Political transformism.
An analysis of the Italian parliament (1946-2013)

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Preliminary and incomplete version

Abstract

We study the role of political transformism, defined as the ability to be co-opted from political opposition (or government support) and transformed into a government force (or opposition), on the political survival of 7,127 members of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Senate, observed from 1946 to 2013. Our results suggest that being a political transformist is a type of political strategy, which often increases the probability of survival. Later on, the electors "punish" the transformists. The electoral system affects the phenomenon which turns out to be more relevant in Second Republic. The system of voting in parliament - whether open or with secret ballot is also relevant.
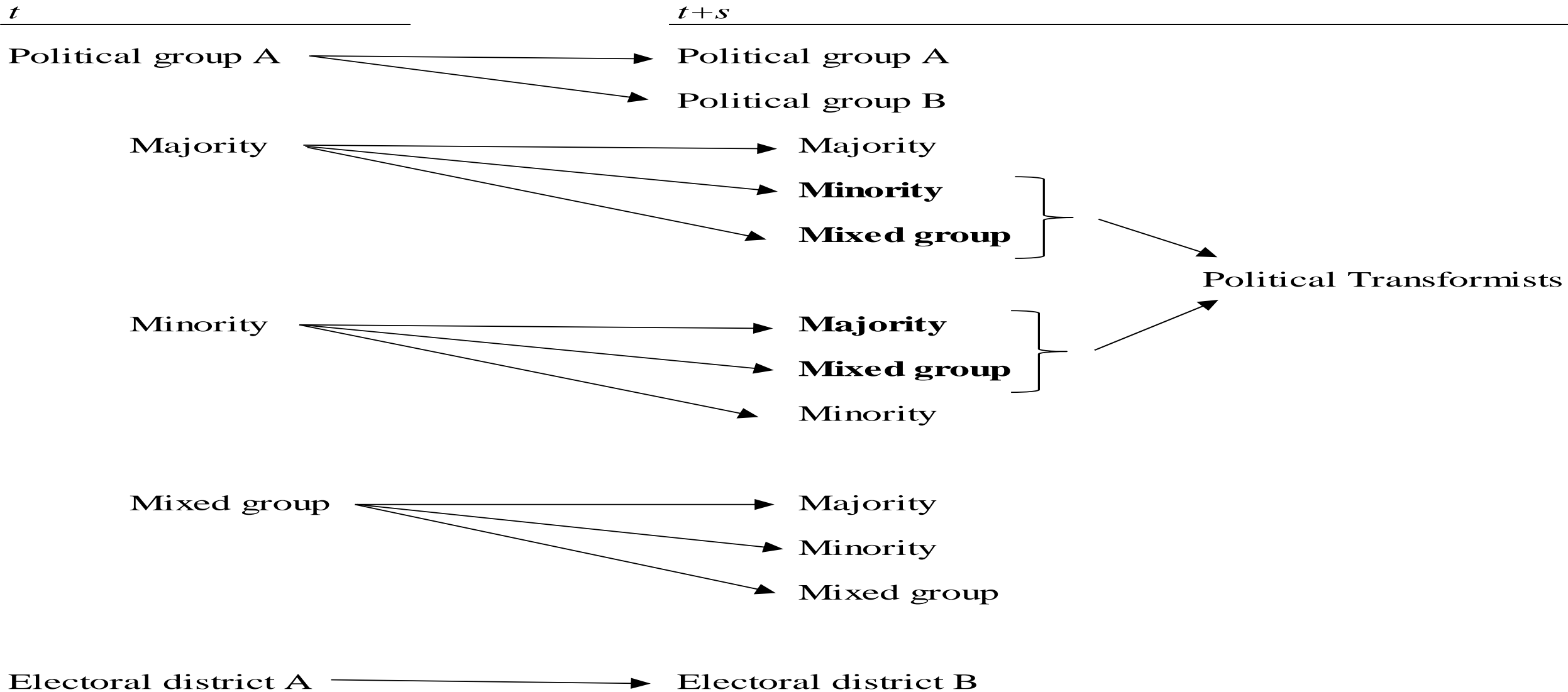
The behavior of the transformists is a violation of the formal and substantial agency relation between the considered politician and the political movement which he or she is leaving. Thus, transformism does not only imply a mere opportunist unethical choice by the politician who leaves the political movement in which has been elected. It may also be triggered or eased by open or concealed manovers of the political movement to which that politician is going to be connected formally or informally, which also may have an unethical connotation of violation of the loyal behavior principle

different kinds of transfomism: those triggered by organized interest group; those triggered by clienteles of local electors who pursue individual interests better served by politicians connected by the ruling majority; those triggered by political movements that deploy practices of recruiting politicians of opposite parties; and those triggered by the mere individual interest of the considered politicians.

