

PoLNeT

Political Participation and the Internet in Spain

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Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGOP)

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Contents

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Internet Politics: Research Questions

- Q1 Who uses the internet for political purposes? What is the relationship between online and offline political participation?
- Q2 How do political organizations use the internet for mobilization?
- Q3 How are users practicing politics online and do they have distinct political attitudes? What effect does online political practice have on have on political equality?
 - Q3b Does new media exacerbate knowledge gaps?

Funding

- Grant from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation SEJ2007-60082, 2007
- Competitive call for survey module design, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2007
- Aragón Regional Government, 2008
- AGAUR, CIS, AC

Data Collection

Survey of population sample

- CIS Survey 2736, data collected fall 2007
- 3716 respondents with an oversample (50%) of 18-40 year olds
- 50.7% (1884) internet users

Discussion groups

- Data collected october 2008, Zaragoza
- Four groups by crossing activism and internet use
- Groups constructed maintaining same range of socioeconomic status

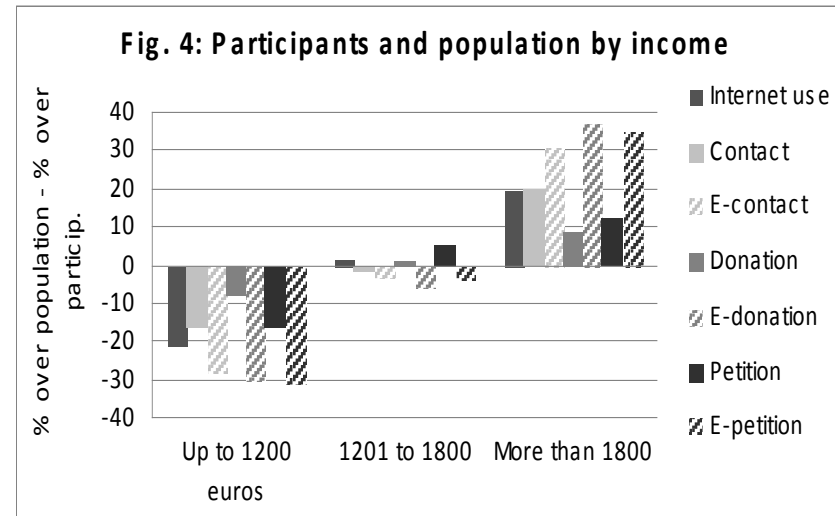
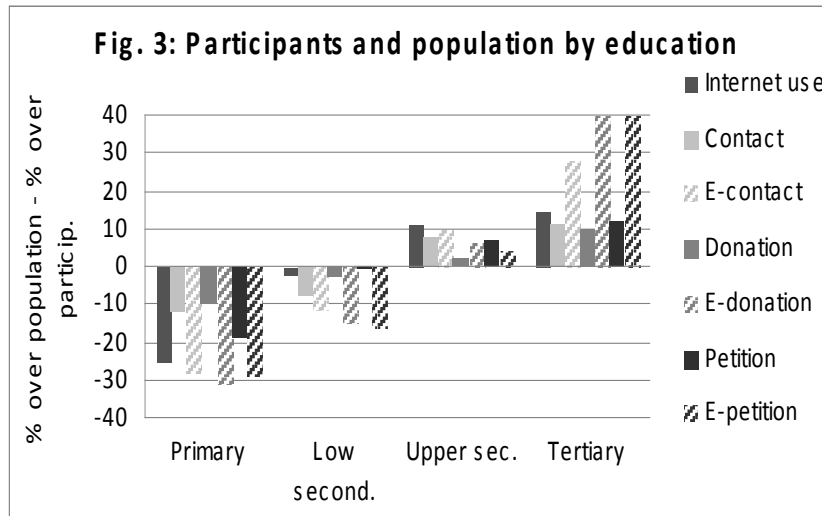
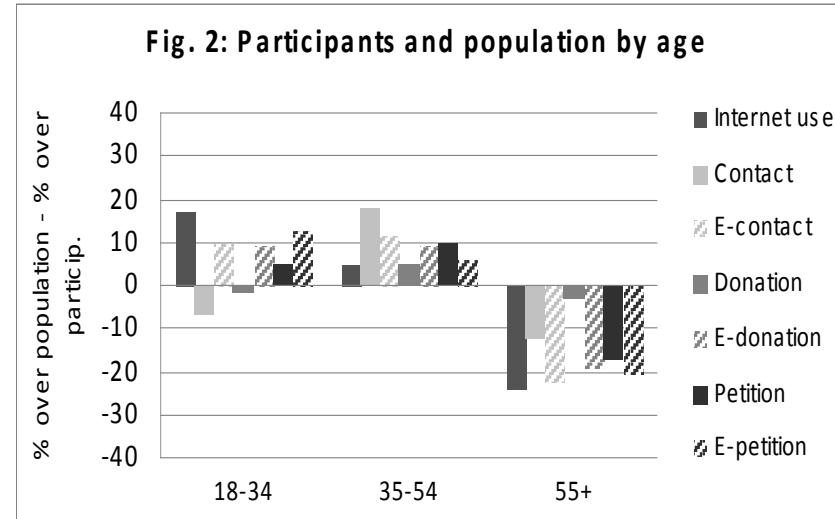
Survey of demonstrators

