

**Social policies, political attitudes and ageing:
Results from a survey on Greater Lisbon****Políticas sociais, atitudes políticas e envelhecimento:
Resultados de uma pesquisa na Grande Lisboa**

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers an important aspect for the assessment of public policies in Portugal, namely the opinions of laypersons or population in general, and particularly the ones regarding social policies. Such opinions, even though different from the ones of experts, must be dully taken into consideration in any assessment of the effectiveness of public policies. The study is based on a survey performed in December 2016, regarding a sample of 600 individuals living in the Greater Lisbon, stratified by gender, education and age. Its main focus is the analysis of shifting attitudes according to age. The questions refer namely to: identification with political parties; vote in recent elections; reasons for vote and/or abstention; interest for politics; features perceived in Portuguese political agents; trust in political agents; satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Portugal; citizens' perceived influence in political events; relevant aspects in partisan choice; self-perception in terms of left-right dimension; preference for economic market regulation, state regulation and/or regulation by the 'third sector'; evaluation of social policies; biases within these perceptions and preferences associated with gender, levels of income, and age.

Keywords: Social policies; economic regulation; political attitudes; ageing.

RESUMO

Considera-se neste artigo um aspeto importante para a avaliação das políticas públicas em Portugal, nomeadamente as opiniões dos leigos ou população em geral, em particular as opiniões relativas às políticas sociais. Essas opiniões, mesmo que divergentes das dos peritos, devem ser devidamente sopesadas em qualquer avaliação da eficiência das políticas públicas. O estudo baseia-se num inquérito realizado em Dezembro de 2016, relativo a uma amostra de 600 pessoas residentes na Grande Lisboa, estratificada por género, níveis de educação e idade. O principal foco está na análise das variações de atitude reportáveis à idade. As questões referem-se designadamente a: identificação com partidos políticos, voto em eleições recentes; razões para o voto e/ou a abstenção; interesse pela política; características percebidas dos agentes políticos portugueses; confiança nos políticos; satisfação com o funcionamento da democracia em Portugal; percepção de influência dos cidadãos na

vida política; aspetos relevantes das escolhas partidárias; autoimagem quanto à dimensão esquerda-direita; preferência pela regulação económica pelo estado, mercado ou ‘terceiro sector’; avaliação das políticas sociais; vieses nestas perceções e preferências associados a género, níveis de rendimento e idade.

Palavras-chave: Políticas sociais; regulação económica; atitudes políticas; envelhecimento.

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of assessing public policies undoubtedly configures a consistently rising academic trend, and there are strong reasons to believe that this ascending trajectory is going to persist. Three motives for that may be very rapidly mentioned: 1) those policies are permanently disputed, with many groups frequently arguing for their needlessness, or even counter-productive character, partly out of a global (and often ideologically biased) tendency to assume what Albert Hirschmann (1991) called the “perversity”, “jeopardy” and/or “futility” thesis on the subject of economic public intervention; 2) the need for governments to intervene in the economy is, however, extremely resilient, no doubt assuming a multitude of forms and occurring in very different degrees, but seemingly consistently higher in democratic countries, where the responsiveness of political agents regarding the populations (or of the elected bodies vis-à-vis the electors) is more directly and more immediately perceivable; 3) the global level of reflexivity within societies constitutes also an ascending trend, and thus both the decisions to intervene and the decisions to avoid intervention, or indeed to *laissez-faire*, permanently need to be more or less coherently argued, producing ‘systems of justification’ endowed with a component of universally valid logical arguments... to which, precisely, the disciplinary field of the assessment of public policies must be directly referred.

2 EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES IN PORTUGAL: A BRIEF SURVEY

Attempts to systematically assess the results of public policies are, indeed, not exactly a novelty, at least not an immediate novelty; not even in the Portuguese intellectual landscape, very often experiencing a considerable time lag regarding the ones of the more rich countries that constitute its usual role model. As early as 1992, for example, Juan Mozzicafredo wondered about the deep institutional nature of the Portuguese welfare system and its outcomes. In his opinion, the development of the Welfare State in Portugal had been mostly officially structured in close vicinity with the so-called ‘universalist’ model. However, in terms of the measures that had been implemented, the evolution had pointed more and more to a merely ‘instrumental’ and ‘selective’ type. In other words, the design process was apparently mostly based on the production of social policies and mechanisms oriented to the regulation of the economic and political sphere of social dialogue, and perceived predominantly as operating in response to immediate requests of populations. This process, Mozzicafredo (1992, p. 60) argued, had proved to be rather discontinuous and

fragmented, as a result both of the different pressures and asymmetries of power by social groups, and of the trends of public resources. On the other hand, the structuring process of the Welfare State seemed to be simultaneously a result of political and social mobilization, and a merely reactive response of the political system to the management needs of socioeconomic development.

A few years later, Manuel Villaverde Cabral (1995), in an article whose scope and purpose was probably not essentially different from ours, commented on the public perceptions of welfare policies in Portugal. Regarding this, and as it was (according to M. V. Cabral) otherwise predictable, the overwhelming majority of the population deemed it to be insufficient (44%) or bad (37%), with only 1/6 considering it good or sufficient. Although the differences of opinions according to gender were negligible, there were noticeable discrepancies among different age groups: the youngest layer (18-24 years) and the older one (65 or more) made a slightly more favorable assessment of the system (probably out of very different reasons), while the middle layers produced more critical assessments, negative opinions reaching 86 per cent in the 45-54 group (*idem*, p. 10). Regarding social stratification, the layers of higher status, greater economic power and higher levels of education made an overall assessment of the performance of social security that was systematically more negative than the global average. Part of the explanation for that, reasoned M. V. Cabral, likely resulted from greater inclination of these strata to be more inquisitive and critical, an aspect associated with different information and participation levels, in turn closely related to the various levels of instruction. As for the distribution of opinions according to partisan sympathies, the evaluation of the performance of social security tended to get more negative when moving from the right to the left, with a maximum of positive ratings (24 per cent against 18 on the national level) by the supporters of PSD: an aspect that Villaverde Cabral deemed also unsurprising. Respondents who refused to declare any partisan sympathy (16 per cent of the population), as well as those who declared to have no sympathy for any party (24 per cent), were very close to the general average (*idem*, p. 11).

Chronologically much closer to us, more than one decade later Pedro Magalhães expressed the opinion that there were by then clearly more Portuguese people who assessed the functioning of the democratic regime in a negative way than those producing a positive evaluation. According to Magalhães (2009, p. 38), 51 per cent of the Portuguese were 'little' or 'nothing' satisfied with the aforementioned functioning, whereas the clearly positive opinions were close to a mere 11 per cent. The areas where the symptoms occurred of a 'relative deprivation' of the Portuguese regarding democracy (in the sense of those detecting a discrepancy between expectations and reality) seemed to be larger and growing. And more general feelings were getting also perceivable, regarding the performance of the system concerning the dimensions of the sociopolitical and institutional contexts where elections occurred: namely, wrote Magalhães, the irresistible motivations of the elected

politicians to meet voters requests instead of other requisites and priorities; the scarce availability of the information needed in order to make good choices and empowering governments; and the basic conditions of citizenship, both under the criterion of strict legal aspects and referring to broader social standards (idem, p. 40).