Our analysis takes advantage of a unique and newly built dataset that contains detailed information on all members of both the Chamber and the Senate from 1946 to 2013. The dataset contains recurrent event outcomes for 15,357 repeated observations referred to 7,127 individuals, who are followed as if they were patients with respect to their re-election to either of the branches (recurrence). Within the entire set of observation, we observed 1,982 changes, 467 of which are recognised as transformism.

We consider *political transformists* parliamentarians that 1)move from a political group of to majority to the mixed group or to a political group of minority; 2)passing from the mixed group to majority, 3)go from a political group of minority to a majority group or to mixed group supporting government. We analyse the survival of the parliamentarian with attention to the outcome "election" to the Parliament may occur more than once in the so-called "follow-up time",entering the same branch or the other branch.

Figure 1
Definition of transformism

Political group A ⟶ Political group A

Political group B

Majority ⟶ Majority

Minority

Mixed group

Political Transformists

Minority ⟶ **Majority**

Mixed group

Minority

Mixed group ⟶ Majority

Minority

Mixed group

Electoral district A ⟶ Electoral district B

Exceptions are considered: parliamentarians who pass from the majority (minority) to the minority (majority):1)because dissent for ideological-political reasons and found a new party (as those who in the 50 left the Socialist Party, founding a new social-democratic party) or enter the mixed group or in another ;2) because their party changes from the minority to the majority or the inverse (as did Italian Socialist Party when in the '60 become "reformist" ; 3) change party or enter in the mixed group because their party has cease to exist and left freedom of choice 4) Were elected in different parties of the majority and the minority as independent and now are able to found a new party which chooses to stay in the majority or the minority. We, thus, define three sub group of the variable "change", including the above parliamentarians who cannot be considered transformists named ***change NT,*** the parliamentarians that have been transformists at least once and-therefore- may be defined as past-trasformists, or also "Political Transformist", i.e. PT change or PT transformists and are not changing and the sub group of actual transormist i.e those who are changing whether PT or new Transformist. For 15,357 observations referred to 7,127 individuals, we observed 1,982 changes, 467 of which are transformism

