

When Political Interest is not Enough

A quantitative study on what deterred politically interested citizens from voting in the 2019 European Parliamentary election

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) has long suffered from a democratic deficit, something that has been highlighted many times by politicians, media and citizens alike. The EU has in turn tried to better its democratic standing by increasing the power of the European Parliament (EP) through the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. This has however not increased turnout in the EP elections substantially, as only the latest election saw an increase at all with a turnout of about 50%. Voter turnout has in turn been analysed in much research, from rational choice theorists in the 50's to the socioeconomic works of the 70's and 90's, with new EP research in the 00's. In many of these works political interest is seen as a driving factor behind voter turnout, but in the case of the EU, many politically interested are not voting in EP elections.

This Master's thesis aims to find an answer to this, asking the research question (RQ) as to what deterred some politically interested citizens from voting in the EP election of 2019. By gathering and analysing previous research and theory on voter turnout on the general population, hypotheses are formulated as for why some politically interested people did not vote – mainly Euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy. The RQ and the hypotheses are tested and answered through several multilevel logistic regressions, with the European Election Study of 2019 as material.

The study finds that the main reasons as for why politically interested people did not vote in the 2019 EP election was the same as the general population – a lack of “hard” Eurosceptic options and a dissatisfaction with EU democracy. The conclusion is thus that the explanatory models that apply to the general population regarding voter turnout in EP elections stands true for the politically interested as well.

Key words: political interest, non-voters, voter turnout, EU democracy, euroscepticism

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1 Introduction

1.1 The EU, Democracy and the Politically Interested

The European Union (EU) and its democracy, or maybe lack of, is often a hot topic amongst the media, politicians and the public. Critics of EU democracy argue that the union lacks input and control from the public, and that politicians on the European level do not partake in public debates. There is a gap between EU leaders and citizens that is far too wide, with parliamentary democracy especially lacking (Jensen, 2009). The EU has however made strides in trying to garner more participation from the European citizenry, as treaty changes have been made to create a more democratic union. The Lisbon treaty of 2009 explicitly included parts that were meant to strengthen democratic institutions of the EU, mainly the European Parliament (EP) and the national parliaments participation in the decision making process. Other democratic additions were for example the ECI, the Europeans Citizens Initiative in which citizens can give proposals to the Commission if they gather enough signatures from enough member states. In essence, the changes made through the Lisbon treaty have made the European Parliament the most democratic part of the European Union, as its members are elected through universal suffrage by all citizens of the union (Mayoral, 2011).

However, there is more to democracy than democratic institutions, as suggested by critics of the European Union and its democracy. For a democracy to claim to be legitimate there needs to exist a “demos”, a people, which the EU is lacking. There exists a national demos, but for most Europeans there is no common identity that unites the people and allows for European public discourse (Jensen, 2009). For social legitimacy of EU democracy to arise, there needs to be European media scrutiny of EU governance that goes above the national lens, and legitimises the EU through belonging to a shared community (Sifft et al, 2007). As of now, this European polity is lacking.

This lack of a common European political culture and demos is clear when looking at voter turnout for the European Parliamentary elections. Even though the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 aimed to further democratise the EU and the EP, both the 2009 EP election and the 2014 EP election saw a downturn in turnout. Both years had 42.97% turnout and 42.61% turnout respectively, which is lower when compared to the 45.47% of the 2004 EP election. However, there was an increase in 2019, with a 50.66% turnout (Europaparlamentet, 2019), but it remains to be seen if this increased turnout remains over time.

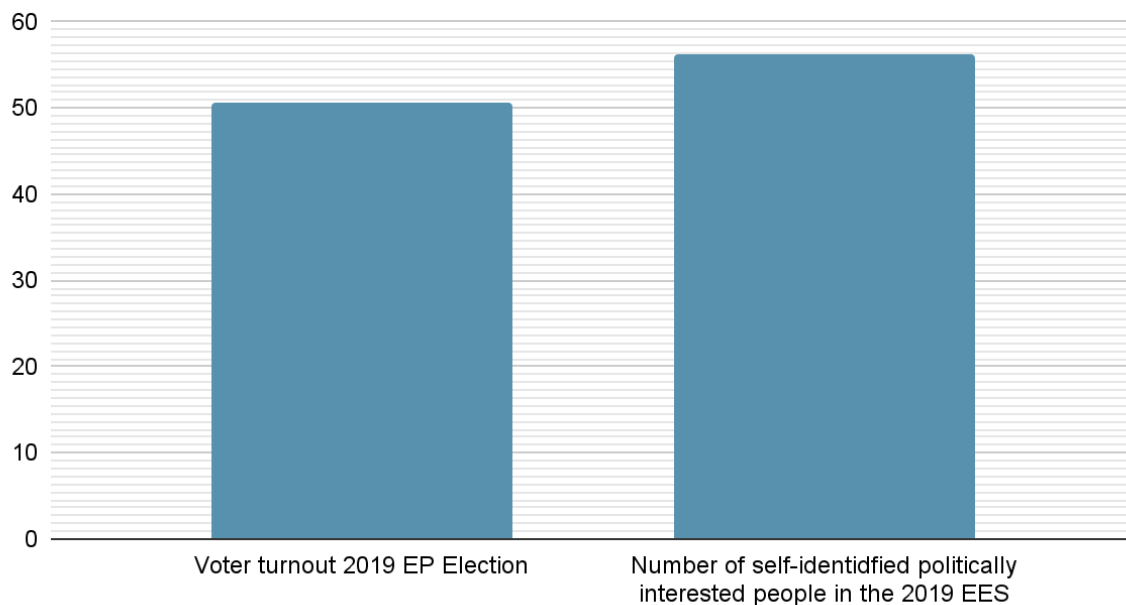
If, how and why European voters vote in the European Parliamentary Elections is mainly studied in studies such as national ones, like the Swedish National Election Study, SNES or

European ones spanning the entire union, such as the European Parliament Election Study, EES, amongst others. There is much research to be found on voter turnout and political participation regarding European Parliamentary elections, as well as general research on other elections, political participation and voter turnout.

Many of these studies on voter turnout and political participation find that political interest is a driving force, the most famous of which being the work of Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman and Henry Brady (1994), who found amongst other things that the primary driver behind voter turnout is political interest, not time or money. This will be explained and detailed further in chapter 2.1. But in the case of the European Union, this does not seem to necessarily hold true, as shown in the graph below.

Graph 1.

Percentage of Voter Turnout compared to Political Interest



(Source left to right: Europaparlamentet, 2019, Schmitt et al, 2022)

As seen in graph 1, non-voters number close to 50% of eligible voters in 2019, or more judging by previous elections, and politically interested people make up a fair share of these non-voters. Judging by these numbers, about 6% of eligible voters define themselves as politically interested but decided not to vote. As it is probable that some non-politically interested people did vote, making up a part of the around 50% that went to the polls, it is reasonable to assume that the number of politically interested people that did not vote is even higher than the numbers suggest.

This is what creates the starting point for my thesis. There is a democratic deficit in the European Union that is, amongst other phenomena, clearly highlighted in the lack of voter turnout. Previous research has given little explanation for why a large percentage of the citizenry of the European Union are politically interested but non-voters, as most research have found the opposite - that political interest leads to voter turnout. Some research on the European Union has found the union to be less important in the eyes of the public, but has not explicitly examined politically interested people.

1.2 Aim & Scope

The aim of this thesis is simply to find why this is, why some politically interested people are not voting. Research regarding voter turnout seemingly assumes and sometimes empirically finds that political interest leads to voter turnout. However, as is clear by Graph 1 above, a large portion of those who define themselves as politically interested people decide to sit at home when they could be going to the polls. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the research on voter turnout and increase the general knowledge around a voting group that is somewhat taken for granted.

Equally, the aim of the thesis is also to highlight what deters these people from voting, and in turn, in theory, if enough changes were made, the European Parliamentary elections could increase their turnout by 6%, if not more. As other research has also found political interest to be the driving force behind voter turnout, it can be assumed that changes that satisfy these 6% or more of eligible voters will actually lead to this theorised substantial increase in turnout.

The general conclusions that can be formed from the study will also be limited to the European Union and the European Parliamentary elections. The scope of this study is limited to the European Parliamentary elections of 2019, as it is the election with the highest turnout in modern times, as well as it taking place after the democratic reforms of the Lisbon treaty. As it has higher turnout than previous elections, the group of non-voting politically interested people is the smallest when compared to other EP elections, and any conclusions that can be made by this study can not be rejected by the fact that turnout has increased in the last election. As such, the higher turnout in the 2019 election strengthens the scope.

1.3 Research Question

Combining the introductory research problem and the aim and scope of the thesis, the research question is as follows:

- *“What deterred some politically interested people from voting in the 2019 European Parliamentary election in the European Union?”*

The question limits the scope of the thesis as it only pertains to one EP election, the election of 2019, but is still open-ended enough for the study to find a variety of answers as to why politically interested people decided not to vote. The question will be answered through the method of multilevel logistic regression and will use the 2019 European Election Study (EES) as its material and dataset.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis begins with the above introduction of the problem, the aim and scope of the study, culminating in the research question. After which the thesis starts with a chronological introduction on general research on voter turnout and political participation, as well as similar works pertaining to the European Union and the European Parliamentary elections. The aim of including such works is twofold, as it highlights the lack of inclusion of the politically interested regarding voter turnout apart from viewing it as a driving factor, as well as creating a theoretical framework that enables the creation of hypotheses and control variables that is to be tested. The chapters on previous research thus both show the research gap this study aims to fill and guides what results can be expected from it. Subsequently the method of multilevel logistic regression and the material, the European Election Study of 2019, is discussed, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses. After a review of the descriptive statistics of each variable the results of the logistic regressions is presented together with an analysis of the results. The paper ends with finding conclusions regarding the research question and results, as well as articulating some stepping-off points and suggestions for future research.

2 Theory and Previous Research on Voter Turnout

The theory and previous research presented below will highlight prominent research contributions in the field of voter turnout, with an initial focus on the field at large, ending with narrowing down on research covering the European Union and the European Parliamentary elections. The main theories of interest included in this research are rational choice theory and social-psychological theories with much emphasis on socioeconomic factors.

The research presented in this chapter is then used to guide and create hypotheses for why politically interested people decided not to vote in the 2019 EP election. In general, previous research on rational choice theory will guide the main hypothesis, with previous research on socioeconomic factors guiding the creation of control variables.

2.1 Voter Turnout in General

This chapter aims at understanding what the core literature of the voter turnout research is and later what it can provide in terms of guidance for this thesis. Being almost chronological, it starts with the rational choice inspired works of the 50's and continues with socioeconomic focused voter turnout research of the 70's and 90's, ending with cross country comparisons and the socialisation of voting.

Voter turnout and political participation has become a large academic field, with much research on what drives people to the polls. Or as was the case with the research of Anthony Downs, what drives citizens to *not* vote. Downs theorised using rational choice theory that a rational citizen would choose not to vote. This is because a rational citizen would see that the possibility of their vote swinging the election in any direction would be near nil, and thus would not put time and effort into formulating an informed opinion and later voting. Such a task would only require time and resources that in turn most probably would lead to no change in the election outcome. This changed the approach of voting research from “why are citizens not voting” to “why are they voting” (Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 1995). This line of thinking has been named the “paradox of voting” (Feddersen, 2004).

