

DECLINING PORTUGUESE VOTER TURNOUT: POLITICAL APATHY OR METHODOLOGICAL ARTIFACT?

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Abstract. The purpose of the paper is to question the decline in the Portuguese voter turnout rate and apparent lack of interest in politics. We argue that the decline could lie with methodologically artificially inflated electoral rolls that drive down the turnout rate. We address this issue by examining the components of the turnout ratio and find that the number of persons registered to vote was inflated in all districts in the early 90s, more so than theoretically possible, judging from statistics on the segment of the population that is eligible to register. Our simple analyses show two important ideas. First, the revision of electoral registration policy in the late 90s making updates mandatory deflated the denominator of the turnout rate in the 1999 election year—thus supporting our suspicions of methodological artificiality in the turnout rate. Second, we show that the rolls continue inflated in 2002, thus casting doubt on official statistics on voter turnout in Portugal.

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Voting is the keystone political activity in contemporary democracies. It constitutes the method by which all adult citizens can express an equal voice on the conduct of public affairs. To the extent a nation's citizens ignore a request to speak or purposefully turn their backs on such a request, there are doubts and questions as to the value of democracy to that citizenry. Just such doubts and questions have crept into the minds of observers of Portugal after one generation of experience with *democracia*. In the elections just after the Revolution, voter participation stood at undeniably healthy levels, in the mid-80 percent range. Twenty to 25 years later, however, voter participation had dropped into the mid-60 percent range, which marks a level that puts the involvement of Portuguese voters behind nearly all other European countries.

The low and declining level of Portuguese turnout is worrisome in its own right, in relation to what it might tell us about the Portuguese people's excitement about and commitment to democratic procedures, but it takes on direct and particular consequences when it determines the outcome of public issues. Just such an effect was felt when more than two out of three registered voters failed to cast a ballot in the first-ever national referendum. The 1998 abortion referendum had a 32% turnout among registered citizens, with the consequence of negating any legal force their own voices could have had because the constitutionally required threshold of 50% turnout had not been achieved.

What is one to make of this seeming indifference to public involvement in Portugal? There are potentially manifold answers, but any and all depend on the basic facts being observed. Our purpose is to ask whether the turnout levels we have been observing in Portugal are themselves mere artifacts of the governmental accounting methods than facts of the people's inclination to get involved in public life. We suspect that the decline could

lie with artificially inflated electoral rolls. We investigate this suspicion by examining the components of the turnout ratio. We find that the number of persons registered to vote was inflated beyond what is logically possible in all districts in the early 90s. Furthermore, we find that the reassessment of the registration rolls in 1999 did not fully solve the inflation problem. In the process we also find incontrovertible evidence that there has been some degree of turnout decline, but that decline would probably be of approximately the same modest proportion that is evident in other European nations in recent years. The lion share of Portugal's seemingly large decline and relatively low levels of turnout is attributable in very large part to how the government records the number of registered voters.

Voter Turnout

Stein Rokkan asserted that the act of voting is a “unique form of political participation” (Perea, 2002: 644). First of all, since the adoption of universal suffrage, voting is the most widespread form of participation. Very often, it is the only way citizens have to participate on a regular basis. Secondly, the secret ballot ensures that citizens can participate with absolute freedom since they are not accountable to anyone for their political options. Lastly, voting means equal influence in participation. The idea of “one person one vote” is widely seen as the cornerstone for the ideal of democracy.

If, on the one hand, the act of voting is widely held to be an “indispensable” and unique form of political participation (Perea, 2002: 645), on the other hand, the literature on voter turnout has not provided a unique interpretation of it. What is the real meaning of an abstention percentage figure? The answer is not as easy as it seems. According to the most widely held view, a high turnout rate indicates satisfaction with the political system in the

same way as abstention indicates apathy and alienation of the citizens. On the other hand, a low turnout rate may indicate the electorate's basic satisfaction with the political system and its functioning and that a high turnout rate indicates a decline in consensus that may turn out to produce instability.

