

**Non-voting in Spain:
some quantitative and attitudinal aspects**

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After five legislative elections have been held, the main features of the electoral behaviour of Spanish voters can be approached with some certainty. The electoral non-participation will be analysed in this working paper which aims to review some of the hypotheses and generalizations that were made on non-voting when just a few elections had been held. We shall base our research on two specific aspects. On one side, the quantitative aspects that will allow us to compare the Spanish non-voting with that of other European countries with regard to some basic dimensions, as well as that of the regions (Autonomous Communities) among themselves. On the other, the attitudinal aspects that meet in certain cultural contents of non-voting and in the non-voters' mobility.

Levels, fluctuations and trends of non-voting

Generally speaking, we can qualify the Spanish non-voting levels as being high. The variations between different elections are also considerable as well as fluctuations in time between elections of the same kind. Percentages of non-voting in the 23 elections held between 1977 and 1989 have not gone, except in a few occasions, below 30%, (see Table 1). Differences related to the kind of election ratify the hierarchical order that voters construct in relation to the importance given to each of the electoral contest: the national are "first-order" elections, followed by the regional, local and, with a much lesser prominence, the European elections (1). The simultaneous celebration of different kinds of elections has nevertheless occasionally put on the same level non-voting rates distinguishable *a priori*. This was the case, for example, in 1986 when the national elections coincided with the regional in Andalucía, or in 1983 and 1987 when the local (and European in 1987) elections coincided with the regional in thirteen regions. Those considered of higher relative importance had a towing effect over the rest, obtaining similar non-voting rates. Among the "second-order" elections, there seems to exist a trend towards a lower non-voting in the local elections, while any conclusion about the European and regional elections would be premature because of the contradictory oscillations, the short number of cases or/and the exceptional circumstances of simultaneous election days. In any case we must say that the 45% of non-voting in the elections to the European Parliament in 1989 is not much different from the rates obtained in the other eleven European countries; but the rates in the Spanish local, and even more regional, elections are usually higher than those of countries with comparable elections (2).

Table 1

Spanish non-voting is one of the highest in Europe. In fact, Spain is the second in a list of the eighteen European countries ordered by their non-voting averages since 1970 (Table 2) (3). If we leave aside the Swiss case, with really

exceptional nonvoting levels, the countries with a higher non-voting average are Spain, United Kingdom, Ireland and France, followed in a short distance by Finland, Greece, Portugal and Norway. It is remarkable, that the non-voting higher rates are shared by countries that belong to such unlike geographic areas as Southern Europe, the British Islands or the Scandinavian Peninsula: this is indicative enough of the complexity of the non-voting phenomenon. Another remarkable fact is that these same countries show in general a trend towards the non-voting increase and moreover they do so in a greater extent than the more participative countries. In some cases (France, Finland, Portugal) the celebration of presidential elections may have reduced the importance of the parliamentary ones, which could suffer the demobilization effects of the "second-order" elections. In others (such as Ireland) the confluence of historical, cultural and structural factors has obstructed the electoral participation since the introduction of universal suffrage. The British case has been qualified as exceptional because the increasing trend of its non-voting in the last half century coincides with the development of the political information and the electoral competition, on one side, and with the fall of party identification and electoral stability, on the other (4).

Table2

Spanish non-voting was, on the contrary, high from the first moment: its average level surpasses that of the so-called Southern European democracies and that of the political systems that: have recently gone through crises and breakdowns. In Spain it has not been possible to reduce non-voting below the 20% obtained in the founding elections in 1977 when a "participative explosion", was expected, similar to the experienced by other countries with an authoritarian past (5); neither in 1982 when their condition of critical elections (and, incidentally, the making up of a new census) predicted a greater mobilization (6). Thus there is a feeling that the Spanish voting levels are producing suddenly results that in other contexts are perceived as the consequence of evolutive processes. That is why it would not be exaggerated to remark that one of the distinctive elements of the Spanish democracy lies not so much in its late arrival to the European scene but in its modernity. In other words, in developing a certain pattern of attitudes and behaviours towards which other European political systems are going but have not reached yet (7). This paradoxical modernity, a consequence of the democratic system's birth conditions, is also present in other dimensions of Spanish electoral behaviour: decrease of partisan alignment, progressive fall of party identification and increasing importance of leadership are some significative examples.

Table 2 also contains some information about the non-voting fluctuations, shown by the differences' dispersion around the mean and measured by the standard deviation. The greater variations usually occur in those countries with higher non-voting rates. They have fluctuated between seven and thirteen

percentage points in Portugal, France, Finland and Spain (Table 3). While in the first three of these cases fluctuations have been sporadic -maybe due to their relation with the presidential elections dynamics-, in Spain they have taken an almost cyclical form. Since the first elections in 1977, the non-voting rates have suffered constant increases or decreases of around ten percentage points, with the one exception of the last 1989 ones. To appreciate the importance of these fluctuations we must consider that voting and non-voting rates are usually characterized by a, considerable stability. The non-voting rates' differences that exist between countries seem to be compensated by the scarce variation within each of them. Just five countries among the eighteen selected for a comparative study have known variations equal or higher than 5% from the 1940s to the 1970s. The - variations' mean experienced between consecutive elections is of 2,7%, a part of which can be attributed to the census' imperfections. Consequently, a variation of 5% in the non-voting rate means a certainly important change (8). Among the little more than one hundred elections that have been held in the eighteen European countries selected, this variation equal or higher than 5% has just appeared in twenty cases; and they have affected, as shown in Table 3, eight countries, among which, as we have already said, Spain occupies an outstanding place. The fact that an important number of these variations has occurred within the last years seems to reinforce the hypothesis on the existence of an increasing electoral volatility not only related to the change of vote among the different parties but also to the very, decision of voting or non-voting in successive elections (9). And thus many of the countries selected are now experiencing positive trends in the non-voting rise, a fact that also appears in Table 2. The highest ones usually correspond to those countries with higher non-voting rates. Nevertheless, we must take into account the different rates on the basis of the positive and negative trends, as is shown in Figures 1 and 2. The non-voting trend in Switzerland cannot be put on the same level that the West Germany's, for example, in a similar way as how the British or Greek falling trends have very different departure points from the Belgian.