Figure 1. Members of the Parliament changing affiliation over legislations

Legend: ■ changes NT ■ transformists when changing ■ changes
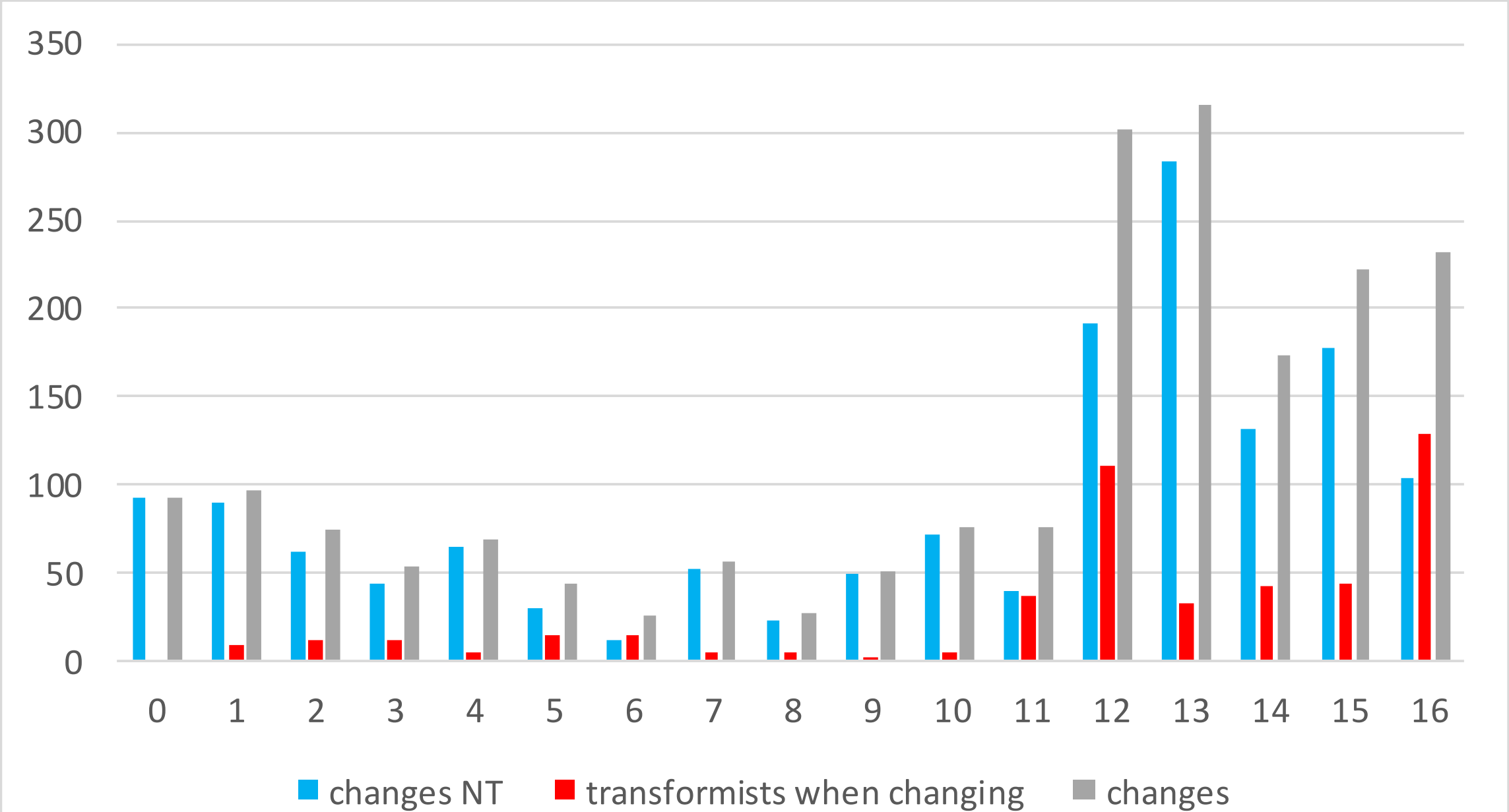