But the need to understand the meaning of turnout rate is acute because we observe a lot of variation either across countries or over time. Across countries the differences are large enough for one to wonder. Table 1 shows voter turnout percentages in Western Europe from 1975-1997. From this table, we can see that turnout in Switzerland averages between 40% and 50% while in Belgium they average over 90%. The literature on voting behavior has tried to understand and explain these variations. Two general theses have been pressed into service to explain variation in turnout, one cultural values and another emphasizes institutional arrangements (Almond and Verba 1963; Verba 1965; Inglehart 1990; Putnam 1993; Powell 1986; Jackman 1987). The cultural argument would lead us to anticipate distinctly lower rates of participation in the new democracies than we would expect from the institutional perspective. On the other hand, some scholars argue that variations in turnout rates across industrial democracies during the 1960s and 1970s are largely a result of institutional arrangements and electoral laws. According to this view, the levels of voter turnout are not so much a result of cultural norms, but rather that of institutional and electoral procedures, such as nationally competitive elections; electoral proportionality; number of parties; mandatory voting laws (Jackman and Miller 1995).

Table 1 Voter Turnout Percentages in Western Europe, 1975-1997

	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-97
Austria	92.5	92.6	90.4	84.1	82.7
Belgium	94.9	94.6	93.4	92.7	91.1
Denmark	87.2	85.8	86.3	83.6	--
Finland	74.5	75.7	72.1	72.1	68.5
France	83.3	70.9	72.3	68.9	68
Germany	90.8	88.5	84.3	78.4	--
Greece	81.1	78.6	82.4	82.5	78.7
Iceland	89.8	88.6	90.1	87.6	87.0
Ireland	76.3	74.2	70.9	68.5	65.9
Italy	92.2	89.0	90.5	86.7	82.9
Luxembourg	88.9	88.8	87.4	88.3	--
Netherlands	88.0	84.0	82.9	78.3	--
Norway	82.9	82.0	83.3	75.8	78.0
Portugal	86.6	81.1	72.4	68.2	66.7
Spain	68.1	79.8	70.2	77.3	78.1
Sweden	91.2	91.4	87.9	86.7	--
Switzerland	50.2	48.9	46.8	46.0	42.3
U. K.	76.3	72.8	75.4	77.8	71.3

Source: Lane and Ersson 1999: 141.

In addition to variation in turnout rates across countries, Table 1 also seems to suggest important variation in the trend in turnout rates over time. Overall, the trend of voter turnout is downward. The average rate of participation for all countries included fell below a score of 80% for the first time in the 1980s continuing in the 1990s (Lane and Ersson, 1999; Mackie and Rose, 1991).

The trend seems to be even clearer in the new democracies in Southern Europe (Lane and Ersson, 1999). In particular, Portugal, with the exception of Ireland and Switzerland, appears to be the country with the lowest level of turnout since the second half of the 1980s. Are Portuguese citizens failing to understand the uniqueness of voting for the ideal of democracy? That is the question that comes to mind, if the facts tell us that the decline is somehow embedded in Portugal's culture. But, as McDonald and Popkin (2001) ask: Are Portuguese voters really vanishing or are these numbers a myth? That is, the principal

explanation for the decline may reside with institutional arrangement, in particular the way in which the electoral registries are maintained.

A Look at the Portuguese Evidence on Voter Turnout

In Portugal turnout rates have declined since 1975. In fact, the Portuguese have been identified to be among the Europeans that least turn out to vote. The number of voters has dwindled throughout its 20 districts since the first free election in 1975. In the 1999 legislative election, Portugal had the recorded lowest turnout in legislative elections—61%. However, the statistics we are often presented with may not be accurate. We suspect they may be the result of the way turnout figures are calculated, possibly leading to a lower turnout result, and consequently to a misleading methodological artifact.

