

# Turnout Models and Election Context

Kelly T. Rowe

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Dr. Ignacio Lago Peñas

DEPARTAMENT DE CIÈNCIES POLÍTiques I SOCIALS



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## **Abstract**

The number of people choosing to vote or abstain varies over elections and across countries. The reasons why individuals may choose to vote in one election but not the next are not completely known. Election context seems to play a role but there is not a clear set of contextual variables that political scientists employ that capture why turnout - or individual decisions to vote - fluctuates from one election to the next. There remains a need fill this literature gap. This dissertation attempts to move our understanding of turnout variation forward. It does so by analysing three election contexts with cross-national as well as individual-level data for specific countries. The results suggest that factors such as emotional responses to election issues, the economy, the party system, and class voting, have an impact on whether people vote or not.

Keywords: turnout; class voting; economic voting; party systems; emotion; election context

## **Resumen**

El número de personas eligiendo si votar o abstenerse varia entre elecciones a través de países. Las razones por la que un individuo pueda decidir votar en unas elecciones, pero no en las siguientes son completamente desconocidas. El contexto de las elecciones parece desempeñar un papel, pero no hay un claro grupo de variables contextuales que politólogos usen que explique porque la participación electoral fluctúe de unas elecciones a las siguientes. Sigue existiendo la necesidad de llenar este vacío en la literatura. Esta tesis doctoral intenta mover la comprensión de la variación de la participación hacia adelante. Mediante el analisis de tres contextos electorales y usando datos de varios países así como a nivel individual para ciertos países, los resultados sugieren que factores como respuestas emocionales a temas electorales, la economía, el sistema de partidos y el voto de clase, tienen un impacto en si la población votará o no.

Palabras clave: participación electoral; voto de clase; voto economico; sistema de partidos; emociones



## **Preface**

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify and fill gaps in the literature related to turnout with original research. Specifically it identifies certain contextual factors that impact a person's decision to vote or not. The findings contribute to existing scholarship on turnout and particularly to advancing our understanding of why turnout varies from one election to the next.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The spirit of scientific research can be thought of as team work; that is because a researcher's empirical findings advance in one way or another the theory it addresses. Whether it is through confirmation, explanation, or discovery, scientific knowledge is either greatly or gradually improved. One method of advancing science is to identify gaps and shortcomings in established theories. This is an especially useful method for the social sciences, since explaining and predicting human behaviour is complex. The challenge for social scientists is partly reflected in many empirical models where explanatory power tends to be unable to rival those produced in natural or physical sciences. In other words, many social science theories are indeed a work-in-progress, and therefore remain open for further development and debate.

In the study of electoral behaviour, particularly voting, there are many variables that preoccupy researchers; voting is a human behaviour that appears logical but at the same time is perplexing. Why do people (not) vote? There are approximately six major theories along with some corresponding questions related to why people vote or abstain. Rational-choice theorists ask what's at stake or what's to gain in voting/not voting? Resource theorists ask who are (non) voters and what are their socioeconomic characteristics? Institutional theorists ask what is the context that facilitates (not) voting? Psychological theorists ask what are the political attitudes of (non) voters? The socialisation perspective asks who are the parents and friends of (non) voters? And the mobilisation theorists ask whether (non) voters are motivated by political parties or not. These theories, with their multitude of variables, illustrate the complexity of explaining behaviour that is based on one seemingly basic question: why do people (not) vote? This dissertation addresses, at the core, that same question. By identifying further gaps in election turnout literature it aims to contribute to the ongoing debate. More specifically it addresses some election-contextual variables related to turnout change, at the individual-level and across countries.

## 1.1. The concept and its measurement

Election turnout refers to the (registered or voting-age) population who voted in a given election. In some statistical models it can also refer to whether a person is likely to vote or not. Even though election turnout has been analysed across individuals, countries, and time; there it can be measured in different ways. If an aggregate-level analysis is conducted then turnout is either the percent of the voting age population (VAP) who voted *or* the percentage of registered voters who voted (or the differences of those figures if calculated between elections). At the individual-level, surveys are used; either a post-election survey when a citizen is asked to answer whether she voted in the past election; or, in light of the voter over-report issues in some countries, a combination of pre and post survey responses are used to build a turnout variable. Lastly, experiments are also used for turnout research.

Each measurement approach has its strengths and weaknesses. Aggregate VAP or registered voters measure is desirable simply because it is actual raw data. Additionally, the turnout data can be differenced from one election to the next. However, aggregate analyses alone can only accomplish so much; due to the absence of individual-level data, there are a number of assumptions made about the actual population such as the reasons for certain behaviour. In other words, there is the possible issue of spuriousness but, further, the unlikelihood of making causal claims. Surveys are an excellent tool for getting at individual characteristics and causality assumptions. One issue that survey data sometimes faces is relying on the honesty of individuals' answers. Answering honestly might not be easy for everyone, particularly when the questions are related to behaviours that one might deem 'desirable'. A possible way around this issue is to have corresponding vote validation records or, in absence of this, to simply build a voter likelihood profile for each individual. Lastly, conducting voting experiments is an ideal method for measuring election turnout probability across individuals and in a variety of settings. One possible problem with experiments, however, is that they are often designed to simulate actual scenarios; some experiments do not take place during actual elections, for example. Notwithstanding the faults of each method, they have produced insightful results: aggregate cross-national and

cross-sectional analyses have been particularly helpful for identifying institutional factors; individual-level studies have generated significant findings related to psychological and resource variables; and experiments have identified some social and mobilisation variables, for example.

In this dissertation, several variable measurements are used: aggregate cross-sectional and aggregate turnout differences, survey-reported turnout, and survey voter propensity score. As mentioned, aggregate data are reliable but they are also good for comparing across national institutional settings. Here the differenced aggregate data are combined with economic, party system indicators, and party results. To confirm assumptions about individual-level behaviours, all aggregate analyses included in this dissertation are backed up with individual-level data. Lastly, the survey data are used to get at potential causal mechanisms and psychological factors related to turnout such as political attitudes and emotion.

## 1.2. The relevance of the topic

Why do some people vote and others do not? Why is turnout higher in some countries than others? Why do some elections have higher turnout than other elections? These are just a few of the main questions that have preoccupied a number of political scientists over decades of research on election turnout. The literature is vast. Voter turnout is one of the most exhaustively researched topics of political behaviour. While the majority of people vote in national elections, many choose not to, and in many countries the rate of abstention is slowly growing. Some claim that low turnout is bad for democracy since those who always participate are different from those who never do, and therefore turnout in some countries tends to be biased in favour of older, educated citizens with higher incomes. Apart from turnout decline, researchers of political behaviour also focus on cross-national differences in turnout (relying on institutional or macro indicators), within country individual-level differences, and lastly short-term or election-specific contextual factors for turnout variation (and combinations thereof). We have a battery of information about individual-level turnout differences as well as cross-national differences, but we know very

little about how election context matters. This is extremely relevant to turnout theory because in absence of knowing how context matters, our models could be underspecified. The notion that specific election contexts like the state of the economy and how competitive the election is may shape turnout is largely grounded in rational choice foundations: meaning, these specific circumstances should generate significant costs and benefits to voting or abstaining. However, when Blais (2000) attempted to explain turnout variation from one election to the next using a rational choice framework, he found that there is a modest relationship between turnout and the national economy, but there is no significant evidence for other factors, including the often cited ‘competition effect’. (See Franklin 2004 for contrary findings). Blais then suggests this is a limit of rational choice theory by stating that this election-to-election variation in turnout is likely due to the specific election contexts and whatever values they elicit.

Given that there is much variation still to be explained, this dissertation examines turnout change under certain election contexts. In doing so it contributes to advancing the turnout literature as it relates to context such as elections issues and party systems.

### 1.3. What we know about election turnout and context

We know a variety of things about turnout. Generally, age, education, and income are the basic resource-socioeconomic indicators that explain some degree of the turnout differences across individuals (although some effects are likely to be stronger in some countries than in others). Psycho-attitudinal indicators such as party identification, being of the opinion that voting is a civic duty, and voting in the last election are also strong predictors. Across institutional settings, electoral systems with proportional representation versus majoritarian systems tend to have higher turnout rates at the aggregate level, as do countries with compulsory voting. In terms of election contexts, there is only some evidence of an economy effect and a competition effect, as well as an election day rainfall

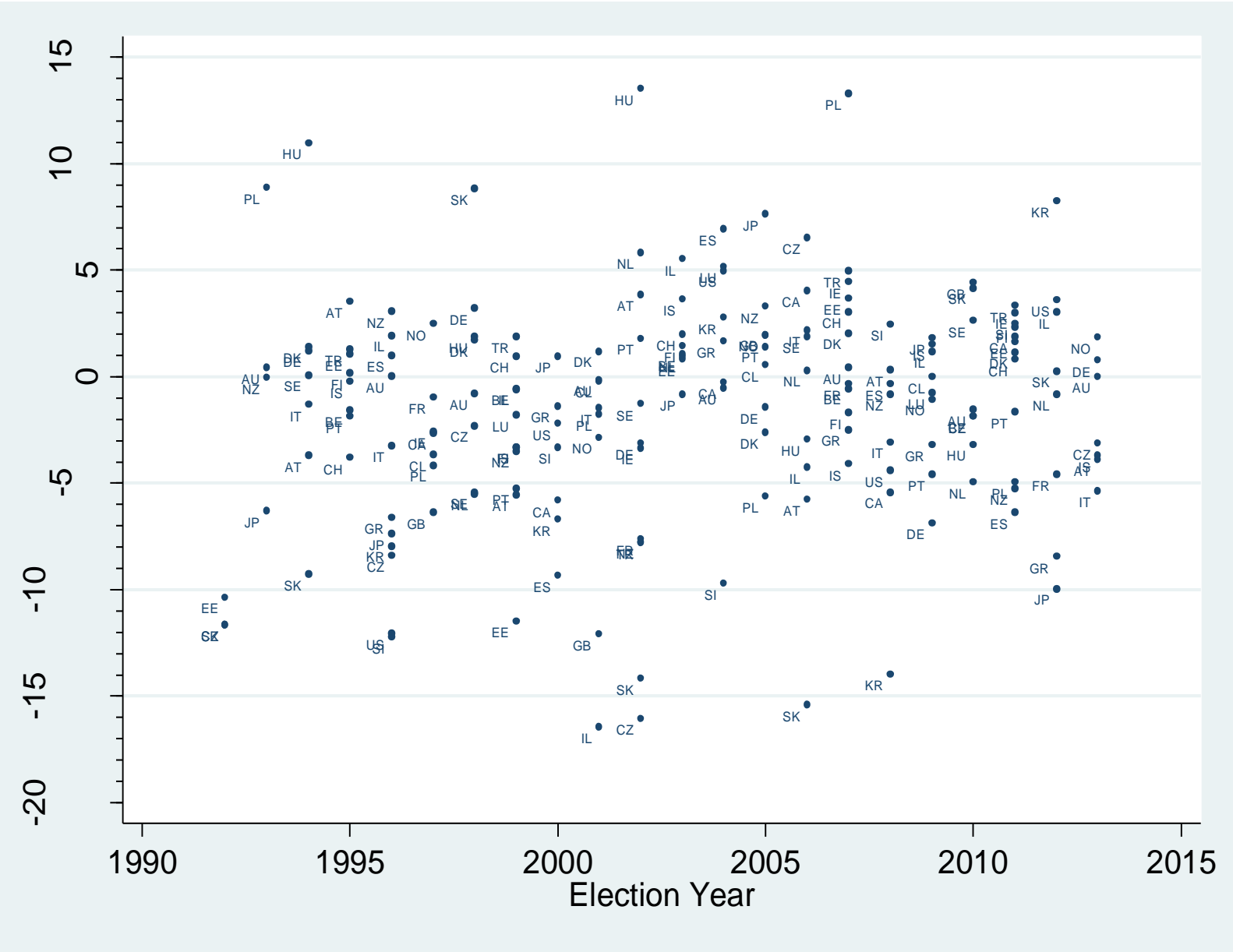


effect such as that found in the United States, but not in Sweden (Blais 2000; Franklin 2004; Gomez et al 2007; Persson et al 2014).

To demonstrate exactly how much variation remains open to explanation, Figure 1.1 shows the difference in turnout for the OECD countries, for parliamentary elections held between 1990 and 2014 (IDEA). What we mostly see is the average fluctuation in turnout (As mentioned by Blais somewhere around 4 percentage points). Notably, some countries have extremely minor fluctuations such as with Australia, Belgium, Chile, and Luxembourg - all countries that have enforced compulsory voting laws. What is rather striking about this data though is that there is a substantial number of elections where turnout increased or decreased *beyond* 4-5 percentage points. There are so many cases, in fact, they could not easily be labelled outliers. There is real, persistent variation occurring in turnout in elections across developed democracies. And, simply, we can not adequately explain why.

If we were to assume that this variation is due to 'context' then are these similar contexts we find in these countries? If we think about it at the individual-level: Why are some individuals being mobilised in some instances or elections and not in others? Would it be peripheral voters who would be more affected by context or is it all types of voters and non-voters who are affected? The literature does not have the answers to these questions and in the absence of having a universal turnout model, or a robust model to explain turnout change, our knowledge remains limited.

Figure 1.1: Difference in national parliamentary election turnout, OECD 1990-2014 (Source: IDEA)



## 1.4. The limitations of the literature

Long-standing and widely-debated theories every so often ask the question: where do we stand now? One of the most recent ‘state-of-the-art’ literature reviews involving individual-level theories on turnout was published in *Electoral Studies* by Smets and Ham (2013). The authors performed a meta-analysis of 90 recent publications on turnout in ten top international political science journals, their conclusion; not only did they find “no consensus on a core model of voter turnout” but consequently “models are often underspecified theoretically and empirically” (2013: 13). To this end, they made several recommendations going forward:

- 1.) Further develop a ‘core model’ of turnout
- 2.) Improve our understanding of conditional effects on turnout
- 3.) Carry out more extensive meta-analysis reviews to get a clearer view of the effects of less often studied variables (Smets and Ham 2013:14)

The goals of this dissertation are essentially tied to this proposition: contribute to the development of the ‘core model’, investigate some of the conditional effects, and give less-frequently studied variables more exposure. The results are presented in three research articles, included herein as chapters. The chapters address turnout at the individual-level as it relates to contextual factors such as political parties, the national economy, and emotional responses to election issues. Each chapter analyses these relationships from some of the leading theoretical perspectives: the resources model, the rational choice-institutional model, and the psychological model. The final results contribute to explaining how specific contextual factors affect turnout.

## 1.5 The structure and contributions of the dissertation

This dissertation has been formatted in a way so to fill gaps in important literature streams where turnout plays a major role, either as the dependent or independent variable. It addresses two major, long-standing yet unresolved theories; one on turnout bias and the other on the economic impact on turnout, and one newly evolving theoretical stream that has even closer links to psychological foundations: how emotion impacts turnout. Each chapter is outlined in the following pages.

### **Do emotions impact turnout?**

In the chapter titled *The Impact of Subjective Emotional Response to Election Issues on Voter Turnout: Evidence from the 2010 British Election*, our attention turns to new horizons in turnout research: emotion, and political behaviour's recent stronger linkage to psychological literature, and the subsequent broadening of the psychological theory of turnout. Research on emotion and political behaviour is relatively recent in the field of political science, and as such is almost entirely focussed on the population in the United States. Fairly recently the British Election Study has included questions on emotion, however. This gives the indication that, along with the growing works on personality and voting behaviour (See Fowler 2006; Blais and Labbe 2011; Gallego and Oberski 2012), political science has new perspectives on individuals. And rather successfully the psychological model of turnout is evolving toward perhaps a more accurate picture of a emotive and personality-defined political citizen.

The chapter that reflects this strong emphasis on psychological literature covers the topic of emotion and political behaviour. Specifically, the chapter examines how specific emotions impact election turnout. This chapter makes a unique contribution as it examines the recent British Election Study that includes questions on emotion. To this day, and to my knowledge Wagner (2013) has written the only journal article using the BES data on emotion. However, he uses the data differently; some emotional response questions (specifically 'anger' and 'fear') are merged into one emotion category.

Further, using the BES data is important because the ANES is the only other election study using emotional response questions; hence the findings on the relationship

between emotions and electoral behaviour are exclusive to the U.S. And because of that we simply do not yet know if similar hypotheses and findings can be applied to other countries. This is important because elections are not run the same way everywhere; campaigning is different, political messages are different, campaign finances and laws are different, etc. Therefore, if we were to find emotion to be relevant behavioural influencers in the U.S but not in other countries, or in some countries but not in others, we would have to ask what it is about the election campaigns or the people in those countries where emotion does or does not matter to electoral behaviour. But, more importantly, the research findings in the U.S certainly suggest the topic of emotion is worthy of our attention and investigation.

