

The beliefs of young parliamentary candidates on democracy and the moderation role of populism

Marco Lisi & João Gaio e Silva

To cite this article: Marco Lisi & João Gaio e Silva (2025) The beliefs of young parliamentary candidates on democracy and the moderation role of populism, Political Research Exchange, 7:1, 2579534, DOI: [10.1080/2474736X.2025.2579534](https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2025.2579534)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2025.2579534>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 30 Oct 2025.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 364



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

The beliefs of young parliamentary candidates on democracy and the moderation role of populism

Marco Lisi^a and João Gaio e Silva^b

^aDepartment of Political Studies, NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal; ^bPortuguese Institute of International Relations, NOVA University of Lisbon (IPRI-NOVA), Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the attitudes of young parliamentary candidates towards representative democracy, examining the potential moderating role of populism. Existing research points to declining youth trust in political institutions, but lacks understanding of how young prospective MPs, especially from populist parties, perceive representative democracy. Drawing from the Comparative Candidates Survey across 18 European countries, the study analyses three dimensions: satisfaction with democracy, evaluation of electoral processes, and support for direct democracy mechanisms. Findings reveal younger candidates express stronger preferences for direct democracy tools like referendums, but limited evidence of an age effect on satisfaction with democracy or perceptions of elections. However, a modest moderating effect of populism emerges – younger candidates from populist parties tend to exhibit greater dissatisfaction with how democracy functions compared to non-populist counterparts, though this dissatisfaction diminishes as they age. The study contributes insights into the complex interplay between generational differences, populist ideologies, and democratic legitimacy perceptions among prospective legislators, informing discussions on evolving youth political engagement.

ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 23 April 2025
Accepted 21 October 2025


KEYWORDS

Youth political representation; candidate attitudes; populism; electoral democracy; direct democracy

Introduction

In the context of global dissatisfaction with political elites and the rise of anti-system or populist parties, there is an increasing push to reconnect young generations with traditional channels of political representation. This issue is critical for the future of democracy, prompting a growing number of studies focused on understanding how young people are represented in contemporary democracies (Cammaerts et al. 2016; Dalton 2011; Sloam 2014). There is also an ongoing scholarly debate regarding young peoples' attitudes towards democracy and democratic institutions, suggesting that younger

CONTACT João Gaio e Silva  joao.gaiosilva@campus.fchsh.unl.pt  IPRI-NOVA, Rua de D. Estefânia 195, 5.º Dt. °, Lisboa 1000-155, Portugal

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2025.2579534>.

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

generations are less committed to democratic principles than older generations (Denemark, Donovan, and Niemi 2016; Foa and Mounk 2016; 2019; Huttunen and Saikkonen 2023). This paper aims to contribute to this strand of research by investigating what young candidates think about representative democracy and its alternatives, as well as the differences across parties, namely distinguishing between populist and non-populist parties.

Existing research predominantly focuses on the demand side – how young people relate to political actors and institutions. Evidence indicates a significant erosion of trust among young people toward political institutions, with surveys consistently revealing negative perceptions of government effectiveness, political parties, and leadership figures (Giugni and Grasso 2021; Hooghe and Wilkenfeld 2008). This demographic demonstrates markedly lower confidence in conventional political structures compared to older generations. Furthermore, electoral behaviour research demonstrates that young citizens represent the least politically engaged demographic across numerous developed democracies, exhibiting diminished electoral participation upon reaching voting eligibility – a pattern that frequently persists throughout their lifespans (Dassonneville 2017; Franklin 2004). This sustained electoral abstention among younger adults poses significant challenges to the perceived legitimacy of legislative bodies and their elected officials.

Empirical evidence regarding the growing criticism of young people towards democracy can also be found at the elite level. For instance, membership rates in traditional political parties have been declining, a trend partly related to the growing distance or criticism from young people towards party organizations (van Haute and Gauja 2015), which in turn contributes to widening the age gap among elected representatives (Stockemer and Sundström 2022). In addition, findings on the evolution of descriptive representation over recent decades suggest that newly formed parties, particularly anti-system or populist ones, are more likely to recruit representatives from younger generations (e.g. Freire et al. 2020). This strategy helps to further differentiate them from traditional and mainstream political forces, which have overwhelmingly privileged middle-aged politicians (Stockemer and Sundström 2018). Yet it is not clear whether young candidates display distinct political attitudes towards democracy compared to older politicians. This study aims to contribute to this literature by focusing on candidates' attitudes towards electoral democracy, examining whether young representatives hold distinct beliefs compared to older cohorts, as well as whether populism play a moderating role in these perceptions.

This paper aims to shed light on the relationship between age and democratic attitudes by providing two important contributions. The first is to explore differences in political attitudes towards democracy displayed by young candidates in comparison to older ones. We add to the existing literature on the relationship between age and democratic attitudes by investigating this relationship at the candidate level. This is a key stratum of office-seekers not only because they are prospective candidates, but also because of their role in bridging the gap between top leadership and grassroots supporters. Our knowledge about candidates' democratic attitudes is very limited, particularly from a comparative perspective. The second contribution examines the moderating influence of populist affiliation, specifically investigating whether young candidates from populist parties exhibit distinctive perspectives on electoral democracy compared to their counterparts

from non-populist political organizations. Therefore, this paper answers to the following questions: Do young candidates show higher levels of dissatisfaction with the way democracies work compared to older politicians? To what extent are young candidates more likely to display lower levels of confidence in elections and higher support for direct democracy than older candidates? And do young candidates belonging to populist parties differ on their views towards democracy from candidates of non-populist parties? To address these questions, we examine candidates' attitudes towards several aspects of electoral democracies using data from the Comparative Candidates Survey (CCS). Although existing scholarship has explored the political attitudes of candidates and MPs to some extent (De Winter, Karlsen, and Schmitt 2020), significant gaps remain. In particular, the differentiation between young and older candidates, as well as the moderating influence of populism, has received limited attention.

Analyzing the connection between age, democratic attitudes and populism in political candidates is crucial for several reasons. First, this analysis enriches our knowledge of party elites, focusing on a critical stratum since young candidates play a key role in mobilizing citizens during election campaigns and connecting representative institutions to the electorate, particularly to young adults.¹ Despite the conventional wisdom that supportive attitudes among office-seekers are crucial for the stability and survival of democracy, there are few empirical studies investigating the extent to which young politicians hold distinct beliefs about democracy.

Second, this study deepens our understanding of the distinctiveness of populist parties, especially given their often-ambiguous relationship with representative democracies. Young politicians in populist parties may exemplify this distinctiveness, further setting them apart from traditional political actors. Populism's emphasis on challenging the status quo and promoting the voice of the 'people' can align with younger candidates' desires for political innovation and change (Maggini 2016; Zuilanello 2018). By focusing on young populist candidates, we can gain insights into how these elites contribute to the dissemination of democratic values and the reinforcement of representative democracy. In addition, populist forces have gained a growing political space in European parliamentary democracies over the last decades. Empirical research has also shown that these parties have played a key role in terms of political socialization, for example by strengthening affective polarization and the creation of new identities, often leading to higher levels of (electoral or non-electoral) mobilization (Davis, Goodliffe, and Hawkins 2024; Pirro and Portos 2020; see also Gattinara and Pirro 2024).

Finally, understanding candidates' attitudes, particularly those of young populists, has systemic implications. Populist discourse challenges the traditional political establishment, potentially leading to significant policy shifts, political instability or democratic reforms. Yet political parties cannot be characterized as monolithic entities; consequently, examining political preferences across diverse intra-party strata (or groups) provides greater insight into both the extent of ideological coherence within political organizations and the significant variations that exist between different party subgroups (Andreadis and Ruth 2018). Young candidates belonging to populist parties may be more sceptical of representative democracy and advocate for direct democracy or other reforms. Therefore, investigating the link between age and populism not only sheds light on the characteristics of these parties but also on their broader impact on democratic systems.

