

Protesting for the Future in Pandemic Contexts: Comparing Participants in Fridays For Future Global Climate Strikes in Austria and Germany

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Abstract: Drawing on new survey data on protesters at the September 2020 Fridays for Future Global Climate Strike in Berlin and Vienna, this report examines protesters' socio-demographic profiles, political engagement and attitudes before and after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The longitudinal patterns we find are more or less consistent across the two cities. Notably, the transformation of the FFF into a broader youth movement, as well as increases in protesters' political engagement, reliance on scientific authority, and feelings of anger and anxiety were more pronounced in Berlin. Among protesters in both cities we find indications of dissonance between positive perceptions about the government's capacity to take scientifically-informed policy action in crisis scenarios (i.e., Covid-19) and concerns that such actions will not be adequately applied to the climate crisis.

Keywords: climate movements, environmental protest, protest surveys, Covid-19, political opportunities

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic emerged amid mounting global attention to the severe threats of climate crisis. In tandem with new and renewed initiatives by mainstream media, governing institutions, and nongovernmental organizations, 2019 was marked by the meteoric rise of youth-led global climate justice campaigns – mainly Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, but also the U.S.-based “Sunrisers”. In organizing hundreds of simultaneous demonstrations with millions of participants around the world, these movements generated a cycle of climate justice protest not seen since the 2014-2015 actions leading up to the Paris Agreement (Almeida 2019). This cycle was abruptly punctured when the pandemic crisis or “corona crisis” began drastically altering the landscape for political mobilization (de Moor, de Vydt, Uba, & Wahlström 2020a). Movement organizers not only had to contend with the shift in public and political agendas to the pandemic and individual concerns about contracting the novel disease, but also with the many social restrictions that upended the conventions of street protest. Despite the pandemic's dampening effects on protest, the mobilization efforts of recent Climate Justice movements did not come to a standstill.

This report focuses on street protests primarily orchestrated by the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement before and after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in Austria and Germany. Employing original protest survey data from three Global Climate Strike (GCS) events in Vienna, Austria and Berlin, Germany, we investigate the impact of pandemic contexts on FFF protest participants. Specifically, we compare the demographic and attitudinal profile of FFF protesters at the pre-pandemic GCS street protests in September and November 2019 with the protester profile from the first one to occur in the pandemic contexts of September 25th, 2020. While our analysis is mainly descriptive in this preliminary report, it sheds new light on the ways in which the profile of FFF protesters was impacted by the contexts of the Covid-19 pandemic in two national settings.¹

Our methodological approach follows the cross-nationally coordinated field surveys on GCS events that took place in March and September 2019 (see Wahlström et al. 2019; de Moor et al. 2020b). Existing research on FFF protest events, including work by the authors on events

¹ For a recent report focused on changes in Germany see Gardner and Neuber 2021

in Germany (Gardner & Neuber 2021; Gardner & Neuber 2020; Neuber & Gardner 2020; Sommer, Haunss, Gardner, Neuber, & Rucht 2020) and in Austria (Daniel & Deutschmann 2020a, 2020b), lead us to think that the slices of survey data presented here are pertinent to understanding features of the broader movement in Germany and Austria. Moreover, with 185,000 and 55,000 demonstrators on the streets of Berlin and Vienna respectively for the large September 2019 GCS, Germany and Austria have proven to be movement strongholds (cf. de Moor et al. 2020b). This recent research also suggests that the participant base of the transnational FFF movement predominantly comprises young people (35 years of age or younger), those with high levels of education or currently enrolled in educational institutions, and identifying as middle-class. In sum, our results are pertinent to understanding FFF mobilization in other national contexts, particularly other European metropolises with large FFF protests in 2019 and relatively low Covid-19 infection or mortality rates in September 2020.

Although we emphasize where trends in the characteristics of protest participants shifted (or not) after the onset of the pandemic, this report is structured along lines similar to previous ones in order to facilitate an ongoing synthesis of empirical, cross-national research on the international FFF movement. The first section offers some background on the movement's emergence and trajectory, and situates the GCS street protest during the pandemic within the national settings of Austria and Germany. Next, the survey design and collection methods are briefly outlined, with an emphasis on modifications made for the September 2020 round of field data collection in pandemic contexts. Section 3 compares results on the demographic composition of protesters at the September 2020 GCS with those from the GCS in September and November of 2019. Building on this baseline demographic profile, the following sections, Sections 4-6, compare results from a number of survey items on political behaviors and attitudes over time, by city, and, when relevant, by age cohort ("youths" aged under 26 and "adults" aged 26 or older). This is followed by a section on survey items most directly related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report concludes with a short summary of key findings.

2. The Fridays for Future Movement

The origins of the Fridays For Future movement can be traced to August 2018 when Greta Thunberg, then a 15-year-old student, began protesting the need for stronger climate-change policies on the steps of the Swedish national parliament every Friday, instead of going to school. That the movement came to be known as Fridays for Future attests to the resonance of her protest actions and her Twitter hashtag #FridaysforFuture (Thunberg 2019). Combining the organizational infrastructures of schools and the tactic of student school strikes with those of the existing transnational climate justice movement, the movement quickly gained momentum (Almeida 2019; de Moor et al. 2020a). Over the course of 2019, Thunberg became a familiar figure as weekly "school strikes" under the banner of Fridays For Future (FFF) proliferated across Sweden and other European cities, and culminated in four globally coordinated days of action (de Moor et al. 2020a). Little more than a year after her solo strike for climate, and following an explicit call for adults to join the movement, more than seven million people in 163 countries worldwide took to the streets demanding immediate political action on climate change at FFF's third "Global Climate Strike" (GCS) during the September 2019 Global Week for Future (de Moor et al. 2020b; Chase-Dunn & Almeida 2020). Within a similarly short time frame, Thunberg was giving numerous speeches before politicians and economic elites on their own stages, such as the European Parliament, the United Nations, and the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos.

The FFF movement's rapid ascension in terms of visibility, global scale, and expanding participant base amidst continuity in school student leadership and participation has been remarkable. Indeed, the likes of FFF's ability to initiate hundreds of protest actions around the world hadn't been seen in the climate justice movement since the peaks of global climate action in 2014 and 2015 (Almeida 2019). Beyond helping to revitalize mass street protest tactics and youth participation as critical instruments of climate justice activism, the movement's importance rests on its blending of climate science with climate justice in the policy demands it directs at state actors. In line with the repertoire of the global climate justice movement since the early 2000s, they use non-institutional forms of action to engage with climate change and the fossil fuel industry on the institutional front of state policy (e.g., Chase-Dunn & Almeida 2020; Daniel et al. 2020; de Moor et al. 2020a; Gardner & Neuber 2020, 2021).

Pressuring authorities to follow through on making the climate goals laid out in the 2016 Paris Agreement binding is a unifying theme in the movement – an ambition shared by FFF protesters cross-nationally (e.g., Daniel et al. 2020; de Moor et al. 2020a, 2020b). FFF demands, such as “unite behind the sciences” or “no degree further,” complement those put forward in the Agreement and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (such as limiting the rise in average global temperatures to 1.5 degrees). The movement's main arguments are that the global climate crisis can only be effectively addressed through environmental protection policies that are anchored in sound scientific evidence, that are socially responsible and ecologically just, and that are enshrined in explicit, enforceable law. By highlighting intergenerational justice, the youth-led FFF movement has also foregrounded the importance of young people in bolstering the authority of scientific and democratic institutions in ways that avoid replicating longstanding injustices at the national and international levels of governance.

After the WHO declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11th, 2020, governments all over the world gradually began implementing restrictions to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. As a result, FFF protest activities dropped sharply in the first half of 2020 and remained on a comparatively low level until the end of the year. Even though an analysis of the movement's online records indicates a slight upward trend in protest activity related to the September 2020 GCS, average participant numbers at the events seem to have declined (Neuber 2021).

The international trajectory of the FFF is largely reflected in the contexts of Austria and Germany. While the timing and extent of the first restrictive measures enacted by the German and Austrian governments were not identical, both countries were in a strict “lockdown” by late March. This included restrictions on civic activities and gatherings of people from more than two households, the relocation of work to the home, the suspension of business at bars and cafes, social distancing guidelines, and so on. Public opinion surveys pointing to renewed public trust in the government in each national context suggest that negative reactions to extensive restrictions early in the crisis were tempered by the relatively low numbers of Covid-related deaths (e.g. Vehrkamp & Merkel 2020). Although small demonstrations against curbs on public life began taking place in on a weekly basis in Berlin, and in Vienna, as early as April,² the pandemic restrictions were embraced for the most part by established, progressive movement groups and entirely by FFF.

Adhering closely to pandemic-related risks, safety recommendations and restrictions, the FFF organizers abandoned plans to hold mass protest events coinciding with Earth Day (April 22) along the lines of the recent Global Climate Strikes (GCS) in 2019. As in other countries that

² <https://www.thelocal.de/20200501/german-extremists-plan-may-1st-protests-against-covid-19-measures/> (12.08.2021); <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria-protest-idUSKCN2262VY> (12.08.2021)

discouraged social gatherings, the organizers in Austria and Germany moved activities online for the April 24, 2020 strike (with the hashtag mottos #FightEveryCrisis and #NetzStreikFürsKlima). While FFF ramped up its online mobilization efforts in the spring, the movement was far from completely abandoning offline repertoires. FFF organizers in Berlin, for example, collected 10,000 protest signs from potential demonstrators and placed them in front of the Reichstag parliament building.³

Over the warmer summer months, with infection rates on the decline, confidence in government actors steadily declined in Austria (Corona Blog 2020), and both countries witnessed large protests against the pandemic restrictions. This included the so-called corona protest demonstration of around 38,000 people in Berlin that notoriously ended with an attempted occupation of the German Reichstag by some of the protesters in late August.⁴ By contrast, it was not until September 25 that FFF returned to the streets for a GCS in locations where Covid-19 restrictions were eased. In the German capital city of Berlin, the Covid-19 ordinance in September required the wearing of mouth and nose coverings for gatherings of more than 100 participants, a minimum distance of 1.5 meters between the attendees, and chanting was forbidden.⁵ However, no limitations were set on participant numbers. Protest organizers were required to provide the authorities with a tailored concept detailing the means by which they intend to comply with these regulations.