The case of Great Britain is used namely for the reason that there is rich data available from the BES, and for the reasons previously outlined. For this chapter, the impact that specific emotions have on election turnout in the 2010 British election is examined. There are six emotions that are considered: Happy, Afraid, Angry, Disgusted, Proud, and Confident. This chapter strays from some of the previous literature in that it treats each emotion individually and by doing this it follows the psychological literature more closely when it comes to the (de)activating responses associated with specific emotions. Further, the way in which the BES questions are asked is different from the ANES. Whereas the ANES mainly asks about emotions felt toward the (2) presidential candidates and the (2) political parties, the BES asks how people feel about specific election issues. These are issues that are ranked as most important by the British population, so there is not an explicit party or candidate referenced. This could be a slightly better method for getting at a citizens overall emotional state without the interference of partisan bias being dropped into the question. Like the method used to treat the data by Wagner (2013) each individual is given a score based on the number of times he or she says one emotion relative to the others. These scores are then used as independent variables in regressions for turnout. Most of the findings are significant, and some but not all of the results found in the previous literature are confirmed.

The findings contribute to our knowledge of which independent variables impact turnout, and it specifically contributes to the psychological theory of turnout. Also, it is

clear that there are some emotions that are relatively strong predictors of turnout at the individual level: citizens feeling anger or fear may be the most affected.

### **In what way does the economy affect turnout?**

The next chapter titled Making Voice Count: Economic Voting and the Number of Parties aims firstly to address whether turnout is affected by the state of the national economy; and, secondly under what conditions does the turnout-economy relationship translate into economic voting. Economic voting theory is arguably one of most well-known and ardently researched rational choice theories in political science, dating back to the 1920s, as outlined by Monroe (1979). One key argument of this chapter is that the previous literature streams have not coalesced; turnout and the economy, and economic voting theory. In other words, each theory tends to pose hypotheses without considering the other, and due to this we are left without a full picture of how the economy and voting behaviour are related.

The argument in this chapter is that turnout is impacted by the state of the national economy to some extent, but the mediating variable is the number of parties; or in other words, the ability one has to voice their discontent with the perceived economic mismanagement of the incumbent. Therefore, if negative economic voting (voting against the incumbent in bad economic times) is to be observed, dissatisfied citizens must have opposition parties to give their votes to, or else they will simply abstain and not fulfill an economic vote. In this regard, one component of the institutional model of turnout, that being the number of parties, needs to be combined with the rational assumptions behind economic voting.

These arguments are tested and confirmed in an aggregate cross-national analysis using the OECD countries, and with an individual-level analysis for the case of Spain. The findings contribute to our understanding of how the two contextual factors – the economy and party competition interacting – affect election turnout.

## **Is there a partisan bias to turnout?**

The final chapter turns to the consequences of turnout when it low versus high. Titled *The Partisan Consequences of Turnout Revisited*, this chapter aims to tackle the mixed findings of a long-standing political science debate: do leftist parties benefit when turnout is high? This is a classic resource model theory that is based on the premise that whether one votes or not depends on their socio-economic status (SES). And, further, those with a lower SES tend to prefer leftist parties. Therefore, when turnout increases, it is due to low SES citizens mobilising, who, once mobilised, would cast a vote for the leftist party; hence, when turnout increases, leftist parties benefit. The challenge with this theory is that it is expected to work everywhere. But, Fisher (2007) in a more recent and robust study found this relationship to exist in some countries and not in others. But we do not know why. The argument made in this chapter is that this relationship should be found when two criteria are met: first, when class voting exists in a country and second when the relationship is considered in the short-term but not the long-term. The idea here is that when class grievances play out in the political arena, there are clear divisions between left and right parties, and equally clear divisions in their class-corresponding constituents. This idea clearly syncs with the theoretical assumption that potential leftist voters tend to have a lower-SES.

Useful evidence to support the thesis that the types of parties competing matter is found in the research by Rubenson et al (2007) where they tested the turnout bias theory in Canada, only to find no effect. As they indicated in their conclusion, Canada's political parties are not very class-oriented and neither are its voters. Some have mused that Canada's political parties have no ideology; the parties are simply too close to one another. The Rubenson et al paper alludes to the fact that this was a valid explanation for their (non)findings.

As mentioned, this relationship should not only hinge on class voting but also on how (long) we are looking at it in terms of elections. This is because short-term analysis will be affected by the reason why turnout has increased. Many times this is hypothesised

to be when there is mobilisation against the incumbent; high turnout is said to be bad news for incumbents (Grofman et al 1999). That means, when a leftist party is governing, this effect will either not exist or be unknown as to its meaning; as we would not be sure if we would be witnessing an anti-incumbent effect or leftist mobilising. On the other hand, if the incumbent is a rightist party, we should expect to see the link between turnout and left party support. The emphasis on the short-term is due to the constant (usual) alternation between the main parties as incumbent governments. This means that, over the long-term, as governments constantly alternate the effect is essentially cancelled out, or is unable to be observed. This chapter uses cross-national data and individual-level data for the cases of Spain and Portugal to demonstrate that this relationship is dependent upon these factors. The findings contribute to our knowledge of why elections with lower turnout are concerning; in some countries the preferences of non-voters and voters are not the same. And, as such, when turnout is lower the outcome of the election could be different than if everyone had voted. Higher turnout in this sense ensures that the preferences of everyone are reflected in the elected candidates and parties and ultimately their policies.



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## **2. THE IMPACT OF SUBJECTIVE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO ELECTION ISSUES ON TURNOUT: EVIDENCE FROM THE 2010 BRITISH ELECTION**

### *Abstract*

The analysis of the role of emotions in political behaviour is a growing body of literature in the United States however we have very little evidence before us to show how emotions impact political behaviour in other countries. Furthermore, while we have an idea about how certain emotions may affect non-voting political participation it is less clear how emotions impact turnout in an actual election. This chapter aims to contribute to the current literature by assessing the impact of subjective emotional response to election issues on turnout in the 2010 British national election. The results show that there are some consistencies between the impact of certain emotions such as anger, fear, and pride, on turnout in Britain as there are with the American literature on political participation. However, the findings for the emotions of disgust, happiness, and confidence have implications for future research since they have not yet been examined independently.



## 2.1. Introduction

In recent years we have learned through research that political parties often strategically use emotional appeals in their campaign messages, and they seem to do this because they believe emotions impact voting behaviour (Jacoby 2000; Sniderman and Theriault 2004; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Gross, 2008; Brader 2005, 2006). Researchers investigating the consequences of emotive politics have revealed a substantial amount of information about the American voter; we have learned that different emotions seem to have different effects on political learning (Way and Masters 1996; Redlawsk et al. 2005; Isbell et al. 2006; Valentino et al. 2008; Valentino et al. 2009), candidate evaluations and voting behaviour (Kinder et al. 1979; Marcus 1988; Isbell and Ottati 2002), and political participation (Rudolph et al. 2000; Valentino et al. 2009; Valentino et al. 2011; Weber 2012). The findings have been robust enough to lead some researchers to argue for the inclusion of subjective emotional states in standard models of voting behaviour (Valentino et al. 2011: 157). The revelations in the emotions and politics literature have been especially attributable to the inclusion of questions about subjective emotional response to candidates and parties in the American National Election Study (ANES) over the past 30 or so years. And it is because of this that we now have an expectation of how voters might behave when their emotions are considered.

However, since the American National Election Study has been the only publicly-available English-text, and long-standing election study which incorporates questions about emotions (to my knowledge), research on emotions and political behaviour has largely been confined to the United States and its population and politics, and therefore we have very little knowledge about the potential external validity of the impact of emotions on political behaviour. Given that American political campaigns are arguably the most expensive and professionalized in the world, we do not know if emotions have an impact only because of the level or type of sophistication of campaigning there or due to the particular two-party system or mass media structure, or if it is because certain emotions experienced by people in elections translate into specific political behaviours.

The British Election Study (BES) has only recently added several questions about emotions; these questions are related to how certain election issues make an individual

feel (afraid, angry, disgusted, proud, happy, etc.) and to my knowledge only Wagner (2013) has published results based on the BES emotion battery of questions; he used the 2005 and 2010 BES internet panel to assess the effect of fear and anger about the economic situation on blame assignment. The BES data is now richer in 2010, since the 2005 BES includes emotion questions only related to the egotropic and sociotropic evaluation of the economy whereas the 2010 BES includes five questions explicitly asking respondents to indicate which emotions election issues conjure up in them. This means the format of the BES emotion questions are different from the ANES in that these questions are not related to candidates and parties but to events (the subjective impact of the financial crisis) and policies (the economy, the national health system, immigration, and the British involvement in the war in Afghanistan). At the same time, the BES does include standard valence questions about the candidates and parties (how much they like or dislike a leader or party). Since data on subjective emotions experienced by a non-American population in an election study have been produced, we now have the opportunity to test the external validity (to some degree) of a few of the emotions and political behaviour assumptions and findings found in the American literature.

A part from the contribution this paper makes to testing emotion hypotheses on a new population, it addresses some of the weaker findings in the literature pertaining to how certain emotions translate into political participation; for instance, ‘fear’ is elusive – sometimes it has been found to be a mobilizing emotion and other times not. Similarly, ‘enthusiasm’ (as categorized by Valentino et al. 2011) is not usually as strong and reliable of an indicator of political behaviour as ‘anger’ has been found to be. And given that psychological research on emotion treats each emotion as a separate unit (while assuming some degree of overlap), it is not clear why, for example, previous emotions and politics research consider ‘anger’ and ‘disgust’ equals, when there is no theoretical foundation to do so. If specific emotions are to be treated separately then arguably an error in some of the previous research is this somewhat ad hoc categorization of emotions based mainly on valence, such as ‘enthusiasm’, for example. And while we know from the literature about the expectations of the emotional impact on non-voting political participation we know much less about the impact of emotions on voting participation in an actual election. That is, to what degree do specific emotions impact election turnout? This paper examines how

the frequency of feeling specific emotions about election issues affects the likelihood to vote or not (turnout). As previously mentioned, evidence from the British population in the 2010 national election is used to test this.

The paper proceeds as follows: the first section of the paper reviews the main arguments, the second explains the data and methods, the third section describes the results, and the last section concludes.

## 2.2. Arguments

The study of emotions in politics relies on established psychological theories and models as a basis to predict the impact of different emotions on behaviour. Definitions also follow from the established literature. From this literature we know that emotions are triggered by external or internal stimuli (James 1884). They are episodes of coordinated changes in several components like subjective feeling and possibly physiological processes. The behavioural results are that people take deliberate actions to cope with their emotions (Lazarus 1991; Carver 2004). Emotions are different from ‘mood’ which is often enduring with less-obvious causes; they are different from ‘attitudes’ which are long-lasting and based on beliefs, and they are not ‘preferences’ which exist on the like-dislike model of valence (Scherer 2000). Emotions are complex. Their complexity has been captured most reliably in dimensional models of emotional response. Those models associate emotion with activation or deactivation but also positive and negative (pleasure and displeasure). The most widely-used and accepted dimensional model of emotion was adapted by Russell (1980). His model, The Circumplex Model of Emotion or Affect, as it is known, considers the emotional dimensions of both valence and activation (see Figure 1). The model constitutes that each emotion has two dimensions; one that indicates the degree of arousal and the other that indicates valence. In the Circumplex Model of Affect, the position of an emotion allows us to anticipate the physiological or behavioural reaction when someone experiences that emotion. For example, anger has high activation so we should expect people experiencing anger to act; whereas if one is sad they are deactivated and sluggish and so we should not expect those individuals to be very activated.

**Figure 2.1:** The Circumplex Model of Affect (Russell 1980)



Political psychologists frequently use this dimensional model to explain political behaviours. Most of this literature that relates politics and emotion adds substantially to what we know about political party strategies, political ads, and political learning, but we are less certain how it adds to the literature on voting behaviour and more specifically voting participation. Different forms of non-voting political participation have been examined (Rudolph et al. 2000; Valentino et al. 2009; Valentino et al. 2011); and more recently the emotional effects of political advertisements on voting participation in an



experimental setting (Clinton and Lapinski 2004; Weber 2012), and the effect of negative political ads on turnout (Kahn and Kenney 1999). But we have not yet tested whether and how different emotions experienced by individuals in an actual election campaign affect voting participation.

Since we know from psychology that emotion has the power to motivate and spur attention, thought, and action (Lazarus 1991) emotion could make an important contribution to literature on voter turnout. This is because after many decades of attempting to explain how and why turnout varies over time, countries and individuals, we are still uncertain about why there is short-term variation in election turnout. Blais (2000) after an examination of all of the main findings in the literature on within-country turnout fluctuations over time suggests that at the individual-level people will likely decide whether to vote or not dependent upon the specific election context and whatever ‘deep values’ those specific elections elicit (Blais 2000: 54). In other words, voter participation at the individual level is partly dependent upon the range of explanatory factors that we often employ when researching turnout that remain unchangeable over the short-term— such as the electoral system or an individual’s socioeconomic status, or the party system, but also the specific morals or ideals of individuals which will impact their reactions to the components of elections. In this paper this refers to their subjective emotional response to election issues.

In previous models examining how emotions affect non-voting political participation, an array of positive and negative emotions are used as key explanatory variables. In the ANES, the emotional reactions to candidates that respondents are asked to choose from are: afraid, angry, proud, and hopeful. When looking at the effect of these emotions on non-voting political participation, Valentino et al. (2011) found that all three emotional factors - anger, fear, and enthusiasm (proud plus hopeful combined) - mobilised individuals (although enthusiasm not significantly). However, when using a different dataset that seeks emotional response to ‘how do you feel about the way things are going in the country these days’ and a larger range of emotions – 12 in total – although using factor-analysis to reduce the number to three: anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm – they found that feeling anger mobilised people to participate, feelings of fear demobilised, and enthusiasm mobilised (although enthusiasm still did not reach an acceptable level of

significance). Interestingly, they also tested an interaction effect between these emotions and an index of standard mobilization factors and found a mobilization effect for anger and even fear.

When Valentino et al (2011) created the Anger category it included angry, disgusted, and outraged. The authors also combined positive emotions in order to create the Enthusiasm category, and what they would classify as ‘fear’ emotions into the Fear category. Since the authors were working with so many emotional states (12) it seems quite reasonable to reduce the number of emotions, and also because some emotions may be correlated. There is a bit of a risk in merging similar emotions into three distinct categories, however: just because there is some degree of correlation between certain emotions, it does not mean that each of those emotions would have the same impact on the dependent variable. This means that when we arbitrarily combine emotions into categories based to some extent on their positivity and negativity (and degree of correlation), we might be talking more about valence. On the other hand, we could treat these emotions individually with the assumption that not all positive emotions will result in the same behaviour, nor have the same strength of effect; we could attempt to leave categories as they are (i.e. an Anger category with anger only) and try to estimate the impact of some of the more omnipresent emotions, individually, in separate models to avoid multicollinearity, and also thereby reduce any categorizations that appear to be rather ad hoc.

To continue on this point, if we consider disgust and anger categorized together, this poses some problems. This is partly because in the often used Circumplex Model anger and disgust come from the same negative-arousal dimension, however, where disgust is located on this dimension relative to anger, is more unpleasant (or negative) and is slightly less activating (see Figure 1). In this case the argument for not merging disgust and anger is similar to the argument for not merging fear and anger; they are from the same dimension but have potentially different sources and behaviours associated with them; for instance the avoid instead of approach element of fear versus anger (Carver and Harmon-Jones 2009).

The noted differences between anger and disgust can be traced back to R.A. Shweder et al. (2003) when they attempted to disentangle contempt, anger, and disgust. In their study their results showed that the feeling of anger is associated with ‘autonomy’ and

‘individual rights violations’ while disgust was associated with ‘divinity’ or ‘purity and sanctity’ (contempt was associated with ‘violating communal codes’). The crux of their argument was that these three moral codes (rights/individuals, community, and purity) align to each of the three moral emotions (anger, contempt, and disgust). Given that it can be argued that anger and disgust have different activators and since they are located at different levels of arousal and negativity it is possible that they have different consequences on behaviour. Following the locations of anger and disgust in the Circumplex Model with regards to activation or arousal, it can be argued that disgust is not as activating as anger. Research also shows that the behavioural consequence of the emotion of disgust is avoidance (Sherman and Haidt 2011). It is plausible to assume that when individuals express that they are in an emotional state of disgust in an electoral context then they may not be as inclined to mobilise or participate compared to those who express an emotional state of anger which is generally accepted to be highly activating or mobilizing. Related to these arguments the following three hypotheses have been formulated for the variables Anger, Disgust, and Fear:

**H1** Increasing amounts of anger will mobilise individuals, given anger’s strong activation foundations (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001).

**H2** Increasing amounts of disgust will demobilise. This is based on the psychological literature foundations that lead us to believe the response will be aversion.

**H3** When individuals experience fear more frequently they will be demobilised and abstain from voting, since the psychological literature indicates that avoidance or apprehension is the result of fear (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001).

Enthusiasm has been shown to be activating and mobilizing for non-voting political participation, although the results have not been found to be significant (Valentino et al. 2011). There is no logical reason to assume that enthusiasm should not mobilise if it is considered along the lines of excitement or a higher level of activation in the Circumplex Model. However, when considered in previous research Enthusiasm as a category has encompassed several emotions that would be placed all over the activation dimension if treated individually, and this could be one of the reasons why this category of Enthusiasm

has not reached a relevant level of significance in past research.