In a nutshell, the results show that younger candidates tend to report greater satisfaction with democracy and more positive attitudes toward electoral representation. Moreover, populist affiliation appears to moderate the effect of age, and this influence grows stronger as candidates get older. Put differently, while young prospective MPs generally exhibit positive democratic attitudes, the rise of populist parties could deepen generational divides and accelerate the erosion of democratic principles among political elites. This paper therefore lends support to the argument that belonging to a populist party has a significant impact on the individual's views towards democracy: despite the generational differences that distinguish younger candidates from their older counterparts, the findings stress the significant role of socialization processes within populist elites in shaping one's beliefs about democracy. Ultimately, this study offers valuable insights into how populist discourse influences representative democracies, suggesting that populist contexts at the elite-level may affect – and potentially undermine – democratic norms and attitudes over time.

This paper explores the intersection of age, democratic attitudes and populism. The first substantive section develops a theoretical framework used to elaborate the main hypotheses, synthesizing existing research on young people's attitudes towards democracy and populist dynamics. We then outline our methodological approach, detailing the data sources and analytical techniques employed in the study. The subsequent section presents and interprets the key empirical findings, revealing the nuanced relationships uncovered through our research. In the conclusion, we distil our primary insights, critically reflect on the study's contributions, and propose avenues for future scholarly investigation.

Young people, democratic attitudes and populism

The erosion of democratic legitimacy has emerged as a critical challenge in contemporary political landscapes, characterized by widespread disillusionment and declining institutional trust. Citizens increasingly perceive representative institutions as disconnected from their lived experiences and material interests, generating a pervasive sense of political alienation (e.g. Dalton 2004; Norris 2011). One key driver of this disenchantment with politics is the growing distance between young citizens and mainstream parties. Scholarship has shown not only that young people display lower levels of turnout (Dassonneville 2017; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Smets 2012), but also that they have distinct preferences when selecting representatives. From this standpoint, young people are more likely to vote for anti-system forces like Pirate parties or the radical right (Maggini 2016; Zulianello 2019). These distinct patterns of voting behaviour seem to be strongly related to the process of dealignment that young voters have experienced over the last decades. Indeed, young people are less likely to develop strong partisan identities, especially towards mainstream parties (e.g. Dalton 2007). Moreover, older people seem to be more attached to established and traditional mechanisms of representative democracy, whereas young people are more likely to support alternative democratic tools such as sortition or direct democracy (Denemark, Donovan, and Niemi 2016; Jacquet et al. 2020). Ultimately, these trends seem to question young people's support towards representative democracy.

Empirical research indicates that there are differences – albeit rather modest – between distinct age groups in terms of regime support (Alexander and Welzel 2011; Norris 2017;

Voeten 2017). A widely cited study argued that millennials has turned away from democracy, not only because of economic insecurity, but also because of the impact of societal changes related to individualization and socialization (Foa and Mounk 2017). Although some analyses have questioned these results (Alexander and Welzel 2017; Zilinsky 2019), there appears to be a tentative agreement that this is not something just related to contextual effects. In fact, age differences present significant differences in terms of democratic attitudes, as young people seem to be somewhat more favourable to alternative ways of ruling and less supportive of traditional representative democracies (Grassi, Portos, and Felicetti 2024; Voeten 2017). In addition, scholarship also highlight that young tend to prefer more direct, elite challenging and engaging forms of political participation (Dalton 2007; Pickard 2019).

Although the relationship between age and representative democracy has been extensively investigated at the mass level, we know very little in terms of the differences between distinct age groups at the elite level. The most consistent body of scholarship has examined this connection primarily through the lens of demographic mirroring, concentrating on how different age cohorts are reflected within political institutions and decision-making bodies. This body of work has shown that, especially in Western Europe, there is an overrepresentation of middle-aged to senior MPs (e.g. Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014; Narud and Valen 2000). Overall, substantial research documents the pronounced disparity between national age demographics and the significantly older age composition of legislative bodies within those same countries (see Joshi 2013; Stockemer and Sundström 2018).

The representation gap among young people stems from mainstream parties' persistent failure to recruit youth. Party membership has not only declined but also significantly aged, rendering most parties unable to attract younger generations or offer them meaningful leadership roles (Heidar and Wauters 2018; van Haute and Gauja 2015). This systemic exclusion has created a profound disconnect between political institutions and emerging demographic cohorts. Another important determinant of this representation gap is related to the lower levels of success of young candidates in running in electoral competition. Indeed, empirical research found that young candidates tend to belong to smaller, poorer and more marginal parties (Belschner 2024). Young candidates are also more likely to lack political experience and to spend significantly less money on their campaigns. Moreover, young candidates are more prone to be placed on lower list positions and receive fewer preferences in candidate centred systems, as well as they tend to be nominated in electoral districts where they have little or no chance of winning (Belschner 2024; Gélis and Chassé 2024).

Empirical research has also shown that young MP's have distinct views and behaviour regarding diverse political matters (e.g. Hájek 2019). For instance, studies have found that younger deputies are generally more progressive and liberal on social issues like LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality and environment protection (Siegel et al. 2022). They are also more inclined to adopt emerging technologies and digital platforms for political communication and civic engagement. Additionally, age influences how candidates perceive political representation, particularly in shaping the priorities and style of their mandates.

While age differences significantly shape distinct attitudes and behaviours among political representatives across institutional contexts, these variations become particularly pronounced in views on democratic processes. Indeed, older representatives tend to

support representative democracy rather than participatory democracy, reflecting a generational preference for more traditional political engagement models (Heinelt 2013). One possible explanation is that different age groups have had distinct historical and social experiences, leading to different worldviews, including human nature and the role of citizens in politics. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the context of the cultural change and the diffusion of post-materialist values (Inglehart 1990), which has brought about significant social and political changes since the late 1960s.

Surprisingly, empirical studies based on candidate surveys have not examined the role of age in determining how party elites interpret their representative role and the extent to which they exhibit distinct political beliefs. Exploratory research highlights the importance of candidate status, i.e. whether it pertains to elite or non-elite groups (Zittel 2020). This study found that candidates with prior legislative experience at the local, regional, or national level tend to have more positive views of democracy. Partisanship also plays a key role in shaping support for democratic systems. Candidates who are ideologically aligned with their party are more likely to express favourable attitudes toward the functioning of representative democracy. Additionally, party size influences these perceptions: candidates from larger parties with greater access to power (i.e. higher vote shares) are generally more positive about democracy than those representing smaller parties. These results highlight the relevance of accounting for partisanship, institutional incentives and strategic motivations as control variables when examining candidates' political attitudes. A full discussion of these controls is provided in the data and methods section.

From a rational choice perspective, one could argue that young people eligible to stand for election can be just as supportive of democracy as older generations. Political recruitment theories rightly emphasize the role of ambition and personal incentives – such as career advancement – in shaping the behaviour of young politicians, often leading them to align their preferences with those of the broader political class. However, empirical research in social psychology and studies on MPs' behaviour reveal significant variation in politicians' motivations and beliefs, challenging the assumptions of rational choice (e.g. office-seeking) theories and suggesting a more complex picture.

From this viewpoint a common approach used to explain political elites' opinions relies on socialization theories, which emphasize the role of the 'formative years' of early adulthood in shaping political attitudes and behaviour (Jennings 2007; Mannheim 1927). According to this perspective, the intertwined effects of time period and generational change are central to understanding the evolving relationship between citizens and politics (Grasso 2016; Serra and Smets 2022). Across all European countries, research consistently shows a decline in support for democracy and decreased engagement with traditional political institutions (Inglehart 2016; Kriesi 2020; Sloam 2014). Given the conventional wisdom regarding the differing political attitudes of the young, it is plausible to expect that young politicians will be more critical, if not outright dissatisfied, with the functioning of democracies compared to older representatives. This assumption is based on the premise that young candidates will be less supportive of traditional representative institutions than older MPs and will exhibit a greater inclination towards unconventional politics.