Table3

Figure1

Figure2

In the inner Spanish context time has confirmed the trends already noticed in the first democratic elections. As Table 4 shows, the non-voting average level in Galicia continues to be exceptional. If we consider the most non-voting regions, the complexity of the phenomenon outstands once more: Galicia and the Canary Islands, Asturias, the Basque Country and Baleares, Catalonia and Andalusia share high non-voting rates despite the economic, social, cultural and, of course, political differences they show. And something similar occurs, in the other extreme, with the most voting regions, such as Rioja and Madrid, Castile-Mancha and Valencia. The

geographical criterium has usually been useful to show some basic structural aspects from which we can classify those areas with a higher or lower tendency towards non-voting. In this sense several studies have coincided to indicate the higher non-voting rates since 1977 in the coast and island regions, and the lowest in the interior regions, with the exception of Cantabria and Levante. This generalization is also good for the districts and even for the main cities (10).

Table4

Non-voting fluctuations at national level have reproduced in the regional and district levels. Non-voting percentages in all the regions and the majority of provinces have developed along with national rates. Table 5 shows a first sample of the scarce differences appeared in the electoral geography. The coefficients of correlation for the non-voting percentages' territorial distributions are very high in the districts and, though in a lesser measure, in the main cities. This reinforces the similarity between the oscillations suffered in the districts (11). An additional proof consists in the lack of a direct relation between higher non-voting levels and greater oscillations between successive elections: the fluctuation rate -as shown in Table 4- is as high for the most nonvoting regions as for the most voting ones. Something similar happens in relation with their respective trends. They both show the particular changes that seem to be going on in some regions. For instance, Baleares, which has become since 1986 one of the most nonvoting regions; or Extremadura, which has moved from the fourth place among the most non-voting regions in 1979 to the second place among the most voting in 1989; and even Madrid, the most participative one in 1979 and 1982, and known, in relatively terms, as the Castilian meseta's "non-voting island" in 1986 and 1989 (12). Figures 3 and 4, which reflect the negative trends of Galicia and Extremadura and the positive trends of Aragón, Baleares, Navarra and Madrid, show the disparities we are talking about.

Table5

Figure3

Figure4

These changes coexist with another two trends that must be at least pointed out. The first one shows an increasing reduction of the differences between the regions' non-voting rates (Table 6). The interregional homogenization evidences itself in the smaller range of the non-voting percentages in different situations. The second trend has to do with a greater intraregional homogeneity that seems to be taking place in most of the regions. The oscillation rates' evolution in the non-voting levels of the pluriprovincial regions' districts shows also a growing similarity (Table 7). Although there are some exceptions (as in Andalusia) and some oscillations (as in the Canary Islands and Aragón, among others) the general trend in nine of the

ten selected regions goes towards the sometimes considerable reduction of the intrarregional differences that were clear in 1977. Thus we could talk of a certain "nationalization" in the Spanish electoral behaviour's participative dimension, in the sense of higher homogeneity levels between different regions as well as intraregional in those with two or more districts.

Table6

Table7

Voluntary and involuntary non-voting

Apart from its quantitative aspects, non-voting evolution and magnitudes in Spain have had a significant qualitative projection among the political elites and the electoral analysts. Their hypotheses centered around the non-voting incidence on the transition and the democratic consolidation processes, and focused on the non-voting types, its causes and the nonvoters' profile. Many observers considered the non-voting increase since 1977 as a worrying disaffection index towards the new democratic regime. Others saw its extraordinary fall in 1982 as an indicator of a new legitimacy that would permit the system's definitive consolidation. In the European electoral processes, nevertheless, the causal relation between participation and legitimacy (so that a considerable fall of the first would reduce similarly the second, and vice versa) is not very valid; and its exceptions are too many as to be confirmed in the empirical theory of democracy. But this relation seemed to have a general validity for the interpretation of the elections between 1977 and 1982. The nonvoting increase was considered as equivalent to the political system's loss of legitimacy, the weakness of parties institutionalize or the popular isolation towards their leader. Non-voting was causally seen as an effect of "disenchantement"; and non-voters were related with some supposed antidemocratic attitudes that were dangerous for the democratic consolidation. That is the reason why, after the coup d'état attempt in 1981, the higher electoral participation in 1982 was understood as a kind of plebiscite in favour of democracy: a plebiscite that finished with the consolidation crises that occurred under the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) governments and opened the way for the PSOE's governmental alternative (13).

Since 1986, 30% of non-voters has usually been simultaneously interpreted as an assimilable rate to that of the European countries and as the homogeneous expression of the lack of political preferences of a supposed "non-voters' party". Since the first interpretation has already been pointed out, we will focus on the second. In fact, any reference to non-voting and to non-voters should be always done in plural,(14). Thus the non-voting rates' oscillations have depended on the concurrence of the structural factors that characterize districts with

the occasional factors of each election. Among the latter we can mention the exceptional conditions (or conditions for change) of the 1977 and 1982 elections, and the normality (or continuity) conditions of the 1979, 1986 and 1989 elections, to which an important part of the participation's rise or fall (and maintenance) can be respectively attributed (15). From another point of view, the nonvoting typologies consider many hypotheses. The most important ones distinguish between the voluntary and the involuntary non-voting. The voluntary non-voting motivations are usually grouped as active (or of protest) and passive (or of indifference), while the reasons of the involuntary generally come from work problems, census' defects or difficulties linked to health or age (16).

We lack any empirical research that deepens in these hypotheses and offers quantitative estimates for the Spanish elections. We can nevertheless point out some interesting facts. When we ask about the non-voting motives to a representative sample of the population in a postelectoral survey, the majority of answers outstand lack of interest, indecision and indifference. But when non-voters themselves answer to this same question, the reasons of involuntary non-voting reach considerable rates (Table 8). It does not seem to exist an uniform guideline for the distribution of opinions about the causes of non-voting in national or regional elections, except perhaps for the general one of those who justify their lack of interest on vote with technical or force majeure reasons (17).