As mentioned previously, part of the contribution of this article is to look at the impact of specific emotions on turnout. For this reason, there is not an all-encompassing Enthusiasm category; individual emotions are treated as they are, as individual emotions with different or varying degrees of impact on the dependent variable. In psychological literature, emotions are not typically merged and then treated as one positive unit; they may belong to subgroups and with some degree of overlap, however. But as we can see in psychological models of emotion there is not the same level of activation for each positive emotion. If we were to assume there were then we could be unintentionally passing over other relevant information; such as the specific effect of each emotion on the dependent variable. As such, the three positive emotions are estimated individually. The following hypotheses for them are formulated below:

**H4** Feeling happy will mobilise individuals to vote versus abstain, overall. But this effect is estimated to be weak. According to the Circumplex Model, it should activate individuals, but when we consider this emotion in response to an election issue, what does it mean to be ‘happy’ about the National Health Service, for example? This might have an awkward interpretation for some individuals. In that sense, it is plausible that it could be interpreted as being content or satisfied, and not ‘excited’, for example, which could translate into lower levels of activation.

**H5** Feeling proud more frequently will mobilise individuals to vote, but given previous results in the American literature, this relationship is predicted to be weak. Feeling proud could mean a lower level of activation for some if it is interpreted into feeling proud with the status quo of issues.

**H6** Feeling more instances of being confident about election issues will mobilise individuals to vote. Feeling confident is predicted to mobilise because it is underlined with hope but at the same time a level of certainty; in this sense, to trust that an event, issue will improve or succeed. The difference with proud or happy that could actually be capturing satisfaction in some people, is that feeling confident is positive while at the same time a feeling that action is still required in order to reach a state of feeling happy/satisfied about the issues, for example.

### 2.3.Data and methods

OLS regressions are used to determine to what degree specific emotions impact the likelihood of voting. As mentioned, data from the British Election Study (BES) for 2010 is used<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately this is the only large-scale BES to include several questions on emotional states. A previous 2005 internet BES did use these questions however the sample is small at fewer than 2,000 people and in 2001 as well but with only one question on the economy and not on any other issues otherwise a longitudinal study would have proved useful for testing robustness. Fortunately the sample size of the 2010 BES is large at 13,198.

The dependent variable for all the models is constructed as a ‘likelihood of voting’ variable. This variable is built by summing the 0-1 values in responses from two questions: How likely are you to vote in the general election that will be held May 6<sup>th</sup> (in the pre-election survey); did you manage to vote in the general election (in the post-election survey). Similar to the method employed by Blais and Labbé (2011) these two variables are checked for reliability first and produce a score of Cronbach alpha of 0.61. After a sum of responses for each individual is produced from the two variables, they are divided by two, which produces the actual dependent variable on a 0-1 range for the likelihood of voting in the 2010 British election. Intuitively this variable is negatively skewed toward turnout (see Table 1) and therefore a log transformation is used in the models to partially correct for this<sup>2</sup>. A turnout variable would have been more appropriate however the ‘likelihood of voting’ scale is used here because the over-reporting of turnout in the BES is substantial (some 20 points over actual turnout)<sup>3</sup>. And, unfortunately, vote validation has not been done for the entire sample but only for the small internet panel. The data are weighted according to the BES post-election demographic variable.

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinal logits were also run and similar results were found.

<sup>2</sup> Data with 0 values need to be corrected before a log transformation. Here, since there is a strong negative skew, a constant of 1 is added to each of the values. At log transformation the scale runs from 1 to 2 instead of 0 to 1.

<sup>3</sup> In spite of the over-reporting of turnout, the results do not substantially differ when running logistic regressions with the dichotomous turnout variable.

The questions used to assess emotional states are related to four issues and events<sup>4</sup>. The key independent variable for each model is constructed through creating a proportion: how many times an individual reported experiencing one emotion relative to all the emotions in total. For example each anger emotion subjectively experienced by an individual relating to each one of the four issues was tabulated (counted 1 for 'yes' and 0 for 'no') and then summed across each issue, and then that amount is divided by the maximum sum of all the emotions indicated by that individual. This technique has been used when dealing with emotions and multiple question and response options. It was employed in some previous research on emotional response (Wagner 2013; Valentino et al. 2011; Marcus et al. 2000; Marcus and MacKuen 1993; Rudolph et al. 2000). The proportion that is then produced for each emotion and individual ranges from 0 to 1<sup>5</sup>. With this Anger proportion variable we can then see how it may affect someone's likelihood to vote.

The BES uses different extractors of emotional states than the ANES; emotional responses to issues instead of 'general feelings' about the country or candidates and parties. By using the emotional responses to questions about several issues instead of candidates and parties or the 'general feeling about the way things are going in the country' it gives us a more precise idea about how the individual is responding to some of the specific and (subjective) most important (political) environmental factors around them. This is supported by the overwhelming majority of the sample indicating their top three 'most important' issues to be the following: the national economy and its determinants like national debt and unemployment; immigration; and the national health system. The questions and issues used in this paper to measure emotional response are exactly these: the economy, immigration, health care, and the British involvement in the war in Afghanistan (though the war in Afghanistan was not ranked as importantly as the other three issues, some individuals still gave emotional responses to it – there is an option

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<sup>4</sup> The pre-election survey questions are the following: Which, if any, of the following words describe your feelings about: the country's general economic situation/the National Health Service/immigration/the war in Afghanistan? (Please tick up to four)

<sup>5</sup> Similar to a log transformation of negatively skewed data positively skewed data in a 0 to 1 range need to be corrected at log transformation as well. This involves subtracting the highest value of the scale (here, 1) from the next natural value (2). Each emotion is log transformed and corrected at the same scale as the dependent variable, 1 to 2. No data is changed, only the scales.

to give a response of ‘no feeling’ – meaning if an emotional response was given by someone it should be an indication that this issue is of some degree of importance to the individual). Although an Ipsos poll before the 2010 election suggests that ‘foreign affairs/international terrorism/defence’ was ranked as important as ‘the National Health Service/healthcare’.

The idea that issues are relevant for assessing emotion follows the logic of Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989) in their directional model of voting where they argue that emotional response to issues makes them politically meaningful. While accounting for emotions to specific issues is different from gauging ‘general feeling’ or feelings about candidates, there is the potential for this indicator to be a more powerful predictor of the impact of specific emotions on the vote since candidate and party emotional responses, while important, may be more closely related to preferences than emotional states. And if we generally control for party and candidate preference strength in the majority of our turnout models anyhow, it might seem redundant. Furthermore, given that these questions are usually used in the United States, the options are roughly two; democrat or republican. However, policy outcomes – even if they are administered by political parties – often have a direct effect on individuals and therefore responses to them could be more indicative of how individuals feel about the tangible political environment around them; the number of issues that concern them and how. In fact, Valentino et al. (2011) switched from the standard ANES candidate and party emotion questions to create their own survey to ask people about their ‘general feeling’ of the country. Even if by using this ‘general feeling’ question we lack knowledge about the exact source of those emotions, Valentino et al. at least diverged from the standard candidate-focused responses, to perhaps break away from the noise of candidate evaluations and preferences.

The initial number of emotional states in the BES survey is rather large, there are eight: anger, disgust, afraid, uneasy, hopeful, confident, happy, proud. While it is true that some of these emotions may be correlated, the purpose of this paper is not to make a contribution to psychological theory in this regard. And since combining some emotions runs the risk of losing information this paper will examine six emotions completely separately, in different models to prevent possible multicollinearity. The BES questions allow for multiple responses, and there are two emotions that appear frequently with

emotions that could be deemed to be ‘stronger’ emotions or more obvious emotions: the emotions ‘uneasy’ and ‘hopeful’ may have unique and somewhat predictable effects on the decision to vote or not, but they occur too often with ‘stronger’ or more obvious emotions (of both positive and negative types) that it could be too difficult to untangle the truth of what their consequences are on behaviour. For this reason, they are not specifically examined. Therefore there are six emotions examined in this paper: angry, afraid, disgust, proud, confident, and happy.

There are a number of control variables used that are known to have some impact on the decision to vote or not<sup>6</sup>. This array of variables covers socio-demographics such as age and education; party identification measured through whether the respondent identifies with a certain party or not; subjective evaluations of each of the main (3) party leaders (in a valence dimension of like-dislike); and to what degree the respondent believes that voting is a civic duty, which has been found to be a strong predictor of turnout (Blais 2000).

The variables are coded the following way, and are described in Table 2.1:

**Education Qualifications**<sup>7</sup> – whether the respondent has any education or work-related qualifications – 0 for ‘no’ and 1 for ‘yes’.

**Age** – by the birth year of the respondent.

**Party ID** – does the respondent identify with one political party or not – coded 0 for ‘no’ and 1 for ‘yes’.

**Party leader evaluation: Gordon Brown** – how much the respondent likes the candidate, on a scale from 0 (dislike) to 1 (like).

**Party leader evaluation: David Cameron** – how much the respondent likes the candidate, on a scale from 0 (dislike) to 1 (like).

**Party leader evaluation: Nick Clegg** – how much the respondent likes the candidate, on a

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<sup>6</sup> There are mixed results showing whether the margin of victory impacts turnout. It was included at first but subsequently removed for not gaining significance in any of the models.

‘Election interest’ was originally used but was found to be moderately correlated to the civic duty variable, and was then removed from the models.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Education in years’ is the only other option for assessing education level. Similar results were found when using this variable instead of education qualifications.



scale from 0 (dislike) to 1 (like).

**Civic Duty** – does the respondent agree or disagree with the statement that if he/she did not vote they would be neglecting their duty as a citizen; scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table 2.1: Descriptive statistics**

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Turnout	0.92	0.20	0	1
Anger	0.29	0.27	0	1
Disgust	0.23	0.23	0	1
Fear	0.18	0.20	0	1
Happy	0.04	0.12	0	1
Proud	0.12	0.20	0	1
Confident	0.11	0.24	0	1
Age	62	14	21	92
Education	0.86	0.35	0	1
Party ID	0.88	0.33	0	1
Civic Duty	4	1	1	5
Feelings Brown	0.42	0.33	0	1
Feelings Cameron	0.44	0.30	0	1
Feelings Clegg	0.46	0.23	0	1

## 2.4. Results

The results are displayed in Table 2.2. The dependent variable for each model is the likelihood of voting (or turnout) in the 2010 British election. The key independent variable in the first model is the number of times an individual stated that they felt angry about an election issue relative to all the other emotions. The coefficient for Anger is positive and significant at the less than one percent level. This means that for every one percent increase in the in the proportion of times an individual indicates feeling anger related to an election issue, their likelihood of voting increases by nine percent. This result is in line with the first hypothesis; individuals who are feeling a lot of anger in elections will be strongly motivated to vote. This finding is consistent with the results found in the American literature. For that reason, there is good reason to believe, more widely, that anger can spur people to political action, such as voting.

The second model looks at the emotion of Disgust. This emotion was predicted to have a negative effect on turnout since the psychological literature explains that the emotion of disgust causes aversion, generally, and avoiding the source of disgust. The results show that the coefficient for Disgust is negative and significant at the less than one percent level. This means that people who reported feeling a high level of disgust about the issues in the campaign were less likely to vote. This is an interesting finding since the previous political behaviour-emotions literature had frequently merged disgust into a category with anger and predicted a mobilizing effect (and, thereby, usually demonstrating weak findings for the Anger variable). Here, the results show that as individuals feel more disgusted their likelihood of voting decreases by five percent. Given this result, analyzing the emotion of disgust on its own could prove valuable to political behaviour research.

The third model looks at the emotion of Fear. An increase in feeling fear was predicted to have a demobilizing effect because fear as an emotion is known to be lowly activating, often causing withdrawal. The results show that the coefficient for fear is negative and significant at the less than one percent level. This means that when an individual is feeling a greater amount of fear related to election issues then they are less likely to vote in the election. For every one percent increase in expressing fear about an election issue their likelihood of voting decreases by six percent. This finding is consistent with the previous research expectations that had ultimately produced rather weak findings.

**Table 2.2: The impact of specific emotions on the likelihood of voting**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Anger	0.09*** (0.01)					
Disgust		-0.05*** (0.01)				
Fear			-0.06*** (0.01)			
Happy				-0.02 (0.01)		
Proud					-0.06*** (0.01)	
Confident						0.03*** (0.01)
Age	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Education	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)
Civic Duty	0.06***(0.01)	0.06***(0.01)	0.06***(0.01)	0.06***(0.01)	0.06***(0.01)	0.06***(0.01)
Party ID	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)
Feelings Brown	0.05*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Feelings Cameron	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Feelings Clegg	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.03)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)
Constant	0.28*** (0.01)	0.35*** (0.01)	0.34*** (0.01)	0.33*** (0.01)	0.33*** (0.01)	0.34*** (0.01)
R2	0.32	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31
N	13,198	13,198	13,198	13,198	13,198	13,198

Standard errors in parentheses. All models are OLS regressions

\*\*\*significant at 0.001 level; \*\*significant at 0.01 level; \*significant at 0.05 level

The fourth model shows the emotion of feeling Happy. This emotion was predicted to mobilise people, but only slightly because the emotion's interpretation when considered with the target (an election issue) could be hard to interpret; in this case it might mean satisfied or content which leads to a response of low activation. The results show that the more frequently a person reports feeling happy about an issue relative to the other emotions they could be less likely to vote. The coefficient is negative but not significant. There are two reasons, I believe, that could be contributing to this negative (although not significant) effect; The first being the amount of people who responded that they were feeling levels of happiness relative to the other emotions is quite low (some 15 percent of the sample), the other possibility relates to the hypothesis in that feeling happy or pleased should not necessarily be equated with high activation, in fact in the Circumplex Model it should not be as activating as an emotion such as 'excited', for example.

The fifth model examines the emotion of feeling Proud. The hypothesis predicted that an individual who is feeling prouder about the election issues relative to the other emotions will be more likely to vote. This was based on the premise that having a feeling of pride about issues - whether that translates into institutional pride even - should mobilise, but might do so weakly. However, the results show a negative coefficient that is significant at the less than one percent level. While this is a surprising finding, this is relevant for the argument outlined in this paper; namely, that we should refrain from arbitrary categorizations of emotions in political behaviour research because although jointly categorized as Enthusiasm in past research, the effects of one high activation positive emotion may not be the same as one moderate or lowly activating positive emotion. It is difficult to untangle what is going on with the emotion of pride here. Previous research has struggled with the findings of this emotion when combined with 'hopeful' producing a positive but not significant result (Valentino et al. 2011). Is it possible that there is not a convenient way of predicting how pride translates into voting behaviour? Or is it that feeling proud about the election issues subsequently reduces the need to act, as argued in the hypothesis. Yet instead of translating into weak action, as predicted, it results in inaction. This is discussed further in the conclusion section.

The final model looks at the emotion of feeling Confident. The hypothesis predicted a mobilization effect from this variable. The results show a positive effect. This is

significant at the less than one percent level. This means that when an individual indicates feeling a high level of confidence related to the four election issues that he or she is more likely to vote. In other words for every one percent increase in Confident an individual's likelihood of voting increases by three percent.

To summarize the findings, the emotions of Anger, Disgust, and Fear produced significant results that align with their respective hypotheses: anger mobilises, disgust demobilises, and fear demobilises. The emotion of feeling Confident about election issues was predicted to mobilise individuals to vote; the result was positive and significant. Feeling the emotions of Happy and Proud were both predicted to weakly impact turnout. The findings however show that they may not be predictors of action but possibly inaction; feeling proud was found to demobilise individuals. Happiness did not reach statistical significance.

## 2.5. Conclusion

This article has set out to examine how specific emotions affect the likelihood of voting in an election. It has been the first paper (to my knowledge) to produce results on how an array of specific emotions impact voting behaviour in an actual election, and secondly, and more generally, what role emotions play in the political behaviour of a population outside the U.S. Some of the findings, such as the outcome of feeling Anger or Fear are similar to those found in the American literature examining non-voting participation, and voting participation in a non-election experiment, although the strength and significance of these specific emotions in this paper appear to be higher. Probably the most interesting and novel finding of this paper is that people who are feeling Disgust related to election issues, relative to other emotions will not be mobilised to vote and will be more likely to abstain. This finding makes a very relevant contribution to both the argument of this paper and to the current state of the literature on emotions and political behaviour since previously the emotion of Disgust was treated as a merged Anger variable, with predicted mobilization effect. This is a good example of why we should treat each emotion independently, if possible, and look to the psychological literature to better predict their specific outcomes. At the same time, this paper has used emotional reactions to election issues in contrast to previous research that uses emotional reactions to candidates

or a 'general feeling' about the state of the country- proving that election issues are a good proxy for assessing the impact of emotions on voting behaviour.

Further, some of the positive emotions that were treated together in previous research as Enthusiasm were also found to have different results on behaviour, once treated individually. Individuals feeling more instances of being Proud or Happy about election issues were found to be less likely to vote (although this was not a significant finding for Happy), while individuals feeling more instances of the emotion Confident were more likely to vote. Explanations were given as to why this occurred, one being that feeling high levels of pride or happiness towards issues could be better explained as feeling satisfaction with them and therefore might result in a perceived low-necessity for action. And we know from the Circumplex Model that feeling satisfied or pleased should not be as activating as feeling 'excited', for example. These explanations require further research.

Alternatively, feeling Confident was found to be significantly mobilizing. This result was explained to mean something different from enthusiasm or satisfaction; inherent in Confident is hope and therefore it is possible that the individual believes the issues still require action to succeed or improve. This, too, needs to be examined further to test the reliability of the outcome. But since the political behaviour literature does not have expectations or findings for a full array of individual positive and negative emotions then academic expectations for how these emotions impact voter turnout do not exist. This paper has attempted to start the debate about the individual outcomes of specific emotions on turnout, although the ideal methodological scenario would allow for examining people over many elections, this paper is a start.

