

PARTY MEMBERS AND ACTIVISTS: PARTY MEMBERSHIP PROFILES IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Our starting point is that the decline of party mobilisation and political socialisation is of great importance to better understand both how democracy works and how it may survive. At national level, party member activity has significant features that are deeply seated in the nation's political culture. At an individual level, party activism is a mission particular to each person. It is not only part of his or her unique life story but serves also as a link in the chain of party sustainability. Party mobilisation and political socialisation warrant further development in the Portuguese context, particularly the study of the choice of party members' activity upstream. The main objective of this article is to identify, in a comparative perspective, sociodemographic basic traits, and a set of essential political and ideological attitudes of party members of three main Portuguese parties with parliamentary representation (Socialist Party – PS, Social Democratic Party – PSD, and Centro Democrático Social / Partido Popular – CDS/PP). The methodology of this study is based on the survey technique validated in the MAPP project (Working group on Members and Activists of Political Parties). This is an object scarcely analyzed in Portugal (Stock et al., 1985; Lisi & Espírito Santo, 2017), and its expected results will be those of contributing to identify causalities regarding the decrease and lack of interest for parties' activities in politics in general, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is intended to contribute to getting to know better, in an inside party perspective, who are the party affiliates and how they can distinguish themselves from the activists.

KEYWORDS

Activists; parties; party members; democracy; socialization

RESUMO

O ponto de partida deste estudo reside na constatação de que o declínio da mobilização partidária e socialização política é de grande importância para entender melhor a democracia e como ela pode sobreviver. A nível nacional, a atividade dos membros dos partidos tem características significativas, que estão profundamente assentes na cultura política do país. A nível individual, o ativismo partidário é uma missão específica para cada pessoa. A filiação partidária não é apenas parte de sua história de vida única, mas também serve como um elo de ligação na cadeia de sustentabilidade do partido. O estudo da mobilização partidária e a socialização política carecem de maior desenvolvimento no contexto português, particularmente o estudo da escolha da atividade dos membros do partido. O principal objetivo deste artigo é o de identificar, numa perspetiva comparada, os traços sociodemográficos básicos assim como um conjunto de atitudes político-ideológicas essenciais distintivos de membros partidários de três partidos Portugueses principais com assento parlamentar (Partido Socialista – PS, Partido Social Democrata Militantes; partidos; filiados partidários; democracia; socialização PSD e Centro Democrático e Social/Partido Popular – CDS/PP). A metodologia deste estudo baseia-se na técnica da sondagem, validada na pesquisa do projeto MAPP (Working group on Members and Activists of Political Parties). Este é um objeto escassamente analisado em Portugal (Stock et al. 1985; Lisi & Espírito Santo, 2017), sendo que os resultados esperados serão os de contribuir para identificar causalidades no que se refere à diminuição e à falta de interesse pela participação partidária, mas também política em geral, por um lado. Por outro, pretende-se contribuir para conhecer

melhor, por dentro dos partidos, quem são os filiados partidários e como poderão distinguir-se dos militantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Militantes; partidos; filiados partidários; democracia; socialização

INTRODUCTION

Political parties and their members are two inseparable sides of political mobilisation and of democracy itself. In Portugal, democracy was an essential milestone in the rebirth of party activity. After the carnation revolution of 25 April 1974, the party scene was characterised not only by a proliferation of political parties¹, but also by the regimentation of major fringes of support in the electorate. Party membership was a direct form of political participation. After the revolution, the advent of democracy was accompanied by a strong will on the part of the public to play a part in the future of society and the parties. However, it gradually began to lose importance as people became disillusioned with the parties and their hopes for democracy were dashed. In other words, party membership is declining more and more steeply, accompanied by disinterest and disillusionment with politics and democracy and a lack of confidence in democratic institutions. An understanding of party members' motivations could be an important barometer for measuring a democracy's status, especially one as young as Portugal.

Upstream of party membership is the political socialisation process. Political socialisation is the way in which political values are formed and political culture is passed down from one generation to another (Almond, Powell, Strom & Dalton, 2000, p. 56). Political socialization refers to the set of experiences that contribute particularly to the formation of the self-image of the individual in relation to the political system itself and to the institutions of society (Oppo, 1986). The importance of the way in which children and adolescents assimilate their political attitudes is reinforced in the origins of political socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1961). The political socialisation process entails the natural involvement and participation of each citizen in the state from the cradle to the grave and springs from the role of the different political socialisation agents, such as family, school, peer and neighbourhood groups, the media, political elites, propaganda and online social networks. Political socialisation agents provide citizens with a path that "empowers them with instruments for involvement and socio-political action so that they can exercise their power of citizenship" (Espírito Santo, 2006, p. 122).

The positioning of the media as a source of information and formation of public opinion is one of the classic elements identified as a fundamental support for the construction and consolidation of social and political representations (Lasswell, 1931; Berelson & Grazia, 1947; Harrop & Miller, 1987; Popper & Condry, 1993, Norris, 2002).

¹ 14 parties ran for election to the Constituent Assembly in 1975. Retrieved from www.cne.pt.