Against the backdrop of these restrictions and the pandemic context, the demonstration that took place on September 25, 2020 was the smallest GCS in Berlin thus far. With an estimated 16,000 participants at the Brandenburg Gate over the course of the day,⁶ the turnout was around one-tenth of the number estimated at the large #AllesfürKlima GCS a year earlier (~185,000) and about one-fourth of the estimated number of protesters on November 29th of 2019 (~53,000), which took place at the same location and in similar cold, rainy weather (cf. Neuber and Gardner 2020). Mobilizing under the slogan “#NoDegreeFurther!” on September 25, FFF stayed true to framing its demands in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (such as the goal of ensuring a maximum temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius). However, the arrangements of the GCS event were clearly adapted to pandemic conditions. Rather than the usual demonstration march, FFF held a sit-in on the Straße-des-17.-Juni. Having placed thousands of white markers on the street prior to the event – to accord with official social distancing guidelines – organizers recast the traditional civil disobedience tactic of the sit-in.

The September 2020 GCS was also more dispersed. Multiple street processions, including a demonstration on bicycles organized by environmental associations and a group of red-robed Extinction Rebellion protestors, crossed paths and joined with the sit-in strikers in the course of the protest. To ensure compliance with the city’s rules, stewards were deployed throughout the day. A substantial number of police officers made their presence felt. However, as this was mainly by channeling protesters away from certain entry-points around the speakers’ platform

³ The organizers also set up a video stream on YouTube, showing the installation of the signs, as well as speeches by activists <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EUVRPSWJsk&t=5562s> (13.03.2021)

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53959552> (24.02.2021)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200924031019/https://www.berlin.de/corona/massnahmen/verordnung/>; (24.02.2021). - Sixth Ordinance Amending the SARS-CoV-2 Infection Protection Ordinance by the Senate of Berlin

⁵ In Germany, the constitutional right of assembly became a point of contention. With its focus on the primacy of the freedom of assembly, German law does not provide explicit regulations to be applied in the case of a pandemic. Furthermore, the federal jurisdiction grants the Bundesländer substantial leeway in the specific implementation of this fundamental right. Not least as a result of this regulatory vacuum and diversity, there have been numerous court decisions in the matter of protests relating to government measures, in which restrictions on demonstrations were at stake.

⁶ Average of police and organizers’ estimates; <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2020/09/demonstrationen-fridays-for-future-ende-gelaende-klimaschutz-berlin.html> (24.02.2021)

to prevent crowding, their presence was not as menacing as it was at the November 2019 GCS. With few exceptions, demonstration participants adhered to social distancing and wore masks.

Although the September GCS in Vienna's pandemic context also reflected close adherence to security measures – i.e., requirements to keep a minimum distance of one meter and to wear masks, the backdrop was slightly different than in Berlin. In the pandemic months leading up to the September 2020 GCS, movement participants engaged in significant in-person actions and coordinated policy action. Notably, FFF groups in Vienna organized neighborhood assistance in the form of grocery shopping for older community members; and, after the lockdown, set up a climate camp in front of the Federal Chancellery in an effort to underscore the ongoing importance of the climate crisis.⁷ In addition, FFF worked with a broad alliance of civil society groups to unveil a joint four-point position paper (“Climate Corona Deal”) calling for a climate-friendly and socially responsible design of the economic stimulus package by the Austrian government in the context of the pandemic.⁸

Building on the momentum of the Climate Corona Deal and in line with the 2019 GCS events in Austria, the September 2020 GCS was organized within the framework of a climate action alliance comprised of multiple civil society groups, such as GLOBAL 2000, Greenpeace, WWF Austria, #aufstehn, and Amnesty International. Of course, various offshoot groups, including Parents For Future, Teachers for Future, and Scientists for Future, were also united under the slogans “Fight every crisis” and “there is no vaccination against the climate crisis.”⁹ Despite the pandemic restrictions and difficult weather conditions, there was a cheerful atmosphere among the approximately 5,000 demonstrators at the Vienna GCS. However, as in Berlin, the number of participants was much lower than at previous GCS events in Vienna, dropping by 60% compared to November 2019 and by as much as 90% when compared to the size of the September 2019 GCS.

The protest was organized as a so-called “Sternmarsch,” a protest practice in which multiple groups of demonstrators arrive simultaneously from different directions at a designated protest site. Coming from the main station, the Westbahnhof, and Wien-Mitte, the participants converged at Schwarzenbergplatz for a final rally. By dispersing the marches and by employing stewards and signage to encourage the observance of social distancing and mask-wearing rules, FFF organizers followed through on press statements attesting to their intention to take all necessary precautions to make the demonstration as safe as possible.¹⁰

Overall, the conditions in the two cities on September 25, 2020 were comparable along many dimensions. Similarities are evident with respect to prior mobilization trajectories, organizational ecologies of civil society support, and turnout at GCS events within each country over time. There are also similarities in terms of pandemic restrictions and infection rates, organizers' calls for supporting safety measures, and adaptive protest arrangements. Moreover, the emergence of anti-lockdown protests featuring disregard for the hygiene rules, and signaling distrust in the science behind them, points to the presence of counter-movement mobilization in both settings.

There are also dimensions in which the two cities differ. The Climate Corona Deal, in our view, is a distinctive feature of the Austrian mobilization landscape that is relevant to the political context and organizational infrastructure of the Vienna GCS in pandemic conditions. Both

⁷ <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/fridays-for-future-wir-schlafen-eine-woche-lang-am-ballhausplatz/400832570> (12.08.2021)

⁸ <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000117313547/ueber-100-ngos-und-500-experten-wollen-einen-klima-corona> (13.05.2021); <https://fridaysforfuture.at/klima-corona-deal> (13.05.2021)

⁹ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000120254700/podcast-gegen-den-klimawandel-gibt-es-keine-impfung> (12.08.2021)

¹⁰ <https://www.diepresse.com/5872650/demo-in-wien-es-gibt-keine-impfung-gegen-den-klimawandel?from=rss#kommentare> (12.08.2021)

countries are parliamentary democracies with coalition governments led by the respective conservative parties CDU and ÖVP. While in Austria the Greens are the current coalition partner, the German government has been formed jointly with the Social Democrats (SPD) since 2013. The Greens are a strong opposition party here.

3. Methodology and Data

We analyze survey data from the September and November GCS of 2019 and the September 2020 GCS in Berlin and Vienna. The sampling procedures and core questionnaire template used in data collection are based on the standardized protest survey method used in the international research project *Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing Contestation* (CCC) (van Stekelenburg et al. 2012; Walgrave, Wouters & Ketelaars 2016; see also Fisher et al. 2019), and developed by Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001). This framework, moderately adapted for studying FFF global action events, enabled coordinated data collection at the March 15 GCS in 13 European cities (Wahlström et al. 2019), and at those that occurred during the 20-27 September 2019 week of action in 19 cities across four continents (de Moor et al. 2020b). GCS demonstrations in the cities of Berlin and Vienna are represented in both of these survey waves. This report reflects a continuation of FFF protest survey data collection in Berlin and Vienna by the authors of this report.

The CCC methodology is designed to ensure a representative selection of interview respondents, to minimize response biases, and to gather comparable information about individual participants (cf. de Moor et al. 2020a for an overview). Pandemic conditions, coordination constraints, and safety requirements required that we adjust some of these techniques during data collection at the pandemic GCS events in Berlin and Vienna. It was possible for the most part to follow the respondent selection scheme while maintaining the required minimum distance of 1.5 meters.¹¹ In Berlin, the process was made even easier at the tactical sit-in portion of the GCS. Invitations to take part in the online surveys were delivered via large flyers, with more information and large QR codes so that participants could take a photo (at a distance) of the leaflet with the code. In contrast to selecting respondents for the online survey, PIs in both cities independently decided that conducting short, face-to-face interviews as usual would be too risky. In Vienna, they were dropped altogether, but ethnographic observations were made by three team members. In Berlin, systematic visual assessments by the survey team of the age and gender of respondents were used to approximate information normally collected in short face-to-face questionnaires (see Gardner & Neuber 2021).

Lastly, both city teams introduced a handful of new questions to get at protesters' perceptions of the pandemic, for instance the influence it had on their decision to protest, their government's pandemic-related policies, and prioritizing the pandemic in relation to climate issues. But the teams did not have time to coordinate new survey items. This means that while the core questions from prior surveys remained the same, the newly added questions differ.

According the organizers, the GCS on September 25, 2020 mobilized about 4,500 people¹² in Vienna, and 16,000 in Berlin.¹³ As shown in Table 1, compared to previous survey results, the

¹¹ A number of safety precautions were taken by survey teams. Notably, members of the survey teams were also informed in pre-GCS briefings about the risks and protective measures, and protocols to be taken on the day of the event to maximize everyone's safety. For example, all team members were equipped with protective gear (N95 masks, visors, gloves, disinfectant) and anyone with a pre-existing medical condition or feeling unwell on the 25th was excluded from the data collection exercise.

¹² <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3068369> (14.03.2021)

¹³ <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2020-09/fridays-for-future-klimastreik-klimapolitik-demonstration> (14.03.2021)

response rates remained high in both cities. If we include partially completed surveys, the response rate is 34% for Berlin and 37% for Vienna. The data used in this working paper only includes surveys that were at least 50% completed as valid cases, which is 123 cases from Berlin and 121 from Vienna for the pandemic GCS events. In comparing the 2020 GCS protest surveys with those collected at the previous two GCS in both cities, we analyze a combined total of 954 individual surveys.

Table 1: Survey response rates for Global Climate Strikes in Berlin and Vienna

City/country	Date	GCS participants (no.)*	Survey invitations distributed (no.)	Online interviews (no.)	Response rate (%)	Valid cases (no.)
Berlin, Germany	Sept. 20, 2019	185.000	433	115	27	114
	Nov. 29, 2019	53.000	509	110	22	105
	Sept. 25, 2020	16.000	467	158	34	123
Vienna, Austria	Sept. 27, 2019	55.000	1.000	291	29	267
	Nov. 29, 2019	12.000	805	223	28	224
	Sept. 25, 2020	4.500	370	138	37	121
Total			3.584	1.035		954

* averaging the estimates of FFF organizers and police.