The growing American literature on emotions and politics has increased our knowledge immensely when it comes to the emotions that campaign messages and advertisements aim to elicit, and how emotions affect political learning in elections, and candidate evaluations, but less about the consequences that specific emotions have on political behaviour, and more importantly how they impact voter turnout. And we know much less about what role emotions play in elections in countries other than the U.S. A follow up question might be how do emotions impact electoral behaviour in other countries? Do other countries' political parties attempt to elicit certain emotions for political gain? And when considering attitudes and preferences, how do these emotions

relate with relevant political attitudes? Are emotions perhaps an input or output of these political attitudes? There is a lot of research ground to be covered in the realm of emotions and politics. This paper has aimed to start to broaden the discussion.

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### **3. MAKING VOICE COUNT: ECONOMIC VOTING AND THE NUMBER OF PARTIES**

#### **Abstract**

Economic voting claims that citizens will reward or punish the incumbent government based on the state of the economy, as a mechanism of democratic accountability. In negative economic voting, in order to vote against the government, citizens must have options (parties) in which to place their vote to voice discontent. If not, there is no opportunity to cast an ‘economic vote’ and abstention results, leading to a weakened economic effect. This chapter argues that the electoral system indirectly mediates the relationship between the economy and the vote by determining the number of viable parties which act as the conduit for punishing the incumbent. Cross-national data and individual-level data for the case of Spain are used to test the impact of the number of parties on economic voting. The findings suggest that when there are more viable parties competing, the probability of casting an economic vote increases.

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<http://ppq.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/02/1354068813509516.full>

### 3.1. Introduction

Even though governments oversee many important public policy decisions, it is their management of the economy which is believed to have the greatest effect on voting decisions. The conventional wisdom is summarised by Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier in the following way: “Among the issues on the typical voter’s agenda, none is more consistently present, nor generally has a stronger impact, than the economy” (2000: 211). The assertion behind what is referred to as ‘economic voting’ is simple: voters will vote for (reward) the government if the economy is doing well and vote against (punish) it if the economy sours (Key, 1964).

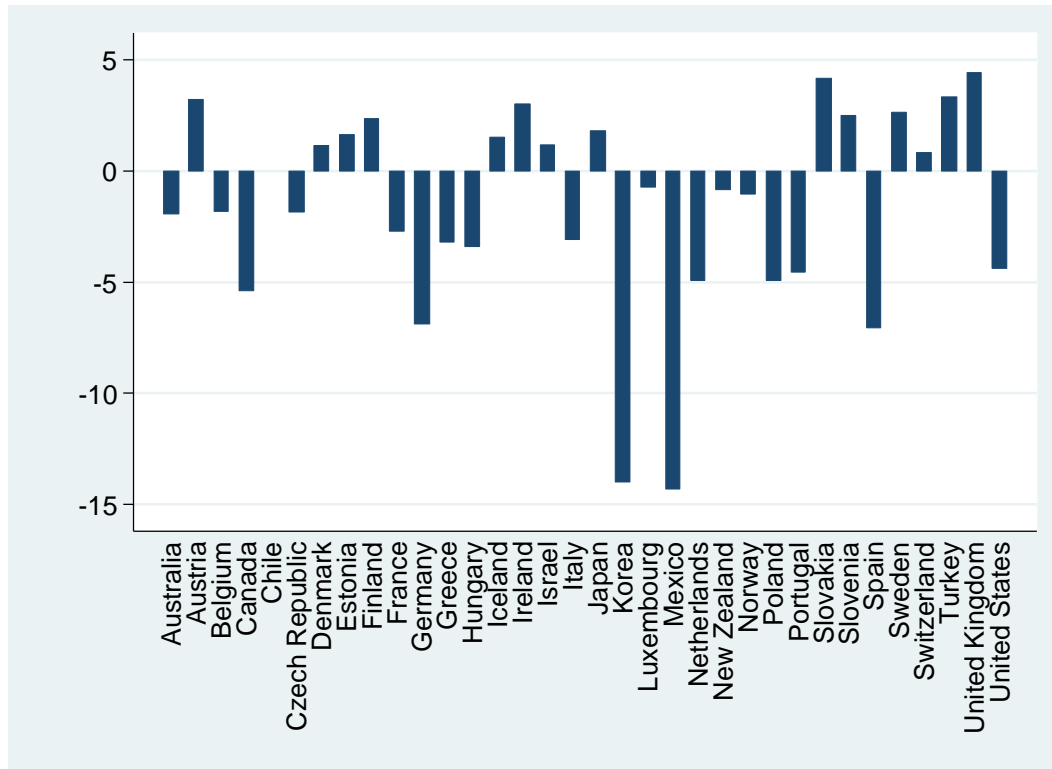
The ‘reward’ aspect of the economic voting theory is straightforward, but the ‘punishment’ action is less so. Currently the theory’s concept of ‘punishing’ an incumbent for bad economic management specifies only one option for punishment: voting for an opposition party. While this may be the case for some citizens in some countries, it is not the only option a discontented voter has. That is to say, in order for voters to vote for an opposition party and voice their discontent with the incumbent government there must be viable vote options available which satisfy a citizen’s ideological leanings at some level in order to earn a vote. Contrary to Anderson’s (2000) findings that when there are less ‘available alternatives’ (viable parties) then economic effects are stronger, the logic behind the argument of this paper is that when there are fewer parties to express a ‘punishment’ vote, then abstention becomes the only possible alternative, thereby reducing the impact of the economic vote.

The idea that abstention or turnout can be affected by the economy is not new (Rosentstone, 1982; Radcliff, 1992). The relationship between the economy and turnout has been examined cross-nationally to determine if there is a ‘mobilising’ or ‘demobilising’ effect of the national economic situation on citizens in elections. However, the results remain unclear and we are still uncertain to what degree – if any – turnout is affected by the economic situation in the country (Blais, 2006). This is important since, if there is an effect, the economic voting model will need to address turnout levels. To my knowledge, to date, and rather surprisingly, economic voting theories have not coalesced with theories linking the economy and turnout to formulate a

more robust and accurate model of voting behaviour during bad economic times. This is rather odd since these two lines of literature involve citizens making voting decisions in elections under the assumption that the economy has the greatest impact on voters. Since these are two pieces of the same puzzle, erroneously we have two interconnected lines of literature that are not even speaking to each other: how the economy affects voting and how the economy affects turnout.

To demonstrate this gap in the literature, Figure 3.1 displays the difference in election turnout for the OECD countries, in elections held before the global economic crisis of 2008 and the first national election held post-2008. There is wide variation among countries; over half of the countries show decreases in turnout from the pre-crisis election to the post-2008 election and the others slight increases. Though the literature would claim this is an ideal moment to observe economic effects, at the moment we are unsure if or what role the economy plays here. Why were voters mobilised in some countries like Sweden and Slovakia but demobilised in France, Italy, and Hungary, and to an even greater extent in Canada, the U.S, and Spain? Since the literature lacks a robust explanation for this, economic voting models are potentially biased in that they are assuming turnout is constant across countries and overtime by simply selecting voters at the time of the election; thus if there was a demobilisation effect, for instance, the economic voting model would not be capturing it.

Figure 3.1: Difference in turnout (%) for the OECD countries



The difference in lower-house election turnout from the election immediately before the economic crisis began (pre-2008) and the first election since the crisis for the OECD countries (post-2008). Data: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

The logic of the argument in this paper is that if citizens have proved to be strongly influenced by economic conditions, real and perceived (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000: 211), this includes all types of citizens, even those who abstain, who would be strongly affected by economic conditions. Given that there would be an economic affect (of some degree) on citizens, the logic of this paper follows that of Southwell on voting behaviour: “When an individual is faced with an external situation that is perceived as undesirable, he is presented with two options: (1) take remedial action, or; (2) exit the scene. In an electoral context, the individual who has become disenchanted with the political system either votes or abstains” (1998:43). In (negative) economic voting, disenchanted individuals are assumed to have one unrealistic option: vote for the opposition. In reality, however, citizens can choose to abstain in lieu of the option to vote

for an opposition party. But under what conditions does a potential economic voter decide not to punish with an opposition vote but rather by abstention?

This paper finds that the relationship between the economy and voting is indirectly influenced by the electoral system but more specifically by the number of viable parties<sup>1</sup>. The interpretation of findings is based on the premise that the electoral system conditions the choices available to voters at the district-level, and it strengthens or weakens the economic vote depending on district-level competition and the number of viable parties – in other words whether citizens have the opportunity to voice their discontent (and cast an economic vote). One cross-national regression is run using the OECD countries, and three multinomial logistic regression models for the case of Spain are used in order to observe the actual mechanisms occurring at individual-level. The overall contribution of this paper is to merge the literature focusing on economic voting with the research linking turnout and the economy. By doing so it argues for economic voting models to include the role of abstention and the affect that the number of parties has on the ability to cast an economic vote of discontent, thereby holding the incumbent government to account.

The paper continues as follows: the next section reviews the literature and outlines the main arguments; the third section describes the data and methods; the fourth section discusses the results; and the final section concludes.

### 3.2 Theoretical arguments

Voting and economics have long been linked by the idea that a citizen reflects upon her present or future economic situation or the present or future state of the national economy before casting a ballot. Once the citizen has assessed the state of the national economy or her own personal financial circumstance, she will decide if she should reward the incumbent party with her vote or punish it by voting for the opposition. The ‘reward’ hypothesis is logically sound, though only weakly supported, and over the years the findings related to the ‘punishment’ hypothesis have been considerably more robust:

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<sup>1</sup> Cox’s (1997) definition of viable parties/candidates includes all those candidates expected to win a seat and those who are tied for the Mth seat.



“the dominant finding is that they (voters) punish economic downturn more than they reward economic upturn” (Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000: 6). Given that there is stronger support for the ‘punishment’ theory, in light of the recent global economic downturn there is a ripe opportunity to test this hypothesis, in conjunction with the arguments put forward in this paper.

Economic voting theory is firm on few explanatory variables. Perhaps it was the simplicity of the original model that drove the desire for more complex designs in order to capture the reality of the political environment. Out of this complexity emerged some of the most vigorous and convincing arguments that have to do with institutions, such as: political context (Powell and Whitten, 1993), clarity of responsibility (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Anderson, 2000), political and economic context and information (Duch and Stevenson, 2008), and available alternatives to the incumbent (Lewis-Beck, 1986; Anderson, 2000). The overall findings suggest that context is important for estimating the economic vote. But have we exhausted the list of contextual variables? And are we accurately capturing what we set out to explain?

In his cross-national individual-level analysis, Anderson (2000) used the national effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) of a country as the measure for the ‘clarity of available alternatives’ which was expected to capture if there was a clear alternative to the incumbent. In his results he found that countries with a higher effective number of parliamentary parties at the national level show a weaker economic vote. Anderson attributed this to the fact that when there are more parties and the party system is more fractionalised then citizens will find it harder to identify the alternative to the incumbent. This is a feasible explanation, yet arguably there are two problems with Anderson’s measure, first he takes the effective number of parliamentary parties at the macro or country level, yet he relies on micro or individual-level results. But if voting takes place at the district-level, and the effective number of parliamentary parties (or district-level viable parties) varies across districts, it would be more reliable to examine district-level competition since individuals must vote for the parties competing at the district-level.

The second issue with Anderson's model is he aims to capture the array of options available to potential economic voters but he does not consider potential economic voters who chose to abstain as a way to express their discontent; he does not incorporate the role of turnout in his models. In other words, he and other economic voting researchers, measure voter discontent for the economy based on the selection of only those who voted in that election. They omit a population of potential economic voters who abstained in lieu of a satisfactory outlet (party) to voice their discontent. As a result of this omission, their economic voting estimates might be biased. To avoid this potential bias one could, first, use a measure of party viability at the district level in order to understand the options available to voters and, second, account for the abstainers who have little or no satisfactory options (parties) in their district.

Party viability and the number of parties at the district level are – to some extent – a product of the type of electoral system via district magnitude: many researchers agree that possibly the most influential characteristic of the electoral system is indeed district magnitude, which has been found to be associated with party fragmentation and the number of parties at the district level (Ordeshook and Shvevtova, 1994). It is because of this that the electoral system has been said to have both mechanical and psychological effects, and overall has a strong relationship with both party systems, and vote choice and abstention (Blais, 2000). Blais and Carty (1991:79) summarise well the original theory by Duverger:

“The mechanical effect refers to electoral systems' systematic underrepresentation (in the share of legislative seats as compared to popular votes) of 'third' parties. The psychological effect refers to the tendency for voters, realizing that votes for minor parties are not effectively translated into seats, to rally to what they consider the least unacceptable of the two major parties.”

Given the existence of this effect of the electoral system, should we expect potential economic voters to behave differently under different electoral system laws? If PR is a fairer electoral system that alienates less voters (Blais, 2000: 26) then we should find that economic voting is stronger when there are more parties, since citizens will be less-alienated and they will more easily find an outlet for their discontent. Although,

when we consider the recent findings from Carey and Hix (2011), we should expect the level of accountability and representation to differ across magnitudes in a positive direction but only up to a point; in other words we should not expect to find a perfectly linear outcome. Alternatively, when there are few viable parties at the district level, as found in an electoral system with FPTP, for example, potential economic voters could be more likely to abstain, since the fewer parties there are in a citizen's district the less chance she has of finding a preferred alternative to the incumbent. In other words, in countries or districts with fewer parties, potential economic voters are more likely to be demobilised than those in countries or districts with more parties. The consequence of this demobilisation is that it weakens the impact of the economic vote because abstention has increased.

To better illustrate this point, Figure 3.2 displays a hypothetical electoral situation where the incumbent government is a leftist party that has managed the economy poorly (as a fact of objective indicators and the vast majority of the subjective ones). There are two districts – D1 and D2; D1 with three viable parties and D2 with two. The parties in the district with three seats range from two leftist (Li being the leftist incumbent) to one centrist to one rightist, and the parties in the district with two seats range from one leftist (Li, the incumbent) and one rightist. If there is an ideologically-left individual who blames the government for the country's poor economic performance, and she is in D1, she appears to have one other party to vote for that would allow her to, as the theory claims, 'punish' the incumbent. Yet, if this individual is located in D2, it appears that in order to 'punish' the incumbent her only option is to not vote for the incumbent, but abstain, thereby decreasing the effect of the 'economic vote'.

Figure 3.2: Hypothetical economic vote comparison with different numbers of viable parties.

<b>District</b>	<b>D1</b>	<b>D2</b>
<b>Viable Parties</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Party Ideology</b>	<b>Li-C-R-</b>	<b>Li-R</b>
<b>Voter Left</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
<b>Voter Right</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R</b>

The key argument to emphasize here is that it is important to include the role of abstention. Abstention can be used by some as a method of protest (Southwell, 1998). And as outlined previously in Figure 3.2, abstention could occur among potential economic voters when they have no viable opposition party to vote for. But since we do not know what role the economy plays in affecting abstention rates we can only refer to the central theoretical framework included in the literature linking the economy and turnout. This literature explores the role of the economy as an entity which either

mobilises or demobilises individuals. The idea is, when the economy is bad, individuals are mobilised to vote because they want to reprimand the governing party that is poorly managing the economy, so turnout increases. On the other hand, some theorists suggest that citizens are actually demobilised because they are personally affected by the economic downturn which makes them too preoccupied with holding ‘body and soul’ together that they cannot be bothered to vote; they have more pressing concerns, so turnout decreases (Rosenstone, 1982). To this end the findings are mixed: some research has found no effect (Fiorina, 1978), while others find support for the withdrawal (demobilisation) hypothesis (Rosenstone, 1982; Verba and Scholozman, 1979; Blais, 2000; Pacek, 1994).

In this regard, it is possible that these inconsistent outcomes are due to the rigid theoretical framework that attempts to link turnout to the state of the economy. That framework suggests there is a *direct* link between the decision to vote or not and the state of the economy when, in fact, the decision to vote or not is also contingent upon who there is to vote for, and not solely upon whether the macroeconomy is good or bad, or whether a person is better off now rather than six months ago. In a similar vein economic voting assumes that all potential economic voters have the ability to express their economic vote: that there is an opposition party to vote for. For this reason, these lines of literature need to establish a dialogue.

It is crucial to define what constitutes an ‘economic voter’ at this time. Anderson (2007) in a vast literature review (and in agreement with Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 1993) argued that two critical moderating factors need to be considered when analysing economic voting: the institutional setting in which voters make their decisions, but also voters, and their individual characteristics, are equally important. Here Anderson refers to voters’ cognitive abilities, their values which shape their economic perceptions, and particularly how they attribute responsibility. Because of its sound logic and support from important authorities on the subject, this paper’s understanding of the primary conditions to observe negative economic voting are i) that the individual believes the national economy has deteriorated; and ii) the individual believes the national government is

responsible for it (Feldman, 1982; Kinder and Mebane, 1983; Peffley, 1984; Anderson, 2007).

