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Campaign Effects in the Spanish Election of 2000

ABSTRACT

This article addresses two controversial questions related to the effect of electoral campaigns. Malaise theories suggest that, although campaigns are intended to get out votes, they can in some cases have a demobilizing effect. Minimal effects theories suggest that campaigns have little conversion effects and that they mainly reinforce prior predispositions of voters. Looking at the Spanish general election of 2000 this article examines whether the campaign had a demobilizing effect and whether it also had an impact on the vote choice itself. Panel data make it possible to estimate the effect of exposure to campaign messages, the evaluation of the campaign carried out by parties and candidates, and the changes in attitudes that may have occurred during the campaign. The results show that the campaign did not demobilize voters but did have a significant effect on voters' support of the party in government.

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Introduction

Electoral campaigns are a series of communicative actions undertaken by parties and candidates to win votes in an election. They are central elements in representative democracies for the functions they perform: they can inform citizens, increase contact between them and politicians, and contribute to the legitimacy of the system. The effect of election campaigns is thus a fundamental concern both for politicians and for political scientists. There is, however, a series of debates regarding whether or not campaigns contribute to the mobilization of the electorate, whether they can make many electors switch votes, and whether the electoral result depends on them.

Moreover, the question of campaign effects is full of conceptual and methodological pitfalls. To start with, just as every election is different, every campaign is different, so it makes little sense to try to estimate “the effect of electoral campaigns”. Campaigns are complex processes, with many elements and dimensions that in turn may have effects on many different variables. In addition, it is very difficult to separate the causal effect of a campaign, understood as the actions taken by parties and candidates, from the events that may happen during the campaign – that is, in the weeks prior to the election while these parties and candidates are campaigning – and that may also have an impact.

This article focuses on the Spanish general election of 2000 and aims to explore two main questions related to the effects of the election campaign: whether it had a (de)mobilizing effect, and whether it had an impact on the voting choice that favoured the party in government. Concern is centred on the explanation of the behaviour of the voter¹ in a context that, as we will see in the next section, we would expect to be favourable for these two campaign effects to become apparent.

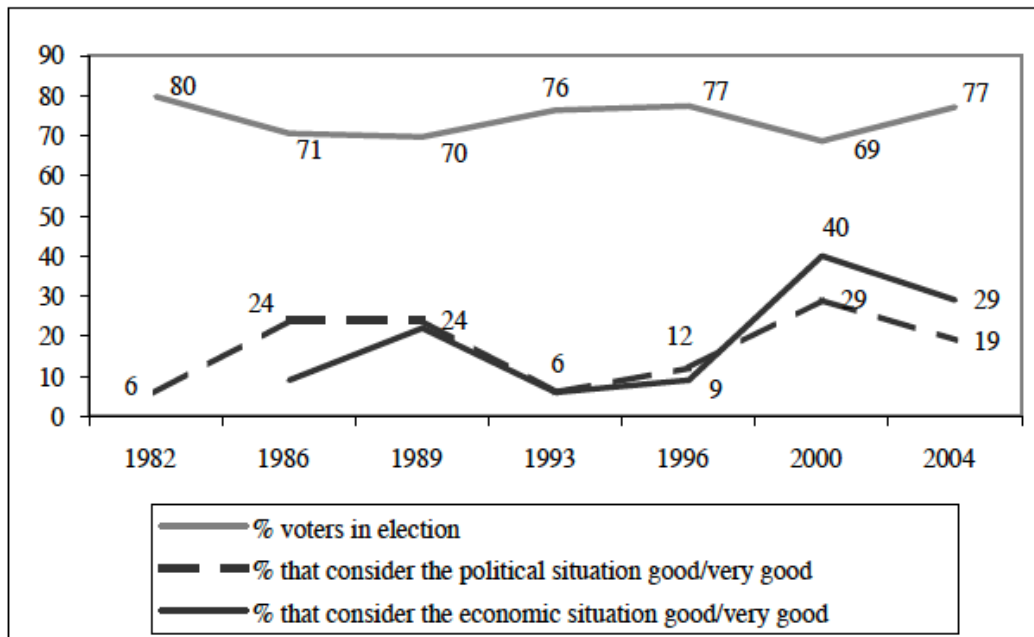
Since, as we have just argued, campaigns are complex processes, we must address a preliminary question in order to focus the analysis: what are the aspects of the campaign that will be our independent variables? We shall concentrate, in a limited yet realistic approach, on the effect of several campaign-related variables observed through panel data:² the exposure to campaign messages, the evaluation of the campaign carried out by parties and candidates, and the changes in attitudes that may have occurred during the campaign. These campaign-related variables are explored in the following section.

Then we analyse the effect of these campaign-related variables on voter behaviour, exploring whether, as malaise theories argue, campaign and media exposure had anything to do with the electoral demobilization that occurred in this election. Finally we focus on the extent to which the campaign significantly did or did not affect voting choice for/against the party in government, once controlling for individuals prior dispositions. The results seem to challenge minimal effects theory.

The Spanish voter and the Spanish general election of 2000

We know from previous research that Spanish electoral turnout is highly dependent on the characteristics of the context, and not so much on individual characteristics. Spanish electors are sensitive to the political and economic situation, to the degree of competitiveness of elections and to the social, institutional and political context when deciding whether to vote or not (Boix and Riba, 2000). We shall consider to what extent turnout in the 2000 election was influenced by a specific aspect of the electoral context: the campaign.

Previous research has also confirmed that voters have relatively strong and stable political preferences, and that campaigns have a small conversion effect and mainly reinforce



Source: www.mir.es and CIS.

Figure 1. Electoral participation and satisfaction with the economic and the political situation of the country (% of electorate)

previous predispositions (Fernández, 2001). In this case we shall test whether, together with ideological factors, the campaign also worked in favour of the party in government.

The 2000 election was a mundane election of continuity between two extraordinary elections that produced change. The 1996 election was the first to be won by the Partido Popular (PP), after 14 years of Socialist government. The 2004 election meant a new change in power after the terrorist bombings of the 11th of March in Madrid. In 1996 the evaluation of the economic and political situation was almost at its lowest level for that decade. This is clear in Figure 1, which plots results from polls asking about the political and economic situation.

Pre-election polls predicted a large victory of the PP. The actual difference between the PP and the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) was only 1,4 percentage points, however. It can also be seen in the figure that electoral participation was among the highest since 1977, at over 77% of the electorate.⁴ The PP formed government with the support in Parliament of small nationalist and regionalist parties from the Basque Country (PNV), Catalonia (CiU) and the Canary Islands (CC).

