How do voters vote when they have no ideology? : evidence from Spain

HOW DO VOTERS VOTE WHEN THEY HAVE NO IDEOLOGY?
EVIDENCE FROM SPAIN

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Abstract

Although they make up a considerable share of the electorate, the literature has overlooked the voting behaviour of non-ideological voters. Using Spanish electoral data from the 1979-2004 electoral period, we seek to identify which alternative cues these voters may use when they cast their ballot – providing ideology is not available. We do not find that evaluations of the incumbent's performance have a higher influence on non-ideological voters as the retrospective voting literature suggests. Nor we find that other shortcuts such as candidate evaluations or party identification are more used by this group when they vote. Instead, our results indicate that non-ideological voters have exchanged the traditional ideological shortcut for the simple pro-incumbent voting as a decision rule.

KEY WORDS: ideology, performance, leadership, party identification, incumbency bias, unlocated voters, Spain.

1. Introduction[*]

It is well-known that voters do not cast their ballot randomly. The existence of ideological voters among the electorate permits to know to some extent the vote share that each political party will obtain, since ideology works as a psychological tie that restricts voter's actual sort of options. This fact make politicians' job easier and safer: a certain amount of votes are less volatile and less dependent on political or economic circumstances during their term in office. However, some voters decide not to "invest" in this voting shortcut with the result of reporting no ideology. In being so, the puzzling question is: how do they make up their minds in order to pick up a party ballot? Do they use alternative shortcuts? This is the main research question that this paper will address.

The study of the electoral behaviour of voters without ideology has important implications for the literature on electoral studies. Traditionally, in this field, non-ideological voters[1] have been pulled out of statistical models. Regardless of their numerical size, voters without placement within the 10-point-range ideological scale have been thrown into the dustbin of missing voters (cases), that is, voters without a say in the explanation of the electoral outcomes. This rationale usually takes on implicit rather than explicit assumptions – namely, that non-ideological voters behave in a similar fashion than ideological voters. In other words, the way in which non-ideological voters distribute their votes among party options fits nicely the way in which ideological voters do it. As a consequence, the absence of these non-ideological voters does not make a difference on the empirical analyses. Rather than taking it for granted, this paper will aim at testing empirically this implicit assumption on the voting randomness of non-located voters. We will try to find out whether it is plausible to drop such a considerable amount of voters from the empirical models of electoral behaviour without having any effect on the outcomes.

[1] In this paper, we will use "non-ideological", "unlocated" and "non-located" indistinctively for the absence of individual self-placement in the ideological dimension.

In sum, in this paper we are interested in analysing the electoral behaviour of non-ideological voters. We will look at their size as well as their rates of turnout in order to quantify their strategic importance in the electoral contest. In addition to describing their main characteristics, we will find out whether non-located voters follow specific patterns of voting.

The paper is divided in seven sections. First, we will show that voters reporting no ideology compound a minor but still significant portion of the electorate in most democratic countries. Second, we will observe in section 3 the electoral patterns of these voters in Spanish elections since 1979 and we will introduce the hypotheses that may explain them. These hypotheses will be developed and tested in sections 4 and 5. Section 6 will discuss the potential results and offer alternative explanations. Finally, some concluding remarks will close the paper.

2. Unlocated Voters in Comparative Perspective

Literature on electoral behaviour almost completely agrees that when people engage in politics they do it with very low levels of information (Converse 2000). This is so because becoming informed about politics always bears costs: "the cost of political information is never zero", as Downs put it (1957 p. 240). However, it is also true that these costs do not detract people from taking political decisions (i.e. the voting levels are quite high across the world relative to the costs in which every voter is supposed to incur when casting her ballot). Given this fact, scholars dealing with electoral behaviour have tried to trace out the main foundations that people use to act in politics.

In this sense, ideology has been considered as one of the main shortcuts the electorate has to save information costs in politics (Ferejohn 1990, Popkin 1991, Sniderman *et al* 1991, Hinich & Munger 1994, Luppia & McCubbins 1998, MacKuen etl al 2003, Kuklinski & Quirck 2000). For instance, Popkin (1991) points out that voters follow a "low information rationality" when they decide their vote and ideology becomes the predominant shortcut

available to reduce the information costs in politics. But Popkin also sees ideology as a fruitful device for political parties when they organise the political contest, because it allows political parties to illustrate more clearly their differences from competitors in the eyes of the electorate.

