

## **Disinterested youth? Young people's attitudes towards party politics in Britain**

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### **Appendix**

This appendix gives an overview of the approach taken for the bivariate (chi-square) and multivariate (logistic regression) analysis.

#### ***Dependent Variables***

The dependent variables utilized here allow us to examine the extent of young people's engagement with (*Interes2*) politics, the degree to which they feel that there are opportunities open to participate meaningfully in political affairs (*Efficac2*) and their actual level of political activism (*Activis2*), and their views both of the democratic process (measured by two variables, *Electio2* and *Voting2*) and of the key political players (*Party2*).

Two questions are combined to derive the *Interes2* variable - whether respondents had an interest in politics, and whether they were interested in the 2001 General Election (coded as 1 interested/ 0 not interested).

The *Efficac2* dependent variable (coded as 1 participation opportunities exist/ 0 no participation opportunities exist) includes responses to questions concerning whether they considered that being active in politics is a good way to get help for themselves and their family, whether they disagree that it takes too much time to be active in politics and public affairs, whether they disagree that young people like themselves have no say in what the government does, whether they disagree that there aren't enough opportunities for young people like themselves to influence political parties, how much influence they consider that they have on the decisions affecting them taken by politicians.

*Activis2* (coded as 1 active/ 0 not active) combines responses from eleven different questions, including whether it is likely that in the future they would: vote in either a general, local or European election; work actively with a group of people to address a public issue or tackle a problem; participate in a protest; be active in a voluntary organisation; give money to a political party; try to convince someone else how to vote; work for a political party or candidate at an election; discuss politics with others; get involved in a youth council or forum.

Three variables are used to assess respondents' degree of faith in the democratic process in Britain – *Electio2* and *Voting2*. *Electio2* is measured using responses to six questions, including whether or not young people consider elections: keep politicians accountable; don't really change anything; provide an opportunity for voters to communicate with politicians; are a waste of time and money; force politicians to listen carefully to public opinion; don't matter as big international companies have real power rather than

governments. *Voting2* has been constructed using four questions, on whether respondents: gain a satisfaction in voting; feel that voting can impact on governance; consider voting to be a duty for all citizens; would only vote if they cared which party or candidate won.

Young people's views of political parties and politicians (*Party2*, coded 1 enthusiastic/ 0 not enthusiastic) are derived by combining responses to fourteen questions concerning whether they agree or disagree that: there is often a big difference between what a party promises it will do and what it actually does when it wins an election; political parties are more interested in winning elections than in governing afterwards; the main political parties in Britain don't offer voters real choices in elections because their policies are pretty much all the same; political parties do more to divide the country than unite it; political parties spend too much time bickering with each other; parties generally do a good job in finding suitable people to run for parliament; in elections, political parties don't tell people about the really important problems facing the country; it's embarrassing when the parties try to appeal to young people during election campaigns; political parties do a good job of listening to young people's concerns, and then responding to them positively; governments don't really care what young people like me think; those elected to parliament soon lose touch with people; parties are only interested in people's votes, not in their opinions; there aren't enough opportunities for young people like me to influence political parties; political parties aren't interested in the same issues that concern young people.

### ***Independent Variables***

Two sets of predictor (independent) variables were used. The first were socio-demographic in nature, and include ethnicity, gender, social class, region, educational and vocational qualifications held, and whether the respondent was in or out of full-time education at the time of the survey. These variables have been selected because previous studies indicate that they are associated with political attitudes and levels of political participation.<sup>1</sup>

Tests of multicollinearity between the predictor variables were conducted in multiple regression. By consulting the tolerance and VIF statistics, and the eigenvalues for shared variance between variables, it was established that there were no significant multicollinearity between all of the predictors. We conclude from this that where predictor variables are shown to impact on the dependent variables, they do so independently of each other. This means for instance, that where time spent in education is identified as impacting upon young people's faith in the electoral process, it does so independently of, rather than as a consequence of, their social class position.

All the socio-demographic predictor variables are operationalised as dummy variables. Ethnicity contrasts white respondents with other ethnic groups (*Ethnicity*), whilst women (*Gender*) are the reference group for gender. For social class, we use the ns-sec scheme, with respondent's defining their social class not by their own occupational circumstances but the reported circumstances of the main wage earner in their household (*Class*).<sup>2</sup> For this independent variable, a middle class managerial/ professional comparison group is

taken. Our analyses contrast those who hold educational and vocational qualifications with those do no not (*Havequal*), and compares young people remaining in full-time education with those who had left (*Timeedu*) by the time of the survey. Finally, a variable was constructed (*Region*) that compares those who live in regions of Britain that have recently established their own additional tiers of government (Wales, Scotland and London), with those that have not – the rationale being that the former brings decision-making closer to people, and may therefore increase their political engagement compared to those respondents who live in other regions of Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance: Parry, Moyser and Day (1992); Bynner and Ashford (1994); and Haerper, Wallace and Spanring (2002).

<sup>2</sup> We recognise the limitations of this method of measurement of social class in that it is based not on objective personal circumstances but on their knowledge of the occupational situation of others. Nonetheless, as most respondents would not yet have reached their class of destination, and in the absence of other objective data, we feel this method provides a useful approximation of the social class of respondents.