In 2000 the situation was very different. In the months prior to the election four citizens out of ten considered the economic situation to be good or very good and only one in ten thought it to be bad or very bad. Also, on this occasion polls did not forecast such an advantage of the PP over the PSOE,⁵ although every one indicated that the PP would renew its mandate with a larger share of votes and seats. Meanwhile, the PSOE was still trying to find a way out the leadership crisis that came after González decided not to stand as Secretary General in the party congress held in 1998.⁶

While 1993 and particularly 1996 had been perceived as highly competitive elections in a situation that for an increasing number of people required alternation and change in government, the election of 2000 belongs to those (as 1979, 1986 or 1989) characterized by producing continuity in a context favourable to the incumbent government. The level of mobilization was among the lowest (less than 70% of the electorate), and the PP obtained more

than 45% of the votes and an absolute majority in Parliament. See the summary of results in Table 1.

Table 1. Election results in 1996 and 2000

	1996			2000		
	% votes	seats	votes	% votes	seats	votes
PP	38.9	156	9,716,006	45.2	183	10,321,176
PSOE	37.5	141	9,425,678	34.7	125	7,918,752
IU	10.6	21	2,639,774	5.5	8	1,263,043
CiU	4.6	16	1,151,633	4.3	15	970,421
PNV	1.3	5	318,951	1.6	7	353,953
BNG	0.9	2	220,147	1.3	3	306,268
CC	0.9	4	220,418	1.1	4	248,261
PA	0.5	0	134,8	0.9	1	206,255
ERC	0.7	1	167,641	0.8	1	194,715
IC-Verds	–	–	–	0.5	1	119,28
EA	0.5	1	115,861	0.4	1	100,742
HB	0.7	2	181,304	–	–	–
Chunta	0.2	0	49,739	0.3	1	75,356
UV	0.4	1	91,575	0.3	–	–
Others	2.3	0	369,404	3.1	1	736,245
Total	100	350		100	350	
Electors			32,531,833			33,969,640
Voters			25,172,058			23,339,490
Non-voters			7,359,775			10,630,150

Source: BOE 4th of April 2000 for 2000; Ministerio del Interior (www.mir.es) for 1996.

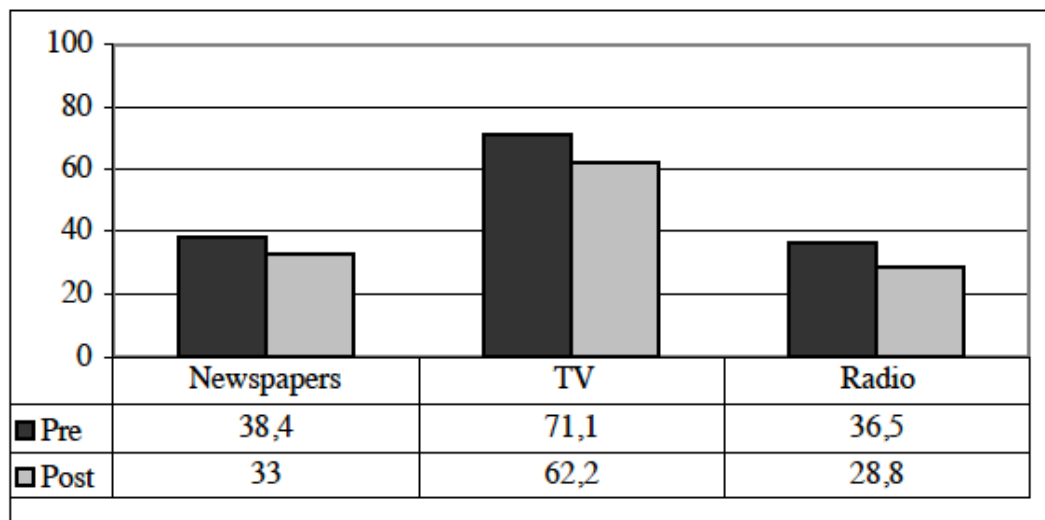
The Campaign

This section presents the different aspects of the campaign, the impact of which on behaviour will be examined later. These aspects concern campaign outputs – the extent to which the campaign reaches the electorate – and campaign outcomes – the extent to which a campaign produces changes in the attitudes (Kavanagh, 1995). Regarding campaign outputs, we shall explore the exposure to campaign messages as well as the respondents' evaluations of the campaign carried out by parties and candidates. Panel data allow us to also observe several changes in attitudes that take place during the campaign as one of its outcomes.

One of the main functions of the campaign is to inform citizens about the different political alternatives, candidates, parties and programmes so that they can formulate their preferences.⁷ This information is obtained directly from party messages in interviews, programs, advertisements, letters etc. But personal conversations about and media coverage of the election (Norris, 2000) are also an important indirect way to get information and form opinions about the election. In this section we analyse the extent to which electors paid attention to the election campaign of 2000 by focusing on three elements: attention to campaign content, attention to media, and frequency of conversations about the election.

The post-election survey includes information regarding attention to specific elements of the campaign: TV advertisements of parties and candidates, electoral programs and printed propaganda, interviews of main candidates,⁸ and pre-election surveys. Most of these elements are, obviously, transmitted to the public by mass media, but not necessarily everyone exposed to newspapers, television or radio news pays attention to these specific elements of the campaign. Almost 60% of electors declared having seen some of the TV slots reserved for party propaganda, while about 35% read or browsed printed material such as letters, programs and brochures, or saw any of the candidate interviews shown on TV during the campaign. Over 50% of the sample declared knowing about pre-election polls. In general, very few of the people who paid attention to these elements acknowledge that any of them had any influence on their decisions.⁹

The surveys also provide information about the general attention to politics and the campaign through the mass media. For this, we have indicators of exposure to newspapers, TV and radio, both in the pre- and the post-election waves. In the first wave respondents were asked how often they follow information about politics in general, while in the second wave respondents were asked how often they have followed information about politics and the election during the campaign. Aggregate numbers are shown in Figure 2.



Source: CIS 2382 and CIS 2384.

Figure 2. Attention to politics and campaign through the mass media (% reading, watching, listening every day or weekly)

Note: “Pre” designates responses in the pre-election wave, where respondents were asked: “How often do you follow information about politics in the newspapers, television and radio?” “Post” designates responses in the post-election wave, where respondents were asked: “During the election campaign, how often have you followed information about politics and the election in the newspapers, television and radio?”