Table 8

In spite of this, the voluntary non-voting acknowledgement is also high. In the democratic systems the dominant assumption of voting as a civic duty makes non-voting a reprobable behaviour which is why many non-voters conceal their attitude in, survey questions or justify it with involuntary reasons. But it is likely that the agitated suffrage's history in Spain and the social conditions of its recent establishment have weakened the cultural assumption of the obligation of voting. Some two thirds of Spaniards do vote because they consider it a civic duty (Table 9). This is a high rate but it is still far from the overwhelming percentages -near to 90%- in other countries (18). And something similar happens with the satisfaction feelings linked to the vote, which are loudly low in Spain (19). Besides, this lower cultural and emotional projection of vote is reinforced by a higher acceptance of non-voting as a legitimate political expression form (Table 10). Comparatively with other Southern European countries, Spanish and Portuguese condemn non-voting less forcefully than Italians and Greeks do, and show, on the contrary, a more marked understanding attitude towards it (20). The fact that the social groups that seem more understanding are the younger and with higher education levels seems to point out towards a future increase of the non-voting legitimacy. So, the Spanish case is also in this aspect set aside from the European countries, where the voting civic duty or/and the social pressure for voting explain high participation levels

despite a slim interest in politics or a low sense of political competence (21).

Table9

Table10

Among the various voluntary non-voting types it is very likely that the positive or active is certainly a minority. It consists in expressing, by non-voting, an opinion on the political system, the structure of electoral choices or the dynamics of partisan competition. The active non-voters -with a higher ideological and political interest level than the average- have very different motivations, generally critical, with which they want to influence the political life. In 1989 a significative section of the Spanish population considered that non-voting was justified as a protest form (Table 11). Although this is the motivation chosen by almost half of the non-voters in Table 11, in postelectoral surveys the protest or critical option is adduced by a much lower rate (22). Spaniards do not generally show significative differences when they relate non-voting to a group of motivations, which include lack of, party attraction, non-voters' irresponsability or a protest expression. But non-voters themselves seem to vary a little this diagnosis by emphasizing the importance of the party factors and logically reducing their irresponsability doses. The resulting image fits without any difficulty with the nonvoting social bases: the majority of non-voters correspond to the passive type. As in other Western countries, their absence at the polls is mainly due to social marginality, political apathy, lack of interest, lack of information and indifference (23). Many studies have confirmed also in Spain higher non-voting levels among women and housewives, the youngs and the old persons, unmarried, unemployed, pensioners and students; among those with lower studies levels, lower income, who do not belong to any voluntary society, declare to be good catholics, atheist and not interested in religion; and among those who .lack any information about the political events, who consider themselves completely out of the political life or who are not interested at all in politics (24). Although with some exceptions of secondary importance, these sociodemographic profiles of non-voters are substantially the same at the regional level.

Table11

As for the involuntary non-voting, the principal types are related to force majeure reasons, to the age or to the electoral register. A considerable sector of non-voters usually explain their absence from the polls with such reasons as work, duties, unexpected situations, trips, being out of town and illness. Although it is difficult to determine them, in many cases these explanations are really justifications of a more or less voluntary behaviour. In the second place, age problems usually affect the young people and especially the elder. In spite of the young people's usual non-voting (25), the involuntary non-voting is usually applied to the most aged electors who are susceptible of suffering physical or psychic problems that

can prevent them from voting. The importance of this fact is better seen if we consider the trend towards a progressive aging of the Western societies. In Spain the rate of people older than 60 among the adult population has risen from 18.2% in 1960 to 23.8% in 1986; a conservative estimate for 1995 would reach 24.3% (26). According to data from different polls, about 15% of them usually do not vote adducing illness in a considerable proportion. We can suppose anyway that the rate is really higher given the general lack of involvement of the elder and of their lesser accessibility to be interviewed (27).

Lastly, the large number of people who assert that they could not vote for census' problems is outstanding: between a fourth and a fifth of non-voters in the legislative elections of 1979, 1982 and 1986, according to the respective post-electoral surveys (28). Is it a weighty argument or, on the contrary, just an excuse? Possibly both, although in different degrees for different non-voters. Some studies have outlined the importance of a census created by the Administration, to the point of considering it as a necessary condition -although not sufficient- to provide a higher electoral participation (29). But it can also happen that the census affects notably the non-voting levels' distortion (almost always by rising it). Thus the technical non-voting appears as formed by a group of different factors which imply from the census' difficulties to reflect faithfully the population's natural movements until the existence of accumulated mistakes due to its unavoidable aging. It is impossible to make conjectures about the impact of census' imperfections on non-voting, but an error of three or four percentage points has been estimated as probable in many countries (30). The reckonings of the technical non-voting significance have allowed the correction of, the official nonvoting figures -also known as "apparent"- with more adjusted, or "real", ones in countries as the West Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom (31). In Spain many analysts have criticized the electoral census deficiencies, which are claimed to be responsible of the non-voting quantitative excess in several percentage points (32). These criticisms have increased recently despite the elaboration of a new electoral census on the basis of the population census of 1980 and its correction in 1986. Thus, for instance, a conservative estimate of the accumulated errors of the 1986 electoral census asserts that the non-voting official figures should, be reduced at least between three and seven percentage points (33). If it is true, as it has been said, that, ceteris paribus, nonvoting will be so much lower as more recent is the electoral census' compilation (34), it seems also true that in Spain the technical non-voting has been considerable even in the moments after the electoral census' creation, getting worse as time goes by.

