

## Political apathy? The evolution of political engagement of the Spanish youth since the 1980's <sup>(1)</sup>

It is usual to hear comments about the “political apathy” of the Spanish youth, but several researches have shown that, in comparison to the rest of the population, young Spanish people are not as different. This article complements previous studies, as it includes a double comparative perspective: we analyze political engagement of young Spanish people compared to adults and throughout time. The results show the need of clarifying the characterization of political engagement of the Spanish youth. On the one side, it is true that they vote less and move away from political parties. But on the other side, several indicators like interest in politics and frequency of discussion about political issues deny the thesis of “political apathy”, or at least they show that young people are not more apathetic than the rest of the population. We will also show evidences of the limitations of considering young people as a homogeneous group, as attitudes and forms of participation are quite different when we consider different age groups of young people.

**Key words:** political engagement, youth and politics, political attitudes, political participation, life cycle.

(1)  
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(2)  
Among others, we can highlight the activities promoted by the Council of Europe since 1997 that culminated with the declaration of the year 2005 as the “European Year for Citizenship through Education” by the European Council of Ministers. Said declaration, as well as reports regarding activities carried out by the European Commission during 2005 can be found in: <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural/Co-operation/education/E.D.C/>. The European Union also considered the need of promoting active citizenship among young Europeans (European Commission, 2003).

### Introduction

The concerns regarding young people moving away from politics, which several institutions and the media have highlighted, has resulted in numerous national and international initiatives (2). They confirmed the decrease of interest in politics of the citizens in general, and the young citizens in particular, their disaffection towards different democratic institutions and their apathy regarding traditional forms of participation. At the same time, we underlined the need of clarifying these results and illustrating them with regard to the general cultural change that affects the whole society. In the Spanish context, the introduction of a new subject in schools, “Education in Citizenship and Human Rights” also insists on the promotion of democratic knowledge and abilities among the youngest citizens and encourages the debate around the need of promoting values and democratic participation of young people.

As we will see, and in spite of the relevance of the relation between the citizens and the younger citizens, existing researches are very fragmented in terms of their approaches and even reach very different conclusions. In this work we will try to contribute to fill the gap with regard to the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of political engagement of the Spanish youth. In order to do so, we analyzed political attitudes and behaviours of young Spanish people using the data provided by different surveys and comparing commonly used indicators. We will use a double comparative

perspective: throughout time and in comparison to adults at different moments in time.

The framework of this work is as follows: In the first place, we will present a summary of the researches that have been carried out about political attitudes and behaviours of young citizens, in Spain as well as in other countries. Then we will reflect on the methodology of youth studies used in Spain, emphasizing samples and available data, and on the suitability of these data for the needs of age studies. Lastly, we will present and discuss the results of the analysis carried out about attitudes and political participation of the Spanish youth.

## **What do we know about the relation between young people and politics?**

In the following paragraphs we will try to present a brief summary of the main researches carried out (3). In the first place, we will focus on the data regarding attitudes and forms of political participation of young people in other Western democracies. Then we will present a summary of the researches that have studied this relation in Spain. We will present information about political attitudes and forms of participation of young Spanish people, several interpretations found in the literature, and the contribution this article wants to make to this issue.

There are empirical evidences of the decrease of voter participation of young people in numerous Western democracies (Blais, Gidengil, & Nevitte, 2004; Ellis, Gratschew, Pammett, & Thiessen, 2006; IDEA, 1999; Saha, Print, & Edwards, 2005). Regarding the attitudes towards politics, and in comparison to previous generations, young people show higher levels of distrust in the government and their co-citizens, are less interested in politics and public issues, their knowledge of political institutions and the democratic process is deficient, they are less interested in political information and less willing to participate in elections and other activities (Bennett, 1997; Delli Carpini, 2000; Pirie & Worcester, 1998, 2000). At the same time, younger generations have been identified as the main actors of the decrease of civic engagement, one of the key elements of the performance of democratic governments (Putnam, 2000).

(3)  
This bibliographic summary does not try to be a comprehensive analysis of the published literature; on the contrary, it tries to provide information about studies carried out in other countries. We mean to confirm or identify certain hypothesis that will allow us to interpret the results of this work. A thorough revision can be found in Martin & Garcia, 2006.

(4)  
These countries are: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and United Kingdom. Information about this research project and a final report can be found in: <http://www.sora.at/de/start.asp?b=236>

These results correspond to studies carried out in the United States, Great Britain and Canada. In the European context, the EUYOUNG project has studied the attitudes of young people towards politics in eight European countries (4). The conclusions of this study show a great diversity –in terms of the levels of psychological engagement, as well as in the forms and levels of participation– depending on the analyzed country. In general, young people in Europe share distrust in political parties and politicians, although a high percentage of young people say they feel close to one or another political party. Regarding participation, they consider the act of voting as the most efficient way to influence on the decisions of society, followed by contacting the media and the collaboration with NGO's (EUYOUNG, 2005).

The context of these studies offers a similar profile of the new generations: they are not interested in politics, distrust traditional political institutions –specially the political parties– and are less willing to make use of conventional participation, above all, of voting. The conclusion of all these

studies could be summed up by the increase of political apathy among young people. This apathy affects the two dimensions of the analysis in this paper: attitudes and behaviour.

Which is the reason for these changes? Different –even conflicting– interpretations have been provided. There are those that say that there is not a crisis of political citizen engagement among the new generations (Gauthier, 2003; Henn, Weinstein, y Forrest, 2005; Kovacheva, 2005; O’Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, y McDonagh, 2003), and those who think these transformations have to be analyzed in terms of the effect of social change of values and culture of the citizenship in post-industrial countries (Bennet, 1998; Inglehart, 1990) and the appearance of new forms of political participation and engagement (Michele Micheletti, Follesdal, y Stolle, 2004; M. Micheletti y Stolle, 2005). We also cannot forget the classical interpretation of political participation: the participation of young people is different due to the life-cycle effect. As they become adults, their levels of political participation and engagement will increase. However, several studies already showed that young people’s participation is different from adults’ participation (Barnes y Kaase, 1979; Jennings y van Deth, 1989; Kaase, 1986; Milbrath, 1965).

Lastly, some authors have pointed out specific reasons. Among them, distrust in political parties is mentioned numerous times. The role of the “agency” in political mobilization has been studied in detail. People participate in politics not only for who they are, but also as a result of political options and offered incentives (Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995). Political parties play a fundamental role as instruments of political participation, mediation and mobilization. We know that the decrease of affiliation and identification with a political party is general in all democratic societies, particularly among young people (Dalton, 2000: 31). Some authors think that political parties have failed to promote incentives directed to young people (Henn et al., 2005). The professionalization of political parties and the importance of the media are the main causes. Political campaigns and marketing specifically directed to key voter groups have left young voters outside. Therefore, politicians and the media have promoted young people’s perception of political parties and democratic institutions as being irrelevant for their personal life.