Created by Downs in the 50s and used by later prominent researchers in the 60s and beyond, the “paradox of voting” model suggests that a citizen will only vote if $pB+D > C$. The probability, p , of someone voting is dependent on the benefit, B , plus the sense of civic duty

to vote and engage in one's democratic rights, D , being larger than the cost, C . At a glance the equation seems simple enough, but it has been used and tweaked ever since, persisting in voter turnout research. In a large country or electorate, using this calculation, the probability of voting becomes more or less nil. With millions of voters, even the closest of races between two or more candidates will still be decided by margins of thousands of votes. The probability of your vote being the decider is minuscule. This in turn makes the benefit of voting also nil, and thus any cost, no matter how small, is now larger than the benefit. The saving grace would be the size of D , how large the sense of duty to vote is. When using the rational choice theory, explaining why citizens vote thus becomes an exercise in proving that $D > C$ (Kanazawa, 2000).

With this in mind, there is no surprise that smaller countries and/or smaller elections tend to have larger turnout. This fact could lend itself to the idea that a smaller election would increase the probability of voting in accordance with Downs equation. With fewer numbers of eligible voters, a citizen could feel that their vote could be more decisive, but there could be other factors at play. These include the general stronger social and personal networks that exist in smaller communities. Another reason could be that a smaller country or election often includes fewer electors and fewer candidates for office, making it easier for these leaders to mobilise their base and galvanise other citizens into voting for them, or voting at all (Blais, 2006).

Rational choice theory is not only used as a theory to argue for the rationale of not voting, as other researchers have found and suggest that a rational citizen could still vote and, in this context, remain rational. A rational, non-selfish, individual could be rational and vote if the person is voting for something that is beneficial for society at large, which in turn benefits the individual, or if the vote is beneficial for them directly. A rational voter does not vote in self-interest, but for what is good for all. This is especially true in elections where the individual believes the stakes are high. In smaller elections, a rational individual is much more explicit in voting in their self interest (Edlin, Gelman & Kaplan, 2007). As the EP election is large, including many countries, voters and possible policy consequences, the rational individual could still vote in the EP elections if they see that the vote is beneficial for them or society at large.

Rational choice theory as a model of explanation has in general not held true, as most western democracies enjoy high rates of voter turnout. The theory is thus used more as a theoretical argumentation for why turnout might be high or low, rather than being grounded in empirical data (Kanazawa, 2000). However, as the EP elections do not enjoy high turnout rates, the theory might be given more credence than in other electoral contexts.

Social factors have had an undeniable impact on research on voting and voter turnout since at least the 70's, with groundbreaking research showing the importance of these factors. Dispelling the notion of the paradox of voting, the authors of Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman and Henry Brady (1995) found in their research *Participation's Not a Paradox: The View from American Activists* that levels of education, income and different types of professions all affect political participation. Furthermore, different socioeconomic factors affect different types of political participation. In the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), political interest is the chief determinant for voter turnout, not income, time or participation in other non-political organisations such as a religious one or a workplace. Although all three - interest, time and resources - are needed to be able to partake in politics, including voting. The basic notion of the CVM is just that, that resources, time and money, and political will are all

needed. Without one of them, individual political capacity diminishes. Although anyone can be politically interested, this is not enough to create political participation - there are socio economic obstacles such as time, money and education that might bar even the most politically interested citizen from political participation (Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 1995).

Sidney Verba created an explanatory model in the 1970s previous to the creation of the CVM, known as the SES-model, or the socioeconomic status model. This model found similar conclusions regarding what socioeconomic factors drive political participation, including voter turnout as well as contacting your elected representative and participating in political campaigns. These types of political participation methods only include “formal” modes of participation, and excludes acts such as protesting or taking part in parades. The SES-model finds that those with high socioeconomic status, such as citizens with high income or those who have high levels of education are more politically active and participate more in the modes mentioned above. The authors find that a high socioeconomic status creates thoughts of civic duties that one must abide by, such as modes of political participation like voting. As these high SES citizens participate more than their lesser off counterparts, they have a larger say in policy matters. The SES-model predicts that high SES citizens in general believe that education is more important, but also that individual poverty is to be blamed on the individual rather than the state and that social welfare should not be the responsibility of the state. The model is built upon the American context but holds over time and also includes variables such as race (Verba & Nie, 1987).

What makes the SES-model less refined than the Civic Voluntarism model is the fact that in its modelling and analysis, different types of socioeconomic factors are not analysed to examine what types of participation they drive. As in, the SES-model finds high socioeconomic status leads to political participation such as voting, but not specifically which types of socioeconomic factors (Verba & Nie, 1987). That is how the latter CVM sets itself apart, finding political interest to be the determining factors in driving voter turnout (Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 1995).

In the CVM the authors also find that voting is often a learned behaviour. Having family members that vote and/or are politically active makes it much more likely that their children also will become active. Often, socioeconomic factors create a multiplicative effect, where being raised in a family of high income earners and/or highly educated parents often leads to being part of alumni organisations and political networks. Organisations that these children later engage in as well, continuing the process of political participation (Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 1995). Even if family members are not politically active or interested, just voting in one election increases the chances to vote in future ones (Gerber, Green & Shachar, 2003).

Franklin (2002) finds using cross country comparisons that, even though socioeconomic factors such as education, age, income and political interest create differences in turnout between countries, the biggest reason for differences is the public's desire to create change. This does not mean that individual-level differences such as socioeconomic factors have no impact. Increasing levels of education and reducing poverty would indeed lead to a greater turnout, but even in the most perfect of cases it would not be “enough”. The example Franklin gives is that even if the United States were to educate every single citizen at the college level, it would still not increase turnout rates that are comparable to a country such as the United Kingdom (UK). Instead, there are other forces at play.

Using the term instrumental motivation, Franklin finds that between countries the desire to affect public policy has a larger impact than any socioeconomic factor. Electoral salience, as in that the vote and election matters in the grand scheme of things, as well as how influential a vote is, is what motivates people to go to the polls and increases turnout. In countries where the election is of much importance but with a “clear” winner (lack of electoral competition), has almost half the turnout of countries where the electoral competition is strong. Many of these differences can be attributed to differences in electoral systems of voting, such as majority or proportional representational systems. Citizens are rational and realise whether a system is responsive to their political participation and voting interest. If it is not responsive, neither are the citizens and they will choose not to vote (Franklin, 2002).

Other surroundings than your social circle, workplace and organisational activities, time and political interest also affect voting, such as the general idea of “duty” or social pressures (Van Winden, 1999), much like the *D* for citizen duty in Downs model (Kanazawa, 2000). Voting is for many not a cost, at least not a big enough cost that it would stop them from voting, but nevertheless there needs to be a social incentive, an external pressure that socialises citizens into voting. Even though the cost is not high enough to stop someone from voting, sometimes the reward or perceived reward needs to exist to incentivize voting. This type of pressure can come from educational institutions and media portraying democracy as something that needs to be defended and thus creating a sense of duty to it. Although this duty also comes from being part of a group, an interest group of any kind such as a women's suffrage movement or a workers union (Van Winden, 1999). Individual models on voting and the cost of voting, such as those inspired by the rational choice theory, often fail to explain why, if the cost to vote is so big as theorised, many still decide to vote (Kanazawa, 2000). Outside factors such as being part of these interest groups can be part of the explanation, as those who are part of these groups face internal social pressure from others in the same group to do the right thing, i.e. vote and further the interest of the group (Van Winden, 1999).

Important to note is that most if not all of these studies are American, with the CVM and other explanatory models being grounded in interviews with American citizens. Thus it is important to examine what supporting research can be found on the European Union and the European Parliamentary elections using rational choice theory and examining socioeconomic factors.

2.2 Voter Turnout in the European Union

This part of the chapter aims to highlight prominent research on what drives and what inhibits European citizens from voting in the European Parliamentary elections. The starting point being the national second order election nature of the EP, which suggests that the EP elections lack importance to the European public, instead serving as a midterm vote or referendum on their national governments or the policies taken at the national level. The theory of national second order elections is then often used in other research when analysing different phenomena regarding the EP elections, such as general low turnout as well as the impact of euroscepticism. The impact of Brexit on euroscepticism is also seen as a key change in European level politics.

Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt (1980) coined this term “national second-order” election, describing how much of the people, media and politicians view this election. When the public looks at an EP election, they do not see it through an European lens, but a domestic one. National politics is still the deciding factor, even if it is lifted to the European level. An EP election transforms into a type of referendum on domestic politics. The study they made in the 80s was a trailblazer, as it highlighted the imbalance of the European Parliament elections and what it means to the average voter. Even though there is no actual institutional connection between the national parties and its political configuration and the European elections, there exists one in the minds of the public and the parties themselves. The European arena acting as a second arena to the national one is not a new concept in of itself, as most national elections have second order arenas in the forms of dual-chambers, municipal and regional elections and by-elections. In that sense the European arena is not unique in that it is viewed through the lens of the national, primary arena, as most political campaigns on say the regional or municipal level are heavily influenced by the national level.

The authors find this to be true by comparing, amongst other things, the then nine member states levels of voter turnout compared to the national elections most recently held previous to the EP election, whether or not the sitting national governments lose votes in the EP election and if the respondents believe EC (EU) membership is a positive or a negative. The results were clear, as most member states saw drastic changes in turnout, with some decreasing as much as 43%. The only member states that had similar turnout were those with laws mandating voting. The hypothesis of “less-is-at-stake” was confirmed, as well as the hypothesis that the EP election works as a referendum on the sitting government, as almost all government parties lost large shares of votes. In addition, those who feel strongly that a party should take part in the decision making process of the EC (EU) are more likely to vote (Reif & Schmitt, 1980).

At the time of the Reif and Schmitt (1980) study, the European level as a political arena was a new world. In more recent times, Mark Franklin (2001) has continued to build upon this, arguing that the European Parliamentary elections lack “electoral salience”. Citizens tend to respond when they believe that an election holds much weight. If elections are held that elect unimportant offices or when there is little policy implications, turnout is low. Unlike the rational citizen that votes when much is at stake, theorised by Edlin, Gelman & Kaplan (2007), the European citizenry does not believe that the European Parliament as an institution is of much importance. The election to the European Parliament lacks much or any impact of government formation such as the European Commission.

The second order nature of the EP elections often remains, as the EP elections place in time compared to national elections is of much importance. If an EP election takes place soon after a national election, meaning that in normal circumstances there are many years until the next national election, it will gather little interest. If however the EP election corresponds more closely to a future national election, the media, politicians and the public will show a heightened interest in the EP election. This further reinforces the idea of EP elections being second order, and more of a referendum on an incumbent government's previous policies and actions during its national term (Franklin, 2001).

However this is not necessarily true for every member state, as although voter turnout for the EP elections is on average quite low, there are stark differences between countries. Member states like Belgium had a turnout of close to 90%. This can be partially explained by the fact

that some member states employ compulsory voting, such as Belgium and Luxembourg, which member states like Slovakia do not have (Franklin, 2001), a member state that did not break 25% turnout in the 2019 EP election (Europaparlamentet, 2019).

Why then does some decide to vote in national elections and not in EP elections, the so-called “EU-only abstainers”, was examined by Constantin Schäfer (2021). Using the model of national second order elections and the Europe matters model on the European Elections Studies data of 2019, he finds that most citizens that stay at home are disinterested in politics. The reason for which they still might vote in national elections go in line with the national second order theory - less is simply at stake in the EP elections, they do not matter. Citizens also show their euroscepticism when showcasing (non)electoral behaviour, the aforementioned EU-only abstainers. By staying home and not going to the polls European citizens express their euroscepticism. Lower trust in the European Union, a form of euroscepticism, has a significant impact on whether a citizen abstains from voting. The lesser the trust, the lesser the probability of them voting. Schäfer finds that both indifference, as in that the EP elections are national second order, and euroscepticism are at play when citizens decide not to vote.

2.3 Euroscepticism and Voter Turnout

This euroscepticism and its tie-in to voter turnout will be examined in this part of the chapter, with a focus on the rise of euroscepticism coinciding with the many crisis the EU has faced in the last decade, the democratic failings of the union and how Brexit has deterred both the public and most parties in the EP from “hard” euroscepticism.

