

LETTER

# Dynamic Political Interest: How Personality Differences and the Political Environment Shape Political Interest

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## Abstract

In order to explain differences in political interest, two strands of literature point to the relevance of either dispositional or situational factors. I remedy this and show how political interest is shaped by the interplay between personality differences and the political environment. Specifically, I demonstrate that people with a stable motivation for engaging with new ideas are more interested in politics when exposed to new political events, e.g. during election campaigns and when unexpected events unfold. The results have implications for our understanding of political inequalities in democratic engagement and shed light on how citizens' interest in politics can be relatively stable over time as well as responsive to the political environment in predictable ways.

**Keywords:** political interest; personality traits; personality-environment interactions; political psychology

Although a vast body of literature examines the sources of political interest, there is no scholarly agreement on why citizens become more or less interested in politics. Put simply, different studies highlight either dispositional or situational factors. One body of literature argues that political interest is highly stable in adulthood (Prior 2010), rooted in family socialization (Neundorf, Smets and García-Albacete 2013), psychological dispositions (David 2009; Gerber et al. 2011a) and encoded into our genes (Dawes et al. 2014; Weinschenk and Dawes 2017). A second body of literature argues that political interest is shaped by features of the environment, such as election campaigns (Butler and De La O 2010), historical and economic events (Prior 2002; van Deth and Elff 2004), and mass media (Sørensen 2019).

I demonstrate that these findings can be understood within a single framework. Specifically, I rely on insights from personality psychology to show that citizens' interest in politics is shaped by the interplay between the political environment and a psychological motivation to engage with new ideas and experiences. Politics provides new experiences, such as when an election is taking place or when novel events unfold, and people with a psychological disposition to engage with new ideas, as captured by the personality trait Openness to Experience, are more likely to be interested in politics under such circumstances.

Across three studies using four datasets, I show that people high on the Openness scale are more interested in politics during election campaigns (Studies 1 and 2) and in a political context with an unexpected event unfolding (Study 3). These findings provide a novel explanation for why people high on Openness are more likely to participate in elections (Mondak et al. 2011). When people high on Openness respond to specific events such as election campaigns, they are also more likely to be politically active. As previous studies have demonstrated how people high on Openness are more likely to have liberal views on economic and social policy issues (Gerber et al. 2010), these findings point to the political ramifications of the differential effects

of political events on the electorate, that is, a 'liberal bias'. Consequently, the results suggest that personality traits, and in particular how they relate to the political environment, can account for political inequalities in democratic engagement. I conclude that further experimental work is needed in order to fully understand the psychological mechanisms explaining how personality traits respond to environmental stimuli in shaping political behaviour.

### Dynamic political interest

To explain long-term stability in political interest, scholars have investigated how psychological dispositions lead to differences in political interest. Weinschenk and Dawes (2017), in the context of behavioural genetics, show that personality traits mediate the impact of genes on political interest. More generally, as will be the focus here, multiple studies in recent decades have looked into how personality traits account for a significant part of the interpersonal variation in political interest (Blais and St-Vincent 2011; Condra 1992; David 2009; Denny and Doyle 2008; Gerber et al. 2011a; Gerber et al. 2011b; Mondak 2010).

While there is a stable component of political interest in adulthood, there are short-term changes in political interest that cannot be attributed to measurement error. Several studies demonstrate how people's level of political interest is affected by current events, including what the media is paying attention to (Beach Hansen, and Larsen 2018; Lupia and Philpot 2005; Strömbäck and Shehata 2010). Prior (2010) finds that there was an 'increase in interest among West Germans in the late 1980s as the Berlin Wall fell and reunification occurred' (p. 752), and concludes that 'events such as a close election, a stimulating political discussion, or the fall of the Berlin Wall spur people's interest (or depress it, in the case of uninspiring events)' (p. 758).

So far little attention has been given to explaining how political interest can be stable in the long run and responsive to the political environment at the same time. To explain both the long-term stability and short-term changes in political interest, I leverage that inter-individual differences in political interest are rooted in the Big Five personality trait framework, which was designed to explain individual differences (McCrae and John 1992).

Previous research has found that the Big Five personality traits are related to a wide range of political attitudes and behaviors, including political interest (for a review, see Gerber et al. 2011a). As personality traits are broad dispositions that shape responses to different stimuli, they are useful to theorize how people interact with and evaluate their environment (Denissen and Penke 2008; Mondak and Halperin 2008; Mondak et al. 2010). While previous research finds that personality tends to have stable effects on political outcomes (for example Bloeser et al. 2015), such evidence provides limited insights into how personality traits and situations interact to shape political behaviour.

Openness to Experience is the trait within the Big Five framework that has been most systematically and positively related to political interest in different contexts (Gerber et al. 2011b; Vitriol, Gahner Larsen and Ludeke 2019). Using several datasets from multiple countries, Vitriol, Gahner Larsen and Ludeke (2019) find that Openness has significant and positive effects on political interest in all samples. Gerber et al. (2011a) find that the traits Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Neuroticism matter for political interest, and Mondak (2010) finds that Openness is positively correlated with political interest whereas Agreeableness is negatively correlated. Gallego and Oberski (2012) find that Openness has a positive effect on political interest, and Leone, Chirumbolo and Desimoni (2012) report the strongest correlations between personality dispositions and political interest for Openness.

The consistent positive relationship between Openness and political interest is promising for exploring why this trait is linked to political interest. People high on Openness have a preference for art and aesthetics, intellectual activities, and new ideas and experiences (Gerber et al. 2010; Gerber et al. 2011a; Mondak 2010); they also enjoy engaging with new information and ideas.

Accordingly, the propensity to express interest in political affairs increases for citizens high on Openness when there is a greater level of activity in the political environment. This relates to the fact that people high on Openness seek information and engagement of all sorts and react positively to stimuli characterized by some degree of novelty (DeYoung, Peterson and Higgins 2005).

Consequently, we can derive specific expectations about when exactly people in the short run will become more and less interested in politics conditional upon their stable personality dispositions. Gerber et al. (2011b) argue that political content ‘is likely to be especially appealing to individuals high on Openness, a trait that is associated with an attraction to new and challenging stimuli’ (p. 37). Hence, people high on Openness will be more interested in politics during an election campaign and when other types of political events with new and challenging stimuli occur. In other words, when events of a political nature take place, people high on Openness will find politics more interesting compared to times when little or nothing is taking place in the political domain.

## Method and Data

The theoretical argument presented above posits that specific methodological challenges such as personal motivations, situational factors and political interest can be related via a multitude of causal pathways, for example, reverse causation (political interest affecting other types of motivations) and self-selection (as people might select into different situations with varying levels of political activities). In order to address the methodological challenges, the aim is to leverage variation in the real-world political environment people encounter.