Only partially in the same spirit, one year later João Ferrão and João Mourato insisted on the exiguity of the Portuguese tradition of systematic public policy assessment. “The evaluation of public policies in Portugal has only about two decades of existence” (2010, p. 9), and it had been initially impelled by program access requirements related with international funding, indeed mostly originating in the European Union. The drive for an emphasis in assessment had emerged, and so far developed, under a strong conditioning represented by “external factors that are coercive in nature: the regulations of access to financing (the power of money) and legal directives (the power of the law)” (idem, p. 9). The 1990s, Ferrão and Mourato continued to argue, represented the period of constitution of the assessment of public policies qua a recognized professional and scientific domain in Portugal, such a situation having justified the publication of the first texts that sought to synthesize and transpose to the Portuguese reality a group of discussions and experiences previously developed in other countries, both in terms of methodologies, and regarding applications to specific fields of intervention: first in the area of employment and education, and then in various other areas, such as urban renewal, social intervention and regional policy, among others. “Very meaningful, within this context, was the fact that the title of the 1996 edition of the journal ‘Sociologia: Problemas and Práticas’ dedicated to the theme of evaluation has been ‘methodologies of evaluation’” (idem, p. 11). Two years after, Maria de Lurdes Rodrigues and Pedro Adão e Silva (2012) found many motives to complain mostly about the erratic character of Portuguese public policies. Various authors, they insisted, had asserted that one of the peculiarities of public policies in Portugal was an alleged “excessive reformism”, with the correspondent tendency to make *tabula rasa* of preceding legacies, and therefore also an incapacity to learn from the paths previously traveled. Portugal, the authors lamented, was indeed one of the European countries that most frequently changed its policies, with shifts in party politics, or regarding the government, often implying deep changes also in public policies. This pattern of ‘excessive reformism’ was fully expressed in a weak stabilization of options, little cooperation between agents, low impact of policies, feeble monitoring, and also a serious waste in the middle and long-term investments. “The result are erratic policies, poorly negotiated, merely with short-term horizons and tending to not benefit from the complementarities between different sectorial domains – regardless of their ideological brand” (2012, p. 18-19). Portugal thus seemed to have a difficulty with the “institutional micro-foundations” of its public policies, which was more than just a problem with the content of the various reforms that successive governments have sought

to carry out: “The Portuguese syndrome is seemingly the result of weaknesses in the formal qualities or attributes of their public policies. Instead of any ruptures, even well intended ones, Portuguese public policies mostly require stability and investment in continuities” (idem, p. 19).

Fundamentally, Rodrigues and Silva insisted, we seem to need the further development of dispositions capable of inducing cooperative strategies amongst various parties and social partners, boosting solutions that are negotiated and consistent with middle-term horizons, allowing the various agents to anticipate behaviors, and so producing complementarities among the various areas of governance. Regarding external attributes of public policies, one of the most important weaknesses in Portugal was apparently a very exiguous culture of dialogue and negotiation between the different agents. Hence a particular relevance of the role and responsibility of universities. Rodrigues and Silva didn't deny the importance of the political-cum-ideological clashes that usually characterize political life, and certainly didn't claim to be contributing for their erasing. A more enlightened debate, however, would definitely produce richer outcomes, including more informed choices: “The ability to negotiate and reach agreements depends, too, of a shared framing of problems and an accurate description of their evolution over time. Universities, in this respect, have a particular responsibility: to contribute with knowledge that can be incorporated in the formation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, in order to strengthen the formal qualities that can, and should, be based in competing political choices” (idem, p. 20).

Still more recently, João Bilhim (2016) emphasized that the evaluation of public policies, regarding their efficiency, effectiveness and economy, necessarily involves the assessment of the degree to which they permit achieving the proposed goals and, in a negative case, the determination of what can be done in order to correct the deviations and improve the end result under the perspective of both citizens and/or businesses. However, he complained, the evaluation of public policies is rarely used and, even when held, it is normally determined by procedural requirements and considerations originating in party-political tactics, thus usually not contributing to the continuing learning process in public policy. Many governments and public bodies, Bilhim added, recurrently prevent important access to information, depriving the evaluators, and particularly University students, of the practical opportunity to exercise the assessment and subsequently transport unto the social fabric the knowledge obtained through specialized training. Notwithstanding this desolating panorama, Bilhim insisted: “The assessment helps the process of creating public policies, given the following reasons: it summarizes the knowledge of the problem and the proposed solution of public policy or program; it tends to demystify the conventional or popular ‘knowledge’ about the problem or the solution; it increases the information available on the effectiveness of the public program or policy; finally it

reveals to the main agents the effects of the new information obtained through evaluation” (2016, p. 16).

3 OUR RESEARCH CONSIDERED IN CONTEXT

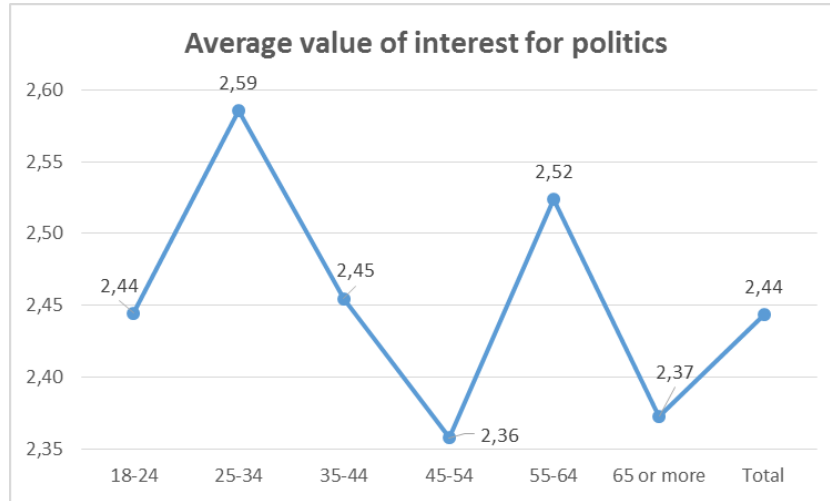
Given this generic mapping of the issues to be debated, and of the problems so connected, it is necessary to add some clarifications regarding the aim of this paper. First, it concerns mostly the so-called “social policies”, that is to say, the sector of public policies that directly address problems of poverty, deprivation of fundamental resources and excessive inequalities. Second, it is based on the perceptions of the population at large regarding those policies; therefore, it is not our goal to debate questions on a mostly ‘technical’ perspective, but to consider the laypersons’ perceptions of issues, even when those perceptions are to be confronted with the ones typical of the clerisy, or the official experts (or mediated by appealing to this filter). Third, it is based on a survey performed in the Greater Lisbon, with the main focus of our analysis being changes of attitudes according to age. Finally, the aforementioned popular attitudes regarding public policies are considered/framed within the ambit of a more generic purpose of identifying and distinguishing political values, attitudes and behaviors in the Portuguese population.

The empirical basis for the study is a survey performed in December 2016, regarding a sample of 600 individuals, stratified by gender, education and age, and living in the Greater Lisbon. The questions answered refer namely to: identification with a political party; vote in recent elections; reasons for vote and/or abstention; interest for politics; features perceived in Portuguese political agents; degree of trust on political agents; perceived corruption of politicians in Portugal; satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Portugal; citizens’ perceived influence over the course of political events; relevant aspects in partisan choice; self-perception in terms of left-right dimension; preference for economic market regulation, state regulation and/or regulation by the ‘third sector’; evaluation of social policies; biases within these perceptions and preferences associated with gender, levels of income, and age.