Sarah Hobolt (2015) finds that in the past few years economic hardship has been attributed to the EU and EU policy, with eurosceptic parties quickly gaining ground. Even though the economic crisis created a debate on the European level, it often took the form of national issues being raised to and blamed on the EU. This can be viewed as a change in the otherwise established idea of the EP elections being a national second order election, a mid-term for the sitting government in the respective member states. Instead, what euroscepticism creates, is the sought after “European” debate, advancing the EP elections from a glorified mid-term to an election standing on its own, with its own policy propositions and public debates.

Some of this new found common democratic spirit came from the 2009 Lisbon treaty, wherein new powers were given to the EP. Amongst these were the inclusion of the EP election in the selection of the European Commission. A strengthening of the ties between the EP election and the executive, the Commission. As political groupings the EP backed a common candidate for the position of the President of the European Commission, known as the spitzenkandidat, the EU sought to create an electoral link from the public to the Commission. By voting for example for the party group of the European People's Party, a citizen would be voting for Jean-Claude Juncker for President of the Commission as well as his and the political party group platform (Hobolt, 2015)

Furthermore, the EP elections of 2014 were situated in a context of economic and political turmoil. The eurozone had suffered a long crisis since 2009 and many south-European member states were unable to pay their debts. The EU in turn aimed at sending relief packages to these member states, with strings attached. These strings included austerity and economic reform, downsizing many welfare sectors. Unsurprisingly this was not popular amongst the public, and the media covered the changes imposed by the EU on these member states extensively (Hobolt, 2015).

Suddenly, the EU was on every front cover in the member states, with prominent European figures headlining them, such as then German chancellor Angela Merkel and Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. This media coverage saw two different faces, one blaming the EU as an institution and others blaming the member states that had not run its economy in a proper manner. Surveys showed that European citizens, unlike in previous years, were keenly aware of the Euro crisis, with many holding the EU responsible. This coincided with a decreasing lack of trust in the EU as a whole. Although the 2014 EP elections saw no increase in turnout, parties that aimed at European reform or even membership exit saw much popularity at the polls, in all member states (Hobolt, 2015).

The previous explanation of the spitzenkandidat serves as a reminder that even though the EU seems to try to reform and create incentives for the public to democratically participate, it sometimes can not help but get in its own way. After the 2019 EP elections, neither the spitzenkandidat of the two largest party groups, Manfred Weber and Frans Timmermans, was elected President of the European Commission. Instead, passed through the European Parliament by a narrow vote, Ursula von der Leyen became president without previously running as a spitzenkandidat. This step back also suggests that the deviation from a national second order election of 2014 was an anomaly, with a European debate and a common democratic community again taking a step back from the spotlight (de Wilde, 2019).

Somewhat paradoxically, the believed failings of the EU, both the economic ones (Hobolt, 2015) and the democratic ones (de Wilde, 2019) could in a way be strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the union, as both a true European debate has emerged and turnout has increased. Although it is not perfect, as democratic reforms and promises have failed to bear long-term fruit, such as the election of Ursula von der Leyen to the post of President of the European Commission. The above reference literature also shows that due to the many crises that the union has suffered during the previous decade, European media coverage has become common in households, highlighting to many the democratic shortfalls of the union. To some, this might lead to voting for eurosceptic parties, as is evident by their increased share of votes (Hobolt 2015), but for others it might lead to disillusionment and a belief that a vote in the EP elections has no impact on EU policy, a continuation of the national second order election (Schäfer, 2021).

The increasing numbers of eurosceptic parties taking part in public debate as well as the actual chamber of the European Parliament (Hobolt, 2015) do not suggest that politically interested non-voters are deciding to not vote due to dissatisfaction with the general direction that the European Union is taking policy-wise. If that was the case Hobolt argues, the politically interested citizen would go to the polls and vote for these types of parties. Instead, it suggests that as there are political alternatives that can take the EU in another direction, the reason for not voting would be a general disillusionment with EU democracy, or rather lack of it.

This is somewhat argued against in research on voter turnout and the EP elections after the 2019 election, and more importantly after the United Kingdom decided to Brexit. Oliver Treib (2021) finds that the number of eurosceptic votes in the EP election of 2019 showed that the gains made by eurosceptic parties in 2014 was not a short-term gain built upon the eurozone crisis, but that eurosceptic sentiment in the union was here to stay. Eurosceptic parties gained seats in almost all member states, but the different types of eurosceptic parties being elected had changed. Left-wing eurosceptics lost 30 seats, whilst right-wing eurosceptics almost doubled theirs to 106 seats. More centre eurosceptic right-wing parties also saw some losses, highlighting a right-wing shift.

This rightward shift happened for two reasons, one being that eurosceptic left-wing parties adopted European level solutions to welfare policy, including union-wide minimum wage and unemployment benefits. This has not necessarily led to these parties losing votes, but rather that they no longer can be classified as eurosceptic. Secondly, right-wing eurosceptics have made massive strides in many member states, with some parties increasing their vote share from a few percent in 2014 to about a third in 2019. Equally, seven member states saw new eurosceptic right-wing parties being elected in 2019 that did not earn a seat in the 2014 election (Treib, 2021).

Most importantly though, these eurosceptic parties have also toned down their alleged euroscepticism, as many no longer oppose EU and/or eurozone membership. This can partially be explained by the difficulties present in the Brexit process, which has highlighted both how difficult it is to find a viable divorce with the union and how many different paths there are to take in a possible -exit. If the parties came to this conclusion on their own is unclear, with a chicken or the egg scenario, where the difficulties shown in the Brexit negotiations have turned both parties and many voters from championing their own countries' exit. Other parties have attempted to moderate their views on the EU to garner support from voters who do not wish for their member state to leave the union. Some eurosceptic parties now have seats in national governments and when having to govern through coalitions and the like have had to tone down their euroscepticism. Eurosceptic parties have thus increased in size and numbers, but their supposed euroscepticism has diminished since Brexit, aligning more with the idea of “soft” euroscepticism (Treib, 2021).

How Brexit has affected EU citizenry support for the union is further analysed by Sara Hobolt, Sebastian Popa, Wouter van der Burg and Hermann Schmitt (2022) by using data from the European Election Study of 2019. With the background of a prolonged divorce, where the United Kingdom and the EU found little common ground, the question is raised whether Brexit has become an inspiration for other member states' own “-exit” or a deterrent, highlighting how deeply nestled the member states are with each other and the union itself? The authors find that, even though many euro-friendly politicians, members of the media and citizens were afraid of a domino effect post-Brexit, where more member states would vote to leave, this did not occur. Instead there was an uptick in support for the EU across the union. As Brexit is the only time when a member state has left the EU, it is used as a benchmark by citizens in other member states, shaping their own opinions of a possible exit. As the Brexit negotiations prolonged for years, data from the summer of 2019 show that Brexit works as a deterrent. A majority believed that the United Kingdom would be worse off after Brexit, and only one in five saw positive outcomes for the country (Hobolt et al, 2022).

Respondents' views on the positive vs negative outcomes of Brexit were unsurprisingly tied to if they believed their own member state ought to leave the EU. If they believed the United

Kingdom would be better off post-Brexit, they saw the same in the case of an -exit for their own county and vice versa. The authors posit that although Brexit is now viewed as a negative, if the United Kingdom were to actually be better off in the future it will transform Brexit from a deterrent to something to aspire to. As for now though, it is viewed by both the public (Hobolt et al, 2022) and most parties, including eurosceptic ones, as a negative (Treib, 2021).

In summary, eurosceptic parties established themselves as a permanent political force in 2019, becoming more than a blip on the radar from the 2014 election. However, their supposed euroscepticism has veined, with many parties no longer arguing for leaving the EU, but rather to reform it from the inside. This has been intensified by the prolonged negotiations and perceived failures of Brexit, deterring many from taking the same path as the UK. This in turn could put off voters, including the politically interested ones, from voting if they are against the European project as a whole but do not find any parties representing this view, as most of the established eurosceptic parties are now “soft” eurosceptics.

2.3.1 Deciding Not to Vote: a Eurosceptic Protest?

Although it is evident many find the national second order election phenomena to hold true, this is somewhat challenged by Daniel Stockemer (2012). Stockemer finds that authors such as Reif and Schmitt (1980) both find that EP elections are less important, and that voting in them is not determined by whether a citizen supports the European Union or not. The latter is what is contested. By using the Eurobarometer survey he operationalizes euroscepticism and approval/disapproval of the EU as whether membership is good or bad. This variable, together with contextual variables such as mandatory voting laws, GDP per capita and being a part of the eastern expansion of the European Union paint a clear picture.

Not voting in the EP election is heavily linked with thinking that their country's membership in the EU is negative. A citizen believing that EU membership is good in turn has a higher likelihood of voting. Stockemer further cemented this by looking at and comparing with descriptive statistics, as member states with an on average low-approval of the EU have a larger discrepancy in voter turnout between EP elections and their own national elections. EU approval ratings, both on a country average and on the individual level predict turnout for the EP election. EP turnout is thus not only the result of the (dis)interest of media and politicians regarding European level matters, i.e second national order, but due to euroscepticism and the rejection of the European project. This furthers the European Union's democratic deficit, as its low turnout is not only a result of lack of interest in European matters outside of the national context, but the people's disapproval of the entire project (Stockemer, 2012)

In conclusion, even though the nature of European Parliamentary elections still as second order to the national arena, more and more citizens are deciding not to partake and vote due to their dislike of the European Union. This a challenge to the dominating paradigm that citizens approval rating of the union does not affect voting, but still accepts that the EP elections are national second order.

In addition to these findings, Stockemer (2012) used socioeconomic factors as control variables in his model. He finds socioeconomic factors such as political interest, socioeconomic status, age and education drive voter turnout in the EP elections. Out of these, political interest was the largest driver regarding voting, with age and socioeconomic status having statistically significant impact, albeit lesser than the political interest. These European results are in line with the previously discussed American-centric works of Verba and Nie (1987), Schlozman, Verba and Brady (1995) and to some degree Franklin (2002).

3 Hypotheses & Control Variables

As is evident in the above referenced literature, some stock is put into political interest as it is found to be a driving factor in voting. Although it is rarely analysed from the viewpoint of raising turnout, i.e why some politically interested decides not to vote, as factors such as the nature of the EP elections in the eyes of the public, election cycles, mandatory voting, euroscepticism, Brexit and economic hardship as well as socioeconomic factors such as age and education levels are some of the main points of interest. This previous research works to show that there is a clear research gap regarding voter turnout and political interest, but it also works to guide the hypotheses that this thesis aims to test to answer its research question. Even though not all of what is referenced above is explicitly aimed at political interest and/or voter turnout, it still shows what type of results we can expect from this thesis in the form of hypotheses. The first of which are the two main variables of interest, with the others working as control variables as they pertain to characteristics rather than the expressed views given by the non-voting politically interested citizen.

As such, from the previous research based upon and touching on rational choice theory, both regarding the EU specifically and voter turnout in general, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- *H1 - Politically interested people did not vote due to lack of satisfaction with European Union democracy*
- *H2 - Politically interested people did not vote due to Euroscepticism*

The point of these hypotheses is to test whether the explanatory models that have been applied to the general population in previous works are true for the group politically interested. As such the testing of the hypotheses is not necessarily to see any differences between the groups, but rather on the contrary, they are expected to be the same. Therefore the hypotheses, that lack of satisfaction with European Union democracy and euroscepticism deters voting, is also expected to be found to be supported for the entire population, not only the politically interested.