The role of media in Western democracies was fundamental, especially since the second half of XX century, as a complement to the traditional role of primary agents of political socialization, such as family and school or groups of peers and neighborhood.

Starting from the 21st century, social networks would stand out as a powerful mechanism and agent of political socialization, acting as an inducer, catalyst or reinforcement of individual and collective sociopolitical positioning, considering the political-partisan realities. Social networks are, currently, a central element in the journey towards the construction of democratic public opinion and a vital and permanent agent of political socialization in democracy.

The way in which political socialisation agents in general and family in particular, foster party involvement is a classic question, and is essential to this study. We also endeavour to identify the relationship between party membership and people's educational and social careers. These are some of the issues at the heart of this study, which focuses on the importance of political socialisation mechanisms in the mobilisation of party members.

The central objective of this study is to identify a set of sociodemographic and attitudinal key aspects that define the activity of party affiliates and may explain their ability to party and politics mobilization. At the methodological level, this study, based on the application of a survey, seeks to deepen knowledge about the sociodemographic attitudinal traits that lead to an active political participation within the parties. The research question is: "how close are party members to the party?" and means to focus upon ideological positions and real participation in the activities of the party. The expected results seek further knowledge on the militant intra-party reality and uncover clues as to the mechanisms that parties use to reverse the downward trend in the number of members in Europe in recent decades.

Our analysis focused on the members of the PS, PSD and CDS/PP. These parties were chosen which for two main reasons: the party's: these are parties with a parliamentary representation and also because of their willingness to collaborate in the present investigation. An online survey was sent to the party members of PS, CDS/PP and party delegates of PSD, between late December 2012 and Late September 2014. The surveys main purpose was to analyse the party members' political motivations and vision of the party's ideology.

A party's ability to recruit and mobilise is directly related to its structure and vocation. From a historical point of view, the large mass parties based their action on an eminently societal perspective. Peter Mair (2003, p. 16) upheld that "parties have not in fact declined as such, but they have changed, and they find themselves more and more embedded within institutions". There is a less visible effort by parties towards propaganda or mobilisation of party members and supporters, with more focus on the media, political marketing specialists and new online platforms to attract new party members.

In his classic distinction between mass and cadre parties, Duverger (1951) set the central differentiating features as forms of party membership and the nature and degrees of party participation. Otto Kirchheimer (1966) coined the expression "catch all parties"

and upheld that they were the result of a systematic depoliticisation and de-ideologisation of their programmes designed to comply with more consensual issues in politics and society (in the first half of the 20th century they reflected the economic wellbeing experienced after the Second World War) with the immediate goal of achieving political power by winning elections. Jean Charlot (1970, p. 63) felt that the so-called “parties of the electorate” expressed “a common value base that is broad enough to gather the maximum number of supporters around it”. The studies on who and the profiles of the affiliates tend to converge on the divisions between large typologies of parties (van Haute, 2011; van Haute & Gauja, 2015). Though the general tendency for the decline of party members and of the consolidation of the self-referential politics, linked to the cartel parties (Katz & Mair, 2009; Poguntke, Scarrow & Webb, 2016), we uphold that these traditional catch-all party characteristics are behind the growth and political ambition of PS, PSD and CDS/PP and have enabled it to achieve its political and ideological configuration.

PS and PSD are two mass parties that have been having leading the Parliament, and Government, since 1975 (PS) and 1976 (PS) and 1980 (AD – “Aliança Democrática”, between, PSD, CDS and PPM – Popular Democratic Party). CDS/PP is a party based on its adherence to the Christian democratic ideology on which it was founded. Nonetheless, CDS/PP has gradually begun to use specific issues and areas (e.g. security and agriculture) as the central theme of its political message and strategy. It has also opened a centre-right political and ideological spectrum in order to attract not only some fringes of a more orthodox right-wing electorate but also the moderate right. It has repeatedly widened its base of key values, as shown by its concrete political action in parliament and in government, as a member of the PSD² – CDS/PP coalition in 2011 and 2015 parliamentary elections³.

PARTY MEMBERSHIP: GENERAL TENDENCIES

The capacity for party recruitment and mobilization is directly related to the party's own structure and vocation. From a historical perspective, it is clear that mass parties based their action on an imminently societal perspective. Peter Mair (2003, p. 285) argued that parties as such have not declined, but have changed and are now increasingly implanted in institutions. We observe a less visible effort of the parties in the propagandistic and mobilizing tasks of the militants/sympathizers, in detriment of a greater emphasis on the media, the political marketing professionals and the new electronic platforms as agents for new party affiliates.

The importance of political parties is undeniable, since, according to Duverger, the development of parties appears linked to that of democracy, that is, the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogatives (Duverger, 1951, p. 24). However, spite

² In Portuguese, PSD: Partido Social Democrata.

