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LABOUR MARKET PRECARITY AND POLITICAL ALIENATION¹

Abstract

The object of this article is to analyse the relationship between labour market precarity and political attitudes in Poland. I address the following research question: how do people in economically insecure employment differ from other workers in terms of electoral participation, self-reported interest in politics, and adherence to democratic principles? My analyses are based on quantitative data from the sixth wave of the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN), conducted in 2013 on a nationally representative sample of adults aged 21 and above. The study found strong associations between indicators of labour market precarity observed at the time of the POLPAN survey and the dependent variables. However, most of these relationships disappear in regression models controlling for the other socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. It appears that the lack of interest in politics and higher scepticism towards democracy among members of the precariat may not be due to labour market insecurity as such, but rather determined by such factors as younger age, a lower level of education, and lower household income.

Keywords: labour market precarity, authoritarianism, democracy, political participation

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INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in the socio-political consequences of labour market dualisation and the rise in precarious employment [Emmenegger 2009, King, Rueda 2008; Rovny, Rovny 2017; Rueda 2005]. The main reason for this is the growing concern related to occupational polarisation driven by technological change, and changes in the employment relationship leading to increased levels of economic insecurity for many individuals. A significant share of workers remain in various types of part-time or fixed-term jobs, often offering limited employee protection and lower wages, as well as worse access to welfare benefits [Kalleberg 2009; Palier, Thelen 2010]. In the context of strong employment protection and restricted access to so-called “insider” jobs, those who enter into atypical employment have a low chance of transitioning to more secure relations [Boeri 2010; European Commission 2010]. As a result, labour market segmentation arises, dividing workers into “insiders”, in jobs offering reasonable wages and good career prospects, and “outsiders”, who remain trapped in precarious jobs, unable to plan for the future and forced to live on a day-to-day basis [Standing 2011].

This change has raised concerns regarding the political integration and sustainability of democratic values among those who end up in the outsider category. The hardships, sense of injustice and lack of prospects for the future experienced by those trapped in precarious employment may lead to their disenchantment with democratic political institutions. Accordingly, employment precarity can cause indifference, apathy, or a complete withdrawal from political and civic life, but also increase the level of intolerance and xenophobia, as well as adherence to radical, anti-democratic ideologies. Despite the fact that this issue has become the subject of some controversy in the recent literature and public discourse, there are very few systematic, empirical attempts focused directly on the relationships between precarious employment and support for democratic principles.

This article studies the possible influence of precarious employment on political attitudes and behaviour in Poland. In particular, I address the following research questions: how do those in unstable employment differ from other workers in terms of voter turnout, self-reported interest in politics and attitudes toward democracy? Three reasons make Poland an especially interesting case for analysis. Firstly, there is the high incidence of precarious employment, compared to other European countries, especially among the young. According to Eurostat data, in the past few years, between 26 and 28 percent of workers had a temporary job – almost twice the EU average. Among people aged 15–24, the respective

percentage was between 68 and 72%². Secondly, the relatively low levels of electoral participation in Polish society, observed in studies over many years, have given rise to concerns over the condition and prospects of Polish democracy [e.g., Grönlund, Setälä 2007; Cześnik, Kwiatkowska 2017; Szczegóła 2007]. Thirdly, the results of the 2015 elections and the allegedly widespread social support for the controversial actions of the Law and Justice government have also spurred public debate on the extent to which these phenomena were brought about by the neglect of labour market outsiders by the previous governments³, and questions whether the dark scenario of the government instrumentalising the discontent of precarious, alienated and disengaged citizens to dismantle democracy and the rule of law is actually coming true in the Polish case [Markowski, Kotnarowski 2016].

My analyses are based on quantitative data from the most recent wave of the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN), conducted in 2013 on a nationally representative sample of adults age 21 and above who have completed full-time education. The next section reviews the literature on the relationship between precarious employment and political attitudes. The third section describes the hypotheses and methodology of the present study. The fourth presents the results, and the fifth concludes.

THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF LABOUR MARKET PRECARITY

Although there is a growing number of studies dealing with the political decisions of individuals in a difficult economic situation, the focus of these studies is mainly on measuring support for various policy ideas or political parties rather than support for democracy as such. A majority of these studies analyse the political preferences and voting choices of variously defined outsiders, using cross-national survey data or single-country data from election surveys. These studies generally assume that voters are mostly rational in their electoral behaviour,

² Source: Temporary employees as a percentage of the total number of employees, by sex, age and citizenship (%), Eurostat database, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [access: 02.07.2018].

³ For example: “Michał Boni: Byliśmy głusi” (Michał Boni: We were deaf), interview published by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 2, 2016 (<http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,19853739,michal-boni-bylismy-glusi.html>) or “Nie tym tonem. Jak rząd obrzydził ludziom reformy” (Watch your tone. How the government made people detest reforms), article by Ewa Wilk, *Polityka*, May 31, 2015 (<https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1621323,2,jak-rzad-obrzydzil-ludziom-reformy.read>). See also: Żerkowska-Balas [2017].

choosing policy solutions and parties which best foster their economic interest [Emmenegger 2009; Marx 2014].

One prominent line of research concerns the outsiders' support for general ideas such as state intervention, welfare or redistribution, as well as employment protection or job creation [e.g., Marx 2014; Rueda 2005; Emmenegger 2009; Schwander, Häusermann 2013]. This literature points to significant effects of outsider status on policy preferences and attitudes to various kinds of state intervention. In particular, outsiders, defined either in terms of their current labour market status, or their vulnerability to job loss (dependent on factors such as occupational position or skill level), appear to have stronger preferences for state intervention and redistribution than do insiders. This may be due to the fact that they are relatively more likely to benefit from these policies at some point in their lives [Rehm 2009; Rueda 2005; Schwander, Häusermann 2013]⁴. The theoretical predictions and results with regard to employment protection are less clear. On the one hand, Rueda [2005] has claimed that people in precarious labour market situations do not favour job security regulations, as such measures generally protect the interest of labour market insiders at the expense of outsiders [Rueda 2005]. On the other hand, Emmenegger [2009] argues that simplistic formulations of the insider-outsider theory do not take into account that outsiders could view employment protection as a way to ensure economic security for their employed household members or, in the long run, also people like themselves. Indeed, his study found that outsiders, especially the unemployed, were as supportive of employment protection regulations as labour market insiders [Emmenegger 2009].

