



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Anna Y. Kulkova

**RELIGIOSITY AND POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION IN
CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA: A
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: POLITICAL SCIENCE
WP BRP 20/PS/2014

RELIGIOSITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS²

The paper argues that religiosity is one of the potential determinants of political participation in Russia. A complex model of religiosity is applied, which treats individual religiosity as both belonging to religious tradition and religious behavior, while political participation includes voting, attending demonstrations, signing petitions and participating in electoral campaigns. The aim of this research is to identify whether there is a difference in political participation between religious and non-religious Russians, and between followers of different religious traditions and atheists. Secondly, it is important to explore which of the measurements of religiosity, religious tradition or religious behavior have the most powerful effect on Russians' political participation. The data for the statistical analysis is from the European Social Survey (6th round), which includes representatives of major religious traditions in Russia.

JEL Classification: Z

Keywords: political participation, religion and politics, religiosity, political behavior, political activism.

¹ National Research University Higher School of Economics, Laboratory for Political Studies, Research Intern. E-mail: akulkova@hse.ru

This Working Paper is an output of a research project entitled "*Syndrome of political nostalgia*" in modern Russia implemented by the Laboratory for Political Studies as a part of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2014. Any opinions or claims contained in this Working Paper do not necessarily reflect the views of HSE.

² The author is grateful to Mark Urnov, Valeria Kasamara and Olga Gasparyan for inspiration and support.

Introduction

Representatives of the “old paradigm” secularization theory believed that the role of religion would gradually decrease until religion would only remain in people’s private lives (Berger, 1967; Chaves, 1994; Durkheim, 2012; Luckmann, 1967; Martin, 1978; Weber, 2013). Nevertheless, beginning from the 1960s, the secularization theory’s predictions can be seen to have failed. New religious movements appeared; “old” religions actively participate in social life; churches cooperate with each other and governments, and the East is quickly Islamizing. The secularization theory also failed in the case of the post-Soviet countries, where, after 70 years of forced secularization, the 1990s were marked by significant surge in religiosity. Post-Soviet Russia can be characterized by an impetuous religious revival, and a significant increase in the levels of religious self-identification. According to public opinion polls conducted in 1991, 63% of Russian citizens considered themselves to be atheists, 28% as Orthodox Christians and only 0,5% as Muslims (“Sophist” data-set, 1991). The percentage of representatives of all religious traditions rose steadily from the beginning of the 1990s, while the number of atheists in the same period declined steadily; in 2010 only 8% percent of respondents called themselves atheists while 75% were Orthodox and 8% were Muslim (VCIOM press-issue № 1461, 2010). A considerable amount of contemporary believers attend churches and act according to religious rather than secular ethics, and religion remains an important factor in these people’s lives. Religion also influences the political sphere (and vice versa), and to some extent determines people’s political behavior. After a short period of decline in religious activity over the latter part of the 1990s, a new wave of religious revival in Russia began in the themed-2000s. Figures 1, 2 and 3 presented below demonstrate the significant increase in religious participation in 2006, compared to 1996, for the overall population and for Orthodox Christians and Muslims as major religious groups. According to data from the World Values Survey, Russians on average approve of religion, given that a considerable part of the respondents moved from the category of non-attendees in 1996 to various categories of attendees. Moreover, in opposition to the ideas claimed by the secularization theory, the Russian Orthodox Church is becoming more powerful on the political stage. The process of differentiating between religious and secular institutions is going back that can be seen from the influence that religious institutions exert over public policy and the Church merges with the State.

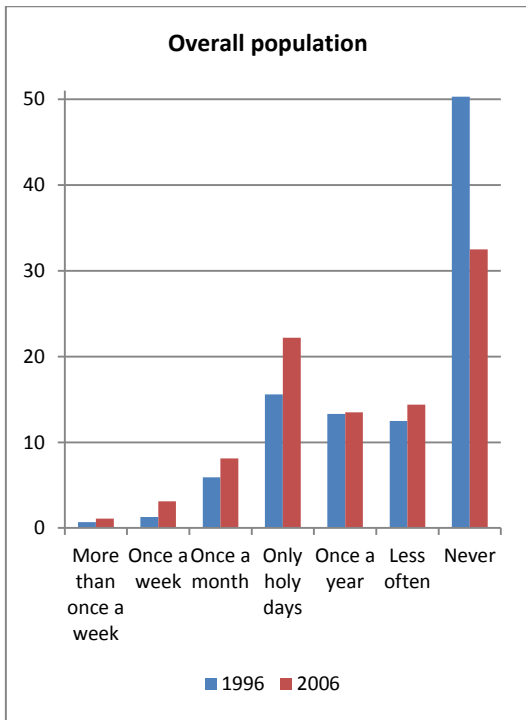


Fig. 1. Attendance at religious services in 1996 and 2006: overall population of Russia (in percentage points)
Data: WVS

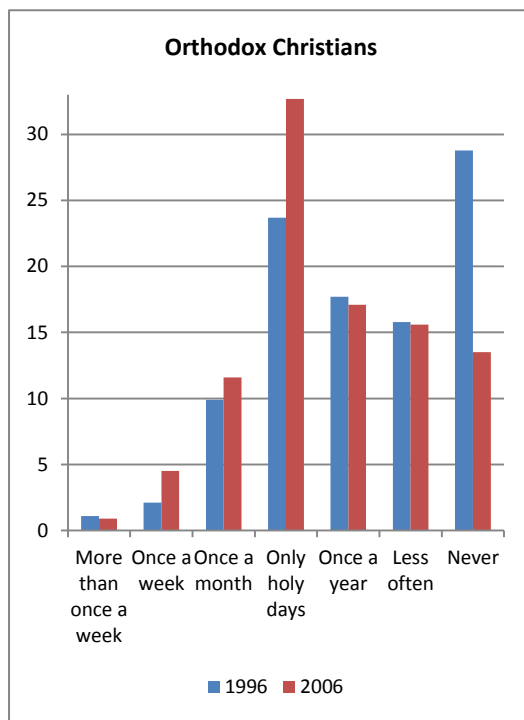


Fig. 2. Attendance at religious services in 1996 and 2006: Orthodox Christians (in percentage points)
Data: WVS