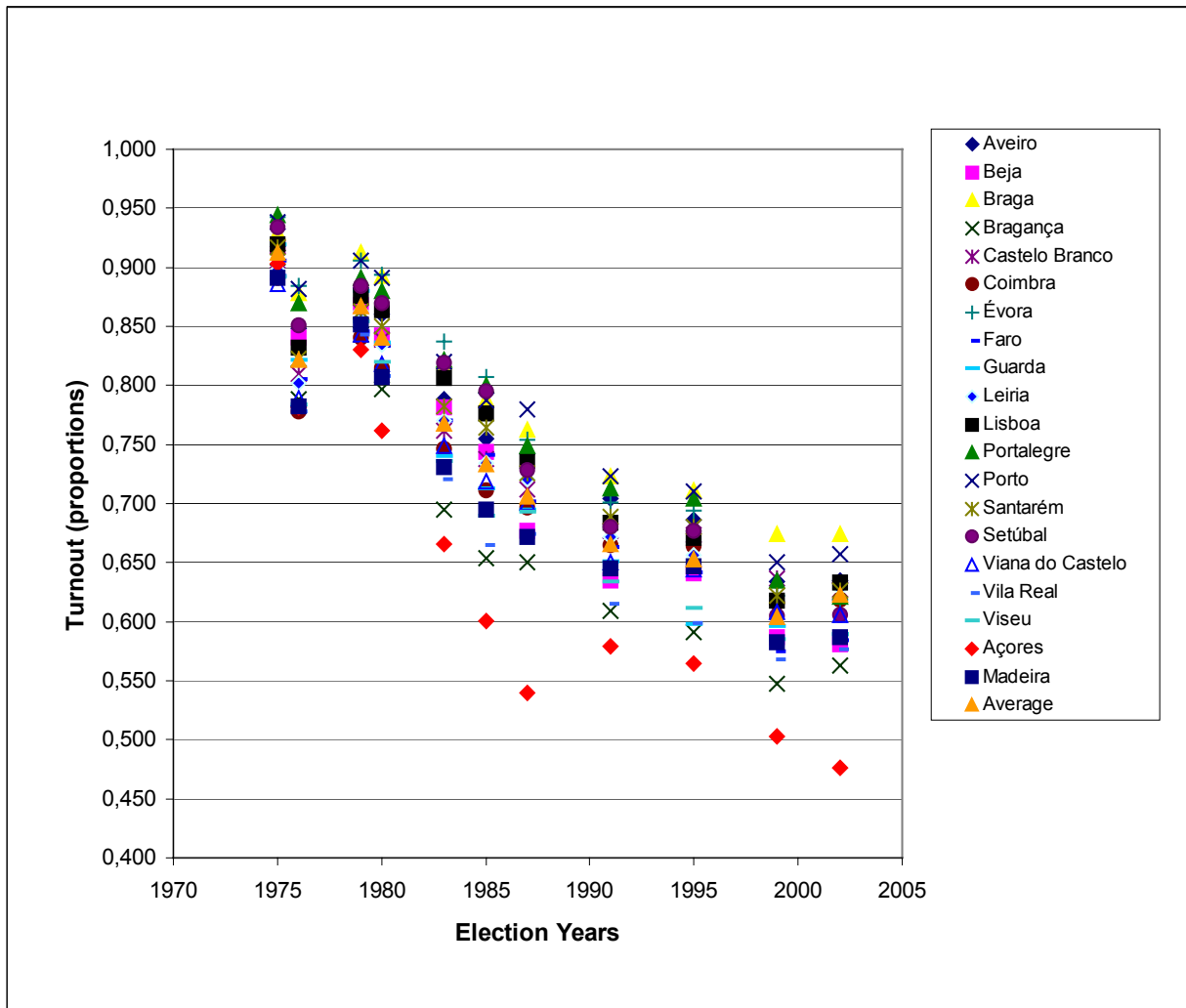
A look into the raw turnout percentages is worth considering. The ratio calculation conceals a phenomenon that may be at the root of the decreasing voter turnout, more so than voting behavior itself. Throughout a quarter of a century of democratic rule, voter turnout in legislative elections has gone from a figure in the vicinity of 90% to approximately 60%, and even lower in many Portuguese districts. An examination of Figure 1 and Table 2 clearly shows that the turnout rate did indeed decline steadily in every district. For example, consider the turnout rates in Lisboa, Porto, and Braga—the three largest districts. Turnout rates in these districts were respectively: 91.9%, 93.8%, and 93.0% in 1975; 77.6%, 78.7%, and 78.8% in 1985; 67.1%, 71.0%, and 71.1% in 1995, and more recently in 2002, 63.3%, 65.7%, and 67.4%.