Our GCS protest survey data should not be considered fully representative of the total population of FFF protesters in either country, nor of the broader FFF movement. However, they still reflect an important slice of FFF protest participants. Several GCS protests were held at different locations in Germany (with the largest taking place in Berlin) and in Austria (with the largest taking place in Vienna). In addition to capturing large samples of FFF protesters in the capital cities as metropolitan regions, prior GCS surveys within Germany and Austria point to highly comparable results across the cities (e.g., Daniel & Deutschmann 2020 a, 2020b; Neuber & Gardner 2020).¹⁴

4. Demographic profile

The socio-demographic profile of FFF protesters has garnered a fair share of attention from journalists and scholars alike. This broad-stroke profile tends to be that of a school-age woman – a profile easily associated with movement leader Greta Thunberg in the public imagination (Daniel & Graf 2020; Gardner & Neuber 2020). Cross-national GCS protest survey research has lent some credence to this image, especially as the inclusion of younger students is one key part of the movement’s novelty. Of course, it’s also important not to overstate the demographic uniformity of movement participants. The heterogeneity of participants that comprise movements is precisely what protest surveys can help to reveal. And from cross-national surveys of FFF protesters, we know that the age profile of FFF’s participant base at GCS events has proven dynamic over time, and that the gender distribution at GCS events has been fairly balanced on average, with women more often outnumbering men among younger participants (see Neuber, Kocyba & Gardner 2020 for European trends). Here, we focus on examining whether the demographic composition of FFF protesters in terms of age, gender, and education shifted in any pronounced ways after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in Vienna or Berlin.

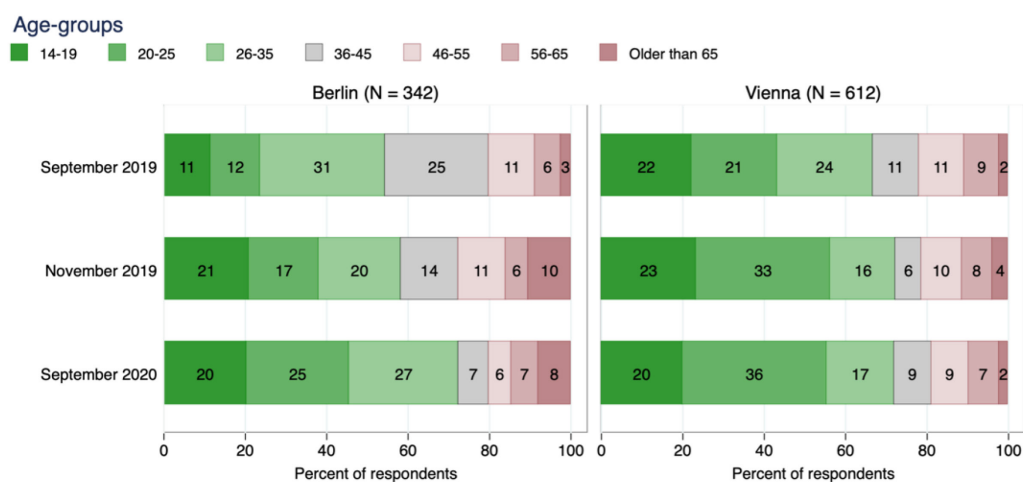
Age results for Berlin and Vienna follow the cross-national trend toward an older participant base since the first GCS event took place in March of 2019 (Daniel & Deutschmann 2020a, b;

¹⁴ Further, in accordance with national legal and ethics regulations, only protestors older than 13 years of age were invited to participate in the surveys. Such limitations are common in social scientific research, including CCC protest research and research on electoral mobilization. However, as people under the age of 14 comprise a particularly relevant segment of participants in Global Climate Strikes, we encourage some caution when interpreting our results.

Neuber & Gardner 2020). However, there are some noteworthy differences in protesters' age profile when we compare the two cities. For instance, Berlin participants in the GCS were on average five years older than the demonstrators in Vienna as of September 2019. After the outbreak of Covid-19, this age difference decreased by three years. In September 2020, the mean age dropped in Berlin from 36 years in November 2019 to 33 years, and even slightly increased in Vienna from 30 years to 31 years. In other words, results show smaller shares of people over 35 turning up to protest in Berlin and a more or less stable age profile in the Viennese September 2020 protests (see Figure 3.1).

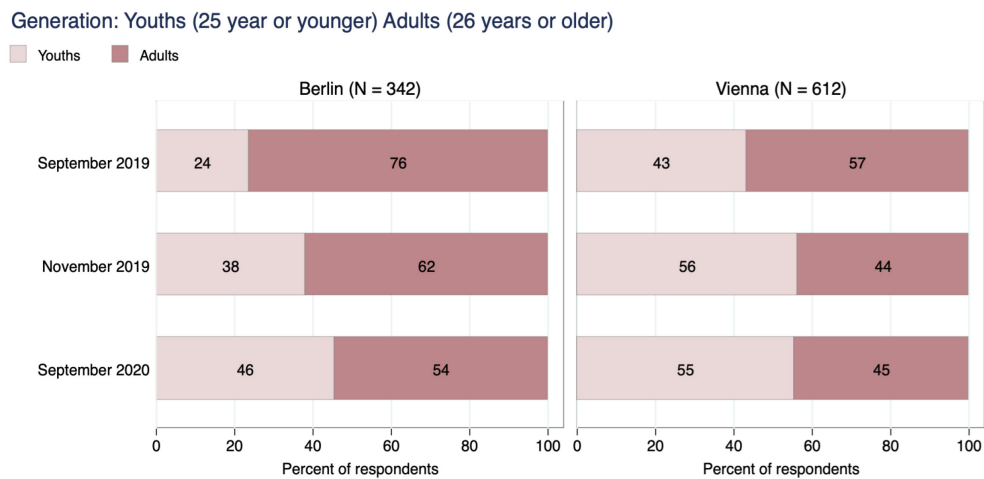
Figure 3.1 presents the results by different age groups. In Berlin, we can see a clear shift toward younger participants in the age distribution over time, especially after the pandemic. Notably, the decreasing share of 36- to 45-year-olds across the GCS events is partially mirrored by increasing shares of participants under the age of 26. In Vienna, the already comparatively small share of participants over 35 years old remained remarkably stable. Although it is difficult to determine the influence of the pandemic on these outcomes, our hunch is that it contributed to the decrease in older participants.

Figure 3.1: Age distribution



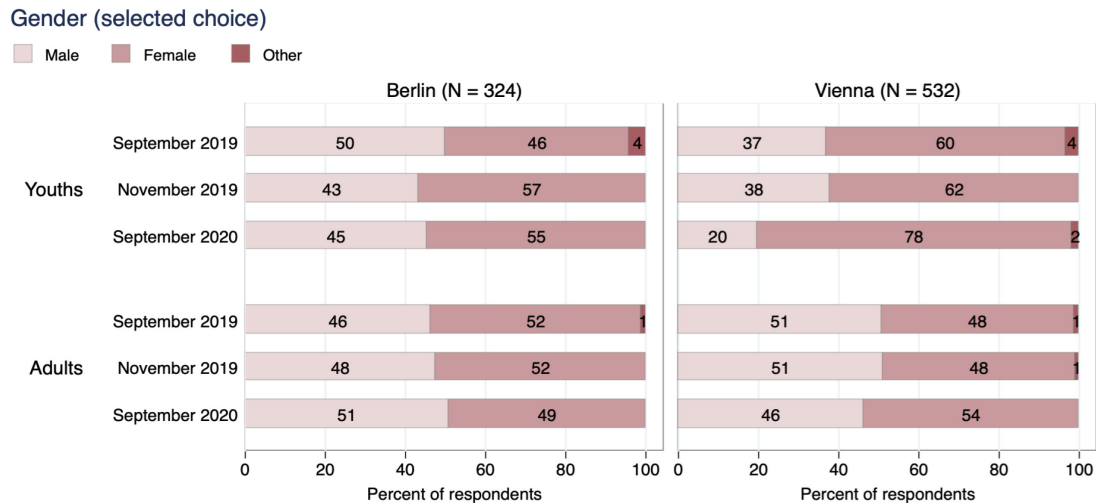
In light of these results and in an effort to maintain consistency with previous GCS studies, we group survey respondents into two age categories when examining age dynamics in this report. Demonstrators up to 25 years of age are categorized as “youths” and demonstrators 26 years or older are categorized as “adults”. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of these two generational cohorts across the GCS events in Berlin and Vienna.

Figure 3.2: Age cohorts 'youths' and 'adults'



With the exception of the pandemic GCS in Vienna, the gender distribution within cities was mostly stable (see Figure 3.3). Whereas the proportion of male and female participants was fairly balanced across the age cohorts and over time in Berlin, women were far more dominant among youth protesters in Vienna. Most striking is the 16% increase in adolescent female participants at the pandemic GCS in Vienna. Additionally, women made up the majority of adult FFF protesters in Vienna for the first time at the September 2020 GCS (54%).