We start by considering the interest for politics, regarding which we have obtained in this enquiry an average value of 2.44 on a 1 to 4 scale (1 - no interest; 2 - little interest; 3 - some interest; 4 – big interest), correspondent to 16.6 per cent for “no interest”, 31.0 per cent for “little interest”, 44.7 per cent for “some interest” and 8.0 per cent for “big interest”. It should be noted that in a similar study, performed roughly ten years before, in 2006 (cf. Graça, Ferreira, Marques, Lopes & Gonçalves, 2012a, 2012b; Graça, Lopes & Correia, 2016; Graça, Caiado & Correia, 2020), we had already registered an average value of 2.3, thus indicating a very slight increase in this variable. The utmost politically interested age cohorts are the ones

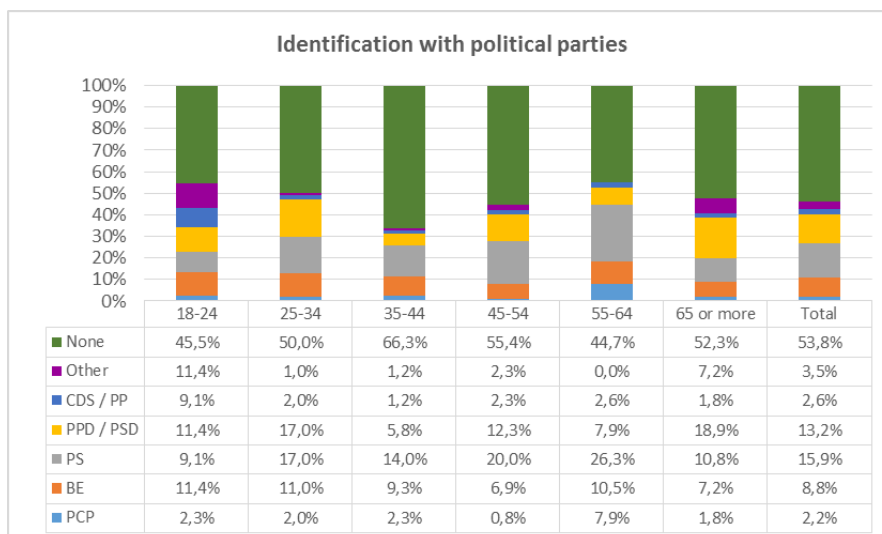
of 25-34 and 55-64 years, with 45-54 and 65-plus years occupying the bottom table; both 18-24 and 35-44 years are in a halfway situation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Interest for politics



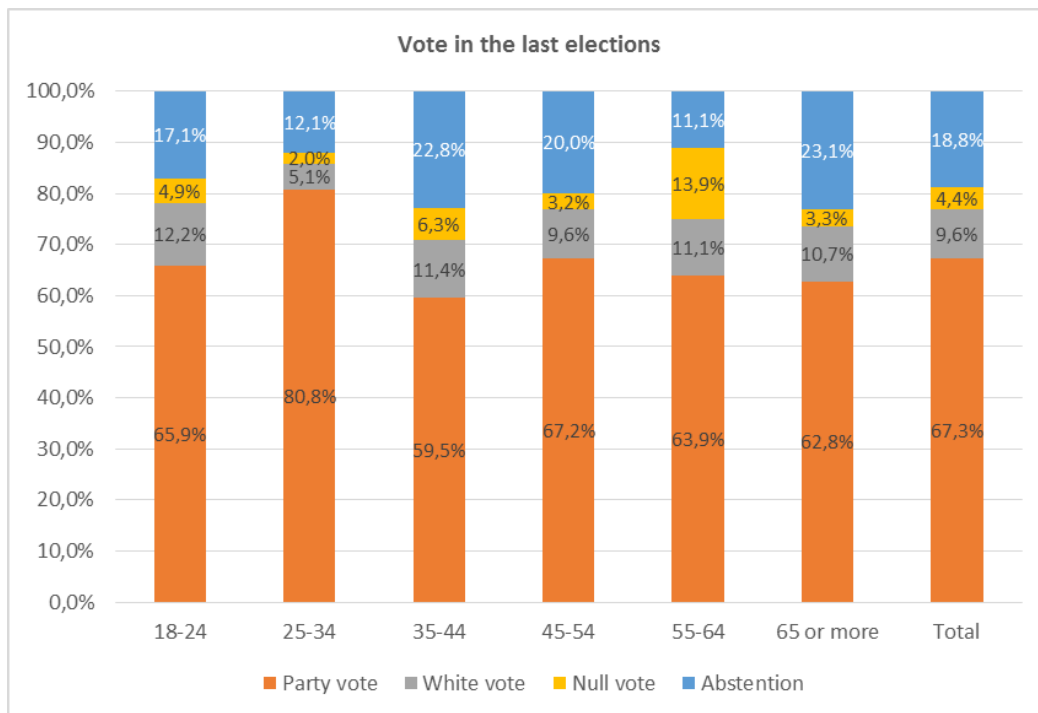
As to the dimension regarding the identification with political parties, we verify particularly the global weight of the answer “None” (Figure 2, last row), conglobating more than a half of the respondents. The levels of identification with political parties are indeed very low, and considerably lower than the vote in those same parties, notwithstanding the important growth of abstention that was registered in the last decades (including the elections that have occurred in 2019, thus after the survey). The age cohort least prone to identification with political parties is the one of 35-44 years, distantly followed by the group of 45-54 years.

Figure 2 – Identification with political parties



CDS/PP has its best results in the first cohort (18-24), PSD scores best in the first, second and last (65-plus), PS does very well in the second (25-34), fourth (45-54) and fifth (55-64) cohorts, Left Block in the first, second and fifth cohorts, and PCP has its best performance in the fifth. Also worth mentioning, referring to this criterion of analysis, is no doubt the comparatively high level of identification with PS (the biggest party as to this standard of measurement, although not in declared vote), as well as the poor performance of PSD; and, by contrast, the comparatively very good achievement of BE/Left Block (Figure 2, last row).

