03)***	–0.14 (0.03)***
Other activity	–0.37 (0.07)***	–0.37 (0.07)***	–0.38 (0.07)***
Household income: ref – medium			
High	0.23 (0.03)***	0.23 (0.03)***	0.23 (0.03)***
Low	–0.12 (0.02)***	–0.11 (0.02)***	–0.12 (0.02)***
Missing	–0.10 (0.02)***	–0.10 (0.02)***	–0.10 (0.02)***
Education (ISCED): ref – ISCED 2			
I: Less than lower secondary	–0.44 (0.03)***	–0.42 (0.03)***	–0.42 (0.03)***
II: Lower secondary	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***	–0.42 (0.02)***
IV: Advanced vocational	0.26 (0.05)***	0.26 (0.05)***	0.27 (0.05)***
V–VI :Tertiary	0.34 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.02)***
Other	–0.23 (0.17)	–0.21 (0.17)	–0.22 (0.17)
Trade union: ref – yes			
Yes, previously	–0.20 (0.03)***	–0.20 (0.03)***	–0.20 (0.03)***
No	–0.40 (0.02)***	–0.40 (0.02)***	–0.40 (0.02)***
Party affiliation			
Strong	1.42 (0.02)***	1.42 (0.02)***	1.42 (0.02)***
Weak	0.79 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***	0.79 (0.02)***
Religious	0.37 (0.02)***	0.38 (0.02)***	0.37 (0.02)***
Country-level variables			
LogGDP	–0.46 (0.14)**	–0.46 (0.14)**	–0.45 (0.14)**
Early childhood education	–0.12 (0.13)	–0.19 (0.13)	–0.19 (0.13)
Secondary education	–0.07 (0.10)	–0.02 (0.10)	–0.07 (0.10)
ALMP generosity	0.48 (0.24)*	0.50 (0.24)*	0.51 (0.24)*
Passive support generosity	–0.11 (0.23)	–0.12 (0.23)	–0.11 (0.23)
Gini	0.06 (0.12)	0.05 (0.12)	0.05 (0.12)
Turnout	1.02 (0.15)***	1.04 (0.15)***	1.03 (0.15)***
Interaction – early childhood education spending			
Old – high	–0.22 (0.14)		
Old – medium	–0.16 (0.09)		
Old – low	–0.36 (0.06)***		
Prime – high	0.18 (0.07)*		
Prime – low	–0.08 (0.06)		
Young – high	0.22 (0.09)*		

(*Continued*)

Table A10. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Young – medium	0.19 (0.08)*		
Young – low	0.19 (0.10)*		
Interaction – secondary education spending			
Old – high		0.25 (0.16)	
Old – medium		–0.06 (0.09)	
Old – low		0.06 (0.05)	
Prime – high		–0.09 (0.08)	
Prime – low		–0.14 (0.05)**	
Young – high		–0.02 (0.09)	
Young – medium		–0.14 (0.07)*	
Young – low		–0.14 (0.09)	
Interaction – ALMP generosity			
Old – high			0.22 (0.13)
Old – medium			0.01 (0.07)
Old – low			0.05 (0.05)
Prime – high			–0.06 (0.06)
Prime – low			–0.05 (0.05)
Young – high			0.09 (0.08)
Young – medium			–0.11 (0.07)
Young – low			–0.08 (0.10)
AIC	106467.94	106566.49	106580.44
BIC	106954.93	107053.47	107067.43
Log likelihood	–53183.97	–53233.24	–53240.22
Num. obs.	125447	125447	125447
Num. groups: cntry	25	25	25
Var: cntry (intercept)	0.06	0.06	0.06

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$.