Non-voting mobility

Lastly, we must make a short reference to the non-voters' mobility. This is

a scarcely known question and generally solved by the common images that emphasize the results of the "non-voters' party". In the majority of cases one of the implicit assumptions in these images is that of the non-voting stability, that is, the fact that it is always the same people -the "permanent non-voters"- who do not vote: this qualification would really be a redundancy. But some research has revealed that voting and non-voting are complementary facets, more than opposite. As it has been said, voters and non-voters do not form two permanent faces of the electoral participation but are characterized, at least a priori, by an intermittent behaviour (35). There is also some empirical evidence of the permanent voters', permanent non-voters' and intermittent voters/non-voters' categories. Although data sources are fragmentary and the obtention methods limit their validity, they show the non-voting mobility in successive elections. Thus, the estimates done for France and the West Germany, among other countries, coincide in pointing out the scarce proportion of permanent non-voters and the majority of sporadic or accidental non-voters, that is, of those who do not vote in one election but do in the next one (36). The United Kingdom case is of particular interest given the similarity between its non-voting rates with the Spanish ones. An analysis of four British parliamentary elections in the 60's and 70's has demonstrated a high proportion of permanent voters and an, in practice, irrelevant rate of permanent non-voters: 72% of the interviewed declared to have voted in all four elections, just 3% acknowledged having voted in neither, and 2% in one (37). In the Spanish case, permanent and accidental non-voting rates are higher (Table 12). Although we must take precautions when reading the quantitative frequent because of the different nature of the elections studied (38), it is clear that non-voting is far from being a kind of permanent and significant body of non-voters. Non-voters' mobility is considerable in sight of the percentage of just accidental non-voters; and we could add even of those who are usual voters, given the fact that, in 1980 and 1983, "first-order" and "second-order" elections have entered in the accounts. These data have been later confirmed with, direct information about Spaniards' electoral habits. Grouped in two basic categories, some eight of each ten interviewed in many surveys recognize to vote always or almost always, while the total number of those who vote just sometimes, never or almost never reaches a minority of 14% (39). And as outstanding as this distribution is the coherence they show when we compare their voting attitudes with their actual electoral behaviour (Table.13).

Table12

Table13

Table1

TABLE 1												
Non-voting in Spain, 1977-1989. (In percentages) (*)												
	Years											
Elections	77	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
National	21	32	-	-	20	-	-	-	29	-	-	-
Regional												
Basque Country	-	-	41	-	-	-	32	-	30	-	-	-
Catalonia	-	-	38	-	-	-	36	-	-	-	41	-
Gallcia	-	-	-	55	-	-	-	43	-	-	-	41
Andalusia	-	-	-	-	34	-	-	-	28	-	-	-
13 region	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	28	-	-
Local	-	40	-	-	-	34	-	-	-	30	-	-
European	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	45

(*) Percentages have been rounded up to facilitate its reading

Table2

TABLE 2				
Non-voting levels, fluctuations and trends in the national elections in Europe, 1970 - 1989 (*)				
Country	Level	Fluctuation	Trend	Number of elections
Switzerland (a)	49.54	3.76	2.490	5
Spain	26.7	4.61	1.488	5
United Kingdom	25.35	2.29	-0.040	6
Ireland	25.23	1.64	0.845	6
France	24.48	6.59	3.570	5
Finland	21.82	4.88	1.035	7
Greece (b)	21.33	2.92	-0.815	6
Portugal	19.5	7.02	3.897	6
Norway	18.36	1.4	0.182	5
Netherland	16.06	3.2	-0.668	6
Denmark	14.2	4.0	0.290	9
West Germany	11.24	2.41	1.520	5
Luxembourg (b)	10.73	0.59	0.650	3
Sweden	10.14	1.9	0.321	7
Iceland	10.08	0.74	0.345	6
Italy	8.76	1.64	0.760	5
Austria (a)	8.27	0.99	0.366	6
Belgium (b)	6.67	1.64	-0.400	7
Total	18.24	2.89		105

(*) Levels are expressed in percentages and have been calculated by the non-voting percentages mean of the 18 countries; fluctuation, by the mean standard deviation; and trends, by the regression line's inclination quotient.

(a) Obligatory vote in four Cantons (switxerland) and three Ländern (Austria)

(b) Obligatory vote. (In Greece, for voters from 21 to 70 years old who live within a distance of 20 Kms. from their district).

Table3

TABLE 3		
Non-voting variations (higher than 5 points) in the national elections in Europe, 1970 - 1989		
Countries	Elections years with variations	Percentage points of non-voting increase and decrease (-)
France	1988-1986	12.7
France	1978-1981	12.4
Finland	1983-1981	10.9
Spain	1979-1977	10.6
Denmark	1988-1987	10.0
Portugal	1976-1975	8.4
Spain	1986-1982	8.2
Portugal	1983-1980	7.6
Finland	1975-1972	7.5
Netherland	1982-1981	6.0
United Kingdom	1974 (oct-feb)	5.9
Portugal	1985-1983	5.6
Finland	1981-1979	-11.3
Spain	1982-1979	-10.9
Frnace	1986-1981	-7.7
United Kingdom	1974 (feb)-1970	-6.5
Greece	1985-1981	-6.4
Denmark	1984-1981	-5.7
Netherland	1986-1982	-5.2

Table4

TABLE4			
Non-voting in the national Spanish elections, 1977-1989: levels, fluctuations and trends by regions (*)			
Region	Level	Fluctuation	Trend
Galicia	41.21	4.77	-0.955
Canary Islands	32.39	5.55	1.132
Asturias	30.34	4.36	0.732
Basque Country	28.44	5.73	1.984
Baleares	28.07	6.94	3.714
Catalonia	27.16	5.94	2.210
Andalusia	26.97	4.70	1.340
Navarra	25.27	5.90	2.760
Aragón	24.70	5.58	3.197
Extremadura	24.58	3.29	-0.114
Castile-Leon	24.26	4.90	1.280
Cantabria	23.55	4.51	0.877
Murcia	23.19	3.77	0.923
La Rioja	22.28	5.29	2.232
Madrid	21.97	6.06	2.630
Castile-Mancha	21.54	4.65	1.178
C.Valenciana	20.75	4.60	1.898
Total	26.7	4.61	

(*) See Table 2 for the meaning of level, fluctuation and trend

Table5

TABLE 5
Correlations between percentages of non-voting in
national elections in the fifty major cities (1977-1986)
and in the districts (1977-1989) (*)

Years	Cities				Districts				
	77	79	82	86	77	79	82	86	89
1977	-				-				
1979	.70	-			.87	-			
1982	.31	.64	-		.86	.95	-		
1986	.19	.61	.72	-	.75	.84	.89	-	-
1989 (**)	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	.64	.74	.77	.93	-

(*) We have selected those cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants.

(**) No data for 1989 in the source used.

SOURCES: For cities, Manuel Justel, "Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España", in Revista de Estudios Políticos, 68, 1990, p.367. For districts our own elaboration.

Table6

TABLE 6					
Non-voting in national elections: evolution outlines by regions, 1977-1989					
	1977	1979	1982	1986	1989
.Percentage points of difference between the most and the less participative regions	23.8	23.8	23.8	17.1	15.6
.Percentage points of difference between the two most non-voting regions	11.7	10.4	10.4	7.2	1.5
.Percentage points of difference between Galicia and the national average	17.8	17.1	17.1	11.8	9.1

SOURCE: Adapted from Manuel Justel, "Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España", in Revista de Estudios Políticos, 68, 1990, p.363.