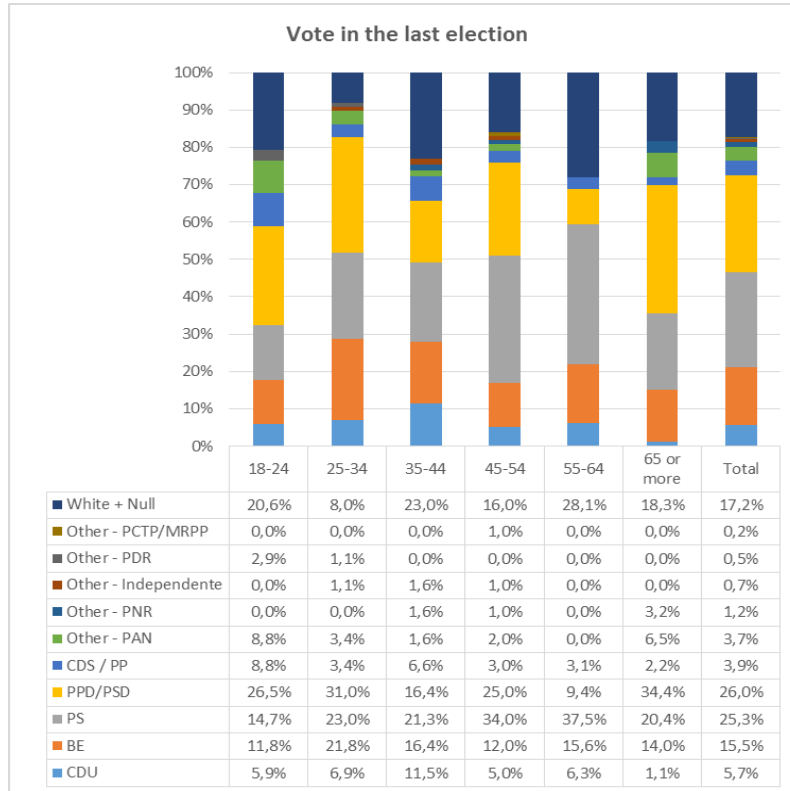
Figure 3 – Vote in the last elections



Noticeably, although the total amount of identification with parties (any party whatsoever) doesn't attain one half of the respondents, the vote in those parties clearly surpasses that mark, with a total amount of 67.3 per cent (Figure 3, supra). However, abstention plus white and/or null vote, taken together, correspond to practically 1/3 of the sample, and it is worth underlining that they have been systematically growing during the more recent decades. Be as it may, within the respondents declaring to have participated in the election, 17.2 per cent assert to have voted white or null (Figure 4, infra). (Considering the answers to the previous question, this seems overestimated, which is due to the fact that now abstention is excluded.) Although PS had obtained a higher score referring to personal identification, PSD is the most voted party in the survey, with 26 per cent against 25.3 per cent for PS. It figures also worth mentioning the high percentage obtained by "other" parties, specially PAN, with 3.7 per cent, leaving it very close to the mark of CDS/PP. The performance of Left Block

is also remarkable and should be pointed out, with a third place correspondent to 15.5 per cent of the declared vote intentions (see Figure 4, *infra*).

Figure 4 – Vote in the last election



The high levels of abstention, taken together with white and/or null vote, the high amount of vote for “other” parties and the weak performance of the pair of hegemonic parties of the Portuguese political scene (PS and PSD), as well as the weak declared identification with political parties, are in our opinion a very important group of aspects to consider in any assessment of Portuguese politics. This is to be taken into perspective considering also the reasons formally invoked both for having abstained and for having voted. Regarding the reasons for abstention, by and large the most important answers denote not ‘instrumental’, rather ‘expressive’ attitudes: “lack of belief in either the candidates or the parties” (65 mentions), followed by “politicians and parties are all the same” (30), and “I don’t care about politics” (29). Eminently more instrumental attitudes, such as “I am not sufficiently informed” (18) or “my vote is irrelevant” (16), follow at a considerable distance. Not instrumental, instead mostly expressive motives predominate also among the reasons for voting, such as that constituting a “civic duty” (259 mentions) and “my vote is important” (153). More instrumental reasons, as “a form of influencing political decisions” (77) and “a form of determining the government’s composition” (75), are only distant suiters.

4 SOCIAL POLICIES, ECONOMIC REGULATION AND LEFT-RIGHT PERCEPTIONS

Concerning public perceptions on the issue of the desirable regulation of the economy, the global responses are: 49.8 per cent favoring more state intervention, 39.3 supporting more market and 10.8 defending an increased role for the economy's "third sector", or non-profit private entities. These numbers ought to be contrasted with those observed ten years before, in 2006: respectively 52.3 (more state), 28.8 (more market) and 18.9 (more third sector), seemingly indicating a slow evolution into free-marketeering positions of the Portuguese public opinion. This evolution is likely to be considered referring it, although probably not directly, with the slight rightwards dislocation that is also perceivable (see *infra*, Figure 5).

The mark of 49.8 per cent demanding more state intervention only partially matches the perception of social policies. Specifically regarding these, 60.5 per cent of the respondents claim that they are "insufficient and revealing an inadequate investment", against 20.3 for those deeming them "correct and necessary" and 19.2 per cent for "excessive and wasteful". Also referring to the opinions on social policies, it is worth considering that in the same questionnaire applied back in 2006 the scores obtained by each answer were 67.2 for "insufficient", 22.3 for "correct and necessary" and 10.5 for "excessive and wasteful": therefore, we face a consistent lessening of the support for social policies, generically matching the slow free-marketeering evolution previously noticed.

On a first glance, we may feel tempted to assume that those in 2016 considering the social policies insufficient are the same requesting more state intervention, probably added by the ones claiming more third sector (close to 60 per cent), whereas the respondents favoring more market (near 40 per cent) are presumably divided in almost two halves: one assuming the existing social policies to be sufficient, whereas the other half deems them to be excessive and wasteful.

Things are, however, somewhat more complicated than that. As verifiable in Table 1, the mere crossing of the 2 questions permits noticing that those favoring more social policies are indeed the winners in all the three categories regarding the 'ideal' economic regulation: even those favoring more market also predominantly claim more social policies (124 among 236, which makes 52.5 per cent). As a matter of fact, the percentage of those requesting more social policies has its apex among the ones claiming more state intervention, with 67.9 per cent (Table 1, below). But this is an all-whether winning answer, an aspect that, confronted with opinions referring to state intervention in the economy, may indicate the existence of very serious problems among the Portuguese population, regarding its (arguably low) levels of economic literacy.

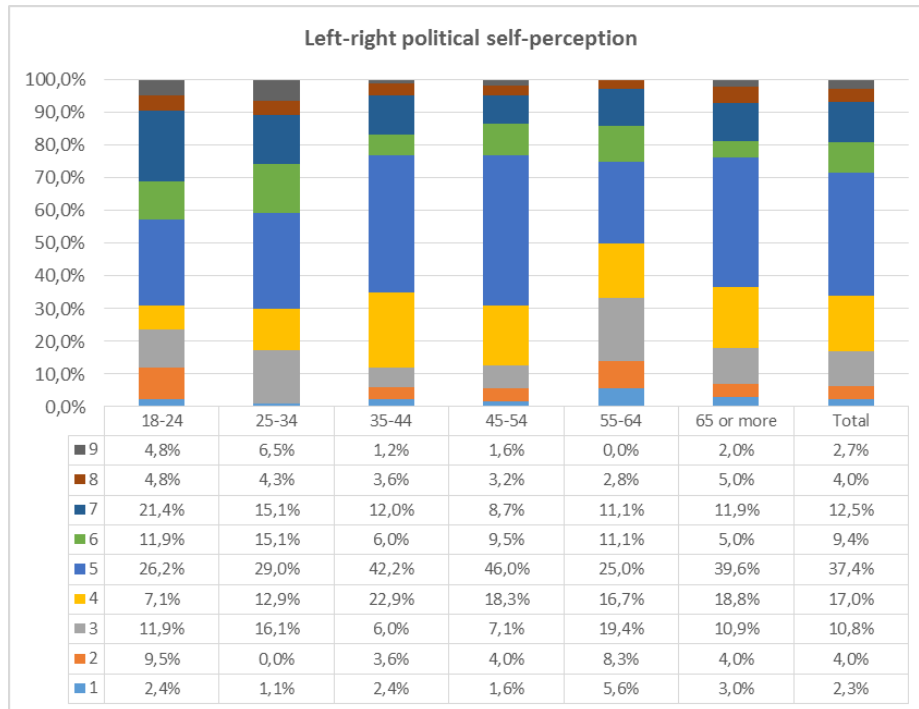
Table 1 – Preferences for economic regulation vs. assessment of social policies

		Regulation of the economy			Total
		With more state intervention and more public services	With more intervention from non-profit organizations	With more liberalization and more private initiative	
Assessment of social policies	Excessive and wasteful	44	15	56	115
	Correct and necessary	52	14	56	122
	Insufficient and revealing low investment	203	36	124	363
Total		299	65	236	600

67,9%	55,4%	52,5%
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As for the dimension concerning self-perception alongside a left-right axis (from 1, denoting “far left”, to 9 for “far right”), we can easily observe within the sample a very high frequency of middle-of-the-road marks, indeed mostly 5. The average value of answers is 4.97. Although probably not far from what was expectable, this facet also seems to indicate an even bigger leaning to the center than the average value of 4.71, obtained in the analogous study performed in 2006. In the survey of 2016 the two age cohorts of 18-24 and 25-34 years lean comparatively to the right, and the one of 55-64 tends to the left, whereas the other three ones are clearly ‘centrist’.