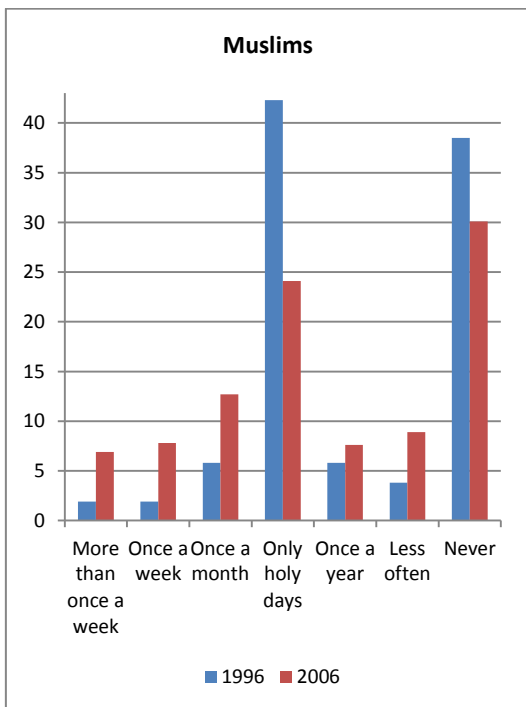


Fig. 3. Attendance at religious services in 1996 and 2006: Muslims (in percentage points)
Data: WVS

Aside from a religious revival, the collapse of the USSR led to the democratization of the political system which, regardless of the autocratic turn at the start of 2000s, still provides some opportunities for political participation; citizens can participate in elections, demonstrations and boycotts or can sign petitions of protest. Therefore, it is extremely important to study the determinants of political behavior in contemporary Russia, and religion can be one of these determinants. In the USA, people participate in religious activity and show high levels of religiosity. In Western and Northern Europe (countries which are often perceived as completely secularized), the level of religious participation is lower than in the USA, but people are still very religious in the private sphere, believing in God and afterlife and grounding their moral judgments in religious values which are embedded within their cultures (Norris and Inglehart, 2011).

The interrelation between individual religiosity and political participation is typical of both the religious United States and of secular Europe. Different factors influence Western people's intention to take part in politics. Religious traditions are amongst these factors, which prescribe its followers to act in a certain way, as well as religious activism, which can turn participation into a habit. But the question remains as to whether religiosity is linked to political participation in Russia, and which aspects of religiosity (religious affiliation or the degree of religiosity) have the most influence. The main goal of this research is to identify the specifics of the influence that individual religiosity exerts on political participation in contemporary Russia. Two *hypotheses* are tested in this paper: religiosity is associated with political participation of contemporary Russians (H1) and the degree of religiosity is the most significant predictor of differences in political activism, rather than belonging to a confession (H2).

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 examines the major theories which explain the ways in which religion can influence political participation. Section 3 is dedicated to Russian specifics of religiosity and political participation, while a statistical analysis of the data from ESS is carried out in Section 4. Section 5 concludes the paper.

Theoretical framework: how does religiosity affect political participation?

The most popular understanding of religiosity equates it with belonging to a religious tradition. From this perspective, a church is regarded as a group of people who share common values and interests. Major studies within the so-called sociological tradition explore the interaction between religiosity and people's attitude towards sensitive issues like abortion, education policies or electoral preferences (McTague and Layman, 2009). Therefore, Catholics and Jews in the USA in recent years prefer to vote Democrat, while Republicans target Protestants and Evangelists as their core audience (Esmer and Pettersson, 2007). In Europe, despite the secularization processes, the influence of religion on party choice is not declining either; religious people are more willing to support Christian-Democrats or, in the case of an absence of such parties, the Conservatives would be their second priority (Van der Brug et al., 2009).

Religious traditions differ not only in the political preferences of their followers but also in the way that believers treat politics and political participation; whether they take part in elections, sign petitions, attend demonstrations or oppose these types of activities. For instance, American Jews and Mainline Protestants are typically more active voters when compared to other confessions, and especially to non-religious Americans (Wielhouwer, 2009). Li and Marsh show that in Britain, Muslims and Hindu are much less eager to take part in politics than atheists and all other Christian traditions' followers, because they do not feel incorporated into society (Li and Marsh, 2008).

The difference in attitudes towards social issues or towards political participation may arise from the religious doctrines that form the basis for all religious traditions. Doctrines include political theologies – the set of ideas that religious actors hold about political authority and justice. Therefore, doctrines can promote political participation or claim politics to be a dirty business, promote tolerant attitudes towards sexual minorities or strictly oppose social change (Philpott, 2007). While Buddhists are generally less interested in politics due to their philosophy of detachment, Christians turn out to be more politically active and in Islam, politics and religion are inseparable. In other words, different religious traditions establish different behavioral norms in all spheres of life, including politics, and their believers follow these norms. For example, American religious communities that do not support absenteeism usually “specialize” in some kind of political activism and prefer to devote their time primarily to these types of activities. A considerable amount of black Protestant communities invite local candidates to give speeches in church and raise votes to

support them. Catholics organize demonstrations and lobby decisions at a local level, while Evangelists generally distribute leaflets (Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003). Given this, belonging to a particular religious tradition may predispose which political actions the individuals are more likely to undertake, because they may favor activities regarded as appropriate in their religious community.

Although religious affiliation is relatively easy to measure and use in quantitative analysis, this understanding of religiosity has some limitations. Firstly, it is not always obvious how exactly religious tradition can influence people's political preferences or their inclination to take part in politics. Confessions differ not only in terms of political theologies but also in religious communities' organizational structures. Higher levels of discipline lead to political uniformity, manifesting in consolidated support for some political actions or a political party among community members. Traditionalism may influence the overall inclination of community members to take part in politics in accordance with religious doctrines. Accordingly, in the USA, Jews and Mainline Protestants, whose communities are characterized by higher levels of within church cohesion, are more inclined to vote than those from less cohesive communities (Wald et al., 1990).