I study four events in three studies to investigate whether people high on Openness are more likely to be interested in politics when political events unfold compared to before or after such events. In Studies 1 and 2, I focus on election campaigns as they provide an increased focus on political topics. Study 1 looks at panel data collected before and after the European Parliament election in the Netherlands in 2009. Study 2a, using data from the Swiss Election Study, and Study 2b, using data from the Swiss Household Panel, focus on federal elections in Switzerland.

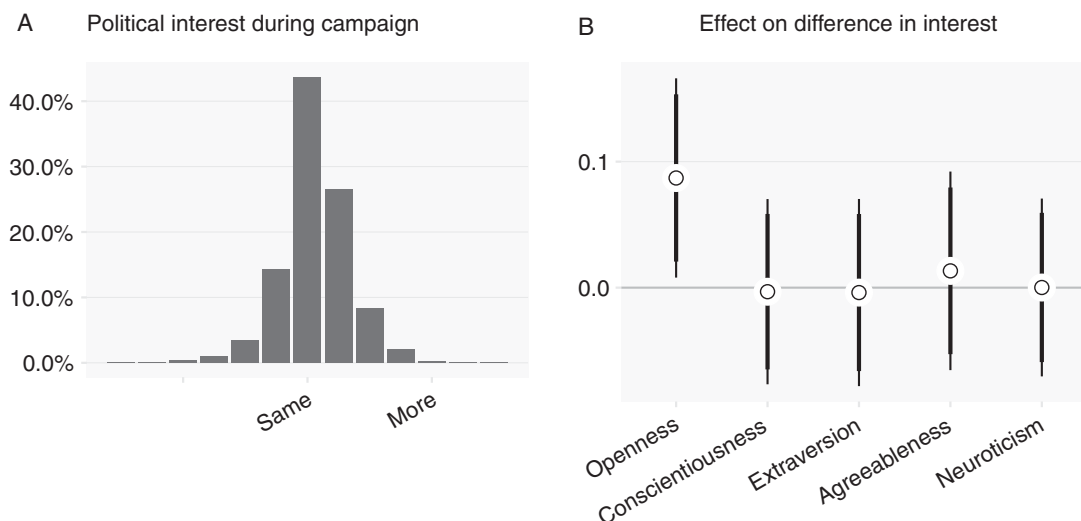
A challenge in Studies 1 and 2 is that respondents might be aware of the election campaign. To accommodate this, I use data from the British Household Panel Survey collected during the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001 as an exogenous, international event in the UK. The aim is to test whether people high on Openness became more interested in politics after the terrorist attack than their low-Openness counterparts. Studies 2b and 3 rely on respondents interviewed both one week prior and one week after the event in an Unexpected Event during Survey Design (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno and Hernández 2019). [Table 1](#) provides an overview of the studies. Additional information on the context, data sources, question wordings and descriptive statistics is available in Appendices A, B, C and D.

## Results

### *Study 1: The European Parliament Election, 2009*

I expect that citizens will show greater levels of interest in politics during an election campaign, and that people with high Openness scores will be more interested in politics during the campaign. Accordingly, I examine whether a change in political interest from the European Parliament election campaign to after the election is greater for people high on Openness.

Panel A in [Figure 1](#) shows the differences in political interest from the campaign to after the election. The figure shows that people expressed more interest in politics during the campaign



**Figure 1.** The effects of personality traits on changes in political interest, LISS (A) Political interest during campaign (B) Effect on difference in interest

Note: Panel A shows the distribution of change in political interest during the campaign compared with after it; higher values indicate more interest during the campaign and lower values indicate less interest. Panel B shows the effect of the personality traits on changes in political interest; higher values indicate more interesting during the campaign. All estimates build on Model 2 in Appendix Table A.4. This model controls for gender, age, education and the personality traits.

**Table 1.** Overview of studies

Study	Country	Year	Political environment	Design	Data
1	Netherlands	2009	EP election	Panel	LISS
2a	Switzerland	2015	Federal election	Panel	SELECTS
2b	Switzerland	2011	Federal election	Quasi-experiment	SHP
3	United Kingdom	2001	9/11	Quasi-experiment	BHPS

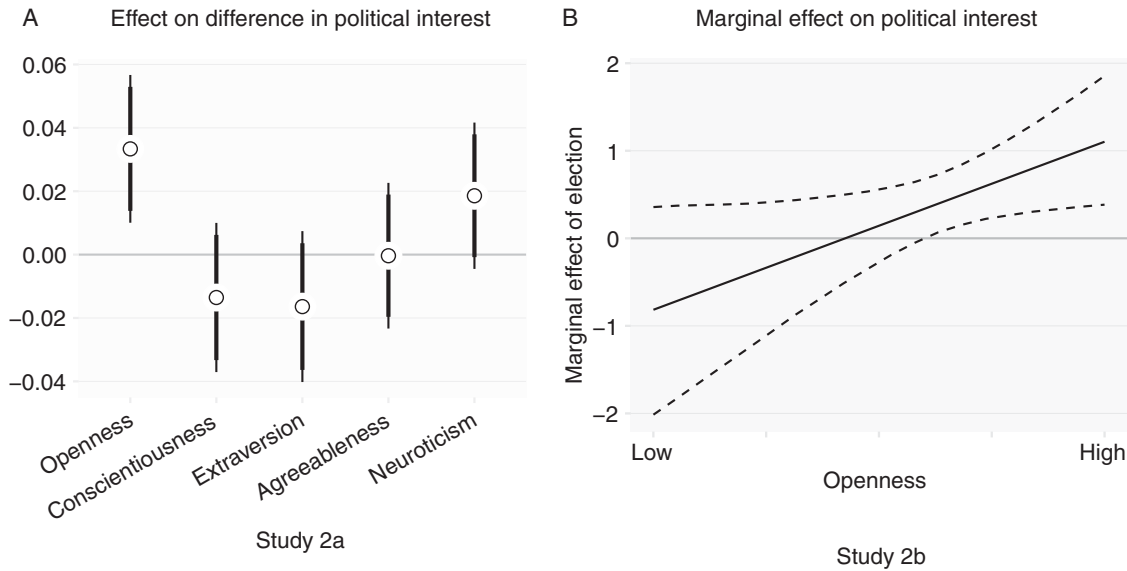
Note: LISS = Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (<https://www.liissdata.nl/>). SELECTS = Swiss Election Study (<https://forscenter.ch/projects/selects/>). SHP = Swiss Household Panel (<https://forscenter.ch/projects/swiss-household-panel/>). BHPS = British Household Panel Survey (<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps>). Additional information on the data sources is available in Appendix A–D.

than after ( $t = 12.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Panel B in Figure 2 shows the effects of the Big Five personality traits on change in political interest. The positive and significant effect for Openness indicates that people high on Openness expressed more interest in politics in the context of the campaign. Last, in Appendix A.5, I show that all items used to measure Openness have a positive impact on changes in political interest.

