



Political participation and active citizenship in Spain: An analysis of youth, participatory culture and their social network.

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ABSTRACT: The new socio-political and economic context sponsored by globalization, the revaluation of particular political interests, linked more with specific problems than with the great left and right ideologies of traditional political organizations and the increase and/or the visibility of the inequalities supported by certain social groups have brought about a substantial change regarding how citizenship can be exercised actively from political action. Young people currently live in a participatory structure in which various forms of political participation are combined, on individual occasions, in other collective cases, and exercised both from within the political system and from public administration as well as outside it. Through the exploitation of data from official statistical sources, the present work shows how the political participation of young Spaniards is, their participatory culture and how they deploy their social network with the objective of exercising political action, incorporating a comparative analysis of the population between 18 and 24 years of age concerning the population as a whole, as well as a gender perspective analysis of the issue.

Keywords: political participation, citizenship, youth, participatory culture, social network.



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Introduction

In this work, political participation is understood as all those actions of citizens aimed at influencing the political process and its results (Anduiza & Bosch, 2009). These are both citizens actions, both individual and collective, referred to both national (and supranational) and local contexts, in which the citizen opposes or supports the structures and authorities from public institutions (Conge, 1988).

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There is a direct relationship between the notions of democracy, politics and participation so that the political action of citizens in democracy has its main justification and it is where, precisely, lies the action. A person deprived of the capacity for action in the political field also sees his or her capacity for opinion limited and, ultimately, is a person deprived of human rights. The active participation of citizens in the affairs of the community of which it is a part is the foundation for the exercise of political activity and even determines the human condition of people (Arendt, 1993).

To understand the ways, possibilities and limits in which citizenship can be actively exercised, there is a need to rescue the polysemic concept of social capital offered by some of the academics who have written the most on the matter. Bourdieu (1985) defined social capital as a set of resources (real or potential) related to a lasting network of relationships, more or less institutional, from which reciprocal recognition is provided. Coleman (1990) did it from the perspective of the social structure, identifying it with socio-structural resources that facilitate the participatory action of the individuals in said structure so that the sense of belonging to it and the social integration of the individuals will depend on the relationship they establish with those resources that the structure facilitates. Putnam (1993) emphasizes certain aspects of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust. In short, from the sum of each of the elements mentioned, a concept of social capital is admitted whose objective is to facilitate the action and cooperation between citizens, and between it and organizations, for the benefit of the community. All this considering the different citizenship strategies that can be attributed to the young population, including those that defend the current existence of a deficit of civic and political participation of this age group (Smith et al., 2005).

In our view, there are three key elements that enable the effective exercise of political action of citizens and therefore their participation in the community: the structures of participation available, the participatory culture and, thirdly, the social network. They are explained in the following lines since each one forms a category of analysis for our study.

a. Forms and structures of participation: it is undeniable that, at present, there is a loss of institutional legitimacy motivated by the disenchantment of citizens to participate in classic electoral participation processes and by the distrust in the institutions representing the more conventional political systems (Rosanvallon, 2010; Norris, 2002; Morrell & Subirats, 2012) that has been compensated by the strengthening of certain instruments of citizen participation aimed at the control, supervision and, sometimes, opposition to these representative institutions. It is

important to start from a broad concept of political participation in which the political action of the citizenry is specified both in individual and collective actions, in which the citizen can be placed both within the participation structures promoted by the same political system as outside it (to exert influence or in opposition to the political system or to certain decisions taken in that system). Participation structures are contextualized in both national (supranational) and local environments, with more intense participation when that participation is articulated on the basis of models in which forms of municipal, relational and participatory administration prevail. In this sense, the local space (that place where people live, relate to each other and to the environment that they know and with which they feel identified) is the most appropriate context in which the possibilities of a democracy understood in a broad sense (Tilly, 2007) can be optimally developed.