Considering the arguments outlined previously, in the first model, the expectation for the OECD countries is the following: those that have experienced declines in GDP and employment from the time of the pre-2008 (pre-crisis) election to the post-2008 election, and that have a lower ENPP, should experience a decline in voter turnout. The hypothesis is that citizens in countries with deteriorating economies and fewer options (parties) to express an economic vote of discontent, will be demobilised by economic effects. Alternatively, in countries that have a higher ENPP, the expectation is that citizens will be mobilised; in other words the economic affect on voting behaviour (or the economic vote) will be stronger in these countries.

Following that same reasoning but now at the individual-level, we should expect that when the number of viable parties is higher in a district the economic vote will be stronger (the higher the turnout), but *only* when the primary economic voting condition is present: when individuals clearly blame the incumbent for the economic deterioration. When the number of parties is considered simultaneously with the attribution of blame the result should shed light on the causal mechanisms behind what we are potentially observing at the aggregate level. This expectation is based on the premise that individuals require an outlet for voicing discontent in economic voting, in the form of an opposition party, or the consequence will be a discontented citizen who abstains.

### 3.3. Data and methods

To test the argument first, a regression is run at the aggregate level for the 34 OECD countries, for national elections before and after the start of the global financial crisis that hit in 2008. Economic crises and recessions generally have a strong affect on electoral outcomes (Weatherford, 1978; Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000). In this paper these two elections are referred to as pre-crisis (before 2008) and crisis elections (post-2008). The difference in turnout (turnout as the percentage of registered voters who actually voted) from the pre-crisis election to the crisis election is used as the dependent variable (source: IDEA). The key independent variable is the number of viable parties

which is measured through the calculation of the effective number of parliamentary parties, as established by Laasko and Taagepera (1979), the formula is the following:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$$

N is the number of parties with at least one seat and  $p_i^2$  the square of each party's proportion of all seats.

District magnitude, as mentioned previously, is an important characteristic of electoral systems which helps determine party systems, to some extent. However, it is not used as a measure of the party system because it is not a proper indicator for comparing the number of viable parties across countries: average district magnitude simply does not correspond precisely with the average ENPP. Since we are trying to determine which options exist for citizens the ENPP is more exact and it gives us information on how many viable parties there are. The ENPP is taken from the first election (pre-crisis) to avoid any problems of endogeneity. Further, a log of the ENPP is taken because the expectation is that ENPP's effect is not perfectly linear.

The other explanatory variables include change in GDP and change in the employment rate from the pre-crisis election to the crisis election (World Bank, OECD). While 'unemployment' is sometimes the measure used, 'employment' is used here so that GDP and employment can be observed and interpreted easily when combined in an interaction variable. Cross-national studies of economic voting generally use these variables (and sometimes inflation) as indicators of the state of the national economic situation (Rosenstone, 1982; Radcliff, 1992). The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 3.1.

Competition is - at times - found to be a correlate of turnout; it is predicted to have the potential to mobilise voters since when there is a close race voters are more likely to believe that his or her vote will make a difference (Franklin, 2004). A measure of competitiveness is included in the cross-national model. Competitiveness is measured by the difference in the electoral results of the winner and the first-loser. The higher the

competitiveness of the election (the closer the winner and the first-loser are to each other) the higher turnout is expected to be. This variable is not considered for the individual-level analysis because PR systems are considered to be competitive, generally, and there is little to no variability across districts (Blais, 2000; Blais and Lago, 2009).

Table 3.1: Displays the descriptive statistics for the OECD model.

Variable		Mean	SD	Min	Max
Difference in turnout	in	-1.58	4.55	-14.29	4.41
ENPP		3.78	1.51	1.99	7.91
Difference in margin of victory	in	2.64	8.25	-12.1	32.4
Difference in GDP		-3.22	3.35	-12.79	4
Difference in employment rate	in	-1.67	2.99	-10.4	3.5

Aggregate analyses assume the presence of certain links in the causal chain of economic voting, such as blaming the government for a poor economic situation, but an aggregate analysis alone does not suffice because the opinions of citizens remain unconfirmed. An individual-level analysis is crucial for identifying the key economic voting mechanism at play; namely, whether citizens blame the government for the economy. Of further import at the individual-level is party competition in districts where citizens make their decisions. In other words, the individual-analysis gives us the opportunity to see if the economic voting hypotheses are actually working.

For the individual-level analysis, the case of Spain has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, Spain has a Proportional Representation electoral system with 52



districts ranging in magnitude from 2 to 36. It is one of the countries with the highest variation in district magnitude (Monroe and Rose, 2002: 68). The consequence of this variation in district magnitude is a relatively high variation in the number of viable parties competing in each district. Secondly, in terms of clarity of responsibility, Spain has been indexed as one of the countries with the ‘most clear’ institutional division of responsibilities (Powell and Whitten, 1993). Lastly, Spain has experienced a deep and enduring economic crisis; over the government term of the Partido Socialista Obrero de España (PSOE) the unemployment rate more than doubled, the country experienced a recession in 2009, and again slipped back into a second recession at the end of 2011, and along with the contracting economy, its national debt and cost of borrowing increased. Further to these reasons, focusing on the case of Spain allows the economy, the electoral system laws (and other country-specific variables) to be held constant, while at the same time there is variation in the party system.

The Spanish data is taken from the 2011 CIS<sup>2</sup> post national election survey. Three multinomial models are run in order to show the mechanisms behind expressing an economic vote; these being the variation in the number of parties and the attribution of blame for a deteriorated national economy. The first model seeks to plainly answer the question: Did economic voting occur in the Spanish national election of 2011 (irrespective of the number of parties)? This model compares abstainers with opposition party voters and incumbent voters with opposition voters (opposition party voting is the baseline), with the key independent variable being to what degree the individual blames the incumbent government for the economic downturn. This first model allows us to verify if the standard economic voting model holds up in Spain, without estimating the impact of the number of parties.

For this first model and the second one, the key independent variable ‘government responsibility’ which subsequently produces an ‘economic voting scale’ that is created

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<sup>2</sup> Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Spain. Survey n° 2.920 is a post-election survey of political behaviour, taken from a sample of 6, 082 of the Spanish population over the age of 18. The survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews between 24 November 2011 and 15 January 2012.

through the use of the following question in the CIS survey, which is subjectively evaluated by citizens:

- Who do you believe has fundamental responsibility for the economic crisis?  
(answer: ‘The Spanish Government’)

When we use this indicator as the key independent variable in models 1 and 2, we are able to verify whether economic voting exists without considering the role of the number of parties. This key independent variable captures the opinions and characteristics of individuals which were previously argued to matter for economic voting. As an indicator for both the attribution of responsibility and sociotropic evaluation this question should capture well the pool of potential economic voters. This is supported by past findings that claim it is not the egotropic reflections of individuals about one’s personal financial situation that matter most for the economic vote but it is an individuals’ sociotropic evaluations of the state of economy that is said to be bad news for incumbents who do not perform well (Anderson, 2000; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Anderson, 2007). For this reason national and individual-level sociotropic evaluations and indicators are used.

The importance of institutional variables was outlined previously and is a significant part of identifying a potential ‘economic voter’. Powell and Whitten (1993) uncovered the need for the inclusion of clarity of the government’s responsibility for the economy because citizens will hold governments responsible for the economy when it is clear to them who is responsible for it. Similarly, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier found clarity to be a key variable as well (2000).

Since several recent economic voting theorists convincingly argue that subjective ‘government responsibility’ for the (weakened) economy should exist among citizens first, in the third model an interaction variable is produced which aims to capture the ripe moment for observing economic voting: government responsibility and the number of parties. The expected effect of this variable is that when subjective government responsibility is high and the number of viable parties is high, among individuals and in districts, turnout should be high and consequently the economic vote should strengthen.

Model 1 differs from models 2 and 3 in an important way: In the first model the sample of individuals includes the voters of all the parties and the abstainers. In the remaining models (2 and 3), third parties are examined, specifically. This is because the dominant Partido Popular is almost 40% of the sample (this party went on to form a majority government). Since it is such a large part of the sample and mainly because it is competitive in every district, it stifles the variation we need to observe in order to identify the mechanism at play across districts. Therefore, in models 2 and 3 the ‘opposition parties’ variable excludes the Partido Popular (PP) and only looks at competitive (viable) third parties.

Using multinomial logistic regressions, the dependent variable for each model is generated by coding 1 if the individual did not vote, and coding 2 if the individual voted for an opposition party, and coding 3 if the vote was for the incumbent. The key independent variable in Model 3 is the number of viable parties. The number of viable parties is used instead of the ENPP because, as mentioned previously, in Model 3 supporters of third parties but not of the dominant Popular Party have been isolated, specifically. This variable is operationalised by counting the number of viable parties in each district (that is, the raw number of parties for the previous, 2008, national election). The log of this variable is used.

The following control variables are used in each of the models: as ideology is a determinant of vote choice, a variable capturing if a respondent feels close to a party is included: this is a dichotomous variable coded 0 if ‘no’ (not close) and 1 if ‘yes’ (close); Age is known to be correlated with voting, and it is included as a continuous variable; Education is known to be correlated with voting. Education is coded from 1 to 6, category 1 meaning no education and category 6 being the highest level or post-graduate education. All three models were clustered by autonomous community (17) to keep the party system and regional features together. The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Descriptive statistics for Spain.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Number of Parties	2.57	.89	2	5
Government Responsible	3.29	1.07	1	5
Close to a Party	.49	.50	0	1
Age	47.8	17.7	18	95
Education	3.01	1.47	1	6

### 3.4. Results

The first results are shown in Table 3.3. In the cross-national regression of the 34 OECD countries, the key independent variable, ENPP is significant at the 5 per cent level and is positive. The data show that as the number of parties increase there is an increase in turnout. This result confirms the main hypothesis: the higher the number of viable parties, the higher the difference in turnout from the pre-crisis election to the crisis election. These findings suggest that individuals in countries with more parties were mobilised by the crisis and possibly used the opportunity of having more parties/alternatives to vote against the incumbent and express an economic vote as opposed to citizens in countries with fewer viable parties who abstained and failed to express an economic vote. This demonstrates that the economic vote is stronger when there are more parties, contrary to Anderson's finding. Additionally, this means that fewer parties and abstention lead to a weaker economic effect. However to be more

certain about this finding confirmation of the mechanisms is required in the individual-level analyses – we still need to prove that individuals did indeed vote against the incumbent and those who did so did this because they felt the incumbent was responsible.

Surprisingly, the margin of victory or the ‘competition effect’ is not significant. The difference in GDP is significant and positive at the 1 per cent level. The employment variable is positive but not significant. When an interaction is introduced for employment and GDP, the interaction coefficient is positive and significant at the 5 per cent level. This means that the bigger the decrease in GDP and employment in a country, the lower the turnout is, meaning, generally, there is a demobilising effect on the population when the economy is bad.

Table 3.3: The effect of ENPP on the difference in turnout, OECD countries	
Explanatory variables	Coefficient
(log)ENPP	4.27**(2.10)
Difference in margin of victory	-.03 (.10)
Difference in GDP	.83***(.29)
Difference in employment rate	.20 (.33)
GDPxEmployment rate	.17**(.08)
Constant	-4.74 (2.87)
N	34
R2	.33
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001; standard errors in parentheses	

For the individual-level results for Spain (see Table 3.4), in the first model, where voters for all opposition parties are included in the sample, the coefficient for government responsibility for the economic crisis is negative and significant at the 1 percent level (the baseline is a vote for the opposition party). This means that those who blame the government for the economic crisis are more likely to vote for an opposition party versus abstain, and vote for an opposition party versus vote for the incumbent. This model demonstrates that economic voting in the traditional sense of the theory was quite strong in the 2011 national election in Spain. Overall, people who blamed the government for the poor economic situation were mobilised to punish the incumbent with a vote for an opposition party. These individuals were also more mobilised to vote for an opposition party and express their discontent versus abstain. But if that were the whole story, why would we still see a decline in turnout at the aggregate level? Models 2 and 3 should lead us to the possible reasons.

As mentioned previously, there was an opposition party that dominated the polls in this election. Indeed, it (Partido Popular) certainly would have gained a substantial amount of support from those ‘economic voters’ however there was still a majority of individuals who did not find themselves ideologically aligned with this centre-right party, and for this reason they either voted for another opposition party or abstained. Model 2 excludes the Partido Popular in order to isolate third party voters and to verify if they also behaved as economic voters. The goal of the second model is to examine these individuals and answer the question: When these individuals had more parties to choose from did they vote for an opposition party, and when they had fewer parties did they decide to abstain?

Table 3.4 displays the results. In Model 2 we find that blaming the government for the crisis has a less-mobilising effect on these individuals. While the coefficient is not significant, it does go in the direction of abstention. This means, when *not* controlling for the number of viable parties, these people, even if they blame the government for the crisis, were more likely to abstain. It appears that, as foreseen, PP voters were biasing the sample in the first model toward economic voting when they were compared to abstainers. When we omit PP supporters it appears that these remaining individuals were

more likely to abstain when they believed the government was responsible for the deteriorated state of the economy instead of voting for another opposition party (but, again, this coefficient does not reach statistical significance). However the coefficient for voting for an opposition party versus the incumbent is predictably negative and significant at the 1 percent level. In this sense, it is safe to say that there was still demonstrative economic voting in this election. But Model 2 still leaves a question unanswered: Why were these individuals demobilised in spite of blaming the incumbent for the poor economic situation? Model 3 attempts to answer this question.

Since the results in Model 2 indicate that the role of abstention is slightly ambiguous, the third model seeks to include the argument that ‘parties matter’ to economic voting: were these abstaining but probable economic voters demobilised because they lacked an outlet for their discontent? In Model 3, the key indicator for us to observe these economic voters is found in the interaction coefficient which considers the number of viable parties with high incumbent blame. As discussed previously, Anderson, among others, felt it crucial for potential economic voting individuals to have a clear attribution of incumbent blame; additionally the argument contained in this paper asserts that the number of viable parties matter to whether one ultimately fulfills an economic vote. Since these are the two argued preconditions for economic voting, they need to co-occur to observe a strong presence of economic voting.

With this argument in mind, when the number of parties is added to the model, the effect changes from that found in Model 2: here, when there are more third parties in a district and *at the same time* these individuals strongly blame the government for the economic crisis, they are more likely to express an economic vote versus abstain. This interaction coefficient is significant at the 10 percent level. Again, when compared against the results in Model 2, we can see that the difference between whether one votes for an opposition party or abstains is the presence of viable parties. In lieu of having some viable third parties in one’s district the economic vote is weakened, and a demobilisation effect of the economy on this population can be observed. When we look at those individuals who voted for an opposition party versus the incumbent, as expected, the coefficient is negative and significant at the 1 percent level. This means when there

are more third parties to vote for, among those who strongly blame the government for the economic crisis, the economic vote work strongly against the incumbent. If we consider that at the aggregate level turnout actually declined in Spain during the last election, then these individual-level results suggest that the decline was not necessarily because certain individuals did not have the characteristics of economic voters per se (in fact economic voting theory suggests they did) but rather some lacked a viable supply opposition parties in their district and therefore potentially withdrew their punishment 'voice' and abstained.



Table 3.4: Multinomial logistic regression models of abstention and voting for the incumbent versus voting for an opposition party

<b>Models</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	
	Abstain	Incumb	Abstain	Incumb	Abstain	Incumb
<b>Government</b>	-.27	-.98	.10 (.07)	-.54	.47	-.22
<b>Responsible</b>	(.06)***	(.04)***		(.06)***	(.19)**	(.13)*
<b>(log)Number of Parties</b>	—	—	—	—	.66 (.60)	-.27 (.40)
<b>Party</b>	-1.33	.74	-1.40	.59	-1.37	.64
<b>Closeness</b>	(.12)***	(.05)****	(.14)***	(.11)***	(.14)***	(.11)***
<b>Age</b>	-.02	.01	-.01	.01	-.01	.01
	(.01)***	(.01)**	(.01)**	(.01)**	(.01)**	(.01)***
<b>Education</b>	-.08	-.10 (.06)	-.35	-.34	-.33	-.29
	(.04)*	*	(.02)***	(.03)***	(.02)***	(.03)***
<b>Parties*Responsible</b>	—	—	—	—	-.36	-.32
					(.19)*	(.10)***
<b>Constant</b>	1.94 (.32)	2.69 (.29)	1.41 (.33)	1.85 (.32)	.59 (.75)	1.80 (.64)
<b>N</b>	4225	4225	3377	3377	3377	3377
<b>R2</b>	.15	.15	.14	.14	.15	.15

Outcome variable is a vote for an opposition party; clusters=17; Robust standard errors in parentheses \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.001

Taking into consideration the results of all the models the relationship between the state of the economy and electoral choice appears to be mediated by the number of parties or the choices available to voters at the district-level. If there are no options available for a citizen who is disappointed in the government's management of the economy, she will likely abstain – and thereby weaken the effect of economic vote on electoral results. On the other hand, if there are opposition parties which the same discontent citizen has in her district, she will likely vote for one of those parties – thereby strengthening the effect of the economic vote on electoral results. Additionally this paper has found that, contrary to Anderson's (2000) findings, the number of viable parties strengthens the economic vote.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Models of economic voting have been parsimonious and logically appealing. Over the years they have rather consistently shown that a relationship exists between the state of the national economy and whether a citizen votes for the incumbent or the opposition, particularly when it comes to negative economic voting, and in the two-party system present in the United States, especially. However, when we look across districts, in particular, and countries, more generally, it appears that the standard economic voting model has omitted party systems as a central mechanism for voicing an economic vote. As seen in the results for the OECD countries, the number of parties has a mobilising effect on citizens to vote in bad economic times, overall. But to confirm this finding it was necessary to look at individual-level behaviours in order to observe whether the mechanisms of the clear attribution of blame and the number of parties in one's district would compel someone to vote against the incumbent, but further whether having more parties would mobilise these individuals to actually fulfill their economic vote.