Table7

TABLE 7
Non-voting in national elections: intraregional homogeneity by
regions with two or more provinces, 1977, 1982 and 1989 (*)

Region	1977	1982	1989
Galicia	4.9	5.2	2.5
Canary Islands	6.6	0.5	1.3
Basque Country	3.4	1.6	0.3
Catalonia	1.5	1.2	0.9
Andalusia	2.5	3.1	4.4
Aragon	0.7	1.2	0.4
Extremadura	1.3	0.9	0.9
Castile-Leon	3.2	2.7	2.6
Castile-Mancha	2.1	1.7	1.1
C. Valenciana	1.5	1.9	0.6

(*) Figures are standard deviations and express the variations of the participation levels in the different districts of each region in the elections selected. Regions are ordered by reason of their average non-voting level, shown in Table 4.

Table8

TABLE 8									
Voluntary and involuntary non-voting in the national and regional elections, 1979-1987 (In percentages)									
	National			Regional					
Non-voting	1979	1982	1986	Catalonia	Galicia	Andalusia	Regional	Basque	Reg. and C. European
				1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1987
Voluntary	56	30	45	36	18	21	35	62	56
Unvoluntary or technical	44	66	53	50	73	72	53	28	38
Others/ No answer	-	4	2	14	9	7	12	10	6
(n)	(1.081)	(264)	(715)	(410)	(811)	(379)	(293)	(463)	(400)

SOURCES: Data Bank of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS); in all the cases it is the addition of the reasons adduced by non-voters in post-electoral surveys.

Table9

TABLE 9		
Voting motivations, 1980 and 1989 (In percentages)		
Motivations	1980	1989
It is a civic duty	56	61
It satisfies myself	2	3
To help my party	11	9
Impede parties I do not like from winning	6	7
Others	3	8
No answer	22	12
(n)	(3.457)	(3.371)

SOURCE: CIS Data Bank

Table10

TABLE 10					
Opinions on non-voting in Spain (1985 and 1989) and in Italy, Greece and Portugal (1985) (In percentages)					
Opinions	Spain		Italy	Greece	Portugal
	1985	1989			
Non-voting is always an error	51	45	79	79	53
Non-voting is a way to express one's opinions	21	22	10	11	26
Sometimes the best you can do is non-vote	15	14	6	7	5
No answer	13	19	5	3	16
(n)	(2.490)	(3.346)	(2.074)	(1.998)	(2.000)

SOURCE: CIS Data Bank. Data for Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal in 1985 belong to the "Four Nation Survey", directed by Julian Santamaria and Giacomo Sani

Table11

TABLE 11
Non-voting justification reasons, by different social, ideological and party groups, 1989 (*) (In percentages)

Reasons	Age		Education		Ideology		Vote in 1986			TOTAL
	18-25	60	First Sc.	Univ.	Left	Right	PSOE	AP	Nonvoting	
Lack of party (a)	69	47	61	70	65	61	62	58	65	60
Irresponsability (b)	41	34	43	43	50	46	47	41	31	41
Protest (c)	43	27	40	43	39	38	35	38	47	38
Not used to (d)	29	23	33	22	28	28	32	28	30	29
Indifference (e)	28	24	28	22	23	22	24	22	38	27
Unnecessary (f)	16	13	19	9	16	22	17	13	15	16
(n)	(651)	(702)	(1.186)	(352)	(261)	(104)	(1.173)	(420)	(575)	(3.346)

(*) Figures are proportions of people who agree to each reason

- (a) "There are people who don't have a party which represents their ideas"
- (b) "There are irresponsible people that want everything without even care to vote"
- (c) "Non-voting is a protest form when things go wrong"
- (d) "They are not used to vote"
- (e) "The main parties are so alike that it does not really matter which one wins"
- (f) "If everything goes well, why should I care to vote?"

SOURCE: CIS Data Bank

Table12

TABLE 12				
Non-voting in Spain, 1980 and 1983 (*) (In percentages)				
Non-voters types	1980		1983	
	All	Constant non-voters excluded	All	Constant non-voters excluded
Constant non-voters (a)	11	24	7	17
Usual non-voters (b)	10	24	7	18
Occasional non-voters(c)	23	52	26	65
Constant voters (d)	56	-	60	-
(n)	(1.458)	(645)	(13.376)	(5.350)

(*)Number of times the interviewed did not vote (i) in 1980, in the national elections of 1977 and 1979, the local on April 1979 and the Constitution referendum in 1978; (ii) in 1983, the national elections in 1982 and the local in 1979 and 1983.

(a) They did not vote in the four selected elections in 1980 and the three in 1983.
(b) They did not vote in three elections in 1980 and in two in 1983.
(c) They did not vote in three elections in 1980 and in two in 1983
(d) They voted in four elections in 1980 and three in 1983.

SOURCES: For 1980, adapted from J.R.Montero, "Una nota introductoria sobre los tipos de abstención y la movilidad de los abstencionistas", in Equip de Sociologia Electoral, Estudis Electorals/7. El comportament electoral a l'Estat espanyol (1977-1982), (Barcelona: Fundació Jaume Bofill/Edicions La Magrana, 1984), p.91; for 1983, M.Justel, "Panoramica de la abstencion electoral en España", in Revista de estudios politicos, 68, 1990, p.375. Data for 1980 have been obtained from a CIS survey of July 1980, with a national sample of 3.457 cases; and 1983 data come from another CIS survey to a national sample of municipalities with more than 100.000 inhabitants, with 21.505 cases.

Table13

TABLE 13
Voting and non-voting in the national elections of 1986,
by participation habits, 1986 (*)

Behaviour in 1986	Participation Habits			Total
	Votes always or almost always	Votes sometimes	Votes never or almost never	
Voted	94	45	14	85
Could not vote	4	19	15	6
Did not want to vote	2	36	69	8
No answer	-	-	2	1
(n)	(7.232)	(655)	(478)	(8.497)

(*) Both the participation habits and the 1986 behaviour are based in the interviewed own declarations.