Table 2 Voter Turnout Rates in the Legislative Elections in the Portuguese Districts, 1975-1999

Districts	1975	1976	1979	1980	1983	1985	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002
Aveiro	.92	.85	.88	.86	.79	.76	.74	.70	.69	.63	.63
Beja	.92	.84	.87	.84	.78	.74	.68	.64	.64	.59	.58
Braga	.93	.88	.91	.89	.82	.79	.76	.72	.71	.67	.67
Bragança	.91	.79	.84	.80	.70	.65	.65	.61	.59	.55	.56
Castelo Branco	.91	.81	.86	.84	.76	.74	.71	.68	.67	.64	.63
Coimbra	.89	.78	.84	.82	.75	.71	.70	.67	.66	.62	.62
Évora	.94	.88	.91	.89	.84	.81	.75	.70	.69	.62	.62
Faro	.91	.81	.85	.83	.77	.74	.70	.66	.64	.58	.58
Guarda	.92	.82	.88	.84	.74	.71	.70	.65	.60	.60	.58
Leiria	.89	.80	.86	.84	.77	.73	.72	.67	.66	.62	.63
Lisboa	.92	.83	.88	.86	.81	.78	.74	.68	.67	.62	.63
Portalegre	.94	.87	.89	.88	.82	.80	.75	.71	.70	.64	.62
Porto	.94	.88	.91	.89	.82	.79	.78	.72	.71	.65	.66
Santarém	.92	.82	.86	.85	.78	.76	.73	.69	.68	.62	.63
Setúbal	.93	.85	.88	.87	.82	.80	.73	.68	.68	.61	.61
Viana do Castelo	.89	.79	.84	.82	.75	.72	.71	.65	.64	.61	.61
Vila Real	.89	.78	.84	.81	.72	.67	.67	.62	.60	.57	.58
Viseu	.89	.78	.85	.82	.74	.69	.69	.63	.61	.59	.59
Açores	.90	.78	.83	.76	.67	.60	.54	.58	.57	.50	.48
Madeira	.89	.78	.85	.81	.73	.70	.67	.65	.65	.58	.59
Average	.91	.82	.87	.84	.77	.73	.71	.67	.65	.61	.62

Sources: Comissão Nacional de Eleições.

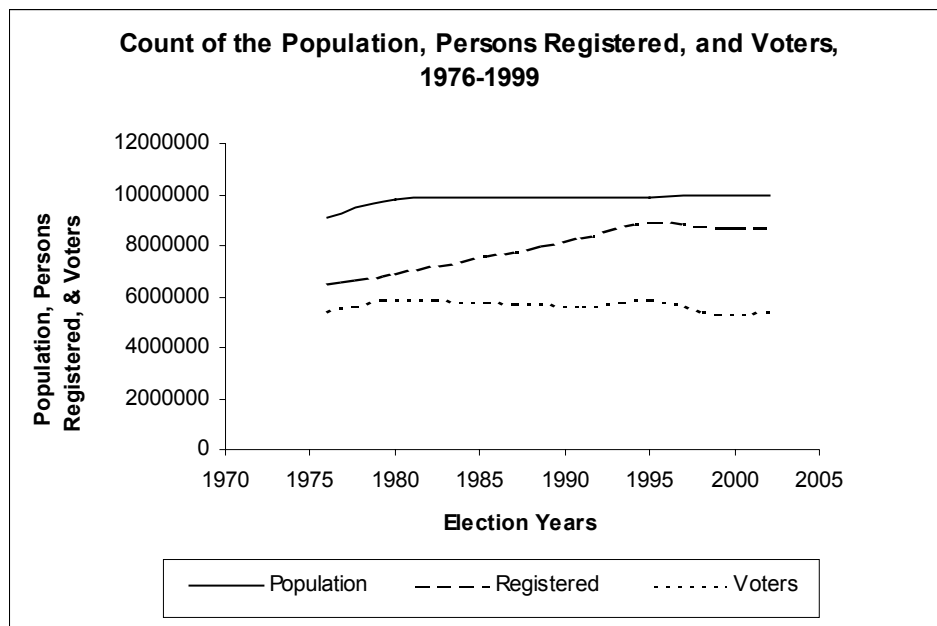
Figure 1 Voter Turnout Rates in Legislative Elections by District, 1975-2002