The findings for the individual-level analyses for Spain indeed confirm the results of the aggregate analysis: the more viable parties there are, the stronger the economic vote will be due to the mobilisation effect or, in other words, the desire to punish the incumbent and at the same time having an outlet (party) to voice discontent.

Concurrently with tackling economic voting theory, this paper has sought to address the literature that links turnout to the state of the national economy. At the aggregate level (and weakly at the individual-level) the results have demonstrated that a bad economic situation has the potential to demobilise citizens.

These findings are consistent with some of the literature on this topic. Yet, when the number of viable parties is factored into the models this effect disappears in some cases; citizens in some countries or districts become mobilised by opposition parties and their ability to punish the incumbent with an opposition vote. In the individual-level results, when parties are not added to the model, it is plausible (though not significant here) that citizens in districts with fewer parties might abstain, even if they are characteristically potential ‘economic voters’ in that they attribute blame to the incumbent government for the poor state of the national economy. This finding warrants more investigation, but is still intriguing when considered with the result of the aggregate analysis and given the wider implication for researchers that the economy-turnout link is certainly not direct, but likely depends on party competition. This revelation – which equally appeals to our logical assumptions about voting behaviour generally – should at least spur some dialogue between the literature on economic voting and the literature that attempts to link turnout to the state of the national economy since they examine the same phenomenon: how the economy affects voting.

Parties, in which citizens can invest a punishment vote against an incumbent government that manages the economy poorly, are an important but previously omitted variable in economic voting theory. With the exception of Anderson (2000), particularly, the number of viable parties has not been given much weight among researchers. This means that most of the past literature has turned a blind eye to the citizen who believes her government is responsible for the deteriorating national economy but who has no viable opposition party to vote for. In that sense, past work might have improperly predicted the strength of economic voting by selecting only the supply of voters at the time of each election.

The key finding of this paper is, simply: parties matter for the economic voting voice to count. When a potential economic voter abstains, a voice has been discounted.

This is important to be mindful of as we go forward with the ever-expanding literature on economics and voting.

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## **4. THE PARTISAN CONSEQUENCES OF TURNOUT REVISITED**

### Abstract

The relationship between turnout and electoral results has been well-studied but with contradictory findings. Thus far an academic consensus on the relationship between turnout and electoral results does not exist, and the conditions under which this relationship can be observed are still unknown. This chapter aims to fill a gap in the literature by arguing for the need to focus on three elements: class voting, the mechanisms behind whether the correlation is observed over the short or long-term, and the use of more rigorous model specifications. By looking at the cases of Spain and Portugal, we find a correlation in the short and long-term for Spain but not for Portugal and this is due namely to the prominence of class voting in the former.

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## 4.1. Introduction

The relationship between turnout and electoral results is one of those long-standing and logically appealing theories in political science. One that is repeatedly studied, partially evidenced but never truly confirmed. After decades of research “there exists little scholarly agreement about either the partisan consequences of high turnout or its effect on incumbents in general” (Hansford and Gomez, 2010: 268). But generally if a theory is not confirmed in every scenario but only in some, it should lead us to new variables that uncover possible conditioning factors.

The logic behind electoral results depending on turnout levels (i.e. the higher the electoral turnout is the higher the left party vote share will be) is that citizens with a higher socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to vote, generally, than those with a lower SES. The next assumption contained in the theory is that these citizens will have different ideological leanings based on their SES which is supposed to manifest into party support. With this in mind, the argument is that low turnout biases election outcomes such that right-wing parties gain at the expense of left-of-centre alternatives (Rubenson et al, 2007: 595). However, as of recently even, the empirical evidence supporting the partisan consequences of turnout has not been conclusive. Using data from national elections in 23 OECD countries, Fisher (2007) only finds statistically significant positive correlations between the left share of the vote and turnout in five countries. In light of this fairly recent finding, we ask: why can we find this correlation in some countries and in some elections and not in others?

In this paper we argue that there has not been unanimous results across countries and elections due to the following issues: the consistent assumption that class voting exists with the same strength everywhere<sup>1</sup>; the different mechanisms behind the correlation between turnout and electoral results depending on whether the correlation is examined in the short or long-term; and the use of inappropriate statistical models to account for the partisan consequences of turnout. To the first point, class voting differs across countries. We argue that, all else equal, the correlation between turnout and electoral results should be higher as class voting increases. On the other hand, if class

voting is virtually non-existent, then voting for one party or for the other does not make a difference in terms of class, and therefore we should not expect a significant correlation.

Our second issue, as explained by Fisher (2007: 598-600), is when assessing the relationship between turnout and the left share of vote, there are two possible scenarios: whether the left share of the vote is higher or not when turnout is relatively high (a long-term relationship) and whether the left share of the vote tends to increase between elections when turnout rises (a short-term relationship).<sup>2</sup> We argue that the variables required to assess these two scenarios are not necessarily the same. Our argument is that the long-term relationship is only a function of class voting; in the long-run leftist and rightist parties alternate in government which causes the impact of short-term factors, specifically the incumbent effect, to cancel out or at least trend to zero. On the other hand, the short-term relationship depends on who the ruling party is, given that higher turnout is associated with a lower vote share for the incumbent. In methodological terms, the main implication is that there are a variety of model specifications that could be reasonable for assessing the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote. Given that any particular specification rests on assumptions about how the two variables are connected (for instance, if they are differenced we are assuming that the relationship is in the short-term, but not in the long-term), a compelling test requires not having *ex ante* assumptions.

We test our argument with a comparison between Portugal and Spain, which are two third-wave democracies with strong differences in class voting; irrelevant in Portugal and significant in Spain. Relying on cross-sectional and time series cross-section analyses in which assumptions about whether the partisan consequences take place in the short or long-term are examined, our findings show that the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote exists in Spain both in the long and short-term, but not in Portugal, neither in the short nor in the long-term.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section we present our argument explaining cross-national differences in the correlation between turnout and the left share

of the vote. The following sections describe the data and methods, the results of the empirical analysis using aggregated data, and an individual-level data analysis of the causal mechanisms driving the relationship between turnout and leftist support. The final section concludes and offers some empirical extensions.

## 4.2. Arguments

The argument linking voter turnout and electoral results rests on three substantive assumptions. First, that there exists some degree of social and/or economic inequality in countries. In other words, if there are no inequalities in society then we cannot expect to find a positive correlation between turnout and electoral results because the differential benefit in terms of class for an individual associated with the election of various legislators/governments would be zero. All else equal, the higher the degree of social and/or economic inequalities, the higher the correlation between turnout and electoral results should be. Second, voters and nonvoters, to a large extent, can be identified by their SES. Accordingly, people of a lower SES have a lower propensity to vote than those of a higher socioeconomic status. Third, that class voting takes place in countries and therefore people of a lower socioeconomic status have a higher propensity to cast ballots for leftist parties than those with a higher SES.<sup>3</sup>

While the first assumption is always met, the other two are more problematic. The positive relationship between SES and turnout has been repeatedly demonstrated (see Blais, 2000), although, as Gallego (2010) shows, there are significant differences in the extent to which SES accounts for the variance in non-voting across countries. However, this correlation is influenced by the existence of strategic behaviours encouraged by electoral systems and the number of viable parties in a district/polity. Two individuals with the same SES may vote or abstain depending on whether parties and voters behave strategically or sincerely. As a consequence, the socioeconomic gap between voters and nonvoters would be reduced as well as the correlation between turnout and electoral results. The level of elite mobilisation effort is predicted to increase in elections when the race is close. Elite effort boosts turnout because voters respond to act-contingent incentives, those marshaled by political parties as part of explicit get-out-the-vote efforts

(Cox, 1999: 389-90). Given that closeness varies across districts within countries, the cost of voting can be different for two individuals with the same socioeconomic status and therefore their overall probability of voting. This impact of closeness is exacerbated if there is strategic abstention, with voters not showing up for less-competitive elections.

Similarly, social class does not shape voting behaviour by default. As explained by Przeworski and Sprague (1986: 7-9, 11), “class, religion, ethnic, race, or nation do not happen spontaneously as reflections of objective conditions in the psyches of individuals ... The organisation of politics in terms of class is not inevitable ... the salience of class as political behaviour can be attributed to the strategies pursued by political parties, especially parties of the Left”. More recently, Anderson and Beramendi (2012) have shown that countries’ income distributions and the presence of left party competition provide different incentives for left parties to mobilise lower income voters: the association between income inequality and turnout is muted by the presence of several parties on the left side of the political spectrum. Accordingly, whether citizens vote according to their SES is an empirical issue and clearly it should vary across countries and over time.

Finally, when analysing the partisan consequences of turnout, controlling for the anti-incumbent effect is crucial; as outlined by Grofman et al (1999), all else equal, higher turnout will be associated with lower vote share for the incumbent party, independently of whether it is a leftist or a rightist party. There are two mechanisms that explain this: First, the conditions that cause voters to reject the incumbent party may also cause more voters to turn out at the polls; and second, since core voters are on average more supportive of the governmental status quo than peripheral voters, the more peripheral voters that are involved in an election, then the worse the incumbent party’s candidate will do (Hansford and Gomez, 2010: 270-271).

Taking into account simultaneously the SES model and the anti-incumbent effect, the partisan consequences of turnout in the short-term will be particularly important when both variables push in the same direction; that is, when turnout is high and the incumbent

party is rightist. On the contrary, the sign of the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote will not be clear when turnout is high and the incumbent party is leftist, since the SES model predicts a positive correlation and the anti-incumbent effect a negative one. In sum, as shown in Table 4.1, and assuming the existence of class voting, there is a clear interaction between the SES model and the anti-incumbent effect when linking voter turnout and electoral results.

Table 4.1:  
The partisan consequences of turnout in the short-term  
(assuming the existence of class voting)\*

		Turnout (mobilisation of peripheral voters)	
		High	Low
Incumbent	Leftist	? (?)	? (?)
	Rightist	+ (-)	- (+)

\*In each cell, the first sign is the expected impact for the left share of the vote; in parentheses, the impact for the right share of the vote.

On the basis of these arguments, the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote in the long and short-terms can be formulated as follows:

- The left share of the vote is higher (lower) on average when turnout is high (low) if and only if social class shapes voting behaviour. If  $n$  elections are studied, the incumbent effect is canceled out or at least tends to be zero because there are alternating leftist and rightist governments. That is, *class voting is a necessary and sufficient condition for observing the correlation between electoral results and turnout in the long-term.*

- The left share of the vote does not increase (decrease) between elections when turnout rises (decreases) if social class does not shape voting behaviour, independently of the incumbent effect. That is, the inexistence of *class voting is a necessary and sufficient condition for not observing a correlation between electoral results and turnout in the short-term.*
- The left share of the vote increases (decreases) between elections when turnout rises (decreases) if social class shapes voting behaviour and the leftist party is the challenger. However, if the leftist party is the incumbent, the sign of the correlation is not clear, since the impact of class voting and the incumbent effect go in opposite directions. That is, *class voting plus a leftist challenger generate a positive correlation between electoral results and turnout in the short-term, while class voting plus a leftist incumbent generate a weaker correlation with an unpredictable sign.*

In Table 4.2 these different combinations of the long and short-term correlations - between the left share of the vote and turnout in three hypothetical countries are displayed. In Country C the correlation exists both in the long and short-term, in Country A only in the long-term, and in Country B neither in the long nor the short-term. Accordingly, model specification in statistical analyses has to respond to these different patterns. For instance, a model in which the left share of the vote and turnout are differenced partially captures the relationship between the two variables in Country C, but would lead to wrongly conclude that the correlation does not exist in Country A. In sum, four conclusions emerge from here: (i) there is not a straightforward relationship between turnout and electoral results; (ii) the determinants of the correlation in the long and short-term are not identical, (iii) class voting is a necessary and sufficient condition for the correlation in the long-term, but only necessary in the short-term, and (iv) the selection of a particular model specification is not an option for the researcher, but imposed by data.



Table 4.2. Three hypothetical cases of correlations between turnout and the left share of the vote

Countries	Elections (%)	Elections			Correlation	
		t	t+1	t+2	Long-term	Short-term
A	Turnout	80	78	80	Yes	No
	Left share of the vote	45	46	45		
B	Turnout	50	52	50	No	No
	Left share of the vote	45	45	45		
C	Turnout	78	80	78	Yes	Yes
	Left share of the vote	45	46	45		

### 4.3. Data and measures

In order to better address the puzzle of the partisan consequences of turnout, we look at data at the district level in Lower House elections within two individual countries, Portugal (1975-2009)<sup>4</sup> and Spain (1977-2008).<sup>5</sup> There are four reasons for this research design. First, cross-sectional studies of turnout are subject to limitations, particularly the omission of important factors (Blais, 2006). Second, because it is easier to register to vote in some countries than in others, turnout measures are not strictly comparable (Blais and

Aarts, 2006). Third, to the best of our knowledge, data measuring the strength of class voting across a significant number of countries and over time (decades) are not available. Lastly, the selection of Portugal and Spain allows us to focus on the variation in class voting amongst other factors that do not differ. The two countries are third-wave democracies with similar electoral systems, but with a considerable variation in the impact of social class on party choice.

Unfortunately, the first comprehensive scientific national election survey in Portugal was not conducted until 2002. Therefore, instead of measuring class voting over time using logistic modeling techniques such as the Kappa or the Lambda indexes, for instance, (Evans, 2000), the different saliency of class voting in Portugal and Spain will be shown according to the existing research. Using different methods and data, the finding that class voting is weak or even absent in Portugal and stronger in Spain is largely consensual in the literature. First, according to Freire (2006: 364-365), the weight of social class (a typology based on occupation and number of employees) in explaining individual left-right placement is three to four times higher in Spain than in Portugal in different moments in time. Not surprisingly, Portugal is at the bottom in the sample of 12 countries and Spain is at the top. Second, relying on multilevel models of voting behaviour in Southern Europe in the period 1985-1999, Freire and Lobo (2005: 510-11) conclude that “in the Portuguese case, the impact of social class’ indicators on the vote is never significant ... in the Spanish case ... cleavage voting is more important than in Portugal: contrary to the latter, in the former case both education and head of household income have a significant impact on the vote ... class cleavage is more important in Spain than in Portugal”. In the same vein, according to Knutsen and Scarbrough (1998: 504-505), the coefficients for both the bivariate and the “controlled” effects of social class on party choice –measured by occupation, education, and household income- is more than double in Spain than Portugal. While Portugal shows the weakest correlations in the sample of 13 countries, Spain is in the middle.

On the other hand, elections in Spain and Portugal are held by D’Hondt formula in one-tier electoral systems with closed party lists. The 52 districts in Spain (2008

election) range from 1 to 35 seats, while in Portugal (2009 election) the 20 districts range from 2 to 47 seats. Mean district magnitude is 6.7 Spain and 11.3 in Portugal.<sup>6</sup> While there is a sizable difference in the mean district magnitudes of Spain and Portugal, we do not foresee this being a problem. If the effective number of parties at the district level were linearly correlated with district magnitude, we may expect turnout in districts to increase with the number of seats and the number of parties competing. However, Grofman and Selb (2011) have recently found that this is not the case and this relationship is non-linear. They find that district magnitude plays a role in shaping the relationship between turnout and the effective number of parties when a district magnitude is equal to one or when a district magnitude is greater than one. But it is not expected that turnout will increase as district magnitude increases. Additionally, there is a (virtually irrelevant) 3% threshold at the district level in Spain, but not in Portugal.

Nevertheless, there are some obvious differences in the institutional arrangements of Portugal and Spain. While Spain is parliamentary and decentralised, Portugal is semi-presidential and unitary. Whether a country is more decentralised does not seem to have an impact on turnout in national elections (Blais and Carty 1990), so we do not see this as impacting our results. Research is thin on presidential systems and the potential impact on turnout. As Blais et al (2011: 301) summarise, “no one work has carefully tested whether turnout declines in legislative elections when there is a powerful president”. Things are even less clear when the question is in which way –if any– turnout may be affected by a semi-presidential system.

In sum, given that we are not accounting for differences in turnout between the two countries, but differences in the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote, with the exception of the party system, institutional variables do not play any role as they are constant over time. For instance, the impact of having a parliamentary or a semi-presidential system should be the same in the founding election as in the following elections.

According to the previous discussion, and given the different saliency of class voting of each country, our expectation is that the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote should be weak in Portugal both in the long and the short-term. In Spain it should be much stronger in the long-term and, when the Socialist Party is the challenger, also in the short-term.

#### 4.4. Estimation methods and results

Testing the argument that left parties benefit from high turnout requires that we properly identify whether the causal effect of turnout rates on the left share of the vote takes place in the short or long-term or both. To address this issue in our estimations, cross-sectional and time series-cross section models are estimated.