Figure 3.3: Gender by two age cohorts



Another aspect of the novelty and early public image of the FFF was the pronounced involvement of schoolchildren and school students (or pupils). With university students and other groups joining the September GCS in 2019, the FFF evolved into a broader youth movement (see de Moor et al. 2020a, 2020b). Despite the younger average age of the September 2020 protesters (compared to September and November 2019), this characteristic seems to remain. In Berlin, the number of pupils at the protests slightly decreased from 15% in November 2019 to 13% in September 2020 (not shown). At the same time, the number of university students rose by 7% from 28% in November 2019 to 35% in September 2020. Even though the Vienna protests show a similar trend of a growing share of university students at the GCS, school

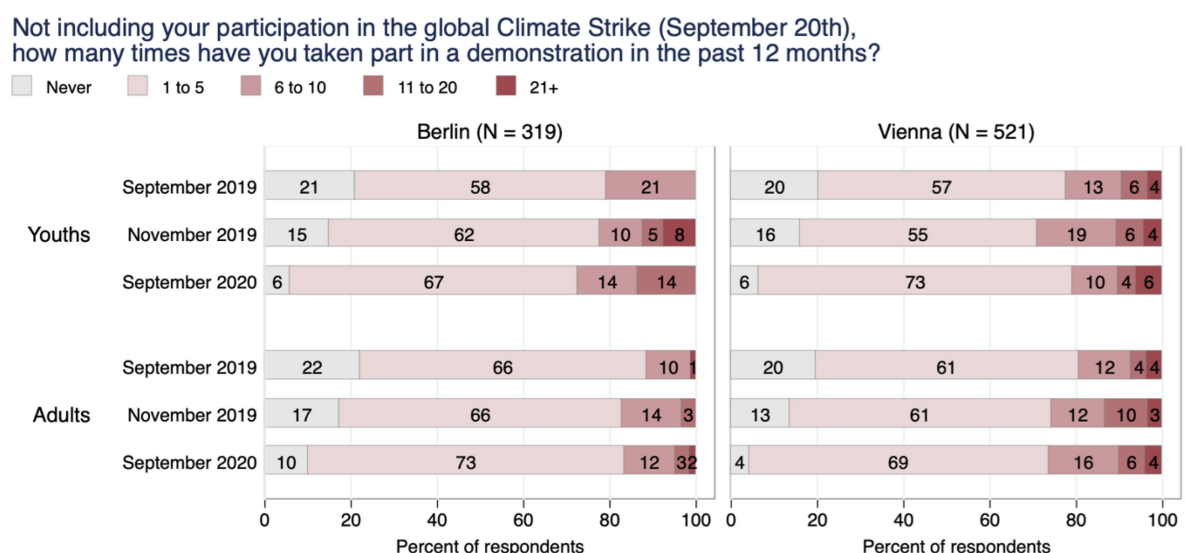
students remain the largest participant group. In comparison to September 2019, the percentage of university students almost doubled from 11% to 20%. However, school students account for 41% of the protesters present at the pandemic GCS in Vienna – this number is slightly lower than in November 2019 (47%) but higher than in September 2019 (35%).

As in past events, the share of non-student protesters was substantially higher in Berlin (53%) than in Vienna (39%) in September 2020 (not shown). With 26- to 35-year-olds as the largest age cohort, young professionals play an important role in this segment of GCS protesters. In terms of the educational levels of people in this group, the majority were highly educated (defined here as holding a university degree – B.A., M.A., or Ph.D.). Namely, 77% reported holding a university degree, which is only slightly higher compared to results from past GCS (September 2019: 74%; November 2019: 72%).

5. Engagement profile

Engaging in collective action like a street protest can produce the solidarity, commitment, or familiarity with protesting that is likely to spur future activism (e.g., Collins 2004; Saunders et al. 2012; van Stekelenberg & Klandermans 2013). Indeed, we find the majority of participants across the cities, events, and age cohorts had previous protest experience. Although adults tend to have accumulated more experience protesting than youths, this age gap is diminished – even absent at times – when we compare the two cohorts’ protest experience in just the past year. As Figure 4.1 shows, youths and adults reported similar levels of protest experience across the events and the two cities. The share of first-time protesters, for instance, decreases for each cohort over time. In Berlin, we actually find a greater intensity of protest engagement over the past year among youth protesters than among adults.

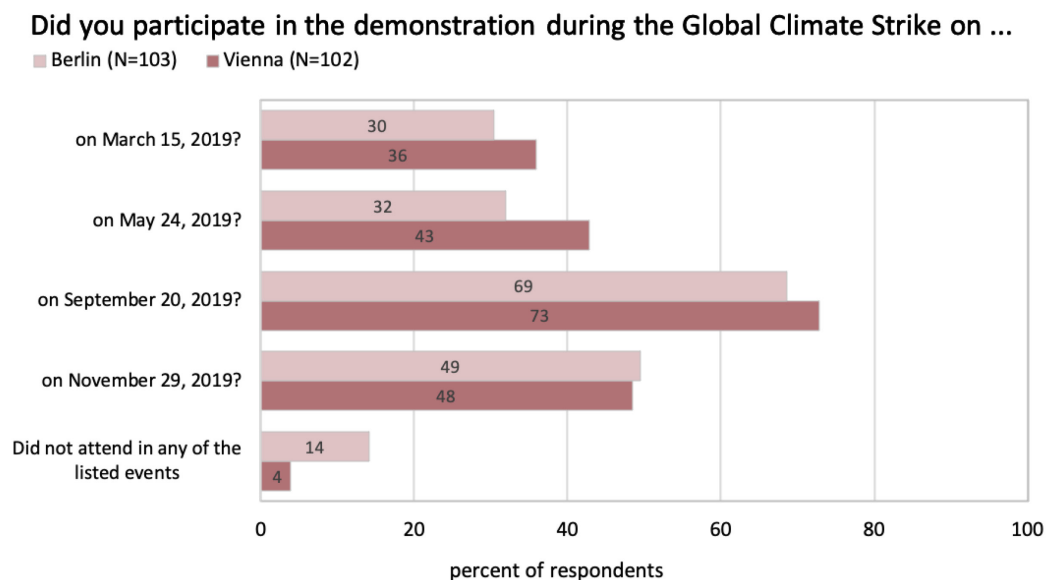
Figure 4.1: Prior protest participation (past 12 months)



Respondents’ past participation in FFF climate strikes partially helps to account for these results (see Figure 4.2). We find an overwhelming majority of participants at the September 2020 GCS had previously participated in a GCS. That is, few were GCS “novices” (cf. Saunders et al. 2012). In line with the November GCS results, the highest proportions of respondents at the GCS in pandemic contexts reported participating in the large September 2019 global day of action (69% in Berlin and 73% in Vienna). However, past GCS engagement decreased slightly compared to November respondents (results not shown). This is more pronounced in Berlin

where the proportion of protesters who participated in the September 2019 GCS fell from 80% in November 2019 to 69% in September 2020, and the share of novices nearly doubled in 2020 (from 8 to 14%). In general, we can also see that the proportion of repeat protesters was slightly greater in Vienna than in Berlin.

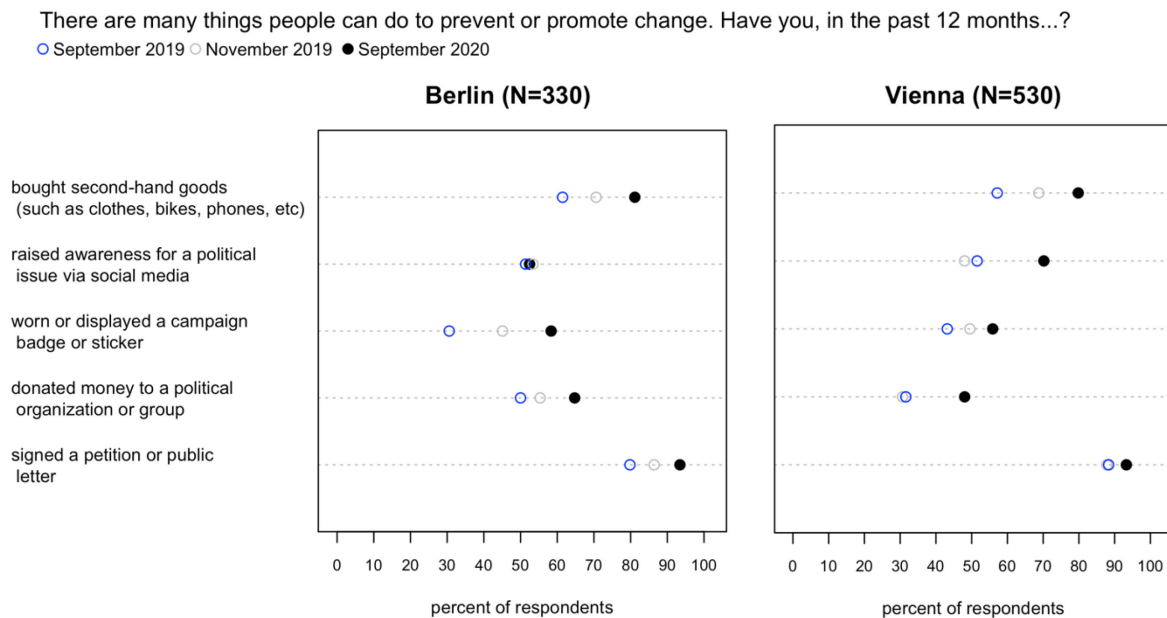
Figure 4.2: Prior Climate Strike participation among September 2020 protesters



We also asked protesters about their engagement in other, more “traditional” and less public forms of political action over the past 12 months (see Figure 4.3). These included contacting an elected politician, signing a petition, engaging in online political advocacy, and changing one’s consumption practices in order to prevent or promote change. To provide a baseline, we find the percentage rankings are generally similar in the two cities across the events. For instance, the largest shares of respondents in both cities reused products, deliberately bought or boycotted certain products, and/or consumed fewer products. Similarly, over 80% of respondents on average signed a petition or public letter, which increased at the September 20, 2020 GCS to over 90% of youth and adult participants in both cities (results by age cohort not shown).

Among the September 2020 respondents in Berlin and Vienna, we find a pattern of greater engagement across the board. As this survey includes numerous behaviors, we limit our discussion to items on which responses from the 2020 GCS differed most from the one a year earlier – from the pre-pandemic strike of September 20, 2019 (see Figure 4.3). Among the largest increases found in both cities are purchasing second-hand goods (up 20% Berlin, 28% Vienna) and donating money to a political organization or group (up 15% Berlin, 16% Vienna). Although the differences between age cohorts were modest on the second-hand goods item, much higher proportions of adults than youths donated money to a political group.

Figure 4.3: General engagement patterns (past 12 months)



On some items we see substantially larger increases in one city than in the other. Among the largest changes in Berlin was a 27% increase in the share of protesters who reported wearing or displaying a campaign badge or sticker as compared to a 13% increase in Vienna. However, these increases were primarily among youths in both contexts. Another notable shift in Berlin was a 13% increase in the share of participants who signed a petition in the past year, as compared to a 5% increase for Vienna (with no substantial differences between youths and adults). In Vienna, raising awareness via social media increased by 18% (from 52% to 70%), whereas almost no change is observed for Berlin (political engagement via social media hovered around 52% in all three survey waves).