To provide a more robust and systematic test of this argument, we consider the complexity and multidimensionality of the notion of democracy by using various dimensions

of political representation as dependent variables (e.g. Ferrin and Kriesi 2016; Norris 2011). First, we explore young candidates' satisfaction with democracy, a conventional indicator of political support frequently included in many studies (Bellucci and Memoli 2012; Tsatsanis et al. 2021). Second, we examine young candidates' views on elections, recognizing them as a cornerstone of democratic representation and a crucial mechanism for linking citizens' preferences to political institutions and decision-making processes. Third, we expect young candidates to have more positive preferences towards instruments of direct democracy. Hence, our first set of hypotheses states the following:

H1a: Younger candidates are more likely to be less satisfied with democratic functioning compared to old ones.

H1b: Younger candidates exhibit lower support for conventional electoral processes compared to older candidates.

H1c: Younger candidates demonstrate a stronger preference for direct democracy mechanisms relative to their older counterparts.

The emergence of populism has significantly intensified age-based political divisions, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that continues to reshape contemporary politics. Age-based political cleavages have deepened considerably as populist movements gained traction across democratic societies. Younger and older generations increasingly find themselves on opposite sides of political debates, with populist rhetoric deliberately exploiting and amplifying these differences. Populist leaders have strategically leveraged age-based grievances to mobilize support. For older generations, populists often appeal to nostalgia for an idealized past and concerns about rapid societal changes. For younger voters, populist movements sometimes channel frustrations about economic precarity and unresponsive political systems. This bidirectional relationship means that age not only influences susceptibility to populist appeals but that populist messaging itself reinforces and deepens generational divides.

Our research seeks to address this scholarly blind spot by examining how populism mediates young politicians' conceptualizations of democracy.² Specifically, we argue that young candidates affiliated with populist parties demonstrate markedly different perspectives on representative democracy compared to their counterparts in traditional political parties. These divergent views stem from populist parties' distinctive interpretative frameworks that challenge established liberal democratic mechanisms.

The novelty of our approach lies in examining how populist discourse functions as an intervening variable, shaping the relationship between young political actors and their opinions on representative democracy. By centring populism as a critical analytical lens, we aim to reveal how alternative political narratives can fundamentally transform understanding of democratic processes, particularly among emerging political generations. Populist parties, with their distinctive anti-establishment rhetoric and direct democracy claims, offer a unique context for exploring how political representation is conceptualized and contested in contemporary democratic systems.

Although most scholars argue that populists are not inherently anti-democratic, their rhetoric frequently challenges the legitimacy of representative democracies and often conveys criticism – if not outright hostility – towards key democratic institutions (e.g. Vachudova 2021). Populists typically advocate for an alternative mode of representation,

questioning the core principles of democracy by asserting that elections are ineffective and that traditional elites have corrupted the 'true' will of the people (Pakulski 2018). Consequently, many populist actors are perceived as radical, as they criticize existing political systems while leveraging democratic and institutional mechanisms to advance their agendas (Betz 1994; Damiani 2020).

Empirical research finds a consistent association between younger generations and populist discourse. In response to younger voters' growing antipathy toward traditional political structures, political parties – particularly anti-system and radical ones – are increasingly tailoring their strategies to attract and mobilize this segment of the electorate (De Vries and Hobolt 2020). These forces often advocate for significant reforms to representative institutions, aligning with the anti-elitist discourse characteristic of populist movements. Populist parties typically criticize the existing democratic framework, positioning themselves as champions of the 'common people' against the 'corrupt elite'. This rhetoric resonates with disillusioned young voters, who may feel marginalized or frustrated within the current political system (e.g. Harrison 2020). Consequently, they are drawn to populist narratives that promise direct democracy and systemic change.

Democratic dissatisfaction of young people is a key factor for explaining the populist wave that has emerged in western societies over the last decades. Indeed, populist criticism towards liberal representative democracies and the disconnection between societal interests and political representatives resonate with most of the feelings of younger generations. Pioneering research on the mediating role of populism on political attitudes indicates that young citizens with higher populist attitudes tend to display lower support for liberal democracy, whereas the conventional dimension of democratic support did not significantly correlate with populist attitudes (Foa et al. 2020; Zanotti and Rama 2021). These findings are also confirmed in different case studies, as a significant proportion of young people show a strong correlation between populist (right-wing) opinions and distrust in political elites and mainstream political parties (Körner et al. 2023; Seippel and Strandbu 2017). Support of populist right-wing ideologies plays a key role in fostering more negative perceptions of how well political institutions represent the interests of the young.

With respect to sympathizers of populist parties, scholarly research suggests that citizens have more antipathy towards democracy, while they tend to be more attracted by authoritarian alternatives (Belchior and Teixeira 2024). Scholarship also found that supporters of populist parties or citizens with populist attitudes show increasing preferences for direct democracy (Mohrenberg et al. 2019; Seyd, Curtice, and Rose 2018; Wegscheider, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Van Hauwaert 2023) and openness for reform (Wuttke, Schimpf, and Schoen 2023). Finally, a comparative study found that individuals who sympathize with populist parties tend to be less inclined to liberal democracy but more to direct democracy, while opposition to both left-wing and right-wing populists display an opposite understanding (Wegscheider, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Van Hauwaert 2023).

While scholarship has widely examined the official discourse of political parties (or their leaders), we lack empirical evidence at the meso level, that is, what prospective representatives or candidates think regarding democracy and its alternatives. In addition, traditional explanations for the support of democratic alternatives, such as the detachment from politics, are not relevant for explaining why politically integrated and highly mobilized citizens display variations in their democratic attitudes. We also know

that political attitudes may significantly vary across different types of party actors – i.e. rank-and-file, middle-level elites or leaders (e.g. Norris 1995). For instance, if we look at party members, populist rhetoric does not seem to affect individuals' democratic attitudes. Indeed, populist parties' members do not display significant disparities regarding the levels of dissatisfaction towards democracy, political trust and political interest (Das-sonneville and McAllister 2023).

Populist parties have been the focus of growing scholarly attention over the last decades also at the supply-side level. Populist representatives exhibit a distinctive approach to democratic participation, characterized by a lower satisfaction with democracy itself, and simultaneously displaying scepticism towards traditional electoral mechanisms (Gherghina, Pilet, and Mitru 2024; Niessen, Schiffino, and Jacquet 2018). Their political ideology strongly advocates for direct democracy instruments, reflecting a fundamental challenge to established representational political structures.

While a growing body of research has explored populism and political attitudes toward democracy, empirical evidence specifically addressing the role of age in shaping these dynamics remains limited. Our main argument is that populism is an important mediating factor in the link between age and democratic attitudes. To test this proposition, and grounded in our review of the literature, we formulate a second set of hypotheses:

H2a: Younger candidates belonging to populist parties will present higher levels of democratic dissatisfaction compared to younger candidates from non-populist parties.

H2b: Younger candidates belonging to populist parties will present more negative attitudes towards elections compared to younger candidates from non-populist parties.

H2c: Younger candidates belonging to populist parties will present higher levels of support towards direct democracy compared to younger candidates from non-populist parties.

Data and methods

This study relies on data from the Comparative Candidates Survey (CCS), as it compiles survey responses from parliamentary candidates across different democracies in Western and Eastern Europe. In particular, it draws on three CCS Modules that cover elections held between 2005 and 2024, comprising 18 countries and a total of 31 817 candidate-year observations. These observations represent 184 political parties, of which 38 (20.6%) are labelled as populist parties; 5 102 candidates (16.0%) are affiliated with the latter. A detailed breakdown of country and election-year distributions is available in Table A1 (Appendix), as well as an overview on the age distribution of candidates by country (see Figure A1, Appendix).

Age is the key predictor of attitudes towards democratic representation in this analysis, but additional sociodemographic and political controls are included in regression models to account for differences among candidates. Specifically, these not only comprise gender and the education level, but also the length of party membership, and whether the candidate was elected in the current election. The models also include the candidates' self-assessed electoral chances. These covariates are included to ensure that the effects of age are not confounded by other factors, and thus to control for the potential effect of political and party socialization, as it helps to isolate the sole effect of age and to disentangle any generational dynamics at play.