A second strand of literature focuses directly on the party choices of precarious workers. It assumes that the workers' policy preferences are reflected in their support for various parties in the left/right spectrum. In this case, we also find diverging theoretical expectations. Given the outsiders' favourable view of state intervention and redistribution, they are generally expected to lean towards Social Democratic parties [e.g., Emmenegger 2009; Rehm 2009]. However, it has also been pointed out that in many cases, parties of the "traditional left", together with trade unions, no longer represent the interests of the entire working class but rather those of the protected insiders. For example, by opposing labour market deregulation which could benefit outsiders by easing their access to better jobs

⁴ However, this relationship may not apply to highly skilled insecure workers, who consider themselves employable and therefore not potential beneficiaries of state redistribution; such individuals tend to prefer social investment in the form of education and employment services [Häusermann, Kurer, Schwander 2015].

[Lindvall, Rueda 2012; Rovny, Rovny 2017; Rueda 2005]. Under such conditions, voters who are in outsider positions are expected to move their vote elsewhere: to centre-right, liberal or conservative parties which favour the deregulation of employment protection, or to the so-called “new left”, which tends to combine a universalist approach to social policy with a pro-welfare orientation [Lindvall, Rueda 2012; Marx 2014]. Indeed, several studies have confirmed the latter scenario. In a comparative analysis focused directly on temporary workers, Marx [2014] concludes that they tend to support the new left parties rather than either the “old left” or the “old right”. Similar results were found by Rovny and Rovny [2017] with regard to outsiders defined on the basis of their current employment status.

Although it is often assumed that labour market dualisation may have a negative effect on the political inclusion of outsiders and may undermine democracy due to an increase in the popularity of various radical, populist movements, there are few studies which directly test these assumptions [Marx 2014]. One reason for this may be that such claims do not fit into the rational choice, economic voting framework used in the existing studies. Regardless of the differing expectations and results of studies on the political preferences among those who are exposed to labour market risks, the explanations offered in this literature are all driven by the premise of rational voting, which assumes that labour market outsiders: (a) are able to adequately recognise policy solutions which benefit them the most, and (b) offer their support to parties that promise to implement such solutions. Non-participation or support for anti-system or protest parties are difficult to reconcile with this literature, and explaining these phenomena requires taking into account other social and psychological factors affecting labour market outsiders’ political behaviour [Marx 2014; Rovny, Rovny 2017; see also Szczegóła 2013].

Why, then, should outsiders act in ways which do not serve their economic interests? Political alienation is implied by the claim that employment precarity generally weakens attachment to society. In current policy debates, unstable employment is regarded, along with unemployment, as one of the important aspects and determinants of social exclusion, understood as a multi-dimensional process involving gradual withdrawal from all aspects of community life [Bhalla, Lapeyre 1997; Mayes 2001; Vleminckx, Berghman 2001]. This may be related to the negative health and psychological consequences of prolonged economic insecurity [Sennett 1998; Virtanen et al. 2005]. As individuals devote most of their time and energy toward making a living on a day-to-day basis and cannot look forward to a better future, they experience feelings of apathy, needlessness, disillusionment and loss of trust in the system [Kiersztyn 2017a; see also Biełliński 2013; 2017 and Lubecki, Szczegóła 2007]. Withdrawal is also predicted

by insider-outsider theory: outsiders, whose interests are no longer represented in the mainstream political process, lose their motivation to vote [Rueda 2005; Lindvall, Rueda 2012]. Indeed, several studies have found that regardless of the operationalisation of outsiders, they are less likely to participate in elections [e.g., Gallego 2008; Häusermann, Schwander 2012; Rovny, Rovny 2017]. A recent analysis by Emmenegger, Marx, and Schraff [2017] also suggests that unemployment experiences at labour market entry lower self-reported interest in politics.

Given the outsiders' presumed disappointment with mainstream politics and parties, it is sometimes feared that, rather than withdrawing from political life, they may become attracted to various populist or protest movements, calling for a radical transformation of society, offering authoritarian solutions or promises of a better life to those who feel that they had been harmed by the current system [Kriesi et al. 2005; Rueda 2005; King, Rueda 2008]. The concern is that the "anger, anomie, anxiety, and alienation" [Standing 2011: 19] experienced by members of the precariat may lead to a loss of altruism and sense of solidarity, coupled with a tendency to blame various groups of "strangers", such as immigrants, or the "corrupt elite" for their plight [Gdula, Dębska, Trepka 2017]. Thus, motivations for supporting radical fringe parties are considered to be expressive rather than instrumental: they are regarded as either a sign of protest against the status quo [see: Marx 2014], or a result of resentment and perceived threat arising from an increasing inflow of migrants. Accordingly, employment precarity may increase the level of intolerance and xenophobia, as well as adherence to radical, anti-democratic ideologies. The latter expectation is also consistent with the long-standing psychological literature that finds links between perceived social threat and ideological authoritarianism [e.g., Feldman, Stenner 1997; Duckitt, Fisher 2003]. It has also received some initial empirical support: in a recent comparative study, Rovny and Rovny [2017] found that outsiders defined as individuals in occupational categories suffering the highest risk of unemployment and non-standard employment tend to support radical right parties, while individuals in precarious labour market situations defined in terms of their current employment status support radical left parties.

It should be noted, however, that although support for radical parties among an increasing number of outsiders is disturbing, and may constitute a threat to democracy, it may also be attributed to various factors other than the delegitimation of democratic institutions and politics, dependent on the political context in each specific country. If the interests of precarious workers are not represented by any political party, they may choose not to vote or engage in protest voting. However, if the same actions are motivated not only by a lack of political representation,

but a lack of commitment to democratic governance as such, we may have even more reasons for concern about the future of democracy and the rule of law. Given this point, the existing research may seem reassuring, as it does not point to widespread political alienation or loss of trust in democracy among fixed-term workers [Marx 2014]. However, the existing evidence on these relationships is still very limited, and needs to be supplemented by additional, in-depth analyses.