### Studies 2a and 2b: The Swiss Federal Elections

Panel A in Figure 2 shows parameters comparable to those of Panel B in Figure 1. The estimates show the impact of the personality traits on changes in political interest due to the election campaign in 2015. As in Study 1, there are similar significant differences in Study 2a where people high on Openness are more interested in politics during the election campaign. In Appendix B.5, I show that each of the items used to measure Openness contributes positively to the change in political interest.

Panel B in Figure 2 shows the differences in political interest at different levels of Openness; higher levels indicate more interest during the campaign in 2011. The marginal effects show that people high on Openness were more interested in politics during the campaign than after. For people low on Openness we see no change in the level of political interest.



**Figure 2.** The impact of Openness on changes in political interest (A) Effect on difference in political interest (B) Marginal effect on political interest

*Note:* Panel A shows the effect of the personality traits on changes in political interest; higher values indicate more interest during the campaign. The estimates build on Model 2 in Appendix Table B.4. Panel B shows the marginal effects of the campaign on political interest at different levels of Openness. The dashed lines indicate the 95 per cent confidence interval. The estimates build on Model 3 in Appendix Table C.4. This model controls for gender, age, education and the interactions between the election and the personality traits.

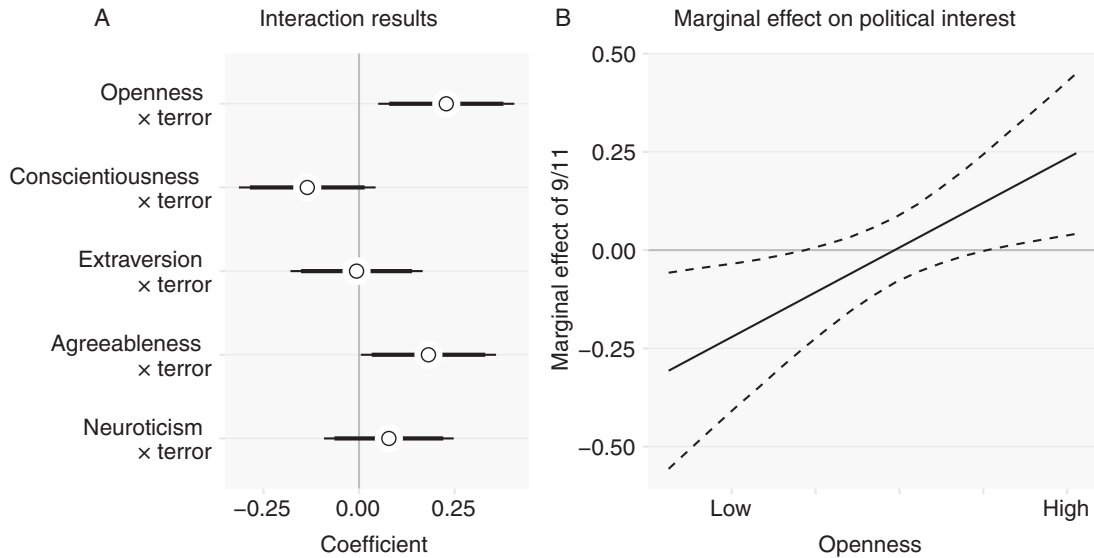
However, as Study 2b relies on cross-sectional data, a key concern is whether the findings might be explained by systematic differences in how politically interested the respondents are across the two groups (cf. Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno and Hernández 2019). It might be that people interviewed after the election are less interested in politics in general, for example that politically interested people are more likely to participate in a survey during an election campaign. To accommodate this possibility, I use placebo measures of both political interest and the campaign (results reported in Appendix C.5). Specifically, I replicated the models for the sample with data collected the previous year to see whether the dynamics found here would replicate using measures without a campaign. The tests show no similar empirical patterns as above and thus little evidence that the findings can be attributed to systematic differences between the groups unrelated to the election campaign.

Next, to ensure that the covariates do not interact with the timing of the interview in explaining the main findings, I estimated a series of models with heterogeneous effects controlling for various interactions between the covariates and the election campaign (reported in Appendix C.6). Last, as in the previous studies, I estimate the key result with the different items used to measure Openness to show that they both contribute equally to the differences in political interest (available in Appendix C.7).

### Study 3: The Foreign Event of 11 September 2001

Panel A in Figure 3 shows the interactions between each of the personality traits and the event to examine whether the event led some people to be more interested in politics. Again, the expectation is that Openness will interact with the political environment (the terrorist attack) to shape people's level of political interest. The results show that there is a significant interaction between the event and Openness.

Panel B shows the changes in political interest at different levels of Openness. The event has a positive marginal effect for people high on Openness. In other words, people high on Openness became more interested in politics directly after the 9/11 attacks. Interestingly, people low on



**Figure 3.** Changes in political interest at different levels of Openness, BHPS (A) Interaction results (B) Marginal effect on political interest

*Note:* Panel A shows the unstandardized regression coefficients for the interaction terms. The thick lines indicate 90 per cent confidence intervals and the thin lines indicate 95 per cent confidence intervals. Panel B shows the marginal effects of the terrorist attack on political interest at different levels of Openness. The dashed lines indicate the 95 per cent confidence interval. All estimates build on Model 3 in Appendix Table D.4. This model controls for gender, age, education and the interactions between the terrorist attack and the personality traits.

Openness became less interested in politics after the event. This relates to the salient nature of the event, where too much is taking place in the political realm for people low on Openness. The findings emphasize the surprising nature of terrorist attacks and show how people low on Openness find politics less interesting in such times.

I conducted two robustness tests. First, placebo tests similar to those in Study 2b ensure that the findings cannot be attributed to systematic differences between the groups unrelated to the event. Specifically, none of these tests showed any indication of patterns that can account for the findings presented above (models available in Appendix D.5). Secondly, models with interactions between the terrorist attack and the demographic characteristics show that the covariates do not account for the differences reported above (see Appendix D.6).

Last, in Appendix D.7 I show that each of the items used to capture variation in Openness account for the change in political interest in response to the terrorist attack.