The H1 hypothesis is based on the idea of the paradox of voting, as well as the second order of the European Parliamentary elections. The rational choice inspired works of Anthony Downs (Kanazawa, 2000) and Aaron Edlin, Andrew Gelman and Noah Kaplan (2007) argues that a rational citizen would not vote if they believed their vote would either not change the results of the election, or if there is not any benefit to themselves or to society. Franklin (2002) notes similar conclusions in his cross country comparisons, where citizens will not vote if they see that the system is unresponsive to their electoral desires.

Equally, the discourse and research on national second order elections such as Reif and Schmitt (1980) and Franklin (2001) suggest that European Parliamentary elections do not really matter in the eyes of the public, as they have no or little impact. As it is given little importance by the public and media, the national second order of the European Parliamentary election increases the cost and resources for a voter to stay informed and eventually decide to vote. The cost increases, and the believed reward (voting for parties and policy changes that one wants to achieve) remains the same (Stockemer, 2011), or is even diminished as the European Union fails in some of its democratic engagements (Hobolt, 2015, de Wilde, 2019).

Thus, the idea is that European Parliamentary elections lack electoral salience and it being a national second-order election, increasing the cost of being informed enough to vote, together with the general idea of not voting without benefit make it clear that a citizen with political interest could decide to not vote if they believed that the European Union lacked democracy, as they believe their vote has no effect.

H2 is also inspired by rational choice theory and the European Union, with the findings of Hobolt (2015), Hobolt et al (2021), Trieb (2021) and Schäfer (2021) suggesting that even though eurosceptic parties are on the rise, some eurosceptics decide to sit at home and not vote. This mainly due to the fact that most eurosceptic parties are as of late “soft” eurosceptics, wanting to reform the EU rather than leave it. A development that has been spurred on by the believed negative effects of Brexit on Britain and the prolonged Brexit negotiations, believed so by both politicians and voters. Brexit has acted as a deterrent, with few wanting to follow in its path - however those who still want their country to leave the EU are left with little to no established parties as their possible choices when going to vote in the EP elections. With this in mind “euroscepticism” will moving forward be defined as “hard” euroscepticism, as in that the person wants their country to leave the EU, if not stated otherwise.

Stockemer (2011) also argues that a reason for the lack of voter turnout is not entirely due to the EP elections being second order, but rather that a growing number of citizens reject their country's membership in the union. By not voting they are expressing their scepticism (or outright rejection) of the European project, which as Schäfer (2021) argues often goes hand in hand with the idea of a national second order election. They are not mutually exclusive, and as such this study expects that both hypotheses H1 and H2 will not be falsified.

The research based on socioeconomic factors and its impacts guides the choice of control variables. With works such as that of Verba and Nie (1987), Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) and Stockemer (2012) guiding the “background” characteristics that might explain the reason for why a group that seemingly should vote in troves might abstain from political participation through voting. Mainly these are the socioeconomic factors found in the CMV that drove political participation. Although political participation through voting was mainly predicted by having a political interest, it is not of interest in this study as the points of interest are politically interested that decide not to vote. However, political interest was not the only determinant, as factors such as higher education, higher levels of income and socioeconomic class predicted increased political participation, including voting (although not as much). These factors, as well as age, gave similar results in other studies (Franklin, 2002, van Winden, 1999,). This general research on voter turnout including these factors, in both the world and the EU specifically formulate the control variables as *education*, *income*, *age* and *social class*.

The control variables are expected to work as they have in other studies, as in that the higher the socioeconomic status or factor, the higher the likelihood to vote becomes.

4 Method – Multilevel Logistic Regression

The method chosen to answer the research question and to test the hypotheses is a multilevel logistic regression. Using a regression allows the study to test and try to find causality between, in this case multiple, independent variables on the dependent variable, as well as controlling for other factors. The choice of logistic regression instead of an ordinary regression is due to the fact that the dependent variable is binary - with the possible answers of 0 or 1. In the case of this study, the 0 is that the respondent did not vote and the 1 being that they did.

To find whether hypotheses are to be falsified or not each regression-type will be made twice, once with the entire dataset included and once with only the politically interested included. This allows for the results of the regressions to show if the same explanatory models are true for the general population as well as for the group we are most interested in, the politically interested. In addition, if the regressions on all the respondents mimic the results of previous research, then the confidence and stock one can put in the regressions regarding the politically interested only increases. Albeit tentatively, the results of the regressions on the two groups can also be compared to highlight whether one or more of the variables have a bigger impact on the groups voting habits compared to the other, although that is not the main point of this thesis.

As for why the logistic regression will be multileveled is to ensure that the number of observations remain as high as possible, especially when looking at the two hypotheses and their corresponding variables. When including all the variables at once, including the control variables, the number of observations (respondents) drops by the thousands. This is due to the fact that respondents become excluded from the regression if they have chosen an answer that is removed for being a “non-answer” so to speak. These answers mostly include “do not know”, but also answers such as “destroy the ballot” when asked about how they would vote in a hypothetical “own member state -exit” scenario. In an attempt to include as many observations as possible, the first regressions will not include the control variables, as they are the main culprit in the decreasing number of observations.

Having a larger number of observations is a positive, especially considering that although the chosen material includes close to twentyseven thousand respondents, each member state only contributes about a thousand each to that number. Aiming to include as many observations as possible allows for each member state to be as represented as they can be. Considering that the control variables are introduced and included in the following regressions, the multilevel approach can only be considered a strength.

Furthermore to ensure that the results of the regressions are not driven by a single member state, or a cluster of similar member states (such as the Nordics or the post-2004 expansion member states) the regression will include jack-knifing tests. Jack-knifing is a common and

simple method to test variance in a larger population. As this study includes at the time 28 member states of the European Union, it is reasonable to expect variance between countries. Especially considering that some member states have mandatory voting laws, different political cultures and the United Kingdom having voted to leave the EU, as highlighted by some of the works cited in the chapter on previous research. As such one member state could due to these circumstances be the driving force behind the results of the logistic regressions, which would be interesting, but also a problem if not discovered. To avoid such an occurrence from slipping through the cracks, a number of jack-knifing tests will be made, where the regression is run again, but with n minus one or more - the n being the number of member states (Kissel & Poserina, 2017). The results of the jack-knifings will be included in the analysis but the regressions themselves will be found in the appendix in an effort to not “overcrowd” the results chapter with too many regression tables.

The strengths of the chosen method are quite clear, as it allows for the question to be answered as well as creating confidence in the result by having a high number of respondents as well as testing for single country “anomalies”. As for the possibility of using any other methods, there are some examples. Regarding quantitative approaches a cross tabulation could be used, but with two independent variables it would be difficult to find any causality. Equally, a cross tabulation would lack the inclusion of control variables that help to create the explanatory models for voting. As for a quantitative approach, there are some strengths that can not be found in the choice of multilevel logistic regression. Interviews allowing respondents to in their own words explain their reasoning for why they did not vote could have a larger explanatory power than a quantitative method. It would also allow for a greater comparison between the general population and the politically interested, doing a deepdive into whether euroscepticism or any other possible reason for not voting is a bigger reason for not voting in one group compared to the other. However such a method would be nigh impossible with the scope of this master's thesis, as it would need to include respondents from every member state. With this in mind, the choice of multilevel logistic regression with a pre-existing dataset is the best choice for this study.

The logistic regressions and the jack-knifing tests will be done in the data program STATA, with data to match from the European Election Study of 2019, the EES. More on the chosen material and dataset in the following chapter.

5 Material – the European Parliament Election Study of 2019

The material chosen for this thesis is the *European Parliament Election Study 2019*, EES, an election study created after the EP election of 2019, surveying citizens in, at the time, all 28 member states of the EU. The survey was made by Gallup International and the researchers Hermann Schmitt, Sara Hobolt, Wouter van der Brug and Sebastian Popa (2022). Many of these researchers conducting the study are also researchers contributing to my previous research and theory chapter. Equally, many of the papers cited in this thesis have used the 2019 election study or previous EES as material in their works.

The purpose of the election study was to study voter turnout and participation, as well as voting behaviour. In addition, the voter study allows for analysis regarding the EU as a political actor and part of the public sphere and how the public perceives the union. The survey data was collected online, with respondents numbering a total of 26 538 people. Around 1000 people were interviewed in every member state, except for the smaller member states of Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta who had 500 interviewees each. The people interviewed were stratified in regards to categories such as gender, age and region. The people were randomly selected using panel databases including stratification variables (Schmitt et al, 2022).

The survey questionnaire asks questions such as whether one voted or not, EU and national party choice, other party preferences as well as general attitudes and interest towards politics. The questionnaire also includes characteristics like gender, age, level of education and religious affiliation. Lastly, the questionnaire also asks questions regarding Brexit and one's attitudes towards liberal democracy (Schmitt et al, 2022).

The strengths of the chosen data is clear - it provides this study with a finished dataset which covers all of the variables that are of interest to the study. These include variables such as the most important one Q6, if they voted or not, as well as Q21, level of political interest. In addition, the main hypotheses can be operationalized through question Q4, satisfaction with EU democracy and Q15, whether your member state should continue to be a part of the EU. There are also controlling questions that can be operationalized into the study's control variables, such as D2 number of years studying, D4 age, D7 class affiliation and D11 family living standards (Schmitt et al, 2022). All these EES questions can be used to operationalize the hypotheses and gather control variables which allow this thesis to answer its research question.

Using existing data is a strength, at least compared to making a new questionnaire. This dataset is timely, as the data was gathered shortly after the election meaning that the respondents would have fresh memory of their choices when answering the questions. The data is also stratified in different factors of socioeconomic interest, such as age, levels of education and societal class. If for example there was a need to make an own questionnaire,

the lack of respondents could mean that some groups of interests were left out due to having few respondents. Overall, the complete dataset that covers the entire union is in every way preferential to creating one's own data. In addition, at least on the European level, no other dataset exists that encompasses all of the questions and variables that are of interest to this study. There are national level datasets, which in theory could be meshed together to create a pan-European dataset - this could have some additional strength as national datasets seem to be more complete, which will be highlighted in the paragraph below.

There are some negatives with the EES, as described in an article by Stefan Dahlberg and Mikeal Persson (2014). The two authors compared the European Election Study of 2009, known as EES, with the 2009 Swedish National European Parliament Study, known as SNES. For one, the SNES had an answer-rate of 67 percent, whilst the EES only had an answer-rate of 11.2 percent in Sweden. The comparison also finds that the EES heavily overestimates voter-turnout for the EP election in Sweden with an estimate of 82.3 percent turnout. However, the SNES also had it wrong, predicting the turnout to be 56.8 percent. The actual turnout of the EP election in 2009 in Sweden was 45.5 percent. The EES also has an overrepresentation of well-educated citizens answering, leading to an underestimation of differences in turnout between social classes. As for party-choice, respondents in the EES place themselves in the extremes of the left-right scale and the EES underestimates the number of voters for the Social Democrats. The authors find no solution to the issues raised in the comparison, and end their article with urging other researchers to be aware of these issues when using the EES as material.

Although there are drawbacks with using the EES, as shown by the critique pointed out by Dahlberg and Persson (2014), there is not much one can say other than to highlight the existence of these weaknesses. It is the job of the EES and their researchers to provide high quality data, but it would be remiss not to include such critique when discussing the material.

5.1 Variables of Interest and Descriptive Statistics

This thesis finds that the dependent variable is simply *Voting* and that there are two independent variables to be tested, with four control variables. The two main hypotheses that this thesis aims to test are *H1 - Politically interested people did not vote due to lack of satisfaction with European Union democracy* and *H2 - Politically interested people did not vote due to Euroscepticism*. These are operationalised as the independent variables dubbed “*Lack of satisfaction with EU democracy*” and “*Euroscepticism*”. The control variables are *education, age, social class* and *income* and are operationalized to correlate with what previous research has found to be driving socioeconomic factors in voting and political participation .