The possibilities of citizen participation are multiple, sometimes with more impact on the political processes and on others with less. In some cases, from structures arranged by the same representative institutions and in others from an external position. Sometimes within an associative framework and sometimes individually. In this work, the multiple and diverse forms of participation are grouped in four possible categories for study: a) electoral participation, b) participation in traditional political organizations (militancy or affiliation to political parties and / or unions), c) citizen participation in local political planning (facilitated from the same local government organisms) and d) citizen participation to try to influence / modify political decisions (the citizen occupying an external position to the public administration, from certain social movements, organizations and associations with specific interests).

The first two categories are associated with the traditional ways of representative democracy (Montesquieu, Kelsen, Rousseau ...) in which the presence of institutional mechanisms of political representation is justified from the idea that to represent the population as a whole, public institutions are the scenario and the political parties are responsible of giving voice and representing the ideas and values of citizens in the decisions taken in those institutions.

a.1 Electoral participation: As Torcal, Moreno & Teorell (2006) claim, citing Hirschman (1970), the first way in which citizens can express preferences for a party is voting. The second, working for it. Through electoral participation, citizens decide, anonymously, the political party they prefer to represent them in democratic institutions and in which they will decide how to govern.

a.2 . Militancy in traditional political organizations: the second way they pointed out, is that one in which the citizen works for the political party by belonging to it. Active personal participation mechanisms are put into operation in which citizens are involved in the activity of

their party. When they are satisfied with the progress of the party, they may decide to exert a greater influence or contribute more actively to the planned actions. However, when they are not satisfied with the decisions made in their midst, far from abandoning it, they often protest through the internal channels of the party (Torcal, Moreno & Teorell, 2006).

The last two categories respond to the idea of "deliberative democracy" by Benhabib (2002). The idea is to propose a valid two-way approach to solve problems and conflicts between different cultures or differentiated groups. The reason is none other than the consideration that, in today's societies (characterized by significant flows of migration, mobility, conflict between different cultures, assignment of specific identities to women based on various cultural practices, etc.), it is necessary to think about new forms of citizenship that are more inclusive and in which the idea of the individual as a political subject that will reach higher levels of citizenship as long as it is active in the political exercise prevails. To articulate policies and solve particular problems, this model of democracy uses, on the one hand, the political participation of citizens through institutions of the public sphere. On the other hand, it is necessary to assess the political participation of citizens from the promotion of the associative fabric, stakeholders, social movements and other civil participation tools that are essential to achieve an inclusive citizenship formed by individuals with legitimacy and ability to listen and be heard about their own social practices (Benhabib, 2002).

a.3. Citizen participation in local political planning: This form of participation is characterized by intervention in public management and decision-making in development processes, mainly at the local level. It is a concrete way of political participation that can have an associative basis or be of a personal nature, and here it means both participation in the diagnosis of problems and the formation of the local political agenda, direct participation in policy formulation and in decision-making and also participation in the management of municipal services and programs (Font et al, 2012).

Citizen participation at the local level in Spain is promoted at the time of the democratic transition from the proliferation of consultative and associative mechanisms, through territorial and sectoral councils. Such a novelty in the democratic structures of local participation also translates, in the 1990s, into the incorporation into this type of process of shared management mechanisms of certain municipal services through agreements with local associative groups. Participation also begins through Agendas 21 and the Strategic Plans of the cities. Finally, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the next decade, individual participation instruments linked to deliberative processes, such as participatory Budgets, start to work (Ganuza, 2010; Font, 2001).

a.4. Participation in associations, organizations and social movements from external positions to the Public Administration: it involves the participation of citizens in organizations and social movements with political influence, as a form of effective political

participation for the exercise of active citizenship. In this case, the political action of the citizenship is not promoted by public institutions as in the previous case, although in many cases it comes precisely from some act or decision taken by the Administration and considered as unfair or undesirable by a sector of the citizenship. On other occasions, more than the action will be the omission by the Administration. These may be actions of a collective nature (generated as a result of membership or militancy in certain organizations) or individual, whose purpose is the defense of certain specific interests.