³ In the 2015 elections, the coalition lasted for only 2 weeks, due to the non-approval of the government project, by the Left majority in Parliament. In 2015 the coalition called PàF (“Portugal à Frente”) had a minority in Parliament. As a consequence Socialists made a coalition with the communists together with Left Bloc party, and got a majority in Parliament. This agreement allowed António Costa to be Prime-Minister and organize a left supported government.

the democratic importance of the parties, a sociological decline in the capacity of parties as member organizations and as vehicles for political participation is identified, which can be explained by several processes of updating the databases political parties members (Katz & Mair, 1992), but also by the decrease in the importance of political parties in the area of political mobilization (Dogan, 1995; Gray & Caul, 2000), linked to a decline in confidence in government and democratic institutions and to party depolarization and electoral volatility (Norris, 1997; Mair & Keman, 2002; Espírito Santo, 2011).

Other contributions allow us to verify that party organizations have undergone profound transformations in the last decades, whose impact on increasing abstentionist tendency is considerable, while there is a decrease in party identification (Wattenberg & Dalton, 2000). This identification process is vital to understanding the phenomenon of electoral participation, which we regard as one of the forms of political participation, considering that it is not possible to have elections without participation. Therefore, there is a real “political participation when citizens decisively influence the political decision-making process” (Meirinho Martins, 2003, p. 23).

Party identification can also make increase the competitive dimension of parties. The identification and mobilization of parties is “a link between many in the chain of human sustainability of the political party, with multiple aspects of common his fellow party struggle” (Espírito Santo, 2011, p. 145). According to this “party members constitute the central element of political party dynamization considering the vital role they play as mobilizers of political action (Espírito Santo, 2011, p. 146). The study of the party communication patterns (comparison between PSD, PS and CDS / PP), developed by Figueiras and Fonseca (2017), identified a relationship between inside levels of party institutionalization and levels of organizational integration and centralization, which can directly influence the party members patterns of activity. In this plan, the levels of inclusiveness can be directly related to the type of communication strategy defined by the party, in terms of its internal publics and its party members, in particular.

PARTY MEMBERSHIP IN PORTUGAL

The instatement of the political parties after 25 April 1974 was accompanied by real growth in the number of members, in Portugal. There are, however, very few studies on the action and political socialisation of members in their parties, in Portugal. This is a direct result, on the one hand, of difficulty in accessing the parties’ databases, which are inaccessible to protect their internal operations from the media. Interest in party activism has perhaps been shelved in sociological and political research due to this difficulty.

The contribution by Stock and colleagues (1985) entitled *Os Partidos em Congresso 1981*, focussed on the congress attendees of the main Portuguese political parties in 1981. It took the form of a sociological survey of the profiles and motivations of the party congress delegates of the PS (Socialist Party), PSD (Social Democrat Party), CDS (Social Democrat Centre), MDP (People’s Democratic Movement – now extinct) and PPM (people’s monarchist party). The following results arose from the spectrum of these parties’ congress delegates.

In each of the four parties studied, around one third of the delegates had occupations in what we have classified as middle class. Nonetheless, while the delegates with upper-middle-class occupations accounted for 40% of the sample in the CDS and PSD, they accounted for around 20% in the PS and MDP". (Stock et al., 1985, p. 134)

Based on a 10-position ideological scale from left to right, the congress delegates of the MDP placed it "considerably to the left", the PS centre left, the PSD centre right and CDS "considerably to the right" (Stock et al., 1985, p. 139), very similar to the current parties. In other words, "the results (...) confirmed the polarisation of the new Portuguese party system in traditional left/right terms, as the party delegates adopted attitudes that were clearly identifiable in the political and ideological spectrum, which in a transnational comparison is particularly broad". Furthermore, "the delegates of the parties studied seemed (...) to be more motivated by political and ideological than by objective and materialistic concerns, especially in the left-wing parties" (Stock et al., 1985, p. 147). This contribution pinpointed not only the nature and profiles of the party elites but also, and especially, their strategic importance in laying the foundations for new future orientations (Stock et al., 1985, p. 28). These party elites were the seeds of Portuguese party culture, in the post-revolutionary period, in which the political scenario required stability and political, social and economic consolidation, and Portugal aspired to be a new, sustainable democracy.

Although it is indirectly linked to party activism, it is worth mentioning Braga da Cruz's (1985) contribution, which analysed young people's political participation based on a survey of members of political youth organisations. These organisations were founded by their parties or in their shadow, as a way of guaranteeing a bridge between parties and young people. One of the elements of the analysis was the fact that some parties had more young members than their actual youth organisations. In other words, the role of party youth was subsidiary to the party and it had no mobilisation capacity. Braga da Cruz (1985) described the political youth elites very clearly and identified a trend towards single male students living with their parents. His study also confirmed the importance of socialisation, such as the contribution from family, friends and the media (access to information) as decisive factors in political involvement. Villaverde Cabral (1995) also analysed groups of party members in Portugal, using a poll to project the percentage of members in Portugal. The figure in 1991 was 415,000 people, according to this study. The author highlighted the fact that the majority the members belong to strata with higher educational attainment. "The more favourable their assessment of the equity of the system of socio-economic opportunities and rewards is, the greater their tendency to participate in civic life and exercise political citizenship (Cabral, 1995, p. 200).