Overall changes , Changes NT, P(ast)-Transformists, Transformists wen change
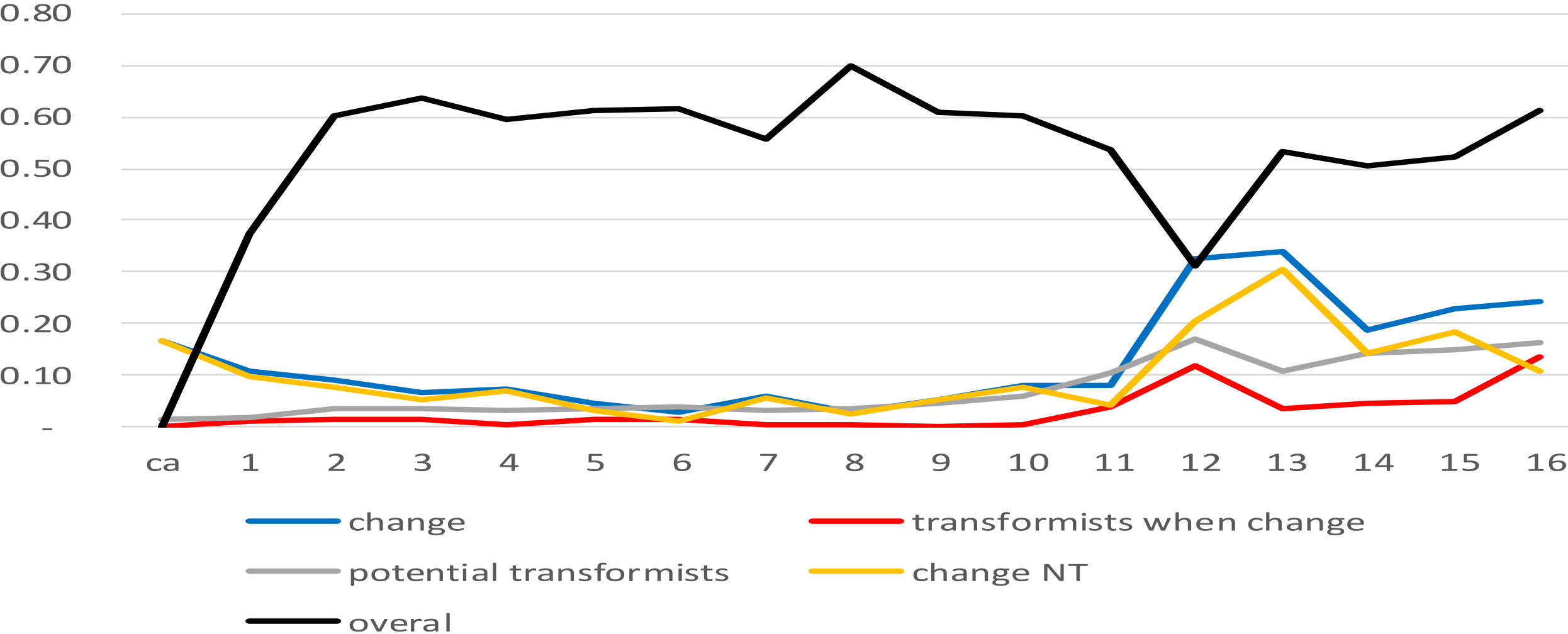
Gender	Change		Change NT		Potential transformists		Transformists when changing	
	obs	%	obs	%	obs	%	obs	%