b. Participatory culture: participatory culture assumes a responsible, reflective and critical attitude of citizens regarding the community's own affairs. In addition to the structural conditions existing in the current democratic systems, citizen participation is also influenced by citizens' attitudes towards political issues and public affairs. It will depend on the sense of identity regarding certain socio-political values and principles, on the desire to contribute to the public affairs of your community and on your commitment and personal responsibility to such issues (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). Under participatory culture, having timely knowledge about the needs and problems of the community, as well as expressing a commitment to action by citizens and civil society leads to increased possibilities of exercising active citizenship models.

c. Social network: the third element necessary for citizens to truly exercise political action is related to the capabilities and abilities of the person to deploy around them a social network that facilitates to a greater or lesser extent that task of citizen participation. Social interactions are the means from which different interrelationships are created in the context of each other's social network, establishing relationships between members of different social systems reflected both in a purely personal, family, friendship, interest dimension. common, etc., and that is organized around different groups and / or social categories present in the social structure (Barnes, 1954).

Nowadays, one of the tools that makes it possible to optimize the capacities of interaction between people and groups is the Internet and the communication established between those who use it. The network society, defined by Castells (1997), places us in a complex scenario in which the new paradigm of information technology is the basis for its expansion to affect the entire social structure. Everyone is experiencing a new social structure in which the Internet is the basic means of communication and relationship between people, groups, networks, organizations and diverse institutions, a new instrument in which group relations are reformulated and affects both culture and relationships of power (Castells, 2003).

In the field of youth political participation, it should be noted previously that the characteristics of the new era in which the world is entering into, present a reality in which youth,

politics and participation are three concepts in (re) definition. In this sense, the recently published research concludes that in this scenario, new conceptual frameworks and analysis methodologies that explain the new and emerging forms of youth participation are required, while incorporating a variable that has become fundamental: Internet (Parés & Franzini, 2014).

In the current relationships between young people and politics, various channels of participation have been incorporated that technological advances have contributed. The new information and communication technologies have activated forms of supervening youth subjectivities, in line with the role of the media and emerging political practices in the digital era (Mendes & Di Marco, 2015). Social movements linked to young cyber-activists of the digital age present new features in the paradigm of activism and participation (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003).

Objectives and methodology.

The objectives of the research are aimed at knowing the way in which young people currently participate in Spain, inquire about their participatory culture and analyze the use of the Internet for issues related to politics, understood as one of the main ways in which young people communicate, interact and build, in a sense, their social network.

To respond to these three objectives, a quantitative and descriptive methodology will be used, trying to compare the differences between the population aged 18 to 24 and the total average of the population and incorporating, from a gender perspective, gender as an independent variable. The data under analysis have been obtained from the following official statistical sources: Center for Sociological Research (hereinafter, CIS)ⁱ, National Statistics Institute (hereinafter, INE)ⁱⁱ and Eurostatⁱⁱⁱ.

Political participation of young people in Spain.

According to the July 2019 Barometer (Study 3257 of CIS), the percentage of young Spanish people aged 18 to 24 who voted in the General Elections held in Spain in April 2019 is below the average of the population (78.9 per cent young people versus 86.4 per cent of the population that went to vote). Among the youth population, young women (84.3 per cent voted in greater proportion than young men (73.9 per cent).

However, an analysis of the youth vote in the General Elections of 2016 and 2011 demonstrate that the percentage of population aged 18 to 24 who went to vote has increased. Thus, in 2011, 67.2 per cent of the young respondents voted (December 2011 CIS Barometer, Study 2923) and in 2016, 72.1 per cent (CIS General Election Post-Election 2016). Although this

increase is also observed in the population as a whole, the differences in the percentage of participation between young people and the population as a whole have been reduced since 2011.