## **And Spain?**

There are many studies that state that a majority of the young Spanish population is not interested in politics and that their level of civic engagement is very low (INJUVE, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Valls, 2006). During the last 20 years feelings of distrust, indifference and annoyance towards politics and especially towards politicians have increased (INJUVE, 2005b). Some studies provide a more complex view of the relation between young people and politics (Megías, Rodríguez & Navarro, 2005). These types of study are very useful in order to understand the relation between young Spanish people and politics, but they need to be more exhaustive if we want to reach relevant conclusions. With the high levels of political disaffection and the low levels of citizen participation of Spanish people, we could think that youth is not too engaged with politics in general terms, but let us compare young people’s engagement to the rest of the Spanish population before we make any assumptions.

The indicators of legitimacy of the democratic system in Spain show great stability in spite of the extraordinary social, economic and, above all, political changes, but they also show high levels of political disaffection (5) (Bonet, Martín, y Montero, 2004; Montero et al., 1998).

Several studies show that there are no evidences of the fact that new generations that where socialized –or even born– in democracy are more committed to politics than previous generations. According to Martín (2004), the analysis of the interest in politics and the patterns of participation of younger cohorts and the comparison to older cohorts of the same age show a clear pattern: interest in politics is lower among today's young generations than among young generations in the past (6).

Feelings of disaffection towards politics, or cynicism, have frequently been interpreted as a possible reason for the decrease of political activism (Norris, 2002). Truth is that levels of participation in Spain are lower than in other European countries. However, non-conventional participation is not as low as the levels of disaffection might make us think. Levels of non-conventional participation, particularly participation in demonstrations, are higher than expected, and show potential for political mobilization (Ferrer, 2005; Ferrer, Medina, y Torcal, 2007; Fraile, Ferrer, y Martín, 2007). Although a detailed analysis of the participation in demonstrations shows us that it is mostly the students, that is, a specific group of the population, who go to demonstrations (Cainzos, 2006).

On the other side, Morales (2005) concludes that available data do not prove this lower participation of today's young generation in comparison to previous generations, rather the opposite, although their participation is focused on the collaboration with organizations that have less political objectives. In general, we cannot say that youth is so different in comparison to the rest of the population regarding patterns of political participation (Ferrer, 2006).

With this brief summary of the different studies we wanted to show the fragmentation and the contradictions in this field of research. In this article, we aim to include a different comparative perspective of the relation between youth and politics. If we want to understand to what extent political engagement of today's generations of young people is different, we have to compare them to previous generations of the same age.

## Some methodological considerations about studies of age

When studying the relation between age and political culture and behaviour we have to take into account several methodological problems. Among the empirical analysis of surveys, the greatest challenge is to distinguish and identify three effects: the life-cycle effect, the cohort effect and the period effect (7). Ideally, the identification of these three effects requires panel data of different moments in time of the same individuals and during long periods of time. In this sense, the discontinuity of the surveys greatly limits the possibilities of carrying out comparisons and studying the evolution of political attitudes and behaviours. Lastly, representative youth studies rarely include indicators that allow studying levels of political participation beyond voting. This implies working with representative samples of the population, which usually do not include a

(5) These authors understand political disaffection as the following group of attitudes: lack of interest, inefficiency, cynicism, distrust, disconnection, frustration, rejection, hostility and alienation towards politics and political institutions (Montero, Gunther & Torcal, 1998: 25)

(6) Moral (2003) reaches the same conclusion regarding young people's interest in politics.

(7) The first effect refers to the differences related to the stage of life in which the individual is, as interests and attitudes are not always the same during youth, adulthood or after retirement. The cohort effect refers to the existence of age groups, or generations, with differentiated attitudes due to different political socialization contexts. Lastly, the period effect is related to the influence of certain historical events on individual attitudes that have different consequences for each group or age cohort or even within the same group.

sufficient number of cases to establish distinctions between age groups. Therefore, we tried to combine several representative surveys of the Spanish population with specific youth surveys.

At the same time, there are also a series of conceptual limitations: the delimitation of youth as a stage of the life cycle. Frequently, the definition of young people in studies about political participation is pretty arbitrary; sometimes, young people are defined as people between 18 and 29 years of age, or between 18 and 25, or even between 15 and 24. The definition is usually limited by the size of the sample. In this article, we have tried to avoid the definition of young people as a homogeneous group, for several reasons. In the first place, we know that political participation is related to the life cycle of the individual and therefore, defining young people as people between 18 and 29 years of age could hide some important differences. We cannot assume that young people who are still in the education system will have the same attitudes and disposition towards participation as those who have been working for years now. But we can assume that the engagement of young people who only recently acquired civic rights like voting will be different than the engagement of those who already had the opportunity of participating in several elections.

The second reason is related to the dynamism of the concept itself. Does it mean the same to be young today than 20 years ago? Well, it is acceptable to say no. The changes in this stage of life have been significant: longer periods in the education system, delay of the access to the labour market, the flexibilization of the labour market, etc. Also the conditions of socialization have changed. In the case of Spain, previous generations acquired their rights a lot later than today. Another relevant difference in the field of studies about political participation is the level of education, that is, the percentage of young people with higher education levels is a lot higher than among previous generations.

On the other side, although we do not try –in the framework of this article– to carry out a generational study, the data presented in the following paragraphs could be used to find a possible definition of new generations for future researches. Studies carried out in Spain using a generational approach (8) usually only include young people who were already socialized in democracy. This is a consequence of the limitations and the range of the available data. As years pass, we will have to face the challenge of identifying new generations, as already happened in other countries (Pirie, 1998) (9). For example, if we consider those young people between 18 and 29 years of age today, all of them were born in democracy, but their political socialization took place during a period of 10 years, therefore we cannot assume that the events during their socialization were the same or that they were affected by them in the same way (10).

Another weakness of some studies about young people and politics is the fact that they focus whether on attitudes or behaviour, but many times they directly link these concepts to “political apathy”. Although the relation between attitudes and political participation can be ambiguous, making it difficult to distinguish between cause and effect –or precisely for that reason– we can assume that there are differences between young people and adults. Therefore, and again highlighting the descriptive character of this work, we have decided to analyze attitudes as well as forms of participation.

(8)  
Among them, we should highlight: Martín (2004), Morales (2005) and Montero, Gunther & Torcal (1998).

(9)  
In this sense, after the generation X, researchers identified a “millennium” generation in Great Britain.

(10)  
In Spain, a recent study has identified and conceptualized two generations of young people socialized in democracy: generation X (those born between 1972 and 1980) and generation Y (born between 1981 and 1988) (Fraile et al., 2007).

## Considerations about the data and the design of the study

After a comprehensive study of numerous available surveys we found that there was certain diversity in the formulation of questions and the categories of answers. In spite of it we have made an effort to develop temporal series of several indicators (11).

With regard to the selection of indicators we tried to include the highest possible number of political attitudes and behaviours, which also was limited by the data available. In any case, we developed indicators for most of the dimensions that interested us, with one important exception: feeling of internal and external efficiency of citizens. Regarding the attitudes towards democratic institutions, only two of the studies included questions about this issue and the formulation of the questions did not coincide, which made us leave this dimension out of the analysis.