Considering the current scenario, the formal definition of party member, within the criteria and conditions for party membership, is expressed in the statutes of each party, and are quite similar and sufficiently extensive, among all parties, as can be seen in the table below.

PARTY	CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS
PSD (Social Democratic Party):	Portuguese citizens may become party members enjoying their full political rights adhering to the programme and the Constitution of the party. Foreign citizens are equally entitled to become members of the party.
PS (Socialist Party)	A member of the Socialist Party is someone who, after agreeing to the declaration of principles, the programme statutes and rules of the party, signs up as an active member and is accepted by the competent bodies.
CDS/PP (social Democratic Centre/Popular Party)	Portuguese citizens over the age of 18 can be affiliated to the CDS Party, and enjoy full civil and political rights, in accordance with the admission regulations approved by the National Council. Foreign citizens who are legally resident in Portugal and have political rights may also be affiliated to the CDS - Popular Party.
PCP (Communist Party)	Any person whatsoever can become a member of the communist party as long as they abide by the programme and statutes of the Party, carry out the fundamental active duties in the party's organisations and pay the necessary contributions.
BE (Left Bloc)	Adherents of the "left bloc" are those considered to manifest the desire to join the movement and be in full enjoyment of their political rights.

Table 1: Criteria and conditions for party membership

After formal affiliation to the party each member is then committed to paying a monthly fee, usually of a symbolic nature, being a minimum of one euro per month, 12 euros per year. This in relation to those parties represented in Parliament, which benefit from a more significant membership. However, this fee is not mandatory and may be adjusted depending upon the ability of the member to pay it, as is the case with the members of the Portuguese Communist Party.

The statutes of each party include detailed rights and obligations for party members. All of the parties have some principles in common. Usually, the first principles of the "rights of the party members" underline the obligation to participate in the parties' activities and the right to elect and to be elected. These two rights and principles are expressed in the statutes of the PSD, PS, CDS and BE, for instance. With regard to the Communist Party there is a focus on the "defense of unity and of party cohesion" as well as on the "collective opinions and decisions" and on "collective responsibility".

Considering the obligations of the party members, the most common principles are to take an active part in the party's activities and to maintain confidentially about the internal issues of the party. In relation to the Communist Party, the obligations of party members are quite detailed (13 principles) and include a strong awareness of a strong commitment to, and participation in, all party activities, as well as contributing to the development of the party, in order to uphold a basis of "internal democracy".

PARTY MEMBERSHIP FIGURES IN PORTUGAL, IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Before 1974, Portugal had lived through what is referred to as the "Estado Novo" "New State" period, from 1933, where the only party formally accepted by the State was the National Union ("União Nacional – UN"). The statutes of this party were inspired by Oliveira Salazar, who was at that time Finance Minister and between 1933 and 1968 was President of the council of Ministers. The name of this single party during the New

State period suggested a desire for uniting the entire Portuguese population around itself. Marcelo Caetano would later succeed Salazar, until the 1974 revolution. The name of the party would change, in 1970, to Popular National Action ('Acção Nacional Popular - ANP'), after a reorganization process. Its statutes would define this party as a "civic association to promote citizen participation in the study of the problems of the Portuguese nation and practical solutions for being more consistent with the fundamental principles which it professes. During the Estado Novo period, the Portuguese Communist party, founded in 1921, suffered a clandestine and difficult period of existence. Its members were closely monitored and experienced the use of repression and strong enforced action at the hands of the political police (called PIDE) on its members.

Table 2, below, shows that there were a total of around 337,000 members in Portugal, about 3.2% of the resident population in 2010, representing about 3,4% of the electorate. This proportion decreased in 2012 to about 2,7% of the resident population and 3% of the voting population. However, according to the parties, there are a considerable number of party members who have not paid their fees. For instance, considering the data given by the PS, from approximately 83.000 members only 49.000 paid their subscription fees. The social democrats considered 112.000 as paid up members as well as the CDS/PP considered almost 30.000 members. The BE considered that only about half were paid up members and the Communist Party indicated that about 43% were "active members" with dues paid. This data reduces, significantly, the real proportion of party members who can be considered as active members and who participate and are involved in the parties' activities. Parties seem condemned to deal, permanently, with a progressive disinterest in party affairs.

As for the evolution of the number of affiliates (Espírito Santo, 2011), there have been considerable fluctuations since the foundation date, as a result of processes of refiliation and "cleaning" of the party members' books. The sudden increases in the number of affiliates are, normally, the result of times of collective enthusiasm, shortly after the victory in elections.