With regard to the links between labour market precarity and democratic legitimisation, there are still many questions to be answered. First, much of the existing research (including the above-mentioned study by Marx [2014]) uses samples of respondents from various countries, and only controls for cross-country differences. Such an approach draws attention away from conditional relationships and the possible differences between countries in the political attitudes of precarious workers. In light of the rich literature on the ways in which various countries differ with regard to the situation and economic prospects of labour market outsiders [Barbieri 2009; Gash 2008; OECD 2014], this is an important shortcoming. Single-country case studies have their limitations, but they also have the potential to offer a better understanding of the effects of a country-specific political, institutional and economic context on the relationships under study.

Another major concern related to the previous research arises from the fact that it is based mostly on widely-available cross-sectional survey data. It has been argued that – given the volatility of individual labour market status – political orientations and choices are shaped not so much by holding a certain job position at one point in time, but by the more general economic prospects and labour market risks experienced by different groups of citizens throughout their lifetime [Emmenegger 2009; Kiersztyn 2017b]. There have been attempts to overcome this problem by dividing survey respondents into groups characterised by varying levels of exposure to labour market risks on the basis of occupational position, age and gender⁵ [Rehm 2009; Schwander, Häusermann 2013; Rovny, Rovny 2017]. However, the problem with such categorisations is that they are based on group characteristics, which do not always determine the actual labour market chances for specific individuals: these chances may be, to a large extent, shaped by other factors, such as conditions on the local labour market or heterogeneity within the wide occupational categories used in such classifications. Also, the Rehm/Schwander and Häusermann approach may complicate the interpretation of the relationship between labour market risks and political orientation – as it

⁵ Specifically, the high-risk groups were defined as those belonging to categories with above-average unemployment and non-standard employment rates.

may be difficult to discern the effects of labour market precarity from the well-known effects of class position, age, or gender [see also Rovny, Rovny 2017].

Both of these shortcomings are addressed in the present analysis. In contrast to much of the current research on the political consequences of labour market segmentation, this study is focused on a single country case. Another important contribution of this study lies in the fact that it uses career data to operationalise labour market precarity in terms of insecure employment trajectories rather than working in a fixed-term job at any given moment.

THE PRESENT ANALYSIS

This article studies the political participation and democratic attitudes of outsiders defined in terms of their current employment status (i.e., working on fixed term vs permanent contracts) and unstable employment histories. It offers, to the best of my knowledge, the first direct quantitative assessment of the links between authoritarian preferences and labour market precarity, overcoming a limitation of studies focusing only on party choices, which need not reflect the legitimisation of the principles of contemporary liberal democracy.

The hypotheses of this study take into account the specific country-level economic and political context. Poland is characterised by a highly segmented labour market, with high levels of employment precarity and relatively low chances of mobility from fixed-term to permanent employment [European Commission 2014; Kiersztyn 2017b]. Under such conditions, and given the generally rather low levels of political engagement in Polish society [e.g., Stanley 2017; Lubecki, Szczegółą 2007; Szczegółą 2013], precarious workers' withdrawal from politics or their abandoning of democratic values may be more likely in Poland than in other European countries. In particular, since recent research on factors influencing voting decisions of Poles suggests that rational choice and economic policy preferences explain only a small part of voter behaviour [Żerkowska-Balas 2015; Żerkowska-Balas, Lyubashenko, Kwiatkowska 2016], I expect political attitudes of labour market outsiders to be highly influenced by expressive rather than instrumental motives [Markowski, Stanley 2017; Żerkowska-Balas 2017]. This assumption is consistent with the results of a recent qualitative case study of political attitudes in a small Polish town, which attribute the common support for the Law and Justice party to its ability to respond to the emotional needs of frustrated citizens by providing a sense of empowerment, community and identity,

defined in opposition to various “enemy” groups [Gdula, Dębska, Trepka 2017]⁶. Hence, I adopt the following hypotheses to guide my research:

- 1) Precarious employment causes citizens to withdraw from political life, resulting in lower electoral participation and lower interest in politics;
- 2) Precarious employment undermines trust in democracy, resulting in a preference for authoritarian solutions.

My analyses are based on quantitative data from the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN), conducted on a nationally representative sample of adults aged 21 and above⁷. I use data from the sixth wave of the panel, which were collected in 2013, as these are the most recent data available at the time this analysis was performed⁸. From the full sample, I selected productive age respondents (below 60 for women and below 65 for men) and excluded individual farm owners. I also excluded respondents for whom employment may not be the main activity or source of income: people age twenty-one to twenty-nine who were still in education at the time of the survey, and respondents receiving retirement or disability benefits (N=1511). The sample was weighted to correct for imbalances in the sex and age structure.

Three dependent variables are the focus of the present study. The first variable, *voting behaviour*, identifies the respondents who declared they participated in the last parliamentary election preceding the POLPAN 2013 survey (in October 2011). The second, *self-declared interest in politics*, was obtained by grouping together respondents who declared that they were at least moderately interested in current politics and follow the main political events. The descriptive statistics for these two variables are presented in Table 1.

⁶ It should be noted, however, that the authors of this study do not restrict the emotional appeal of the narrative offered by the ruling party to labour market outsiders.

⁷ POLPAN is a unique program of panel surveys carried out since 1988 in 5-year intervals on a sample of the adult population of Poland. It is focused on describing the social structure and its change throughout the post-communist transition. Apart from many indicators of political behaviour and attitudes, POLPAN includes very detailed data on occupational histories, covering all the jobs performed by the respondents over many years. POLPAN is carried out by the Team for Comparative Analyses of Social Inequality (CASIN) at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN), headed by prof. Kazimierz Słomczyński. Detailed information on the POLPAN methodology and data access are provided on the project website: <http://polpan.org/data-and-documentation/> and in Słomczyński et al. [1989].

⁸ Currently, fieldwork for a new wave of POLPAN is coming to an end; however, the data from the POLPAN 2018 survey are not yet available for analysis.