SOURCE: Adapted from Manuel Justel, "Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España", which will soon be published in Revista de Estudios Políticos, 68, 1990, p.376.

Figure1

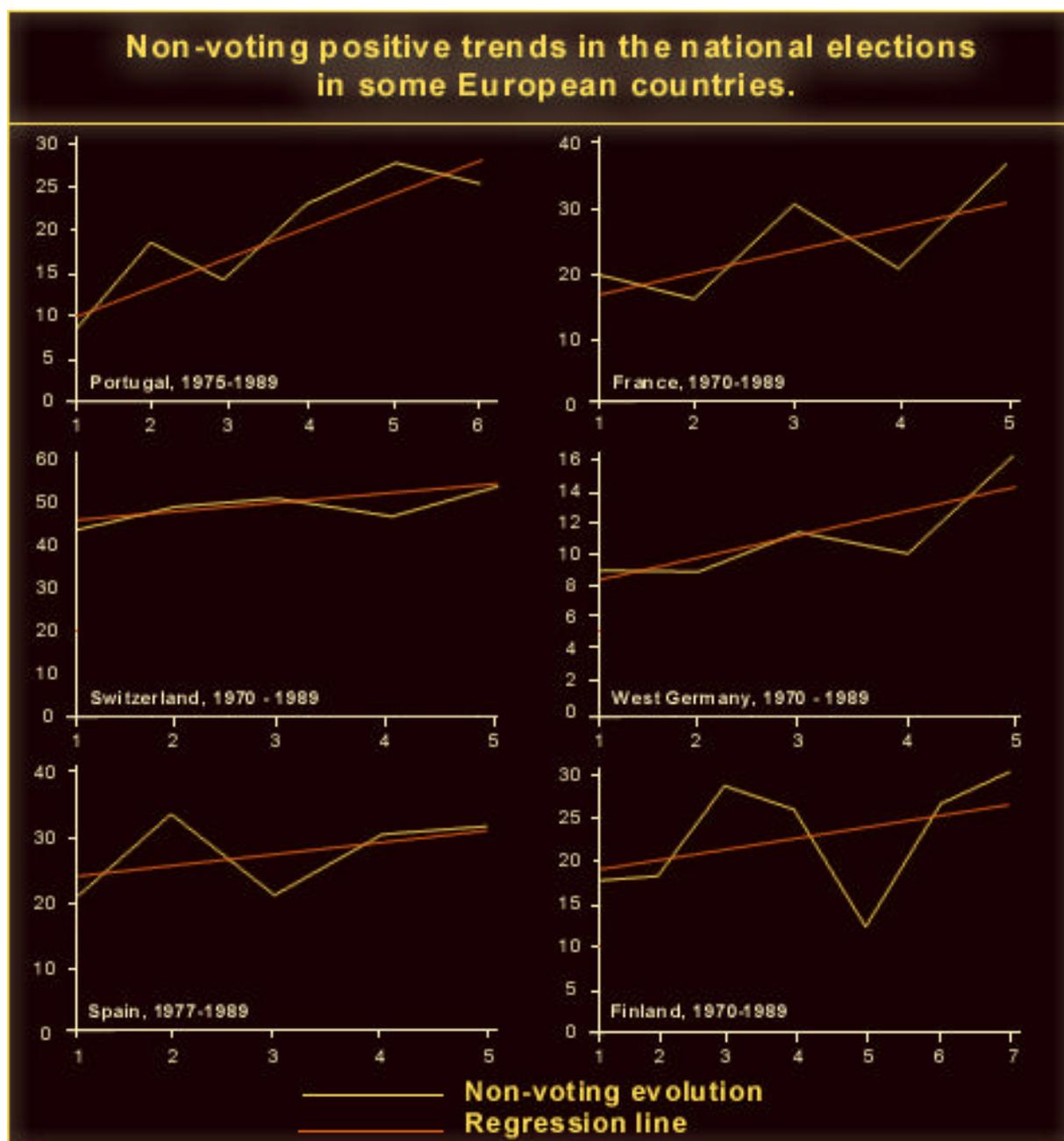
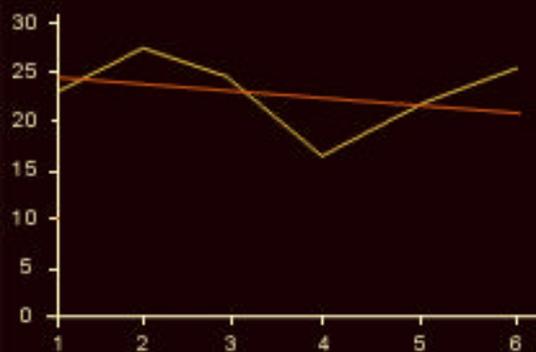
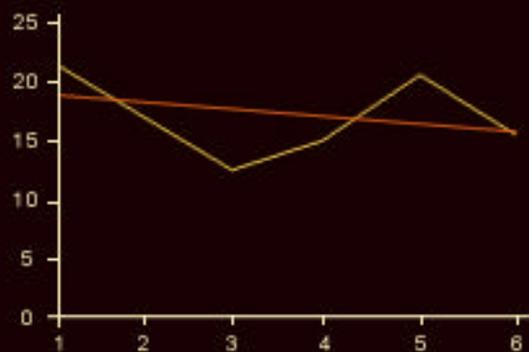


Figure2

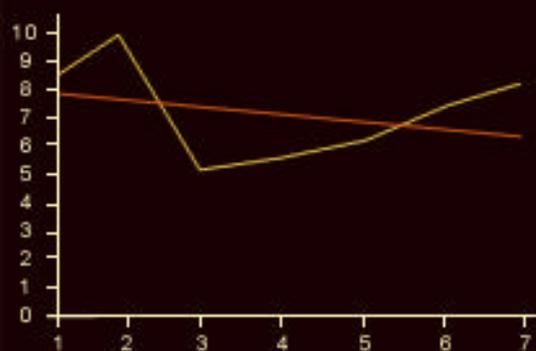
Non-voting negative trends in the national elections in Europe