Voter turnout is, of course, a ratio; the numerator is the number of voters and the denominator is the number of those eligible to vote. It follows then that the turnout rate can decline in three ways. One way is as a result of a decrease in the number of voters; another is through an increase in the number of persons eligible to vote; a third way is through a combination of both. Because of this, one must examine what happened to the individual components of the turnout ratio. As we can see from Figure 2, the number of actual voters

has held fairly steady in the vicinity between 5 and 6 million ballots cast, although there have been slight declines between 1980 and 1990 and between 1995 and 2002. Population, too, has held fairly steady, in the vicinity of 10 million persons. What has changed most noticeably over these 25 years is the growth in the number of persons registered to vote. Between 1975 and 1995, the number of registered voters grew by more than 2 million. This expansion could go a long way toward explaining the persistent decline.

Figure 2 Comparison of the Count of the Population, Persons Registered, and Voters, 1975-99



To check this, let us take, for example, the 1991 population, registration, and election results (see Table 3). A quick look at Table 3 clearly reveals that something is suspect about the electoral rolls. The difference between the 1991 Census estimates of the population (Column A and Column B) gives us an estimate of the number of persons old enough to be eligible to register registered to vote (Column C). A comparison of Columns C and D

reveals that the number of individuals who are theoretically eligible to register is noticeably smaller than the number of persons actually registered to vote. This means the electoral rolls must be inflated. Age 18 is the minimum for registration in Portugal, therefore it would be preferable to have data on the segment of the population aged 18 and younger.¹

Critics could argue that Column B does not provide us with an accurate estimate of the population eligible to register. However, available statistical data for this year does not provide us with the number of individuals aged 18 and older (or alternatively 17 and younger). However, this should not prove damaging to the argument we are making concerning the difference between what the electoral rolls suggest should be the population underage to register and the actual number of those ineligible to register given such a large difference. In other words, the number of individuals aged 18 and 19 should not affect this difference score by very much. We were able to find estimates on the number of individuals aged 18 and 19 for 1998, seven years later; these data reassure us that this group aged 18-19 is a small fraction of 1991 segment of the population aged 19 and younger (Column B), meaning that in 1991 the number of individuals aged 18 and 19 should be slightly smaller than these presented here for 1998. For instance, individuals aged 18-19 in Lisboa added up to 54 670 in 1998. This is 10% of the segment of the population aged 19 and younger reported in Column B, 530 589; therefore, the group of individuals aged 18-19 cannot justify the large inflation figures in Column E.

In Column G of Table 5, we calculated the inflation rate in the electoral rolls. We show that in 1991, the rolls were inflated in every district, ranging from approximately 12% in Porto and also in Aveiro to a maximum of 64% in Braga. In sum, we show that the

denominator of the turnout rate is clearly inflated, casting doubt on the decline of the voter turnout rate in Portugal.

Table 3 Illustration of Inflation of Electoral Rolls in the 1991 Legislative Election Year, by District

Districts	A 1991 Population Count	B 1991 Pop Aged 19 or <	C (A-B) Persons Theoretically Eligible to Register	D 1991 Registration Count	E (D-C) Inflation Count Electoral Rolls	F (E/C) Percentage Inflation in 1991
Aveiro	667314	197300	470014	526727	56713	12.07
Beja	165261	41234	124027	152597	28570	23.04
Braga	776254	260771	515483	587337	71854	64.08
Bragança	155423	43290	112133	148876	36743	32.77
Castelo Branco	209948	50824	159124	199654	40530	25.47
Coimbra	425211	107450	317761	370925	53164	16.73
Évora	171143	42812	128331	149495	21164	16.49
Faro	339836	86730	253106	293573	40467	15.99
Guarda	184337	47967	136370	173630	37260	27.32
Leiria	427633	112954	314679	358145	43466	13.81
Lisboa	2057562	530589	1526973	1796885	269912	17.68
Portalegre	130706	30145	100561	117052	16491	16.40
Porto	1686884	506438	1180446	1319056	138610	11.74
Santarém	440006	112019	327987	385602	57615	17.57
Setúbal	719347	198303	521044	595534	74490	14.30
V. do Castelo	242371	72937	169434	214800	45366	26.78
Vila Real	236594	720929	164495	213334	48839	29.69
Viseu	402273	122964	379309	344478	65169	17.18
Açores	239190	84260	154930	181018	26088	16.84
Madeira	250550	86887	163663	193763	30100	18.39

Sources: 1991 Census; Comissão Nacional de Eleições.