TABLE 1. Descriptive statistics for voting behaviour and interest in politics, POLPAN 2013

Variable	Incidence (%)	
Respondent voted in the 2011 parliamentary election		
Yes	70.8	
No	29.2	
Respondent's self-reported interest in politics:		
Very much interested (carefully follows what's going on in politics)	2.5	} 48.8
Quite interested (follows most of what's happening in politics)	8.1	
Moderately interested (follows only most important political events)	38.2	
Not very interested	30.8	} 51.2
Not interested in politics at all	20.4	

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Productive age respondents, excluding independent farmers, respondents aged 21–29 who are still in schooling, and those receiving retirement or disability benefits, N = 1511. Sample weighted according to gender and age categories. Number of cases with missing data: voting – 99; interest in politics – 7.

The third variable, the *democratic attitudes index*, is built from four inter-correlated survey items, using principal component analysis. The items were as follows. First, the respondents were asked whether they thought that “for people like themselves: (1) democracy is always the best form of government, (2) non-democratic government is sometimes better, or (3) it makes no difference.” The answers were then recoded to obtain a binary indicator: respondents who chose the first answer were assigned 1, all others were assigned 0 (“don’t know” answers were also included in this category). Next, the survey participants were asked whether they agreed with the following claims: “it would be enough to have one good party for governance; others would be unnecessary”; “elections are not necessary if political leaders represent the interests of citizens”; and “if the country is governed by a wise leader, he or she need not obey the law”. Their responses were coded using five-item Likert scales, where the answer “definitely agree” was assigned the lowest value (to minimise the number of missing cases, I treat the “don’t know, difficult to say” option as the middle answer). These three items were a part of a wider set of questions used in successive waves of POLPAN to measure support for liberal democratic principles and have been found to be good predictors of pro-democratic attitudes [Słomczyński, Shabad 2002]. The factor

loadings for all the four items are reported in Table 2⁹; the values of the factor score, with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1, range from -2.21 to 1.76.

TABLE 2. Frequencies of responses and principal components analysis factor loadings for the variables used to compute the democratic values index.

Variable	Incidence (%)					Factor loadings
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	
(1) It would be enough to have one good party for governance; others would be unnecessary	21.1	20.5	14.0	25.7	18.7	0.790
(2) Elections are not necessary if political leaders represent the interest of citizens	15.8	29.4	13.7	22.9	18.3	0.769
(3) If the country is governed by a wise leader, he or she need not obey the law	3.8	9.7	10.2	29.3	47.0	0.640
(4) For people like you, democracy is always the best form of government (percent agree)				46.6 ^a		0.587

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Frequencies calculated on a weighted subsample of productive age respondents, excluding independent farmers, respondents aged 21–29 who are still in schooling, and those receiving retirement or disability benefits (N = 1511). Number of cases with missing data was 6 for variables (1) and (3), 5 for variable (2), and 11 for variable (4). ^a Percent of respondents who declared they agree that “democracy is always the best form of government”.

To assess the possible determinants of political participation and adherence to democratic principles, I use multiple regression models (logistic regression for binary dependent variables, and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression for the democratic attitudes index), including a measure of labour market precarity among the independent variables, together with a set of controls.

Despite the fact the in the public and scholarly discourse on labour market segmentation, the proliferation of non-standard job arrangements and employment instability are regarded as important problems, there are very few studies focusing

⁹ The number of extracted components was set to 1, total variance explained: 49.3%.

directly on employment contract in their measurement of outsider status (see Marx [2014], for an exception). The most common approach in studies which measure “outsiderness” based on the current employment status of respondents is to combine indicators of involuntary fixed-term employment with those of involuntary part-time employment and unemployment. Treating part-time employment on an open-ended contract as an indicator of labour market risk is problematic in the specific Polish case due to the relatively rare incidence of such contracts (around 7% throughout the past years; the EU average is more than 19%¹⁰), compared to various fixed-term arrangements. In some cases, part-time jobs are entered into voluntarily (for example, by women seeking to combine work with childcare) and need not be a sign of labour market difficulties [Kiersztyn 2017c]. Unfortunately, POLPAN does not include information allowing us to distinguish voluntary from involuntary part-time and fixed-term employment – however, according to Eurostat, more than two-thirds of part-time workers in Poland declare this arrangement to be “voluntary”¹¹. In light of this data, it seems more reasonable to combine fixed-term employment with unemployment as both may be regarded as signs of weak labour market integration. This, however, gives rise to problems related to the measurement of joblessness among those who are not seeking employment or who do not define themselves as unemployed: we have no way of distinguishing the economically inactive from so-called discouraged workers [Kiersztyn 2016]. Another issue which was not addressed in previous studies is the distinction between measures of labour market status observed only during the survey and those which attempt to capture weak labour market attachment over longer periods of time based on employment history data. The latter can be expected to be more relevant in the study of the political consequences of employment precarity [Emmenegger 2009].

In order to address these issues, I develop three different measures of employment precarity and estimate separate models for each of these alternative indicators. The first, included in models 1a, 2a, and 3a, is used for a sample of

¹⁰ Labour Force Survey data for the years 2008–2017; http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_eppga&lang=en [access September 17, 2018].

¹¹ Source: Labour Force Survey data for the years 2008–2017; http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_eppgai&lang=en [access September 17, 2018]. It should be noted, however, that the value of such information is questionable in itself due to the fact that the respondents’ subjective feelings of “voluntariness” may be affected by psychological coping mechanisms [see Kiersztyn 2017c]. An assessment of the degree of outsiderness suffered by part-time workers in Poland would require additional data to be taken into account, which is beyond the scope of this article.

working respondents, either hired employees or self-employed. For hired employees, precarity is defined on the basis of the type of employment contract: open-ended contracts (both full-time and part-time) are considered non-precarious, and all other arrangements (e.g., fixed-term, civil agreements, and unregistered work) are considered precarious¹². With regard to self-employed non-farming workers, the precarity indicator identifies those who are likely to be in “quasi” or “dependent” self-employment relationships [Kiersztyn 2014; OECD 2014]. I adopt two criteria: respondents who work under the supervision of one person or company, and respondents who do not hire non-family employees and at the same time have only one client firm are both considered precarious [Kiersztyn 2017a]. The overall percentage of precarious workers according to this definition is 28.5% of the POLPAN 2013 sample.