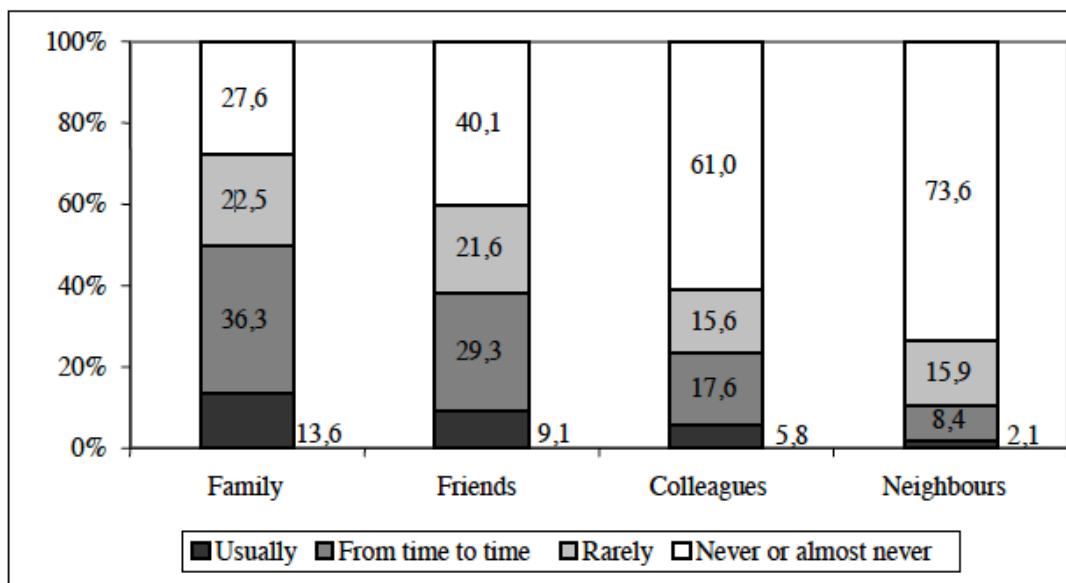
According to the pre-election survey, television is the most widely followed news media, with over 55% people watching it every day to follow politics. Radio comes next, with 25% daily listeners; only 20% of the sample read newspapers daily.¹⁰ In Figure 2 it can be seen that electors pay more attention to media for information about politics in general than during the campaign. The percentages decrease in all cases. Moreover, almost 35% of people attentive to mass media regarding politics in general were not very interested in following the media

during the campaign. Conversely, only 18% of the generally inattentive people paid a great deal of attention to magazines, TV and radio during the campaign.

With this evidence in mind, we cannot say that the campaign increased attention to political information transmitted by the media. On the contrary, we find some kind of saturation, maybe produced by too much coverage of the election campaign, and thus a reduction in the attention paid by electors to the news about politics and the election in the media. This evidence goes some way towards supporting the malaise theory, which can be interpreted, according to Norris et al. (1995: 15) as an “information saturated context”.

This surprising effect deserves further exploration. The generally attentive electors that “tuned off” (12% of the sample) show levels of education and income higher than average. Conversely, generally inattentive electors that “tuned in” during the campaign (6%) are mostly men, early deciders, with high levels of party closeness. Unlike in Britain, in the Spanish case the fatigue affects more those with higher levels of interest in politics.¹¹ Repetitive content seems to be less boring for citizens who do not usually pay much attention to politics, but unbearable for those who usually do.

Conversations about the election are another indicator of exposure to campaign messages. However, only a small portion of the sample talk regularly about the election during the campaign, as Figure 3 shows. The frequency is larger among family and friends than among colleagues and neighbours, which indicates that discussions about politics in Spain still remain very much in the private sphere.



Source: CIS 2384. Respondents were asked: "During the electoral campaign, to what extent have the elections been a subject in your conversations with family, friends, colleagues or neighbours?"

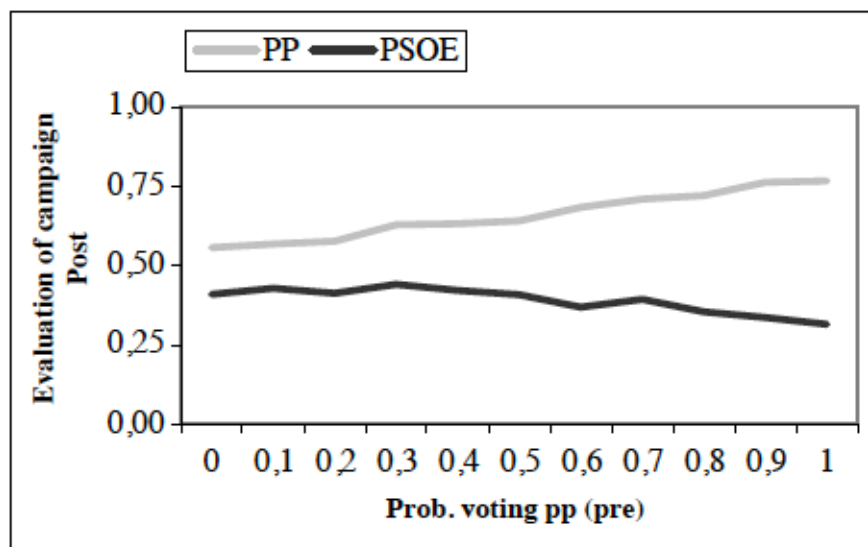
Figure 3. Conversations about the election (% talking)

Since the Columbia studies we know that campaigns are mostly followed by the committed, interested, attached, involved citizens (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson et al., 1954). Undecided, uninterested and uncommitted voters are less attentive. These hypotheses are clearly confirmed by our data.¹² As in the American and British cases, party closeness and particularly interest in politics increase the level of exposure. In general, attention to campaign content, exposure to media and frequency of conversations are influenced by the same factors that affect general attention to politics. If anything, the effect of sociopolitical resources and motivations is weaker regarding attention to campaigns, but this is so not because electors with

low resources increase their levels of attention, but because those with high resources and motivation pay less attention.