Figure 5 – Left-right political self-perception



Very interesting aspects are also detectable by crossing the self-perception in left-right terms with both the attitudes vis-à-vis public policies and the opinions regarding economic regulation (see Table 2 and Table 3). As to the opinion that social policies are insufficient, the highest scores are apparently for groups with a political self-perception strongly on the left (1 and 2, with 72.7 and 73.7 per cent). However, the immediate positions correspond to those who don't know or refuse to answer (69.7 per cent) and to the far right: 9, with 69.2 per cent. Therefore, more 'extreme' political self-perceptions, together with a consciously 'agnostic' or secretive attitude, are the ones that seem to mostly propitiate the support for increased social policies. It thus seems fair to say that in the assertion of the insufficiency of social policies there tends to be a 'grouchy' element, denoting both discontentment and a propensity to openly voice it. Oppositely, the identification with the center-right and right political leaning (positions 6, 7 and particularly 8) is an inhibiting factor of that kind of choice (see Table 2, *infra*).

Table 2 - Self-perception in a left-right scale vs. assessment of social policies

		"Left" / "right" scale positioning									DK/NA	Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
Assessment of social policies	Excessive and wasteful	1	2	6	20	32	16	11	5	3	19	115
	Correct and necessary	2	3	17	16	27	10	20	9	1	17	122
	Insufficient and revealing low investment	8	14	29	46	121	19	29	5	9	83	363
	Total	11	19	52	82	180	45	60	19	13	119	600

72,7%	73,7%	55,8%	56,1%	67,2%	42,2%	48,3%	26,3%	69,2%	69,7%
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Regarding the topic of economic regulation, for the option “more state intervention” the best scores are at levels 2 and 3, respectively with 73.7 and 63.5; these are followed by non respondents, with 56.3 per cent. Level 7, with 20 per cent, represents its nadir. All the entire rest of the spectre (positions 4, 5 and 6, but also 8 and 9, and furthermore somewhat oddly added by 1) have fairly divided inclinations (see Table 3, bottom row). Oppositely, levels 1, 3 and chiefly 2 tend to avert market regulation, whereas levels 6, 8 and particularly 7 tend to uphold it (Table 3, top row).

Table 3 - Self-perception in a left-right scale vs. preferences regarding economic regulation

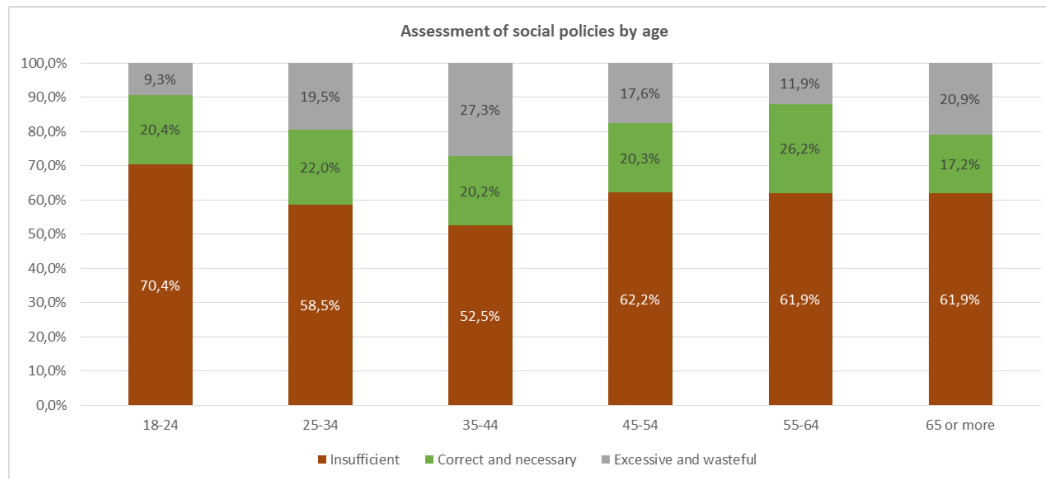
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DK/NA	Total
		27,3%	10,5%	28,8%	39,0%	33,9%	55,6%	73,3%	52,6%	38,5%	32,8%	39,3%
		"Left" / "right" scale positioning										
Regulation of the economy	With more liberalization and more private initiative	3	2	15	32	61	25	44	10	5	39	236
	With more intervention from non-profit organizations	3	3	4	12	23	1	4	1	1	13	65
	With more state intervention and more public services	5	14	33	38	96	19	12	8	7	67	299
	Total	11	19	52	82	180	45	60	19	13	119	600
		45,5%	73,7%	63,5%	46,3%	53,3%	42,2%	20,0%	42,1%	53,8%	56,3%	49,8%

Moving now to the consideration of how attitudes regarding social policies fluctuate according to gender, level of income and age cohorts, the first important thing to notice is that women have clearly a more favorable attitude vis-à-vis those, with 66.8 per cent assessing them as “insufficient”, 15.7 per cent as “correct and necessary” and only 17.5 per cent as “excessive and wasteful”. In a sharp contrast, men indicate for each of these categories 53.1, 25.8 and 21.1 per cent, respectively. Thus, a rather lessened support in the case of male respondents.

Regarding levels of income, we verify a decreased support for social policies accompanying its growth: 62.2 per cent for “insufficient” for those under 1500 euros, 54.6 per cent for the group of 1500-3000 euros and 40.9 for those of 3000-5000 euros; but there is an important and very interesting reversion of his tendency for the upper level, the one with earnings above 5 thousands euros per month, who respond “insufficient” in 80 per cent of the cases. The answer “excessive and wasteful” goes from 19.6 per cent (under 1500 euros) to 21.6 per cent, 18.2 and 10 per cent, respectively. “Correct and necessary” evolves from 19.6 per cent unto 21.6, 18.2 and 10.0. Particularly regarding the richest echelon, it is important to note that we are dealing in this particular case with a very small group of persons, a fact that may raise the question of the sample’s representativeness.