In order to see whether the results of the analysis were affected by the exclusion of unemployment, in models 1b, 2b, and 3b, I use a second indicator of precarity, grouping together fixed-term workers and the unemployed. Unemployment is identified on the basis of the respondents’ declarations concerning their current labour market status (those who were not working and declared that their situation was either taking care of other family members, education, or support by others, were not included among the unemployed and were excluded from the sample). The inclusion of the unemployed increases the total percentage of labour market outsiders to 36.4%.

To account for the possibility that political alienation may not be directly influenced by employment status at a given moment, but rather by persistent labour market instability, in models 1c, 2c, and 3c, I use an additional measure of precarity which is based on retrospective data on employment histories covering the period from 2008 to 2013. This variable defines as precariously employed all those who were either working in temporary arrangements or unemployed at the time of the survey and had not been employed on the basis of an open-ended contract since 2008¹³. Such a measure focuses on individuals who either

¹² In the case of respondents holding more than one job, all individuals who, at the time of the survey, held at least one non-precarious job, were assumed to be non-precarious (even if the stable job was not considered by the respondent as his/her main employment). For those who were self-employed in their additional jobs, the data do not include any items allowing for the identification of dependent self-employment; these respondents were excluded from the sample.

¹³ The data on the respondents’ earlier jobs do not include any items allowing for the identification of dependent self-employment, which caused some difficulties in classifying past spells of self-employment and farming. Additional analysis found that such spells were very rare. They were classified based on a detailed, case-by-case analysis of individual employment histories. Short

remain in a single precarious job or experience multiple spells of temporary employment. In addition, respondents who met the criteria of precarity, and at the same time: (1) were 29 or younger and had completed their education within less than three years before the survey, or (2) were not working for the whole time between 2008 and three years before the survey, were excluded from these analyses. Both these categories are people entering (or re-entering) the labour market, so for them, unemployment, fixed-term contracts and engaging in short-term jobs may be regarded as a natural and temporary state. The excluded group also contains the long-term unemployed, who are likely to be a specific category distinct from the precariously employed. The percentage of persistently precarious workers in the POLPAN 2013 sample was 16.5%.

Among the control variables, I included standard socioeconomic characteristics which in the literature are considered important determinants of political participation [e.g., Rovny, Rovny 2017]. All the models control for gender, with males as the reference category, the respondents' age in years, and educational attainment. The latter variable divides the survey participants into four categories, based on the type of education they completed: less than secondary education (including primary or middle school as well as lower vocational education; the reference category), secondary vocational school, secondary general school, and university. The next two variables control for household composition: whether the respondent is married or lives with his/her partner, and whether he/she has children under 16 years of age (who are also current household members). Parenting has been shown to be an important variable influencing local activism [Putnam 2000], while living in a stable relationship may enhance economic security and access to economic and social resources enabling more active participation despite one's own precarious labour market position. On the other hand, it can be hypothesised that individuals preoccupied with their families may be less motivated and have less time to spend on political matters [Standing 2011]. Another important characteristic is the total level of household income *per capita*, which ranges from 135 to 50000 zloty, with a mean of 1589, median of 1250, and standard deviation of 1919.5 ($N = 1142$). To correct for the skewness of the income distribution, I use the natural logarithm of this variable in the regression models. The final control variable is church attendance, informing whether the respondent participates in religious practices regularly, at least once a week.

spells of self-employment which were accompanied by a larger number of odd jobs were treated as precarious. Two ambiguous cases were excluded from the sample.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The distributions presented in Table 2 suggest that a strikingly large percentage of Poles tend to agree with statements which are inconsistent with the basic principles of contemporary liberal democracy. As many as 45% appear to consider elections unnecessary if “political leaders would represent the interest of citizens”, compared to 41% who declare the opposite. Almost 42% agree that if there was “one good party”, others would be unnecessary. Only the idea of a “wise leader” who need not conform to the law is treated with more caution and accepted by only 12.5% of the survey participants. Less than one out of two respondents considers democracy “the best form of government”; others declare non-democratic governments to be better, consider the distinction irrelevant, or are not sure. These percentages are disturbing as they suggest a weak legitimisation of democracy in Polish society, consistent with earlier observations regarding the low levels of political participation among Polish citizens. With regard to electoral turnout, it should be noted that POLPAN, like other surveys, overestimates the percentage of individuals who actually vote. This percentage was 70.8% in the sample under study, while the actual participation rate in the 2011 parliamentary elections was less than 50%.

Table 3 presents the dependent variables by employment precarity. The figures point to generally significant relationships between the various measures of precarious employment and political alienation. On the one hand, precarious employment lowers the percentage of respondents who declared they had voted in the 2011 parliamentary election by more than 13 percentage points and the percentage declaring they follow at least the most important political events by around 8.5 percentage points. If the unemployed are included among the labour market outsiders, the difference increases to 16 and 11 percentage points for voting and interest in politics, respectively. Support for democratic values is also visibly undermined by precarious employment and joblessness observed in 2013 (all these differences were significant at the 0.05 level). However, and contrary to expectations, when precarity is defined as labour market instability lasting at least five years, these differences become much smaller (and insignificant in the case of interest in politics). This may be due to the exclusion of the long-term unemployed and recent labour market entrants from the precarious category. It is also worth noting that, consistent with studies of the economic effects of temporary job holding (for Polish data, see Kiersztyn [2012]), precarious employment is associated with significantly lower household income, by 24% and even as much as 34% if the unemployed are included in the analysis.