The measure of religiosity understood as "belonging" is widely used as an explanatory variable in contemporary studies of political participation (Brady et al., 1995) and social policy (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011). However, the opportunity to conduct a cross-country analysis using this indicator is doubtful. It is hardly correct to categorize followers of the same tradition, but from different countries, into one religious group and suggest that they have common attitude towards political participation. For example, Catholic communities in the Czech Republic and Poland differ greatly in their attitude towards political participation (Philpott, 2007) and Muslim communities in countries where Muslims are only a small minority are not equal to Muslim communities in predominantly Muslim countries (Pepinsky and Welborne, 2011).

The understanding of religiosity as religious behavior stems from the works of Emile Durkheim, for whom religious rites form group solidarity and strengthen the ties between individuals in society (Wielhouwer, 2009). The behavioral dimension of religiosity is operationalized through the frequency by which people attend religious services and other practical manifestations of following the rules of the religious tradition, such as praying or following dietary requirements. It is expected that people who follow religious norms are actually religious; religion is important for them and they could be called religious.

Conversely, individuals who claim to be affiliated with a religious tradition but do not follow its rules cannot be said to be religious. Proponents of this approach suggest that in a contemporary world, the main religious cleavage lies not between representatives of different confessions, but between very religious people and those who are either less involved in their religious community's affairs or are non-religious (Esmer and Pettersson, 2007). From this perspective, religious communities are not only a communities of people with shared values (as seen from the sociological perspective), but rather agents of socialization, which promote their values among their followers. Therefore, the more individuals are involved into their community's life, the more they are exposed to the community's influence (Wald et al., 1990). On the other hand, high levels of participation in community activities may imply that a person shares the community's typical values. Churches can actively engage in the electoral mobilization of their followers because they have the opportunity to convince followers to participate in politics or to vote for a particular candidate. Even if not every religious community practices political agitation among its members (confessions and countries do differ in the degree of politicization of religious communities), conservative politicians can successfully find support among religious people when sensitive issues such as reproductive rights and minorities' rights appear on the political agenda (Gershtenson, 2003). Regular attendance at religious services therefore increases a person's chances of being exposed to the influence of conservative movements.

The specifics of interaction between religiosity and political participation should not be reduced to the influence that intra-communal norms exert over members' political participation. Macaluso and Wanat suggest that the necessity of regular attendance at religious services creates skills which are close to those required for being a responsible citizen, as well as increases social and political responsibility at an individual level. The most religious people pay attention to order, rites, duty and legitimacy – those psychological traits which form a sense of civic responsibility (Macaluso and Wanat, 1979). On the other hand, religious participation can lead to political participation because a person gets into the habit of participating. Despite its popularity, the behavioral dimension of religiosity is constantly criticized, primarily due to the impossibility of correctly comparing religious participation between representatives of different confessions. Religions have different requirements for performing their religious rites, such as the obligation to attend religious services or to pray, and acts that are mandatory for a Muslim are not the same for a Buddhist (Esmer and Pettersson, 2007). While Orthodox Christians must regularly take part in sacraments, it is mandatory for Muslims to attend mosque on Friday for a sermon, but in the

Buddhist tradition, attending church (khurul) is mandatory only on holidays. Moreover, in some local communities, attending church will be more of a social ritual than a religious one.

Finally, if we ignore the content of religiosity and focus only on behavioral characteristics of the individuals, involvement into life of a religious community becomes indistinguishable from a social club's activities (like gardening) when it comes to their influence on its members' political participation. In both cases, either binding or bonding social capital is formed, which can affect people's civic responsibility and their inclination to take part in politics, but it has nothing to do with religiosity (Putnam, 1995).

Scholars who criticize "simple" measures of religiosity suggest focusing on beliefs instead of affiliation and quantitative manifestations of religiosity (Driskell et al., 2008; Guth et al., 2002). The beliefs that people hold are actually the most accurate understanding of religiosity. Nevertheless, beliefs are much harder to measure empirically than religious affiliation or practices. It is extremely hard to formulate a question about the essence of religious beliefs which would firstly have an informative and useful answer and, secondly, would have answers from followers of different religious traditions which could be compared. In cross-country mass surveys, the topic of beliefs is presented very narrowly. The questions are usually about belief in God and the afterlife, which does not allow us to carry out accurate cross-country and cross-confessional comparative studies.

The influence of individual religiosity on political participation can be multidimensional. It could be suggested that religious fundamentalism leads to political absenteeism because the religious community retires into its shell, but recent studies demonstrate that current religious conservatives actively participate in political processes, especially when sensitive issues such as abortion or gay rights are included on the political agenda (Guth et al., 2002). Therefore, supporting fundamentalist or liberal religious views will tell us nothing about the individual's inclination to participate in politics, but can predispose political preferences and the type of political actions that an individual will be more likely to take part in.

Religious beliefs and modes of religious participation differ amongst confessions. This is why cross-country mass surveys often include the additional indicator of a respondent's degree of religiosity; how religious the respondents consider themselves to be, or the degree to which religiosity is important to them (Prutskova, 2012). The way that this

question is formulated allows the respondents to reveal their subjective attitudes towards religion, while answers may be compared between followers of different religions, regardless of their particular beliefs.

There is no perfect indicator of religiosity, which is why from the early 2000s researchers used a complex approach to operationalizing religiosity, which implies the simultaneous use of religious affiliation, participation and beliefs as indicators of religiosity, which may explain differences in people's inclination to participate in politics (Driskell et al., 2008; Guth et al., 2002). The simultaneous inclusion of these indicators into statistical models allows us to compare the effect that all these dimensions of religiosity have on political participation, and even to identify the indicator that could best explain political participation.

Russian specifics of religiosity and political participation

All the theories presented in the previous section work well for Western societies. However, in order to explore contemporary Russia, the key features of Russian religiosity and political participation must be identified, which would allow us to derive hypotheses about the interaction we are examining.