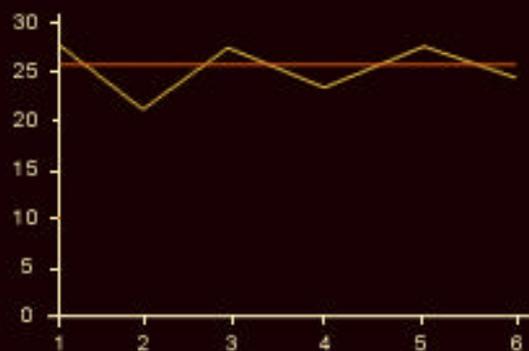
Greece, 1974 - 1989



Holland, 1970 - 1989



Belgium, 1970 - 1989

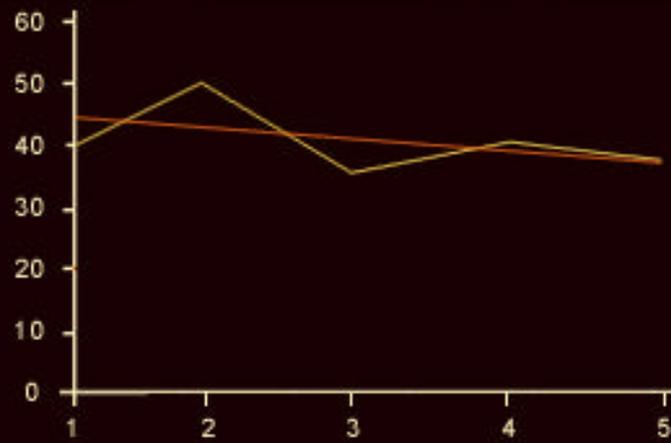


United Kingdom, 1970 - 1989

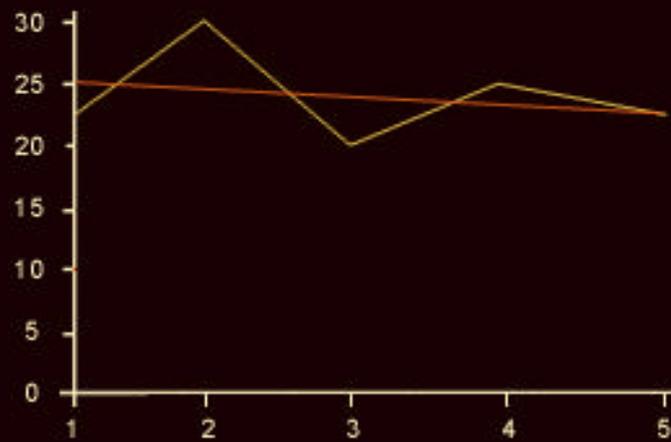
— Non-voting evolution
— Regression line

Figure3

**Non-voting in the national spanish elections, 1977-1989:
Negative trends by regions.**



Galicia

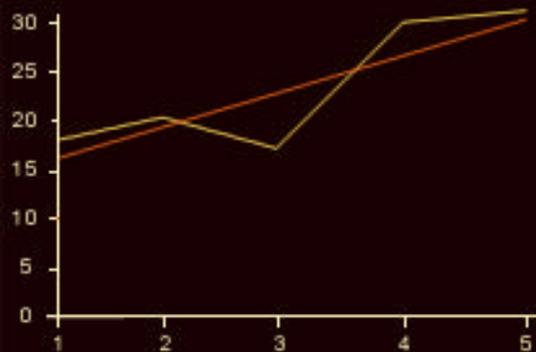


Extremadura

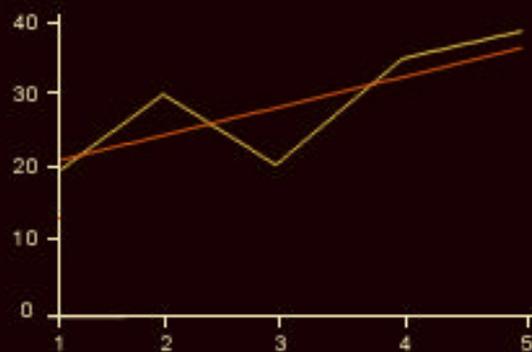
— Non-voting evolution
— Regression line

Figure4

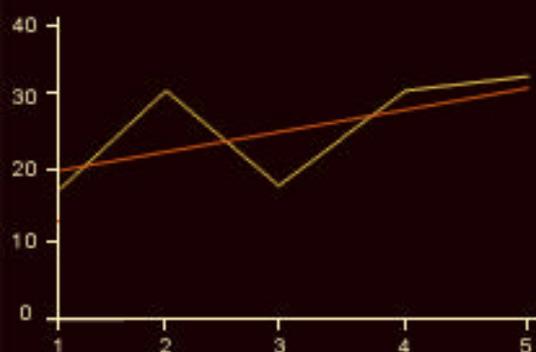
**Non-voting in the general spanish elections, 1977-1989:
positive trends by regions.**