The independent variable of this study is obviously age. To select the categories of age we took into account the already mentioned methodological considerations, as well as some limitations imposed by the selected datasets (12). A way to overcome these limitations and avoid treating youth as a homogeneous group was to divide young people into four groups (15 to 17, 18 to 21, 22 to 25 and 26 to 29 years of age). That way, although not having data for all groups throughout time, the meaning of the indicators is not distorted. With regard to adults, they were divided into two groups, those between 30 and 64 years of age, and those over 65. This last differentiation aims to control the relation between the life-cycle effect and political participation that, as we know, usually shows an inverted curved relation.

## Political culture of young people in Spain: Persistence or change?

We underlined the importance of political attitudes to explain citizen engagement. Almond and Verba (1970) defined “civic culture” as the group of political orientations that contribute more to the support and development of the democratic system. In the following sections we will analyze three types of attitudes: legitimacy of the democratic regime, interest in politics and attitudes towards political parties.

### Attitudes towards democracy: legitimacy

An important indicator for every study about political culture is the legitimacy of the political system. As proven by previous studies, support of democracy is very high among the Spanish population and presents high levels of stability throughout time (Montero et al., 1998). Are there differences regarding the opinion about democracy between young people and adults? Chart 1 shows that support of democracy in Spain has increased during the last two decades among all age groups, but there are also differences between the young people and the rest of the population. The support of democracy increases among older people. Especially significant is the difference between young people under 18 and the rest, as many of them are in accordance with the statement “to people like me it does not matter”. This difference can be found in the data available for the years 1994, 2000 and 2003.

If we focus on the evolution of the feeling of legitimacy towards the political system we can see how support of democracy is no longer inversely related

(11)

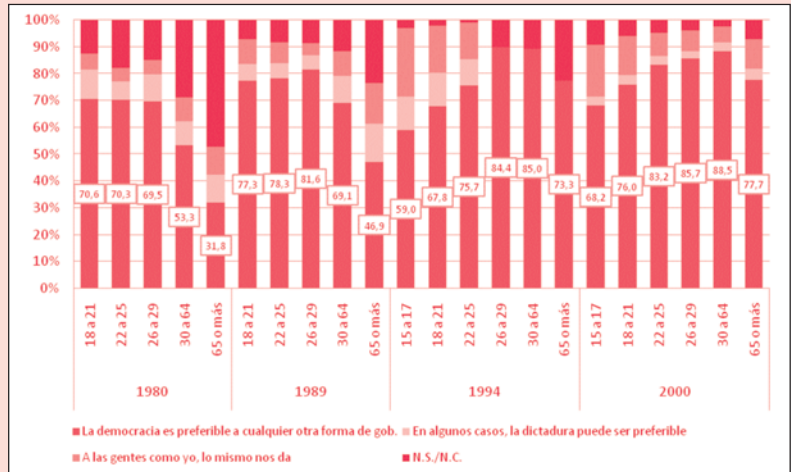
Due to different formulations of the questions, the temporal evolution of some indicators has to be interpreted with caution. In these cases, we have highlighted and presented each of the different results. In any case, comparison between different age groups at different moments in time was not affected by this problem.

(12)

Specifically, while youth surveys and studies include young people between 15 and 29 years of age, studies by the CIS only include people over 18. Furthermore, the only study with a representative sample of young people and a survey for the whole Spanish population is divided in two datasets, and the one referring to young people only includes interviewees between 15 and 24 years of age (CIS n. 2105).

to age, as in 1980, but shows a curved relation. This change is not the consequence of less support by young people, but more support by adults and, above all, the decrease of the percentage of those who answer: “Do not know” or “Do not answer”.

Chart 1. **Attitudes towards democracy. Evolution 1980-2003**



Source: CIS (several surveys; 1989 (CIS1788/CIS1813), 1994 (CIS 2105/CIS2107) y 2000(CIS2370/CIS2387)

Therefore, we can conclude that young people support democracy the same way as adults do, although this feeling develops with age. We have also seen that there are significant differences between young people, especially among people under 18: around 20% of them state that “it does not matter for someone like me”.

### Attitudes towards politics: interest

Interest in politics is the most used indicator of psychological engagement in studies about political culture. In this case, we analyze subjective political interest (Van Deth, 1989). As shown in previous studies, interest in politics in Spain is low (Martín, 2004; Montero et al., 1998). Available data show that the percentages of interviewees that are very or pretty interested in politics never exceed 35% (see Table 1). Young people are also less interested in politics than adults, but here we also have to add some riders. The evolution of this indicator shows that the interest in politics of young people was much higher during the first years of democracy, in the 1990's it decreased, but recently (2000 and 2005) data show certain increase among all age groups, also among young people (13). Besides, we can see interesting differences between groups of young people. Young people between 18 and 21 are less interested in politics and speak less about politics with family and friends, but as age increases their psychological engagement seems to increase. The interest in politics of young people between 22 and 29 is then similar to the interest of the rest of the population.

(13) The interest in politics in 2000 could be overrepresented, as the question was about “interest in national politics”. In any case, results are very similar in 2000 and 2005.

Table 1. **Interest in politics sorted by age groups (1980 to 2005)**

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>18-21</b>	<b>39.45</b>	<b>17.09</b>	<b>21.43</b>	<b>22.16</b>
<i>res*</i>	4.83	-2.22	-2.66	-2.30
<b>22-25</b>	<b>37.62</b>	24.70	27.23	26.34
<i>res</i>	4.21	1.25	-0.77	-1.08
<b>26-29</b>	<b>37.86</b>	<b>27.92</b>	31.53	27.66
<i>res</i>	3.82	2.43	0.69	-0.67
<b>30-64</b>	<b>25.68</b>	<b>24.09</b>	<b>33.11</b>	<b>34.32</b>
<i>res</i>	-2.72	3.33	4.40	5.69
<b>65 +</b>	<b>12.66</b>	<b>12.83</b>	<b>22.77</b>	<b>21.77</b>
<i>res</i>	-6.99	-5.56	-3.57	-4.38
<b>Total</b>	27.35	22.00	29.42	29.81
<b>N</b>	(3,438)	(3,345)	(2,484)	(2,479)

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to be "very interested" or "pretty interested" in politics. In 1980, the question referred to the feelings towards politics: "enthusiastic" or "interested". Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

The temporal evolution shows that young people were less interested in politics at the end of the 1980s, but interest increased during the last years. We could provide several interpretations. On the one side, it could be an effect of the life cycle: after youth, people integrate completely into society, and become aware of the social and political context they live in. Besides, they acquire all political rights, for example voting, and they are more aware of how politics affect their life. In any case, this hypothesis will only be validated through a later cohort analysis. Currently, these results only spread doubts about the hypothesis of the increase of apathy among the new generations of Spanish citizens.

### **Attitudes towards institutions: political parties**

Our analysis confirms that the feeling of distrust towards political parties in Spain is a lot higher than during the 1980s among all age groups, and this trend is especially noticeable among young people. In this case, the relation with age is not curved, but lineal.

Regarding the differences among the young people themselves, there is not a clear relation to age, as it is the case with other indicators. In any case, young people between 18 and 21 years of age are the ones that feel more distrust towards political parties. But the relation is more complex among other age groups: young people between 26 and 29 do not seem to feel especially closer to political parties than young people between 22 and 25, it rather is the opposite. In this case, and given the differences, we have to rule out the hypothesis of the life-cycle effect, as well as of the period effect, as indicators of all groups do not increase or decrease in the same direction. It could be the cohort effect, but that will be the task of future analyses to examine if there are lasting generational differences regarding this issue.