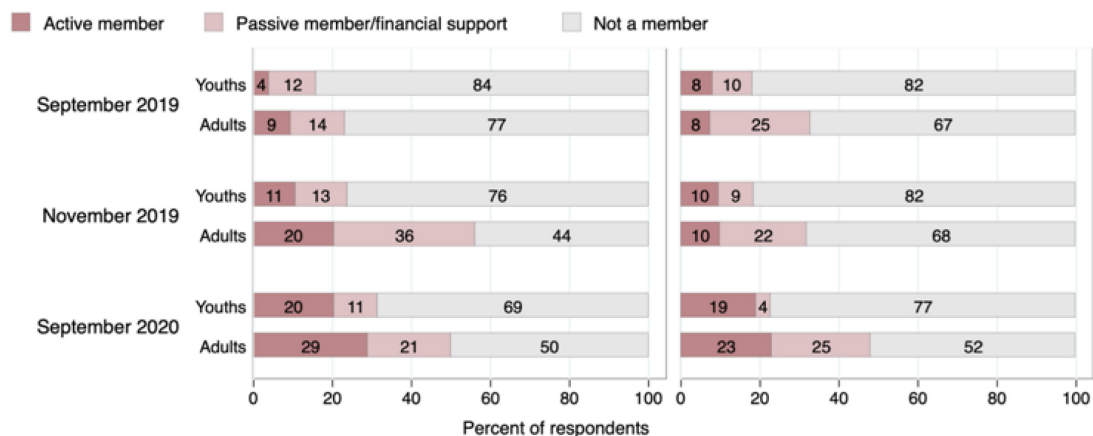
Being embedded in civil society groups, such as through membership in political parties and/or environmental organizations, often goes hand in hand with protesting, as well as with the more conventional forms of political action just discussed (e.g., Klandermans, Van der Toorn & Van Stekelenberg 2008; Van Stekelenberg & Klandermans 2013). Therefore, we also examine FFF protesters' active or passive membership in various types of organizations in order to shed some light on the potential role of associational embeddedness in channeling people to GCS participation. We highlight the results for environmental group membership because the largest shares of protesters consistently report this type of associational involvement across our city cases, including participants at the GCS in pandemic contexts. By contrast, results vary by city for the next most prominent types of membership.¹⁵ Notably, our numbers for membership in a political party or its youth organization are similarly low among respondents in both cities, which is also consistent with our findings on the pre-pandemic protests (e.g., Daniel & Deutschmann 2020b; Neuber & Gardner 2020).

Environmental group membership did not shift drastically across the three events or within age cohorts, but we do observe a clear trend toward more active membership over time (see Figure 4.4). By age cohort, the proportion of youth respondents holding any type of environmental group membership increased slightly at each event over time. In Berlin, for example, smaller shares of youth respondents held such memberships in September (16%) and November (24%)

¹⁵ In Berlin, the next largest share of adults at the pandemic GCS reported membership in charity or humanitarian organizations, whereas sports or cultural groups are nearly tied with environmental ones among youths. In Austria, trade union or professional associations came in second for adults, and youth were most frequently members of a youth organization.

of 2019 than did in September 2020 (31%), and the share with an active membership approximately doubled at each event (i.e., 4%; 11%; 20%). *Active* memberships increased at each event among respondents in each age cohort in both cities.

Figure 4.4: Membership in environmental organizations
[Environmental organization]



At the September 2020 GCS events, active memberships rose notably in both cities. In Vienna, for example, 48% of adult protesters reported holding some form of environmental group membership at the pandemic GCS – a nearly 15% greater share than at the two prior events. In short, we find a pattern of increasing depth of environmental association involvement among FFF protesters. Our results on protest experience, individual political behaviors, and environmental organizational membership suggest that the people who joined the pandemic GCS on September 25, 2020 were more politically active and institutionally embedded than those at prior GCS events.

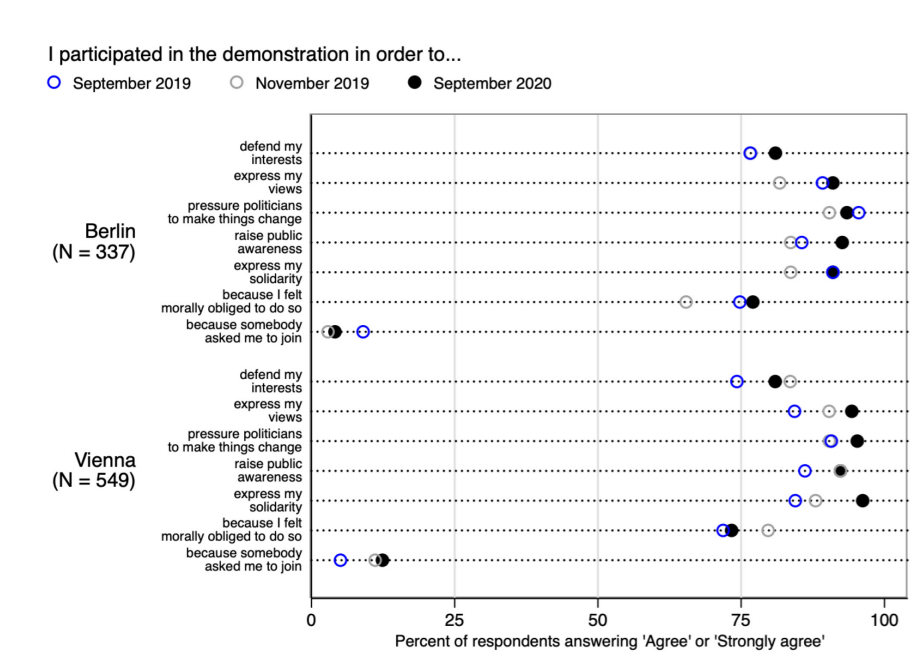
6. Why did they protest?

Experience with protest and other forms of participatory civics can all influence people's decisions to join a protest, but they don't tell us much about people's motivations or feelings. We need to know more about people's perceptions to understand why they protest (cf. van Stekelenberg & Klandermans 2013). For instance, it's important to consider how perceived motives, emotions, and hope in the possibility of bringing about change (efficacy) influence protest participation. Therefore, this section explores how participants responded to explicit questions about their motives for joining the climate strike.

Overall, we find that an all-time high was reached for many of the motivation categories at the September 2020 GCS (see Figure 5.1).¹⁶ For example, the percentage of FFF protesters wanting to raise public awareness was higher than at the previous events in both cities. The goal of pressuring politicians to enact more comprehensive environmental protection policies continued to be a primary motivation for joining the September 2020 GCS. This is the only motivation that more than 90% of respondents agreed with across all of the GCS demonstrations examined here. However, a closer look reveals differences between the two cities. In Berlin, this motive was ranked at the top among participants at all three FFF protest events. In Vienna, this motive was overtaken by raising public awareness in November 2019, and by expressing solidarity at the September 2020 pandemic GCS.

¹⁶ In Vienna, the two exceptions are to "defend my interests" and "because I feel morally obliged." In Berlin, the two exceptions are to "pressure politicians to make things change" and "I participated because someone asked me to join."

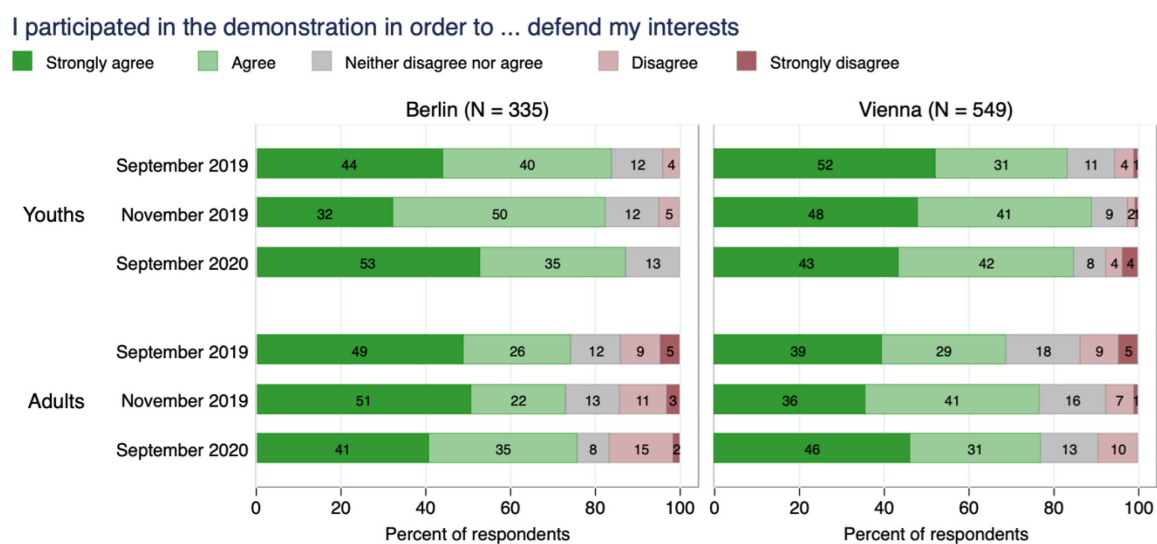
Figure 5.1: Motivation for participating



Indeed, along with pressuring politicians, the top-ranking motives for protesters in both cities are generating public attention, expressing solidarity, and expressing one's views. On average, these were the motivations of nearly 90% of the demonstrators surveyed. In Vienna, the motivation to show solidarity stands out as the strongest in September 2020, with 96% of respondents reporting this as the reason for their participation in the climate strike. Notably, joining because of being asked by someone played the least important role across all survey waves. It is not surprising that we find a more motivated set of GCS participants in pandemic contexts, given the greater potential costs and risks. Interpreted alongside the engagement profile findings from the previous section, these high motivation scores at the pandemic GCS demonstrations might reflect the greater turnout of people who are more involved in political activism.

Although the September 2020 results do not reveal any major changes in motivational differences between the two age cohorts, there is an interesting variation in two motives that can be connected to generational relations. The motivational framing and youthful demographic base of the FFF movement explains the motives of defending one's (own) interests and expressing solidarity (with the interests of others), i.e., the urgent need to halt climate change so that young people and future generations don't inherit an unlivable environment. The shares of young protesters who report defending their own interests as a motive for participating are larger than those of the older participants in Berlin and Vienna (see Figure 5.2). To point out a few specific results, 17% of adults as compared to zero youth disagreed with the influence of this motive in their decision to participate in the pandemic GCS in Berlin. At the pandemic demonstrations in both cities, just over 75% of adults agreed that this motive had influenced their decision to participate compared to 85% or more of youths.