Young people also participate in a lesser grade through militancy in political parties. The Post-Election of the General Elections of April 2019 of the CIS 2019 (Study 3248) collects the percentage of respondents belonging to a political party. Again, young people between 18 and 24 years old are the age group that least participate in this way (6.7 per cent young people and 8.9 per cent the whole population).

Analyzing the data according to gender, although Spanish men belong to political parties in greater proportion than women, there is more female (7.5 per cent) affiliation observed among the young than the male (6.1 per cent) gender. In the specific case of women, young women between the ages of 18 and 24 are the only age group whose membership in political parties is greater than that of men.

Regarding participation in local political planning, the findings found in official Spanish sources are significant. However, the vast majority of the latest published data regarding this form of participation are from 2006. It is undeniable that the political context and the forms of citizen participation in Spain before this time are very different: on the one hand, the economic crisis that began in 2007, the 15-M movement and the subsequent emergence of new political parties and social movements have modified the scenario. On the other, the technological transformation and the new possibilities of participating through the Internet are implying changes both in the political structure and in the planning of public policies (Subirats, 2013). In spite of this, it is convenient to show briefly how it was then (2006), participation in different initiatives of consultation and citizen participation by the Spanish population. The CIS Study 2661 on Local Participation asked respondents if they had ever participated in various forms of participation at the municipal level. Young people between 18 and 24 years participated in neighborhood councils, participatory budgets and civic or municipal centers more than the population as a whole did. However, in the rest of the initiatives they are asked about are practically missing. From a gender perspective, young women participate more than young men in the initiatives in which this age group is present, except in the Neighborhood Councils, in which the number of young men is considerably higher (almost three times more). As the study indicated in the theoretical framework, participation to influence the decisions of the Government from external positions to the Administration is analyzed from a collective perspective (through militancy or membership in certain associations) and from an individual perspective, in both cases, participating in social

initiatives of defense or support of specific interests. From the collective point of view, the study is interested in knowing the degree and types of commitment of young people with associationism. In 2019, 29.9 per cent of young people belong to some association. Except for the population over 65 years of age, young people between 18 and 24 years old are the age group that to a lesser extent belong to associations concerning the population as a whole, whose average is 34.1 per cent (Study 3248 CIS). However, the young men are close to the average of the population, while young women move away, belonging to associations to a lesser extent than young men.

Young people also practice associationism less than the population as a whole but are more represented in sports associations as well as in ecologists and feminist's associations.

More interesting is the analysis based on gender. Women belong in greater proportion than men to associations discussed here, except in the case of the sports clubs. In this case, the percentage of men doubles that of women, both among the young population and respecting to the population as a whole. The most significant differences between women and young men are in membership in youth associations (43.4 per cent women and 22 per cent men), environmental groups (17 per cent women and 1.2 per cent men), sports clubs (37.7 per cent women and 75.6 per cent men) and feminist organizations (20.8 per cent women and 1.2 per cent men).

Regarding the individual aspect of this last form of citizen participation in which the action takes place from external positions to the Administration, in 2018 young people participated more than the entire population in all activities that do not affect their purchasing power or those which relate to other traditional forms of participation. That is, they are only below the average of the population in activities aimed at the purchase of certain products (or boycotting others) for political, ethical reasons or to favour the environment. They also participated less in attending rallies or trying to contact political party officials. However, all other activities related to different forms of social and political action of the citizens included in the Study 3210 of the CIS (participate in a strike, go to demonstrations, contact the media, participate in discussions on political issues on the Internet or in signature collections) were more practiced by young people than the Spanish population as a whole did in that year.