Religiosity in Russia is highly contradictory, due to forced secularization and people's experiences of state atheism, combined with an extremely fast religious revival (in terms of the increase in individuals' beliefs) during the 1990s (Sinelina, 2009). Russian social surveys usually demonstrate that, in traditionally Orthodox regions, the number of Orthodox Christians exceeds the number of believers by 20-30%. People who call themselves Orthodox are not necessarily religious, as religious confessions which are traditionally Russian (like Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in different parts of the country) usually play the role of cultural traditions (Kublitskaya, 2009). Being a Russian means belonging to the Orthodox cultural tradition, while being a Tatar is equal to being a Muslim (Gavrilov et al., 2005). The spread of religious beliefs in Russia goes hand-in-hand with low levels of religious participation that vary significantly between representatives of different religious traditions. Among followers of religions which are traditional for Russia such as Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, religious participation rates are rather low (less than 30%) because respondents consider these to be cultural rather than religious traditions. From amongst the followers of minor religious traditions, especially Protestants

and Catholics, the participation rates are much higher (more than 50%) which can be explained by the severe discipline imposed by these religions (Gavrilov et al., 2005).

The religious beliefs of people who adhere to different religions are characterized by several contradictions. Christian beliefs can be intertwined with eastern beliefs (inspired by Buddhism) and supplemented by pagan superstitions (Mchedlova, 2009). This is more typical of traditional Russian religions than for the minor religious groups. In the beginning of the 1990s, traditional religions tried to recruit as many followers as they could, but lacked the resources to teach these new followers (Gavrilov et al., 2005). Finally, respondents that identify themselves as nonbelievers may attend church occasionally, while among “believers” there are respondents that do not attend church at all and do not follow the norms of their religion.

Political participation in Russia also has its certain typical features. Pensioners tend to be more politically active than people of other ages, because they have more time for political actions. Russian citizens do not approve of taking part in demonstrations and meetings and attend them only in extreme cases. They also do not approve of signing petitions but can be more active in complaint-making (Henry, 2012). According to the ESS data from 2012, voting is the most popular mode of political participation among Russians; almost 64% of respondents claimed to have taken part in the parliamentary elections of December 2011. Other modes of political activism are considerably less common; the second popular mode of political participation was contacting politicians, which only 7.4% of respondents did. If before 2011 Russians showed any refusal to take part in politics, after 2011 young people and people of middle age and middle income also began to engage in politics (although this tendency is only typical of big cities). The summarized statistics on Russians’ political participation in 2012 are shown in Table 1.

Tab. 1. Political participation rates in Russia, 2012 (in percentage points)

| There are different ways of trying to improve things in Russia or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... | Yes | No |
|--|------|------|
| ...voted in the last parliamentary national election in December 2011? | 63.8 | 30.2 |
| ...contacted a politician, government or local government official? | 7.4 | 92.6 |
| ...worked in a political party or action group? | 3.3 | 96.7 |
| ...worked in another organisation or association? | 5.7 | 94.3 |
| ...boycotted certain products? | 4 | 96 |
| ...worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker? | 5.1 | 94.9 |
| ...signed a petition? | 6 | 94 |
| ...taken part in a lawful public demonstration? | 4.3 | 95.7 |

Data: ESS 2012

Summing up, Russians who call themselves Orthodox or Muslim (which form the majority in the country) are not necessarily religious. They may never attend religious services and know almost nothing about religious doctrines that they ought to adhere to. Thus, in a statistical analysis it is important to use both measures of religious affiliation and practical religiosity (attendance at religious services and praying) in order to distinguish true believers from those who identify with the dominant cultural tradition and are not religious at all.

Hypotheses, Data and Methods

The theoretical approaches presented above suggest different ways of how religiosity may affect political participation. In accordance with the Russian specifics of religiosity and political participation, the main hypothesis tested in the paper is that religiosity is associated with Russians' political participation (H1). The values of believers and nonbelievers, of those who attend religious services and those who believe on their own may vary, which will in turn affect these people's inclinations to participate in politics. The term "association" is used in the paper because I cannot prove that there is a causal inference and that religiosity actually causes differences in political participation among Russians. Therefore, when discussing the influence that religiosity may exert over political participation, I mean that these variables are somehow interrelated and higher practical religiosity levels correspond to higher levels of political participation. The previous section indicated that Russians' religious consciousness is self-contradictory and religious affiliation is often a substitute for a cultural or national identity. Religious affiliation may actually tell us nothing about a respondent's beliefs and values, while attending religious services and praying frequency are more of a reflection of a considered choice. The second hypothesis therefore suggests that practical (behavioral) measures of religiosity are likely to explain political participation better than subjective measures of religious affiliation and a respondent's estimation of his/her degree of religiosity (H2). In other words, contemporary Russia is expected to be similar to other European countries, in the way in which religiosity is connected to political participation. The main cleavage is expected to lie between religious and secular people, but not between followers of different religious traditions.

The data for the statistical analysis comes from the European Social Survey project for 2012 ("ESS Round 6: European Social Survey Round 6 Data", 2012). After adjustment, this data-set contains more than 1800 observations for Russia. I will also use the data from previous rounds of the ESS (2010 and 2008) to check whether the model is robust over time.

The dependent variable is political participation, which is measured as an additive index. This is the sum of political actions performed by the respondent during the previous year which includes signing petitions, attending demonstrations, working for political parties and NGOs, joining boycotts, displaying political symbolics, contacting politicians and voting in the previous Parliamentary elections. The index varies between 0 and 8, where 0 means that respondent did not take part in any political action and 8 means that respondent participated in every type of political action defined in the paper. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the political participation index.

Tab. 2. Additive index of political participation: descriptive statistics

| Number of political actions performed during the last year | N | Frequency |
|--|------|-----------|
| 0 | 537 | 28.52% |
| 1 | 1041 | 55.28% |
| 2 | 133 | 7.06% |
| 3 | 100 | 5.31% |
| 4 | 39 | 2.07% |
| 5 | 20 | 1.06% |
| 6 | 9 | 0.48% |
| 7 | 4 | 0.21% |

Notes: The index is a sum of political actions performed by the individual during the last 12 months. The second and third columns show absolute numbers and frequencies of respondents performing this amount of actions in the sample. The data is from ESS 2012.