### Concluding Remarks

Personality differences and political interest are key to understanding turnout in contemporary democracies (Denny and Doyle 2008). Despite the importance of citizens being interested in political affairs, there are still scholarly challenges related to understanding public interest in politics. Using the Big Five framework to encapsulate stable psychological differences between people and connecting this to the political environment people encounter, I have resolved an important part of the puzzle.

This insight builds on the framework outlined by Mondak et al. (2010), where personality traits are expected to interact with environmental factors to shape political behaviour, as well as the idea of the personality triad, which conceptualizes behaviour as a function of personality-situation interactions (Funder 2006). The findings have implications for the literature interested in not only explaining why people are interested in politics, but also why they might pay less attention to politics. Potski and Urbatsch (2017), for example, found that entertaining sporting



events the day before US general elections make people less likely to vote, with a stronger effect among those least interested in politics.

While the focus here is on political events, further research can use the framework outlined here to study the implications of non-political events. One prediction to be explored in future work is how salient events might decrease some people's level of political interest. The findings in Study 3 show that political interest decreased for people low on Openness in the wake of 9/11 in the UK.

The real-world events studied here show the importance of linking individual differences to features of the political environment. Future research should examine the various psychological mechanisms that might be at play. Such dynamics would be ideal to test in controlled settings with fine-grained measures of personal motivations and experimental control over the novelty of the political content to explore how environmental stimuli foster (or inhibit) an individual's general interest in political affairs.

In sum, political interest is indeed stable over time as it is rooted in deep-seated personality dispositions. However, this is not incompatible with people also responding to short-term changes in the political environment on the basis of the same dispositions. Consequently, the question to be examined in future research is not whether political interest is explained by dispositional *or* situational factors, but understanding the complex interplay between such factors in shaping political behaviour.

**Supplementary material.** Data replication sets are available in Harvard Dataverse at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JZZWER> and online appendices at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123419000784>.

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# SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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## **A: Study 1**

### **A.1: Context and data**

The European Parliament election took place on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2009. During and after the European Parliament election campaign in 2009, panel data was collected from a high-quality true probability sample of the population in the Netherlands, namely the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS). The LISS panel consists of around 8,000 individuals aged 16 years or older.

In April 2009, during the early stage of the election campaign, subjects were asked different questions related to the campaign. Important for the present study, in June 2009, i.e. after the election, subjects were interviewed again. This data is used to create a within subjects measure of changes in political interest from the campaign to after the campaign. Accordingly, the parameter of interest in this study is whether Openness can account for this change.

Political interest is measured with a 7-point scale asking the respondents to indicate their degree of interest in politics. Importantly, the question is identical in both waves and not specifically related to the election. The main outcome of interest in this setting is the difference between the two waves. Personality traits are measured using 50 items from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg 1992). The traits are measured in a separate wave of the panel in May 2009 (from the 4<sup>th</sup> of May to the 27<sup>th</sup> of May).

For additional information on the dataset, see <https://www.lissdata.nl/>.

## A.2: Question wording

**Table A.1:** Question wording, variables and answers, LISS

Title	Variable	Question	Answers
Political interest	ay09a018 ay09b018	Can you indicate your degree of interest in politics?	From “not at all interested” [1] to “very much interested” [7]
Ideology	cv10c101	Where would you place yourself on the scale below, where 0 means left and 10 means right?	From “left” [0] to “right” [10]
<i>Personality</i>			
Openness	cp09b024 cp09b029 cp09b034 cp09b039 cp09b044 cp09b049 cp09b054 cp09b059 cp09b064 cp09b069	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have a rich vocabulary.</li> <li>- Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.</li> <li>- Have a vivid imagination.</li> <li>- Am not interested in abstract ideas.</li> <li>- Have excellent ideas.</li> <li>- Do not have a good imagination.</li> <li>- Am quick to understand things.</li> <li>- Use difficult words.</li> <li>- Spend time reflecting on things.</li> <li>- Am full of ideas.</li> </ul>	From “very inaccurate” [1] to “very accurate” [5]
Conscientiousness	cp09b022 cp09b027 cp09b032 cp09b037 cp09b042 cp09b047 cp09b052 cp09b057 cp09b062 cp09b067	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am always prepared.</li> <li>- Leave my belongings around.</li> <li>- Pay attention to details.</li> <li>- Make a mess of things.</li> <li>- Get chores done right away.</li> <li>- Often forget to put things back in their proper place.</li> <li>- Like order.</li> <li>- Shirk my duties.</li> <li>- Follow a schedule.</li> <li>- Am exacting in my work.</li> </ul>	
Extraversion	cp09b020 cp09b025 cp09b030 cp09b035 cp09b040 cp09b045 cp09b050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am the life of the party.</li> <li>- Don't talk a lot.</li> <li>- Feel comfortable around people.</li> <li>- Keep in the background.</li> <li>- Start conversations.</li> </ul>	

- cp09b055 - Have little to say.
- cp09b060 - Talk to a lot of different
- cp09b065 people at parties.
- Don't like to draw attention to myself.
- Don't mind being the center of attention.
- Am quiet around strangers.

#### Agreeableness

- cp09b021 - Feel little concern for
- cp09b026 others.
- cp09b031 - Am interested in people.
- cp09b036 - Insult people.
- cp09b041 - Sympathize with others'
- cp09b046 feelings.
- cp09b051 - Am not interested in other
- cp09b056 people's problems.
- cp09b061 - Have a soft heart.
- cp09b066 - Am not really interested in others.
- Take time out for others.
- Feel others' emotions.
- Make people feel at ease.

#### Neuroticism

- cp09b023 - Get stressed out easily.
  - cp09b028 - Am relaxed most of the
  - cp09b033 time.
  - cp09b038 - Worry about things.
  - cp09b043 - Seldom feel blue.
  - cp09b048 - Am easily disturbed.
  - cp09b053 - Get upset easily.
  - cp09b058 - Change my mood a lot.
  - cp09b063 - Have frequent mood
  - cp09b068 swings.
  - Get irritated easily.
  - Often feel blue.
-

### A.3: Descriptive statistics

**Table A.2:** Summary statistics, LISS

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Median	Pctl(75)	Max
Political interest, campaign	4,333	3.98	1.66	1	3	4	5	7
Political interest, non-campaign	4,333	3.73	1.64	1	2	4	5	7
Openness	4,333	-0.002	0.50	-2.04	-0.40	0.02	0.32	1.55
Conscientiousness	4,333	0.02	0.50	-2.00	-0.29	-0.002	0.38	1.24
Extraversion	4,333	-0.01	0.50	-1.80	-0.29	0.03	0.34	1.38
Agreeableness	4,333	0.004	0.50	-2.44	-0.28	0.02	0.33	1.15
Neuroticism	4,333	0.001	0.50	-1.19	-0.36	-0.06	0.32	1.83
Male	4,333	0.47	0.50	0	0	0	1	1
Age	4,333	48.49	15.91	18	37	49	61	95
Ideology	3,306	5.22	2.12	0.00	4.00	5.00	7.00	10.00