PARTY	FOUNDED IN	1976	1983	1990	2001	2003	2010	2012
PSD	1974	7.943	-	29.005	86.674	120.720	131.488	112.009
PS	1973	-	-	55.358	125.313	72.710	116.000	83.500
CDS-PP	1974	-	-	-	32.571	35.972	22.435	29.655
PCP	1921	115.000	200.753	-	131.000 a)	131.000 a)	58.928	60.484
BE	1999	-	-	-	-	5.035	8.000	9.600
Total of party members		-	-	-	375.558	365.437	336.857	295.248
Voters		6.457.440	7.450.108	9.970.441	8.695.958	8.687.945	9.740.366	9.721.406
Resident population		9.403.810	9.969.940	9.970.441	10.394.669	10.473.050	10.572.157	10.562.178

Table 2: Number of party members in Portugal

Source: Adapted and updated from Espírito Santo (2011)

a) data available only at the party congress year, occurring each four years

Although there has been a reduction in the numbers of members in Europe's established democracies (Wattenberg & Dalton, 2000; Whiteley, 2009, van Haute & Gauja, 2015), party leaders have sought to come closer to their members, by encouraging them to participate in the choice of their representatives. In Portugal, the PS, PSD and CDS-PP guarantee the election of the leader to their members in general elections. This is the case in a number of countries, where members also participate more in defining the party's policies (Scarrow, Webb & Farrel, 2000; Pennings & Hazan, 2001; Seyd & Whiteley, 2002). Direct election of the leader is not, however, plain sailing, as greater participation by members in party life may mean a loss of influence for the elites that have been running the party. In terms of the impact of this process in attracting members and effective participation in the party's future, its efficacy is questionable.

Where the quantification of political party members is concerned, in Europe there are considerable differences in parties' ability to attract new members. In recent decades, the number of members in the most recent democracies (Portugal, Spain and Greece) has been growing, unlike in the established western democracies, where the numbers have been falling. When Peter Mair and Van Biezen (2001) analysed party membership in Europe from 1980 to 2001 (15 countries), they found a reduction in the number of members, with the exception of Spain and Greece, where it had grown 2% and 3.5% respectively. Portugal showed a slight 0.24% fall, while the largest decreases were in Austria and the Scandinavian countries. This process was accompanied by greater electoral volatility. In other words, lower party identification meant that voters were influenced by short-term political events and leaders' characteristics, rather than ideological issues.

The reduction in numbers of party members is more clearly visible in the established democracies in the north and centre of Europe, while they are still growing, albeit slightly, in the southern European countries. It is important to note that this trend is not general and does not apply to the whole party political spectrum, as there has been an increase in the parties that Oreste Massari (2004) calls "the libertarian left" and "post-industrial far right". This is because they focus their action on specific issues that do not meet the needs or expectations of a considerable part of the electorate.

Paul Whiteley (2009, pp. 2-4) mentions the difficulty in understanding the decline in party members in part of Europe, and puts forward two hypotheses for explaining the phenomenon. The first is that the relationship between parties and state undermines party volunteering, so that members progressively become "unpaid civil servants" and their financial contributions (dues and donations) are replaced by state subsidies. The second is the growth in new forms of participation, such as citizens' movements and the potential of new technology, at a time when the "old cleavages" are giving way to post-materialist values. On the subject, Massari (2004) highlights the growth of green parties and far-right parties and their substantial rise in election results. This phenomenon is not found in Portugal, in the former case because the ecologist party joins forces with the Portuguese communist part in elections to form the united democratic coalition and in the latter case because of the low electoral success of the Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR – National Renewal Party) (it got 0,5% of the recorded votes in the last

parliamentary elections). In Portugal, citizens' and independent movements can run in local elections (parish assembly, municipal assembly and municipal council). There is considered to be compatibility between the parties and voter groups, as "these groups are not organised and do not assert themselves against the parties but rather complement them, thereby helping to reinforce representative and participative democracy" (Meirinho Martins, 2003, p. 37).

The results of the MAPP (Members and Activists of Political Parties) project have showed, in the majority of Portuguese parties, with parliamentary seats, there is a general trend towards a decline in parties' activity (Lisi & Espírito Santo, 2017, p. 271). In longitudinal terms, the decline between 1974 and 2014 was about 30%, considering about 2% per year (Almeida Correia, 2017). This decline may be seen as an important sign about the loss of importance of parties as traditional and fundamental vectors to the democracy development and trust

PARTY MEMBERSHIP SURVEY: KEY EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In methodological terms, the survey was applied via an online platform from 27, sent to all the party members of this survey. The following guidelines were used in drafting the survey in order to achieve the goals set out at the start of the research. The survey was divided into three parts (sociodemographic characteristics, ideology and political or party activism and political opinion) so that we could draw a picture of the members' position on Portugal's social structure and the party's ideological framework.

Our analysis of the results therefore always takes account of the total number of answers obtained and validated. Table 3 indicates the sampling size for each party, as well as other data that may be of interest in sampling terms, such as the data collection date and the proportion between the universe and the sampling obtained. Given the difficulties of this type of survey, we may consider that the overall response rate was quite positive and relevant, even in statistic terms.