The main explanatory variable is religiosity that is measured in four different ways: by religious affiliation, frequency of attending religious services, frequency of praying, and a respondent’s estimation of his/her degree of religiosity. Several measures of religiosity have been used, because church attendance represents a respondent’s institutionalized religiosity and social activism, while the religious self-esteem measure reflects the respondent’s individual religiosity, which is not influenced as much by the religious community (Wielhouwer, 2009).

In the regression model, belonging to a religious tradition is coded as a dummy-variable with “No affiliation” left as a residual category. All significant religious tradition coefficients would be interpreted in comparison with non-affiliated respondents, which will demonstrate if there is any difference between religious and non-religious people in terms of

their inclination to take part in politics. Descriptive statistics for religious affiliation are presented in Table 3.

Tab. 3. Descriptive statistics: religious affiliation

| Religious affiliation | N | Frequency |
|-----------------------|------|-----------|
| Non-affiliated | 805 | 42.75% |
| Orthodox Christian | 936 | 49.71% |
| Muslim | 120 | 6.37% |
| Buddhist | 10 | 0.53% |
| Catholic | 3 | 0.16% |
| Protestant | 9 | 0.48% |
| Total | 1883 | 100% |

Notes: The second and third columns show absolute numbers and frequencies of respondents ascribing themselves to one of these (non) religious groups. Data is from ESS 2012.

Another subjective measure of religiosity is a respondent's estimation of his/her degree of religiosity. This variable varies from 0 (where a respondent considers himself/herself not to be religious at all) to 10 (where a respondent considers himself/herself to be extremely religious). Although this measure of religiosity is imperfect and reflects how the respondent views himself/herself regardless of his/her actual degree of religiosity, it can be used to understand whether political participation is connected with representation or behavioral habits.

Quantitative measures of religiosity include attendance of religious services and frequency of praying. Both variables vary from 0 (respondent never attends or prays) to 6 (respondent does it every day). Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4.

Since the political participation index is a count variable, the Poisson regression model is used, where the influence of religiosity on Russians' political participation is controlled for respondents' socio-economic status, including age, gender, education and income levels. This is because there are stable differences between respondents who belong to different social groups in terms of their inclination to participate in politics (Brady et al., 1995). All specifications will include SES controls while the different measures of religiosity will be introduced separately and together in order to identify which "side" of religiosity is associated with political activism.

Tab. 4. Behavioral measures of religiosity: descriptive statistics

| | Attending religious services | | Praying | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| | N | Frequency | N | Frequency |
| Every day | 16 | 0.85% | 305 | 16.20% |
| More than once a week | 27 | 1.43% | 120 | 6.37% |
| Once a week | 95 | 5.05% | 96 | 5.10% |
| At least once a month | 214 | 11.36% | 134 | 7.12% |
| Only on special holidays | 453 | 24.06% | 191 | 10.14% |
| Less often | 434 | 23.05% | 285 | 15.14% |
| Never | 644 | 34.20% | 752 | 39.94% |

Notes: The table shows absolute numbers and frequencies for respondents performing religious acts with varying regularity. Data is from ESS 2012.

Statistical analysis

The results presented in Table 5 show that religiosity is associated with political participation, and practical religiosity turns out to be a better predictor of political participation compared to religious ascription. There is a statistical difference in political participation rates between the Orthodox and non-affiliated respondents, but it appears only if practical religiosity measures (church attendance and frequency of praying) are introduced into the model. Therefore, controlling for practical religiosity shows that the Orthodox are a somewhat less likely to participate in politics than those without a religious ascription. Attendance of religious services is the best explanatory variable for political participation, and models with this indicator of religiosity have better information criteria estimates than others. In both models 1 and 3 there is a considerable difference between those who do not attend religious services and those who attend them on a more or less regular basis. For example, the odds of participating in politics are on average 2 times higher for people who attend religious services more than once a week, when compared to non-attendees. It is important to note that the difference does not disappear if we introduce a confession variable. The coefficient for everyday attendees may be insignificant because of the small number of observations in this group. Praying frequency is a less powerful predictor of political activism than church attendance, but it also shows some association with the dependent variable. An interesting result is that people who pray every day as well as those who pray at least on holidays are more likely to participate than those who do not pray at all. The respondent's estimation of his/her religiosity was excluded from the models because it turned out to be insignificant in all models.

The results suggest that religious activism corresponds to higher levels of political participation, which means that people who show religious discipline and an interest in religious practices are more likely to be politically active and responsible than those who are not engaged in a religious lifestyle. On the other hand, subjective measures of religiosity like religious affiliation and degree of religiosity estimated by the respondents themselves seem to have no stable connection with political participation. This finding adds to the idea that what you do is more important than what you think of yourself and different types of activism (religious and political) are quite close in their essence.

[Tab. 5 about here]

Robustness checks are required to confirm the results. Firstly, it is suggested that the differences in political participation between religiously active and inactive respondents may be true only for the year 2012. This year was rich in political events such as federal elections and mass protests, and can also be characterized by a growing tension between religious and secular Russians in the media. The same models as in Table 5 were run using data from two previous rounds of the ESS. The results from Tables 6 and 7 support the hypothesis that there is no significant and stable difference in political participation between Orthodox Christians, Muslims and those with no religious affiliation. This was particularly so when controlling for the degree of religiosity, which was measured by frequencies of praying and church attendance. Although belonging to an Orthodox tradition is associated with lower levels of political activism in comparison to non-affiliated Russians in 2012, in 2010 and 2008 Orthodox Christians were on average more likely to participate in politics than non-affiliated people. Moreover, these coefficients are significant without controlling for religious activism, but if we add these controls there appears to be no difference between followers of different religious traditions. On the contrary, attending religious services proves to be a rather stable predictor of political activism. Its coefficients for the two years of the federal elections (2012 and 2008) are very similar and unidirectional. The year 2010 was in the midst of the Russian political cycle, which led to lower rates of all kinds of political participation, meaning fewer cases of participation in the model. It is also interesting that, in 2008, frequent attendees were less likely to participate than non-attendees. During that period, religion in Russia was not as politicized and believers chose to avoid the dirty world of politics.