- Face to face and online questionnaires
- Zaragoza: Gran scala (December 2008)
- Barcelona: Survey fall 2008 and spring 2009, government response to the recession (247 f2f, 49% response rate for follow-up)

Q1 Key findings: Internet political use

- 51% of Spaniards use the internet
- Most common uses of the internet include:
 - Searching for information for work, school or personal needs (95% of users)
 - Send/receive emails (88%)
 - Download music, videos, documents etc. (76%)
 - Surfing to pass the time without a concrete purpose (66%)
- But political use of the internet is less common
 - Searching for political information (45%)
 - Visiting the web of a political party or candidate (19%)
 - Data for the 2008 election confirm these low levels

Socio-demographics of Online and Offline Participation

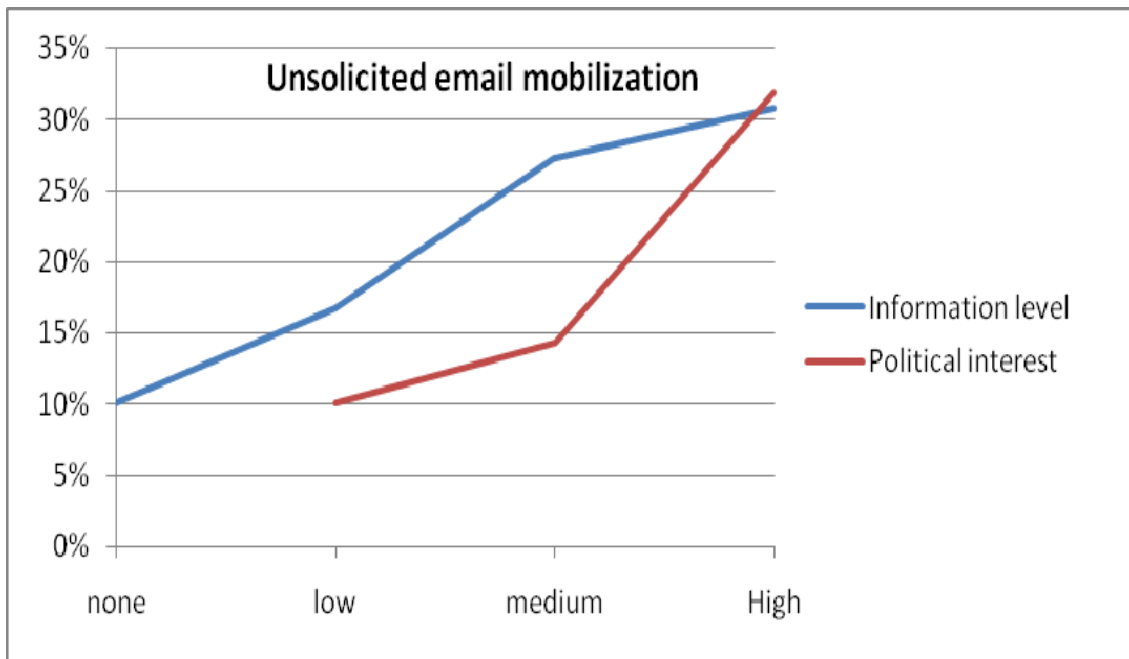


Q1 Key findings: profiles of internet users

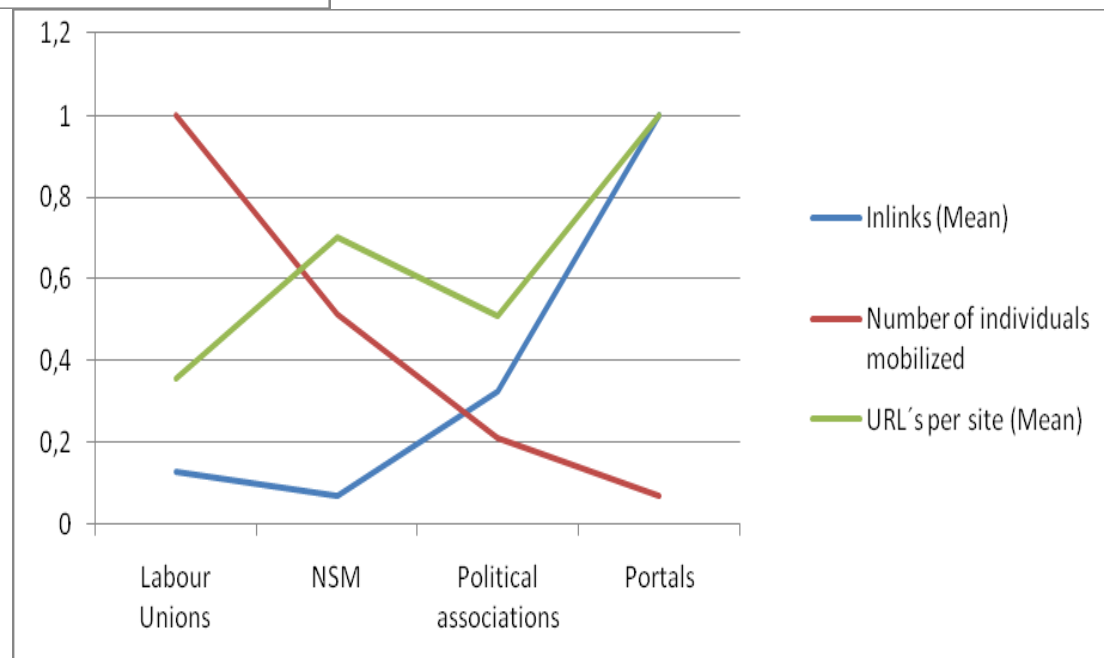
- Internet users in Spain tend to be
 - Better educated
 - Wealthier
 - But younger
- Internet users have
 - Greater sense of political efficacy but
 - Less confidence in political institutions

Q2 Key findings: political mobilization

- Face-to-face contact is the most common medium of communication, but email is also playing an important role
- People tend to receive mobilization appeals both online and offline
- Email appeals travel through offline associational networks and networks created by past participation



Visibility and mobilisation



Q3a Key findings: internet use, attitudes and participation

- The internet enables persons to become producers rather than passive consumers of political information.
- Generally those who participate offline participate online.
 - But younger cohorts are more likely participate using Web 2.0
- Users have higher levels of internal efficacy and knowledge (all other things being equal).
- Generally internet users are more likely to participate in nonrepresentational modes.
- Traditional resources are fundamental for access to internet but not so much for online participation. Online resources are important for online participation. This may change as the proportion of users increases.

