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Social engagement of citizens



This study conducted as a survey in 2011 to a sample of 3,000 people of the Spanish population over 18 years old and living in households with telephones, has analyzed the social engagement of this population and concluded that 36% of Spanish people is socially engaged. This results are part of Sergi Blancafort's doctoral thesis, researcher at the Josep Laporte Foundation (UAB) and member of the Research Group on Globalization, Education and Social Policy (GEPS), at the Department of Sociology at the UAB.

According to the results of this research, the engagement in volunteer organizations and the importance given to participating in activities that benefit the entire population is greater the higher the level of education of Spanish people. So, while 6% of uneducated people participates actively in these organizations, the figure rises to 13% in the case of people with university education. 87% of college-educated people give much thought to participate in activities that benefit the entire population, while the percentage of people with almost no studies that give the same importance to these activities drops to 76%.

The level of education is clearly associated with the attitude toward taxes and spending on social policies. As education level increases, a greater preference for raising taxes and increasing spending on social policies appears. The 38% of the university educated people preferred a greater social spending at the expense of increasing taxes and 35% would oppose this measure, while only 14% of people with no education or primary school is in favor.

This research also shows an association between health status and many of the variables of civic competence and attitude toward taxes and social policies. People with a good health considers crucial to vote, and show greater confidence in government and politicians. The worse the health status of individuals, the less likely to increase social spending by increasing taxes.

Age and gender also have influence in the analyzed variables. 50-64 years old age group is more interested in political and social issues. From 35 years old on, citizens are more favorable to higher taxes and higher spending on social policies, and have a greater sense of insecurity in the future. Regarding gender, women care more on civic values. Instead, men show a greater interest in policy issues. Men are more inclined than women to pay more taxes in exchange for higher spending on social policies.

Based on all the variables analyzed in the study, the researchers have developed a three group typology of Spanish citizens, according to which 36% have a profile "engaged", ie, are active members of voluntary organizations, consider important to vote, participate in activities that benefit the entire population, trust government and politicians and are interested in participating in a committee on public spending on social policies.

18% have a profile "apathetic" not interested in political or social issues, they do not consider important the vote or follow politics today, do not trust the government or politicians. The group of citizens with a profile "ambiguous" amounts to 46%, and is composed of individuals who are between "a little and quite" interested in matters of social participation.

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References

"Competencia cívica y actitudes hacia el Estado del Bienestar: la opinión pública de los ciudadanos españoles", Sergi Blancafort's doctoral thesis read at the UAB, october 2012.

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