Table 1. The Variables

| Dependent Variable (Y) | Independent Variable (X) | Control Variables |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of satisfaction with EU democracy Euroscepticism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Age Social class Income |

The descriptive statistics and how they are coded and used in the logistic regressions will be described below, with data from the EES dataset. Although included in the descriptives below, answers such as “Don't Know” and “No Answer” will be excluded from the regression.

5.2 Dependent Variable

5.2.1 Voting

The operationalisation for voting is simple, and is using question number 6 which is formulated as “*Q6 The European Parliament elections were held on the [insert correct date for each country]. For one reason or another, some people in [your country] did not vote in these elections. Did you vote in the recent European Parliament elections?*”. The question allows for four different answers, being *Yes, voted, No, did not vote, Don't Know* and *No answer*. The answers are coded as 1, 2, 98 and 99 respectively.

Table 2. EES Respondents Voter Turnout in 2019 EP Election

| Voting in the 2019 EP election | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Voted | 18 749 | 70.80 | 70.80 |
| Did not vote | 7348 | 27.66 | 98.46 |
| Don't know/no answer | 408 | 1.54 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

The respondents of the EES had a high turnout, with 70,8% of all respondents answering that they voted in the 2019 European Parliamentary election. About 28% did not vote, numbering 7348 of the 26 538 respondents. Compared with the actual election, the turnout in the EES is much higher. The actual election had a turnout of 50,66% (Europaparlamentet, 2019),

suggesting that the difference in reported turnout is over 20 percentage points. This was a critique on sampling bias in the EES previously highlighted by Dahlberg and Persson (2014).

5.2.2 Political Interest and Voting

The question Q21 is formulated as “*Q21 To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?*”, with five possible answers. These are coded as *1 very*, *2 somewhat*, *3 a little*, *4 not at all* and *98 dk* (don't know). For the purpose of this study, *1 very* and *2 somewhat* will be classified as politically interested and included in the dependent variable in the following regressions that only includes the politically interested, whilst the answers *3 a little* and *4 not at all* will be excluded, including *98 dk*. Although they are included in the descriptives below. Note that the question and thus the results and conclusions that can be used from this data are based on self-defined political interest. There is no test or other type of control for whether the respondent actually takes an interest in and knows about politics, especially at the EU-level..

Table 3. EES Respondents Levels Of Political Interest

| Question 21, Political Interest | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Very | 4080 | 15.37 | 15.37 |
| Somewhat | 10 871 | 40.96 | 56.34 |
| A little | 7 996 | 30.13 | 86.47 |
| Not at all | 3088 | 11.64 | 98.10 |
| Don't know | 503 | 1.9 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

Looking at Table 3 with all respondents, over half are very or somewhat politically interested, with 15,37% and 40,96% answering as such respectively. A little over 30% are a little interested, with close to 12% being not interested at all. Compared with Table 4 below, it is clear that in that table, out of the non-voters there are fewer people that are interested in politics. This is supported by previous research that finds that political interest is a driving force in voting.

Why the descriptive statistics looks at politically interested non-voters rather than the entirety of the politically interested as it will do when looking at the regressions, is to cut deeper into the underlying statistics for the group of politically interested that decided not to vote. As these statistics will not be as clearly highlighted through the regressions tables where all the politically interested will be included, as the logistic regression requires a 1 (voting) and a 0 (not voting), the group of politically interested non-voters are instead shown here. The

descriptive statistics thus further hammer home what deterred the politically interested from not voting.

Table 4. EES Respondents Levels Of Political Interest, Non-voters Only

| Question 21, Political Interest | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Very | 469 | 6.39 | 6.39 |
| Somewhat | 2186 | 29.78 | 36.17 |
| A little | 2793 | 38.05 | 74.21 |
| Not at all | 1709 | 23.28 | 97.49 |
| Don't know | 184 | 2.51 | 100.00 |
| Total | 7341 | 100.00 | |

The descriptive statistics in Table 4 for the number of politically interested people that answered that they did not vote number 469 for the very interested and 2186 for the somewhat interested, totaling a number of 2655. Of all non-voters, the politically interested make up 36,17%. The non-voter category is thus dominated by people who are not politically interested, but the politically interested make up a large chunk, over a third. Out of all respondents in the EES, this equals roughly 10%. That is 2655 out of 26 538. The number of politically interested non-voters is thus 2655 people in the EES. This percentage is even higher than the number deduced in the introduction from the voter turnout in the 2019 EP election, underscoring how large the number of politically interested non-voters there are in the European Union.

5.3 Independent Variables

The first independent variable is labelled as “Dissatisfaction with EU democracy” and is operationalised as the question “*Q4 All in all again, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union?*”. The question allows for six different answers, being *1 very satisfied, 2 fairly satisfied, 3 not very satisfied, 4 not at all satisfied, 98 dk* (don't know) and no answer.

Table 5. EES Respondents Satisfaction With EU Democracy

| Question 4, Satisfaction with EU Democracy | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|--|-----------|---------|------------|
| Very satisfied | 1132 | 4.27 | 4.27 |
| Fairly satisfied | 9917 | 37.37 | 41.63 |
| Not very satisfied | 9538 | 35.94 | 77.58 |
| Not at all satisfied | 4291 | 16.17 | 93.74 |
| Don't know | 1658 | 6.25 | 99.99 |
| No answer | 2 | 0.01 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

As shown in Table 5, less than half of all respondents are satisfied with the democracy of the European Union, with only 37,37% saying they are fairly satisfied, and 4,27% being very satisfied. Instead 52,11% answered that they are dissatisfied, with 35.94% being not very satisfied and 16,17% being not at all satisfied. Most answers lie in the middle, with 73,31% picking either the middle answer of 2 *fairly satisfied* or 3 *not very satisfied*. There is also quite a large contingent that does not know their answer, numbering 6,25%.

When only looking at those politically interested who did not vote, we see that satisfaction with EU democracy is as follows.

Table 6. EES Respondents Satisfaction With EU Democracy, Politically Interested Non-Votes Only

| Question 4, Satisfaction with EU Democracy | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|--|-----------|---------|------------|
| Very satisfied | 104 | 3.92 | 3.92 |
| Fairly satisfied | 890 | 33.52 | 37.44 |
| Not very satisfied | 1007 | 37.93 | 75.37 |
| Not at all satisfied | 544 | 20.49 | 95.86 |
| Don't know | 110 | 4.14 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

Judging by Table 6, only 37,44% of politically interested non-voters answered that they are satisfied or fairly satisfied with EU democracy, with 3,92% being very satisfied and 33,52% being fairly satisfied. 58.42% of this type of respondent found dissatisfaction with EU democracy, with 37.93% being not very satisfied and 20.49% being not at all satisfied. Compared with all the respondents in Table 5, it is clear that a larger percentage of politically interested non-voters are dissatisfied with the EU, as 58,42% answered so compared to the

52,11% of the general respondents. Additionally, more politically interested non-voters had an answer for the question, with around 2 percentage points fewer opting for the “don't know” or “no answer” answer.

The operationalisation of this variable together with the previous research on rational choice is not a perfect match. This is due to the fact that, as suggested by rational choice theory, a rational citizen will not vote if they do not believe that their vote will have any impact on the election result or whether the elections lack importance/salience (Kanazawa, 2000, Franklin, 2001, Edlin, Gelman & Kaplan, 2007). This variable and its operationalisation only examines whether the lack of democracy could be the culprit in their choice of not voting, not whether or not they believe the vote will have any impact on the result or resulting policy changes. A rational voter can believe that the EU and the EP elections are democratic and at the same time think that their vote does not matter. Thus, the variable only examines one part of rational choice inspired literature.

The second independent variable is “Euroscepticism“ and it is operationalised through the question “*Q15 Imagine there were a referendum in [country] tomorrow about the membership of the European Union. Would you vote for [country] to remain a member of the European Union or to leave the European Union*”, with six possible answers. The answers are 1 Remain a member of the EU, 2 Leave the EU, 3 You would submit a blank ballot paper, 4 You would spoil the ballot paper, 5 You would not vote, 6 You are not eligible to vote and 98 Don't know. The answers coded as 3 and 4 will be included in the answer of 98, that the respondent does not know. In the subsequent regressions, these answers will be excluded. The choice of this question as the operationalisation of euroscepticism is inspired by Stockemer (2012) who used it to the same effect. The descriptives for this variable are as follows:

Table 7. EES Respondents Answer To Remaining In The EU

| Question 15, Vote on leaving the EU | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| Remain a member of the EU | 17 228 | 64.92 | 64.92 |
| Leave the EU | 4677 | 17.62 | 82.54 |
| Submit a blank ballot | 781 | 2.94 | 85.48 |
| Spoil the ballot | 404 | 1.52 | 87.01 |
| Would not vote | 1046 | 3.94 | 90.95 |
| Not eligible to vote | 183 | 0.69 | 91.64 |
| Don't know | 2219 | 8.36 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

A large majority of all the respondents in Table 7 show support for membership in the EU, with 64,92% answering as such. Only 17,62% of the respondents would like their member state to leave the union, and 8,36% don't know, together with others unsure of their choice, such as the 2,94% that would submit a blank ballot and 3,94% who would not vote at all.

When looking at support for EU membership in the group of politically interested non-voters, the descriptives look as follows.

Table 8. EES Respondents Answer To Remaining In The EU, Politically Interested Non-voters Only

| Question 15, Vote on leaving the EU | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| Remain a member of the EU | 1513 | 56.99 | 56.99 |
| Leave the EU | 629 | 23.69 | 80.68 |
| Submit a blank ballot | 92 | 3.47 | 84.14 |
| Spoil the ballot | 54 | 2.03 | 86.18 |
| Would not vote | 162 | 6.10 | 92.28 |
| Not eligible to vote | 46 | 1.73 | 94.01 |
| Don't know | 159 | 5.99 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

The politically interested non-voters in Table 8 also contain a majority of respondents that want to remain members of the EU, with 56,99% picking that answer. 23,69% want to see their country leave the EU, and around 6% are unsure, with another 6,10% deciding not to vote. Comparing this to all the respondents in Table 7, even though a majority would like to stay in the union, a larger percentage would vote to leave. The difference is around 6 percentage points more who would vote to leave in the politically interested non-voters group. However, although fewer respondents answered that they did not know, more respondents would decide not to vote at all.

When taking into account the variable of dissatisfaction with EU democracy, it is clear that in both the group of politically interested non-voters and all the general respondents, that even though over half of the respondents are dissatisfied with EU democracy as seen in Table 5 and Table 6, a majority want their member state status to continue, as seen in Table 7 and 8.

5.4 Control Variables

5.4.1 Education

The first control variable is “Education” and it is operationalised through the question “*D2 How old were you when you stopped full-time education?*” which has two modes of answering. The first being *xy [age in years]*, as well as *97 still studying*.

As the variable contains numbers from 0 to 97, the answered ages will be grouped and re-coded into the age ranges of 0-15 (coded as 1), 16-20 (coded as 2), 21-96 (coded as 3) and 97 (coded as 4). These age groupings are meant to symbolise the different stages of education levels, with 0-15 being pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education, 16-20 being an upper secondary education and 21-96 being a tertiary education. Answering 97 means still being a student in an education level of any kind. The age groups are based on the definitions of education levels from the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education by Unesco (ISCED, 2006). This is re-coded from the variable D2, with all ages separately, to the variable D2_1, with the education level groupings.