F	224	13,28	169	9,74	112	6,20	55	1,76
M	1760	12,96	1344	9,92	1013	7,44	416	3.04
Total	1984	12.9	1513	9.9	1125	7.3	471	3.1
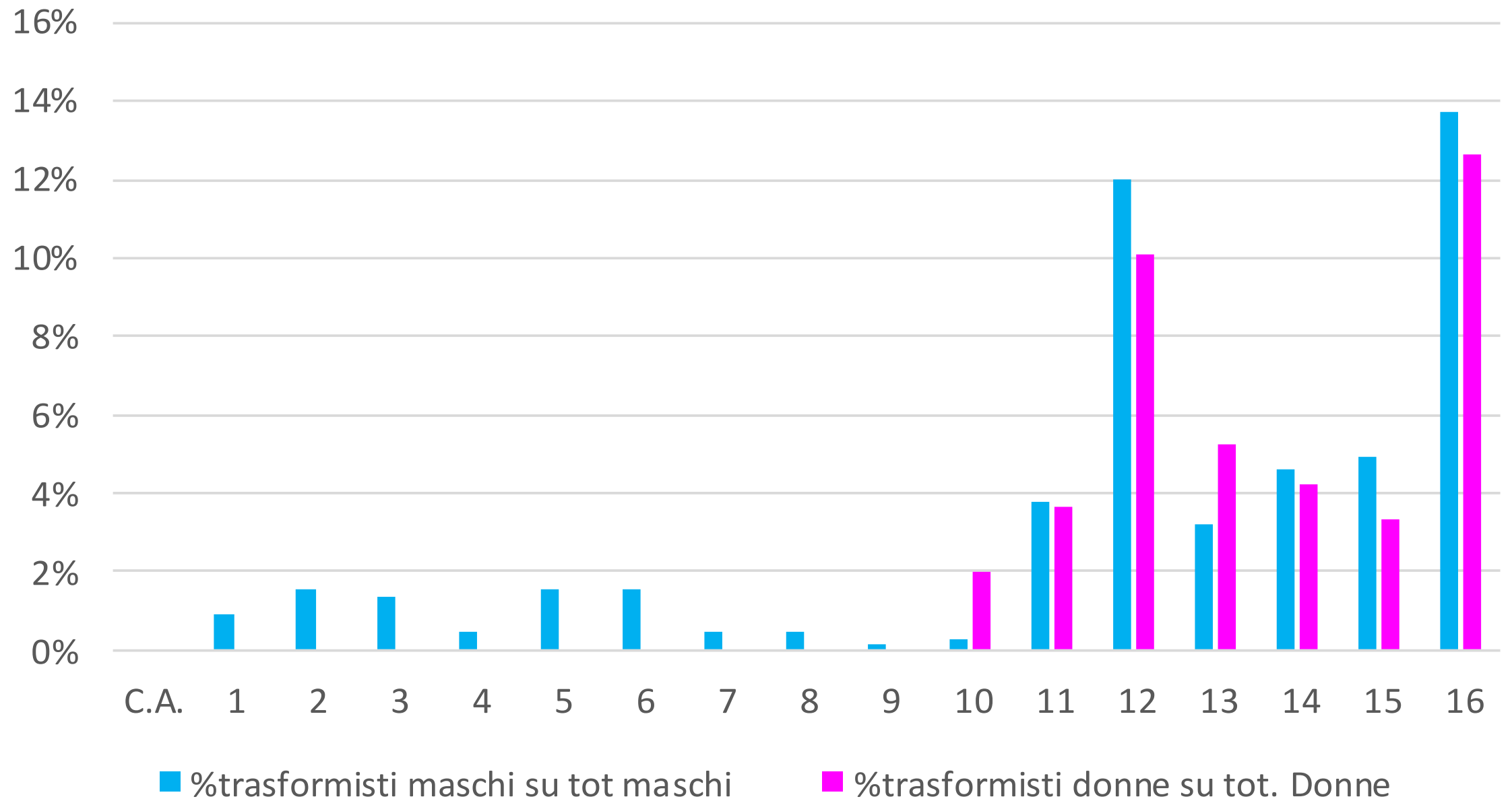
- TRANSFORMISTS BY EDUCATION