TABLE 3. Median income and political participation indicators by employment precarity

	Median per capita income	Voted in 2011 election (%)	Interested in politics (%)	Mean democratic attitudes score
Precarious workers in 2013				
No	1863	77.4	53.6	0.193
Yes	1423	64.1	45.1	-0.062
Total	1742	73.6	51.2	0.120
Number of valid cases ^a	908	1096	1141	1132
Precarious workers or unemployed in 2013				
No	1863	77.4	53.6	0.193
Yes	1234	61.0	42.2	-0.151
Total	1645	71.4	59.5	0.068
Number of valid cases ^b	1032	1259	1314	1300
Precarious labour market trajectories				
No	1767	73.7	51.9	0.125
Yes	1347	66.3	47.0	-0.014
Total	1699	72.5	51.1	0.101
Number of valid cases ^c	741	867	903	896

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Sample weighted according to gender and age categories. ^a All respondents who were working in 2013, including self-employed non-farming workers (N = 1160); ^b Respondents who were economically active (working or unemployed) in 2013 (N = 1333); ^c Respondents who were economically active in 2013 and had had at least one job since 2008 and 3 years before the survey (N = 921).

The aim of the second part of the analysis is to check whether the bivariate relationships between employment precarity and political participation, as well as adherence to democratic values, are related to political participation and attitudes when other important respondent characteristics are controlled for. Table 4 reports the logistic regression results for voting and Table 5 for self-declared interest in politics. Table 6 shows the OLS regression coefficients for the democratic attitudes index.

The dummy variable identifying respondents who have children under 16 years of age is not included in any of the models reported below, since it was unrelated to the dependent variables under all model specifications (and caused some collinearity issues with the other household composition indicator). The exclusion of this variable did not affect the other parameters of the models.

TABLE 4. Logistic regression, dependent variable: self-reported voting in the 2011 election

	Model 1a Precarity in 2013 job			Model 1b Precarity or unemployment in 2013			Model 1c Precarity in all jobs between 2008 and 2013		
	Coeff.	SE	OR	Coeff.	SE	OR	Coeff.	SE	OR
Precarity indicator	-0.365	0.165*	0.694	-0.414	0.151**	0.661	0.014	0.202	1.014
Gender: female	-0.308	0.155*	0.735	-0.334	0.144*	0.716	-0.396	0.162*	0.673
Age in years	0.038	0.008***	1.038	0.034	0.007***	1.034	0.048	0.008***	1.049
Educational attainment									
primary and basic vocational (reference)									
secondary general	0.891	0.314**	2.438	0.807	0.284**	2.241	1.063	0.346**	2.895
secondary vocational	0.433	0.182*	1.542	0.449	0.169**	1.567	0.474	0.181**	1.606
college / university	1.669	0.228***	5.307	1.736	0.217***	5.673	2.086	0.251***	8.050
Religious participation at least once a week	0.487	0.156**	1.627	0.560	0.146***	1.751	0.461	0.163**	1.585
Married / cohabiting	-0.196	0.179	0.822	-0.205	0.163	0.815	-0.038	0.189	0.963
Log household income per capita	0.089	0.129	1.093	0.096	0.117	1.101	0.084	0.130	1.087
Constant	-1.626	0.980 [^]	0.197	-1.545	0.889 [^]	0.213	-2.303	0.978*	0.100
Log likelihood			-565.6			-639.8			-515.6
Model Chi ²			123.2			155.1			143.9
Cox & Snell R ²			0.109			0.123			0.135
Nagelkerke R ²			0.158			0.175			0.195
N (unweighted)			866			983			706

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Sample weighted according to gender and age categories. Model 1a: subsample of respondents who were working in 2013, including self-employed non-farming workers (N = 1160); Model 1b: subsample of respondents who were economically active (working or unemployed) in 2013 (N = 1333); Model 1c: Subsample of respondents who were economically active in 2013 and had at least one job since 2008 and 3 years before the survey (N = 921). Each model uses a different precarity indicator (as specified in the Methods section). *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; [^] p < 0.1.

The findings from Table 4 confirm the existence of a significant relationship between precarity at the time of the survey and the likelihood of voting. Regardless of whether the unemployed are included among labour market outsiders or not, belonging to the latter category reduces the odds of voting by more than 30%, even after controlling for education and other characteristics which affect electoral participation. This result is consistent with studies from other countries

(e.g., Rovny, Rovny 2017)¹⁴. Surprisingly, no such relationship has been found for the third measure of precarity, based on the respondents' employment histories since 2008 (model 1c).

TABLE 5. Logistic regression, dependent variable: self-reported interest in politics

	Model 2a Precarity in 2013 job			Model 2b Precarity or unemployment in 2013			Model 2c Precarity in all jobs between 2008 and 2013		
	Coeff.	SE	OR	Coeff.	SE	OR	Coeff.	SE	OR
Precarity indicator	0.012	0.152	1.012	-0.037	0.139	0.964	0.238	0.186	1.269
Gender: female	-0.756	0.136***	0.470	-0.792	0.128***	0.453	-0.868	0.143***	0.420
Age in years	0.032	0.007***	1.032	0.031	0.006***	1.032	0.035	0.007***	1.035
Educational attainment									
primary and basic vocational (reference)									
secondary general	0.090	0.290	1.094	0.202	0.266	1.224	0.168	0.315	1.183
secondary vocational	0.097	0.169	1.101	0.133	0.160	1.142	0.156	0.170	1.169
college / university	1.015	0.192***	2.759	1.097	0.184***	2.995	1.093	0.200***	2.984
Religious participation at least once a week	0.006	0.132	1.006	-0.066	0.125	0.937	-0.024	0.139	0.976
Married / cohabiting	-0.220	0.157	0.802	-0.160	0.145	0.852	-0.233	0.170	0.792
Log household income per capita	0.340	0.115**	1.405	0.313	0.106**	1.368	0.447	0.118***	1.564
Constant	-3.455	0.865***	0.032	-3.298	0.804***	0.037	-4.378	0.882***	0.013
Log likelihood			-718.4			-794.2			-655.1
Model Chi ²			113.7			138.8			130.9
Cox & Snell R ²			0.096			0.105			0.118
Nagelkerke R ²			0.129			0.140			0.158
N (unweighted)			901			1024			736

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Sample weighted according to gender and age categories. Model 2a: subsample of respondents who were working in 2013, including self-employed non-farming workers (N = 1160); Model 2b: subsample of respondents who were economically active (working or unemployed) in 2013 (N = 1333); Model 2c: Subsample of respondents who were economically active in 2013 and had at least one job since 2008 and 3 years before the survey (N = 921). Each model uses a different precarity indicator (as specified in the Methods section). *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

¹⁴ It is, however, inconsistent with my own preliminary analyses of POLPAN 2013 data, reported in Kiersztyn [2014]; the earlier regression models did not find significant relationships between employment precarity and voting. The difference may be caused by the fact that the preliminary analyses were done on a different sample, including respondents who were still in education at the time of the survey.