##### *Cross-sectional analyses*

When analysing the long-term relationship between turnout and the left share of the vote, we run the following model:

$$Left_i = \alpha + \beta Turnout_i + \varepsilon_i \quad [1]$$

Here *Left* is the share of the vote of the main leftist party in national elections, the Socialist Party, PS in Portugal and PSOE in Spain, respectively;<sup>7</sup> *Turnout* is the percentage of registered voters who cast votes in national elections, and  $\varepsilon$  is a residual error term. Districts are indexed by  $i = 1, \dots, J$ . As the two variables are district-level averages for all the elections, this model captures whether the left share of the vote is higher on average when turnout is high. The number of observations is 20 in Portugal and 52 in Spain.

On the other hand, when analysing the short-term relationship, we run three models:

$$\Delta Left_{it} = \alpha + \beta \Delta Turnout_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [2]$$

This is the same as Model 1 but with the dependent and independent variables differenced (by subtracting the value at the previous election). Districts are indexed by  $i =$

1, ... J and elections are indexed by  $t = 1, \dots$ . As the two variables are differenced, this model captures whether the left share of the vote increases between elections when turnout rises. The incumbent effect is not controlled here. The number of observations is 220 (20 districts  $\times$  11 elections) in Portugal and 468 (52 districts  $\times$  9 elections) in Spain.<sup>8</sup>

$$\Delta Left_{it} = \alpha + \beta \Delta Turnout_{it} + \gamma Governing_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [3]$$

Here the variable *Governing* (1 if the Socialist Party is the governing party; 0 otherwise) is added to the previous specification. That is, the incumbent effect is included in the model. The number of observations is the same as in model [2].

$$\Delta Left_{it} = \alpha + \beta \Delta Turnout_{it} + \gamma Governing_{it} + Interaction_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [4]$$

Here an interactive term (between  $\Delta Turnout + Governing$ ) is included. We are testing here to what extent the correlation between turnout and the left share of the vote changes depending on whether the socialist party is the incumbent or the challenger. The number of observations is the same as in models [2] and [3].

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4.3. The most relevant item is that the within-variation in *Turnout* in Portugal is double than in Spain, but the between-variation is lower in the former. In other words changes across elections in *Turnout* are higher but more homogeneous across electoral districts in Portugal than in Spain.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics

Spain (52 districts ×10 elections = 520 observations); Portugal (20 districts ×12 elections = 240 observations)

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation (overall)	Std. deviation (within)	Std. deviation (between)	Minimum (overall)	Maximum (overall)
<b>Spain</b>						
Left	38.31	9.75	6.77	7.07	14.50	63.67
Turnout	73.68	7.05	4.78	5.23	42.20	87.60
Governing	0.60	0.49	0.49	0.00	0	1
<b>Portugal</b>						
Left	33.55	9.76	8.76	4.39	13.20	56.00
Turnout	71.33	11.34	10.73	3.76	43.90	95.27
Governing	0.55	0.50	0.50	0.00	0	1

### Results

The least squares method is highly unsatisfactory due to the presence of outliers which can be supposed in the analysis of the level of nationalisation in the sample of countries. The residuals plotted against the fitted values exhibited some outliers. In such a case, the robust regression is an acceptable and useful tool because it provides a good fit to the bulk of the data and exposes the outliers quite clearly.

The estimation results of model [1] presented in Table 4.4 strongly support our argument. As predicted, in Spain the left share of the vote is significantly higher when turnout is high: one point increase in turnout increases the vote share of the Socialist Party by 0.51. The variable is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. However, in Portugal the relationship, although positive, is not statistically significant.

Table 4.4:

The partisan consequences of turnout in the long-term for the Socialist Party in Portugal and Spain

Variables	Models	
	Portugal	Spain
Turnout	0.45 (0.28)	0.51*** (0.19)
Constant	1.66 (20.24)	-0.30 (12.42)
F	2.50	7.55***
N	20	52

Notes: Robust regression. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*p<0.01.

The short-term relationship between the left share of the vote and turnout (models [2], [3], and [4]) is displayed in Table 4.5. Again, as expected, there is considerable support for the partisan consequences of turnout in Spain, but not in Portugal. In Spain, all of the model specifications indicate that left share of the vote is significantly correlated with turnout. According to the first model, the difference in turnout in a given district is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and has the expected positive sign: one point increase in turnout increases the vote share for the Socialist Party by 0.53. The coefficient for the difference in turnout and its statistical significance do not change appreciably when controlling for whether the Socialist Party enters an election as the governing or an opposition party. As shown in model 2, when the PSOE enters an election as the governing party, its results are six points worse than when it enters an

election from opposition. The variable is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Lastly, model 3 shows the interaction between if the Socialist Party enters the election governing or not and the difference in participation. The interaction is statistically significant, as well as its constitutive elements.

Table 4.5:

The partisan consequences of turnout in the short-term for the Socialist Party in Portugal and Spain

Variables	Portugal			Spain		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
$\Delta$ Turnout	-0.14 (0.14)	0.06 (0.10)	0.13 (0.14)	0.53*** (0.04)	0.54*** (0,03)	0.74*** (0.03)
Governing		-15.28*** (0.88)	-15.70*** (1.00)		-6.00*** (0.45)	-6.12*** (0.38)
Interaction			-0.19 (0.20)			-0.66*** (0.05)
Constant	-0.25 (0.80)	8.02*** (0.69)	8.26*** (0.75)	1.49*** (0.27)	4.96*** (0.33)	4.82*** (0.28)
F	1.01	152.33***	101.49***	214.99***	260.72***	298.89**
N	220	200	200	468	468	468

Notes: Robust regression. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*p<0.01.

In Portugal, as expected, the results for the Socialist Party do not depend on the level of turnout. The difference in turnout is not statistically significant in any of the three models and it only has the expected positive sign when controlling for whether the Socialist Party enters an election as the governing or an opposition party. Lastly, the interaction between turnout and being the governing party is not statistically significant



### *Time series-cross section analyses*

When using averages for every district in the whole period it is possible that results are spurious if turnout and the left share of the vote are dominated by long-term social trends. And even if the results are not spurious, cross-section estimates do not inform us about the existence and the velocity of adjustments in *Left* to changes in exogenous variables. Similarly, when using differences in turnout and the left share of the vote some parametric assumptions are imposed without being tested. First, the coefficient for the lag of the dependent variable is equal to 1. As explained by Fisher (2007), this is a problematic assumption, since parties that did well in one election are more likely to go back down in the next election rather than continue to rise. Second, the coefficients of turnout and the lag of turnout are equal in absolute values, but with opposite signs. If these two assumptions are not true, estimates would be biased. Accordingly, we have explored the robustness of our findings replacing cross-sectional estimates with time series-cross section (TSCS) analyses.

The point of departure to analyse the dynamic relationship between turnout and the left share of the vote is the following general specification in which no assumptions are imposed:

$$Left_{it} = \alpha_i + \rho Left_{it-1} + \beta Turnout_{it} + \gamma Turnout_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [5]$$

Where districts are indexed by  $i = 1, \dots, J$  and elections are indexed by  $t = 1, \dots$   $\alpha_i$  are the individual fixed effects. Since the districts are a complete set and not a random sample from a wider population, a fixed effects model is more appropriate than a random effects model. As is well-known, when the lagged endogenous variable is on the right side of the equation, the initial impact or the short-term impact of the change in the regressor  $x$  is given by its coefficient, while the steady-state or long-term impact depends on the value of  $\rho$ . In [5], the short-term effect of changes in *Turnout* on *Left* is  $\beta$  and the long-term impact is  $\frac{\beta}{1-\rho}$ .

Departing from [5] three models can be derived:

1. If  $\rho = 1$  and  $\gamma = -\beta$ , then we obtain the “differenced model”:

$$\Delta Left_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta \Delta Turnout_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [6]$$

In this model both the dependent and independent variables are differenced by subtracting the value at the previous election. As the two variables are differenced, this model captures whether the left share of the vote increases between elections when turnout rises. This is our previous model [2].

2. If  $\rho = 0$  and  $\gamma = 0$ , we have the “model in levels”:

$$Left_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta Turnout_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [7]$$

Here the adjustment of *Left* to changes in *Turnout* is instantaneous, that is, short-term and long-term multipliers are the same.

3. Finally, if  $0 < \rho < 1$  and  $\gamma = -\beta$  then we obtain the “semi-differenced model”:

$$Left_{it} = \alpha_i + \rho Left_{it-1} + \beta \Delta Turnout_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad [8]$$

In this model short-term and long-term multipliers differ, while the level of *turnout* is irrelevant. Only changes in this variable have an impact on *Left*.

Hence, the models [6], [7], and [8] are specifications nested in the general model [5]. Given that there are no *ex ante* reasons to select one of them, some preliminary tests are necessary before imposing constraints on the parameters  $\rho$  and  $\gamma$ . Finally, the variable *Governing* (1 if the Socialist Party is the governing party; 0 otherwise) is added to the previous specifications as a control variable to capture the “incumbent effect”.

The first step is to test for unit root processes in both *Left* and *Turnout* in order to determine: (i) if we are dealing with integrated or stationary series, (ii) if the order of integration is the same, (iii) if they are cointegrated or not, and (iv) if differencing *Left* is appropriate or not. Two unit root tests for panel data have been run. The Levin-Lin-Chu (2002) test or LLC assumes that each individual unit in the panel shares the same AR(1) coefficient, while the Im, Pesharan and Shin (2003) test or IPS allows for different AR(1)

coefficients in each series. Both tests allow for individual effects, time effects and possibly a time trend and assume that all series are non-stationary under the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis in both cases is that series are integrated of order 1 or I(1). In table 6, individual and time effects are included, but not time trends or lags of the dependent variable. The p values and the t-star statistic and the W[t-bar] when using the LLC test and the IPS test, respectively, are shown (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Unit root tests: Series are I(1) under the null hypothesis in all cases

Variable	LLC t-star and p-value	IPS W[t-bar] and p- value	Observations (t*N)
<b>Spain</b>			
<i>Left</i>	-8.58 (0.0000)	-4.65 (0.000)	9*52=468
<i>Turnout</i>	-9.33 (0.0000)	-5.81 (0.000)	9*52=468
<b>Portugal</b>			
<i>Left</i>	-6.68 (0.0000)	-3.78 (0.000)	11*20=220
<i>Turnout</i>	-7.09 (0.0000)	-4.51 (0.000)	11*20=220

Clearly, the null hypothesis has to be rejected, meaning both variables are stationary in both countries. Hence, the problem of spurious regressions and the potential lack of cointegration are not a concern. Additionally, using the lagged endogenous variable in levels on the right-side of the equation (as in specifications [5] and [8]) is more appropriate than differencing it (as in specification [6]).

### *Results for Spain*

The results of the estimates of models [5] and [8] are displayed in Table 4.7. Individual fixed effects are highly significant, according to an F-test on the null hypothesis of irrelevance:  $F(51, 413) = 3.23$   $p\text{-value} < 0.0000$ ). Following Greene (1997: 598), we have calculated a modified Wald statistic for groupwise heteroskedasticity in the residuals. According to the results, the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity can be rejected ( $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$ ). Moreover, we have computed the Breusch-Pagan statistic for cross-sectional independence in the residuals of a fixed effect regression model (Greene, 1997: 601). The null hypothesis can be rejected ( $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$ ).

However, serial correlation of residuals does not seem problematic. When computing the modification of the Breusch-Godfrey test proposed by Greene (1997: 517), the existence of a common AR(1) process in residuals may be discarded.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to what Hansford and Gomez (2010) argue, endogeneity of variable *Turnout* may be also rejected according to the Hausman test, while multicollinearity is not a serious concern according to estimates of multiple correlations among regressors. For each regressor the coefficient of determination of the auxiliary regression on the rest of right-hand variables was calculated. All of them were below 0.59.

Three more problems have been addressed: (i) possible biases in the coefficients due to the estimation of first-order autoregressive models with fixed effects (Nickell, 1981); (ii) panel heteroskedasticity; and (iii) contemporaneous cross-correlation. To deal with problems (ii) and (iii) Panel-Corrected Standard Errors (PCSE) can be used instead of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) standard errors, following the methodology proposed by Beck and Katz (1995). In Table 4.7 t-statistics computed using PCSE are shown in brackets. While PCSE are substantially higher than standard errors, all independent variables are significant at the 0.05 level or better. Moreover, according to the Wald tests, we may assume the hypothesis  $\gamma = -\beta$  and the hypothesis  $0 < \rho < 1$ . In other words, instead of using *Turnout* and *Turnout*<sub>*t*-1</sub> in levels, first differences can be used. On the contrary, differencing *Left* is not supported by the data.

Second, the coefficients do not change appreciably depending on whether biases are corrected following the proposal by Kiviet (1995) in columns 2 and 3 of Table 4.7. Insofar as  $T=9$ , a bias of order  $T^{-1}$  is not as problematic as the most often cases of  $T=3$  or  $T=6$  when working with microdata (Beck and Katz, 2011). Using estimates of coefficients  $\rho$  and  $\beta$  in column (3), a one point increase in turnout increases the vote share for the Socialist Party by 0.473 points in the short-term (the same election) and by  $0.473 / (1-0.465) = 0.88$  points in the long-term. The lag of the dependent variables and turnout, independently of how it is defined, are statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better in all columns.

Additionally, to explore the robustness of our findings we have calculated the system GMM estimator in column 4. We compute the two-step estimator and the covariance matrix robust to any pattern of heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation within panel. Unfortunately, we cannot correct for contemporaneous correlation across panels. The only endogenous variable is *Left*, which is instrumented with its lagged values. We also include as additional instruments the first and second lags of  $\Delta Turnout$ , and a time trend. The results for both the Arellano-Bond test for AR(2) in first differences, and the Hansen test of overidentification restrictions discard problems in both senses. The results do not change appreciably: the short-term effect is weaker (0.28), while the long-term is stronger (0.66).

Lastly, in columns 5 and 6 the variable *Governing* is added to the previous models. In column 5 the LSDV estimator with PCSE is used, while in column 6 it is replaced with the Kiviet's bias correction. The variable *Governing* is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and increases the  $R^2$  from 0.752 to 0.809. Using the corrected coefficients in column 6, when *Governing* = 1 (i.e., when the Socialist Party is the governing party), the left share of the vote increases by 5.8 points. Not surprisingly, the inclusion of *Governing* reduces the magnitude of the effect of both the lagged endogenous and  $\Delta Turnout$ . The short-term effect is now 0.25 and the long-term effect, 0.36.

In sum, as in our cross-sectional analysis in Tables 4.7 and 4.8, our results strongly support the partisan consequences of turnout in Spain; the left share of the vote is significantly correlated with turnout. According to the Wald test, the best specification to deal with this correlation in Spain is [8]. The difference in turnout in a given district is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and has the expected positive sign. When the variable *Governing* is included, and the potential bias in the coefficients is corrected, a one point increase in  $\Delta Turnout$  increases the left share of the vote by 0.255 in the short term and by 0.356 in the long-term.

Table 4.7: The partisan consequences of turnout in Spain

Variables	Models					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Left<sub>t-1</sub></i>	0.372 (10.53)*** [2.54]**	0.455 (7.15)***	0.465 (9.10)***	0.580 (12.50)***	0.234 [2.17]**	0.284 (9.02)***
<i>Turnout</i>	0.587 (11.21)*** [3.27]***	0.569 (11.78)***				
<i>Turnout<sub>t-1</sub></i>	-0.354 (7.13)*** [2.03]**	-0.389 (5.62)***				
$\Delta$ <i>Turnout</i>			0.473 (19.16)***	0.279 (7.51)***	0.248 [2.11]**	0.255 (6.57)***
<i>Governing</i>					6.035 [3.06]***	5.850 (9.15)***
Wald test. $H_0: \gamma = -\beta$ (p-value)	0.97 [0.325]	2.67 (0.102)				
Wald test. $H_0: \rho = 1$ (p-value)	18.35 [0.000]	51.16 (0.000)				
Arellano-Bond test for AR(2) in first differences (p-value)				0.743		
Hansen test of overidentification restrictions (p-value)				0.290		
Observations (T*n=N)	9*52=468	9*52=468	9*52=468	7*52=364	9*52=468	9*52=468
R <sup>2</sup>	0.752				0.809	
Method	LSDV	KIVIET	KIVIET	GMM	LSDV	KIVIET

### *Results for Portugal*

When studying the partisan consequences of turnout in Portugal, there are two crucial differences in comparison with what we have seen in Spain. First, *Turnout* and  $Turnout_{t-1}$  are highly correlated ( $r = 0.91$ ). In order to avoid problems of multicollinearity, the hypothesis  $\gamma = -\beta$  has not been tested. Accordingly, in Table 4.8 the constraint  $\gamma = 0$  is imposed in columns 1, 2, and 4 and the constraint  $\gamma = -\beta$  is imposed in column 3 to show how the results change when *Turnout* is included in levels or first-differences. Second, individual fixed effects are not as relevant as in Spain. In column 1 we cannot reject the hypothesis of irrelevance at the 0.05 level and they are even less significant in column 3, when *Turnout* is replaced with  $\Delta Turnout$ .<sup>10</sup>

As in the estimates for Spain, the null hypothesis of cross-sectional independence of residuals is clearly rejected ( $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$ ) and serial correlation of residuals is even weaker. On the contrary, heteroskedasticity is not a problem now. The hypothesis of homokedasticity cannot be rejected ( $p\text{-value} = 0.22$ ), while residual autocorrelation is even lower than before.