Party- and system-level variables are also considered in the analysis. Firstly, candidates' parties are classified as either populist or non-populist, according to the classification provided by The PopuList (Rooduijn et al. 2023), and further characterized by their ideological stance, governing status at the time of a given election, and previous vote share. Then, at a systemic level, the models control for democratic consolidation and region (i.e. Western or Eastern Europe), and the electoral system, using the Gallagher Index of Disproportionality. A full list of control variables, along with their sources and measurement details, is available in Table A2 (see online Appendix). Descriptive statistics for all variables in the analysis are provided in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Three positional, opinion-items are considered as dependent variables: the candidates' level of satisfaction with democracy, to account for one important dimension of political support; the evaluation of the quality of MPs' representation of the voters' views through elections (i.e. the evaluation of electoral representation); and the candidates' perspective on the use of referenda and its merits as a mechanism of decision-making (i.e. the evaluation of direct democracy). The items' scales and wording are described in Table 1 below.

The analysis employs ordered logit models to test both sets of hypotheses, incorporating nested random effects for countries within specific election years. This approach reflects the hierarchical nature of the data, as candidates belong to different political parties, and these are grouped within countries across different elections. By accounting for both within- and between-country variation over time, models account for how contextual factors influence individual attitudes on democracy and representation. The inclusion of nested random effects ensures that country- and time-specific influences are captured, thus allowing for variations that are not fully explained by the fixed effects in the intercepts.

Empirical analysis

Table 1 displays the coefficients for the models using age as a main predictor for the positioning of candidates regarding the different views on democracy, alongside individual-

Table 1. Opinion-items' wording and respective scales.

Designation	Question	Scale
Satisfaction with democracy	Satisfaction with democracy in own country	1 = not at all satisfied 2 = not very satisfied 3 = fairly satisfied 4 = very satisfied
Electoral representation	How well do elections ensure that MPs represent the views of voters?	1 = not well at all 2 = not very well 3 = fairly well 4 = very well
Negative view of referenda	Opinion: Referenda tend to be poorly thought out and make bad law	1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = disagree 5 = strongly disagree

Source: Comparative Candidates Survey (2022).

Note: As the original response scales of the CCS items vary across the three modules, we have recoded the outcome variables to ensure comparability and consistency across all modules. We have also opted to standardize the direction of the scales, so that higher values consistently reflect greater satisfaction or support for the respective models of democracy.

level controls (Models 1, 3, and 5); and additional party- and system-level covariates (Models 2, 4, and 6).

According to these models, H1a and H1b seem to be rejected. In fact, results indicate that, contrary to expectations, younger candidates are more likely to present more positive views on democratic satisfaction and electoral representation, as significant coefficients are consistent across specifications that control for individual and contextual variables (see [Table 2](#)). In spite of the coefficients' negligible magnitude, their negative direction suggests that as candidates grow older, their likelihood of expressing democratic satisfaction decreases. Likewise, the log-odds of reporting positive positions on electoral representation tends to diminish as well. In regard to H1c, Models 5 and 6 fail to support the latter: both estimates suggest no observable impact, indicating no association between age and the candidates' views on the use of referenda. All in all, younger political candidates seem to exhibit greater satisfaction and confidence in representative institutions, but this association does not robustly extend to direct democratic procedures.

Additional socio-demographic and political controls present significant effects as well. While gender is not significantly associated with any of the political attitudes under study, both education and length of party membership present robust and similar results. Specifically, candidates with higher levels of education and longer party affiliation are more likely to express democratic satisfaction and hold positive views of electoral representation ([Table 2](#)). Simultaneously, these two variables are negatively and significantly associated with opinions on the use of direct democracy: this indicates that more educated and longer-affiliated candidates tend to be more sceptical about the use of referenda. Furthermore, currently elected candidates are significantly more likely to state positive opinions on satisfaction with democracy and electoral representation, even though no statistically robust association is observed in relation to direct democracy (despite the negative direction of the coefficients). Finally, candidates with higher self-perceived chances of winning a seat are particularly likely to hold favourable views of electoral representation.

Furthermore, candidates from right-leaning parties are more likely to present positive views on satisfaction with democracy and electoral representation, while also exhibiting greater scepticism toward the use of referenda as a democratic tool ([Table 2](#)). Likewise, affiliation to governing parties and with higher seat share are linked to more positive views with regard to democratic satisfaction and elections, alongside more critical views of direct democracy. Taken together, these findings suggest that candidates from electorally stronger parties tend to evaluate the functioning of representative institutions and elections more positively, while showing greater caution on the role of referenda in decision-making. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the results suggest there is not necessarily a trade-off between representative and direct democracy at the elite level, as is often observed at the mass level. Overall, these findings support socialization theories, which emphasize that political experiences and the ways in which young people are integrated into the political sphere play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes toward democracy. However, when focusing solely on the results related to conventional dimensions of representative democracy (H1a and H1b), it is possible that rational motivations contribute to positively shaping young candidates' beliefs.

In turn, country-level variables generally present non-significant coefficients, and only electoral systems seem to effectively matter: candidates from more disproportionate



Table 2. Ordered logit models of age as main predictor of democratic attitudes, controlling for socio-demographic, political, party, and country-level factors.

	Model 1 Satisfaction with democracy	Model 2 Satisfaction with democracy	Model 3 View of electoral represent.	Model 4 View of electoral represent.	Model 5 Negative view of referenda	Model 6 Negative view of referenda
Age	-0.013*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.011*** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.002)
Gender	0.047 (0.033)	0.054 (0.035)	-0.045 (0.035)	-0.031 (0.037)	0.010 (0.036)	0.023 (0.038)
Education	0.088*** (0.014)	0.099*** (0.015)	0.097*** (0.014)	0.091*** (0.016)	-0.071*** (0.014)	-0.101*** (0.016)
Years in party	0.022*** (0.002)	0.011*** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.009*** (0.002)
Electoral chances	0.044* (0.019)	-0.011 (0.020)	0.113*** (0.020)	0.076*** (0.021)	-0.022 (0.020)	0.002 (0.021)
Current election	0.401*** (0.067)	0.331*** (0.071)	0.986*** (0.072)	0.937*** (0.076)	-0.044 (0.069)	-0.033 (0.073)
Ideology		0.087*** (0.007)		0.058*** (0.008)		-0.054*** (0.008)
Governing status		0.194*** (0.044)		0.202*** (0.046)		-0.164*** (0.048)
Vote share		0.021*** (0.002)		0.019*** (0.002)		-0.008*** (0.002)
Pre-1980		0.170 (0.616)		0.962 (0.709)		-0.567 (0.331)
Electoral system		-0.177*** (0.039)		-0.158*** (0.033)		0.049* (0.024)
Western/ Eastern		-0.814 (0.695)		0.459 (0.808)		-1.028* (0.437)
Not at All Satisfied Not Very Satisfied	-1.913*** (0.235)	-2.192*** (0.530)	-1.621*** (0.216)	-1.205 (0.690)		
Not Very Satisfied Fairly Satisfied	0.141 (0.234)	-0.022 (0.529)	0.770*** (0.216)	1.255 (0.690)		
Fairly Satisfied Very Satisfied	3.133*** (0.236)	3.029*** (0.530)	4.404*** (0.220)	4.922*** (0.692)		
Not Well at All Not Very Well						
Not Very Well Fairly Well						
Fairly Well Very Well						

systems are more likely to hold negative opinions with regard to democratic satisfaction and electoral representation (Table 2). The distinction between Western and Eastern democracies shows no significant results, but it emerges as a modest, yet significant predictor of attitudes toward referenda: candidates from more consolidated democracies are less likely to support direct democracy, as indicated by a negative log-odds coefficient ($-1.028, p < 0.05$).