Q3b Key findings: knowledge gap

- Internet use does not trade-off with other forms of media use (which is different than the American case)
- Internet use magnifies the knowledge gap due to education (expected)
- But not for political interest (counterintuitive)
- Unintended exposure explanations do not work

Figure 2: The knowledge gap in Spain by political interest

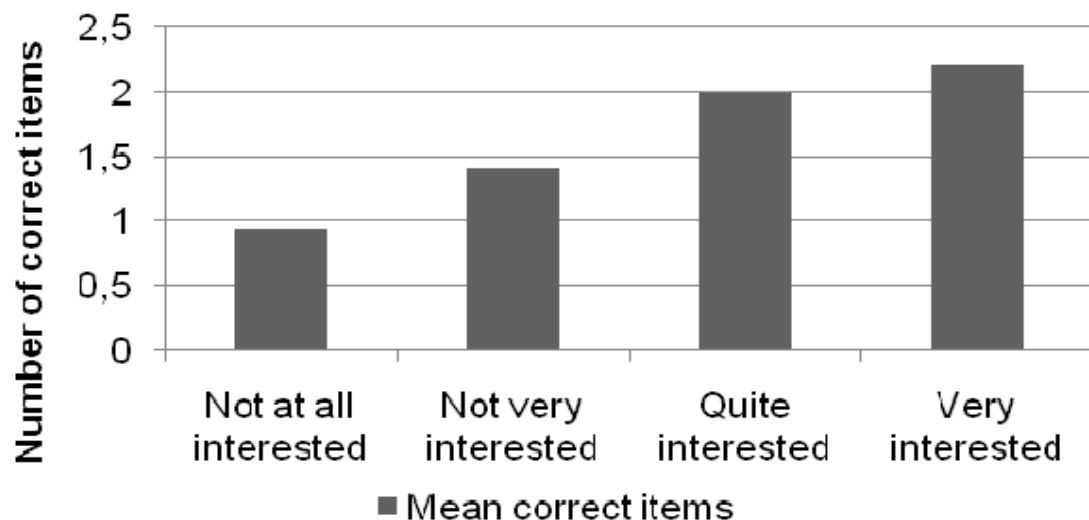
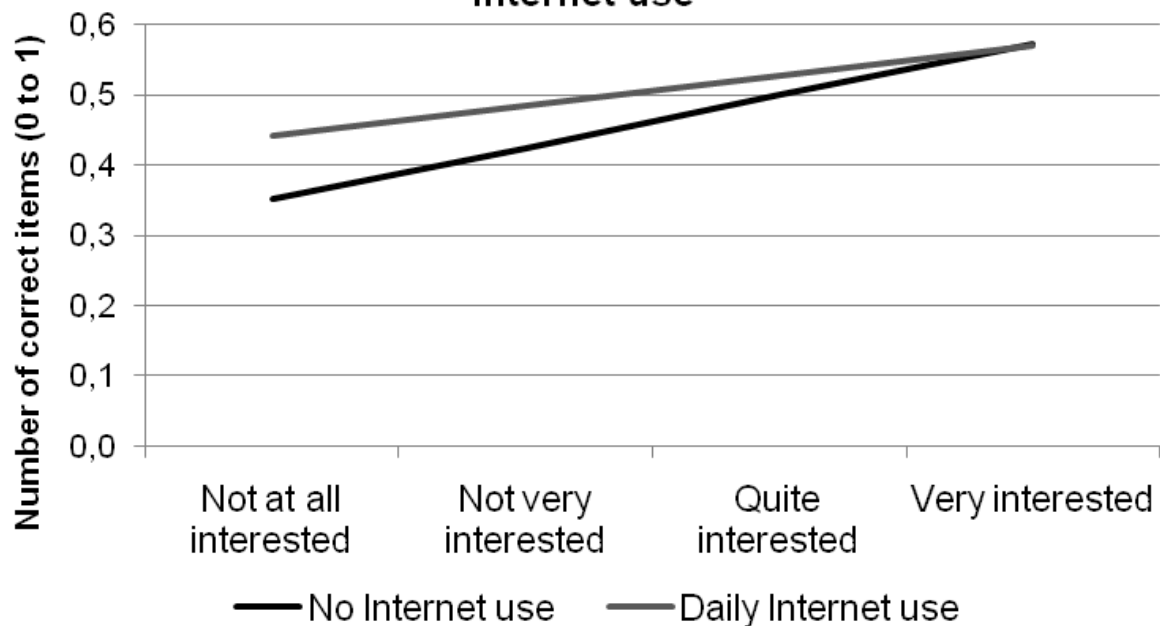