Contrary to expectations, once the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are controlled for, the negative relationships between labour market outsidership and interest in politics become insignificant for all the three measures of the employment situation (Table 5). To account for the possibility that this null result may have been affected by the choice of measurement of the dependent variable, which also includes among those interested in politics respondents who declare they follow “only major political events”, I estimated the regression models using an alternative indicator, which identifies only those who report being “very much” or “quite” interested in politics. The percentage of survey participants who are defined as interested in politics according to this more rigorous criterion was only 10.6%. These additional analyses found a strong relationship between precarious employment and interest in politics, but the direction of this relationship was contrary to expectations: fixed-term employment or unemployment actually doubled the odds of declaring a high level of interest in political events¹⁵. In fact, it appears that precarity does not lower interest in politics but causes a polarisation in the distribution of this variable: labour market outsiders are overrepresented among those who declare themselves to be highly interested in politics and also among those who express a lack of interest. While the lack of interest may be explained by the younger age and generally lower level of human capital among many of those with a weak attachment to the labour market, the existence of a group of precarious workers with an above-average interest in politics is intriguing and merits further study.

TABLE 6. Linear regression (OLS), dependent variable: democratic attitudes index

	Model 3a Precarity in 2013 job			Model 3b Precarity or unemployment in 2013			Model 3c Precarity in all jobs between 2008 and 2013		
	Coeff.	SE	beta	Coeff.	SE	beta	Coeff.	SE	beta
Precarity indicator	-0.058	0.065	-0.026	-0.056	0.059	-0.026	0.064	0.079	0.023
Gender: female	-0.157	0.057**	-0.077	-0.190	0.053***	-0.093	-0.184	0.060**	-0.089
Age in years	0.006	0.003*	0.066	0.008	0.003**	0.086	0.009	0.003**	0.093
Education: secondary vocational	0.561	0.125***	0.133	0.622	0.115***	0.151	0.587	0.137***	0.128
Education: secondary general	0.405	0.073***	0.184	0.377	0.069***	0.170	0.405	0.074***	0.184
Education: college / university	0.905	0.080***	0.429	0.916	0.076***	0.426	0.914	0.083***	0.419
Religious participation at least once a week	0.018	0.056	0.009	0.001	0.053	0.000	0.017	0.059	0.008

¹⁵ Full results not reported; available upon request from the author.

	Model 3a Precarity in 2013 job			Model 3b Precarity or unemployment in 2013			Model 3c Precarity in all jobs between 2008 and 2013		
	Coeff.	SE	beta	Coeff.	SE	beta	Coeff.	SE	beta
Married / cohabiting	0.014	0.066	0.006	0.017	0.062	0.007	0.050	0.072	0.020
Log household income per capita	0.346	0.048***	0.219	0.306	0.044***	0.201	0.316	0.049***	0.206
Constant	-2.917	0.371***		-2.635	0.348***		-2.840	0.374***	
R ²			0.231			0.232			0.225
N			892			1010			729

Notes. Source: own calculations based on POLPAN 2013 data. Sample weighted according to gender and age categories. Model 3a: subsample of respondents who were working in 2013, including self-employed non-farming workers (N = 1160); Model 3b: subsample of respondents who were economically active (working or unemployed) in 2013 (N = 1333); Model 3c: Subsample of respondents who were economically active in 2013 and had at least one job since 2008 and 3 years before the survey (N = 921). Each model uses a different precarity indicator (as specified in the Methods section). *** p < 0,001; ** p < 0,01; * p < 0,05.

The OLS regression analyses found no significant correlation between any of the three measures of precarity and the democratic attitudes index (Table 6). More detailed analyses showed that the main factor accounting for the bivariate relationships observed in the last column of Table 3 was education, suggesting that democratic attitudes are, to a large extent, determined by cultural capital, as measured by the type of schooling received by the respondents. In general, voting appears to be the only variable under study which is directly related to precarity when controlling for other determinants of political attitudes and behaviour.

As far as the independent variables are concerned, the results are mostly consistent with earlier studies, in Poland and in other countries. Age was found to positively affect both political participation and adherence to the basic principles of democracy: the younger the respondents, the less likely they are to vote, or express even a moderate interest in politics or pro-democratic attitudes. Interest in politics and support for democracy were found to be lower among women than among men. Another important predictor for all the dependent variables was the level of education. Higher educational credentials generally increase the level of political participation and acceptance of democratic principles. It is also worth noting that, net of other variables, household per capita income is one of the strongest predictors of pro-democratic attitudes. It also increases the level of interest in politics. This suggests that there may be an indirect relationship between employment precarity and political alienation, insofar as unstable jobs worsen a household's economic situation, as suggested by Table 3 and earlier

studies [Kiersztyn 2012]. With respect to household composition, the analysis found no association between living with a spouse or partner or having children and any of the dependent variables. Finally, regular participation in religious practices was found to be related to only one indicator of political participation. It increases the likelihood of self-reported voting, but has no effect on either the level of interest in politics or democratic attitudes. These findings lead to intriguing questions concerning the role of the Catholic Church as promoting political participation and democracy in Poland. These issues are, however, beyond the scope of the present analysis.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented above offers only partial support to the hypotheses of this study. On the one hand, there are clear associations between indicators of labour market precarity observed at the time of the POLPAN 2013 survey and both political participation and support for democracy. However, most of these relationships disappear in regression models controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics which affect the phenomena under study. If the hypotheses are interpreted as referring to the possible direct effects of labour market segmentation, net of other factors, they have only been confirmed with respect to voting. As far as the other two dependent variables are concerned, it appears that the lack of interest in politics and higher scepticism towards democracy among members of the precariat may not be due to labour market insecurity as such, but determined by such factors as younger age, lower education, and lower household income. These factors can be interpreted within the framework proposed by Szczegółka [2013], as indicators of limited access to resources enabling political participation.