Attention and exposure to the campaign, whether intense or weak, does not imply that electors accept the messages they receive or that they are influenced by such messages (Forrest and Marks, 1999; Zaller, 1989). However, some parties may be more effective than others. In fact, not all parties show equally high levels of campaign performance, at least not in the electors' view. The average evaluation of the PP party campaign in a 0–1 scale is 0.65, while for the PSOE this value is only 0.39.¹³ This evaluation depends to some extent, as could be expected, on the political orientation of citizens. However, even those who would never vote PP still considered its campaign better than the one carried out by the PSOE. This is clear from Figure 4, which plots the mean evaluation of the campaign of the PP and the PSOE by the predisposition to vote for the PP.

The campaign may also produce changes in attitudes and perceptions. Particularly relevant are the attitudes that may influence the vote (see Finkel, 1993). As Figure 5 shows, this campaign witnessed an improvement in the evaluation of the political and economic situation, variables that can be expected to favour the vote for the party in government. The increase is slightly larger for the political situation than for the economic situation.¹⁴ The mean ideological position of the sample remained unchanged between the two waves, at 4.9 of the 1–10 scale. However, some individual changes can be observed, which could be due to campaign effects. About 12% of the sample moves two points or more on the scale towards the right and about the same percentage moves towards the left, while around 75% of the sample remains in the same position (or changes by just one point) between both waves.



Source: CIS 2382 and CIS 2384. The probability of voting PP is observed in the pre-electoral survey using responses to the question: "As you know in Spain there are different parties and coalitions. I would like you to tell me how likely you are to vote for each of the parties that I shall mention, using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you would never vote for this party and 10 means you would certainly vote for this party always." The evaluations of the campaigns are from the post-electoral survey, where respondents were asked to evaluate the campaign of each party and candidate in a 5 point scale from 0 (very bad) to 1 (very good).

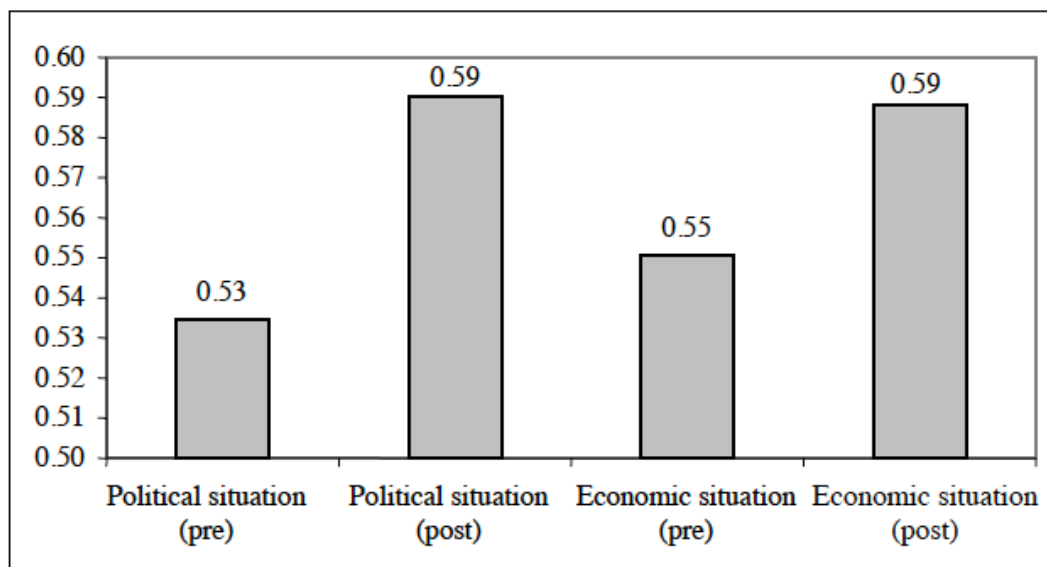
Figure 4. The evaluation of the campaigns of PP and PSOE (means) by the probability of voting PP

Thus this was a campaign where it seems that people lost interest, where the party in government did much better than the main party in opposition, and where the evaluation of the economic and political situation improved. We must now turn to the fundamental question of whether these variables related to the campaign have any effect on voting behaviour, first on the likelihood of voting, and then on the likelihood of changing the direction of the vote.

A demobilizing campaign?

Election campaigns are intended to get out the vote. However, this may not always be the case. Previous research has found that watching negative television advertising reduces voter participation (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Kahn, Fridkin and Kenney, 1999; but see Waternberg and Briens, 1999). Others have argued that campaigns and media exposure foster mobilization (Newton, 1997; Miller, 1991). Yet others (Norris et al., 1995: 109; Finkel and Geer, 1998; Lau et al., 1999) do not confirm either of the two theses.

There are different ways to approach the analysis of the (de)mobilizing effect of a campaign. By comparing voting intention before the election and actual vote recall we may divide the sample in four groups: voters (intended to vote and did so), non-voters (did not intend to vote and did not), mobilized electors (did not intend to vote but did) and demobilized electors (intended to vote but did not).



Source: CIS 2382 and CIS 2384. Mean values calculated from a 5-point scale from 0 (very bad) to 1 (very good).

Figure 5. Evaluation of the political and economic situation (means)

Most electors are voters both in intention and in behaviour (83%), but the second largest group is that of the demobilized citizens, that is, electors who intended to vote before the election but finally did not cast a vote (17%). The amount of mobilized voters is very small (3%) and the percentage of convinced non-voters is only slightly higher (7%).¹⁵ Thus, participation was lower than the pre-election survey predicted, and a fair amount of the sample did not vote although they intended to do so. Because intention to vote is usually higher than actual vote recall we cannot say that the demobilization took place because of the campaign with this analysis. We therefore choose to estimate a multivariate analysis of voting by including the campaign-related variables in the model. Two dependent variables are used, one

of which is voter participation and the other of which captures demobilization, taking the value “1” for those individuals who intended to vote before the election but ultimately did not turn out. Table 2 shows the results.

The results of the vote analysis are shown in the first column of Table 2. Here it can be seen that participation in the 2000 election was influenced by age, interest in politics, and party closeness in the expected direction. That is, older citizens who are closer to a given party and more interested in politics are more likely to vote. As can be seen in the second column of Table 2, they are also less likely to be demobilized. A positive evaluation of the political situation also increased the probability of voting and decreased the likelihood of being demobilized.