According to the gender of the youth population, there are no big differences between women and men in those activities in which, as noted, young people participated less than the whole population. While young women participate more than young men in the boycott of products for political reasons (25.3 per cent vs. 18.2 per cent) and there is also a slight difference in favour of greater involvement of young women in the donations or fundraising for social and/or

political (12.6 per cent vs 9.1 per cent). On the other hand, regarding the activities in which young people participate more than the average of the population, there are more differences between both genders. Women participate in a greater proportion than men in strikes (35.6 per cent vs. 22.2 per cent), demonstrations (40.2 per cent vs. 26.3 per cent) and signatures (43.7 per cent vs. 36, 4 per cent). In short, young women participate more than young men in activities related to this type of citizen participation. It is significant, however, that the activities in which young men stand out more than young women are those that have to do with traditional organizations such as political parties.

Participatory culture of young Spaniards.

The participatory culture of the population is the second relevant element for the achievement of an active exercise of citizenship. In this section, the paper is exploring the attitude of young Spaniards towards politics, analyzing the available data according to two categories: their knowledge about the political issues, needs and problems of their community and their commitment to action.

A majority (82.5 per cent) of the Spanish population is interested in current affairs according to the CIS Study 3156 (2016). In the case of young people, this percentage drops to 80.8 per cent, thus approaching the population average, although slightly below. Analyzing this variable according to gender, there is a greater interest on the part of the male population (83.6 per cent) concerning to female population (81.4 per cent). Again, this trend is reversed in the case of the young population. 80.2 per cent of young men say they are interested in current affairs. However, in this case, the percentage of young women in such a situation is 81.4 per cent.

But if the focus is on the degree of commitment to the policy, Eurobarometer 4021 (2019) shows that young Spaniards between 15 and 24 years are most show a degree of commitment strong compared to other age groups (30 per cent), being the mean of the population in 21 per cent. But they are also above the average for young people in the EU as a whole (28), given that only 14 per cent said they had a high degree of commitment to politics. The young people of this country also surpass the average of the Spanish population who replied that they have a medium degree of commitment (49 per cent versus 45 per cent in the total population). In this sense, in 2016, 47.5 per cent of Spanish youths expressed disagreement about the idea of not getting into politics, compared to 39.1 per cent of the population that answered in the same direction. Young

Spaniards, then, are the ones who to a lesser extent think that one should not get into political issues (Study 3156 CIS).

Regarding the knowledge of young people about political issues, the first focus is to understand what their perception is about the way politics influences the life of citizens. According to the CIS Study 3156 (2016), 76.8 per cent of young people aged 18 to 24 think that politics has a great influence in that regard. Although only in the case of people over 65 years the percentage is lower, therefore it is not evident to state that the young population is significantly away from the total average of the population, which answered in the same way by 78.3 per cent.

From a gender perspective, although the difference is small, the percentage of men who think that politics has a great influence on their lives as citizens is slightly higher than that of women (79.4 per cent men and 77.2 per cent women). However, the trend is reversed and differences are accentuated in the case of the youngest. In this case, the percentage of young women who indicate that the degree of influence of the policy is high is 80.4 per cent, compared to 73.3 per cent in the case of younger men.

However, 39.2 per cent of young women think that politics is so complicated that they cannot understand it, compared to 30.7 per cent of young men who agree with that statement. On the contrary, 34 per cent of young people (both women and men) recognize themselves as a person who understands politics. Again, although the percentage is lower than that of the population as a whole (37.7 per cent) it is not a significant difference. Perhaps the relevant issue is that, analyzing the differences between men and women concerning to that self-perception as a person who understands politics, the only age group in which there are no differences between the genders is precisely that of the young, appreciating important differences in the rest of the age groups (Study 3156 CIS).

The value given to the different types of participation is also of an interest to this study. Although there is no information on the four forms of participation, analyze of the differences respecting to one of the traditional and other non-traditional forms of political participation is indicated here. In that same Study 3156 (CIS) respondents were asked if they perceived the vote as the only way in which citizens can influence what the Government does. 43.4 per cent of young people between 18 and 24 answered affirmatively, compared with 57.4 per cent of the population as a whole. Although it is a relatively high percentage, young people are the age group that least thinks that electoral participation is the only way to influence politics. On the other hand, they were asked about the importance they attached to associative activities. In this case, on a scale

from 0 to 10 where 0 is not important and 10 is very important, it shows how the importance given to associative activities by young people is greater than that given by the population as a whole.