[Tab. 6 about here]

[Tab. 7 about here]

The models for frequencies of praying, as shown in Table 8, further confirm the significance of behavioral measures of religiosity for people's propensity to participate in politics. People who pray every day turn out to be more involved in politics than people who do not pray at all. A possible explanation of this interaction is that those who pray regularly are more disciplined and care more about other people, but further research is needed to support this. The coefficients for this group are significant for all years, both with and without controls for religious affiliation. Although other frequencies of praying are also positively associated with political participation, it is regular praying that should be regarded as a typical feature of a religious person.

[Tab. 8 about here]

The association between religious behavior and political participation may be driven by the specifics of one religious group, for example the Orthodox, and may not be typical of Muslims and non-affiliated people. It is therefore important to run the same models for the subsamples of three major affiliation groups. The results presented in Table 9 confirm the idea that religious behavior is connected with political activism. Even non-affiliated people that attend some religious services tend to be more involved in politics than non-attendees. Nevertheless, the question arises as to which services they attend and whether this measure of affiliation is correct at all. There is a stable significant difference in political participation rates between religiously active and inactive orthodox Russians, while among Muslims regular attendees are the only ones that deviate from the complete non-attendees. A striking result is that the odds of participating in politics are 4 times higher for Muslims who attend mosque more than once a week, compared to non-attendees. Praying does not have such a remarkable effect among these groups of respondents, and the quality of these models is weaker than for models with attendance as an explanatory variable.

[Tab. 9 about here]

Conclusion

Statistical analysis results show that political participation and religiosity in Russia are associated, and quantitative measures of religiosity turn out to be better predictors than religious affiliation and religious self-esteem. These findings suggest that contemporary Russia does not significantly differ from Western countries, where the main political cleavage lies between religious and non-religious people, but not between followers of different religious traditions. While there are no significant differences in political participation between confessions in Russia today, greater practical religiosity is proven to be associated with higher levels of political activism. Attending religious services and praying frequently are in a stable and positive connection with political participation, which is similar among confessions and within time.

This paper marks the first step towards identifying the channels through which religiosity may affect political participation in Russia, and it is still important to explore how precisely religiosity can determine support for political activism. The stable connection between attending religious services and political participation may mean that a respondent is influenced by his/her religious community but also that respondent is more disciplined than non-attendees. To distinguish the effect of community from the effect of discipline in further research, I may use variables which indicate whether a respondent has friends within a religious community and whether he/she praises discipline and obedience. Finally, it may be important to study the influence of religious beliefs on a person's inclination to participate in politics. It may also be beneficial to use more accurate indices of political participation and conduct a qualitative study of religious communities in Russia in order to explore their attitudes towards politics.

References

- Alesina, A. and Giuliano, P. (2011), "Preferences for Redistribution", *Handbook of Social Economics*, Elsevier, pp. 93–131.
- Berger, P.L. (1967), "The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion", *New York*.
- Beyerlein, K. and Chaves, M. (2003), "The political activities of religious congregations in the United States", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, No. 2, pp. 229–246.
- Brady, H.E., Verba, S. and Schlozman, K.L. (1995), "Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation", *American Political Science Review*, No. 02, pp. 271–294.

- Van der Brug, W., Hobolt, S.B. and De Vreese, C.H. (2009), "Religion and party choice in Europe", *West European Politics*, pp. 1266–1283.
- Chaves, M. (1994), "Secularization as declining religious authority", *Social forces*, No. 3, pp. 749–774.
- Driskell, R., Embry, E. and Lyon, L. (2008), "Faith and Politics: The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Political Participation", *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)*, No. 2, pp. 294–314.
- Durkheim, E. (2012), *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Courier Dover Publications, available at: <http://www.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YrdHxmvSg4cC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Durkheim++The++elementary++forms++of++the++religious+life&ots=OuiZRzwsYN&sig=cBkcrYExCbmj1ot7bQC6BIXT39g> (accessed 24 November 2014).
- Esmer, Y. and Pettersson, T. (2007), "The effects of religion and religiosity on voting behavior", *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*.
- "ESS Round 6: European Social Survey Round 6 Data". (2012), , Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data., available at: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> (accessed 13 April 2014).
- Gavrilov, Y.A., Kofanova, E.N., Mchedlov, M.P. and Shevchenko, A.G. (2005), "Denominatory specifics of religious beliefs and ideas about its social functions", *Социологические исследования*, No. 6, pp. 46–56.
- Gershtenson, J. (2003), "Mobilization strategies of the Democrats and Republicans, 1956–2000", *Political Research Quarterly*, No. 3, pp. 293–308.
- Guth, J., Green, J.C., Kellstedt, L.A. and Smidt, C.E. (2002), "Religion and Political Participation", Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, American Political Science Association, pp. 1–31.
- Henry, L.A. (2012), "Complaint-making as political participation in contemporary Russia", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, No. 3, pp. 243–254.
- Kublitskaya, E. (2009), "Specific Features of Religiosity in Contemporary Russia", *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, No. 4, pp. 96–107.
- Li, Y. and Marsh, D. (2008), "New Forms of Political Participation: Searching for Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers", *British Journal of Political Science*, No. 2, pp. 247–272.
- Luckmann, T. (1967), *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society.*, MacMillan Publishing Company, First edition.
- Macaluso, T.F. and Wanat, J. (1979), "Voting turnout & religiosity", *Polity*, No. 1, pp. 158–169.
- Martin, D. (1978), *A General Theory of Secularization*, Blackwell Oxford, available at: <http://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/clc/310931> (accessed 24 November 2014).
- Mchedlova, M.M. (2009), "Religions' role in contemporary Russian society eco-sociology", *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, No. 12, pp. 77–84.
- McTague, J.M. and Layman, G.C. (2009), "Religion, Parties, and Voting Behavior: A Political Explanation of Religious Influence", *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*.
- Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. (2011), *Sacred and secular: Religion and politics worldwide*, Cambridge University Press, available at:

- <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ObwtZ36m1hwC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=info:uCB0x3I15L8J:scholar.google.com&ots=AufaZW5UiG&sig=CnIKkc3c4wyVzAcegzw39JF6J1Y> (accessed 13 April 2014).
- Pepinsky, T.B. and Welborne, B.C. (2011), “Piety and redistributive preferences in the Muslim world”, *Political Research Quarterly*, No. 3, pp. 491–505.
- Philpott, D. (2007), “Explaining the political ambivalence of religion”, *American Political Science Review*, No. 3, pp. 505–525.
- Prutskova, E. (2012), “The Concept of Religiosity: Operationalization in Empirical Research”, *State, Religion, Church*, No. 2, pp. 268–293.
- Putnam, R.D. (1995), “Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital”, *Journal of democracy*, No. 1, pp. 65–78.
- Sinelina, Y. (2009), “Orthodox Christian and Moslem believers. Comparative study of religious behavior and value orientations”, *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, No. 4, pp. 89–95.
- “Sophist” data-set. (1991), “VCIOM omnibus 1991-7 (Religion)”, available at: <http://sophist.hse.ru/dbp/S=2152>.
- VCIOM press-issue № 1461. (2010), “Do we believe in God?”, available at: <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=268&uid=13365>.
- Wald, K.D., Owen, D.E. and Hill, S.S. (1990), “Political cohesion in churches”, *The Journal of Politics*, No. 1, pp. 197–215.
- Weber, M. (2013), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Merchant Books, abridged edition.
- Wielhouwer, P.W. (2009), “Religion and American Political Participation”, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195326529.003.0014.
- “WORLD VALUES SURVEY Wave 3 1995-1998 OFFICIAL AGGREGATE v.20140921”. (n.d.) , World Values Survey Association, available at: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.
- “WORLD VALUES SURVEY Wave 5 2005-2008 OFFICIAL AGGREGATE v.20140429”. (n.d.) , World Values Survey Association, available at: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

Appendix

Tab. 5. The association between political participation and different measures of religiosity in 2012.

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Religious affiliation (Residual category is "Non-affiliated")</i> | | | | | |
| Orthodox | -0.171*** (0.054) | -0.018 (0.048) | | -0.137** (0.058) | |
| Muslim | -0.167 (0.118) | -0.006 (0.126) | | -0.153 (0.125) | |
| <i>Religious services attendance (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | |
| Less often than on special holidays | 0.084 (0.065) | | 0.020 (0.065) | | |
| Only on special holidays | 0.291*** (0.064) | | 0.192*** (0.060) | | |
| At least once a month | 0.393*** (0.085) | | 0.290*** (0.077) | | |
| Once a week | 0.312*** (0.112) | | 0.220* (0.114) | | |
| More than once a week | 0.698*** (0.232) | | 0.563*** (0.195) | | |
| Every day | 0.131 (0.356) | | -2.02e-05 (0.367) | | |
| <i>Praying frequency (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | |
| Less often than on special holidays | | | | 0.006 (0.079) | -0.051 (0.078) |
| Only on special holidays | | | | 0.178** (0.078) | 0.101 (0.074) |
| At least once a month | | | | 0.304*** (0.088) | 0.238*** (0.084) |
| Once a week | | | | 0.100 (0.101) | 0.011 (0.093) |
| More than once a week | | | | 0.177 (0.108) | 0.082 (0.100) |
| Every day | | | | 0.280*** (0.077) | 0.182*** (0.069) |
| Controls: SES | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Constant | -0.759*** (0.116) | -0.700*** (0.113) | -0.787*** (0.114) | -0.702*** (0.112) | -0.728*** (0.111) |
| Observations | 1,883 | 1,883 | 1,883 | 1,883 | 1,883 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: The dependent variable is political participation index. All specifications include SES controls.

Tab. 6. Political participation and religiosity: robustness in time (full model)

| | 2012 | 2010 | 2008 |
|---|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| <i>Religious affiliation (Residual category is "Non-affiliated")</i> | | | |
| | -0.171*** | 0.075 | 0.003 |
| Orthodox | (0.054) | (0.054) | (0.047) |
| | -0.167 | -0.039 | -0.156 |
| Muslim | (0.118) | (0.099) | (0.101) |
| <i>Religious services attendance (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | |
| Less often than on | 0.084 | 0.059 | 0.064 |
| special holidays | (0.065) | (0.059) | (0.055) |
| Only on special | 0.291*** | 0.108* | 0.149** |
| holidays | (0.064) | (0.065) | (0.060) |
| | 0.393*** | 0.106 | 0.228*** |
| At least once a month | (0.085) | (0.074) | (0.073) |
| | 0.312*** | 0.077 | 0.424*** |
| Once a week | (0.112) | (0.121) | (0.102) |
| | 0.698*** | 0.064 | -0.415** |
| More than once a week | (0.232) | (0.216) | (0.209) |
| | 0.131 | -0.152 | 0.342 |
| Every day | (0.356) | (0.390) | (0.344) |
| Controls: SES | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Constant | -0.759*** | -1.012*** | -0.759*** |
| | (0.116) | (0.113) | (0.097) |
| Observations | 1,883 | 2,108 | 2,091 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: The dependent variable is political participation index. Specifications are made for 3 rounds of the ESS. All specifications include SES controls.