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of participation and demobilization (logistic regression)

	Participation		Demobilization	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
<i>Controls</i>				
Age (EDAD1)	2.12	.000	-1.98	.000
Interest in politics (PRE1RE)	0.99	.000	-1.03	.002
Party closeness (CERCPPRE)	1.08	.000	-0.74	.006
Left-right self placement (P38RE)	0.51	.155	0.18	.683
Evaluation of the political situation (PREEVPO1)	1.68	.001	-0.89	.187
Evaluation of the economic situation (PREVECO1)	-0.41	.438	-0.57	.390
<i>Campaign variables</i>				
Attention to content (SCON)	0.16	.478	-0.25	.404
Attention to media (SEG)	0.28	.272	-0.45	.171
Talks about election (CONV)	1.51	.000	-1.43	.001
Evaluation of PP campaign (CAMPP1)	1.25	.000	-0.83	.037
Evaluation of PSOE campaign (CAMPS1)	0.51	.064	-0.11	.744
Contacted by a party (CANVASS)	0.33	.035	-0.39	.054
Changes in evaluation of the pol. situation (DIFPOL)	0.89	.054	-0.58	.334
Changes in evaluation of the ec. situation (DIFEC)	-0.61	.183	-0.37	.518
Constant	-1.83	.000	0.91	.020
Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.18		0.14	
N	2844		2295	

Source: CIS 2382 and CIS 2384. For the variables measuring change between the two waves, higher values indicate an improvement in the evaluation or a shift to the right (see the Appendix).

Regarding the campaign-related variables, friends and family seem to have a greater effect on participation than do mass media, parties or candidates. Attention to the media and the campaign content seem to favour participation and reduce demobilization, but their effects are not statistically significant. Only conversations about the campaign have a reliable effect on the chances of voting. Moreover, conversations are an important factor in the reduction of

demobilization. The evaluation of the campaign carried out by the PP seems to have a positive effect on participation, as do the positive changes in the evaluation of the political situation and the fact of being contacted by a party during the campaign.

Thus, although this election had a low level of turnout and a substantial amount of people did not vote although they intended to, we cannot say that the campaign as such had a demobilizing effect at the individual level. On the contrary, campaign related variables reduced the chances of being demobilized. So we find no evidence in support of the “malaise” theory. Nonetheless we cannot say that the exposure to the campaign had a strong mobilizing effect, since exposure to content and media had non-significant effects. If electors chose to participate less in 2000 than in other elections it was probably because they found the result predictable in advance,¹⁶ and not because the campaign had a demobilizing effect. It nevertheless was a demobilizing election, as turnout declined.

The campaign effects on voting choice

Undoubtedly, the most interesting and discussed effect of campaigns (because it is the campaign’s objective) concerns the voter’s choice among parties and/or candidates. Campaigns not only provide information and try to mobilize voters; they also try to persuade. The question is whether campaigns change existing political preferences; that is, whether voters change their voting choice due to the campaign.

The literature on campaigns has distinguished basically three types of effects that they may have on the vote: reinforcement, activation and conversion (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). In the reinforcement effect, the campaign does not alter voting intention; if anything, it reaffirms the elector in their initial voting dispositions. Under the activation effect the campaign convinces undecided and potential non-voters to vote for a political party in line with their pre-existing preferences. Finally, under the conversion effect, the campaign convinces voters to vote for a political party different than the one their pre-existing preferences would have led them to choose, and which they had no initial intention of voting for. Since the pioneering study *The People’s Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944), most research has followed the minimum effects theory: campaigns mainly reinforce previous preferences, to some extent activate undecided voters according to their dispositions, and only rarely change the elector’s predisposition.

Some authors have criticized the minimum effects model, arguing that it does not consider the impressive development of media as sources of information, and particularly the important influence of television (Noelle-Neuman, 1973; Atkin, 1980). Mass media focus public attention on certain issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), and influence the attributes given by the public to such issues (McCombs and Evatt, 1995). This increase in the importance of media comes together with the weakening of long-term political attitudes that anchor the vote in a process of party dealignment (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg, 2001: 48; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002: 263). If electors are less attached to parties, and they decide their vote later in the campaign, there is reason to presume that the potential effect of campaigns and campaign related factors like media, issues and candidates would increase (Salmore and Salmore, 1989).

However, in spite of the frequently heard idea that media have a determining influence on attitudes and behaviour, and in spite of the development of what Finkel

calls a “campaign industry” (1993: 2) the minimum effects theory is still at work in some important research work. Finkel (1993), Gelman and King (1993) and Fernández (2001) find that besides a reinforcement effect, electoral campaigns mainly activate latent pre-existing political predispositions. Conversion effects are small and irrelevant for the result.

Elsewhere, I have tried to disentangle these three effects in the same way as previous work.¹⁷ However under the label of conversion or activation we may find very different

movements across intentions, predispositions and final vote recall. If different effects are merged together, the interpretation of the results may be confused. Thus in this section we limit the analysis to the impact of the campaign over the chances of voting for the party in government.

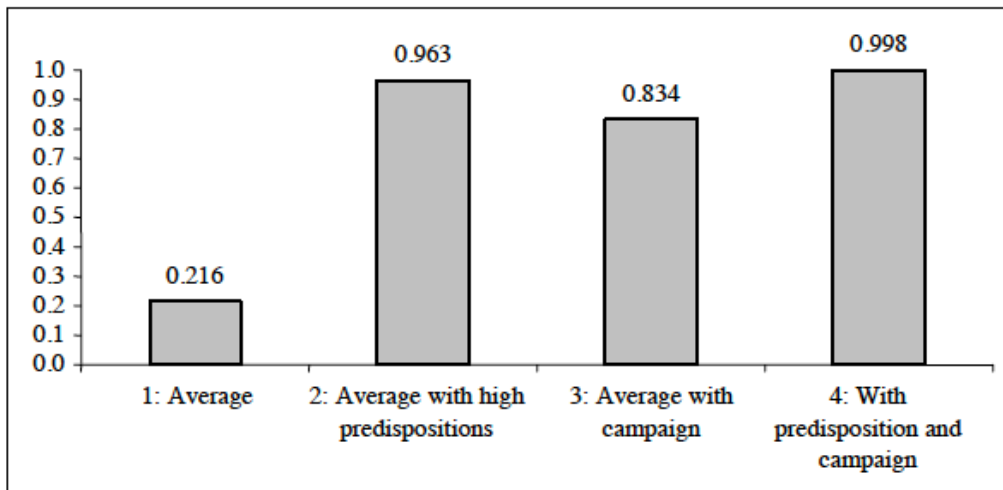
Table 3. The campaign effect on the vote for the party in government (logistic regression)