Social network.

This paper is also studying the communication possibilities and interaction on political issues available for young people. It is unavoidable to consider the potential of the Internet as a tool for communication and relationship between people, especially when 77.6 per cent of the population residing in Spain (between 16 and 74) uses the Internet every day, percentage increases to 93.6 per cent in the case of young people aged 16 to 24 (Survey on Equipment and use of Information Technologies and Communication in homes, Statistics National Institute (INE, 2019).

Except for the older ones, young Spaniards aged 18 to 24 are the age group that least talks about politics with people in the nearby social environment. 24.7 per cent never talk about politics with their friends, 21 per cent don't do it with their family members and 24.7 per cent never do it with their coworkers or classmates. While in the second course they are under the whole population (the percentage of total population never talk to their families is greater than the younger population), regarding friends and especially from coworkers, the percentage of young people who never talk about politics is greater than the total population.

Among the young population, the percentage of women is greater than that of men who never talk about politics, the differences between both genders are more significant compared to those who never talk about politics with their coworkers or classmates (10.1 per cent young men and 18, 4 per cent young women) (Study 3210 of the CIS).

Regarding the forms and frequency of follow-up of the policy, almost half of the young people never read the newspaper (45.1 per cent), but 47.7 per cent use radio and television daily to be informed through News. Regarding information on the Internet, 28.2 per cent of young people between 18 and 24 never do it, 36.9 per cent being those who do it daily (CIS Study 3191, 2017).

This paper is also inquiring a little more about the frequency of use of the two main media used by young people to learn about politics (radio and television, on the one hand, and the Internet, on the other). Analyzing the data offered by the CIS Study 3191, the use of the Internet by young people at least one or two days a week is 46.9 per cent. In the case of radio and

television, 81.6 per cent of young people 's use on that same frequency. Therefore, young people's favorite media to inform themselves about issues related to politics is radio or television.

Through the Internet, citizens are not only informed but also interact and even have the possibility to act and take part in various actions. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the use of internet. Also, according to the 3195 Study of the CIS (2017), 99.5 per cent of the population between 18 and 24 years participated in chats or instant messaging systems (Messenger, WhatsApp, Line, etc.) during the last three months before carrying out the study, and 99.8 per cent did it on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ...), confirming that, regardless of the use they gave related to political issues, young people are the age group that use this form of communication the most.

Thus, in 2019, according to Eurobarometer 4021, 35 per cent of the young people surveyed read and/or discussed something about politics using a messaging application in the period of one month, while only 20 per cent of the average of the total population did the same. In this same sense, the CIS Study 3210 (April, 2018) asked about participation in a blog, forum or political discussion group during the previous 12 months. 10.2 per cent of the population between 18 and 24 years affirmatively answered, being the age group that did more, doubling the average of the total Spanish population, which stood at 5.5 per cent. In this case, there are no differences between women and young men (10.3 per cent young women and 10.1 per cent young men). However, the differences in the general population according to gender regarding this issue are important. 7.1 per cent of the total number of men in the Spanish population said they participated in a blog, forum or political discussion group during the 12 months before the survey, compared to 4.1 per cent of the total number of women who answered in the same sense.

Finally, it is relevant to analyze the participatory activities carried out by the Spanish population through the Internet, linked to the form of citizen participation in which it is intended to influence political decisions from a position external to the Public Administration (the fourth form of participation exposed in this work). According to the CIS Study 3195, in general terms, participation in Spain through this route is scarce. Only in cases referred to writing comments in a forum, social network, etc. (27.2 per cent), the use of the Internet to sign petitions or adhere to certain manifests or campaigns (29.2 per cent) and communicate with any association or organization (24.4 per cent). These activities are, at the same time, the most used by the population between the ages of 18 and 24 to participate politically through the Internet, being in the first two cases above the average of the total population.