Table 2. **Identification with political parties**

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>18-21</b>	<b>68.56</b>	<b>49.21</b>	<b>29.38</b>	<b>23.86</b>
<i>res</i>	4.08	-2.97	-2.20	-3.35
<b>22-25</b>	<b>66.13</b>	<b>62.39</b>	34.94	33.51
<i>res</i>	3.25	2.08	-0.49	-0.59
<b>26-29</b>	<b>71.49</b>	62.55	31.96	<b>26.60</b>
<i>res</i>	4.66	1.89	-1.33	-2.65
<b>30-64</b>	<b>56.57</b>	<b>58.26</b>	<b>39.10</b>	<b>37.57</b>
<i>res</i>	-1.29	1.61	3.14	2.50
<b>65 +</b>	<b>40.40</b>	<b>51.32</b>	34.05	37.77
<i>res</i>	-7.87	-2.91	-1.15	1.19
<b>Total</b>	57.43	57.06	36.36	35.50
<b>N</b>	3,441	3,349	2,489	2,479

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that identify with political parties. In 1997 and 2005 there is a direct question: Do you identify with a political party? In 1980 the question referred to how close interviewees felt to certain political parties. The percentages reflect those how said they felt close to a certain political party. In 1989, the same question was used, but distinguishing five categories (including "neither close nor distant").

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

For now, we can take a closer look at other attitudes towards political parties that may help us interpreting said differences (14). First, there are two positive indicators of the role played by political parties: political parties as the key element for democracy and their role as agents to facilitate participation of citizens. And second, two clearly negative attitudes: "political parties only divide people" and "political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same".

Most interviewees consider that, since the first years of democracy, political parties have been fundamental for democracy (see Table 3). This attitude is stable throughout time and there are no significant differences between age groups.

The assessment of the role of political parties as instruments of political participation shows different opinions. Although most interviewees since the 1980s assess them positively, they do it less today than in the past and there are differences depending on the age group. Young people are now very critical. There are significant differences among all groups of young people in 1997 and 2005 that point into that direction. Data corresponding to 2005 indicate that this is not necessarily a consequence of the life-cycle effect, as young people between 18 and 21 years of age and those between 26 and 29 are clearly pessimistic in this sense, while young people between 22 and 25 are not. This is the same pattern as when we analyzed feelings towards and identification with political parties. Disillusionment with the role of political parties as instruments for participation could be the reason of the distrust by young people.

On the other side, the percentage of people that agree with the statements "political parties only divide people" and "political parties only criticize each

(14)

Previous researches focused on biased feelings against political parties in southern Europe, showing that we can distinguish two attitudinal dimensions: biased cultural feelings and reactive biased feelings, both with different impact on participation (Torcal, Montero & Gunter, 2003). Unfortunately, the variability of the used questions does not allow us to use these two dimensions. However, we analyze each of the indicators separately.

Table 3. **Attitudes towards political parties: without them democracy is not possible**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
<b>1980</b>	18-21	<b>72.82</b>	<b>9.06</b>	18.12
	<i>res.</i>	3.81	3.32	-5.49
	22-25	<b>80.58</b>	4.21	15.21
	<i>res.</i>	6.84	-0.70	-6.75
	26-29	<b>79.44</b>	5.24	15.32
	<i>res.</i>	5.68	0.15	-5.95
	30-64	<b>61.31</b>	4.84	33.85
	<i>res.</i>	-2.03	-0.66	2.41
	65+	<b>40.62</b>	3.75	55.63
	<i>res.</i>	-10.39	-1.34	11.37
	N	2,151	173	1,111
<b>1989</b>	18-21	66.14	15.82	18.04
	<i>res.</i>	1.26	1.93	-2.89
	22-25	65.57	<b>16.77</b>	17.66
	<i>res.</i>	1.07	2.55	-3.14
	26-29	<b>73.21</b>	14.34	12.45
	<i>res.</i>	3.62	0.99	-4.82
	30-64	<b>66.19</b>	11.55	22.26
	<i>res.</i>	4.51	-1.72	-3.74
	65+	<b>42.21</b>	<b>9.70</b>	48.10
	<i>res.</i>	-10.70	-2.06	13.56
	N	2,093	413	822
<b>1997</b>	18-21	67.30	<b>23.22</b>	9.48
	<i>res.</i>	-0.76	3.23	-2.30
	22-25	70.68	19.28	10.04
	<i>res.</i>	0.39	1.73	-2.26
	26-29	73.71	14.43	11.86
	<i>res.</i>	1.30	-0.44	-1.23
	30-64	<b>71.31</b>	15.40	13.28
	<i>res.</i>	2.06	-0.18	-2.47
	65+	<b>63.28</b>	<b>10.80</b>	25.92
	<i>res.</i>	-3.28	-3.11	7.40
	N	1731	386	370
<b>2005</b>	18-21	67.05	19.89	13.07
	<i>res.</i>	-1.80	-0.51	0.36
	22-25	71.28	19.15	9.57
	<i>res.</i>	-0.51	1.92	-1.15
	26-29	72.87	19.15	7.98
	<i>res.</i>	0.01	1.69	-1.85
	30-64	<b>75.91</b>	15.31	8.78
	<i>res.</i>	3.98	0.62	-6.08
	65+	<b>66.80</b>	<b>8.95</b>	24.25
	<i>res.</i>	-3.42	-4.22	9.23
	N	1,806	370	303

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentages of the answers of the interviewees. The formulation of questions differs between different studies. In 1989, 1997 and 2005: "Without political parties democracy is not possible". In 1980: "Political parties are needed for democracy". Both were considered as functional equivalents.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

Table 4. **Attitudes towards democracy: Thanks to political parties people can participate in the political life of the country**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
<b>1980</b>	18-21	<b>63.98</b>	<b>14.67</b>	21.35
	<i>res.</i>	4.25	2.41	-5.94
	22-25	<b>64.96</b>	13.81	21.23
	<i>res.</i>	4.71	1.80	-6.02
	26-29	<b>63.38</b>	<b>14.92</b>	21.70
	<i>res.</i>	3.64	2.24	-5.19
	30-64	51.45	10.41	38.14
	<i>res.</i>	-1.13	-0.68	1.60
	65+	<b>33.09</b>	<b>4.91</b>	62.00
	<i>res.</i>	-8.69	-4.27	11.72
	N	1,794	366	1,275
<b>1989</b>	18-21	61.32	<b>20.74</b>	17.93
	<i>res.</i>	-0.18	2.22	-1.78
	22-25	<b>67.61</b>	<b>20.78</b>	11.61
	<i>res.</i>	2.29	2.26	-4.72
	26-29	61.74	<b>24.01</b>	14.25
	<i>res.</i>	0.00	3.50	-3.14
	30-64	<b>65.37</b>	15.27	19.37
	<i>res.</i>	4.86	-1.98	-3.95
	65+	<b>45.58</b>	<b>11.14</b>	43.28
	<i>res.</i>	-8.33	-3.55	12.98
	N	2,068	550	731
<b>1997</b>	18-21	<b>57.35</b>	<b>33.18</b>	9.48
	<i>res.</i>	-3.29	4.24	-0.67
	22-25	65.86	<b>29.72</b>	4.42
	<i>res.</i>	-0.58	3.25	-3.44
	26-29	62.89	<b>29.38</b>	7.73
	<i>res.</i>	-1.42	2.72	-1.46
	30-64	<b>71.24</b>	<b>19.42</b>	9.34
	<i>res.</i>	4.43	-3.01	-2.68
	65+	63.79	<b>15.52</b>	20.69
	<i>res.</i>	-1.88	-3.56	7.55
	N	1,679	539	270
<b>2005</b>	18-21	<b>60.23</b>	<b>27.84</b>	11.93
	<i>res.</i>	-2.90	2.05	1.76
	22-25	69.68	25.53	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	-0.07	1.33	-1.85
	26-29	<b>62.77</b>	<b>31.38</b>	5.85
	<i>res.</i>	-2.22	3.35	-1.31
	30-64	<b>72.05</b>	22.33	5.62
	<i>res.</i>	2.70	0.88	-5.78
	65+	69.98	<b>12.72</b>	17.30
	<i>res.</i>	0.04	-5.47	8.07
	N	1,733	538	208