Tab. 7. Political participation and religiosity: robustness in time (religious affiliation and attendance)

| | 2012 | 2010 | 2008 | 2012 | 2010 | 2008 |
|---|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| <i>Religious affiliation (Residual category is "Non-affiliated")</i> | | | | | | |
| | -0.018 | 0.116** | 0.081* | | | |
| Orthodox | (0.048) | (0.049) | (0.043) | | | |
| | -0.006 | -0.019 | -0.057 | | | |
| Muslim | (0.126) | (0.098) | (0.108) | | | |
| <i>Religious services attendance (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | | |
| Less often than on special holidays | | | | 0.020 | 0.090 | 0.072 |
| | | | | (0.065) | (0.057) | (0.053) |
| Only on special holidays | | | | 0.192*** | 0.145** | 0.156*** |
| | | | | (0.060) | (0.060) | (0.057) |
| At least once a month | | | | 0.290*** | 0.157** | 0.246*** |
| | | | | (0.077) | (0.073) | (0.069) |
| | | | | 0.220* | 0.127 | 0.409*** |
| Once a week | | | | (0.114) | (0.121) | (0.098) |
| More than once a week | | | | 0.563*** | 0.100 | -0.423** |
| | | | | (0.195) | (0.213) | (0.205) |
| | | | | -2.02e-05 | 0.077 | 0.273 |
| Every day | | | | (0.367) | (0.278) | (0.344) |
| Controls: SES | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Constant | 0.700*** | 0.980*** | 0.717*** | 0.787*** | 0.990*** | 0.760*** |
| | (0.113) | (0.109) | (0.093) | (0.114) | (0.111) | (0.097) |
| Observations | 1,883 | 2,108 | 2,091 | 1,883 | 2,108 | 2,091 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: The dependent variable is political participation index. Specifications are made for 3 rounds of the ESS. All specifications include SES controls.

Tab. 8. Political participation and religiosity: robustness in time (praying)

| | 2012 | 2010 | 2008 | 2012 | 2010 | 2008 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| <i>Religious affiliation (Residual category is "Non-affiliated")</i> | | | | | | |
| | -0.137** | 0.047 | 0.032 | | | |
| Orthodox | (0.058) | (0.058) | (0.046) | | | |
| | -0.153 | -0.096 | -0.102 | | | |
| Muslim | (0.125) | (0.101) | (0.108) | | | |
| <i>Praying frequency (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | | |
| Less often than | 0.006 | 0.046 | 0.061 | -0.051 | 0.065 | 0.073 |
| on special | | | | | | |
| holidays | (0.079) | (0.073) | (0.060) | (0.078) | (0.069) | (0.059) |
| Only on special | 0.178** | 0.124 | 0.029 | 0.101 | 0.161** | 0.048 |
| holidays | (0.078) | (0.083) | (0.076) | (0.074) | (0.077) | (0.074) |
| At least once a | 0.304*** | 0.092 | 0.119 | 0.238*** | 0.124 | 0.141* |
| month | (0.088) | (0.090) | (0.081) | (0.084) | (0.088) | (0.079) |
| | 0.100 | 0.233** | 0.190* | 0.011 | 0.258** | 0.233** |
| Once a week | (0.101) | (0.117) | (0.099) | (0.093) | (0.111) | (0.092) |
| More than once a | 0.177 | 0.044 | 0.095 | 0.082 | 0.071 | 0.107 |
| week | (0.108) | (0.086) | (0.085) | (0.100) | (0.079) | (0.083) |
| | 0.280*** | 0.217*** | 0.120* | 0.182*** | 0.245*** | 0.139** |
| Every day | (0.077) | (0.072) | (0.065) | (0.069) | (0.063) | (0.061) |
| Controls: SES | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Constant | 0.702*** | 0.981*** | 0.734*** | 0.728*** | 0.963*** | 0.724*** |
| | (0.112) | (0.108) | (0.098) | (0.111) | (0.106) | (0.098) |
| Observations | 1,883 | 2,108 | 2,091 | 1,883 | 2,108 | 2,091 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: The dependent variable is political participation index. Specifications are made for 3 rounds of the ESS. All specifications include SES controls.

Tab. 9. Political participation and religiosity: robustness for different religious groups

| | Non-affiliated | | Orthodox | | Muslim | |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| <i>Religious services attendance (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | | |
| Less often than on special holidays | -0.059 (0.092) | | 0.183* (0.096) | | 0.171 (0.201) | |
| Only on special holidays | 0.294** * | | 0.279** * | | 0.422* (0.254) | |
| At least once a month | 0.661** * | | 0.324** * | | 0.306 (0.452) | |
| Once a week | 0.387* (0.212) | | 0.259** (0.126) | | 0.434 (0.362) | |
| More than once a week | | | 0.380 (0.278) | | 1.502** * | |
| Every day | | | -0.389 (0.442) | | 0.275 (0.567) | |
| <i>Praying frequency (Residual category is "Never")</i> | | | | | | |
| Less often than on special holidays | | -0.038 (0.117) | | 0.034 (0.114) | | -0.171 (0.302) |
| Only on special holidays | | 0.163 (0.122) | | 0.136 (0.108) | | 0.452 (0.320) |
| At least once a month | | 0.356** (0.149) | | 0.263** (0.112) | | -0.429 (0.354) |
| Once a week | | 0.477* (0.256) | | 0.004 (0.108) | | -0.636 (0.418) |
| More than once a week | | 0.243 (0.350) | | 0.132 (0.123) | | 0.246 (0.405) |
| Every day | | 0.195 (0.199) | | 0.244** (0.098) | | 0.317 (0.221) |
| Controls: SES | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Constant | - 0.654** * | - 0.622** * | - 0.789** * | - 0.669** * | - 2.636** * | - 2.353** * |
| | (0.156) | (0.153) | (0.173) | (0.163) | (0.647) | (0.593) |
| Observations | 805 | 805 | 936 | 936 | 120 | 120 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: The dependent variable is political participation index. Specifications are made for 3 main types of religious affiliation in the ESS. All specifications include SES controls.

Contact details and disclaimer:

Anna Y. Kulkova

National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia). Laboratory for Political Studies. Research Intern;

E-mail: akulkova@hse.ru, Tel. +7 (916) 211-57-67

Any opinions or claims contained in this Working Paper do not necessarily reflect the views of HSE.

© Kulkova, 2014