Methodological Artificiality in the Denominator of the Turnout Rate

As we can see, there were more persons registered to vote in 1991 than the number of the individuals who were actually *eligible* to register. How this could be brings us to the point of our argument. It is not theoretically logical for the number of registered persons to grow at the same rate as the actual growth in the population—much less at a higher rate.

But judging from the figures, that is what appears to have happened. The population at large grew at a rate of .1 from 1976 to 2002 across all districts, while the number of persons eligible to vote, i.e. the number of registered persons, grew at more than three times that rate, .34 (see Figure 2 for an illustration).

One reason for this inconsistent phenomenon is that the electoral rolls may be inflated with names of deceased persons. Another reason may be perhaps that the names of those who have moved from one municipality to another have been kept consistently on the rolls in the previous residential municipality(ies) so that some potential voter may be registered in two or more locales. Either situation is possible given that there has been little control on matters of electoral registration by the competent authorities in the past, at least up until 1999.

According to Portuguese constitutional and electoral law, the apportionment of seats per district is based on the number of registered voters in the district (Article 149°), after allowance for four seats elected by Portuguese citizens living abroad, thus providing municipalities with a theoretical incentive for leaving names from the rolls and thus restricting turnout figures. Let us consider the fact that in 1998 the government proceeded for the first time ever to update the electoral rolls. This resulted in the legislative act, Lei n° 13/99, which establishes the new legal regime for electoral registration. This act noted the changes in boldface type. Among the most interesting of these changes, for our purposes, are articles 47° through 49°. These state that a change in residency from one administrative jurisdiction of registration to another implies a transfer of the elector's name and the elimination his/her name by registration committees from the prior roll. The mere fact that this constitutes a novelty is already supportive of the idea of inflated electoral rolls. Among

other reasons for the elimination of names from the electoral rolls is the death (Article 49°, c).

As a result of this governmental initiative, one would expect to see the number of persons registered in each district to decline in the election years following the Lei 13/99, thus making for more credible voter turnout rate statistics. For comparative purposes, Table 4 shows the voter turnout rate and its components by district for three different legislative election years—1995-2002—one before the correction of the electoral rolls and the two following the update. As it appears from this simple analysis, the Portuguese turnout figures were indeed methodologically flawed due to inflated electoral rolls. Generally speaking, from the 1995 to the 1999 election years, the number of names on the electoral rolls did diminish—3% across all districts. There is evidence of some decline in the number of votes cast (see Figure 3a), more so than the decline in the number of persons registered to vote—10% across all districts. From the 1999 to the 2002 election years, the effects of the 1999 correction in the electoral rolls are less notorious, as would be expected. Table 4 and Figure 3b show that the number voters increased in most districts, but so did the number of registered persons—in all but seven districts.

Table 4 Number of Persons Registered, Number of Voters, and Voter Turnout Rates in the 1995-2002 Legislative Elections, by District

Districts	Number of Persons Registered			Number of Voters			Voter Turnout Rates		
	1995	1999	2002	1995	1999	2002	1995	1999	2002
Aveiro	539057	571455	580904	383676	362371	368602	.69	.63	.63
Beja	151016	144921	141549	96468	85024	82283	.64	.59	.58