In terms of age cohorts, the most important aspect is that 2 groups, both youngsters and people generically with 45 years or above, tend to be more favorable to social policies or consider them “insufficient”, whereas people between 25 and 44 years are more prone to deem those measures “excessive and wasteful”. We should notice that typically the segments more favorable are also the ones more prone to become welfare-dependent: public financing of universities and unemployment subsidies for those beginning a career, added with pensions and long-time unemployment subsidies for the ones in the second half in their professional careers. However, and remarkably enough, the most elderly segment (65 years and more) reveals a partial inversion of this pattern (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Assessment of social policies by age

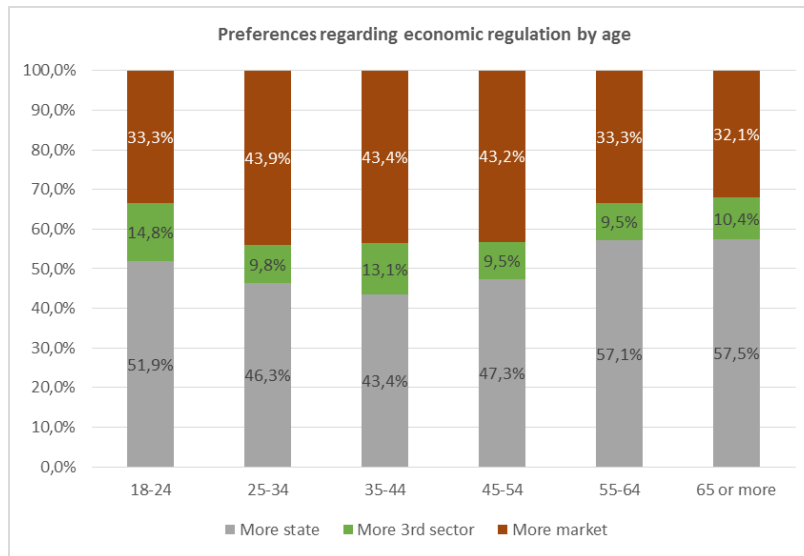


Concerning the regulation of the economy, an important gender dissimilarity is also observable, closely analogous to the one detectable apropos social policies, with women much less free-market prone and instead more favorable to state regulation: the answer “more state” gets 44.0 per cent for men and 54.8 for women, whereas “more market” obtains percentages of 45.1 and 34.5, respectively. Third sector institutions, oppositely, score practically the same for both sexes: 10.9 for men and 10.8 for women.

Considering the various levels of income, and rather patently, inasmuch as it grows, so a neat shrinking of the support for state intervention also occurs, accompanied by a steadily growing inclination for more market regulation. “More state” gets initially 53.3 per cent (below 1500 euros), then 43.8, 40.9, and finally 40.0 per cent (above 5000 euros); “more market” evolves from 35.9 unto 44.3, 45.5 and 50.0 per cent; “more 3rd sector” gets percentages of 10.6, 11.9, 13.6 and finally 10.0.

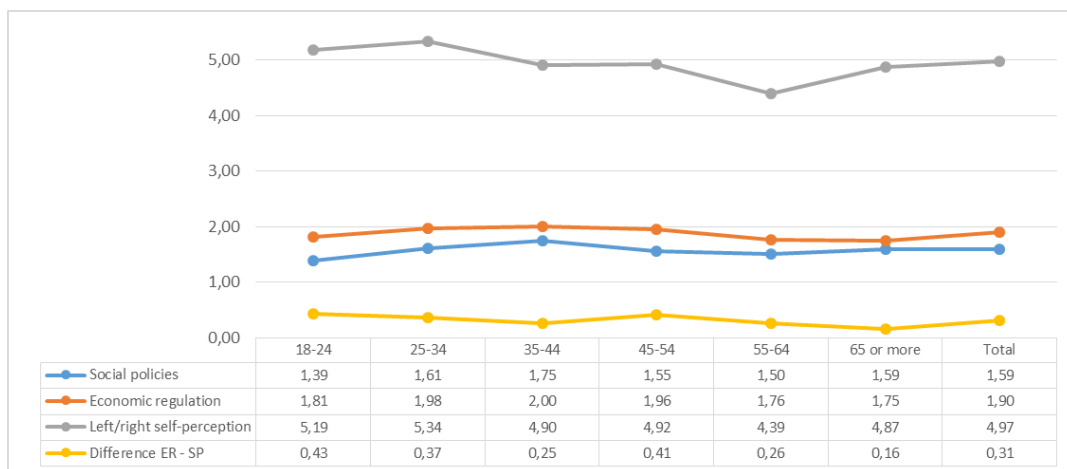
Again, analogously to what we noticed regarding social policies, the younger age cohort and the elder ones tend to be more ‘statist’, whereas the people in working ages (and thus presumably also less prone to become welfare-dependent) are inclined to more free-marketeering opinions (Figure 7).

Figure 7 - Preferences regarding economic regulation by age



As seen above, both the inclination for state regulation of the economy and the one for social policies partly (but not completely) escort the dimension of left-right political self-perception. We now proceed to distinguish age cohorts according to the following three dimensions: a) left-right orientation; b) propensity for economic state regulation (more state – 1; more third sector - 2; more market – 3); and c) leaning for social policies (insufficient – 1; correct and necessary – 2; wasteful – 3). Generically speaking, it may be said that the younger cohorts are more favorable to both social policies and state economic intervention, with the working-age adult cohorts less favorable to both, and then aging seemingly inducing a renewed bent for at least state economic intervention, although not necessarily for social policies (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 – Economic regulation, social policies and left/right self-perception



These trends definitely do not match the left-right tendency, regarding which younger people are clearly more right-wing prone, the 55-64 years cohort (those who were 13 to 22 years old back in 1974) is clearly bent to the left, and the other three cohorts are more or less ‘centrist’ (see above Figure 5, and Figure 8), with the 45-54 cohort being ‘center-right’ and the 65-plus years ‘center-left’ inclined. However, if we compare the differences between propensity for economic state regulation and favor awarded to social policies (bottom line of Figure 12), we get to a scale not significantly different from the one regarding left-right perceptions (top line of the graphic): the cohorts of 18-24, 45-54 and 25-34 years are the ones with a bigger discrepancy between approval given to state regulation and to social policies (amounting to a meaningful level of systematic cognitive dissonance or, also probably, at least for the 18-24 cohort, economic illiteracy), whereas the 65-plus cohort has the lowest levels of incongruity, and the two other cohorts, 35-44 and 55-64 years, verify less-than-average marks. Therefore, it is fair to say that, in terms of age-cohorts, a political inclination to the center-left and/or the left is correlated to lower discrepancy between endorsement of social policies and support to economic state intervention, whereas center-right and right inclinations are prone to higher amounts of inconsistency.

5 CITIZENS AND THE POLITICAL LIFE

If we turn now to the declared satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, the first aspect worth noticing is that its level is seemingly rather worrisome, with 60.8 per cent of the enquiry respondents explicitly being either “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied”, and only a very meagre 2 per cent being officially “very satisfied” (see *infra*, Table 4). This mark of 60.8 percent of respondents explicitly “unsatisfied” or “vey unsatisfied” with the functioning of democracy, in turn, is to be compared with 57.3 per cent who declare they think that Portuguese citizens have little or no influence over the course of events (see also Table 4).

Notwithstanding these being not exactly the same questions, the undeniable vicinity of the themes, added with the closeness of marks, seems to indicate a deep, rather generalized crisis of satisfaction, attributable to a perception of absence of empowerment within the citizenry. Roughly 3/5 of Portuguese citizens, it is fair to say, feel basically deprived of capacity to relevantly impact on public decisions, and therefore experience a mix of disappointment and disgust vis-à-vis the political regime. As a matter of fact, even without a detailed cross-analysis of these two questions, it figures reasonable to suppose that the nearly 3/5 of respondents globally unsatisfied are more or less the same population (also close to 3/5 of the total) with a perception of reduced or inexistent influence of citizens over the course of the political life – and even more so, if we add to this panorama the

information that also about 3/5 of respondents identify themselves with no party at all, or with “other” party (that is, formations beyond the main ones, those mentioned in the questionnaire), as seen above.