PARTY	% VOTING (2011 ELECTIONS)	% VOTING (2015 ELECTIONS)	TYPE OF PARTY MEMBERS	(N VALID ANSWERS)	(N UNIVERSE)	DATA COLLECTION DATE
PS	28,1	32,1	Party members	1.347	83.524	2014*
PSD	38,5	36,6****	Delegates	313	1.000	2014**
CDS-PP	11,7		Party members	1.444	29.655	2013 ***

Table 3: Electoral context data and sampling of party members in the Portuguese party surveys applied

Notes:

* 01/2014 to 02/2014

** 01/2014 to 02/2014

XXV PSD Congress, Lisbon, 21-23 February 2014.

*** 27/12/2012 to 15/02/2013

**** PSD and CDS/PP were in together in a coalition (PàF, "Portugal à frente")

In terms of limitations on our research, although almost all party members provided the party with an email address and the newsletter was the current form of contact with the party members, motivation to answer may have been influenced by aspects such as how often they checked their emails and their motivation and involvement in the party structure. Another limitation is the comparison between party affiliated data (PS case and CDS / PP) and party delegates (PSD). From our perspective, we take the sample of PSD delegates as having the same characteristics as the other members, since the selection process is based on some diversity in terms of various aspects such as geographical representativeness, demographic and involvement in party activities. Notwithstanding these aspects, some reserve in terms of analysis and extrapolation of the results obtained must be taken into account. Our efforts to mobilize the parties for this type of investigation have been numerous and not always easy. Note the wide availability and openness of the CDS/PP for this type of academic research.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTY MEMBERS

One of the central aspects of political activity is gender equality, though as yet not at a formal level. We do not intend to expound on the causes of or reasons for greater participation by males in parties and politics or on the ways of narrowing this gap, such as the Parity Law⁴, but we will indicate the differences between the sexes in terms of party membership. In the study carried out, Table 4 shows a very evident dominance of men at the level of party affiliation. We therefore agree with Margarida Fernandes and Maria Estrela Duarte (1985, p. 7) when they say, “the gap between women’s legal status and their absence from decision-making bodies shows discrimination. By discrimination we mean the exclusion of a social group, women in this case, from bodies and institutions, i.e. gender-based selection in access to decision-making offices”.

Portugal was the last European Union country to recognise unrestricted votes for women (after the 25 April 1974 revolution). The time lapse between the grant of this right in EU countries is significant as some of them recognised equal voting rights in the early 20th century, some 60 before Portugal. This factor may help explain low participation by women in political activity, such as in government positions and as MP’s.

	PARTY	PS	PSD	CDS
Gender	Male	75,4	82,7	74,0
	Female	24,6	17,3	26,0
	Total (N)	(1.347)	(313)	(1.449)
Age	<35	16,9	25,6	26,1
	36-64	66,2	67,0	68,3
	65>	16,9	7,4	5,6
	Mean	49,7	44,5	43
	Total (N)	(1.346)	(312)	(1.735)

⁴ We are referring to Organic Law 3/2006 of 21 August, which sets out that both men and women must represent at least 33% of the list for parliamentary elections, local elections and European Parliament elections.

Education	None/Elementary	9,4	0,3	6,5
	High school	26,0	19,6	25,0
	Higher education	64,6	80,1	69,5
	Total (N)	(1.347)	(312)	(1.735)
Professional Status	Active	64,3	81,2	76,1
	(Early) retired	21,3	8,0	7,3
	Student	3,2	2,9	6,5
	Unemployed	7,4	3,2	9,3
	Other	3,8	5,7	0,8
	Total (N)	(1.243)	(313)	(1.421)
Professional sector	Public sector	41,9	43,3	31,7
	Private sector	30,7	33,4	64,9
	Voluntary sector	27,4	23,3	3,3
	Total (N)	(1.243)	(305)	(1.246)
Religious practice	Every week, or more	8,1	17,6	23,7
	A few times per month	8,2	27,3	14,8
	A few times per year	35,0	46,0	36,8
	Hardly ever, or ever	48,8	19,2	24,6
	Total (N)	(1.347)	(313)	(1.396)
Religiosity	Not at all religious	24,4	7,3	n.a.
	Not religious	30,7	17,9	n.a.
	Fairly religious	40,9	65,8	n.a.
	Very religious	4,0	8,3	n.a.
	Total (N)	(1.347)	(311)	
Trade Union Member	Member	25,6	22,0	13,0
	Total (N)	(1.337)	(313)	(1.735)

Table 4: Social profile of party members (%) – Portugal

Source: Espírito Santo and Lisi (2014); Lisi and Espírito Santo (2017)

In terms of the party members' age, the three parties had quite proportional representation in the different age groups⁵, which shows some revitalisation capacity but also an inter-generational groups of members. In internet answers, the over-65 age groups were less represented in the sample, which was natural, as they make less use of the internet.

One intriguing aspect of the analysis was the question of religion and assertion of religious beliefs among the party members. Spite the low identification with the Catholic faith, in general, on behalf of all the affiliates in study, the degree of participation in religious activities assumes some differentiation among the members of the CDS/PP. In this case, the party's ideology had Christian roots, as shown by its foundation on the principles of Christian democracy.