Braga	640514	654287	672317	452981	441438	453252	.71	.67	.67
Bragança	154459	150247	150599	90603	82132	84753	.59	.55	.56
C. Branc	202995	192358	190863	136839	122622	119712	.67	.64	.63
Coimbra	380227	378701	378195	254800	233244	234266	.66	.62	.62
Évora	151035	148820	147164	104500	92586	91022	.69	.62	.62
Faro	309018	313469	318058	198360	180216	185766	.64	.58	.58
Guarda	176818	170987	171041	113406	101970	100842	.60	.60	.58
Leiria	374257	374867	380261	244528	231945	238954	.66	.62	.63
Lisboa	1876610	1825612	1801824	1262256	1127653	1140175	.67	.62	.63
Portalegre	115402	112297	110329	82248	71258	68463	.70	.64	.62
Porto	1405730	1411557	1426551	1001151	917419	937312	.71	.65	.66
Santarém	396918	389692	387807	269461	242495	242758	.68	.62	.63
Setúbal	636420	645045	651159	432955	389948	394386	.68	.61	.61
V. Castelo	225309	225658	229815	145052	137179	139237	.64	.61	.61
Vila Real	224022	219118	221291	133170	124375	127620	.60	.57	.58
Viseu	357660	348083	355074	217194	203673	209424	.61	.59	.59
Açores	188327	186578	188832	106258	93763	89808	.57	.50	.48
Madeira	206959	208567	213316	132766	121583	125289	.65	.58	.59
Total/Aver.	8906608	8672319	8716949	5904854	5362894	5433924	.65	.61	.62

Sources: Comissão Nacional de Eleições.

Figure 3a: Change in the Number of Voters and Persons Registered between the 1999 and 1995 Legislative Elections

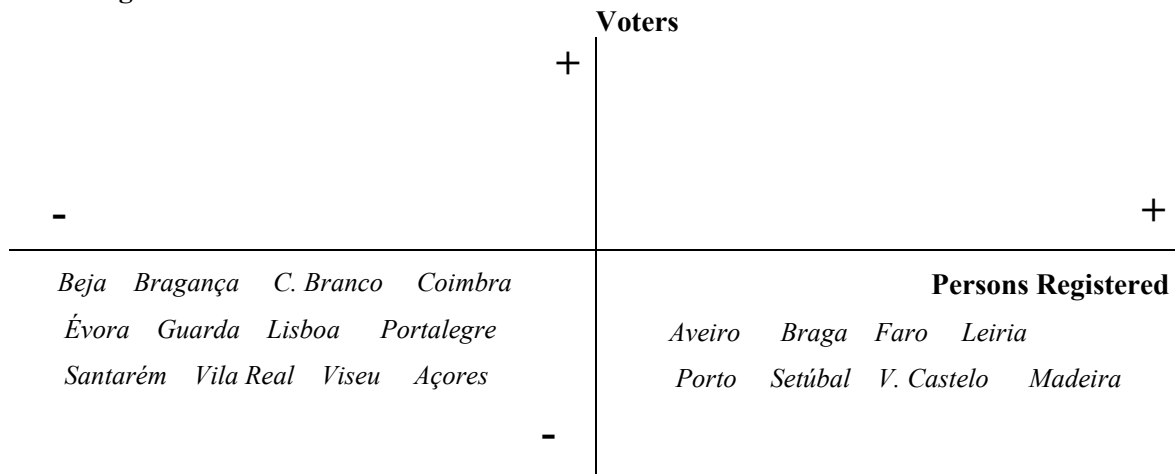


Figure 3b: Change in the Number of Voters and Persons Registered between the 2002 and 1999 Legislative Elections

			Voters					
			+	<i>Aveiro</i>	<i>Braga</i>	<i>Bragança</i>	<i>Faro</i>	
				<i>Leiria</i>	<i>Porto</i>	<i>Setúbal</i>	<i>V. Castelo</i>	
<i>Coimbra</i>	<i>Lisboa</i>	<i>Santarém</i>		<i>Vila Real</i>	<i>Viseu</i>	<i>Madeira</i>		
								+
				Persons Registered				
<i>Beja</i>	<i>C. Branco</i>			<i>Guarda</i>	<i>Açores</i>			
<i>Évora</i>	<i>Portalegre</i>							
			-					

The decline in the number of persons registered was not as notorious as would be expected given our analysis of Table 3. This led us to wonder just how successful the correction in the electoral rolls was. Table 5 shows the number of persons eligible to register in 2001 and the actual number of persons registered in 2002 (already shown above in Table 4). It essentially replicates Table 3 except that now we want to check the extent to which electoral rolls were corrected. The ideal result would be to see the percentage of inflation reduce to zero or negative numbers (negative numbers simply imply that not all citizens who are eligible to register have done so). As we can see, though, this is not what happened. It is true that the percentage of inflation has decreased substantially in most districts, with the exceptions of Bragança, Vila Real, and Madeira—as the comparison of columns G and H show—however, the registration numbers still exceed what the census counts tell us is the maximum possible. The correction did not do the whole trick. Something is still wrong with the registration numbers. The rolls continue inflated, three years after the electoral registration policy revision.