Figure 5.2: Defending my interests as a motive



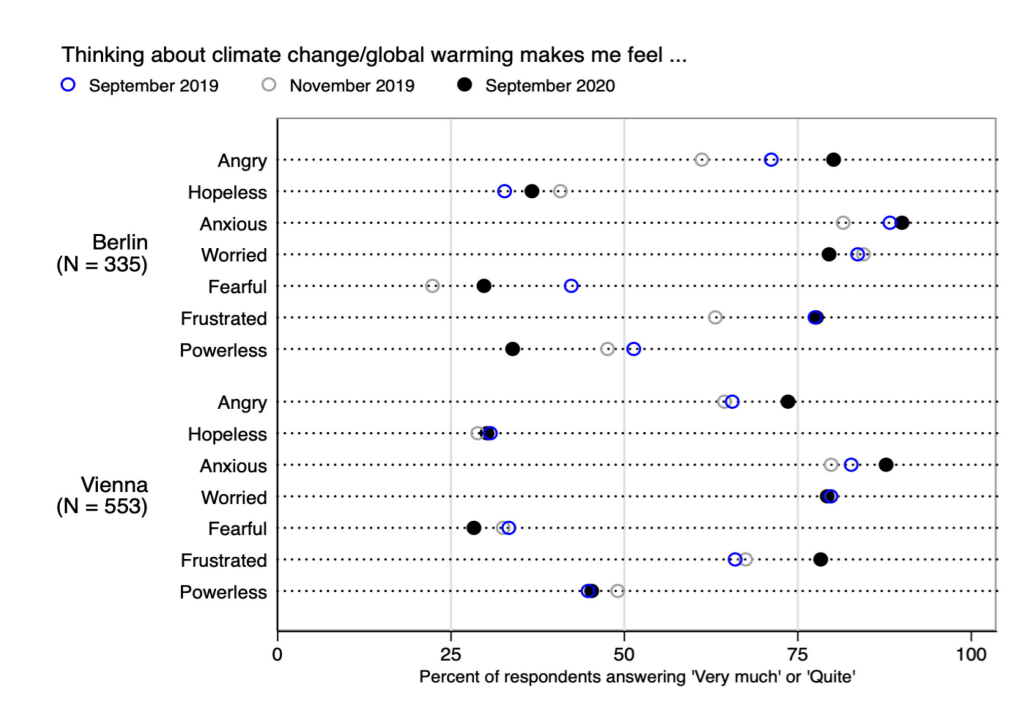
As Figure 5.3 illustrates, larger shares of adult protesters agreed with the statement that they were motivated to join the September 2020 action by the wish to “express solidarity.” Every adult respondent at the pandemic GCS in Vienna agreed that they wanted to show their solidarity. 82% of adults in Berlin *strongly* agreed, as compared to 69% of adults in Vienna, 60% of youths in Berlin, and 57% of youths in Vienna.

Figure 5.3: Solidarity as a motive



The cognitive and emotional components of motivation for engaging in protest cannot be easily disentangled, something that is underscored by the concept of solidarity (emotional connections to individuals, groups, ideas, etc.). Research on movements has shown that emotions can contribute to both mobilization and demobilization (e.g., Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta 2001; van Stekelenberg & Klandermans 2013). But strong emotions, especially indignation over a particular conflict or issue, are considered to be decisive drivers of expressions of political dissent, like street protests. Our survey results point to four dominant emotions that can each be closely linked to indignation (see Figure 5.4). Across the GCS events, large majorities of participants felt anxious or worried, angry or frustrated when thinking about climate change (“quite” or “very much” as opposed to not at all, not very much, or somewhat).

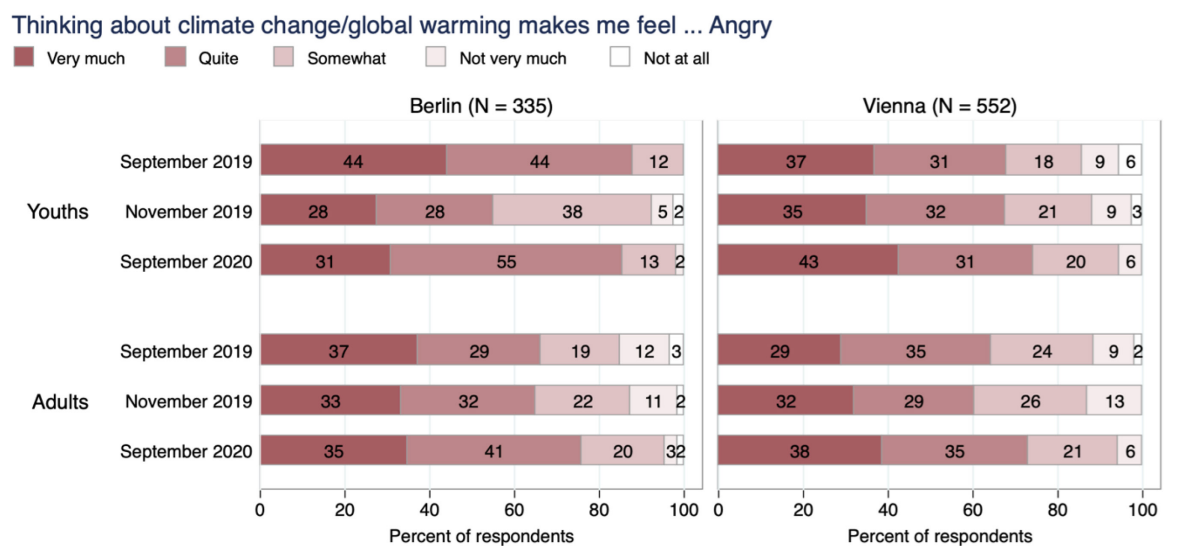
Figure 5.4: Emotions when thinking about climate change



Across GCS events, participants most commonly report feeling anxiety and worry when thinking about climate change. These cognate emotions are dominant across cities and in almost every survey wave (over 75% of protesters on average, over time and in both Berlin and Vienna). In September 2020, 90% of respondents in Berlin and 88% in Vienna reported feeling “quite” or “very” anxious. Similarly, 80% and 79%, respectively, reported feeling worried. The proportion of FFF protesters reporting anxiety grew at each event to reach an all-time high in both cities at the pandemic GCS demonstrations.

After anxiety and worry, the next most dominant emotions are anger and frustration. Notably, the pattern of greater feelings of anger over time is very similar to that described for anxiety. Although respondents in both cities reported high levels of anger and frustration in all three waves, anger reached a new peak on average at the September 2020 GCS in pandemic contexts. At this event in Berlin, feelings of anger slightly outpaced those of frustration among protesters (80% anger, 78% frustration). In Vienna, by contrast, frustration outpaced anger (e.g., 74% for angry and 78% for frustrated). As Figure 5.5 shows, there is generally not much difference in the intensity of anger among youth and adult protesters at the pandemic GCS in Berlin and Vienna. With the categories “very much” and “quite” combined, Berlin protesters report the highest level of anger (86%), that is 10% percent more than in the group of Berlin adults. Youths and adults in Vienna report no substantial differences. Even though their combined anger scores are lower than in Berlin, Vienna protesters report a higher anger intensity (proportion of “very much” responses).

Figure 5.5: Anger



The results for feelings of powerlessness also differed markedly between the cities (again, Figure 5.4 above). A downward trend in the share of protesters reporting feelings of powerlessness is evident over time in Berlin. At the September 2020 GCS in Berlin, fewer than one out of four protesters agreed with feeling “quite” or “very” powerless when thinking about climate change – 14% less on average than at the November 2019 GCS, and 17% less than at the September action 12 months previously. However, this same trend is not found in Vienna. In fact, there was little change among respondents on this item across the events in Vienna. At the pandemic GCS, around 45% of all respondents still strongly felt powerless with regard to climate change. We did not find generational differences in respect of feelings of powerlessness.

Taken together, these results on the motivations and feelings of the protesters offer less support for the idea that there was a different composition of participants at the September 2020 GCS. It wouldn’t be far-fetched to expect that the most committed, motivated, or empowered segments of the FFF movement’s participant base attended the pandemic GCS, and that such people are less likely to report feelings of powerlessness. However, this doesn’t account for the differences in feelings of powerless among FFF protesters in Berlin and Vienna because the engagement profiles in the two cities are so similar. Therefore, we tentatively suggest that the perceptions of the protesters in this respect were influenced by the pandemic, in other words by their perceptions of how the respective national authorities were responding to the pandemic crisis. The next section, on perceptions of political, scientific, and market institutions, reinforces this possibility.

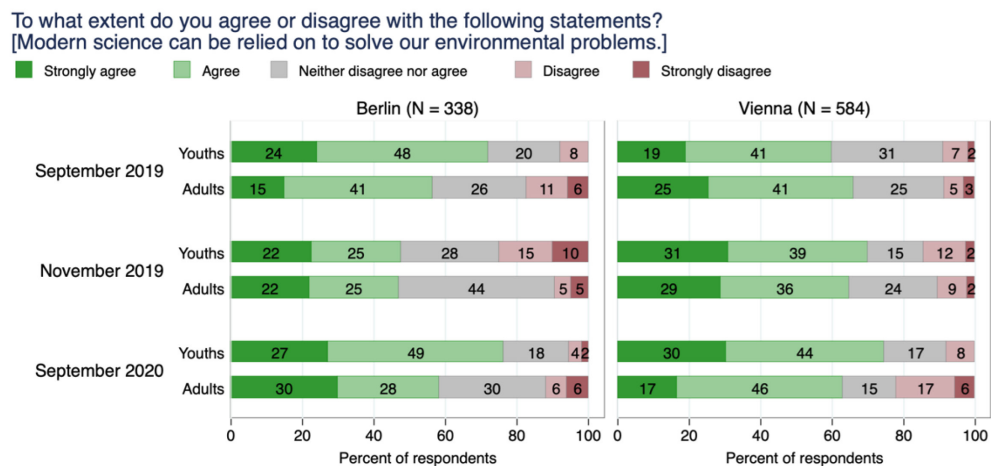
7. Approaches to addressing the climate crisis

When it comes to identifying the actors or institutions that can be relied upon to address the myriad problems stemming from climate change, FFF protesters continue to look to science more than politicians or companies. At the pandemic GCS events in Berlin and Vienna, clear majorities of respondents (around 75% of youths and 60% of adults) reported thinking that modern science can be relied on to solve environmental issues (results not shown). By contrast, less than 3% of protesters thought the government can be relied on. Perceptions of companies and/or the market were equally negative, if not worse. Only 2% of youth protesters and zero adult protesters at the pandemic GCS in both cities believed companies can be relied on to solve the climate crisis. By comparison, respondents’ views on individual lifestyle change as a

primary means to halting climate change are middling, with 26% of youth and 22% of adult protesters, on average, considering voluntary lifestyle change a key approach. As the overall ranking or ordering of political actors/approaches in terms of addressing climate problems is consistent with pre-pandemic GCS survey results – i.e., first place to science, then individual lifestyles, then government, and companies/the market in last place (e.g., Neuber & Gardner 2020; Daniel & Deutschmann 2020a) – we highlight where FFF protesters’ perceptions shifted in other notable ways at the September 2020 actions.