Even though ideology is a strong predictor of how both parties and voters behave in politics, there are a considerable number of voters that do not place themselves in the ideological continuum. In this paper we consider "non-located" voters those who reject to locate themselves within the left-right ideological scale, that is, those who pick up a "don't know/no answer" (dk/na) response.

The validity of the option "na/dk" in surveys has been largely debated in public opinion literature. Converse (1964) has pointed out that some interviewed report answers without having underlying attitudes. The opposite may also be true: some dk/na responses may not be real non-attitudes. False negatives –as Gilham and Gramberg (1994) call them- are those who apparently show no attitude, but they turn out to take a position if the topic is asked differently. Certainly, dk/na option may shelter different meanings –ignorance, indecision or uncertainty about the meaning of the question asked (Sanchez y Morchio 1992).

Obviously, in our study we cannot be fully sure if dk/na respondents are really non-ideological voters (or if those who place themselves in the left/right scale are truly ideological voters). But there is some evidence that unlocated voters are truly reporting a non-attitude. In a Spanish CIS survey of 1982, apart from the traditional left-right scale question, it also appears an alternative item asking for the affiliation to the main ideologies (marxist, anarquist, centrist, between others). Most dk/na in left/right scale specifically report to have no ideology (53%) in the alternative scale and only a ten percent is able to place themselves in one of the ideological categories. The rest remain in the dk/na option. Hence, we find high consistency in both questions, with a 90% systematically reporting a non-attitude, which seems to qualify our dk/na respondents as "true negatives".

Research on electoral studies tends not to consider these voters as significant or influential, and consequently, they are dropped from their models. But table 1 clearly points

out that for most democratic countries[2] those not having an individual location within the ideological dimension exceed the 15 percent of all voters. The percentage ranges from the insignificant 2 percent of Norway to the almost 60 percent of Bulgaria. On average, unlocated voters represent one fifth of the electorate. Therefore, this kind of voters composes a small nonetheless significant portion of the electorate of most democracies.

A clear pattern that we find in table 1 is that the electoral participation of unlocated voters is lower in all countries except Korea and Taiwan. Despite the remarkable 14-percent gap between located and unlocated participation, almost three quarters of the latter group decide to turnout.[3] In brief, voters with no ideology still represent an important volume of those who finally decide to attend the polls on election's day. Their potential influence on the electoral results has not to be overlooked as they represent almost the 18 percent of all participants.

Another remarkable finding is that new democracies show higher levels of unlocated voters. Indeed, there is a negative correlation of 0.37 (significant at 0.05 level) between years of democracy[4] and the level of unlocated voters. This may be explained by the fact that new democracies abide likely more unstable party systems –because of the oversupply of parties- and more ideologically volatile party positions –because of the process of matching between electorate and parties (Tavits 2005). On the contrary, affluent democracies have smaller levels of non-ideological voters. Around 10% of voters in the European countries do not hold an ideological position within the 10-point-range scale. Leaving the Canadian case aside, there is no a consolidated democratic polity with more than 20% of unlocated voters.

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[2] Data used in table 1 comes from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which collects post-election surveys of 39 countries (CSES Secretariat 2004). See the data appendix to follow how the relevant variables were generated.

[3] It is important to point out that voter turnout is always overestimated in electoral surveys (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Sigelman 1982). In fact, the current evidence states that "non-voting voters" tend to be less interested in politics, which it is a characteristic present within the Spanish unlocated voters, as we will see in section 3. Hence, it is reasonable to think that the participation gap between ideological and non-ideological voters will be higher than reported in table 1.

[4] Data on "years of democracy" has been taken from the Polity IV Project dataset (reachable at www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity). We use the 1998 values of this variable in its logarithm form.

Table 1. Unlocated voters in comparative perspective (CSES dataset)