If the data is analyzed according to gender, the first thing noted is that there are no big differences between young men and the whole male population. However, the differences between young women and the female population as a whole are significant. Only in the activity aimed at donations, young women remain close to the average of the female population. In all others, in some cases above and in others below, young women distance themselves from the modes of participation of the female population as a whole. On the other hand, young women participate more than young men writing comments in a forum, blog or social network and in donations to associations or organizations. In the other options, it is young men who participate in greater proportion than young women.

Conclusion

Young people participate less than the population as a whole in the four ways of exercising citizenship studied here, except in one: citizen participation to try to influence and/or change in policy decisions from external positions Public Administration, provided it is done individually and not within a specific organization or group. Young people vote less, join less than the average political parties and associate less. However, when it is done individually and independently concerning the Public Administration, young people participate more than the population as a whole, as long as the activity does not affect their purchasing power (buying certain products or boycotting others) or their action can link with traditional organizations such as political parties. That is, they are mostly in strikes, demonstrations, contact with the media, political debates on the Internet or collecting signatures.

However, the study has found significant differences in gender analysis. Young women participate more than young men in all actions. Young women vote more, join political parties to a greater extent (in this case the trend is also reversed concerning the population as a whole, in which male affiliation is greater than female), they associate more than young men in organizations linked to political issues and participate individually rather than young men in the actions in which most represented is the youth (participate in a strike, attend demonstrations, contact media, participate in discussions on political issues on the Internet or signatures collected). In this case, young men participate more than young women in whom there is less youth representation and who are more related to political parties (rallies or contacting politicians).

As for the participatory culture, young people do not present important differences compared to other age groups, being very close to the average of the Spanish population as a whole. Summarizing, young people are interested a little less than the total population in current

affairs, understand politics a little less and have a slightly higher degree of commitment than the population as a whole.

The interest of Spaniards in current affairs is high. More than 80 per cent of the population is interested. Although young people have practically no differences concerning the population as a whole, there is some variation in gender analysis. Spanish men show more interest than women, but tenure is invested in the case of the young population, with young women being more interested than young men. The same happens with the degree of commitment. Almost 80 per cent of young people believe that politics exerts a great influence on the life of citizens, but it is more young women than young men who think so, investing concerning the male and female population as a whole.

Regarding the understanding of politics, less than 40 per cent of the population perceives itself as people who understand politics. But, although in all age groups the differences between women and men are important (men say they understand better than women), the only age group in which there are no differences between the genders is precisely that of young people. There are no differences between women and young men regarding their self-perception as people who understand politics.

Finally, young people are the age group that talks less about politics with people in their immediate social environment, and they are more women than young men who never talk about politics.

As for how they follow the news on politics, the media most chosen by young people to discuss issues related to politics are radio or television, well above people who are using the internet to learn about political issues in spite of using it practically every day. Except for information on politics, young people do not practically use the Internet to actively participate in certain political issues. Only 10 per cent of young people use the Internet to discuss politics, but it doubles the average population and there are no differences between women and young men.

Participation in Spain through the Internet with the objective of influence in political decisions from an external position to the Public Administration is scarce, and young people are only above the population as a whole in activities related to showing comments or discussing politics in the network and sign petitions or adhere to manifestos. Regarding the rest of the activities in which you can participate from the Internet, young people participate below what the average of the population as a whole does. Again, young women participate more than young men in these two activities that young people do most on the Internet (sign and discuss on the

networks) and also make more donations than they do. Young men use it more than women to be informed and / or request information (from organizations, political parties or media). In short, although it is the tool most used by young people to communicate and interact, it does not seem to be the main instrument to materialize an active exercise of citizenship.

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ⁱ <http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://ine.es>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>