Nonetheless, the existence of even such indirect relationships offers reasons for concern about the future of democracy¹⁶. Firstly, this study suggests that, in Poland, as in other EU countries, net of other factors, the youth appear to have withdrawn from political life – among the youngest respondents, voting is less frequent, they express less interest in politics and lend more support towards

¹⁶ In the context of the current political developments in Poland, it is important to note that the data used in this analysis were collected before the 2015 elections, won by the Law and Justice party. Although the results of this study may offer some insights allowing us to understand the later success of the ruling party despite its attempts to undermine the rule of law, they need to be updated by analyses of newer data. It is possible that the recent important political events, and the ongoing discussion regarding the future and prospects of Polish democracy, have changed the political attitudes of Polish citizens and affected the relationships which are the subject of this analysis.

anti-democratic ideas. This result is consistent with other Polish studies, particularly the “Youth 2011” report [Szafraniec 2011], suggesting disillusionment with politics and alienation of the youngest generations from the public sphere. It is possible that the pervasive economic insecurity which young school leavers now face is one of the factors contributing to this withdrawal [Standing 2011].

Secondly, the statistical analyses revealed strong positive relationships between household per capita income and interest in politics, as well as support for democratic values. As precarious employment has been found to negatively affect income levels [Kiersztyn 2012], in some cases, it may indirectly have a negative effect on the political inclusion of citizens. This mechanism may be stronger in the case of households where fixed-term employment is the only source of work-related income. In this context, it is worth noting that, according to an earlier study, in 2008, around 10% of the total number of households in Poland met this condition, and these households suffered a much higher risk of poverty compared to those in which stable employment was one of the sources of income [Kiersztyn 2012]. Given the concentration of precarious employment among young workers, and the tendency to form within-group matches [de Lange, Wolbers, Ultee 2013], it seems likely that current changes in the labour market, if they persist, may, in the long term and indirectly, contribute to a further delegitimisation of democracy and alienation from politics.

The results of the current analyses open up new avenues for future research. Contrary to expectations derived from the literature, the indicator of persistent labour market precarity used in this study was found to be uncorrelated (or only weakly correlated) with political attitudes and behaviour. This raises questions of how to capture potentially meaningful distinctions among fixed-term workers based on their past employment trajectories. Two possibilities need to be taken into account. First, it is possible that the presence of periods of employment on open-ended contracts in their past may not be the best indicator of labour market security, especially under the conditions of economic slowdown, which may have resulted in an occupational downgrading of laid-off workers. Second, the surprising null result may be due to the fact that the specific measure used in this analysis excluded recent graduates and labour market entrants from the sample. In the light of these interpretations, it seems worthwhile to conduct research with an additional focus on young labour market entrants, and take into account other indicators of weak labour market position, not only the type of contract.

This is related to a more general issue of how to adequately operationalise employment precarity. While fixed-term employment contracts have been found to offer – in objective terms – lower returns and stability to workers, compared to

open-ended contracts, it appears that as various temporary arrangements proliferate, fixed-term contracts in Poland are increasingly regarded as the new “standard”, especially for labour market entrants. Hence, the new line of stratification may no longer be between those with stable and temporary jobs, but between those whose jobs are protected by the legal guarantees of the Labour Code and those hired on the much less protected civil-law contracts [Kiersztyn 2017b]. In addition, there are reasons to believe that many young workers employed on the basis of temporary or civil contracts are reluctant to view themselves as precarious, and – at least for the time being – do not report feelings of relative deprivation, insecurity or frustration [Kiersztyn 2017c; Mrozowicki 2016]. While the relationship between the objective labour market situation and the subjective sense of precarity merits additional study¹⁷, this could also explain some of the null results of the present analysis, especially with regard to democratic attitudes.

Finally, the surprising results with regard to interest in politics point to another promising line of research, focusing on the possible conditional relationships between employment precarity and political alienation. Labour market outsiders are a very diverse group, including both low-skilled, easily replaceable workers in elementary occupations, and well-educated professional free-lance workers who also suffer from economic insecurity [Kalleberg 2009; Kiersztyn 2017b; 2017c]. It is very likely that labour market precarity has differing political outcomes for workers depending on their education, occupational position, or the level of economic security provided by other household members. In order to fully understand the ways in which labour market segmentation affects contemporary politics, we need additional research with a focus on the possible interaction effects between precarity and other socio-economic characteristics of workers.

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¹⁷ An example of research on these topics is the ongoing international PREWORK („Young precarious workers in Poland and Germany: a comparative sociological study on working and living conditions, social consciousness and civic engagement”) research project. See <http://prework.eu/en>, for detailed information on this project.

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Anna Kiersztyn

PREKARYJNOŚĆ NA RYNKU PRACY A ALIENACJA POLITYCZNA

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza zależności między niepewnością na rynku pracy a postawami politycznymi w Polsce, w szczególności odpowiedź na pytanie o stopień, w jakim niepewność ekonomiczna determinuje deklarowany udział w wyborach oraz zainteresowanie polityką, jak również poparcie dla wartości demokratycznych. Zaprezentowane w artykule analizy mają charakter ilościowy; wykorzystano w nich dane z szóstej fali Polskiego Badania Panelowego (POLPAN), przeprowadzonego w 2013 roku na reprezentatywnej próbie mieszkańców Polski w wieku 21 lat

i powyżej. Wyniki analiz wskazują na silne korelacje między niepewnością obserwowaną w momencie badania i analizowanymi zmiennymi, jednak większość z tych zależności zanika w modelach regresji wielokrotnej, gdy kontrolowane są inne społeczno-demograficzne charakterystyki respondentów. Wydaje się, iż brak zainteresowania polityką i większy dystans wobec demokracji wśród członków prekariatu nie wynika bezpośrednio z sytuacji niepewnego zatrudnienia, lecz jest efektem czynników takich jak młody wiek, niższy poziom wykształcenia i niższe dochody gospodarstwa domowego.

Słowa kluczowe: niepewność na rynku pracy, autorytaryzm, demokracja, partycypacja polityczna