Table 4 shows that the majority of the party members have university qualifications, this is a degree, masters or PhD. There are not noticeable differences between the three parties, despite a slight accentuation of values in the case of PSD members, concerning

⁵ The age groups used in the sample are those used in the MAPP questionnaire.

a higher degree of education. This trend can be explained by the profound changes in education in Portuguese society and the proliferation of degree courses, specially, after the establishment of democracy in Portugal. However, when compared with the data gathered for this universe of party affiliates in the 1980s (Stock & Rosa, 1985, pp. 70-72) there is a more positive and divergent evolution.

An analysis of the respondents' work situation showed that the party with a higher number of members working for the private sector is CDS/PP, with around 65% in this situation, and 32% party members working for the public sector. In PS and PSD the proportion of affiliates who are civil servants is above 40%⁶. That perspective is countered by the trade union membership proportion of affiliates. A minority of the respondents said that they did belong to a trade union. As evidenced in a previous study (Lisi, Espírito Santo & Costa, 2017, p. 117), in the affirmative answers, many belonged to teachers' and bank employees' trade unions. In the Portuguese business world, the two main trade union congresses, CGTP – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses [General Confederation of Portuguese Workers] and UGT – União Geral de Trabalhadores [General Union of Workers] are often associated with the politics of the communist party and socialist party respectively, although there is no formal connection between them.

REASONS FOR JOINING AND PARTY ACTIVISM

When analysing reasons for joining the party, it is important to examine a number of variables that can influence the process. In this question the focus is given to individual motivations for membership. A brief analysis shows that the respondents highlighted the importance of providing an own political contribution, by defending the party ideals and the wish to be politically active, followed by the wish to play an active political role. Few focused on the hypothetical benefits of membership, the family context or financial contributions to the party⁷. There are no significant differences between members of different parties on this issue, which shows that the will of party membership tends to contain a basic set of common motivations regardless of party.

Different levels of party activism were considered since the seminal study of Duverger (1951) that identified different degrees of participation in membership activity: supporters, adherents, militants and propagandists. The levels of proximity to the party have been discussed by several other contributions (Katz & Mair, 1995; Krouwel, 2012; van Haute & Gauja, 2015), aiming to define how close are party members to the parties organization, across several democracies. Party activism refers to the degree of commitment, the rights that are acquired in the party structure and the party members' intervention in it.

⁶ This was the question with the smallest percentage of answers. A smaller amount of answers from total were validated, which could mean some reluctance by respondents in indicating their work area.

⁷ This result is based on the respondents' assessment of these factors. They may not be fully confirmed by *social praxis*, this is the unimportance of the family context is belied by the relationship between parents' membership and that of the respondents.

I BECAME A MEMBER ...	PS	PSD	CDS
I wanted to meet politically like-minded people	3.1 (1.2)	3.0 (1.2)	3.4 (1.2)
I wanted to become politically active	3.9 (1.1)	3.9 (1.1)	3.7 (1.2)
I wanted to help in the realization of the political aims that I supported	4.4 (0.8)	4.4 (0.8)	4.5 (0.8)
I wanted to influence the selection of candidates for political office	3.2 (1.2)	2.9 (1.2)	3.5 (1.2)
I wanted to pursue a career in politics	2.1 (1.1)	2.2 (1.1)	2.3 (1.2)
I wanted to support the party financially	2.0 (1.0)	1.7 (0.9)	2.1 (1.0)
I expected that party membership would be advantageous for my career	1.5 (0.8)	1.4 (0.7)	1.7 (1.0)
I had relatives or friends influence	2.0 (1.2)	2.1 (1.2)	2.2 (1.2)

Table 5: Reasons for being a party member (mean) – Portugal

Source: Espírito Santo and Lisi (2014); Lisi and Cancela (2017)

Note: Figures are mean and in parentheses standard deviation. Each issue is based on one item or proposition (multiple answer). For each item, the respondents had the opportunity to say whether the reason was completely irrelevant (1), not very relevant (2), relevant (3), rather relevant (4) or very relevant (5). Don't know and no answers were excluded from the analysis

This indicator enabled us to measure the respondents' involvement with the party and the society around it. Each member has the potential to attract new members. This depends on their degree of integration and their own goals within the organisation. With regard to the degree of participation of members in party life, a series of questions were developed in order to assess whether militants have an active participation, following the conceptual separation between the “party member” and the “militant” perspective.

PARTY	PS	PSD	CDS	
Time devoted to party activities per month	0-5 hours	79,4	62,2	69,0
	6-10 hours	13,3	23,1	11,9
	More than 10	7,3	14,7	19,1
	Total (N)	(1.220)	422	(1.069)
Participation in party events in the last 12 months	Once a week or more	16,8	35,5	n.a.
	Twice a week	19,2	33,3	n.a.
	Once a month	17,0	12,1	n.a.
	More than six times a year	17,2	9,9	n.a.
	0-6 times per year	24,1	9,2	n.a.
Total (N)	(1.092)	452		
Perception of party involvement	Very active	19,4	41,2	11,8
	Fairly active	50,4	56,9	38,1
	Not very active	24,0	1,6	32,9
	Not at all active	6,2	0,3	17,2
	Total (N)	(1.346)	(313)	(1.189)

Table 6: Level and type of activism (%) – Portugal

Source: Espírito Santo and Lisi (2014); Lisi and Cancela (2017)

From the analysis of Table 6, above, it is clear that a portion of the affiliates does not develop any work for the party on a monthly basis. This indicator allows to verify the involvement of the party members within the activity of the party. The lower degree of participation can result from a large part of the daily activities being carried out by a set of professionals of the politics, employees of the own party.