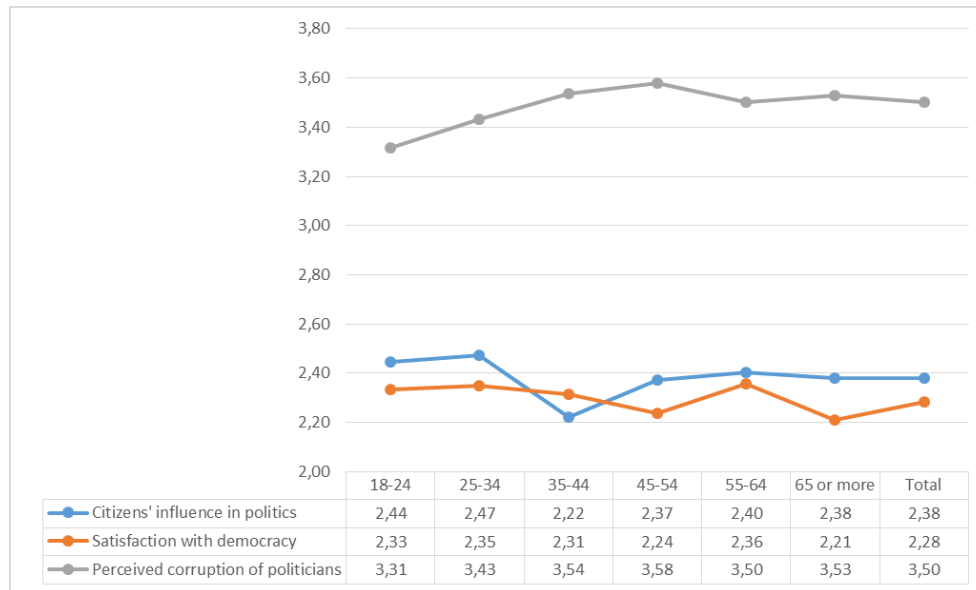
Table 4 – Satisfaction with democracy and citizens’ influence in politics

		Citizens' influence over the course of political events				
		Big influence	Some influence	Little influence	No influence	
Satisfaction with democracy	Very satisfied	4	5	3		12
	Satisfied	9	123	88	3	223
	Unsatisfied	21	80	158	29	288
	Very unsatisfied	8	6	24	39	77
		42	214	273	71	600

The cross-exam generically confirms this conjecture, with a large majority of those declaring to be “very unsatisfied” or “unsatisfied” believing that citizens have “no influence” or “little influence” over the course of politic events, whereas those declaring to be “satisfied” or “very satisfied” are much more prone to instead assert a belief in “some influence” or “big influence”. Reciprocally, those who assume little or no influence are mostly unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, and those positing some influence tend to be satisfied or very satisfied. However, as a discrepant note, we should also mention that the ones postulating “big influence” are more prone to be unsatisfied – possibly, in this case, out of an idea of excessive influence of the citizenry.

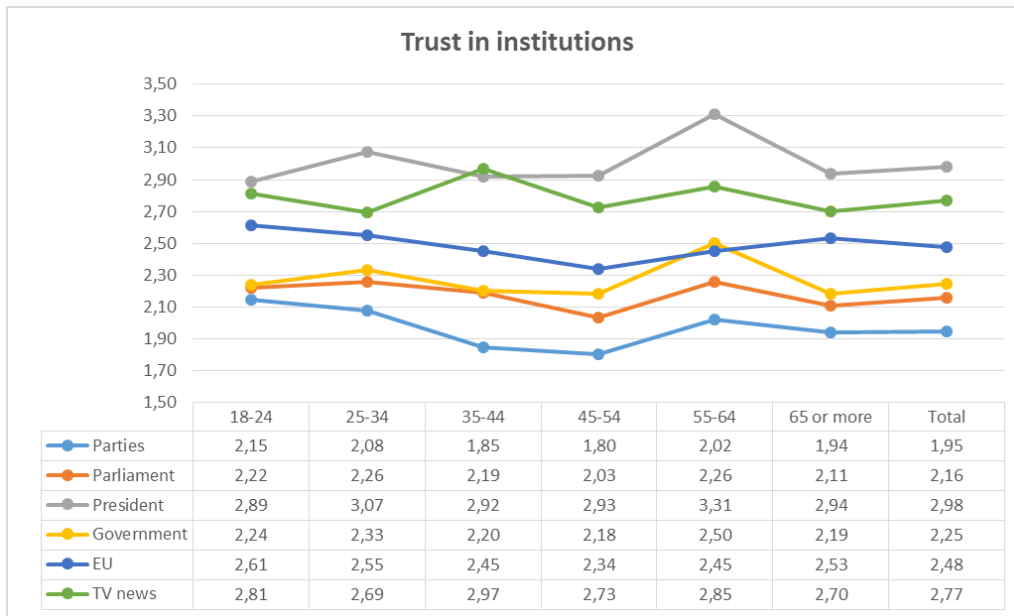
Combining the study of citizens’ perceived influence in politics, satisfaction with democracy, and seeming corruption of politicians, a brief analysis by age cohorts allows the basic assertions that: a) the 2 younger cohorts are the ones simultaneously with a more reduced perception of corruption of politicians and the highest levels of beliefs regarding citizens’ capacity to influence politics; b) the dominant trend of perceived corruption is for an increase accompanying age and until the 45-54 cohort, followed by a very small reduction; c) for both perceived citizens’ influence in politics and satisfaction with democracy there seems to be no clear global trend, but the 2 younger cohorts added with the group of 55-64 are the ones more satisfied. As mentioned, the two younger cohorts are also the ones with higher expectations referring to citizens’ influence, but this is immediately followed by an abrupt fall with the cohort of 35-44 years (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 – Citizens' influence, satisfaction, perceived corruption of politicians



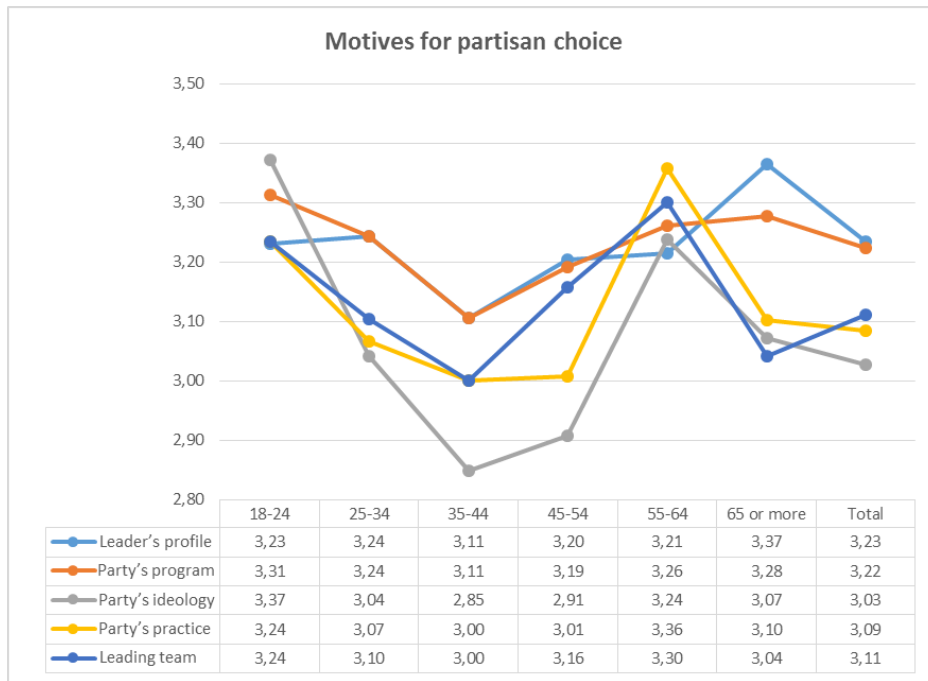
These patterns of opinions figure also rather compatible with the low degree of trust that is declared by respondents both vis-à-vis parties and regarding the branch of sovereignty that is more directly and more thoroughly connected with those, i.e. the Parliament. Oppositely, the most intensely 'personalized' of all the institutions of the Portuguese Constitutional framework, the President of the Republic, obtains the highest declared levels of trust, and by a large difference. The Government occupies, as to this measure, a position very similar to the one of Parliament (see Figure 10). The media, more specifically TV news, followed by the European Union, enjoy levels of trust systematically above the ones of Parliament, the Government and the political parties, but below those of the President, with relevant exceptions being the cohort of 35-44 years (preferring the TV news to the President) and the one of 55-64 years, preferring the Government to the European Union. By age cohorts, the group of 55-64 years is the one expressing the highest levels of trust in the Parliament, the Government and the President; the 2 first age-cohorts (18-24 and 25-34) are the ones scoring the best regarding parties and the European Union, and the third cohort (35-44) marks the apex of trust in TV news.