	Baseline		Full Model	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Predispositions:				
Ideological self-placement (P38RE)	2.45	.000	5.74	.000
Probability of voting PP (PROBPP1)	4.20	.000	3.49	.000
Evaluation of the political situation (PREEVPO1)	1.10	.003	3.47	.000
Evaluation of the economy (PREVECO1)	0.92	.009	0.67	.247
Campaign:				
Change in ideological self-placement (RIDENT1)	–		4.84	.000
Change in evaluation of the political situation (DIFPOL)	–		3.27	.000
Change in evaluation of the economy (DIFEC)	–		0.82	.096
Content exposure (SCON)	–		0.09	.694
Media exposure (SEG)	–		0.26	.276
Conversations about the election (CONV)	–		0.60	.044
PP party canvassing (CANVASS)	–		0.45	.004
Evaluation Aznar campaign (CAMAZ1)	–		1.90	.001
Evaluation PP campaign (CAMPP1)	–		1.00	.051
Evaluation PSOE campaign (CAMPS1)	–		–1.42	.000
Constant	–4.20		–9.52	
Total correct predictions	83.4		86.6	
Correct voting predictions	80.2		83.9	
Model Chi squared (df)	1558	(4)	2005	(14)
Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.59		0.70	
N	2731		2731	

Source: CIS 2382 and CIS 2384. The dependent variable is voting for PP versus other choices. For the variables measuring change between the two waves, higher values indicate an improvement in the evaluation or a shift to the right (see Appendix).

According to previous work on the effect of campaigns,¹⁸ sociodemographic characteristics and political attitudes form the basis of electors' predispositions for voting. If the campaign is not important for individual behaviour, then the individual vote will be explained mainly by individual predisposition prior to the campaign. On the other hand, if the campaign has a relevant effect, the coefficients of the campaign-related variables will be significant, and they will add to the overall explanatory power of the model.

Table 3 shows the estimation of two models. In the first, the baseline model, we include variables that are expected to shape the individual’s electoral predisposition, observed about a month before the election in the first wave of the panel.¹⁹ The preelectoral study does not include a question on the voter’s closeness to parties, but it does ask about the probability of voting for each one of the different parties and coalitions. Left–right self-placement and the evaluation of the political and economic situation are also included. We expect positive evaluations of the economic and political situation to favour the party in government. All the variables included in the baseline model have a significant effect as expected. The variables related to predispositions prior to the campaign offer a fairly good explanatory model for how people voted, and the resulting model correctly predicts 83% of the cases.²⁰



Source: Own elaboration from CIS 2382 and CIS 2384 (see Appendix).

Figure 6. Expected probabilities of voting for the PP.

The full model introduces the election campaign related variables. Following Finkel (1993) and Fernández (2001), we analyse the campaign’s indirect impact on how people vote by observing the shifts (between the first and second waves of the panel) in ideological self-placement and in the evaluation of the political and economic situation of those interviewed in the course of the campaign. These shifts, analysed above, act as intervening variables between the election campaign and how people vote. Shifts to the right of the ideological scale during the campaign had a significant increase in the probability of voting for PP.²¹ Improvements in the evaluation of the political situation increased the likelihood of voting for the PP, while changes in the evaluation of the economic situation have a weaker effect.

In contrast with previous research, we are able to also introduce other variables related to the election campaign: exposure to content, media and conversations, exposure to party canvass, as well as the evaluation of the campaign carried out by different parties and candidates. Their effects are evident in the second column of Table 3. Reinforcing the minimal effects thesis, exposure to campaign content and media coverage of the election did not seem to have a significant effect over the vote. Only conversations about the election had an effect, though just on the edge of statistical significance: the more people talked about the election with friends, neighbours, colleagues or folks, the more likely they were to vote for the PP.

Party canvassing by post, telephone or in person by the PP has the expected effect on the vote for this party. A positive evaluation of the party campaign, the PP and of J.M. Aznar also increased the likelihood of voting for the PP. Notably the effect of the evaluation of the leader’s campaign is larger than the effect of the party campaign, though both variables

correlate highly. If the campaign affects the vote, the campaign of the opposition parties should matter too. As expected, a positive evaluation of the campaign of the PSOE decreases the chances of voting PP.

The full model including both variables defining predispositions and factors related to the campaign improves the correct predictions by 3 points. This is a modest improvement, adding to the support of the minimal effects thesis.²² However, looking at the expected probabilities predicted by the model we may reach different conclusions. Figure 6 shows the probability of voting for the party in government for four different profiles of electors.

The first profile is a person with mean values in all variables considered in the full model.²³ This means that they locate themselves in the centre of the left–right dimension (precisely at 0.437 in a 0–1 scale), they have a subjective probability of voting for the PP prior to the campaign of 0.461, and their evaluation of the political situation is 0.535 on a 0–1 scale. They also have mean values in all variables regarding the electoral campaign: their ideological position hardly moved during the campaign, though they became slightly more positive about the political situation. They were not personally contacted by the PP during the campaign, and the level of their conversations about the campaign was 0.296 in a 0–1 scale. They rate the campaign of Aznar and the PSOE on a 0–1 scale at 0.646 and 0.389 respectively. The probability that this person with these reference characteristics would vote for the PP (instead of voting for any other party or abstaining) is 0.22.

The second profile is a person that, unlike the previous one, has a predisposition to vote for the PP. This means that they locate themselves more to the right in the left–right scale (one standard deviation over the mean), they are more favourable to vote for the PP in the pre-election wave, and they are also more optimistic about the political situation. They keep, however, all mean and modal values regarding campaign related variables. In this case, the probability of voting for the PP increases to 0.96. Following what we know from previous research, predisposition is a fundamental determinant of the final vote.

The crucial question here is how important are campaign-related variables. For this, the third profile defines a person who has mean values regarding predispositions, but who is above average regarding campaign-related variables: they moved towards the right during the campaign, became more positive about the political situation, were contacted by the PP, talked more than average about the campaign, and evaluated the campaign of Aznar also one standard deviation above the mean. In this case the probability of voting for the party in government was 0.83. The effect of campaign related variables is thus not as strong as the one caused by predispositions, but is far from modest and can hardly be called minimal. Obviously the larger expected probability for voting PP is found among those that have high values both in their predispositions to vote for the PP and in the campaign related variables (0.99 in the fourth profile).