To better illustrate the substantive effects of the log-odds coefficients, Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities for each response category across the outcome variables: satisfaction with democracy, and views on electoral representation and the use of referenda. First, the patterns reinforce the main findings from the logit models, namely regarding the rejection of H1a and H1b: younger candidates are in fact more likely to express positive views about the functioning of democracy and the role of elections. In both cases, moderately positive evaluations are consistently the most likely responses across the age spectrum, but the likelihood of selecting these responses is notably higher among younger candidates (Figure 1). Holding all other variables constant, an 18-year-old candidate has a 0.59 chance of being fairly satisfied with democracy, as well as a 0.55 likelihood of assessing the role of elections in ensuring parliamentary representation as functioning fairly well. As previously suggested by the models, these values steadily decline with age, dropping to 0.50 and 0.45 on satisfaction with democracy and electoral representation, respectively. In other words, the predicted probability of selecting these moderately positive responses drops by 9–10 percentage points, from the youngest to the oldest candidates, thus reflecting a general erosion of positive evaluations over the candidates' life cycle – conversely, the likelihood of expressing more negative assessments increases with age. This trend is especially pronounced for satisfaction with democracy, as evidenced by the predicted probabilities for opinions on electoral representation, which are accompanied by relatively wide confidence intervals. While the overall direction remains clear, the overlap between the intervals of 'fairly well' and 'not well at all' after approximately age 40 calls for cautious interpretations of these effects (Figure 1).

The more extreme categories (i.e. those expressing either very positive or very negative evaluations) tend to exhibit lower probabilities and subtler variations, but the overall pattern holds, as younger candidates are consistently more likely to show more

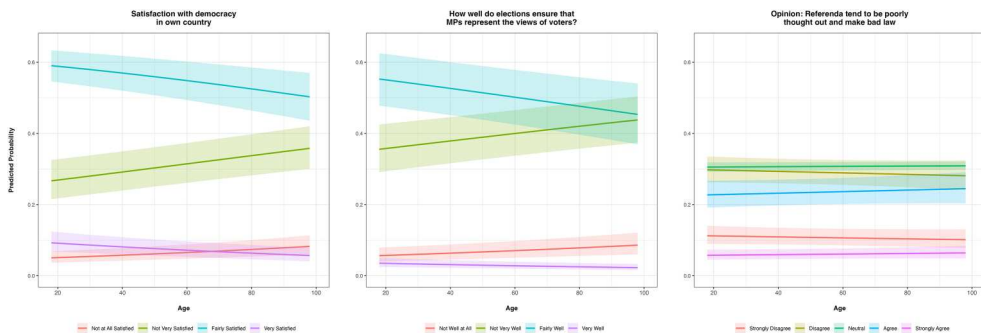


Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of political attitudes by age: satisfaction with democracy, electoral representation, and negative views on referenda. Obs.: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

favourable views in both domains. Indeed, in an illustrative way concerning democratic satisfaction, it is worth noting that candidates aged 18 are more likely to report being very satisfied than to express absolute dissatisfaction – a difference that gradually diminishes and eventually reverses after approximately age 60.

Second, the results regarding views on referenda are less straightforward, though they present a slight tendency towards neutrality and disagreement. Moreover, [Figure 1](#) indicates that the predicted probabilities of agreement and disagreement tend to vary in opposite directions: while the probability of disagreement decreases with age, agreement with negative views on referenda becomes slightly more likely among older candidates. However, both responses reveal reduced marginal age-related effects, around 2 percentage points in each case, and they are accompanied by substantial overlaps in confidence intervals. A similar pattern holds with greater robustness for candidates who strongly agree or disagree, as the overlap between their confidence intervals is only marginal ([Figure 1](#)). Overall, these results suggest that attitudes towards the use of referenda do not substantially vary with age.

Turning to the moderating effect of populism, one can observe that the interaction terms between age and affiliation to a populist party consistently exhibit significant coefficients, even if modest in some cases ([Table 3](#)). This pattern supports the general argument that populist affiliation may thus moderate the effect of age on political attitudes and opinions. While model estimates provide a first indication of the nature of such association, further nuance is offered through marginal means.

In the first place, the combined effect of age and populism on satisfaction with democracy is negative and reaches conventional levels of statistical significance, thus supporting H2a (-0.009 , $p < 0.01$). While the effect of age amongst non-populist candidates has a negligible, non-significant coefficient (0.002 , $SE = 0.002$), the significant interaction between age and populism indicates a steeper decline in democratic satisfaction with age among populist candidates as these become older. In other words, the expectation that younger candidates from populist parties are more dissatisfied with democracy than their mainstream counterparts finds empirical support, indicating that the effect of age indeed varies by populist affiliation. [Figure 2](#) displays the predicted probabilities for each response category, and it provides a visual summary of the previous findings. In fact, among younger candidates, those affiliated with populist parties have a substantially lower probability of reporting being fairly or very satisfied with democracy, while also presenting greater chances of responding that they are not at all or not very satisfied. Notably, however, while the overall effect is more pronounced among candidates from populist parties, the difference associated to populist affiliation tends to widen with age ([Figure 2](#)). In summary, the significance of the interaction term might thus denote that a populist party affiliation could moderate the effect of aging: as candidates grow older, the likelihood of expressing dissatisfaction with democracy increases at a more pronounced rate for the candidates belonging to a populist party (compared to their non-populist counterparts, for whom aging is suggested to have a more modest effect).

Likewise, with respect to H2b, findings support the empirical expectation. The pattern is thus consistent with that observed in H2a: younger candidates from populist parties are more likely to share unfavourable views towards electoral representation (-0.011 , $p < 0.01$), compared to those that are members of a mainstream party. However, for this

Table 3. Ordered logit models of the interaction effects of age and populism.

	Model 1 Satisfaction with democracy	Model 2 View of electoral represent.	Model 3 Negative view of referenda
Age	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)
Populism	-0.538*** (0.159)	-0.152 (0.169)	1.620*** (0.184)
Gender	0.106** (0.035)	-0.000 (0.037)	-0.032 (0.039)
Education	0.062*** (0.015)	0.067*** (0.016)	-0.065*** (0.016)
Years in party	0.006** (0.002)	0.006** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Electoral chances	-0.001 (0.020)	0.085*** (0.021)	-0.015 (0.021)
Current election	0.333*** (0.071)	0.937*** (0.076)	0.000 (0.073)
Ideology	0.126*** (0.008)	0.084*** (0.008)	-0.107*** (0.009)
Governing status	0.107* (0.045)	0.151** (0.046)	-0.031 (0.048)
Vote share	0.025*** (0.002)	0.022*** (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.002)
Pre-1980	0.078 (0.617)	0.936 (0.739)	-0.381 (0.363)
Electoral system	-0.174*** (0.039)	-0.152*** (0.034)	0.034 (0.025)
Western/ Eastern	-0.993 (0.719)	0.365 (0.841)	-0.813 (0.446)
Age:Populism	-0.009** (0.003)	-0.011** (0.003)	-0.008* (0.004)
Not at All Satisfied Not Very Satisfied	-2.338*** (0.550)		
Not Very Satisfied Fairly Satisfied	-0.115 (0.549)		
Fairly Satisfied Very Satisfied	2.976*** (0.550)		
Not Well at All Not Very Well		-1.225 (0.720)	
Not Very Well Fairly Well		1.267 (0.720)	
Fairly Well Very Well		4.948*** (0.721)	
Strongly Agree Agree			-4.248*** (0.365)
Agree Neutral			-2.345*** (0.363)
Neutral Disagree			-1.026** (0.362)
Disagree Strongly Disagree			0.735* (0.363)
Log Likelihood	-14229.234	-12548.191	-14469.312
AIC	28496.468	25134.381	28978.624
BIC	28640.263	25276.948	29123.127
Num. obs.	14302	13407	10149
Groups (Country:Year)	24	21	20
Groups (Year)	12	12	11
Variance: Country:Year: (Intercept)	0.569	0.351	0.254
Variance: Year: (Intercept)	0.034	0.124	0.010

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

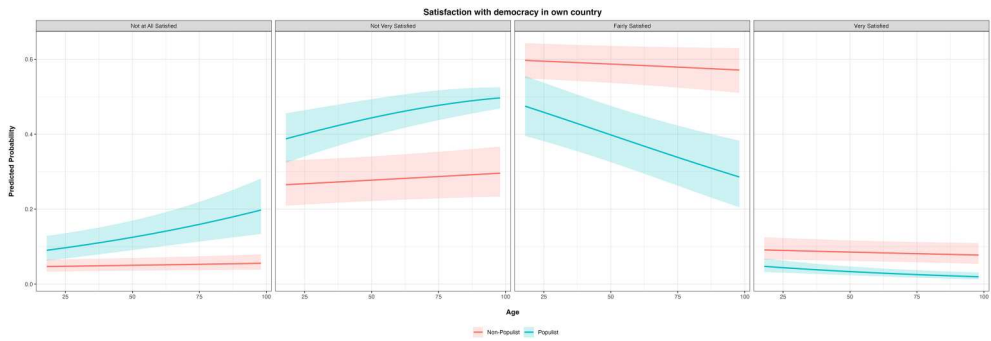


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of satisfaction with democracy by age, for populist and non-populist parties. Obs.: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

outcome variable, it should be noted that differences in the probability of each response category between populist and non-populist candidates are considerably reduced at younger ages (Figure 3). In particular, the confidence intervals for predicted probabilities across all categories exhibit a considerable overlap until approximately ages 25–30. This indicates that the distinctiveness of populist affiliation in shaping the perceptions of elections in ensuring that MPs represent the electorate becomes more pronounced only beyond this age. While further research is necessarily required to clarify the position of younger populist candidates toward electoral representation, it may nonetheless plausible that the maturation of political beliefs, and the continuous process of party socialization might contribute to strengthening such attitudes.

