The United States of America (US) is the prime example of a polity with senior leaders, where the political class is not representative of the population. In the spring of 2021, three of the most important politicians are beyond 70 years of age. The president Joe Biden is 78 years old, the former president Donald Trump is 74 years old, and the speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi 80 years old. In the November 2020, Americans had choice between two presidential candidates in their 70s, the incumbent Donald Trump and his challenger Joe Biden. Given that Biden’s toughest primary contender Bernie Sanders is also in his late 70s, the magazine the Atlantic described the presidential race in March 2020 as follows: “We have now before us three candidates divided by ideology, but united in dotage. All three white men were born in the 1940s, before the invention of Velcro and the independence of India and Israel. Amazingly, each is currently older than any of the past three U.S. presidents.” The seniority of politicians goes beyond the figure heads of the two main parties. The 115th Congress of the United States (January 2017 to January 2019) was the oldest one to have ever served. The average American was about 20 years younger than the average representative the US’s lower House, who was 58 years old at the time of the swearing in of Congress in early 2017.

This project addresses the democratic deficit of youths’ relative absence in Congress. What is the current situation of youths’ representation in Congress after the 2020 elections? What individual-level and party-level factors explain youths’ lack of representation in Congress? Is the lack of youth a supply or demand problem? Who are the few young politicians, who get elected?

The students involved in this research project will engage in the following tasks:

1. Collecting data on youth representation in parliaments the US Congress
2. Building an original dataset
3. Reviewing and succinctly summarising existing literature on youth representation
4. Contributing in the write up of an article and possible co-authorship

**KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

- Learning about an emerging topic in political science
- Synthesizing the literature
- Learning about data collection and building a novel dataset
- Learning about accessing government records
- Conducting some simple statistical tests
- Learning how to work independently
- Make sound judgement about the quality of prior research