**Table A.3:** Correlation matrix, LISS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) Political interest, campaign	1	0.77	0.30	0.10	0.11	0.05	-0.11	0.25	0.21
(2) Political interest, non-campaign	0.77	1	0.28	0.09	0.11	0.05	-0.10	0.22	0.19
(3) Openness	0.30	0.28	1	0.21	0.33	0.24	-0.18	0.10	-0.13
(4) Conscientiousness	0.10	0.09	0.21	1	0.10	0.30	-0.22	-0.07	0.19
(5) Extraversion	0.11	0.11	0.33	0.10	1	0.31	-0.25	0.01	-0.09
(6) Agreeableness	0.05	0.05	0.24	0.30	0.31	1	-0.04	-0.32	0.06
(7) Neuroticism	-0.11	-0.10	-0.18	-0.22	-0.25	-0.04	1	-0.17	-0.08
(8) Male	0.25	0.22	0.10	-0.07	0.01	-0.32	-0.17	1	0.08
(9) Age	0.21	0.19	-0.13	0.19	-0.09	0.06	-0.08	0.08	1

*Reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha)*

- Openness: 0.77
- Conscientiousness: 0.79
- Extraversion: 0.87
- Agreeableness: 0.81
- Neuroticism: 0.88

#### A.4: Main models

**Table A.4:** Effect of personality traits on changes in political interest, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Openness	0.10*** (0.03)	0.09** (0.04)	0.08* (0.05)
Conscientiousness		-0.003 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
Extraversion		-0.004 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Agreeableness		0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)
Neuroticism		0.0001 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
Male		0.09** (0.04)	0.12*** (0.04)
Age		0.002* (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)
Edu: Intermediate secondary		-0.19** (0.10)	-0.10 (0.12)
Edu: Higher secondary		-0.15 (0.11)	-0.07 (0.13)
Edu: Intermediate vocational		-0.14 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.12)
Edu: Higher vocational		-0.07 (0.10)	0.002 (0.12)
Edu: University		-0.17 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.13)
Edu: Other		0.13 (0.17)	0.26 (0.21)
Edu: Not completed		0.10 (0.79)	0.22 (0.78)
Edu: Not started		-0.06 (0.43)	-0.04 (0.56)
Ideology			-0.004 (0.01)
Constant	0.25*** (0.02)	0.24** (0.12)	0.14 (0.15)
Observations	4,333	4,333	3,306
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.005	0.004

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Baseline for education is primary school.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .



## A.5: Results with Openness items

**Table A.5:** Effects of Openness items on changes in political interest

Item	Estimate	SE	p-value
Rich vocabulary	0.05	0.02	0.01
Vivid imagination	0.05	0.02	0.01
Excellent ideas	0.07	0.02	0.00
Quick to understand things	0.04	0.02	0.15
Use difficult words	0.04	0.02	0.03
Reflect on things	0.02	0.02	0.42
Full of ideas	0.04	0.02	0.05
Understand abstract ideas	0.02	0.02	0.37
Interested in abstract ideas	0.01	0.02	0.67
Good imagination	0.01	0.02	0.59

## **B: Study 2a**

### **B.1: Context and data**

Study 2a uses panel data from the Swiss Electoral Studies collected before and after the 2015 Swiss federal election. The dataset provides identical measures of political interest just before and after the election on the same set of respondents. The election took place on 18<sup>th</sup> of October and interviews ended on the day of the election and began in the next wave on 19<sup>th</sup> of October.

The main outcome of interest in this setting is the difference in political interest between the two waves. Political interest is measured with the question ‘How interested are you in politics in general?’ on a 4 point scale ranging from ‘Not at all interested’ to ‘Very interested’. Personality traits are measured with 15 questions where the three questions on Openness relate to the respondent being highly imaginative, appreciates artistic experiences and is original and has new ideas. The estimation procedure is identical to the logic described in Study 1.

For additional information on the dataset, see <https://forscenter.ch/projects/selects/>.

## B.2: Question wording

**Table B.1:** Question wording, variables and answers, SELECTS

Title	Variable	Question	Answers
Political interest	w2_f10100 w3_f10100	How interested are you in politics in general?	From “Not at all interested” [1] to “Very interested” [4]
Ideology	f15201	In politics one sometimes speaks of "left" and "right". Where would you rank your political position on a scale from 0 to 10?	From “Left” [0] to “Right” [10]
<i>Personality</i>		Now a few statements. Please indicate to each of them how much the statement applies to you or not. I am a person who ...	From “Does not apply at all” [1] to “Applies perfectly” [10]
Openness	w3_f15771a w3_f15771f w3_f15770d	- Appreciates artistic experiences - Highly imaginative - Original and has new ideas	
Conscientiousness	w3_f15770a w3_f15770g w3_f15771c	- Works thoroughly - Rather lazy - Completes tasks effectively	
Extraversion	w3_f15770b w3_f15770h w3_f15771d	- Talkative - Sociable - Reserved	
Agreeableness	w3_f15770c w3_f15770f w3_f15771e	- At times too harsh with others - Is able to forgive - Considerate and friendly with others	
Neuroticism	w3_f15770e w3_f15771b w3_f15771g	- Worries often - Easily nervous - Relaxed and deals well with stress	

### B.3: Descriptive statistics

**Table B.2:** Summary statistics, SELECTS

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Median	Pctl(75)	Max
Political interest, campaign	6,153	2.95	0.74	1	3	3	3	4
Political interest, non-campaign	6,153	2.95	0.74	1	3	3	3	4
Openness	6,153	0.01	0.50	-1.72	-0.37	-0.01	0.35	0.99
Conscientiousness	6,153	0.003	0.49	-2.31	-0.31	0.04	0.39	0.75
Extraversion	6,153	0.003	0.50	-1.79	-0.35	0.03	0.31	1.08
Agreeableness	6,153	0.0003	0.50	-2.23	-0.29	0.04	0.36	0.90
Neuroticism	6,153	0.001	0.50	-1.21	-0.33	0.02	0.38	1.44
Male	6,142	0.53	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Age	6,125	49.60	16.28	17.00	37.00	51.00	62.00	95.00
Education	6,110	8.58	3.33	2.00	5.00	9.00	12.00	13.00
Ideology	5,780	5.27	2.52	0.00	3.00	5.00	7.00	10.00