Sources: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: "thanks to political parties people can participate in the political life of the country."

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1,96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

Table 5. **Attitudes towards political parties: “political parties only divide”**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
<b>1980</b>	18-21	28.50	<b>47.88</b>	<b>23.62</b>
	<i>res.</i>	1.86	3.09	-4.81
	22-25	22.53	<b>57.52</b>	<b>19.95</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.73	6.72	-6.18
	26-29	26.28	<b>55.75</b>	<b>17.97</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.84	5.42	-6.27
	30-64	24.04	38.31	<b>37.65</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.13	-1.98	2.13
	65+	21.49	19.12	<b>59.39</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-1.39	-9.57	10.97
	N	831	1,361	1,247
<b>1989</b>	18-21	35.26	48.61	16.13
	<i>res.</i>	1.16	0.54	-2.02
	22-25	<b>25.87</b>	<b>59.71</b>	<b>14.42</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-2.72	4.87	-2.87
	26-29	30.21	<b>56.46</b>	<b>13.33</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.81	3.22	-3.04
	30-64	33.87	48.34	<b>17.79</b>
	<i>res.</i>	2.02	1.64	-4.37
	65+	30.89	<b>29.17</b>	<b>39.93</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.83	-9.03	12.14
	N	1,089	1,576	684
<b>1997</b>	18-21	37.44	55.45	<b>7.11</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.42	0.91	-2.06
	22-25	30.52	<b>61.45</b>	8.03
	<i>res.</i>	-1.93	2.99	-1.77
	26-29	38.66	54.12	<b>7.22</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.77	0.48	-1.92
	30-64	<b>33.60</b>	<b>56.46</b>	<b>9.93</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-2.88	4.41	-2.58
	65+	<b>44.83</b>	<b>33.84</b>	<b>21.34</b>
	<i>res.</i>	4.34	-8.91	7.45
	N	898	1,305	284
<b>2005</b>	18-21	40.91	47.73	11.36
	<i>res.</i>	0.22	-0.99	1.38
	22-25	42.02	53.19	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	0.55	0.54	-1.92
	26-29	45.21	50.53	<b>4.26</b>
	<i>res.</i>	1.48	-0.22	-2.19
	30-64	<b>37.22</b>	<b>56.95</b>	<b>5.83</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-3.44	6.53	-5.63
	65+	<b>45.53</b>	<b>36.18</b>	<b>18.29</b>
	<i>res.</i>	2.76	-7.60	8.75
	N	995	1,272	212

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “political parties only divide”.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

Table 6. **Attitudes towards political parties: “political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same”**

		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't answer</i>
<b>1980</b>	18-21	<b>9.51</b>	<b>72.08</b>	<b>18.52</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-2.27	7.09	-5.83
	22-25	11.84	<b>67.88</b>	<b>20.39</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.95	5.61	-5.23
	26-29	17.37	<b>66.78</b>	<b>16.05</b>
	<i>res.</i>	1.66	4.61	-6.07
	30-64	14.13	<b>50.98</b>	34.88
	<i>res.</i>	0.80	-2.14	1.68
	65+	14.14	<b>28.25</b>	<b>57.65</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.29	-11.08	11.49
	N	471	1,795	1,155
<b>1989</b>	18-21	47.61	35.32	17.03
	<i>res.</i>	0.16	0.75	-1.10
	22-25	46.27	<b>42.80</b>	<b>10.84</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.31	3.80	-4.14
	26-29	47.02	<b>39.45</b>	<b>13.48</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.00	2.12	-2.53
	30-64	48.53	34.18	<b>17.28</b>
	<i>res.</i>	1.75	1.05	-3.48
	65+	<b>42.72</b>	<b>20.84</b>	<b>36.48</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-2.25	-6.72	10.87
	N	1,582	1,121	648
<b>1997</b>	18-21	61.61	32.23	6.16
	<i>res.</i>	0.21	0.66	-1.43
	22-25	57.03	<b>38.55</b>	<b>4.42</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-1.33	3.02	-2.59
	26-29	64.43	30.41	5.15
	<i>res.</i>	1.04	0.06	-1.88
	30-64	60.88	31.09	8.03
	<i>res.</i>	-0.06	1.05	-1.58
	65+	61.42	<b>22.20</b>	<b>16.38</b>
	<i>res.</i>	0.24	-4.17	6.34
	N	1,516	752	220
<b>2005</b>	18-21	63.07	30.11	6.82
	<i>res.</i>	-0.02	-0.34	0.72
	22-25	70.21	27.13	2.66
	<i>res.</i>	2.09	-1.27	-1.83
	26-29	65.96	29.26	4.79
	<i>res.</i>	0.84	-0.62	-0.51
	30-64	62.01	<b>34.13</b>	<b>3.86</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-1.35	3.58	-4.39
	65+	62.62	<b>25.84</b>	<b>11.53</b>
	<i>res.</i>	-0.26	-2.94	6.47
	N	1,565	775	139

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “political parties criticize each other, but they are all the same”. The formulation was different in 1980: “All political parties are the same”.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1,96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

other, but they are all the same” have increased dramatically during these years, and nearly uniformly among all groups (see Table 5 and Table 6). And differences between adults and young people and between the young people themselves are not significant.

To conclude we can highlight that attitudes towards political parties in Spain show a process of convergence between different age groups. In general terms, data support the hypothesis that young people generally reject political parties. It is important to underline that they agree even less with the role of political parties as instruments for political participation. Of all the attitudes analyzed so far, this aspect could be the main reason for the rejection of political parties by young people, and the fact that most of them do not identify with political parties. In this sense, it would be interesting for future researches to focus on the failure of political parties as mobilization agents among young people.

## Political participation of young Spanish people <sup>(15)</sup>

### Political discussions

One of the indicators of political engagement is also frequency of political discussion. This indicator is not always considered as adequate to analyze political participation (Parry, Moiser & Day, 1992), but we think that it is a good indicator to measure the presence of politics in everyday life of citizens. Besides, the lack of other data to analyze the evolution of other “conventional” political activities forces us to complement the information about this type of behaviour beyond voting.