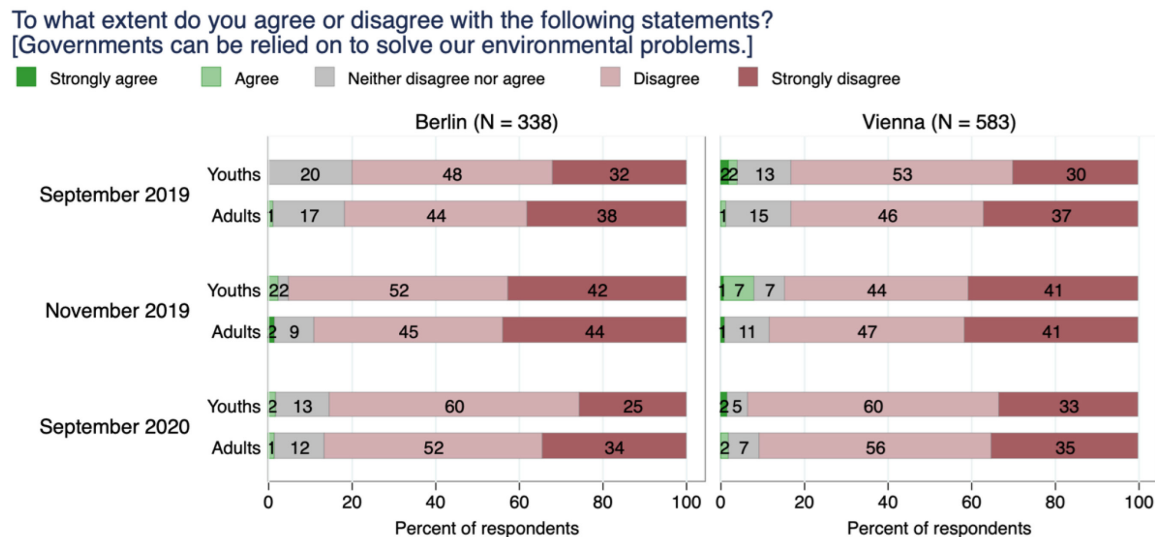
The FFF movement advocates that scientific institutions and actors should play a greater role in climate policy. Although the largest shares of protesters in Berlin and Vienna agreed with the statement “modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems” at every event, these shares became majorities among both youth and adult participants at the September 2020 GCS (see Figure 6.1). In Berlin, trust in modern science to solve environmental issues increased from November among both age cohorts (up by 29% to 76% for youths and up by 11% to 58% for adults). Further, strong agreement among Berlin’s adult and youth FFF protesters was highest at the pandemic GCS (27% and 30% respectively). The trends are more mixed among protesters in Vienna.

Figure 6.1: Modern science can be relied on



At Vienna’s September 2020 GCS, 74% of youth respondents reported agreeing or strongly agreeing that modern science can be relied on (a 4% increase from November), compared to 63% of adults (a 2% decrease from November). Similarly, strength of agreement remained stable among youth participants, but not among adults. Among adults in Vienna, such confidence in science dropped by over 10 percentage points (to 17%) at the September 2020 GCS compared to the pre-pandemic strikes. And overt skepticism (disagreement) increased by over 12% (to 23%). These differences in perceptions of modern science between adult FFF protesters in Berlin and Vienna are intriguing, but not dramatic. Despite the controversies, misinformation dynamics, and limited pace of scientific solutions surrounding the pandemic, FFF protesters, for the most part, appear to be maintaining their allegiance to science.

Figure 6.2: Reliance on governments

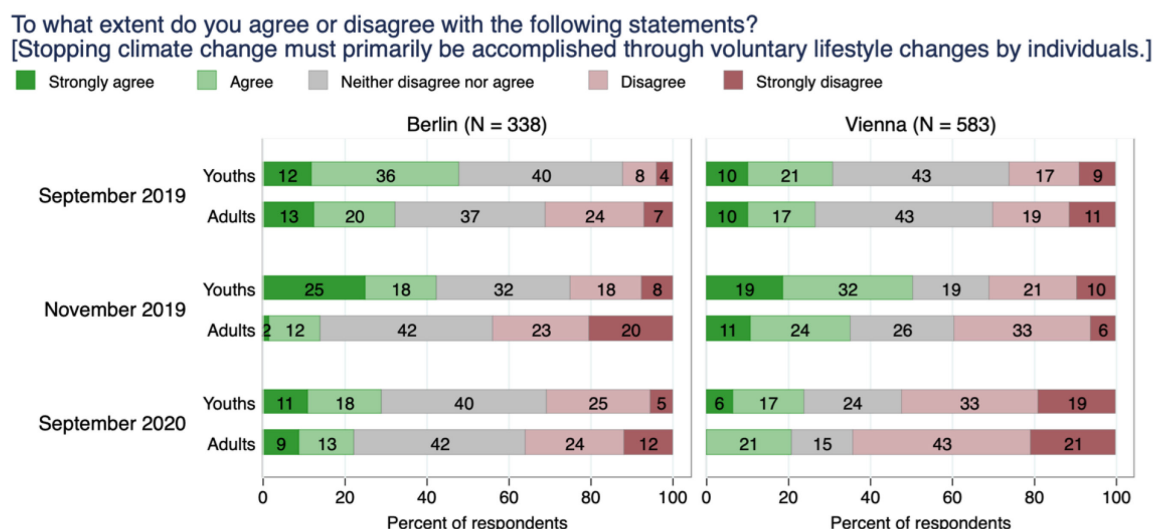


While FFF protesters are skeptical of simply relying on governments to solve environmental problems, they were less staunchly opposed to the idea of depending on governments at the pandemic demonstrations. Figure 6.2 clearly shows that participants don't think governments are going to fix things – and, as we will discuss further on in this section, certainly not without pressure from civil society. However, *strong* disagreement with the statement “governments can be relied on to solve our environmental problems” decreased across the two age cohorts and cities when we compare the November 2019 GCS with the pandemic GCS. This response category declined by 10% among adults and by 17% among youths in Berlin, and the changes in Vienna were smaller. These results reinforce the interpretation that pressuring politicians to act on climate change issues is a primary motivation for people joining the GCS demonstrations in the first place.

In line with protesting in order to hold government accountable for the implementation of more comprehensive climate policies, strong majorities of FFF protesters across the cities also want the government to act based on the expertise and evidence of climate scientists: more than 70% of respondents in Berlin and more than 85% in Vienna at the pandemic GCS agreed with the statement that “the government must act on what climate scientists say even if the majority of people are opposed.” These proportions hold across both age cohorts (results not shown). Although the share of participants in agreement with this view increased slightly at each GCS in Vienna, ambivalence increased somewhat in Berlin.

On average, support for stopping climate change primarily via voluntary lifestyle changes by individuals was the lowest at the September 2020 GCS in both Berlin and Vienna. In Berlin, the average protester agreement with this prognosis went from 36% at the September 2019 GCS, down to 25% in November 2019, and down to 16% at the pandemic GCS. In Vienna, the percentage dropped from a high of 44% agreement among protesters at the November 2019 GCS to the low of 22% in September under Covid-19 restrictions. There was also variation by generational cohort in both cities (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Lifestyle changes



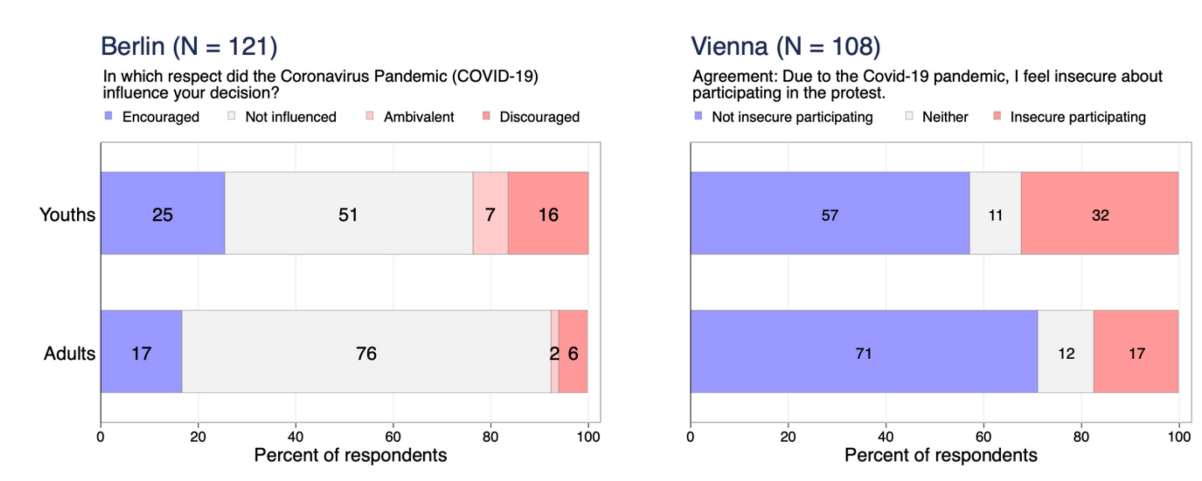
The pattern of decreasing support for lifestyle approaches over time is evident among younger participants and fairly similar in Berlin and Vienna. Adult protesters in Vienna also follow this trend. No adult respondents who attended the pandemic demonstration in Vienna strongly agreed with the statement. While only adults in Berlin don't quite fit this pattern when compared to their counterparts at the November 2019 GCS, they remained fairly aligned with younger protesters. The largest shares of protesters in Berlin neither agree nor disagree with this statement at the September 2020 GCS (~40% of youth and adults), whereas majorities of younger and older FFF protesters disagree in Vienna. Along with privileging scientific expertise, these results reinforce arguments that FFF participants believe change must occur at the political level. Results for questions concerning protesters' trust in different political institutions reinforce this assertion.