A number of questions were asked about the respondents' participation in party life in order to assess whether play an active part, in accordance with the conceptual difference between "member" and "activist".

This indicator – the number of hours devoted to party activities per week and per month – shows members' affinity with their party, although it does not measure quality of participation or their loyal commitment to the party's values and ideologies. Another relevant aspect is their family background and workplace. Kriegel (1986) states that part of the activity of French communist party activists occurs at the workplace, in an apparent interconnection with the trade union movement. In a survey conducted in 1975 Lagroye, Lord and Mounier-Chazel (1976) demystified the idea that activism was a left-wing party phenomenon, although they confirmed that it was in these parties that political participation was most active. In another contribution, which analysed party activism in Belgium, Emily van Haute (2011) found that members were unwilling to spend time on work for the party. Her generic profile of a party activist was a middle-aged, well-educated, professionally active male.

From a longitudinal perspective, Whiteley and Seyd (2002) and Whiteley (2009) have analysed activism in the United Kingdom, focusing on social class and education as variables explaining greater political participation. Using data from the ISSP Citizenship Survey in 36 countries, in a total of 50,000 surveys collected, they found that there were two central models for explaining people's involvement in political parties: the civic volunteer model, which defends the idea that political participation comes from each individual's resources (Verba & Nie, 1972; Whiteley, 2009) and cognitive relationship models, which explain participation with the "ability and will to process and understand information on politics and society" (Whiteley, 2009, p. 11).

The constant changes in parties' structure and operation are reflected in their ability to attract members and we dare say that the idea of "memberless parties" is currently viable (van Haute, 2011). In this case, there might be no active, decisive participation by members to support the party. Nonetheless, party competition may not lose its effective political and social capacity because of a reduction in the number of members, as parties' public projection clearly depends more on their capacity for political and electoral mobilisation in the media than the number of members in the field. There are also different recruitment capacities in different parties. Delwit (2000) states that this phenomenon is essentially found in the mass parties, where the number of members increases in those that address specific or controversial society issues. Examples are the far-right parties or ecological parties. There is no sign of growth in the far right in Portugal. What stands out in the far left, however, is the left-wing bloc (BE), a party that focuses on controversial issues (e.g. voluntary termination of pregnancy and same-sex marriages).

These data provide us with a tendency to be used and developed by the party machine. In general, there were many members who did not take part in any events and so there is room for seeking to understand why they are not motivated to attend or contribute to party activities. Some differences between parties can be derived from the position of “delegate” vis-à-vis “party member”, as it is the case of this issue (“time devoted to party activities per month”, Table 6). The same can be said about the following question about “Perception of party involvement”. The tendency is for a self-definition to be “reasonably active”, that is, an intermediate position in a commitment plan with party activity. A possible link between this set of questions and the party’s political functions may be explored in further analysis, considering local, municipal or national level’ party structures functions. Having a formal link to the party a part from being party member may influence the perception and expectations developed towards the party organization and activities. It would be interesting to explore if there is a relation between the small number of municipal employees and parliamentary deputies in the CDS/PP’s case, may be linked to a lower degree of self-involvement into the parties’ activities.

FINAL REMARK

New social movements are posing a challenge to democracy and to the existing political framework, by creating alternatives to people’s participation and civic involvement in society. We cannot imagine the existence of parties without members, in Portugal, but the present scenario requires clear redefinition of their role and importance in achieving the party’s goals. This new political and social spectrum has been considered by the mass parties in an attempt to reach a larger fringe of the electorate.

The role played by the three parties under study, PS, PSD and CDS/PP, as government parties, and their political framework in the national panorama led us to a survey about their membership structure, the socio-demographic characteristics of their members and the respective process of party affiliation, both at the level of the motivations, as well as the degree and type of participation developed.

Party affiliates are mostly men, in a universe, in terms of age, heterogeneous, qualified, and mostly employed. Affiliates assume themselves in terms of social stratification as belonging to the middle class, not religious, resulting in a process of membership diluted over time, which allows us to affirm that, to a large extent, there is a basis of party mobilization in the parties under study, and with a sense of renewal. The way from being party member to become an activist may not be effective, and this study demonstrates the distance between one level and another as being of interest to be deepened, particularly by the low proportion of active members, with political availability to party activists.

It is also necessary to look at the phenomenon of former members, i.e. people who at some point in their lives decided to leave the party. It is naturally not easy to fathom the reasons for these decisions due, for one thing, difficulty in accessing these data. The emergence of new forms of political participation may be a new attraction for party members who find that the party structures are impeding their ascension.

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