**Table B.3:** Correlation matrix, SELECTS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) Political interest, campaign	1	0.82	0.11	0.04	0.09	-0.01	-0.08	0.17	0.27	0.18
(2) Political interest, non-campaign	0.82	1	0.09	0.05	0.10	-0.01	-0.10	0.17	0.27	0.17
(3) Openness	0.11	0.09	1	0.13	0.28	0.10	-0.04	-0.03	0.01	0.12
(4) Conscientiousness	0.04	0.05	0.13	1	0.20	0.22	-0.13	-0.07	0.05	-0.01
(5) Extraversion	0.09	0.10	0.28	0.20	1	0.05	-0.20	-0.09	-0.07	0.02
(6) Agreeableness	-0.01	-0.01	0.10	0.22	0.05	1	-0.15	-0.14	-0.01	-0.005
(7) Neuroticism	-0.08	-0.10	-0.04	-0.13	-0.20	-0.15	1	-0.13	-0.05	-0.09
(8) Male	0.17	0.17	-0.03	-0.07	-0.09	-0.14	-0.13	1	0.08	0.11
(9) Age	0.27	0.27	0.01	0.05	-0.07	-0.01	-0.05	0.08	1	-0.09
(10) Education	0.18	0.17	0.12	-0.01	0.02	-0.005	-0.09	0.11	-0.09	1

*Reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha)*

- Openness: 0.64
- Conscientiousness: 0.52
- Extraversion: 0.65
- Agreeableness: 0.43
- Neuroticism: 0.62

#### B.4: Main models

**Table B.4:** Effect of personality traits on changes in political interest, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Openness	0.03** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Conscientiousness		-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Extraversion		-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
Agreeableness		0.002 (0.01)	-0.005 (0.01)
Neuroticism		0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Male		0.005 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Age		0.0003 (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.0004)
Education		0.001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Ideology			-0.002 (0.002)
Constant	0.001 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)
Observations	6,272	6,071	5,704
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.001	0.001

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

**B.5: Results with Openness items**

**Table B.5:** Effects of Openness items on changes in political interest

Item	Estimate	SE	p-value
Appreciates artistic experiences	0.03	0.01	0.01
Highly imaginative	0.01	0.01	0.29
Original and has new ideas	0.02	0.01	0.14



## **C. Study 2b**

### **C.1: Context and data**

Study 2b examines the Swiss federal election in 2011 as a quasi-experiment. The data stems from Swiss Household Panel (SHP) and was collected during the period in which the election took place, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. To ensure that other events cannot account for any of the results here, I focus on respondents interviewed one week before and one week after the election. Respondents interviewed on the day of the election are not included. The focus on this brief period ensures that any potential effects can be attributed to the election.

The personality traits are measured with the short Big Five Inventory (BFI-10, Rammstedt and John 2007). These traits are measured in the 2009 wave, i.e. two years prior to the election. Political interest is measured with an 11-point scale asking subjects about their interest in politics, ranging from not at all interested to very interested.

For additional information on the dataset, see <https://forscenter.ch/projects/swiss-household-panel/>.

## C.2: Question wording

**Table C.1:** Question wording, variables and answers, SHP

Title	Variable	Question	Answers
Political interest	p11p01	Interest in politics	From “not at all interested” [0] to “very interested” [10]
Political interest, placebo	p10p01		
Campaign	month11 day11		
Male	sex11	Gender of respondent	Male [1], Female [0]
Age	age11	Age in years	
Education	edu_1_09	Highest level of education achieved.	From incomplete compulsory school to university.
Ideology	p09p10	When they talk about politics, people mention left and right. Personally, where do you position yourself, 0 means "left" and 10 "right"?	From “left” [0] to “right” [10]
<i>Personality</i>		I see myself as someone who	
Openness	p09c64 p09c69	... has an active imagination. ... has artistic interests.	From “completely disagree” [0] to “completely agree” [10]
Conscientiousness	p09c62 p09c67	... does a thorough job. ... tends to be lazy.	
Extraversion	p09c60 p09c65	... is reserved. ... is outgoing, sociable.	
Agreeableness	p09c61 p09c66	... is generally trusting. ... tends to find fault with others.	
Neuroticism	p09c63 p09c68	... is relaxed, handles stress well. ... gets nervous easily.	

### C.3: Descriptive statistics

**Table C.2:** Summary statistics, SHP

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Median	Pctl(75)	Max
Election	1,002	0.56	0.50	0	0	1	1	1
Political interest	1,002	5.10	2.88	0	3	5	7	10
Political interest, placebo	969	5.38	2.74	0	4	6	7	10
Male	1,002	0.45	0.50	0	0	0	1	1
Age	1,002	44.80	17.48	16	31	46	57	95
Education	1,001	5.14	3.19	0	4	4	8	10
Ideology	857	4.85	2.01	0.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	10.00
Openness	1,002	0.02	0.50	-1.69	-0.35	0.05	0.46	0.99
Conscientiousness	1,002	-0.01	0.49	-2.26	-0.30	0.03	0.36	0.85
Extraversion	1,002	0.03	0.49	-1.49	-0.30	0.10	0.37	0.90
Agreeableness	1,002	0.01	0.48	-1.88	-0.29	0.06	0.42	1.12
Neuroticism	1,002	0.01	0.48	-1.45	-0.29	0.003	0.29	1.02

**Table C.3:** Correlation matrix, SHP

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(1) Election	1	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.03	-0.06	0.001	-0.07	0.01	0.003
(2) Political interest	0.10	1	0.83	0.19	0.26	0.30	0.05	0.04	-0.001	0.01	0.05
(3) Political interest, placebo	0.06	0.83	1	0.18	0.30	0.32	0.05	0.04	-0.003	0.02	0.08
(4) Male	0.07	0.19	0.18	1	0.02	0.09	-0.13	-0.04	-0.05	0.01	0.16
(5) Age	0.09	0.26	0.30	0.02	1	0.32	-0.01	0.23	-0.14	0.13	0.02
(6) Education	0.03	0.30	0.32	0.09	0.32	1	0.08	0.20	-0.05	-0.003	0.07
(7) Openness	-0.06	0.05	0.05	-0.13	-0.01	0.08	1	0.11	0.22	0.10	0.09
(8) Conscientiousness	0.001	0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.23	0.20	0.11	1	0.15	0.28	0.20
(9) Extraversion	-0.07	-0.001	-0.003	-0.05	-0.14	-0.05	0.22	0.15	1	0.16	0.19
(10) Agreeableness	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.13	-0.003	0.10	0.28	0.16	1	0.21
(11) Neuroticism	0.003	0.05	0.08	0.16	0.02	0.07	0.09	0.20	0.19	0.21	1

*Reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha)*

- Openness: 0.34
- Conscientiousness: 0.39
- Extraversion: 0.50
- Agreeableness: 0.15
- Neuroticism: 0.52

#### C.4: Main models

**Table C.4:** Heterogeneous effect of personality traits, SHP, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Election	0.35** (0.16)	0.40** (0.17)	0.40** (0.17)	0.41** (0.18)
Male	1.01*** (0.17)	1.01*** (0.17)	1.00*** (0.17)	0.77*** (0.18)
Age	0.03*** (0.005)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Education	0.20*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)
Ideology				-0.07 (0.04)
Openness		-0.05 (0.24)	-0.05 (0.25)	0.08 (0.27)
Conscientiousness			-0.43 (0.27)	-0.68** (0.30)
Extraversion			0.27 (0.27)	0.46* (0.28)
Agreeableness			-0.03 (0.29)	0.12 (0.31)
Neuroticism			-0.11 (0.28)	0.01 (0.30)
Openness × Election		0.77** (0.33)	0.72** (0.34)	0.64* (0.36)
Conscientiousness × Election			0.23 (0.36)	0.63 (0.40)
Extraversion × Election			0.02 (0.36)	-0.24 (0.37)
Agreeableness × Election			-0.04 (0.38)	-0.30 (0.41)
Neuroticism × Election			0.20 (0.37)	0.21 (0.39)
Constant	2.12*** (0.25)	2.10*** (0.26)	1.92*** (0.27)	2.42*** (0.38)
Observations	1,066	1,004	1,001	856
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.14

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

### C.5: Placebo tests

As placebo tests, I estimated similar models as the ones reported in the main text with a placebo measure of political interest, i.e. political interest from the previous year, and a placebo measure of the campaign, i.e. the period from the previous year.

Model 1 in Table C.5 shows the placebo measure of political interest regressed on Openness and the placebo campaign. Here we see no evidence for a heterogeneous effect. Model 2 looks at the placebo measure of political interest but with the election campaign and Model 3 looks at political interest during the campaign but with the placebo measure of the campaign. In none of the models do we find any evidence for changes that can account for the main findings.

**Table C.5:** Placebo tests on heterogeneous effects, SHP, OLS

	(1) Placebo interest	(2) Placebo interest	(3) Real interest
Openness	0.74** (0.30)	0.05 (0.25)	0.88*** (0.32)
Placebo	0.08 (0.19)		0.21 (0.20)
Openness × Placebo	-0.35 (0.39)		-0.43 (0.42)
Election		0.36** (0.18)	
Openness × Election		0.49 (0.35)	
Constant	5.54*** (0.15)	5.18*** (0.13)	5.21*** (0.15)
Observations	799	972	791
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.01

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.  
\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

### C.6: Robustness tests

**Table C.6:** Heterogeneous effects controlling for various interactions, SHP, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Election	0.16 (0.24)	0.19 (0.53)	0.47 (0.37)	0.99** (0.47)	1.05 (0.74)
Male	0.45* (0.27)	0.77*** (0.18)	0.77*** (0.18)	0.77*** (0.18)	0.41 (0.28)
Age	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Education	0.19*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.05)
Ideology	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.003 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)
Openness	0.05 (0.26)	0.07 (0.26)	0.07 (0.26)	0.09 (0.26)	0.08 (0.27)
Conscientiousness	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.75** (0.31)
Extraversion	0.33* (0.19)	0.34* (0.19)	0.33* (0.19)	0.33* (0.19)	0.42 (0.28)
Agreeableness	-0.06 (0.20)	-0.06 (0.20)	-0.06 (0.20)	-0.06 (0.20)	0.17 (0.32)
Neuroticism	0.14 (0.20)	0.14 (0.20)	0.14 (0.20)	0.13 (0.20)	0.05 (0.30)
Male × Election	0.56 (0.36)				0.65* (0.37)
Age × Election		0.005 (0.01)			0.004 (0.01)
Education × Election			-0.01 (0.06)		-0.06 (0.06)
Ideology × Election				-0.12 (0.09)	-0.16* (0.09)
Openness × Election	0.71** (0.35)	0.64* (0.35)	0.64* (0.35)	0.60* (0.35)	0.67* (0.37)
Conscientiousness × Election					0.78* (0.41)
Extraversion × Election					-0.16 (0.38)
Agreeableness × Election					-0.39 (0.41)
Neuroticism × Election					0.14 (0.40)
Constant	2.57*** (0.39)	2.56*** (0.47)	2.40*** (0.41)	2.08*** (0.46)	2.04*** (0.56)
Observations	856	856	856	856	856
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.



**C.7: Results with Openness items**

**Table C.7:** Effects of Openness items on changes in political interest

Item	Estimate	SE	p-value
Imagination	0.43	0.37	0.25
Artistic interests	0.48	0.36	0.19

## **D: Study 3**

### **D.1: Context and data**

As in Study 2b, the setup rely on respondents interviewed one week prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and the respondents interviewed one week after the event. Respondents interviewed on the day of the event are excluded.

In the BHPS, personality traits are measured in one wave, namely in wave 15 with the 15-item Big Five Inventory (in the field September 2005 to May 2006).

The traits are measured with statements on what degree the specific statements apply to the respondent personality. Openness is about the degree to which the respondent comes up with ideas, values artistic experiences, and has an active imagination. Political interest is measured on a 4-point scale ranging from not at all interested to very interested.

For additional information on the dataset, see <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps>.

## D.2: Question wording

**Table D.1:** Question wording, variables and answers, BHPS

Title	Variable	Question	Answers
Political interest	kvote6	How interested would you say you are in politics?	“Very interested” [3], “Fairly interested” [2], “Not very interested” [1], and “Not at all interested” [0]
Political interest, placebo	fvote6		
Terror	kdoim kdoid		
Male	osex	Respondent is ...	Male [1], Female [0]
Age	oage	Would you please tell me your exact date of birth?	
Education	oqfedhi	Highest educational qualification	From no qualification [13] to higher degree [1]
<i>Personality</i>		I see myself as someone who ...	From “Does not apply to me at all” [1] to “Applies to me perfectly” [7]
Openness	optrt5o1 optrt5o2 optrt5o3	- Is original, comes up with new ideas - Values artistic, aesthetic experiences - Has an active imagination	
Conscientiousness	optrt5c2 optrt5c1 optrt5c3	- Tends to be lazy - Does a thorough job - Does things efficiently	
Extraversion	optrt5e3 optrt5e1 optrt5e2	- Is reserved - Is talkative - Is outgoing, sociable	
Agreeableness	optrt5a1 optrt5a2 optrt5a3	- Is sometimes rude to others - Has a forgiving nature - Is considerate and kind to almost everyone	
Neuroticism	optrt5n3 optrt5n1 optrt5n2	- Is relaxed, handles stress well - Worries a lot - Gets nervously easily	