In opposition to what happens with voting, young people are the ones who discuss more with family and friends about political issues (see Table 7). The

(15)

Considerations about the selection of indicators: the discontinuity of the studies has forced certain limitations on our analysis. On the one side, the formulation of questions has different temporal limits. The most common question refers to the participation in political activities throughout time, but some studies limit this question to the last 5 years or the 12 months. The first case is directly related to age, as older people will have had more opportunities to participate than young people. With regard to our results, this is the case for all studies, with the exception of the data corresponding to 2005. This implies that we will have to be cautious when it comes to analyze the temporal evolution of different indicators, but at the same time we will be able to trust the representativeness of the differences between young people and adults for this last year. Besides, available data does not include indicators of the so-called “new forms of political participation”, with the exception of the 2005 survey.

Table 7. Frequency of political discusión sorted by age

Age	1980	1989	2000
<b>18-21</b>	<b>36.50</b>	23.80	58.00
<i>res</i>	6.4	-1.4	-0.2
<b>22-25</b>	<b>34.00</b>	<b>37.20</b>	<b>68.80</b>
<i>res</i>	5.4	4.3	3.2
<b>26-29</b>	<b>34.10</b>	<b>39.90</b>	64.60
<i>res</i>	4.9	4.9	1.7
<b>30-64</b>	<b>19.10</b>	28.10	<b>62.00</b>
<i>res</i>	-4.8	1.5	3.6
<b>65 +</b>	<b>8.40</b>	<b>12.70</b>	<b>40.30</b>
<i>res</i>	-7.1	-8.1	-8.3
<b>Total</b>	21.70	27.10	58.70
<b>N</b>	3,340	3,321	2,285

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of people who discuss about politics “frequently” or “very frequently”. The 2000 study included three questions: frequency of political discussion with friends, family and co-workers.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

type of indicator we use does not allow us to compare levels of participation of the year 2000 to previous years, and we will have to limit our analysis to the interpretation of the evolution of differences between different moments in time. (16)

In this sense, it is interesting to highlight the change among young people: in the first 1980s, young people between 18 and 21 years of age were the ones that discussed more about politics, in 1989 and 2000 it were the young people between 22 and 29 who discussed more about politics.

We also have to underline that the increase of the frequency of political discussion among adults between 30 and 64 years of age is quite remarkable. This evolution is probably the consequence of the higher education levels of the population in general, which is one of the proven reasons of the increase (Topf, 1995a: 66). These results corroborate the results on the European level: age is not an indicator for the frequency of discussion, but in some countries like Spain and Portugal young people carry out this activity more frequently than adults (Topf, 1995a).

### Voter participation (17)

As is well known, voting is the most important form of political participation in democracy. For two fundamental reasons: on the one side, it is the political activity that most citizens carry out, and on the other side it is a needed element to elect governments. Therefore, it is a necessity for the correct development of democratic regimes (Anduiza, 1999). Furthermore, it legitimates the political system and the rest of the democratic process. According to Dalton “voting is the activity that links individuals to the political system and legitimates the rest of the democratic process” (cited by Topf, 1995b: 26, translation by the author).

The relation between age and voter participation is well known. Besides education, age is probably the most common factor to explain political participation in general and voter participation in particular. Several studies have shown that voter participation increases with age, to again decrease among people over 60 or 65. This relation is usually interpreted in terms of the life cycle. As they mature, citizens acquire important resources regarding participation, status, political information, social position, and development of ideological identifications. Voter participation is, as already mentioned, especially important. Plutzer (2002) has proven that voting is a habit that can be learned (or not) during the education of the citizens, that is, during their youth, and has found out that people who have voted once will probably vote again.

In countries like Canada and the United States the explanation for not voting is beyond the life-cycle effect. It is probably related to generational differences (Blais et al., 2004; Schlozman, Verba, Brady, & Erkulwater, 1999). Other studies have been carried out in several countries (IDEA, 1999) and different initiatives have been developed to promote voting among young people: campaigns in the media, conferences, events, and the use of new technologies to reach the young people, etc (Ellis et al., 2006). (18)

How is voter participation of young Spanish people? The relation between electoral participation and age in Spain changed from a curved relation to a lineal relation (see Table 8). That means that while in the first elections participation increased with age until the 65 year olds, since 1993

(16)

We have to be cautious when analyzing this increase in the frequency of political discussion in the year 2000, as it could be overrepresented due to the type of indicator used. In 1980 and 1989 the question referred to the frequency of discussion with other people, while in 2000 the same question was asked, but distinguishing between friends, family and co-workers. To create an equivalent indicator we developed an index combining these three distinctions. Therefore, the presented information should be equivalent, but the increase could also be a consequence of the more specifically asked question. This phenomenon is common among other indicators, such as interest in politics.

(17)

In order to analyze voter participation in all general elections since 1982 we used post-electoral studies carried out by the Centre for Sociological Researches.

(18)

Several campaigns have been carried out in North-American universities, like “The National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement”. Other initiatives used new technologies, such as blogs and free-to-download videos like “Rock the vote ([www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com), or [www.rockthevote.ca](http://www.rockthevote.ca)).

participation of older people is very similar to participation of people between 30 and 65 years of age. In all analyzed general elections participation of adults is higher than participation of young people. Among young people the same happens: more age equals higher participation. These differences are statistically relevant for all groups, but as we can see, they vary from one election to the next. This is of course a consequence of the period effect and reflects variations of real participation in each of the elections.

Table 8. **Voter participation sorted by age groups**

<i>Participation in general elections</i>	<i>RV 1982</i>	<i>RV 1986</i>	<i>RV 1989</i>	<i>RV 1993</i>	<i>RV 1996</i>	<i>RV 2000</i>	<i>RV 2004</i>
<b>18-21</b>	<b>78.20</b>	<b>76.90</b>	<b>70.27</b>	<b>79.35</b>	<b>77.65</b>	<b>68.10</b>	<b>77.20</b>
<i>res</i>	-4.89	-7.25	-5.83	-4.30	-7.03	-8.95	-6.69
<b>22-25</b>	<b>82.16</b>	<b>77.85</b>	<b>76.80</b>	<b>81.02</b>	<b>82.02</b>	<b>72.54</b>	<b>81.61</b>
<i>res</i>	-3.02	-6.13	-3.17	-3.17	-4.07	-6.81	-4.66
<b>26-29</b>	<b>84.88</b>	<b>82.87</b>	<b>77.35</b>	<b>81.77</b>	<b>81.36</b>	<b>77.97</b>	<b>82.37</b>
<i>res</i>	-1.53	-1.78	-2.50	-2.46	-4.15	-3.47	-3.52
<b>30-64</b>	<b>92.22</b>	<b>88.83</b>	<b>87.27</b>	<b>88.16</b>	<b>90.22</b>	<b>86.64</b>	<b>90.01</b>
<i>res</i>	7.01	10.38	7.05	5.15	5.45	5.77	4.77
<b>65 +</b>	<b>84.96</b>	<b>83.61</b>	<b>82.19</b>	<b>86.81</b>	<b>92.04</b>	<b>89.46</b>	<b>91.30</b>
<i>res</i>	-2.19	-1.91	-0.65	0.76	4.09	5.64	3.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.21</b>	<b>85.33</b>	<b>83.21</b>	<b>85.95</b>	<b>88.01</b>	<b>83.98</b>	<b>88.14</b>
<b>N</b>	(2,349)	(8,215)	(3,050)	(4,934)	(4,953)	(5,231)	(5,363)
<b>Voter participation (a)</b>	79.97	70.49	69.74	76.44	77.88	68.71	75.66

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have voted in the corresponding general elections.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is  $>1.96$  or  $<-1.96$ , thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

Source: Post-electoral studies by the CIS: CIS#2559, CIS#2384, CIS#2210, CIS#2061, CIS#1842, CIS#1542 y CIS#1387.