Finally, the moderating role of populist party membership on age has only modest influence on the candidates' attitudes on direct democracy, thus lending relative empirical support to H2c (-0.008 , $p < 0.05$). Although the marginal effect size and significance recommend some caution in interpreting the results, the findings are nonetheless aligned with the posited hypothesis: candidates from populist parties are generally more likely to reject the assumption that 'referenda tend to be poorly thought out and make bad law'. In fact, across all ages, the predicted probability of a populist candidate disagreeing with this statement is consistently high, above the mark of 0.3 (Figure 4).

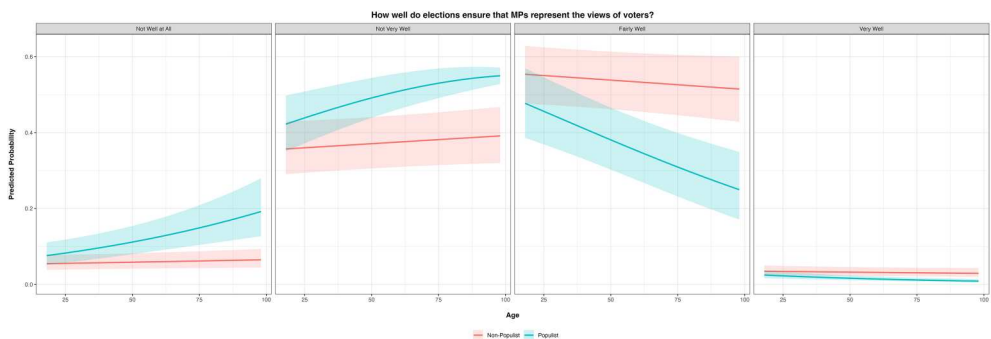


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of views on electoral representation by age, for populist and non-populist parties. Obs.: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

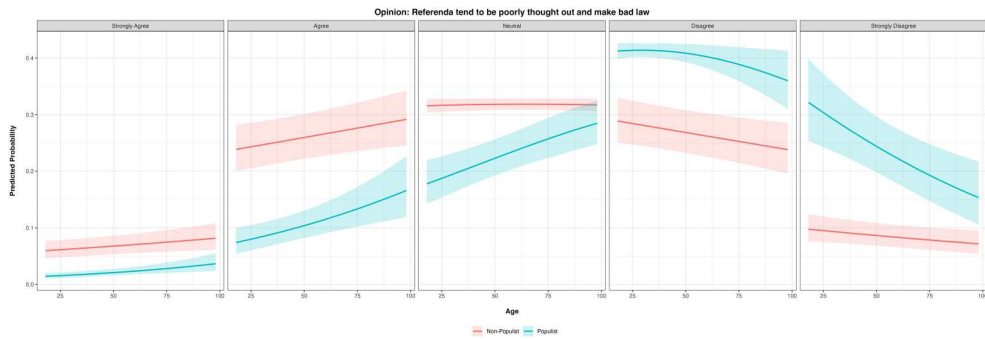


Figure 4. Predicted probabilities of views on referenda by age, for populist and non-populist parties. Obs.: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

This effect is particularly pronounced among younger candidates. For instance, the predicted probability of strongly disagreeing with the negative view on referenda declines from 0.32 at age 18 to 0.15 at age 98 for populist candidates (see Figure 4). In this case, unlike the patterns observed for the previous outcome variables, the most accentuated differences occur at earlier ages. While younger individuals are generally more inclined toward direct democracy, the evidence signals that this tendency is indeed substantially stronger among those affiliated with populist parties.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper addresses the role of age in shaping political candidates' attitudes toward various dimensions of representative democracy, an important line of inquiry, given evidence that younger candidates often hold distinct perspectives on democratic representation. Thereby, one might better understand the evolving nature of political attitudes across generations, shedding light on novel dynamics of youth political engagement and ultimately assessing the needs of representative democratic systems. While age is seen to be relevant, the effect of party-related aspects might not be neglected, namely its populist stance.

Overall, our analysis yields nuanced evidence regarding our central argument: age matters, and a party's populist stance might moderate such effect. With regard to the first set of hypotheses, one observes significant age-related patterns: younger candidates consistently express more positive attitudes toward both democratic satisfaction and electoral representation, thus opposing the expectations of both H1a and H1b. Importantly, the effect of age remains robust across models that include party- and country-related controls, apart from the individual-level variables, suggesting that generational differences may be fundamental rather than a mere consequence of institutional structures. Taken together, this consistent significance and direction of estimates lend robustness to the idea that younger candidates are more likely than older ones to positively evaluate the way democracy works and the representative function of elections. Our results might thus suggest that the political trajectory of young candidates enables them to counterbalance the frustration felt by many young people, who perceive a significant gap between the principles and the practice of democracy (see Cammaerts et al. 2016; Harrison 2020).

Most notably, while age seems to shape the attitudes discussed above, the examination of H1c offers no support for the expectation that younger candidates would be more likely to express positive views on direct democracy. This finding is particularly noteworthy when considering the candidates' position on direct procedures vis-à-vis representative mechanisms. While support for both forms of political decision-making may be seen as compatible within the institutional milieu of a representative democracy, the absence of a clear age effect among candidates might suggest that elite status may temper individuals' scepticism and criticism of representative politics.

While such results stress that the socialization process within the political elite and rational motivations tend to play a powerful role in mitigating negative beliefs about democracy, the candidates' age emerges as significantly associated to the likelihood of positive attitudes towards democratic satisfaction and electoral representation. Moreover, this occurs even when controlling for the effect of the length of party membership, winning chances, or current electoral success. While younger cohorts seem to present different democratic attitudes when distinguishing between the mass and elite level, generational differences remain evident among political representatives. Despite party socialization undoubtedly shaping political attitudes, our findings point to a distinct generational effect that differentiates younger candidates from their older counterparts. Although prolonged affiliation with a party typically fosters alignment with its ideological framework and normative positions, the persistent age-based differences we observe suggest that generational experiences transcend organizational socialization. However, we acknowledge that due to the limited longitudinal depth and unbalanced structure of the dataset across time and countries, the interpretation of these findings must be approached with caution, as the paper is unable to fully disentangle age effects from those specific to the cohort of young candidates under study. In other words, our findings may reflect not only age-based differences, but also cohort-specific contexts and patterns. While future research would benefit from a more robust longitudinal design to explore this effect, these results nonetheless contribute to scholarly discussions on how younger political actors respond to evolving democratic expectations, navigate different formative political events, and adapt to broader societal transformations that distinguish their political worldviews from those of previous generations (e.g. Grassi, Portos, and Felicetti 2024; Huttunen and Saikkonen 2023).