Figure 10 – Trust in institutions



As to the motives for partisan choice, and in a basic agreement with the aforementioned pattern pointing to the emphatic ‘personalization’ of political attitudes, the “leader’s profile” is declaredly the most important dimension for party choices. The “party’s program” is a close second, although this seems a program perceived mostly in a rather ideology-less way, given that the “party’s ideology” shows up as being the least important aspect. The “leading team” and the “party’s practice” occupy intermediate positions within the ranking of the factors for choice. Attributing 4 to the answer “a lot”, 3 to “some”, 2 to “little” and 1 to “none”, the global scores are attained of 3.23 for the leader’s profile, followed by 3.22 for the party’s program; the leading team obtains 3.11 and the party’s practice 3.09, whereas the party’s ideology gets a mere 3.03.

Figure 11 – Motives for partisan choice

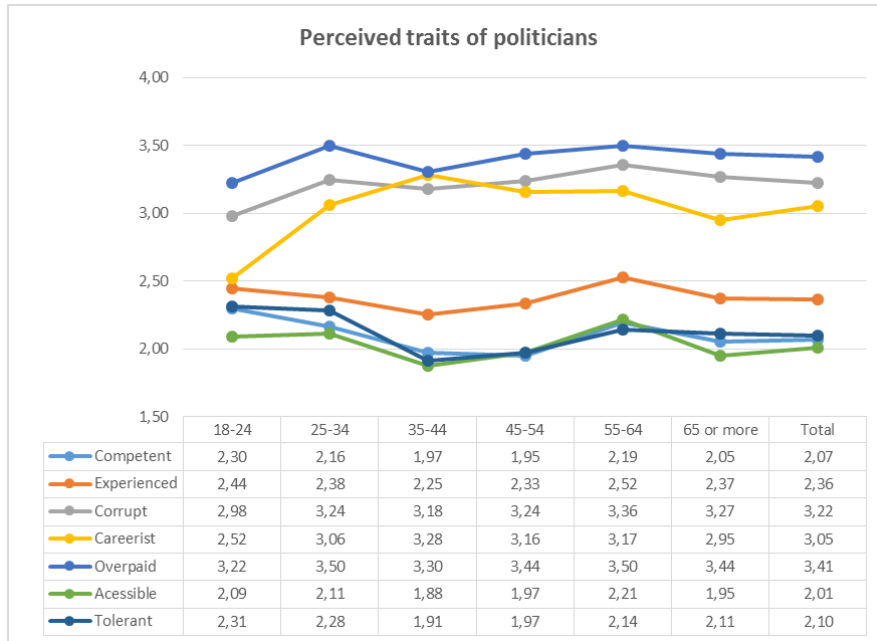


By age cohorts, the most striking aspect is the emphasis in these various aspects, and particularly party’s ideology, that characterizes the younger group, and again the group of 55-64 years (although for these the party’s practice is declaredly the most important aspect). There seems to be a huge ‘valley’ of disappointment in the intermediate cohorts, and particularly regarding the group of 35-44 years. The older cohort, of 65-plus years, denotes also a certain amount of disenchantment, with values very close to the global average, except for the enhanced importance recognized to the leader’s profile.

The already mentioned high levels of abstention, taken together with white and/or null vote, the high amount of the vote for “other” parties and the weak performance of the two hegemonic parties of Portuguese political life (namely PS and PSD), as well as the feeble declared identification with political parties: this a group of aspects in our opinion to be considered by placing them in a close parallel also with the prevailing perceptions regarding politicians. As to this subject, it should be underlined first of all the extremely high degree of agreement with the attributes “overpaid”, “corrupt” and “careerist”. By vivid contrast, “tolerant”, “competent” and “accessible” obtain very low grades, the adjective “experienced” attaining an intermediate mark. Proceeding analogously with the case regarding factors for party’s choice, i.e. assigning 1 for the answer “none”, 2 for “little”, 3 for “some” and 4 for “a lot”, we obtain the mark of 2.01 for “accessible”, “competent” gets 2.07, and

“tolerant” 2.10; “experienced” lies somewhere in the middle with 2.36, whereas “careerist” gets 3.05, “corrupt” 3.22 and “overpaid” reaches a remarkable 3.41.

Figure 12 – Perceived traits of politicians



Concerning age groups, there is noticeably a more favorable opinion by the younger ones, with lesser values for careerist, corrupt and overpaid, whereas tolerant and competent obtain the highest marks. However, these specificities are apparently quick to vanish, with the second age cohort (25-34) getting values very close to the global average. It is thus fair to say that the results for this last variable mostly confirm the already identified patterns of skepticism (or even cynicism) by the Portuguese population regarding politics and politicians.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Skepticism, and probably also cynicism, indeed seem to be adequate expressions to capture important traits of Portuguese opinion regarding politics, given the low levels of identification with political parties, the growing levels of abstention, as well as the trend to ‘other’ parties. The same is obviously valid for high levels of perceived politicians’ careerism, overpayment, and even corruption. Moreover, the vast majority of the population recognizes rather low levels of citizens’ capacity to influence the political life, and indeed tends to directly express dissatisfaction with politics. Generically, the younger cohorts seem more optimistic and prone to assume the best, but disappointment is also usually quick to follow. Considerable differences among the various cohorts are perceptible, with the group of 55-64 years (those who were very young in 1974) more inclined to

trust elected politicians, whereas others prefer to rely on the European Union and TV news services. The more personalized Portuguese sovereign institution, the President of the Republic, is however the winning category in all age cohorts, regarding levels of trust.

The younger cohorts are more prone to sympathize with social policies than those in a working age, and for both the younger and the older cohorts this also holds valid concerning preference for state economic intervention. Generically, both social policies and economic state intervention get the clear approval of the majority of the population, but comparing the data for 2016 with the one for 2006 we notice that the two trends configure downwards slopes. On average, Portuguese population was in 2016 also slightly more prone to the right-wing half of the political spectrum than it was 10 years ago, although 'centrist' positions continued to represent the vast majority. Younger cohorts broadly lean to the right, whereas the one of the 55-64 is bent to the left. There are also very relevant discrepancies between political left-right self-perception and favor awarded to both social policies and economic state intervention, which seems to indicate the existence of important levels of economic illiteracy. These levels are probably considerably higher among the younger groups.

A more thorough treatment of the possible relations among these various political dimensions of the Portuguese public opinion will be performed in subsequent studies.

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