Conclusions

The Spanish election of 2000 is an interesting case for the analysis of the effect that campaigns have on voting behaviour. On the one hand, the turnout level was well below average. Spaniards are known to be very sensitive to the political context of elections when deciding whether to vote or abstain. Thus, this election is a good occasion to test whether the campaign – as part of this context – had a negative effect on participation.

The analysis has shown that, in spite of the low turnout level, the electoral campaign of the 2000 election did not demobilize voters. Some fatigue may be observed in the decreasing level of interest in politics during the campaign. However, electors who followed the campaign were not less likely to vote. They also were not any more likely to be demobilized. In this

respect our results do not support theories that suggest that exposure to media can reduce electoral participation. The low turnout level of this election was probably due to other political circumstances – mainly the low level of competitiveness of the election and the high levels of satisfaction with the political and economic situation, as previous research has shown – but not to the campaign itself.

On the other hand, the 2000 election was a deviating one in terms of the resulting distribution of votes: the level of support of the PP, then in government, was the highest since 1977. In spite of the stable electoral preferences of Spanish voters, the campaign could have increased support for this party. Results support the hypothesis that exposure to the campaign had a relevant effect regarding the probability of voting for the party in government. Of course, predispositions prior to the campaign such as the ideological location in the left–right scale, the declared probability of voting for the PP, and the evaluation of the political situation were also important. Although media and content exposure did not show a significant effect, other campaign-related variables increased the probability of voting for the PP significantly. Particularly relevant were the frequency of conversations about the election, the evaluation of the campaign of the party in government and its candidate, and the changes in the attitudes that take place during the campaign. Considering the hard conditions that our model imposes for campaign effects to appear, we may conclude that even if prior predispositions matter more, campaigns do matter.

Notes

1. While the effect of campaigns can be observed too on individual attitudes (Miller, 1991; Norris, 1999, 2000; Lang, 1966; Robinson, 1976; Miller et al., 1979; Cappella and Jamieson, 1996), or on aggregate results (see for instance Campbell, 2001; Wlezien and Erikson, 2002; Fisher, 1999), this will not be the focus of this article.
2. This article is based on the analysis of a panel survey carried out on the occasion of this general election held on the 12th of March 2000. The first wave included over 24,000 interviews and was held between the 11th and the 28th of February (Estudio 2382 Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas CIS). The second wave included over 5,200 interviews, and fieldwork was carried out between 18th of March and 18th of April (Estudio 2384 CIS). Legally, the election campaign takes place in the two weeks previous to the election, although of course there is a long pre-campaign period, the effect of which cannot be observed with the panel available.
3. The CIS regularly asks in its Barometer questions regarding the evaluation of the economic and political situation of Spain. Figure 1 is based on the following questions: “Talking about the general political/economic situation in Spain now, would you say it is very good, good, regular, bad or very bad”. Sample sizes vary but usually are around 2,500 cases.
4. In 1996 differences between PP and PSOE were estimated around 11 percentage points according to El Mundo, 7 points according to CIS and El País. The fear of a landslide victory of a rightwing party mobilized some voters that were certainly not very keen on voting Socialist, and would probably had otherwise abstained (see Wert, 1996).
5. In 2000 direct voting intention showed a large distance of PP ahead PSOE (30% vs 19% respectively according to the pre-election wave, CIS) but numbers were corrected to avoid the same “error” as in 1996, and estimated differences between both parties were at largest 4%. All forecasts published by newspapers were very similar, showing 41–42% for PP and 37–38% for PSOE.
6. Joaquín Almunia replaced González as Secretary General, and called for closed primary

elections to choose a candidate for Prime Minister as a way to increase his legitimacy. He lost the race to Josep Borrell, and the PSOE had for the first time a candidate for Prime Minister that was not Secretary General of the party. Borrell, who had the support of the rank and file but not the party organization, resigned a month before the European Parliament election of 1999, where the PSOE lost but with a fairly small difference with the PP. The Federal Committee then chose Almunia as candidate for the 2000 elections, who resigned after the defeat. A new congress chose José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as the new Secretary General a few months later. Under his leadership, the party won the general election of 2004.

7. We shall not discuss here to what extent they are successful, but some previous research has found that campaigns increase knowledge and information about candidates and issues (Gelman and King, 1993; Miller, 1991; Norris, 1999, 2000). In our data, people who had paid high levels of attention to the campaign were about twice as likely to know the name of the head of the list for their voted party in their constituency, which on average was only about 15%.
8. The PP refused to participate in any debates with other candidates during the campaign, as it also did in 2004.
9. Over 75% of those who saw any of the three TV interviews with Aznar (PP), Almunia (PSOE) or Frutos (IU) said they had little or no influence in making up their mind about the candidate. Almost 95% of those that had come to know about any of the pre-election surveys said the surveys influenced their vote little or not at all. All the percentages about attention to campaign content are from the post-electoral wave of the panel survey (see note 2 above).
10. These figures are higher than the ones showed by Norris (1999) regarding TV, but lower concerning the press, though they are not entirely comparable. Data from the British Election Campaign panel study show that 32% of the sample were regular viewers of TV news, and 31% regular newspaper readers, where “regular” means having read a newspaper the day before the interview.
11. Mean decrease in attention to media between the two waves goes from -0.14 among those with no interest at all in politics, to -0.61 among those very interested.
12. Men tend to have higher levels of attention to the campaign than women. Age shows the characteristic curvilinear relationship, with young electors being less attentive and people between 55 and 64 years or more being most attentive of all. Education, income and subjective social class are also positively related with the level of attention to the campaign (bivariate analysis not shown).
13. This quantitative evidence is also confirmed by a qualitative analysis. The campaign of the PP was considered “active, positive, constructive, based on facts, serious”, while the campaign of the PSOE was considered “passive, negative, too much centred on ideology, demagogic, nervous” (see Anduiza and Oñate, 2003). The evaluation of the campaign carried out by the candidates correlates very highly with the evaluation of the candidate’s party campaign.
14. In this change we can see the effect of the campaign, but also the effect of the electoral result. Looking at changes in attitudes between the two waves is a problematic approach to estimate the campaign effect. It has been argued that only a three-wave panel would show how changes in X between t1 and t2 affect changes in Y between t2 and t3 (Bartle and Griffiths, 2001: 149). Holbrook (1996: 33) argues that even this is a limited approach to the study of campaign effects.
15. The four groups are different in many aspects. Non-voters and demobilized electors are younger than voters and mobilized electors, have paid less attention to the campaign and have talked little about the election during the campaign. Non-voters show the