Table 9. EES Respondents Education Level

| D2_1, Age when full time-education ended | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| 0-15 years old | 1040 | 3.92 | 3.92 |
| 16-20 years old | 10 602 | 39.95 | 43.87 |
| 21-96 years old | 12 185 | 45.92 | 89.78 |
| 97, still studying | 1859 | 7.01 | 96.79 |
| Don' know | 852 | 3.21 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

Judging by Table 9 most respondents ended their education at the upper-secondary or tertiary level. 39,95% did not attend tertiary education such as a university, with 45,92% doing so. Close to 4% of the respondents ended their education at the primary level and 7,01% are still studying.

When only looking at politically interested non-voters the descriptives paint a somewhat similar picture.

Table 10. EES Respondents Education Level, Politically Interested Non-voters Only

| D2_1, Age when full time-education ended | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| 0-15 years old | 89 | 3.35 | 3.35 |
| 16-20 years old | 1127 | 42.45 | 45.80 |
| 21-96 years old | 1143 | 43.05 | 88.85 |
| 97, still studying | 204 | 7.68 | 96.53 |
| Don' know | 92 | 3.47 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

42,45% of politically interested non-voters in Table 10 ended their full-time schooling at the upper-secondary level, with roughly the same percentage ending theirs at the tertiary level. The percentage that are still studying and ending their full-time education at the primary level is roughly the same as the general respondents in Table 9. The only larger difference compared to all the respondents is that a few percentage points fewer in the politically interested non-voter group ended their full-time education at tertiary level, at around 2,5 percentage points difference.

5.4.2 Age

The control variable of age is operationalised by using the question “*D4 What year were you born?*”. The variable D4 has 80 unique values, as the responses range from the year 1921 to 2003, with years with zero respondents excluded. As such the age ranges will be re-coded into decades, starting with 1920, 1930, 1940 and so on until the decade of 2000. 1920 is coded as 1, 1930 as 2 etc. The unique values will as such go from 80 to 9. This re-coded variable is called D4_1.

Table 11. EES Respondents Age

| D4_1, What decade were you born? | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| 1920s | 6 | 0.02 | 0.02 |
| 1930s | 205 | 0.77 | 0.79 |
| 1940s | 2122 | 8.00 | 8.79 |
| 1950s | 4702 | 17.72 | 26.51 |
| 1960s | 4537 | 17.10 | 43.61 |
| 1970s | 4914 | 18.52 | 62.12 |
| 1980s | 4729 | 17.82 | 79.94 |
| 1990s | 4564 | 17.20 | 97.14 |
| 2000s | 759 | 2.86 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

The ages of all the respondents in Table 11 is quite evenly dispersed between the decades of 1950 to 1990, with 85,86% of respondents being born in those decades. Less than 9% are over the age of 72, and about 3% are in their early 20s or late teens. Compare this with Table 12 below and there is a similar dispersion, however it is clear that a larger percentage of politically interested non-voters can be found in the younger ages compared with all respondents.

Table 12. EES Respondents Age, Politically Interested Non-voters Only

| D4_1, What decade were you born? | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| 1920s | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1930s | 10 | 0.38 | 0.38 |
| 1940s | 171 | 6.44 | 6.82 |
| 1950s | 436 | 16.42 | 23.24 |
| 1960s | 433 | 16.31 | 39.55 |
| 1970s | 482 | 18.15 | 57.70 |
| 1980s | 518 | 19.51 | 77.21 |
| 1990s | 516 | 19.44 | 96.65 |
| 2000s | 89 | 3.35 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

5.4.3 Social Class

Social class as a control variable is operationalised through the question “D7 *If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to - the working class, the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class or the upper class?*”. All the possible answers are included in the question and are coded from 1 to 6 respectively, with 6 being “other”. In the regression other will not be included. The descriptives for D7 for all respondents are:

Table 13. EES Respondents Social Class

| D7, Self-identified social class | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Working class | 4849 | 18.27 | 18.27 |
| Lower middle class | 5464 | 20.59 | 38.86 |
| Middle class | 12 073 | 45.49 | 84.35 |
| Upper middle class | 3010 | 11.34 | 95.70 |
| Upper class | 425 | 1.60 | 97.30 |
| Other | 717 | 2.70 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

In Table 13 less than 13% of all respondents categorised themselves as upper middle class or higher, with the bulk of answers being found in the middle class, with almost a majority. 84,35% classify themselves as middle class or lower, with 18,27% being working class.

When only looking at politically interested non-voters, the result is close to identical. See below.

Table 14. EES Respondents Social Class, Politically Interested Non-voters Only

| D7, Self-identified social class | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Working class | 527 | 19.85 | 19.85 |
| Lower middle class | 599 | 22.56 | 42.41 |
| Middle class | 1147 | 43.20 | 85.61 |
| Upper middle class | 279 | 10.51 | 96.12 |
| Upper class | 33 | 1.24 | 97.36 |
| Other | 70 | 2.64 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

Although there is a difference in the percentage of self identified working class and lower middle class in Table 14 compared to Table 13, with 1,5 percentage points and 2 percentage points respectively, the results are close to the same - almost all politically interested non-voters identify from lower to upper middle class. The politically interested non-voters are slightly more working and lower middle class than the general respondents.

5.4.4 Income

The control variable income is operationalised through the question “D11 Taking everything into account, at about what level is your family’s standard of living? If you think of a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means a poor family, 7 a rich family, and the other numbers are for the positions in between, about where would you place your family?”. The possible answers are as the question says, a rating between 1 and 7, with 1 being a poor family and 7 a rich one.

This is not the perfect operationalisation for income, as for one the variable does not examine actual income, but just financial standing. In theory, a family or individual could have low or no income but still have a solid or rich financial standing based on inheritance or any other form of wealth creation not named income. Secondly, it is a rating without any solid numbers - financial standings could mean different things to different people, leading to, in theory at least, respondents with dissimilar financial standing giving the same answer. A better operationalisation would have been income as a raw number or some sort of income bracket. However, rating financial standing can still be viewed as an operationalisation for income, as income is tied with personal or family finances.

Table 15. EES Respondents Financial Standing

| D11, Family Financial Standing (rating) | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|
| Poor Family (1) | 1002 | 3.78 | 3.78 |
| (2) | 1847 | 6.96 | 10.74 |
| (3) | 4834 | 18.22 | 28.95 |
| (4) | 9277 | 34.96 | 63.91 |
| (5) | 7039 | 26.52 | 90.43 |
| (6) | 1551 | 5.84 | 96.28 |
| Rich Family (7) | 394 | 1.48 | 97.76 |
| No answer | 594 | 2.24 | 100.00 |
| Total | 26 538 | 100.00 | |

In Table 15 the largest share of answers was the middle answer, number 4, with 34,96% of all answers. The other middle answers of 3 and 5 got 18,22% and 26,52% of the answers respectively, highlighting that most respondents put themselves somewhere in the middle. Few of all the respondents deemed their financial situation to be dire, with about a tenth of respondents answering 1 or 2, and equally very few deemed their situation to be on the richest end of the scale, with less than 8% answering 6 or 7.

Table 16. EES Respondents Financial Standing, Politically Interested Non-voters Only

| D11, Family Financial Standing (rating) | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|
| Poor Family (1) | 143 | 5.39 | 5.39 |
| (2) | 206 | 7.76 | 13.15 |
| (3) | 506 | 19.06 | 32.20 |
| (4) | 962 | 36.23 | 68.44 |
| (5) | 637 | 23.99 | 92.43 |
| (6) | 126 | 4.75 | 97.18 |
| Rich Family (7) | 33 | 1.24 | 98.42 |
| No answer | 42 | 1.58 | 100.00 |
| Total | 2655 | 100.00 | |

When only looking at the politically interested non-voters in Table 16, the answers are somewhat similar, but the poorer answers have a larger percentage share. The rating 1-3 contains 32,20% of all answers by politically interested non-voters, whilst for all respondents in Table 15 the same percentage is 28,95%. Otherwise, most politically interested non-voters categorise themselves somewhere in the middle regarding financial standing.

6 Results & Analysis

Below are the tables of logistic regression presented, firstly only with the main variables of interests with all respondents and only the politically interested respectively, and then done with all variables, including the control variables, with one made with all respondents in the EES, and one done just with those who answered that they are politically interested. The regressions test the likelihood of someone voting, showing how the previously presented variables affect this probability - voting being 1 and not voting being 0. A variable showing a minus figure would thus be a variable that has a negative effect on the probability of voting, whilst a plus figure would have the opposite effect, increasing the likelihood of going to the polls. In the tables themselves a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy is simply named “EU_Democracy”, whilst euroscepticism, defined as wanting their country to leave the EU, is simply named “Euroscepticism”. In addition, knife-jacking tests are done on several member states of interest to validate that the findings in the regressions are not driven by certain countries.

Table 17. Logistic Regression With Euroscepticism & Lack Of Satisfaction With EU Democracy Only, All Respondents

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.424 | .042 | -9.98 | 0 | -.507 | -.341 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.073 | .023 | -3.22 | .001 | -.118 | -.029 | *** |
| Constant | 1.916 | .062 | 30.77 | 0 | 1.794 | 2.038 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.768 | SD dependent var | 0.422 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.008 | Number of obs | 20848 |
| Chi-square | 171.884 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 22425.494 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 22449.329 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

The first level of logistic regressions includes only the variables of euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy. Table 17 above shows that both variables have a negative impact on the likelihood of voting. As shown by the coef., when increasing euroscepticism by 1, i.e going from wanting to remain a member of the EU to wanting to leave the EU, the likelihood of voting goes down significantly, with a score of -.424. The statistical significance of this number is sound, as the p-value is a 0 and the significance value a ***, showing that there is a statistical relationship between the variables outside of the model itself.

Equally a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy also negatively impacts the likelihood of someone voting in the 2019 EP election, with a coefficient of -.073. As the possible answers regarding satisfaction with EU democracy ranged from 1 to 4, with 1 being very satisfied and 4 being not satisfied at all, the minus coefficient figure, i.e increasing the number by 1, shows that lack of satisfaction with EU democracy decreases the likelihood of voting. This variable is also statistically significant, with a p-value of .001, and three ***.

The standard error, as in how uncertain one can be of the results, were close to zero in both variables, suggesting that the value found here is very close to the actual value. The number of observations numbered 20848 respondents, meaning that about 6000 of the original 26 538 respondents chose an answer in one, some or all of the variables that were coded out of the model, such as “Don’t Know”. This is a drop in observations, but still includes a large majority of the respondents in the EES.

Table 18. Logistic Regression With Euroscepticism & Lack Of Satisfaction With EU Democracy Only, Politically Interested Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|----------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.528 | .062 | -8.56 | 0 | -.649 | -.407 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.085 | .033 | -2.57 | .01 | -.149 | -.02 | ** |
| Constant | 3.7 | .144 | 25.77 | 0 | 3.419 | 3.981 | *** |
| Mean dependent var | | 0.842 | SD dependent var | | 0.365 | | |
| Pseudo r-squared | | 0.022 | Number of obs | | 13108 | | |
| Chi-square | | 248.199 | Prob > chi2 | | 0.000 | | |
| | | 11208.671 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | | 11238.595 | | |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 18 is the same model of regression as Table 17, with the difference being that the regression only includes the politically interested. That being those who answered very interested or somewhat interested regarding their political interest. This group numbers 13108 observations, including politically interested respondents that voted and those who did not. When looking back at the descriptive statistics, we see that the number of politically interested number 14951 respondents, suggesting that the exclusion of some answers only dropped the number of observations by around 1800 responses.

The first variable, euroscepticism, shows a clear negative impact on the likelihood of a politically interested person voting if they want their country to leave the EU. The coefficient for this is -.528, which has strong statistical significance. The p-value is a zero, the standard error somewhat close to zero as well and the significance being *** - Euroscepticism is thus a reason for why politically interested citizens did not vote in the EP election of 2019. The impact euroscepticism has on the probability of voting is also higher amongst the politically interested in Table 18 when compared to all respondents in Table 17.