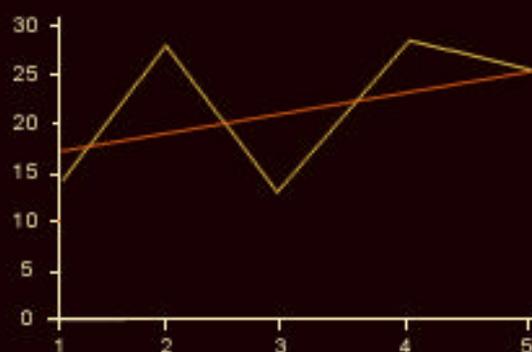
Aragon



Baleares



Navarra



Madrid

— Non-voting evolution
— Regression line

NOTES

- (1) Cf. REIF, Karlheinz: "Ten second order elections", in K. Reif (ed.), Ten european elections (Aldershot: Gower, 1985) , pp. 10-44; and REIF, K. and SCHMITT, Hermann: "Nine second-order national elections: a conceptual framework for the analysis of european elections results", in European Journal of Political Research, 9, 1980, pp. 3-44.
- (2) Cf. BLUMDER, Jay G. and FOX, Anthony D.: The european voter: popular responses to the first Community election (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1981); REIF, Karlheinz: "National electoral cycles and european elections 1979 and 1984", in Electoral Studies, 3, 1984, pp. 244-255; CACIAGLI Mario and SCARAMOZZINO Pasquale (eds.), Il voto di chi no vota. L'astensionismo elettorale in Italia e in Europa (Milán: Edizioni di Comunità, 1983); and M. CACIAGLI and Piergiorgio CORBETTA (eds.), Elezioni regionali e sistema politico nazionale. Italia. Spagna e Repubblica Federale Tedesca (Bologna: Mulino, 1987).
- (3) Cf. MONTERO, José R.: "Niveles, fluctuaciones y tendencias del abstencionismo electoral en España y Europa", in Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 28, 1984, pp. 223-242; and "L'astensionismo elettorale in Europa: tendenze, tipologie e alcuni problemi di analisi", in Quaderni dell'Osservatorio Elettorale, 13, 1984, pp. 37-77; DITTRICH, Karl and JOHANSEN, Lars. N.: "Voting turnout in Europe, 1945-1978: myths and realities", in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds.), Western european party systems: continuity and change (London: Sage, 1983), PP. 95-114; CREWE, Ivor: "Electoral participation", in David Butler, Howard R. Penniman and Austin Ranney (eds.), Democracy at the polls. A comparative study of competitive national elections (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981), pp. 216-263; and POWELL, G. Bingham: "Voting participation in thirty democracies: effects of socio-economic, legal and partisan environments", in Richard Rose (ed.), Electoral participation. A comparative analysis (London: Sage, 1980), pp. 5-34.
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- (7) LINZ, Juan J.: "Consideraciones finales", in Linz y Montero, eds., Crisis y cambio, cit., pp. 657 ss.
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- (9) SJÖBLOM, Gunnar: "Political change and political accountability: a propositional inventory of causes and effects", in Daalder and Mair (eds.), Western european party systems, cit., pp. 238 ss.
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- (13) MONTERO, J.R.: "La vuelta a las urnas", cit., pp. 74 ss.; LOPEZ PINTOR, Rafael and others, Estudio postelectoral de la opinión pública tras las elecciones de octubre de 1982 (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 1983), pp. 25 ss.; NAVARRO Francisco J., BOTELLA, J. y otros, Las elecciones generales de 1982. Opiniones y actitudes políticas de los españoles (Madrid: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1983), pp. 145 ss.; and VALLES, Josep M.: "Las elecciones legislativas, del 28 de octubre de 1982: una aproximación de urgencia", in Revista de Estudios Políticos, 33, 1983, pp. 226 ss.
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- (17) JUSTEL, M.: "Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España", cit., pp. 28 ss.; and LOPEZ PINTOR, Rafael: La opinión pública española del franquismo a la democracia (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1982), pp. 126-127.
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- (19) According to ALMOND, Gabriel and Sidney VERBA's data (La cultura cívica. Estudio sobre la participación democrática en cinco naciones; Madrid: Euroamérica, 1970), 71% of citizens of the United States who had recently voted declared to feel satisfied going to the electoral colleges; it was followed by the United Kingdom, with 43%; the FRG, with 35%; and Italy, with 30%.
- (20) For the Italian case, see Renato Mannheimer and Giacomo Sani, Il mercato elettorale. Identikit dell'elettore italiano (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), pp.42 ss.
- (21) For instance, in the book edited by ROSE, Richard (Electoral behaviour: a comparative handbook; New York: Free Press, 1974) this type of explanation is given in the case of Belgium (HILL, Keith, "Belgium: political change in a segmented society", p. 59), the FRG (URWIN, Derek W., "Germany: continuity and change in electoral politics", p.143) and Finland (PESONEN, Petti, "Finland: party support in a fragmented society", p. 277).
- (22) According to several CIS post-electoral polls, the protest option was taken just by 3% of nonvoters in the local elections in 1979, 13% in 1982 and 12% in 1986.
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- (27) JUSTEL, M. : Los viejos y la política (Madrid: Centro de Investigación Sociológicas, 1983), PP. 186 ss.
- (28) LOPEZ PINTOR, R. : La opinión pública española, cit. , p. 126; LOPEZ PINTOR, R. and JUSTEL, M.: “Iniciando el análisis de las elecciones generales de 1982 (Informe de un sondeo postelectoral)”, in Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1982, p. 156; MONTERO, J.R.: “La vuelta a las urnas”, cit. , p. 113; and Banco de Datos del CIS (encuesta postelectoral de 1986).
- (29) POWELL, G.B.: “Voting turnout in thirty democracies” cit. , pp. 11 ss. , and
- (30) CREWE, I.: “Electoral participation”; cit. , p. 233.
- (31) NOHLEN, Dieter and STURM, Roland: “L’astensionismo nella Republica federale tedesca: un problema político ed analítico”, in CACIAGLI and SCARAMOZZINO (eds.), Il voto di chi non vota , cit. , p. 52 LANCELOT, Marie-Thérèse and LANCELOT, Alain: “A cartographical approach to the presidential election, may 1974, in Howard R. Penniman (ed.), France at the polls. The presidential elections of 1974 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), p. 151; LANCELOT, L’abstencionnisme électoral en France, cit. , pp. 26 ss. ; BARNES, Samuel H.: “Italy: religion and class in electoral behaviour”, en Rose (ed.), Electoral behaviour, cit. pp. 177-178; MANHEIMER and SANI, Il mercato elettorale, cit. , pp. 35 ss. ; BALSON, D. and McALLISTER, I.: “Whose vote counts? Electoral registration and the 40 per cent rule”, in Political Quarterly, 51, 1980 pp. 218 ss. ; SWADDLE, K. And HEATH, A.: “Official and reported turnout in the british general election of 1987”, in British Journal of Political Science, 19, 1989, pp. 537 ss.
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- (33) JUSTEL, M.: “Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España”, op. cit. , pp. 8-9. The electoral roll’s inflation is basically due to the incorporation of the young generations without the correspondent exclusion of the withdrawals caused by death, as well as the new registrations for change of residence without the respective withdrawals in the original roll.
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- (37) CREWE, I, FOX, T. and ALT, J.: “Non-voting in british general elections”, cit. , pp. 47 ss.
- (38) MONTERO, J.R.: “ Una nota introductoria sobre los tipos de abstención y la movilidad de los abstencionistas”, cit. , pp. 89 ss.
- (39) JUSTEL, M.: “Panorámica de la abstención electoral en España”, cit. , pp. 25.