The moderating effect of populism on age-related political attitudes also reveals relevant findings: indeed, the interplay between populist party membership and generational differences produces nuanced outcomes that suggest populism shapes – but does not override – age-based political orientations. Notably, populism stresses the effect of age on candidates' democratic satisfaction and support for both electoral and direct forms of representation, even if this effect is less sharp for younger candidates when compared to older ones. In fact, this pattern may indicate that while generational preferences play a role in shaping political attitudes, the effect of populist affiliation intensifies with age: it is hence suggested that party socialization might become increasingly influential over the life course. Younger candidates from populist parties report similar attitudes to those of mainstream parties, but democratic satisfaction and support for electoral and direct democracy decline more sharply as they age, when compared to their non-populist peers. In other words, as candidates grow older, this gap between

individuals from populist and non-populist parties widens, indicating that prolonged exposure to a populist environment may reinforce scepticism toward democracy and political representation. In this line, this finding is particularly revealing, as it suggests that populist parties – in comparison to mainstream ones – may function as distinctive socializing contexts, reinforcing and amplifying age-related shifts in political attitudes. Ultimately, our analysis supports H2a, H2b and H2c, though with varying intensities of effect – indicating that populism moderates the likelihood of age-based attitudes toward certain aspects of democracy with different magnitudes and levels of robustness.

Our results highlight compelling topics for future research. First, there is a need for future research to focus on the candidates' own populist attitudes. Second, further research on the matter may also benefit from delving into a more detailed analysis of democratic dimensions, namely the rejection or support for liberal values and their interplay with participatory ones. Future avenues of research might also consider interesting to explore whether candidates' opinions also shape the policy direction of a democracy, in particular democratic reforms and the chances to build consensus on democratic innovations or key policy issues. Given that younger candidates are more inclined toward direct democracy, age may be a key factor in studying democratic reforms. Additionally, our findings offer insights into how populist parties shape their strategies to either mobilize or disengage young supporters. In particular, at the individual level, these dynamics could relate to recent research on party youth wings, which highlights how ideological alignment varies according to membership length and political ambition (McDonnell et al. 2025).

All in all, our findings hold significant implications for research aimed at comprehending the challenges faced by liberal democracies and the erosion of democratic legitimacy. For instance, the seemingly generational divide towards representative politics stresses the potential for age-oriented strategies for youth engagement and democratic reform. Moreover, the effect of populism underscores the need to address as well as the youth's representative demands.

Notes

1. Candidates, particularly those running for elected office, are typically viewed as part of the political elite due to their proximity to institutional power and their role in shaping political agendas. Even when they have not yet held office, the act of candidacy itself often implies access to party structures, networks of influence, and public platforms that distinguish them from ordinary citizens. This aligns with classical elite theory, which defines elites not solely by office-holding but by their capacity to influence political outcomes and participate in decision-making processes.
2. Despite the existence of different approaches, it is consensual to characterize populism as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde 2004, 542).

Acknowledgments

This article used OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-4o) for language improvements, specifically to enhance clarity and grammatical accuracy.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work is supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) under grant number 2022.11777.BD, and IPRI-NOVA (DOI 10.54499/UIDB/04627/2020).

References

- Alexander, A., and C. Welzel. 2011. "Measuring Effective Democracy: The Human Empowerment Approach." *Comparative Politics* 43 (3): 271–289. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041511795274931>.
- Alexander, A. C., and C. Welzel. 2017. "The Myth of Deconsolidation: Rising Liberalism and the Populist Reaction." ILE Working Paper Series 10.
- Andreadis, I., and S. P. Ruth. 2018. "Using Surveys to Measure the Populist Attitudes of Political Elites." In *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory and Method*, edited by K. A. Hawkins, R. Cardin, L. Littvay, and C. R. Kaltwasser, 112–127. London: Routledge.
- Belchior, A. M., and C. P. Teixeira. 2024. "Breaking with Mainstream Politics While Engaging with Polarized: Determinants of Young Europeans' Support for Democracy." *Journal of Youth Studies* 27 (7): 986–1005. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2187693>.
- Bellucci, P., and V. Memoli. 2012. "The Determinants of Democracy Satisfaction in Europe." In *Citizens and the European Polity: Mass Attitudes towards the European and National Politics*, edited by D. Sanders, P. Magalhães, and G. Tóka, 9–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Belschner, J. 2024. "Too Young to Win? Exploring the Sources of Age-Related Electoral Disadvantage." *Electoral Studies* 88.
- Betz, H. G. 1994. *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*. Basingstoke and London: The MacMillan Press.
- Cammaerts, B., M. Bruter, S. Banaji, S. Harrison, and N. Anstead. 2016. *Youth Participation in Democratic Life*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dalton, R. J. 2004. *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, R. J. 2007. *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Dalton, R. J., ed. 2011. *Engaging Youth in Politics*. New York: IDEBATE Press.
- Damiani, M. 2020. *Populist Radical Left Parties in Western Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dassonneville, R. 2017. "Age and Voting." In *The Sage Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*, edited by K. Arzheimer, G. Evans, and M. S. Lewis-Beck, 137–158. London: Sage.
- Dassonneville, R., and I. McAllister. 2023. "Are They Different? A Comparative Study of European Populist Party Members." *Party Politics* 29 (1): 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211060652>.
- Davis, B., J. Goodliffe, and K. Hawkins. 2024. "The Two-way Effects of Populism on Affective Polarization." *Comparative Political Studies* 58 (1): 122–154.
- Denemark, D., T. Donovan, and R. G. Niemi. 2016. "Advanced Democracies: The Erosion of Traditional Democratic Citizenship." In *Growing Up Democratic: Does It Make a Difference*, edited by D. Denemark, R. Mattes, and R. G. Niemi, 181–206. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- De Vries, C., and S. B. Hobolt. 2020. *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- De Winter, L., R. Karlsen, and H. Schmitt. 2020. *Parliamentary Candidates between Voters and Parties*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Ferrín M. and H. Kriesi. 2016. *How Europeans View and Evaluate Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foa, R. A., Klassen A., D. Wenger, A. Rand, and M. Slade. 2020. *Youth and Satisfaction with Democracy: Reversing the Democratic Disconnect?* Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge.

- Foa, R. S., and Y. Mounk. 2016. "The Democratic Disconnect." *Journal of Democracy* 27 (3): 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0049>.
- Foa, R. S., and Y. Mounk. 2017. "The Signs of Deconsolidation." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (1): 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0000>.
- Foa, R. S., and Y. Mounk. 2019. "Youth and the Populist Wave." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 45(9-10): 1013–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453719872314>.
- Franklin, M. N. 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freire, A., M. Barragán, X. Coller, M. Lisi, and E. Tsatsanis. 2020. *Political Representation in Southern Europe and Latin America: Crisis or Continuing Transformation Following the Great Recession?* Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Gattinara, P. C., and A. L. P. Pirro. 2024. *Movement Parties of the Far Right: Understanding Nativist Mobilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gélix, C., and P. Chassé. 2024. "Are Young Candidates "Sacrificial Lambs? Evidence from the 2012, 2017, and 2022 French Legislative Elections." *Electoral Studies* 90.
- Gherghina, S., J.-B. Pilet, and B. Mitru. 2024. "Big Ideas, Little Detail: How Populist Parties Talk about Referendums in Europe." *Contemporary Politics* 30 (4): 437–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2296734>.
- Giugni M. and M. Grasso, eds. 2021. *Youth and Politics in Times of Increasing Inequalities*. London: Palgrave.
- Grassi, E. F. G., M. Portos, and A. Felicetti. 2024. "Young People's Attitudes towards Democracy and Political Participation: Evidence from a Cross-European Study." *Government and Opposition* 59 (2): 582–604. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2023.16>.
- Grasso, M. 2016. *Generations, Political Participation and Social Change in Western Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Hájek, L. 2019. "Effects of age and Tenure on MPs' Legislative Behaviour in the Czech Republic." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 25 (4): 553–575. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2019.1697049>.
- Harrison, S. 2020. "A Vote of Frustration? Young Voters in the UK General Election 2019." *Parliamentary Affairs* 73 (Supplement_1): 259–271. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsaa032>.
- Heidar, K., and B. Wauters. 2018. "Representativeness of Parties: Old Problems, New Challenges." In *Do Parties Still Represent? An Analysis of the Representativeness of Political Parties in Western Democracies*, edited by K. Heidar and B. Wauters, 169–181. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Heinelt, H. 2013. "Councillors' Notions of Democracy, and their Role Perception and Behaviour in the Changing Context of Local Democracy." *Local Government Studies* 39 (5): 640–660. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2012.670746>.
- Hooghe, M., and B. Wilkenfeld. 2008. "The Stability of Political Attitudes and Behaviors across Adolescence and Early Adulthood: A Comparison of Survey Data on Adolescents and Young Adults in Eight Countries." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 37 (2): 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-007-9199-x>.
- Huttunen, J., and I. Saikkonen. 2023. "Are the Young Undemocratic? Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment." *Representation* 59 (4): 707–723. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2023.2242386>.
- Inglehart, R. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R. 2016. "The Danger of Deconsolidation. How Much Should We Worry?" *Journal of Democracy* 27 (3): 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0053>.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2014. *Youth Participation in National Parliaments*. Geneva: IPU.
- Jacquet, V., C. Niessen, and M. Reuchamps. 2020. "Sortition, its Advocates and its Critics: An Empirical Analysis of Citizens' and MPs' Support for Random Selection as a Democratic Reform Proposal." *International Political Science Review* 43 (2): 295–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512120949958>.
- Jennings, M. K. 2007. "Political Socialisation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, edited by R. J. Dalton and H.-D. Klingemann, 29–44. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Joshi, D. K. 2013. "The Representation of Younger age Cohorts in Asian Parliaments: Do Electoral Systems Make a Difference?" *Representation* 49 (1): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2013.775960>.