Lack of satisfaction with EU democracy, just named EU_Democracy in the tables, is also a reason found for why politically interested people decided not to vote. With a coefficient of -.085 it has a negative impact on the probability of a politically interested person voting. The result being statistically significant with a p-value of .01 and **. As was the case for the euroscepticism variable as well, the standard error was close to 0. The negative impact of the variable is also a bit higher when compared to Table 17 that includes all respondents.

Table 19. Logistic Regression With All Variables, All Respondents

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.385 | .046 | -8.45 | 0 | -.475 | -.296 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.096 | .025 | -3.85 | 0 | -.145 | -.047 | *** |
| Age | -.024 | .001 | -20.03 | 0 | -.026 | -.022 | *** |
| Education | .011 | .002 | 4.77 | 0 | .006 | .015 | *** |
| Social_Class | .056 | .019 | 2.91 | .004 | .018 | .094 | *** |
| Income | .15 | .017 | 9.06 | 0 | .117 | .182 | *** |
| Constant | 48.125 | 2.365 | 20.35 | 0 | 43.489 | 52.76 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.774 | SD dependent var | 0.418 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.040 | Number of obs | 18686 |
| Chi-square | 798.669 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 19181.830 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 19236.678 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

In Table 19 the model goes to the next level and includes the control variables. It is clear that the previous results still hold, as both main variables still show a negative coefficient value, a standard error close to zero, a p-value of 0 as well as a statistical significance of ***. Even though the number of observations/respondents have decreased further with the introduction of the control variables, from 20848 in Table 17 to 18686 in this table, Table 19, the results still remain the same. Euroscepticism and a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy had a negative impact on voter turnout amongst the general population.

As for the control variables, three out of four have a positive impact on the probability of voting amongst the general population. These three were education, with a coefficient of .011, social class with .056 and income with .15. Although the variable age shows a negative impact, with a coefficient of -.024, it does not mean that older age leads to a lesser probability of voting - it's rather the opposite. As the variable is coded as year of birth, not age, the higher

the number in variable the younger the person is. As such, the negative coefficient actually shows that the younger you are the less likely you are to vote. With this in mind, the variable worked as expected.

The p-value of all the control variables are 0 apart from social class with .004, which is still statistically significant. All four variables score a ***. The standard error of all variables was close to zero.

Table 20. Logistic Regression With All Variables, Politically Interested Respondents Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|--------------------|--------|----------|----------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.465 | .066 | -7.08 | 0 | -.594 | -.336 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.11 | .036 | -3.09 | .002 | -.18 | -.04 | *** |
| Age | -.019 | .002 | -11.39 | 0 | -.023 | -.016 | *** |
| Education | .011 | .003 | 3.57 | 0 | .005 | .018 | *** |
| Social_Class | .051 | .028 | 1.80 | .072 | -.004 | .107 | * |
| Income | .137 | .024 | 5.70 | 0 | .09 | .184 | *** |
| Constant | 40.946 | 3.367 | 12.16 | 0 | 34.347 | 47.545 | *** |
| Mean dependent var | | 0.845 | SD dependent var | | 0.362 | | |
| Pseudo r-squared | | 0.045 | Number of obs | | 11892 | | |
| Chi-square | | 465.500 | Prob > chi2 | | 0.000 | | |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | | 9810.690 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | | 9869.759 | | |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

The final table is Table 20, which also levels up to include the control variables but only includes the politically interested. As was the case with all previous regression tables, both euroscepticism and a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy is found to have a negative impact on the likelihood of voting, with coefficients of -.465 and -.11 respectively. These figures are statistically significant, with a p-value of 0 and .002 respectively and *** for both variables. When compared to the table with only politically interested without the control

variables, there has been some changes - as the negative impact of euroscepticism has gone down slightly whilst the negative impact of lack of satisfaction with EU democracy has gone up slightly. Nevertheless the results remain close to the same.

With the introduction of the control variables the number of observations is 11 892, down from 13108 in Table 18. As for the results of the control variables, three out of four have a positive impact on the probability of a politically interested person voting. These three being education, social class and income - when these factors increase in value, so do the likelihood of voting. The positive coefficients were .011 for education, .051 for social class and .137 for income. Education and income were statistically significant with p-values of zero and ***. Social class on the other hand lacked statistical significance, at least comparatively, with a p-value of .072 and one *. As for the variable of age, the tale remains the same - even though it shows a negative number, older age does not mean that the politically interested person is less likely to vote. The variable is coded as year of birth, so the higher the number the younger the person is - suggesting that the coefficient of -.019 shows that youth decreases the likelihood of a politically interested person voting. This number is statistically significant with a p-value of zero and ***.

6.1 Results of Jack-knifing

To test the whether the results of the regression model is driven by singular or similar member states, several jack-knife tests will be made, one without the United Kingdom, one without Belgium, one without the cluster of the Nordics (Sweden, Denmark and Finland) and one without the cluster of the post 2004-expansion member states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria). The tests are exactly the same type of logistic regression as the ones made previously, but when jack-knifing one excludes the member states represented above in their respective jack-knife regression. The United Kingdom was chosen for this as they had decided to leave the European Union at the time of the EP elections of 2019, although at the time of the election had still not left. Belgium has mandatory voting laws, which makes it stand out among most other EU member states. These two member states are unique cases, and together with clusters of similar member states they will act as a test to see how much confidence one can put in this model. If the results of these jack-knifings are similar to the logistic regressions made on the entire union we can conclude that the conclusions that can be made from this thesis can be generally applied to all the member states of the European Union. These logistic regressions can be found in the Appendix after the list of references.

The first member state to be jack-knifed is the United Kingdom. Both logistic regressions, as in one including all the respondents and one only including the politically interested, showed similar results as the main logistic regressions. When taking the United Kingdom out of the picture, euroscepticism and a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy still negatively affects the likelihood of voting, for both the general population and the politically interested. The control variables too are the same, with increases in social status and socioeconomic factors having a positive impact on the likelihood of voting. The p-value is under 0.05 in all variables apart from social class, and the sig is three asterisks for all variables, apart from social class.

As such, the United Kingdom was not a driver in the results of the regressions across the entire union (see Table 21 & Table 22 in Appendix).

In the second jack-knifing test the United Kingdom is put back into the model and Belgium is taken out. Once again, the results for the entire union sans Belgium are similar, with euroscepticism, lack of satisfaction with EU democracy and the control variables acting as expected. The p-values and sig remain strong, with only social class lacking significance with only one asterisk. Belgium is thus not a lone driving force in the results of the main logistic regressions, the rest of the union is (see Table 23 & Table 24 in Appendix).

The first cluster of member states to be taken out of the model are the Nordic states of Sweden, Denmark and Finland. As was the case for previous jack-knifings, the regression results still hold up when taking the Nordic member states out of the equation. Euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy have a negative effect for both the general population and the politically interested, whilst the control variables show a positive effect. Equally p-values and significance remain strong across the board, with only a slight difference regarding lack of satisfaction with EU democracy who amongst the politically interested scored a p-value of 0.011. When taking out the Nordics there are close to no differences in the result, once again showing that the results of the main regression spans the entire union (see Table 25 & Table 26 in Appendix).

The final jack-knifing test excludes the member states that became members of the EU during and after 2004. These include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria, which is a total of 13 states. This jack-knifing test with close to just half the member states of the EU holds up, just as the previous tests. All variables work the same as expected, and the results of the model when excluding these post-2004 expansion states shows the negative impact of euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy and the positive impact of the control variables. The variable of lack of satisfaction in EU democracy has a higher p-value than previous regressions, with a score of 0.07 and 0.033 respectively. Other p-values and significance remains the same as previous, apart from social class and education who both saw higher numbers. Even though the results remain the same as both the main regressions and the other jack-knifing tests, the higher p-values on some variables suggest that when these member states are left out, leaving only the western part of the union in the model, the results lack as much statistical significance (see Table 27 & Table 28 in Appendix).

All in all, the jack-knifing tests highlight the “pan-Europeanness” of this observed phenomena, that euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy decreases the likelihood of voting and the control variables increasing it, as the results remain when taking a host of different member states out of the model.

6.2 Hypotheses & Control Variables

With the results complete, this part of the chapter aims at analysing the results by testing the hypotheses and the impact of the control variables, starting with the first and second hypothesis. The control variables, although not having any hypotheses, are included to show confidence in the regression model by working as expected.

6.2.1 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis this thesis aimed to test was *H1 - Politically interested people did not vote due to lack of satisfaction with European Union democracy*. In both regression Table 18 and Table 20, i.e the regressions with politically interested people only, made without and with control variables respectively, the variable EU_Democracy clearly shows that a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy was a reason for why politically interested people did not vote. Table 18 had a coefficient of -.085 and Table 20 one of -.11. Introducing the control variables thus changed the number somewhat, but the result remained the same. In both tables the p-value is at least $<.05$ and the sig has ***, underlining the statistical significance of this result. Although not explicitly stated with its own hypothesis, the same result can be found in the general population in both Table 17 and Table 19.

This hypothesis of H1 is supported and not falsified - politically interested people did not vote in the 2019 EP elections due to lack of satisfaction with European Union democracy.

6.2.2 Hypothesis 2

The second and last hypothesis was *H2 - Politically interested people did not vote due to Euroscepticism*. The results of both Table 18 and Table 20 clearly show that politically interested people did not vote due to euroscepticism, i.e wanting their country to leave the EU. The variable's coefficient in Table 18 was -.528 whilst the same figure for Table 20 was -.465. As was the case for the other main variable, the introduction of control variables and the change in the number of observations had an effect on the figure but not the main result. The result was also statistically significant with a p-value of 0 and *** in both regressions. The same results stand for the general population as well, judging by Table 17 and 19.

This hypothesis is also supported and found to not be falsified - politically interested people did not vote in the EP elections of 2019 due to euroscepticism (wanting their country to leave the EU).

6.2.3 Control Variables

The control variables worked as was believed, the greater one's socioeconomic status the higher the probability of voting becomes. In both of the levelled up regressions, Table 19 and Table 20, the control variables worked as expected, although somewhat surprisingly the number of observations did not drop as much as theorised when they were introduced into the model. Education had a positive coefficient of .011 and .011 respectively, social class .056 and .051 and income .15 and .137. These factors were theorised to have a positive impact on the probability of voting, and they did. Age also had the impact that was expected, as younger ages, i.e “higher” years of birth, had a negative impact on the probability of voting - with coefficients of -.024 and -.019. The impact of these control variables were true for both the general population and the politically interested only.

All variables were statistically significant in all regression tables apart from social class in Table 20, the one with politically interested only, which found itself with a p-value of .072 and *. With the fact that the control variables worked as expected, the general confidence in the regression model grows. Equally, as the regression was multileveled, the results regarding euroscepticism and EU democracy are not driven by socioeconomic factors, and are shown to be independent of socioeconomic factors. Nevertheless, these socioeconomic factors still had an impact, which in all cases but one carried a statistical significance.

7 Conclusions & Future Research

The conclusions that can be made from this study is that although previous research has not explicitly examined what deters politically interested people from going to the polls, it has provided this study with potent guidance that in turn produced hypotheses that were found to be supported. The previous research that guided this thesis has been found to be correct in that their findings were true for the general population, and as was of interest in this study, the politically interested. The lack of satisfaction with EU democracy being a reason for not voting as outlined through rational choice theorists such as Downs (2000), Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan (2007) and national second order election theory provided by Reif and Schmitt (1980) and Stockemer (2011) was found to be supported by this study. As the EP election lacks electoral salience and democratic legitimacy in the eyes of many in the public, the cost and resources to vote in such an election which is believed to have little impact becomes too high. Despite political interest, why vote if you believe the democratic mechanisms of representation do not work?