Table 5: Illustration of Inflation of Electoral Rolls in the 2002 Legislative Election Year, by District

Districts	A 2001 Population Count	B 2001 Pop Aged 18+ (Persons Theoretically Eligible to Register)	C 2002 Registration Count	F (C-B) Inflation Count Electoral Rolls	G (F/D) Percentage Inflation in 2002	H Percentage Inflation in 1991
Aveiro	714791	565487	580904	15417	2.73	12.07
Beja	158436	131592	141549	9957	7.57	23.04
Braga	826267	635928	672317	36389	5.72	64.08
Bragança	146322	122068	150599	28531	23.37	32.77
Castelo Branco	208120	174474	190863	16389	9.39	25.47
Coimbra	443311	365681	378195	12514	3.42	16.73
Évora	171012	141699	147164	5465	3.86	16.49
Faro	399236	327741	318058	-9683	-2.95	15.99
Guarda	179796	149669	171041	21372	14.28	27.32
Leiria	462266	376032	380261	4229	1.12	13.81
Lisboa	2141578	1745385	1801824	56439	3.23	17.68
Portalegre	124690	104201	110329	6128	5.88	16.40
Porto	1771043	1388712	1426551	37839	2.72	11.74
Santarém	453990	379402	387807	8405	2.22	17.57
Setúbal	791769	645673	651159	5486	0.85	14.30
V. do Castelo	247052	200563	229815	29252	14.58	26.78
Vila Real	220405	179040	221291	42251	23.60	29.69
Viseu	394170	316910	355074	38164	12.04	17.18
Açores	237315	174026	188832	14806	8.51	16.84
Madeira	243988	185063	213316	28253	15.27	18.39

Sources: 1991 Census; Comissão Nacional de Eleições.

Conclusion

Declining voter turnout has been a concern in the literature on political behavior for time now. Competing theories explain the determinants of voter turnout in an attempt to address the downward trend. Statistics would have us believe the Portuguese citizenry is not very interested in politics, as voter turnout data reveal that the Portuguese have steadily been going less often to the polls. Perhaps the voters are not turning out as much anymore;

perhaps not. Can we trust these statistics? What if the problem lies not with electorate behavior but rather with the measurement of the components of the turnout rate?

This paper investigates the extent to which the voter turnout figure is reliable. We argue here that it could be methodologically flawed as a result of inflation of electoral registration. The answer to these questions becomes extremely important in a young democracy where suspicions of political apathy have come to the forefront and whose Constitution requires a turnout threshold for referenda voting, such as Portugal. An erroneous measurement of the turnout rate could change the course of policy issues that are brought to referenda and could have already skewed the results of the two referenda already held in Portugal.

We took our suspicions to the test by examining the evolution of the separate components of the turnout ratio for the particular election year, for which we have demographic census data available. We found that the decline in voter turnout rates was to a substantial degree the result of a faulty measurement of the denominator of the ratio—the number of persons eligible to vote. This is because the population that was registered to vote was greater than that portion of the population eligible to register in all districts in 1991, ranging from approximately 12% in Porto and Aveiro to a maximum of 64% in Braga.

A look at official 1999 voter turnout rate in its separate parts following the update in the electoral rolls, reveals that the number of electors on the rolls dropped in most districts, thus supporting the artificiality argument. Because electoral registration policy in Portugal underwent substantial revision in 1999 prior to the legislative election that same year and after the first nationwide referendum results on abortion having failed to meet the threshold,

we again looked for inflation in the 2002 legislative year using 2001 census data and found that the rolls continue to be inflated, although to a much lesser extent than we found in 1991.

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Legislation

Lei nº 13/99 de 22 de Março. Novo Regime Jurídico do Recenseamento Eleitoral.

¹ The Constitution states that electoral registration is compulsory, but in practice that is not what occurs. It is up to each individual to take the necessary steps to register electoral registration regime. Registration is voluntary for national residents (Article 1º and 4º, line a of Lei 13/99).