Country	Observations	% Unlocated	Turnout IV[1]	Turnout UV[2]
Norway 97	2033	2.19	86.59	55.56
Czech Rep. 96	990	3.09	90.13	67.57
Denmark 98	1973	3.45	96.72	77.59
Germany 98	1900	8.02	93.39	77.5
Switzerland 99	2011	8.15	64.23	22.29
United States 96	1533	8.21	77.4	64.52
Peru 01	1113	8.94	96.07	88
Island 99	1569	8.95	92.93	69.9
Chile 99	1112	9.21	92.16	74.74
Belgium (Walloon) 99	1960	10.31	93.02	87.07
Poland 97	1981	10.53	59.86	26.56
Belgium (Flanders) 99	2179	12.02	99.07	98.64
Israel 96	1087	13.47	92.97	84.87
Australia96	1798	13.90	99.07	98.27
Spain 96	1198	14.44	90.71	78.63
Portugal 02	1206	14.66	75.76	38.57
Spain 00	1189	14.74	83.97	57.78
Sweden 98	1154	15.64	90.43	76.51
United Kingdom97	2753	17.47	85.51	71.26
South Korea 00	1100	18.27	85.97	88.03
Netherlands 98	2082	19.56	92.13	70.83
Peru 00	1102	19.60	94.92	92.13
New Zealand 96	3949	19.93	97.89	89.23
Hong Kong 98	673	21.40	74.38	66.49
Hungary 98	1504	22.30	77.2	49.83
Mexico 97	1753	24.94	77.5	69.07
Mexico 00	1992	28.43	96.36	90.67
Canada 97	1814	31.93	88.53	77.05
Lithuania 97	864	33.30	94.97	78.91
Slovenia 96	2031	33.43	80.19	64.02
Russia 99	1747	33.77	84.18	68.39
Hong Kong 00	996	34.12	63.86	43.84
Russia 00	1834	34.84	n.a.	n.a.
Rumania96	1171	36.68	94.4	85.21
Ukraine 98	1137	38.59	79.15	68.18
Taiwan 96	1198	52.17	91.35	92
Bulgaria 2001	998	58.80	86.6	85.63
Japan 96	1273	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Thailand 01	780	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

[1] Ideological Voters; [2] Unlocated Voters.

Yet, table 1 does not allow us to analyse the rates of unlocated voters in a longitudinal perspective. To solve it, from now on we will focus on our empirical case: democratic Spain. Figure 1 includes the time evolution of the share of unlocated voters and their turnout -as well as the ideological voters' turnout- during the last 7 democratic elections held in Spain (from 1982 to 2004).[5] The figure arises several facts. First, the level of unlocated voters did go down along the 80s until remaining stable around 20% in the middle of the 90s. This evolution seems to confirm the previous intuition that citizens become more accustomed to parties and ideologies when the democratic system cements into the society. On the other hand, levels of 20% without an ideological stance could be catching country-level effects mediated in the Spanish case by the long duration of the Francoist regime.[6]

Figure 1. Evolution of unlocated voters in Spain: 1982-2004
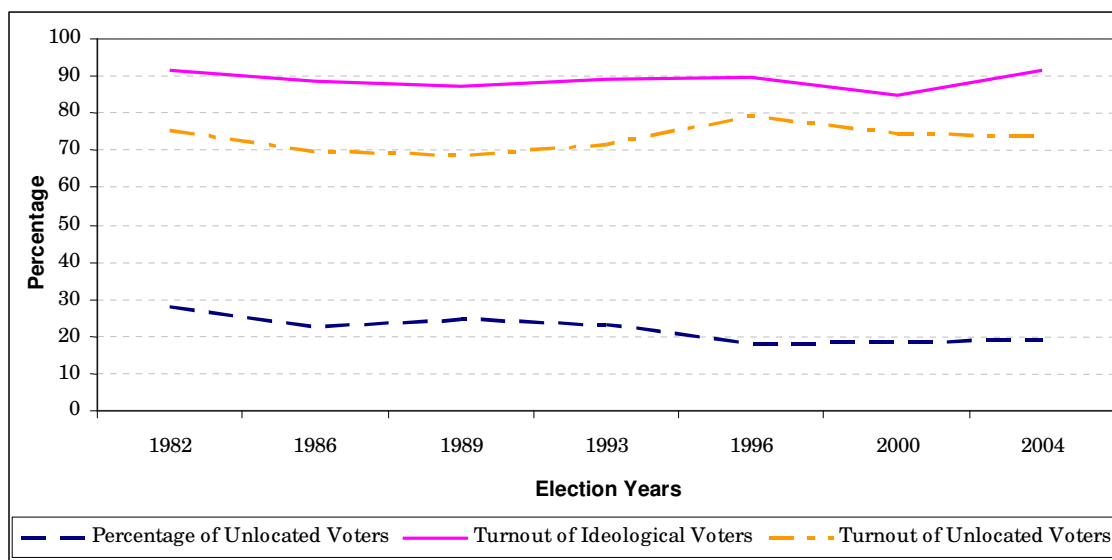
A second finding is that turnout levels manifest a 15-percent-point gap between ideological and non-ideological voters. The former exhibits systematic higher levels of turnout than the latter, something congruent with the observed pattern in table 1. The gap

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[5] See the appendix to find a complete list of the surveys used in each table.