This in turn leads down to the second hypothesis and how the findings of authors such as Hobolt (2015), Hobolt et al (2021), Trieb (2021) and Schäfer (2021) were found to be correct as well. With Brexit turning many other parties into soft eurosceptics, options for the hard eurosceptic, the -exiter, has ceased to exist. As such the hard eurosceptic sees no alternatives on election day that represents their views, and thus decides to stay at home, despite their interest in politics. Their findings are as such supported by this study as well, showing that the general conclusions that have been made regarding voter turnout in previous research also can be generally applied to a group often being taken for granted in the field, the politically interested.

The explanatory models hold across the groups and by extension, if one wished to raise turnout in the EP elections, the methods one would aim to use to increase the general population's turnout in regards to euroscepticism and lack of satisfaction with EU democracy would be the same for the politically interested ones. In addition, a somewhat paradoxical way for the EU to see a rise in its turnout in EP elections and thus create more democratic legitimacy for the union would be to have more “hard” eurosceptic parties participating in the EP elections. Previous research such as that of Treib (2021) highlights the lack of options for the true/hard eurosceptic, as most eurosceptic parties post-Brexit have either abandoned their euroscepticism altogether or turned into “soft” eurosceptics, suggesting reform rather than -exit. If there were more parties that advocated for leaving the EU entirely, judging by the results of this study, the turnout would increase dramatically. As both the general population and the politically interested specifically lack this option at the polls making some citizens seemingly stay at home because of it. A group often found, through their common characteristic of being politically interested, to be going to the polls in droves could increase its turnout even more if these harder eurosceptic options existed.

Now, although the study finds support for all its hypotheses, it is not perfect. The variables used to operationalize the hypotheses were functional, but they were not a one to one

comparison. The first hypothesis regards EU democracy, but it was supported and grounded in previous research on rational choice theory and national second order elections research. These previous works do not necessarily suggest that a citizen would for-go their vote due to a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy. To believe that one's vote does not matter is not entirely the same thing as being dissatisfied with democracy, as suggested by some countries' lack of electoral salience by Franklin (2002). So although there was a clear link between lack of satisfaction with EU democracy and not voting amongst the politically interested, it only answers if it is due to believing their vote doesn't matter because there are actual democratic deficits in the union, not because their vote had no impact. That remains unanswered.

The second weakness is the overall idea of someone being politically interested, especially when looking at the European Union. With the low turnout that is found in the EP elections compared to that of national elections, it is reasonable to assume that people in general are less interested in the EU, including those who deem themselves to be politically interested, as supported by the descriptive statistics. As in, they might call themselves politically interested as they have done in the EES, but at the same time have little to no interest in European political matters. Thus, it would be of even greater interest to do a study and run a similar regression model which includes a variable that specifically examines EU-level political interest. However, to my knowledge no material regarding the EU exists that includes such a specific definition of political interest.

Future studies could thus work on finding better source material or create material of their own, material which aims at breaching the gaps between what material is available and the causal linkages the research tries to find. A suggestion would be to interview politically interested (interested in the EU that is) non-voters in a semi-structured way to allow them in their own words to describe the reasons for why they did not vote, instead of using quantitative data to make a regression or any other quantitative method. The EES should also in future election studies specify EU-level political interest in the same or a new question to allow further research on the subject.

Although the jack-knifing showed that the results of the regression and the support for the hypotheses were potent in its "pan-Europeanness", it also highlighted that there are some intra-EU differences. The jackknifing excluding the member states from the 2004 and after EU expansion particularly weakened the confidence in parts of the model, with rising p-values for the EU-democracy variable and some control variables. Although not enough to invalidate or even really challenge the findings of this study, it does highlight that there are some differences and thus there could be a need for future cross country comparisons and case studies on the subject.

In conclusion, this study finds that the explanatory models and theories that have been tested and applied in previous research to the general population regarding voter turnout is also true for the group of politically interested, a group previous research has somewhat taken for granted. In short, euroscepticism and a lack of satisfaction with EU democracy are driving factors when politically interested, as well as the general population, decides not to vote in European Parliamentary elections. Although a potent result in and of itself, this study also highlights further possibilities in future research that could be made pertaining to the group politically interested and voter turnout.

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9 Appendix – Jack-knifing Logistic Regressions

Table 21. Logistic Regression, No United Kingdom

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.402 | .047 | -8.52 | 0 | -.495 | -.31 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.094 | .026 | -3.66 | 0 | -.144 | -.044 | *** |
| Age | -.024 | .001 | -19.68 | 0 | -.027 | -.022 | *** |
| Education | .01 | .002 | 4.47 | 0 | .006 | .015 | *** |
| Social_Class | .053 | .02 | 2.70 | .007 | .015 | .092 | *** |
| Income | .159 | .017 | 9.31 | 0 | .125 | .192 | *** |
| Constant | 48.84 | 2.432 | 20.08 | 0 | 44.072 | 53.607 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.776 | SD dependent var | 0.417 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.041 | Number of obs | 17974 |
| Chi-square | 786.523 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 18370.511 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 18432.885 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 22. Logistic Regression, No United Kingdom, Politically Interested Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|----------|----------------------|------|----------|-------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.479 | .068 | -7.01 | 0 | -.613 | -.345 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.107 | .037 | -2.90 | .004 | -.178 | -.035 | *** |
| Age | -.02 | .002 | -11.15 | 0 | -.023 | -.016 | *** |
| Education | .01 | .003 | 3.24 | .001 | .004 | .017 | *** |
| Social_Class | .05 | .029 | 1.69 | .09 | -.008 | .107 | * |
| Income | .147 | .025 | 5.92 | 0 | .098 | .195 | *** |
| Constant | 41.358 | 3.465 | 11.93 | 0 | 34.566 | 48.15 | *** |
| Mean dependent var | | 0.847 | SD dependent var | | 0.360 | | |
| Pseudo r-squared | | 0.045 | Number of obs | | 11447 | | |
| Chi-square | | 442.091 | Prob > chi2 | | 0.000 | | |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | | 9373.827 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | | 9439.937 | | |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 23. Logistic Regression, No Belgium

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.385 | .046 | -8.35 | 0 | -.475 | -.294 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.114 | .025 | -4.49 | 0 | -.163 | -.064 | *** |
| Age | -.024 | .001 | -20.11 | 0 | -.027 | -.022 | *** |
| Education | .011 | .002 | 4.84 | 0 | .007 | .016 | *** |
| Social_Class | .058 | .02 | 3.00 | .003 | .02 | .097 | *** |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|-------|-------|---|--------|--------|-----|
| Income | .146 | .017 | 8.72 | 0 | .113 | .179 | *** |
| Constant | 48.835 | 2.399 | 20.35 | 0 | 44.133 | 53.538 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.768 | SD dependent var | 0.422 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.041 | Number of obs | 17999 |
| Chi-square | 807.666 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 18686.776 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 18749.161 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 24. Logistic Regression, No Belgium, Politically Interested Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.468 | .066 | -7.08 | 0 | -.598 | -.339 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.127 | .036 | -3.55 | 0 | -.198 | -.057 | *** |
| Age | -.019 | .002 | -11.35 | 0 | -.023 | -.016 | *** |
| Education | .012 | .003 | 3.58 | 0 | .005 | .018 | *** |
| Social_Class | .053 | .029 | 1.85 | .064 | -.003 | .109 | * |
| Income | .135 | .024 | 5.59 | 0 | .088 | .183 | *** |
| Constant | 41.119 | 3.394 | 12.11 | 0 | 34.466 | 47.772 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.842 | SD dependent var | 0.365 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.046 | Number of obs | 11580 |

Chi-square 467.698 Prob > chi2 0.000

Akaike crit. (AIC) 9650.412 Bayesian crit. (BIC) 9716.625

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 25. Logistic regression, No Nordics

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.402 | .048 | -8.33 | 0 | -.496 | -.307 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.089 | .026 | -3.37 | .001 | -.14 | -.037 | *** |
| Age | -.023 | .001 | -18.54 | 0 | -.026 | -.021 | *** |
| Education | .012 | .002 | 4.91 | 0 | .007 | .017 | *** |
| Social_Class | .047 | .021 | 2.31 | .021 | .007 | .088 | ** |
| Income | .149 | .018 | 8.40 | 0 | .115 | .184 | *** |
| Constant | 47.482 | 2.503 | 18.97 | 0 | 42.576 | 52.388 | *** |

Mean dependent var 0.775 SD dependent var 0.418

Pseudo r-squared 0.039 Number of obs 16758

Chi-square 691.301 Prob > chi2 0.000

Akaike crit. (AIC) 17212.627 Bayesian crit. (BIC) 17274.440

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 26. Logistic regression, No Nordics, Politically Interested Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.472 | .07 | -6.79 | 0 | -.608 | -.336 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.095 | .037 | -2.53 | .011 | -.168 | -.021 | ** |
| Age | -.019 | .002 | -10.28 | 0 | -.022 | -.015 | *** |
| Education | .013 | .003 | 3.71 | 0 | .006 | .02 | *** |
| Social_Class | .051 | .03 | 1.67 | .095 | -.009 | .11 | * |
| Income | .142 | .026 | 5.51 | 0 | .092 | .193 | *** |
| Constant | 39.437 | 3.564 | 11.07 | 0 | 32.452 | 46.422 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.844 | SD dependent var | 0.363 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.044 | Number of obs | 10630 |
| Chi-square | 403.385 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 8812.004 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 8877.447 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 27. Logistic regression, No Post 2004 Expansion Members

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf | Interval] | Sig |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.398 | .065 | -6.12 | 0 | -.526 | -.271 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.066 | .036 | -1.81 | .07 | -.137 | .005 | * |
| Age | -.018 | .002 | -10.67 | 0 | -.022 | -.015 | *** |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|-----|
| Education | .005 | .003 | 1.57 | .116 | -.001 | .011 | |
| Social_Class | .089 | .028 | 3.11 | .002 | .033 | .145 | *** |
| Income | .12 | .025 | 4.90 | 0 | .072 | .168 | *** |
| Constant | 38.504 | 3.432 | 11.22 | 0 | 31.777 | 45.231 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.819 | SD dependent var | 0.385 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.033 | Number of obs | 10088 |
| Chi-square | 319.470 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 9241.127 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 9298.879 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 28. Logistic regression, No Post 2004 Expansion Members, Politically Interested Only

| Voting | Coef. | St.Err. | t-value | p-value | [95% Conf Interval] | Sig | |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|--------|-----|
| Euroscepticism | -.513 | .092 | -5.57 | 0 | -.694 | -.333 | *** |
| EU_Democracy | -.109 | .051 | -2.13 | .033 | -.21 | -.009 | ** |
| Age | -.016 | .002 | -6.62 | 0 | -.021 | -.012 | *** |
| Education | .006 | .004 | 1.39 | .164 | -.002 | .014 | |
| Social_Class | .043 | .042 | 1.01 | .311 | -.04 | .125 | |
| Income | .099 | .036 | 2.78 | .005 | .029 | .169 | *** |
| Constant | 36.338 | 4.911 | 7.40 | 0 | 26.712 | 45.964 | *** |

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Mean dependent var | 0.874 | SD dependent var | 0.332 |
| Pseudo r-squared | 0.041 | Number of obs | 6580 |
| Chi-square | 205.444 | Prob > chi2 | 0.000 |
| Akaike crit. (AIC) | 4792.215 | Bayesian crit. (BIC) | 4853.341 |

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$