- highest levels of education, and an ideological self-placement more to the left than the other groups. Unexpectedly, demobilized electors pay higher attention to politics in the media and talk more about politics in general than non-voters or mobilized electors.
16. This follows Franklin's (2004) argument about the importance of competitiveness for turnout.
 17. See Anduiza and Oñate, 2003. In the 2000 election we found more conversion and less activation effects, while the reinforcement effect remained stable.
 18. Lazarsfeld (1944), Finkel (1993), Gelman and King (1993) and Fernández (2001).
 19. Sociodemographic variables like age, gender, education, income did not show any significant effect and thus were excluded from the final estimation.
 20. The reference for improvement of prediction is 59%. Including the four indicators of predispositions thus increases the percentage by 25 percentage points. This important increase is certainly explained by the fact that there is a close relation between voting probabilities and how people vote, so it is no surprise that the baseline model has a good fit. This leaves little space to the full model to improve prediction.
 21. However, it could be that part of this effect is a result of the voter's own ideological replacement because of the change in voting choice in order to avoid dissonances between the two. This problem of endogeneity is present also in the methodology used by Finkel (1993) and Fernández (2001).
 22. However, this campaign effect is probably underestimated because the structure of the panel leaves out the whole pre-campaign period, and we cannot estimate the effect of relevant variables like the exact media (which newspaper, which TV channel, which radio) the respondent is exposed to (see also note 20 above).
 23. The Appendix includes a table with the means, standard deviations and coefficients necessary to calculate these probabilities.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Variable coding

Description	Variable name	Format	Labels
Woman (pre)	Mujer	Dummy	0: man; 1: woman;
Age (pre)	Edad2	Interval	0: 18 years old 1: 95 years old (maximum)
Education (pre)	Educ1	Ordinal	0: none; 0.25: primary; 0.5: secondary; 0.75: vocational; 1: university;
Income (post)	Ingres61	Ordinal	0: 600€ or less; 0.2: 601–900€ ; 0.4: 901–1.200€ ; 0.6: 1.201–1.800€ ; 0.8: 1.801–2.400€ ; 1: 2.401€ or more;
Interest in politics (pre)	Pre1re	Ordinal	0: not at all; 0.33: somewhat; 0.66: fairly; 1: very;
Party closeness (post)	Cercppre	Ordinal	0: not close; 0.33: somewhat close; 0.66: fairly close; 1: very close;
Satisfaction with democracy (post)	R5re	Ordinal	0: not at all satisfied; 0.33: somewhat satisfied; 0.66: fairly satisfied; 1: very satisfied;
Left–right self placement (pre)	P38re	Ordinal	0: extreme left; 1: extreme right;
Changes in left–right self placement (pre/post)	Rident1	Ordinal	–1: maximum change towards left 0: stability +1: maximum change towards right
Evaluation of the economic situation (pre)	Preveco1	Ordinal	0: very bad; 1: very good;
Changes in the evaluation of the economic situation (pre/post)	Difec	Ordinal	–1: maximum change towards worse 0: stability +1: maximum change towards better
Evaluation of the political situation (pre)	Preevpol	Ordinal	0: very bad; 1: very good;
Changes in the evaluation of the political situation (pre/post)	Difpol	Ordinal	–1: maximum change towards worse 0: stability +1: maximum change towards better
Probability of voting PP (pre)	Probpp1	Ordinal	0: would never vote PP 1: would certainly vote PP
Probability of voting PSOE (pre)	Porbps1	Ordinal	0: would never vote PSOE 1: would certainly vote PSOE

Appendix 1: Continued

Description	Variable name	Format	Labels
Decided vote before campaign (post)	Decid	Dummy	0: did not decided before, 1: decided before;
Evaluation of PP campaign	Campp1	Ordinal	0: very bad; 1:very good
Evaluation of PSOE campaign	Camps1	Ordinal	0: very bad; 1:very good
Evaluation of Aznar campaign	Campaz1	Ordinal	0: very bad; 1:very good
Contacted by a party during the campaign	Canvass	Dummy	0: not contacted; 1: contacted
Attention to content of campaign (interview, surveys, programmes) (post)	Scon	Index	0: minimum; 1: maximum;
Attention to media during campaign (TV, radio, press) (post)	Seg	Index	0: minimum; 1: maximum;
Conversations about politics during campaign (post)	Conv	Index	0: minimum; 1: maximum

Appendix 2: Coefficients for the calculation of the expected probabilities in Figure 6

	B (*)	Mean	Desv. típ.	Media + st.dv.	Mínimo	Máximo	N
Ideological self-placement (P38RE)	5.82	0.437	0.21	0.648	0	1	4210
Probability of voting PP (PROBPP1)	3.44	0.461	0.37	0.832	0	1	4627
Evaluation of the political situation (PREEVPO1)	3.99	0.535	0.21	0.741	0	1	4899
Change in ideological self placement (RIDENT1)	4.94	-0.001	0.19	0.189	-0.88	1	3684
Change in evaluation of the political situation (DIFPOL)	3.71	0.056	0.20	0.253	-0.75	1	4744
Conversations about the election (CONV)	0.81	0.296	0.25	0.541	0	1	5246
PP party canvassing (CANVASS) (dummy)	0.46	0.167	0.37	–	0	1	5283
Evaluation Aznar campaign (CAMAZ1)	2.67	0.646	0.22	0.862	0	1	3918
Evaluation PSOE campaign (CAMPS1)	-1.41	0.389	0.23	0.161	0	1	3885
Constant	-9.17						

(*) This B coefficient is calculated from the full model specified in Table 3 but removing all non-significant variables.

Calculus of expected probabilities

The expected probabilities reported in Figure 6 are calculated from the following formula that transforms logits into expected probabilities between 0 and 1:

$$P_i = 1/(1+\exp(-\sum B_k x_k))$$

P_i for Group 1: All variables (x_k) are set to their mean values. *Canvass*, a dummy variable, takes the modal value 0.

P_i for Group 2: Predispositions are one standard deviation above the mean values, while campaign variables are set to the mean or modal value.

P_i for Group 3: Predispositions are set to their mean values and campaign variables are one standard deviation above the mean. *Canvass* changes value from 0 to 1.

P_i for Group 4: Predispositions and campaign characteristics are one standard deviation above the mean. *Canvass* takes value 1.

Note: The evaluation of PSOE campaign is set to the mean in all groups.