[6] In figure 1 we use CIS data which reports about 4 percentage points more of unlocated voters in 1996 and 2000 than CSES data.

remains fairly stable during all period with the exception of 1996 and 2000 elections, where the gap is considerably reduced. However, unlocated voters thoroughly vote in levels above 70% in every election. In absolute terms, it means that around 14% of the votes come from unlocated voters in every election, which is somewhat lower than the average of CSES countries, but it is still a significant proportion. In brief, even small in numbers, unlocated voters still compose a relevant section of the electorate as to be brought into academic attention. In what follows we will try to analyse how they vote and why.

3. How do Unlocated Voters vote? Evidence from Democratic Spain

The results we have just presented point out that non-ideological voters have a potential significant influence on the electoral outcomes. However, unlocated voters will not become an important constituency unless they show a different voting behaviour compared with ideological voters. In this section we analyse whether the Spanish unlocated voters cast their ballot differently than the located ones. Thus, our null hypothesis will be that there is no difference between these two groups. If the null hypothesis is rejected we will have to provide plausible alternative hypothesis predicting the electoral behaviour of unlocated voters. Since there is no specific literature focused on this group of people we will need to rely on indirect research which we think may shed some light on the electoral patterns of this set of voters.

Table 2 provides initial evidence against the null hypothesis as it points out that non-ideological voters constitute a group that shares relevant socio-demographic traits. Logit models in this table show that unlocated voters are less educated and informed in all years except for 1979, where education has not a significant coefficient. Despite the fact that the literature regards ideology as a shortcut in order to save the cost of being informed, it seems that it requires some political awareness. The influence of sex is less clear. In almost all years the coefficient turns out to be positive, that is, women are more likely to be unlocated. However, we have only slight evidence as this coefficient is only significant in the half of our regressions. Finally, in most years the relation of age is curvilinear: it is firstly negative but

reaching the age about 45 years old the relation becomes positive. Therefore, younger and older people tend to be less ideological than middle ages.

If these socio-demographic differences turn to be influential in the voting behaviour we will expect that they vote in a different fashion than ideological voters.

Table 2. Logit models of not having an ideological self-location
by socio-demographic variables

Variables	1979	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000	2004
Sex	0.113	0.204	0.437***	0.397***	0.321***	-0.022	-0.017	0.091**
	0.083	*0.147*	*0.032*	*0.107*	*0.099*	*0.068*	*0.068*	*0.04*
Education	-0.018	-0.183***	-0.19***	-0.059*	-0.244***	-0.181***	-0.182***	-0.087***
	0.024	*0.048*	*0.011*	*0.033*	*0.07*	*0.028*	*0.028*	*0.017*
Information	-0.215***	-0.317***	-0.199***	-0.312***	-0.424***	-0.36***	-0.357***	-0.565***
	0.053	*0.027*	*0.006*	*0.017*	*0.025*	*0.014*	*0.014*	*0.013*
Age	0.006***	-0.054**	-0.014***	-0.042***	-0.032**	-0.0024	-0.019**	-0.013**
	0.002	*0.023*	*0.005*	*0.016*	*0.015*	*0.002*	*0.009*	*0.006*
Age2		0.001***	0.0002***	0.001***	0.0003**		0.0002*	0.0001**
		0.0002	*0.00005*	*0.0001*	*0.0002*		*0.0001*	*0.00006*
Constant	-1.667***	2.069***	0.474***	1.124***	1.413***	1.165***	1.491***	0.792***
	0.269	*0.671*	*0.145*	*0.463*	*0.411*	*0.197*	*0.273*	*0.157*
N	5362	1196	24989	2416	2488	5817	7398	22244
R-squared	0.011	0.174	0.099	0.175	0.131	0.134	0.133	0.131
Prob>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

This preliminary finding is confirmed in table 3, which records vote choice in every Spanish election (from 1979 to 2004) for both ideological and non-ideological voters.[7] According to the table, the latter voters systematically show a larger inclination to vote for the incumbent. In six out of eight elections the unlocated support of incumbents is over 45 percent. It only falls below this percentage in the two first elections. On the other side,

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[7] This table is built by following the same procedure used in Carabaña (2001). Basically, we weigh the results found in the postelectoral survey by the actual results of the election in order to avoid misreporting of the real vote due to bandwagoning with the winner.