- Körner, A., K. Eckstein, and P. Noack. 2023. "Young and Prone to Populist Ideas?—Facets and Correlates of Populist Attitudes in Middle Adolescence." *International Journal of Developmental Science* 17 (1-3): 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.3233/DEV-230344>.
- Kriesi, H. 2020. "Is There a Crisis of Democracy in Europe?" *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 61(2): 237–260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-020-00231-9>.
- Maggini, N. 2016. *Young People's Voting Behaviour in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mannheim, K. 1927. "The Problem of Generations." In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by P. Keckemeti, 276–320. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- McDonnell, D., S. Ammassari, A. Werner, N. Bolin, M. Valbruzzi, H. F. Lopes, R. Heinisch, A.-C. Jungar, and C. Wegscheider. 2025. "Young Radicals, Moderates and Aligned: Ideological Congruence and Incongruence in Party Youth Wings." *European Journal of Political Research* 64(4): 1759–1782. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.70000>.
- Melo, D. F., and D. Stockemer. 2014. "Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis." *Comparative European Politics* 12 (1): 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2012.31>.
- Mohrenberg, S., R. A. Huber, and T. Freyburg. 2019. "Love at First Sight? Populist Attitudes and Support for Direct Democracy." *Party Politics* 27 (3): 528–539.
- Mudde, C. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 541–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- Narud, H. M., and H. Valen. 2000. "Does Social Background Matter?" In *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic Experience*, edited by P. Esaiasson and K. Heidar, 83–106. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.
- Niessen, C., N. Schiffino, and V. Jacquet. 2018. "Critical Candidates: Elite Attitudes towards the Functioning of Representative Democracy." In *Candidates, Parties and Voters in the Belgian Partitocracy*, edited by A. Vandeleene, L. D. Winter, and P. Baudewyns, 341–364. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Norris, P. 1995. "May's Law of Curvilinear Disparity Revisited." *Party Politics* 1 (1): 29–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068895001001002>.
- Norris, P. 2011. *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. 2017. "Is Western Democracy Backsliding? Diagnosing the Risks." *Journal of Democracy (Online Exchange)*. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exchange-democratic-deconsolidation/>.
- Pakulski, J. 2018. "Populism and Political Elites." *Zoon Politikon* Special Issue: 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.4467/2543408XZOP.18.001.10057>.
- Pickard, S. 2019. *Politics, Protest and Young People: Political Participation and Dissent in 21st Century Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Pirro, A. L., and M. Portos. 2020. "Populism between Voting and Non-electoral Participation." *West European Politics* 44 (3): 558–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2020.1739451>.
- Rooduijn, M., A. L. Pirro, D. Halikiopoulou, C. Froio, S. v. Kessel, S. d. Lange, C. Mudde, and P. A. Taggart. 2023. *The PopuList 3.0: An Overview of Populist, Far-left and Far-right Parties in Europe*. www.popu-list.org.
- Seippel, Ø., and Å. Strandbu. 2017. "Populist Political Right Opinions and Political Trust among Norwegian Youth." *Journal of Youth Studies* 20 (4): 415–429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1241863>.
- Serra, L., and K. Smets. 2022. "Age, Generation, and Political Participation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*, edited by M. Grasso and M. Giugni, 545–561. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seyd, B., J. Curtice, and J. Rose. 2018. "How Might Reform of the Political System Appeal to Discontented Citizens?" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20 (2): 263–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117736189>.
- Siegel, S. N., S. J. Turnbull-Dugarte, and B. A. Olinger. 2022. "Where is the Party? Explaining Positions on Same-Sex Marriage in Europe among Would-Be Members of Parliament." *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 5 (1): 83–108. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16267702086451>.

- Sloam, J. 2014. "New Voice, Less Equal: The Civic and Political Engagement of Young People in the United States and Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (5): 663–688. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453441>.
- Smets, K. 2012. "A Widening Generational Divide? The Age Gap in Voter Turnout through Time and Space." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties* 22 (4): 407–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2012.728221>.
- Stockemer, D., and A. Sundström. 2018. "Age Representation in Parliaments: Can Institutions Pave the Way for the Young?" *European Political Science Review* 10 (3): 467–490. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773918000048>.
- Stockemer, D., and A. Sundström. 2022. "Introducing the Worldwide Age Representation in Parliaments (WARP) Data Set." *Social Science Quarterly* 103(7): 1765–1774. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13221>.
- Tsatsanis, E., E. Borghetto, A. Freire, and J. R. Montero. 2021. "Generational and Ideological Gaps in Democratic Support: Seeds of Deconsolidation in Post-crisis Southern Europe?" *South European Society and Politics* 26 (2): 209–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2021.2016245>.
- Vachudova, M. A. 2021. "Populism, Democracy, and Party System Change in Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24(1): 471–498. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102711>.
- van Haute E., and A. Gauja, eds. 2015. *Party Members and Activists*. London: Routledge.
- Voeten, E. 2017. "Are People Really Turning away from Democracy." *Journal of Democracy (Online Exchange)*. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exchange-democratic-deconsolidation/>.
- Wegscheider, C., C. Rovira Kaltwasser, and S. M. Van Hauwaert. 2023. "How Citizens' conceptions of Democracy Relate to Positive and Negative Partisanship towards Populist Parties." *West European Politics* 46 (7): 1235–1263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2199376>.
- Wuttke, A., C. Schimpf, and H. Schoen. 2023. "Populist Citizens in Four European Countries: Widespread Dissatisfaction Goes with Contradictory But Pro-democratic Regime Preferences." *Swiss Political Science Review* 29 (2): 246–257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12548>.
- Zanotti, L., and J. Rama. 2021. "Support for Liberal Democracy and Populist Attitudes: A Pilot Survey for Young Educated Citizens." *Political Studies Review* 19 (3): 511–519. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929920945856>.
- Zilinsky, J. 2019. "Democratic Deconsolidation Revisited: Young Europeans Are Not Dissatisfied with Democracy." *Research & Politics* 6 (1): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168018814332>.
- Zittel, T. 2020. "The Beliefs of Parliamentary Candidates on Electoral Democracy. Who Are the Guardians of Democracy and What Motivates Them?" In *Parliamentary Candidates between Voters and Parties*, edited by L. De Winter, R. Karlsen, and H. Schmitt, 219–237. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Zulianello, M. 2018. "Mobilizing Young Voters? A Cross-national Analysis of Contextual Factors in Pirate Voting, European Politics and Society." *European Politics and Society* 19 (3): 282–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2017.1419666>.
- Zulianello, M. 2019. *Anti-system Parties: From Parliamentary Breakthrough to Government*. Abingdon: Routledge.