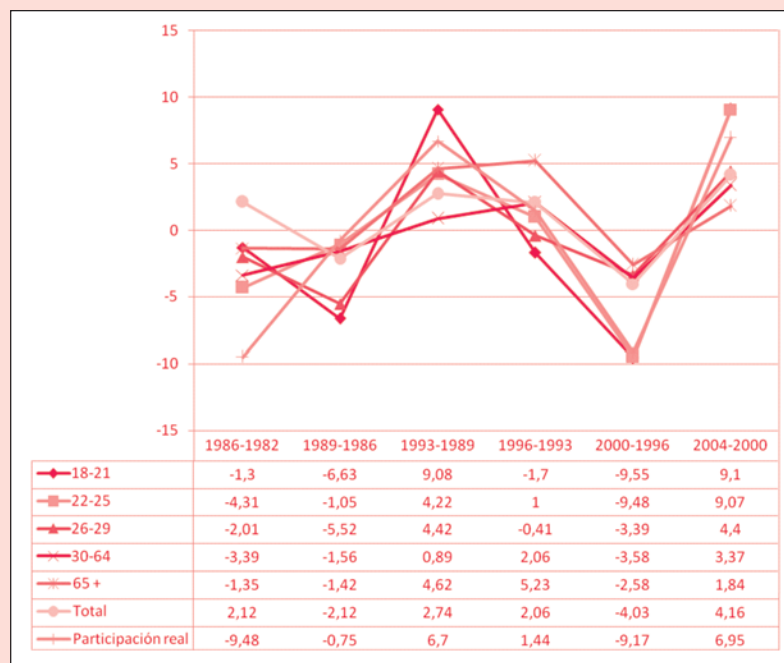
(a) Official voter participation: Source: Central Electoral Commission. Ministry of Interior.

The following chart clearly shows the differences between voter participation from one election to the next, which allows us to compare the deviation of the level of participation of each group regarding the variation of real participation.

Differences of the level of declared participation between elections are higher among young people than among adults. This pattern could indicate, as highlighted by different authors (Mateos & Moral, 2006; Martin & Garcia, 2006) that participation of young people depends on the political context of the elections. It is also interesting to underline the difference between the significant mobilization of young people in 1993 and the corresponding mobilization in 1996, in spite of the character of "change" of the last ones: young people voted more in 1993, when the result was not clear and the socialist party needed high levels of participation to win. In 2004 the participation rate was also very high. Several authors have analyzed and explained the results of these elections and all of them highlighted the high levels of participation of the groups that usually do not vote, among them the young people (Sanz & Sanchez Sierra, 2005).



Figure 2. Differences in voter participation in every election with regard to previous elections. (1982 to 2004). Age groups



Own elaboration. Sources: Post-electoral Studies by the CIS: CIS#2559, CIS#2384, CIS#2210, CIS#2061, CIS#1842, CIS#1542 y CIS#1387

(a) "Real voter participation" shows the difference in participation according to the official data provided by the Ministry of Interior.

The exceptionality of the events around these elections does not allow us to reach conclusions about whether this mobilization can happen again in a context of "political normality". Lastly, we cannot rule out that there are generational effects that point towards a generational replacement and, therefore, a decrease of the total voter participation.

### Participation in demonstration

The participation in demonstrations is the most common form of political participation after voter participation regarding the percentage of people in Spain that participate in such activities. Besides, we know that young people participate more in protest actions than adults (Barnes, Kaase, y al, 1979; Ferrer, 2005; Kaase, 1986; Milbrath, 1965; Norris, 2003; Parry et al., 1992). Spanish youth is not an exception in this sense (see Table 9). But, as in other countries, demonstrations are no longer an exclusive redoubt of youth. In the case of Spain, we should emphasize the important role of political parties for the mobilization of citizens in the context of this type of actions.

Table 9. **Participation in demonstrations sorted by age groups (1980 to 2005)**

Age	1980	1989	1994*	2000	2005
15-17			24.30		
res			n.a		
18-21	<b>42.61</b>	<b>43.51</b>	35.70	42.58	<b>35.80</b>
res	8.38	6.93	n.a	1.58	2.03
22-25	<b>45.00</b>	<b>38.91</b>	38.00	40.69	<b>43.09</b>
res	9.32	5.2	n.a	1.05	4.39
26-29	<b>36.12</b>	<b>39.46</b>	35.30	<b>46.04</b>	<b>38.50</b>
res	4.99	4.79	n.a	2.61	2.94
30-64	18.27	24.72	29.50	<b>42.16</b>	<b>31.62</b>
res	-7.56	-3.13	n.a	5.22	3.2
65 +	4.76	9.84	11.00	17.02	10.93
res	-8.63	-9.33	n.a	-10.28	-10.05
Total	22.76	26.87		37.51	29.10
N	3,033	3,212	(2,146 a 2,198)	2,458	2,470

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in a demonstration.

Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

\*los datos correspondientes a 1994 están contruidos a partir de dos encuestas diferentes, una representativa de los jóvenes (entre 15 y 25 años) y otra representativa de la población (a partir de 25 años) por lo tanto no es posible comparar los estadísticos.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

Although differences between young people and adults regarding this type of participation have decreased in the last years, a survey carried out in 2005 –which limits the question to participation during the last 12 months – shows that differences are still very important among all groups of young people, but especially among young people between 22 and 29 years of age. Lastly, we would like to mention that participation of young people under 18 is quite lower.

### Signing petitions

Signing petitions, as well as other forms of political protest activities, is more common among young people than among adults. Young people between 22 and 29 are the ones that sign more petitions, while young people between 15 and 21 participate less than adults regarding the data of 1994 and 2000.

As well as in the previous case, the differences with the group of adults, although significant, seem to have decreased, which would again point towards a wider repertoire of political actions of the citizens.

Table 10. **Signing petitions sorted by age groups (1980 to 2000)**

Age	1980	1989	1994***	2005
<b>15-17</b>			<b>20.00</b>	
res			-7.3	
<b>18-21</b>	<b>37.46</b>	<b>35.83</b>	<b>34.70</b>	22.99
res	4.05	2.8	3.4	0.73
<b>22-25</b>	<b>46.93</b>	<b>40.37</b>	<b>36.40</b>	<b>28.49</b>
res	7.71	4.81	3.6	2.68
<b>26-29</b>	<b>45.61</b>	<b>41.31</b>	<b>36.70</b>	25.67
res	6.47	4.58	2	1.7
<b>30-64</b>	<b>23.37</b>	28.52	<b>32.80</b>	<b>23.90</b>
res	-6.18	-0.59	3.5	4.38
<b>65 +</b>	<b>12.68</b>	<b>12.25</b>	<b>18.20</b>	<b>6.76</b>
res	-6.57	-8.94	-5.7	-8.71
<b>Total</b>	27.26	28.93		20.82
<b>N</b>				

Source: CIS (several surveys)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in a strike.

Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

\*\*\*Los datos referentes al año 1994 están contruidos a partir de dos encuestas diferentes, por los tanto, los estadísticos utilizados solo pueden compararse entre 15 años y 25 para los jóvenes y de 26 en adelante para los adultos.

### Other protest activities

Other series of protest activities have usually been associated to young people. Due to the difficulties to find equivalent indicators, the following table shows the percentage of individuals in every age group that have participated in some of the following activities: graffiti paintings, occupation of buildings or factories, damaging public goods, blocking the traffic or carrying out violent actions (19).

Due to the diversity of questions included in the different studies we cannot reach relevant conclusions about the evolution of participation in this type of activities –for example, the survey carried out in 1994 includes more questions, and therefore participation is higher– but we can see that the young people are the ones that participate more in this type of actions. Besides, in 2005, we get a more real view of participation in this type of actions depending on age, as the question is limited to the last twelve months. In fact, participation of young people is a lot higher than adults' participation, at least regarding the indicators included in said survey: occupation of buildings, blocking the traffic, graffiti painting and damaging public goods. Besides, participation in this type of action is no longer as significant among people over 25 years of age. We can also say that only a minority uses this type of participation, as the participation rate is only 1.4%.

(19)

The questions and the number of questions are different in every study. In 1980: graffiti paintings, occupation of factories or buildings, blocking the traffic, damaging public goods. 1989: occupation of factories and violent actions. The 1994 study included the questions of the 1980 and 1989 studies. 2005: two indicators, 1 occupation of buildings, blocking the traffic 2 graffiti paintings and damaging public goods.

Table 11. **Other protest activities (graffiti painting, blocking the traffic, damaging public goods, violent actions)**

Age	1980	1989	1994***	2005
15-17			15.10	
res			-3	
18-21	13.30	4.70	19.20	2.80
res	5	0.4	0.2	1.7
22-25	16.60	6.70	22.50	4.30
res	7.3	2.4	2.7	3.5
26-29	12.50	6.20	12.50	1.10
res	3.9	1.7	1.9	-0.4
30-64	4.20	4.00	10.10	1.30
res	-6.4	-0.5	3	-0.7
65 +	0.80	1.80	2.60	0.40
res	-4.5	-2.9	-4.9	-2.2
Total	6.40	4.20		1.40
N	3,900	3,187	(2,146 a 2,198)	2,462

Source: CIS (several surveys)

\*\*Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declares to have participated in this type of action throughout their life. Las acciones son distintas para cada estudio: 1980: pintadas, ocupar fábricas o edificios, bloquear tráfico, causar daños. 1989: ocupar fábricas o acciones violentas. 1994: 1980+1989. 2005: dos indicadores: 1 ocupar edificios, encierros, cortar tráfico y 2 hacer pintadas o causar daños. Los datos de 2005 reflejan, sin embargo, el porcentaje de entrevistados que ha participado en este tipo de acción en los últimos doce meses.

Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts.

\*\*\*Data referring to 1994 were provided by two different surveys, therefore not all age groups are comparable (only the 15 to 25 year olds for young people and the people over 26 years of age for adults).

## New forms of political participation?

In order to complete the analysis of the forms of political participation, and to empirically prove the hypothesis of the higher levels of participation of young people in new forms of participation, we have analyzed three types of action, but, sadly, only one of the studies, the one carried out in 2005, includes this type of actions.

The results show that participation in the three so-called “new forms of participation” (20) is uneven depending on the age group: while young people wear insignias and stickers more often than adults, the results are different when we analyze the consumption or boycott of certain products due to political reasons, or the use of the media to report on a problem. In the case of consumption or boycott for political reasons, adults and young people over 26 are the ones that participate more, when it comes to use the media to report on problems participation is marginal (2.6%) and higher among adults.

(20)

In a certain way, these actions cannot be considered “new”, but several studies have included them defining them as new (Micheletti et al., 2004). In any case, participation of young people is higher regarding this type of action.

Table 12. **New forms of political participation sorted by age groups (2005)**

	18-21	22-25	26-29	30-64	65 +	Total	N
<b>Boycott of products due to political, ethnic and environmental reasons</b>	17.0	19.4	<b>23.5</b>	<b>21.4</b>	5.2	17.8	2,468
<i>res*</i>	-0.3	0.6	2.1	5.4	-8.3		
<b>Wear insignias or stickers to support certain campaigns</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>27.8</b>	19.8	16.9	7.0	16.7	2,470
<i>res*</i>	3.9	4.2	1.2	0.4	-6.6		
<b>Contact the media to report on problems</b>	1.8	2.1	3.7	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	2.9	2,471
<i>res*</i>	-1.0	-0.6	0.7	2.5	-2.5		

Source: CIS (several studies)

Data refer to the percentage of interviewees that declare to have participated in this type of actions. Bold percentages indicate the subtract is >1.96 or <-1.96, thus, it is a significant deviation.

\*res: corrected subtracts

## Conclusions

With this brief analysis we wanted to study the relation of young Spanish people to politics, in comparison to same groups of young people since the 1980s. The comparison between young people and adults throughout time was very effective to prove that the link between young citizens and the field of politics is more complex and full of shades than sometimes thought.

In general, we can say that, although young people are less interested in politics and participate less than adults, the rest of indicators do not confirm that young people are especially apathetic towards public issues or, at least, not as much when compared to adults. Specifically, the evolution of the interest in politics and the frequency of discussion about political issues question the thesis that states that young Spanish people are gradually becoming more and more politically apathetic. On the other side, we found evidences of a growing feeling of distrust towards political parties, particularly among young people. There is no direct rejection of this institution, but a critical assessment of their role as agents that should promote the participation of citizens.

On the other side, the comparison between groups of young people of different ages has shown us that we cannot analyze attitudes and behaviours of youth as a homogeneous group. There is a pattern that systematically repeats itself: young people under 18 are less interested in politics and feel they have less to do with it. However, the rest of the groups do not show a clear pattern. It may be a sign of the existence of cohort, period or life cycle effects. Their identification and measurement requires a more sophisticated study. However, we can identify the life cycle effect in attitudes like interest in politics and support of democracy, and in forms of participation like voting, demonstrations and other types of protest actions. However, regarding these and the rest of the indicators we cannot rule the existence of generational differences out.

How do these results affect democracy in Spain? We can provide two interpretations: on the one side, it seems that young Spanish people today

are not significantly different from previous young generations regarding their relation to politics. On the other side, and due to the low levels of political engagement in Spain, it is really surprising that young people with higher levels of education, with more resources for participation and whose political socialization was carried out during democracy, do not show more political engagement than previous generations. Maybe the democratic experience does not promote engagement of citizens by itself, and the institutions will have to find instruments to promote active citizenship.

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