	Overall	Change	Change NT	Potential transformists	Transformists when changing
Elementary	2.26%	39,82%	39.82%	0.00%	0.00%
University	73.77%	13,46%	10,20%	8,18%	3,24%
Middle	3.12%	6,73%	5,77%	1,60%	0,90%
High	20.86%	13,04%	9,34%	6,90%	3,40%

AVERAGE AGE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AGE OF CHANGES, AGE OF NT, AGE OF TRANSFORMISTS WHEN CHANGING, AGE OF P(AST)-TRANSFORMITS

Legend: overal — change NT — transformist when changing — potential transformists
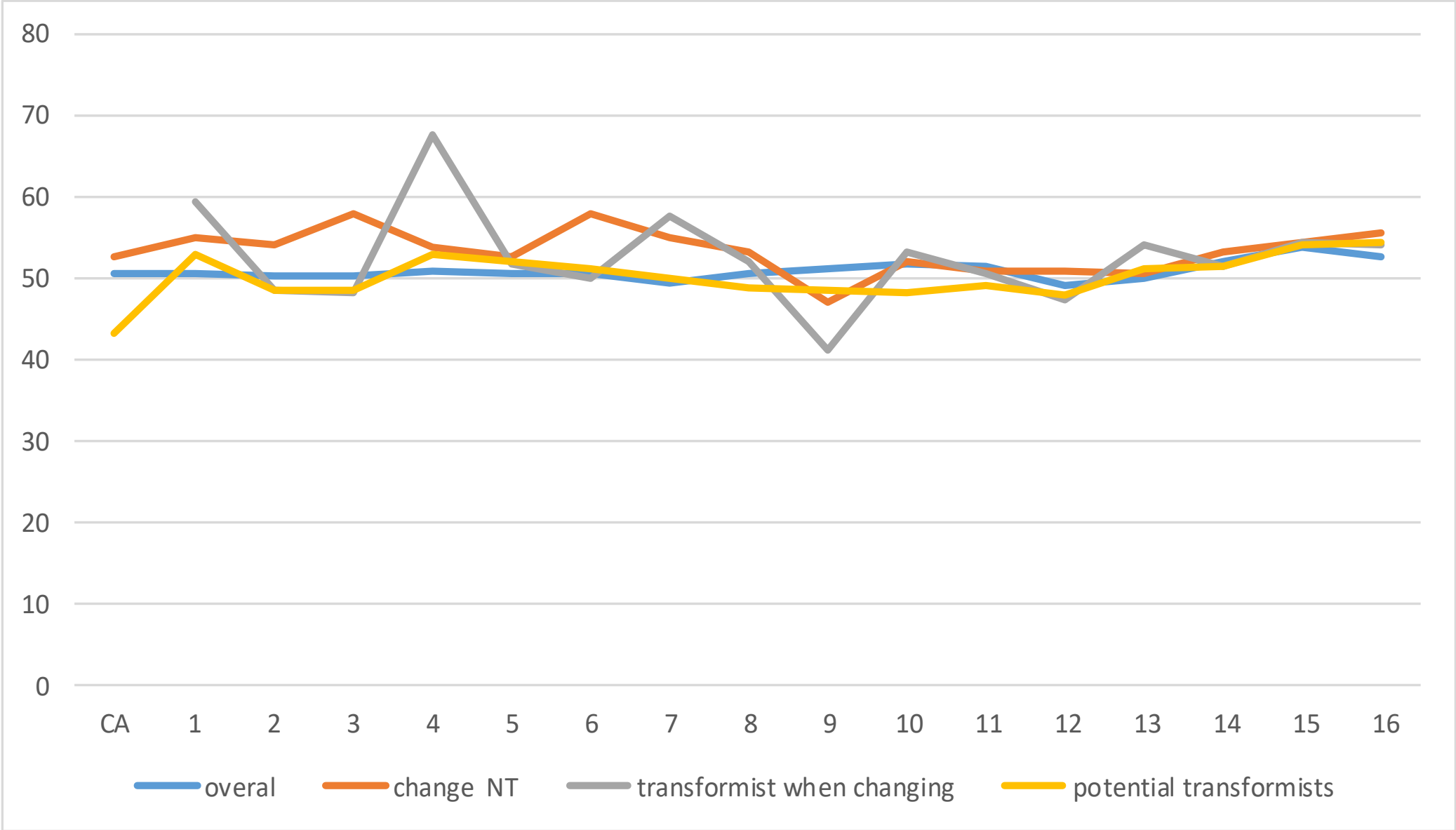
- We report results from two models, the model named as Basic Model (Column A) and the models named After General-to-Specific (Columns B).

- For both the models we report the impact of each variable and the impact of the variable interacted with (the ln of) time. This term allows testing the null hypothesis that the PH is violated; in case the null hypothesis is not rejected, the term controls for the violation associated to the variable interacted with time (Ata and Sozer, 2007).

- The general-to-specific exercise increases the degrees of freedom of the estimates and their precision.

- It also helps reducing the likelihood of having results driven by the high correlation the regressors have.

Entire period

Variable	Full Model	After General-to-Specific
Male	11.157***	11.220***
	(7.135)	(7.178)
Age	1.160***	1.158***
	(0.017)	(0.017)
Education	0.706	0.858***
	(0.163)	(0.015)
Change	2.796***	2.730***
	(1.175)	(1.146)
Variable interaction with (ln of) time		
Male	0.796***	0.795***
	(0.052)	(0.052)
Age	0.987***	0.987***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	1.021	
	(0.025)	
Change	0.902***	0.904***
	(0.039)	(0.039)
LogL	-36779.459	-36779.843

Results suggest that gender matters, as the hazard ratio for men is higher than that for women.

The hazard ratio estimated for the variable Age is slightly greater than unity; moreover, the coefficient associated to the variable with time is slightly lower than unity.

The most relevant result of this general picture is that the variable **Change** is statistically significant, and its impact to the hazard ratio is higher than one, in line with the hypothesis that the changing members of the Parliament *generally* have a higher probability to survive than others.

 But the hazard ratio of P- Transformist is lower than 1, while that Non-Transformists is-by inference- higher. More over the changes of survival of P-Transformists diminish through time. Voters are able to identify and punish the opportunistic behaviour of the transformists. However, the results that **Political transformists when changing** have a high probability of survival. In other words they need to repeat their offense to the ethical rules to increase their survival.