8. Protesting in pandemic contexts

Protesters in both cities were asked about the impact of the pandemic on their decision to participate on September 25. As noted earlier, however, the new pandemic-related questions differed between the two research teams (see Figure 7.1). Overall, the pandemic does not appear to have drastically affected respondents' thoughts about participating in the GCS. More accurately, the majority of protesters reported that the pandemic did "not influence" (Berlin) or did not "make them feel insecure about" (Vienna) their decision to join the protests. Nevertheless, more respondents in Vienna reported feeling insecure than respondents in Berlin reported being discouraged by the pandemic circumstances. Of course, based on our data, we can say little about the social characteristics and the decision-making process of sympathizers who did not show up for the protest.

The results by age cohort shown in Figure 7.1 suggest that the pandemic had a greater impact on youth protesters. In both cities, larger shares of youth than of adult protesters reported that the pandemic made them feel insecure about or discouraged their participation. This potentially protest-dampening effect was twice as large among youth in Vienna (32%) compared to youth in Berlin (16%). A larger proportion of youth protesters than adults reported the pandemic encouraged their participation in Berlin.

Figure 7.1: Influence of the pandemic on decision to protest

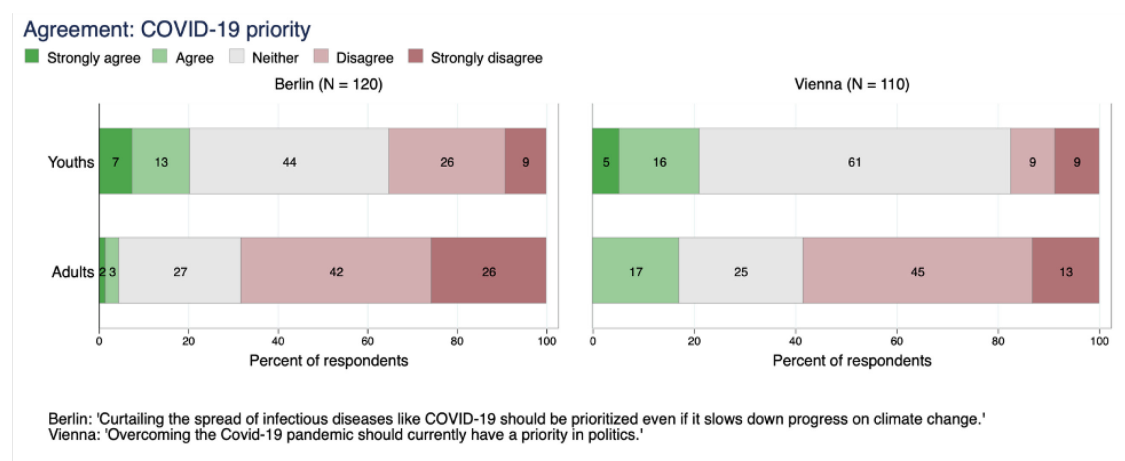


A closer examination of the open-ended responses to this question asked of participants in Berlin and responses to additional questions asked of participants in Vienna offer additional nuances to these results. With respect to overcoming barriers to participation in the pandemic, we identify two main patterns among respondents. The first concerns FFF's capacity to offset pandemic risks by encouraging and closely adhering to safety precautions. About one in four demonstrators in Berlin stated that trust in the organizers and their hygiene concept as well as confidence in the consideration of fellow demonstrators played an important role in their decision-making process. Related to this thinking, several respondents in Berlin cited participation in the GCS as a form of counter-mobilization against the so-called Corona protests against pandemic regulations.

The second pattern we identify concerns the incentive of recouping attention to the climate crisis. For example, Berlin FFF protesters commonly stated that waning public attention to the issue of climate change due to the pandemic motivated their activism (echoing the motive to raise awareness from section 5). On an additional question asked in Vienna, 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the climate crisis had received only marginal political attention since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic (results not shown). Although the protest surveys in Vienna did not explicitly ask if the pandemic encouraged participation, we interpret these results as suggesting that a meaningful segment of protesters were motivated to protest in order to restore attention to the climate crisis.

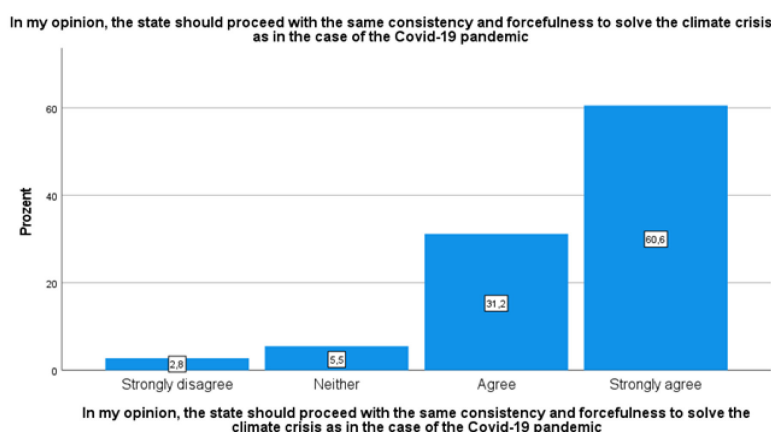
The surveys also asked demonstrators about their thoughts on prioritizing the pandemic or climate change. Overall, while few respondents thought the pandemic should be *the* priority, the differences between the two age cohorts are stark (see Figure 7.2). Majorities of adult protesters "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with prioritizing the Covid-19 pandemic (68% in Berlin and 58% in Vienna). By contrast, the largest proportions of youth protesters were ambivalent (44% in Berlin and 66% in Vienna). In Berlin, adults were particularly opposed to the statement "Curtailing the spread of infectious diseases like Covid-19 should be prioritized even if it slows down progress on climate change" (only 5% of adults as compared to 20% of youth respondents expressed agreement). Disagreement with the statement "Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic should currently have a priority in politics" was also much greater among adult (58%) than youth participants (18%) in Vienna.

Figure 7.2: Priority of pandemic



As discussed earlier, arguments that the pandemic crisis should not overshadow the climate crisis were also given expression in a Climate Corona Deal put forward in Austria. This 'deal,' signed by over 120 civil society actors in May of 2020, demanded that the measures enacted to combat the pandemic be climate-friendly. Although only 22% of protesters in Vienna were aware of the deal (not shown), an overwhelming majority agreed with an item asking if the Austrian government's approach to dealing with the pandemic should be applied to solving the climate crisis (see Figure 7.3). 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the state should proceed with the same consistency and forcefulness to solve the climate crisis as in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 7.3: State response to corona and climate crisis



9. Conclusion

Drawing on new survey data on protesters at the September 2020 Fridays for Future Global Climate Strike in Berlin and Vienna, this report examines protesters' socio-demographic profiles, political engagement, and attitudes before and after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The longitudinal patterns we found were fairly consistent for both cities. However, the protests in Berlin show a greater dynamic in the sense of gains in institutional trust, the self-efficacy of protesters, and a socio-demographic transformation of the FFF from a movement primarily driven by school students to a broader movement of students and young professionals.

Our socio-demographic comparison of participants the GCS events in Berlin and Vienna indicates clear local differences. While in Vienna the shares of youth and adults remained comparatively stable at November 2019 levels, the proportion of youth protesters in Berlin continued to increase with the pandemic GCS. The proportion of students and young professionals increased in both cities, but was particularly high in Berlin. This development was already visible in November 2019 and has continued under Covid-19 conditions. The shares of middle-aged and elderly people in Berlin and Vienna have also developed differently, with Vienna showing very stable shares at a low level and Berlin now adopting the same pattern. Given the increased risks for these age cohorts under Covid-19, this difference is very interesting. Overall, we cautiously interpret these changes as an indication that pandemic conditions may favor the transformation of the FFF into a broader youth movement.

FFF demonstrators in both cities show very similar changes in their experiences with politics and protest, as well as in their motivations for participating in the GCS in times of Covid-19. In addition to being more motivated to participate in the pandemic GCS than at the previous two events, participants at the September 2020 GCS in Berlin and Vienna were more politically active and institutionally embedded in terms of past protest experience, individual political behaviors, and involvement in environmental organizations. In Vienna, the alliance of civil society groups initiating the “Climate Corona Deal” and contributing to the GCS organization may help to account for this development. While the proportion of respondents with prior protest experience, especially previous GCS events, was high in both cities, there were still a handful of first-time GCS participants at the event in Berlin. This suggests that being among the already committed FFF activists was not the only key driver of participation.

Despite even stronger trust in scientific authority, slightly greater confidence in government action, and a reduced sense of powerlessness, respondents had stronger feelings of anger and anxiety when thinking about climate change than in any other GCS. We tentatively interpret these results as indicating that protesters did not perceive political developments as uniformly “good” or “bad.” There appears to be tentative optimism amidst dissatisfaction with the ongoing climate crisis, on the one hand, and satisfaction with the government response to the pandemic crisis on the other. Younger FFF protesters in particular seem to be uncertain about how to best cope with the compounding threat of pandemic *and* climate crisis. We suspect that the contradictory features of these results reflect the protesters’ ambivalence toward the interconnected issues (and their interplay with other core policy priorities, such as employment). Notably, the fast, scientifically-informed and largely effective government actions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic contrasts with the slow-pace and limited actions on the climate change crisis. This may fuel dissonance between perceptions that the state is capable of science-based actions in crisis scenarios and concerns that they will not be applied to the climate crisis or, worse, that efforts at economic recovery from the pandemic will permit further environmental degradation – undermining the achievements and goals of the movement.

The FFF movement’s focus on pressuring politicians to take concrete and effective action on the climate crisis remains crucial. With a post-pandemic political landscape in mind, the movement’s future mobilization success in Austria and Germany may additionally depend on its ability to effectively respond to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic while also highlighting the dovetailing issues of human health and the environment. Pointing to the public health successes of Covid-19 policies informed by the best scientific evidence as well as some of their failings when it came to environmental protection might help to build arguments that mobilize participants, enlist third parties, and influence decision makers.

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