Individual fixed effects are only included in column 1. Columns 2 to 4 are estimated by OLS including  $t$ -statistics computed with PCSE instead of OLS standard errors. When comparing the results for Spain with those for Portugal, it seems clear that it is better to start in the latter with the general model specification [5]. The results are very different from those corresponding to Spain. The lagged endogenous variable is statistically significant at usual levels, but not *Turnout* when PCSE are used. Moreover, the latter does not have expected positive sign. Similarly, the variable  $\Delta Turnout$  is not statistically significant both using PCSE or OLS standard errors, although it has the expected positive sign. These findings strongly support our argument about the crucial role of class voting when determining the partisan consequences of turnout. In Portugal, in congruence with the weak role of class voting, the left share of the vote is not correlated with turnout either in the long and short-terms. On the contrary, *Governing* is



statistically significant at the 0.01 level. In sum, there is not evidence of a robust correlation between the left share of the vote and turnout in Portugal.

Table 4.8: The partisan consequences of turnout in Portugal

Variables	Models			
	1	2	3	[4]
<i>Intercept</i>		33.553 [2.18]**	14.870 [2.13]**	27.488 [2.40]***
<i>Left<sub>t-1</sub></i>	0.318 [1.37]	0.493 [2.76]***	0.557 [2.90]***	0.384 [2.85]***
<i>Turnout</i>	-0.377 [1.58]	-0.227 [1.25]		-0.175 [1.27]
<i>Turnout<sub>t-1</sub></i> [imposed]	[0]	[0]	[-β]	[0]
$\Delta$ Turnout			0.007 [0.02]	
<i>Governing</i>				9.83 [3.25]***
Wald test. $H_0: \rho=1$ (p-value)	8.62 [0.003]			
Observations (T*n=N)	11*20=220	11*20=22	11*20=22	11*20=220
R <sup>2</sup>	0.466	0.384	0.324	0.614
Method	LSDV	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: t-statistics computed using PCSE in brackets.

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1.

#### 4.5. Causal mechanisms and individual data analyses

According to our aggregated data analyses, while we found a positive correlation between turnout and the left party's share of the vote in Spain, this correlation does not exist in Portugal. However, the individual causal mechanisms accounting for this correlation have been hypothesised, but not shown. Based on individual data, in this section we show, first, that there exists social and economic inequalities in both countries, but they are translated into different political preferences (the left-right dimension) in Spain and not in Portugal as a result of the higher importance of class voting in the former. Second, when abstainers are mobilised, they tend to vote according to their socioeconomic status and are more likely to support leftist parties since they tend to be more ideologically left.

In order to maximise the comparability of the data, we have selected two similar elections in each country. In the first one, the 2000 election in Spain and the 2002 election in Portugal, a rightist party won the election (the Popular Party and the Social Democratic Party, respectively), while in the second, the 2004 election in Spain and the 2005 election in Portugal, the rightist party was defeated by the Socialist Party. Additionally, in both countries turnout was higher in the second election than in the first one (from the 68.7 percent to the 75.7 in Spain and from the 61.5 percent to the 64.3 in Portugal).

Relying on the first and second round of the European Social Survey, Tables 4.9 and 4.10 show the placement in the left-right scale and the household's income of Spanish and Portuguese voters and abstainers. Both Tables show that abstainers earn less income than voters in both elections and both countries. That is, voters and non-voters can be identified by their economic status everywhere. The difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. However, in Portugal the economic status is not statistically correlated with the placement on the left-right scale, although abstainers are more leftist than voters. Interestingly, when turnout rises (in the 2005 election), the ideological gap

between voters and abstainers survives, although decreases. In other words, as our argument suggests and the aggregated analyses have shown, the correlation between turnout and political preferences is weak in Portugal. On the contrary, in Spain there is an ideological gap between abstainers and voters when turnout is low (in the 2000 election), but it disappears when abstainers are mobilised (in the 2004 election). This evidence strongly supports our arguments and previous results.

Table 4.9: Voters and abstainers in the 2000 and 2004 elections in Spain

	<i>2000 election</i>			<i>2004 election</i>		
	Voters	Abstainers	Difference	Voters	Abstainers	Difference
Placement on left right-scale <sup>a</sup>	4.52 (1060)	4.04 (242)	0.48***	4.38 (1130)	4.57 (207)	-0.19
Feeling about household's income nowadays <sup>b</sup>	1.92 (1217)	2.05 (346)	-0.13***	1.82 (1253)	1.96 (276)	-0.14***

<sup>a</sup> (0, left - 10, right).

<sup>b</sup> (1, living comfortably on present income, 2, coping on present income, 3, finding it difficult on present income, 4, finding it very difficult on present income).

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . In brackets, the number of individuals.

Source: European Social Survey, First and Second Round.

Table 4.10: Voters and abstainers in the 2002 and 2005 elections in Portugal

	<i>2002 election</i>			<i>2005 election</i>		
	Voters	Abstainers	Difference	Voters	Abstainers	Difference
Placement on left right-scale <sup>a</sup>	5.18 (887)	4.91 (270)	0.27	5.07 (970)	4.87 (275)	0.20
Feeling about household's income nowadays <sup>b</sup>	2.35 (1029)	2.53 (383)	-0.18***	2.36 (1302)	2.47 (512)	-0.11***

<sup>a</sup> (0, left - 10, right).

<sup>b</sup> (1, living comfortably on present income, 2, coping on present income, 3, finding it difficult on present income, 4, finding it very difficult on present income).

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . In brackets, the number of individuals.

Source: European Social Survey, First and Second Round.

Given that ideological placements are not the same as party preferences, in Table 4.11 we show whether low turnout biases election outcomes such that right-wing parties gain at expense of left-of-centre parties in Spain. In this empirical analysis, we have used a post-electoral 2004 survey undertaken by *Demoscopia*: the European Social Survey does not contain voting records from the last two national elections<sup>11</sup>. The evidence is conclusive. The 40 percent of abstainers in the 2000 election voted for the Socialist Party and the 20 percent for the Popular Party in the previous election. Similarly, the 60 percent of abstainers in the 2000 election voted for the Socialist Party in 2004 and only 20

percent for the Popular Party. In sum, the left share of the vote tends to increase (decrease) between elections when turnout rises (drops).

Table 4.11: Mobilisation and demobilisation in the 2000 and 2004 elections in Spain

1996 election	Abstainers in the 2000 election	2004 election	Abstainers in the 2000 election
Socialist Party voters	40 (175)	Socialist Party voters	60 (91)
Popular Party voters	27 (120)	Popular Party voters	20 (30)
Other parties voters	33 (146)	Other parties voters	20 (31)

First, the column percentages. In brackets, the number of individuals

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (2382-2384 study) for the 2000 election and Demoscopia for the 2004 election.

## 4.6. Conclusion

In this paper we have tested the partisan consequences of turnout for Portugal and Spain. We have argued and further demonstrated the need for the inclusion of three elements in future studies, from a theoretical and a methodological perspective. As seen in our results, the degree of class voting of a country matters. The expression of the class struggle in the democratic arena is more salient in Spain than in Portugal and this is why we find a strong correlation in Spain and not in Portugal.

We have further demonstrated that the consideration of the relevant mechanisms at play in the short and in the long-term for the partisan consequences of turnout are necessary for better explaining fluctuations in the effect. The incumbent effect – whether a party is governing or not - is crucial for explaining the reduction of the magnitude of the effect of turnout on the electoral results of the left party, if they are governing, in the short-term.

Additionally, we have demonstrated how better model specifications can adequately test the assumptions of the model and solve issues related to spuriousness and multicollinearity and address some expressed concerns about endogeneity in the theory of the partisan consequences of turnout. Individual data analyses have shown the causal mechanisms behind the aggregated correlations.

In future research it might prove fruitful to include all leftist parties when analysing turnout and electoral results in the long-term. Aggregated results for leftist parties may better capture the full logic of theory. Accompanying survey research may also be useful to uncovering additional mechanisms at play in the short and long-term.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Class voting refers to the tendency of voters in a particular class to vote for a specific party, rather than an alternative option, compared with voters in another class or classes (Evans, 2000: 402).

<sup>2</sup> Fisher (2007) points out a third question about the left share of the vote if everyone voted. But given that this is a hypothetical question, while the other two are about average behaviour, the former will be not considered here.

<sup>3</sup> However, this correlation is mitigated by the more volatile behaviour of less frequent voters. As DeNardo (1980) argues, peripheral voters are more likely to defect from whatever partisan leaning they may possess than core voters.

<sup>4</sup> The 1980 election has not been included. The coalition between the Socialist Party (PS) with two minor leftist parties, UEDS and ASDI, in this election with the remaining elections of the period does not make the comparison possible.

<sup>5</sup> Electoral results can be found at [www.cne.pt](http://www.cne.pt) (Portugal), and [www.elecciones.mir.es](http://www.elecciones.mir.es) (Spain).

<sup>6</sup> An electoral reform in 1991 in Portugal reduced the number of MPs from 250 to 230 thus alter marginally altering district magnitudes. This change in district magnitudes does not change our results appreciably.

<sup>7</sup> Contrary to Fisher (2007), for instance, we do not include the results of more leftist parties, such as the Communist, in the dependent variable. Although the correlation between turnout and electoral results should also work for minor leftist parties, when the Socialist Party is the ruling party the incumbent effect would go against the Socialist Party and in favour of minor leftist parties. Aggregating their results would negatively bias the impact of the incumbent effect.

<sup>8</sup> As the variables are differenced, the first election (1975 in Portugal and 1977 in Spain) is not included.

<sup>9</sup> When regressing the OLS residuals on the lagged endogenous, the exogenous variables and the lagged residuals, a non significant coefficient for the latter was obtained (p-value=0.40). Robust standard errors to both cross-section heteroskedasticity and contemporaneous correlation were also used in this auxiliary regression.

<sup>10</sup> The corresponding F-statistic in column (1) is  $F(19, 197)=1.61$  with p-value=.0576. In column (4),  $F(19, 198)=0.56$  with p-value=0.9308. When correcting the estimates in column (1) for the potential bias according to the Kiviet's proposal, the coefficient on  $Left_{t-1}$  0.425 and the coefficient on  $Turnout$  was -0.343.

<sup>11</sup> This survey was directed by Richard Gunther and J. R. Montero, and conducted in April-May 2004, covering a representative sample of 2.929 adult Spaniards.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

Scientific theories evolve as part of a team effort to identify literature gaps and shortcomings. This is particularly true for social science research where we often attempt to explain the complex behaviour of individuals. For political behaviour researchers, few variables preoccupy us as much as election turnout. Scores of theories have been postulated, bit by bit helping us to unravel the puzzle of voting. But, partly because the behaviour of voting involves many actors and institutions beyond just the complicated socioeconomic and psychological characteristics individuals, we have struggled to conceive of a universally accepted and robust model of turnout.

### 5.1. Filling the gaps in the turnout literature

As indicated by Smets and Ham (2013) in their recent literature review and meta-analysis, to this day a ‘core model’ of turnout does not exist. Each theoretical framework for turnout has made some sort of a contribution to our understanding of how certain variables impact turnout but, according to their review, we still need to develop the ‘core model’, find conditional effects, and examine more closely some of the less-used variables. With regard to conditional effects, this manuscript has shown that looking at election contexts may help, particularly since our turnout models currently do not explain election-to-election variation. Further, expanding the theoretical frameworks such as the psychological model to include emotion has proven to be a potential factor explaining why some people vote and others abstain.

Three chapters identified and addressed three gaps in the turnout literature. The first chapter found that emotion is a predictor of turnout on a population outside the United States. The British population was found to be more mobilised and more demobilised when they identified as being in specific emotional states as activated by important election issues. The following chapter examined impact of the economy on turnout, The next chapter found that the theory that the economy affects turnout is conditional on the number of competitive opposition parties; the state of the economy may suppress voter turnout but if there are more opposition parties to vote for then citizens will be mobilised to vote (against the incumbent). The final chapter analysed the

consequences of low versus high turnout. The findings suggest the theory of a partisan bias in turnout is not necessarily applicable to every country; class voting needs to be a feature of a country first, but nor is it observable in a longer-term analysis or when the party of the incumbent is leftist. The results showed that there are certain conditions that have to be met before the relationship between turnout and leftist party support can be observed.

Overall the three chapters demonstrated conditional and contextual factors that affect turnout, which contribute to our understanding of why individuals vote in certain contexts but not in others.

## 5.2. Expanding the psychological model of turnout

The last chapter changed direction toward a newer stream of political science research: emotion and political behaviour. Despite the fact that there is a substantial amount of literature on this topic in the U.S, we have not had any indication of how those findings travel across countries. The first chapter of the dissertation aimed to address this shortcoming by using the case of Great Britain to examine if specific emotional states impact election turnout. The hypotheses were linked with psychological literature to estimate the impact of emotional responses to election issues on turnout. The survey questions differed from past surveys in the literature; emotional responses to important election issues instead of candidates and parties were used. Another difference was that the emotions were treated independently, as they usually are analysed in psychological literature.

The findings in this chapter, for the most part, were significant. The results suggest that when people claim they are in an emotional state of disgust, they are less likely to vote. However, when they are angry, they are more likely to vote. These findings diverged from much of the literature that combined anger and disgust into one category and ended up with mixed results. Fear was found to be a demobilising emotion. This was consistent with much of the previous literature. The emotions of happy, proud, and confident were slightly puzzling. While there was a valid reason to believe that confident is a mobilizing emotion, feeling happy or proud about issues simply does not

seem to impact turnout in a predictable way. It was further suggested that feeling happy or proud could be a way of expressing feeling 'satisfied'. If that is the case, then the psychological literature suggests that people should not be very activated, and this could be why this result was found. This finding is in need of further research, as does most of the literature on emotion and electoral behaviour, however the main issue is the lack of election survey data for different countries.

### 5.3. Re-examining the impact of the economy on turnout

The next chapter examined the popular topic of how the economy relates to political behaviour; specifically to turnout and subsequently economic voting. The results demonstrated that a more adequate way to approach this question is by merging two lines of literature that for some reason are disconnected: how the economy affects turnout and how the economy affects vote choice. Through this it was shown that when the economy takes a downturn, turnout may be depressed, *if* people blame the incumbent but, most importantly, if they are able to express that discontent through a vote for another party. The more parties there are for voters in this scenario to vote for then the more likely they are to cast an 'economic vote'. Further, the results suggest that a bad national economic situation may depress turnout; when citizens do not have a party in which to place their place, they will simply abstain. This finding has implications for how we approach voting behaviour as it relates to the economy; we must be thinking about not just how the (bad) economy itself may impact an individual's choice to vote or not but also whether they have an opportunity to vote for an opposition party or, in other words, whether or not they can fulfil an 'economic vote'.

### 5.4. Revisiting the partisan consequences of low turnout

The final chapter analysed the turnout bias phenomenon; a theory that is logically appealing when considered from the perspective of the resource model but whose results are simply confounded. The chapter partly addresses why Fisher (2007) could find a relationship between turnout and left party vote share in some countries but not in others.

The findings, using aggregate and individual-level data for Spain and Portugal confirmed the hypotheses: turnout bias is contingent upon the existence of class voting in a country, and whether or not we examine it over the long or short-term. The results showed that leftist parties will benefit most from high turnout if there is class voting, and if the leftist party is in opposition. The results suggest that lower turnout should be of concern to us in those countries where class voting is strong; namely because it suggests that the electoral results would be different had everyone voted. In other words, lower turnout in some instances (countries) conflicts with ideals that democratic elections (should) produce representative governments.

## 5.5. The limits of the dissertation and future research

This dissertation has identified and addressed *some* gaps in the literature on turnout. Election turnout is not a puzzle that is solved in one book or paper; decades have been spent exploring the issue across individuals, variables, countries and contexts. And, while we have come to understand a large amount of information about it over the years, researchers do not seem to agree even on a baseline model. Beyond this, however, as others have pointed out, we need to start to explore contextual factors and models that interact some core assumptions with context. If we have yet to fully explore how election context affects turnout, then there is good reason to believe we might be missing part of the puzzle.

Individual-level variable expansion is likely a big part of solving the puzzle. Recent evidence in the turnout literature related to psychological factors such as personality, heredity, and emotion has demonstrated that individual characteristics appear to be good predictors of turnout. At the same time, we know very little about the predictors of emotion as they relate elections. If there were data for individuals over time (elections) we might be able to unravel whether specific emotions felt in a political context are related to long-standing political attitudes or if they are personality-specific features. For example, do individuals who express a high amount of disgust or fear for election issues, candidates and parties actually just have a higher tendency for

neuroticism? And are ones who express a high degree of happiness or pride just generally more agreeable?

In terms of the way forward for research on turnout, as voting rates decline in many western democracies, we (unfortunately) increase our sample of non-voters to examine, but potentially the consequences for representative democracy may expand. That means, when we examine contextual and conditional mobilising effects on turnout, there is possibly a contribution to be made to public policy and subsequently the public good; laws can be changed that address turnout levels, or election rules, and public information that is disseminated can be of better quality.