Variable	1946-2013: I Republic	
Age	1.082***	1.081**
	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education	0.877***	0.882***
	(0.019)	(0.019)
DC	0.440**	0.424**
	(0.184)	(0.179)
PCI	0.071***	0.072***
	(0.036)	(0.036)
Change	10.585***	
	(5.798)	
Political transformist		0.435***
		(0.041)
Other changes		14.235***
		(8.600)
Variable interaction with (*ln* of) time		
Age	0.995***	0.996***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
DC	1.094**	1.093**
	(0.050)	(0.050)
PCI	1.356***	1.346***
	(0.075)	(0.074)
Change	0.778***	
	(0.048)	
Other changes		0.750***
		(0.051)
LogL	-21240.160	-21201.676

In the I Republic Gender was not relevant for survival, nor education. Changing was much relevant. However, P-transformist had chances of survival <1/5 the average. Members of Communist Party had better survival chances ratio than DC.

We split the I Republic from the II , because we expect our result to be conditional upon the electoral laws and because P-transformists are likely most able to adapt to different/changing environments, as those due to the disappearing of most former political parties with the fall of Berlin wall and of URSS communist menace.

 Italian electoral system experienced a structural change from pure proportionality to plural-proportional systems with Law 276/1993 and one of majoritarian proportionality with Law 270-2005 which characterize the II Republic as a whole.

Male gender (slide 18) now is relevant for survival with coefficients substantially >1. Education as such does not matter. Change is relevant as in the I republic, while P-Transformists survival chances increase over the previous ones, even if still<1. Centre-left parliamentarian have better survival chances than centre-right ones.

Variable	1946-2013: II Republic	
Male	1.195***	1.194***
	(0.044)	(0.043)
Age	1.011***	1.011***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Education	0.946*	
	(0.028)	
Centre-Left	0.919***	0.898***
	(0.027)	(0.026)
Centre-Right	0.778***	0.774***
	(0.029)	(0.029)
Change	1.163***	
	(0.039)	
Political transformist		0.855***
		(0.037)
Other changes		1.098**
		(0.044)
LogL	-14253.742	-15136.419

Variable	Before Law 270/2005			After Law 270/2005	
Male	1.019*** (0.003)	1.018*** (0.003)		1.146*** (0.040)	1.145*** (0.039)
Age				1.012*** (0.002)	1.012*** (0.002)
Education				0.946* (0.030)	
Centre-Left	0.814*** (0.029)	0.818*** (0.030)			
Centre-Right	0.785*** (0.055)	0.787*** (0.056)		0.845*** (0.027)	0.865*** (0.028)
Change	1.524*** (0.098)			1.101*** (0.037)	
Political transformist		0.286*** (0.066)			0.452*** (0.043)
Other changes		1.300*** (0.100)			1.285*** (0.059)
Political transformist that changes		6.428*** (1.609)			2.200*** (0.226)
LogL	-5030.365	-5009.409		-8754.382	-9495.624

Let us, now, separate the periods of the II Republic with different electoral systems. Survival chances of males increase with majoritarian proportionality. Change decreases its relevance; but P transformism becomes more relevant even if with chances <1 Belonging to Centre left is better than Center Ritgh only under the first law, while has no relevance under the second. When changing, Transformists have better-than average survival chance with both electoral systems, but higher under the first, which seemingly assures a better parties control on elections

We further check ,a for the Ii Republic, whether the results are driven by different professional skills/attitude to opportunistic behaviour, by considering the group of political managers. Results suggest that being a political manager has a similar impact on the survival as for all the variables except NT and PTransformism which have similar chances.

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Age	1.011***	1.011***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
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FINAL REMARKS

•Change from one political group to another for reasons other than dissatisfaction for the political behavior of own group or for more general ideological reasons, i.e. transformism, is an opportunistic behavior with betrayal, motivated by personal interest for money, power, prestige, often driven by pressure groups and clientele linkages, that prevail over coherent political choice.

• We-with a survival approoach- have studied the phenomenon of transformism in Italy, by a unique set of data on the main characters of the members of parliament, under the I Republic in which pure proportional system and organized, ideological parties were dominant and in the II in which more pragmatic parties emerged, in a different structural stage of economic development with less clear definition of the social classes and no "cold war" by the West with a communist world.

This phenomenon, always present in Italy, becomes more relevant with II Republic, particularly under the plural-proportional system. New researches on profession and electoral areas, may prove useful to test survival chances of average members of parliament, of non T-changers, of P- Transformist and of ActualTransformists.