Figure 3: Knowledge gap by political interest and Internet use



Summary of empirical findings

- The internet's role in a political system is highly contingent on its relation to other media and cultural patterns
- Online mechanisms may extend an organization's reach or reinforce a message but its efficacy depends on the strength of offline networks
- Internet access is strongly socially biased, online participation among users is not
 - but knowledge gap may increase in high choice environments

Dissemination

Web www.polnetuab.net

Papers

- “Changing politics...”, IUE Florence 2007
- AECPA Valencia 2007
- Youth and Politics Conference, Brujas 2008
- APSA Boston 2008
- ECPR Lisbon 2009
- Barcelona, Madrid 2009

Seminars, working groups

- “New Media and Politics” International Workshop, Barcelona May 2009 (AGAUR, CIS, AC Ministerio)
- Section “Internet and Politics”, several panels and papers at ECPR GC 2009
- Grupo de Trabajo AECPA Málaga 2009

Selected papers

- Anduiza, Eva, Marta Cantijoch and Aina Gallego (2007). "[Political Participation and the Internet. Descriptive Hypotheses and Causal Pathways](#)". Paper presented at the Symposium Changing Politics through Digital Networks, 5-6 October 2007, Florence. Forthcoming at ICS
- Anduiza, Eva, Aina Gallego, Marta Cantijoch and Josep San Martin (2008). "[Online Resources, Political Participation and Equality](#)". Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 28-31 August, Boston.
- Anduiza, Eva, Aina Gallego and Laia Jorba (2009). New media and the paradox of the knowledge gap in Spain, International Workshop Barcelona
- Cantijoch, Marta, Laia Jorba and Josep San Martin (2008). "[Exposure to Political Information in New and Old Media: Which Impact on Political Participation?](#)" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 28-31 August, Boston.
- Cantijoch, Marta (2009). Reinforcement and mobilization: the influence of the Internet on different types of political participation
- Colombo, Clelia (2008). "Usos políticos de Internet. Estudio 2736 del CIS". Paper presented at the seminar "Internet y Política". June 9, Barcelona.
- Cristancho, Camilo and Jorge Salcedo (2009). Assessing Internet Mobilization, International Workshop Barcelona
- Gallego, Aina and Jorge Salcedo (2008). "[La movilización política a través de medios convencionales y nuevas tecnologías](#)". Paper presented at the seminar "Internet y Política". Barcelona, June 9th.
- Gallego, Aina and Laia Jorba (2008). "[Does Media Use Lead to a Widening Knowledge Gap and Decreasing Participation](#)". Paper presented at the Conference "Youth and Politics, Strange Bedfellows?" 3-4 July, Brugge.
- Jensen, Michael J. (2009). "The Internet and Indifference: Online Political Participation in Spain and the United States." Presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, April 2009, Lisbon, Portugal.
- Jorba, Laia (2008). "[Grupos de discusión para analizar la relación entre el uso de Internet y las actitudes políticas](#)". Paper presented at the seminar "Internet y Política". June 9th, Barcelona.