### D.3: Descriptive statistics

**Table D.2:** Summary statistics, BHPS

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Median	Pctl(75)	Max
Terror	1,679	0.62	0.49	0	0	1	1	1
Political interest	1,679	1.28	0.87	0	1	1	2	3
Political interest, placebo	1,462	1.31	0.88	0	1	1	2	3
Male	1,679	0.43	0.50	0	0	0	1	1
Age	1,679	52.81	18.69	19	38	51	68.5	97
Education	1,645	6.80	3.53	1	4	6	10	13
Openness	1,679	-0.03	0.48	-1.38	-0.30	-0.03	0.24	1.05
Conscientiousness	1,679	-0.03	0.51	-1.97	-0.44	0.01	0.32	0.78
Extraversion	1,679	-0.02	0.51	-1.46	-0.33	-0.04	0.38	1.09
Agreeableness	1,679	-0.01	0.50	-2.04	-0.39	0.10	0.43	0.76
Neuroticism	1,679	-0.005	0.49	-1.00	-0.37	0.01	0.26	1.27

**Table D.3:** Correlation matrix, BHPS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(1) Terror	1	-0.02	-0.004	0.02	-0.14	-0.08	0.05	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.05
(2) Political interest	-0.02	1	0.66	0.15	0.23	-0.13	0.13	-0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.09
(3) Political interest, placebo	-0.004	0.66	1	0.20	0.23	-0.14	0.13	-0.04	0.001	-0.0002	-0.11
(4) Male	0.02	0.15	0.20	1	-0.01	-0.10	0.09	-0.02	-0.09	-0.17	-0.28
(5) Age	-0.14	0.23	0.23	-0.01	1	0.39	-0.22	-0.13	-0.18	0.02	-0.11
(6) Education	-0.08	-0.13	-0.14	-0.10	0.39	1	-0.33	-0.11	-0.10	0.04	0.03
(7) Openness	0.05	0.13	0.13	0.09	-0.22	-0.33	1	0.25	0.26	0.20	-0.06
(8) Conscientiousness	0.01	-0.03	-0.04	-0.02	-0.13	-0.11	0.25	1	0.23	0.38	-0.15
(9) Extraversion	0.04	0.01	0.001	-0.09	-0.18	-0.10	0.26	0.23	1	0.16	-0.19
(10) Agreeableness	0.03	-0.01	-0.0002	-0.17	0.02	0.04	0.20	0.38	0.16	1	-0.05
(11) Neuroticism	0.05	-0.09	-0.11	-0.28	-0.11	0.03	-0.06	-0.15	-0.19	-0.05	1

*Reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha)*

- Openness: 0.67
- Conscientiousness: 0.51
- Extraversion: 0.53
- Agreeableness: 0.52
- Neuroticism: 0.67

#### D.4: Main models

**Table D.4:** Heterogeneous effects of personality traits, BHPS, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Terror	-0.06*	-0.03	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Openness		0.06	0.09
		(0.07)	(0.07)
Conscientiousness			0.03
			(0.07)
Extraversion			0.07
			(0.07)
Agreeableness			-0.13*
			(0.07)
Neuroticism			-0.06
			(0.07)
Male			0.23***
			(0.05)
Age			0.01***
			(0.001)
Openness × Terror		0.30***	0.23**
		(0.09)	(0.09)
Conscientiousness × Terror			-0.14
			(0.09)
Extraversion × Terror			-0.01
			(0.09)
Agreeableness × Terror			0.18**
			(0.09)
Neuroticism × Terror			0.08
			(0.09)
Education controls	X	X	X
Observations	2,608	1,707	1,645
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.02	0.14

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

## D.5: Placebo tests

Model 1 in Table D.5 shows the placebo measure of political interest regressed on Openness and the placebo event. Here we see no evidence of a heterogeneous effect. Model 2 looks at political interest during the event but with the placebo measure of the event and Model 3 looks at the placebo measure of political interest but with the event. In none of the models do we find any evidence for changes that can account for the main findings.

**Table D.5:** Placebo tests on heterogeneous effects, BHPS, OLS

	(1) Placebo interest	(2) Real interest	(3) Placebo interest
Placebo	0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	
Terror			-0.02 (0.05)
Openness	0.24*** (0.09)	0.19** (0.09)	0.16** (0.07)
Openness × Placebo	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.005 (0.10)	
Openness × Terror			0.12 (0.09)
Constant	1.29*** (0.04)	1.33*** (0.04)	1.33*** (0.04)
Observations	1,303	1,306	1,490
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.02

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.  
\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.



## D.6: Robustness tests

**Table D.6:** Heterogeneous effects controlling for various interactions, BHPS, OLS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Terror	0.02 (0.06)	0.34** (0.13)	1.08*** (0.32)	1.38*** (0.35)
Openness	0.09 (0.07)	0.12 (0.07)	0.11 (0.07)	0.11 (0.07)
Conscientiousness	0.03 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)
Extraversion	0.07 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	0.09 (0.07)
Agreeableness	-0.12* (0.07)	-0.14** (0.07)	-0.14* (0.07)	-0.14* (0.07)
Neuroticism	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)
Male	0.25*** (0.07)	0.24*** (0.05)	0.24*** (0.05)	0.27*** (0.07)
Age	0.01*** (0.001)	0.02*** (0.002)	0.01*** (0.001)	0.02*** (0.002)
Openness × Terror	0.23** (0.09)	0.18** (0.09)	0.19** (0.10)	0.18* (0.10)
Conscientiousness × Terror	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.17* (0.09)	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.16* (0.09)
Extraversion × Terror	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)
Agreeableness × Terror	0.18* (0.09)	0.21** (0.09)	0.21** (0.09)	0.21** (0.09)
Neuroticism × Terror	0.07 (0.09)	0.04 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)
Constant	0.86*** (0.17)	0.66*** (0.18)	0.15 (0.27)	-0.04 (0.28)
Gender × Terror control	Yes	No	No	Yes
Age × Terror control	No	Yes	No	Yes
Education × Terror control	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.15

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01.

**D.7: Results with Openness items**

**Table D.7:** Effects of Openness items on changes in political interest

Item	Estimate	SE	p-value
Original, come up with ideas	0.27	0.08	0.00
Values artistic experiences	0.17	0.09	0.05
Active imagination	0.18	0.09	0.04

**References not included in the main text**

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