located voters never exceed the 41 percent. In addition, in all elections but in 1982,[8] the party in government is always the political option most voted by non-ideological voters, even in 1996 and 2000 when the government is defeated. And more importantly, the vote share for the incumbent is higher for the unlocated voters in all elections than for their ideological counterparts. The gap between these two types of voters goes from 3.27 points in 1982 to 14.45 points in 1989. Remarkably, we see this incumbent advantage in governments of all ideologies: in left-wing governments (from 1982 to 1996), in right-wing governments (from 1996 to 2004) and in centre-based governments (1979-1982). As a matter of fact, unlocated voters tend to be more loyal to the party in office regardless of its ideology. Moreover, this effect still works during economic recession periods (for instance, 1993) as well as periods of economic growth (for instance, 2000). Finally, it is also interesting to see how this pattern keeps taking place in 1982, 1996 and 2004 elections, when the incumbent was defeated. The unlocated voter is more unwilling to take their support away from the defeated incumbent but once the new government is settled, he becomes again a more incumbent supporter.

Apart from the pro-incumbent bias, data show another relevant difference between these two groups. Unlocated voters have been always less interested in the leftist coalition, IU. It is especially noticeable in 1989 elections where the vote share of located voters is about four times the vote of unlocated voters. A possible explanation for that finding is the non-ideological electorate does not feel attracted by parties with a strong ideological platform. The reason why the category "other parties" does not show a clear different pattern between unlocated and located voters may be caused by the fact that behind this category there are nationalist parties such as CiU or PNV, which are incumbents at the regional level where they have real chances of winning in particular constituencies in national elections.[9]

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[8] Let's explain why the incumbent got such a contemptible fraction of votes in 1982. Simply put, the centrist party built from the middle-aged cadres coming from the last regime collapsed because of the existence of diverse leaders without common interests among them. Then, the spectacular decay of the governmental UCD was predicted by the electorate very far beforehand (Gunther & Hopkin 2002).

[9] We leave this hypothesis open for further research. Since the main focus of this paper is to look at the Spanish parliament, we do not consider plausible interactions between electoral territorially-based arenas that might have an influence on the electoral behaviour of unlocated voters. For instance, an unlocated voter weighing the regional arena stronger than the national arena could try to vote for the regional incumbent not only in regional elections but also in national ones.

Table 3. Vote for parties by ideological placement in the Spanish elections

	Vote	Ideological Voters	Unlocated Voters	Total
1979	*Incumbent* (UCD)	34.19	***39.68***	34.79
	PSOE	30.54	29.97	30.36
	PCE	10.85	9.96	10.76
	CD	6.10	5.60	6.05
	Others	18.32	15.80	18.04
1982	*Incumbent* (UCD-CDS)	9.04	***12.31***	9.47
	PSOE	47.42	46.72	47.33
	AP	25.65	*27.53*	25.89
	PCE	4.36	1.13	3.95
	Others	13.53	12.31	13.37
1986	*Incumbent* (PSOE)	41.07	***46.83***	41.75
	AP	24.62	24.55	24.61
	CDS	8.89	7.68	8.74
	IU	4.60	2.76	4.38
	Others	20.83	18.18	20.51
1989	*Incumbent* (PSOE)	38.02	***52.47***	39.87
	PP	26.86	19.88	25.96
	CDS	8.80	2.14	7.95
	IU	10.09	2.64	9.14
	Others	16.22	*22.87*	17.08
1993	*Incumbent* (PSOE)	37.81	***47.94***	39.07
	PP	35.69	30.97	35.10
	IU	10.28	5.37	9.67
	Others	16.22	15.71	16.16
1996	*Incumbent* (PSOE)	36.57	***46.95***	37.68
	PP	39.27	35.24	38.84
	IU	11.24	4.83	10.55
	Others	12.92	12.97	12.93
2000	*Incumbent* (PP)	41.85	***53.02***	43.07
	PSOE	33.58	28.63	33.04
	IU	8.62	2.24	7.92
	Others	15.96	16.12	15.97
2004	*Incumbent* (PP)	36.66	***45.38***	37.64
	PSOE	43.15	38.63	42.64
	IU	5.35	1.90	4.96
	Others	14.84	14.08	14.75

Data that we have just presented allow us to reject the null hypothesis: unlocated voters clearly do not behave in the same way as located voters when they cast their ballot. Moreover, table 3 also shows that there is a clear different pattern on voting behaviour among these two groups. The pro-incumbent bias of non-ideological voters is both significant and persistent over time.

Then, how can we account for this differential political behaviour? If voters do not invest in having an ideology to make up their political opinions and to assess politics in general, we have basically left out with other three alternative shortcuts. First, voters may pick up a ballot by weighing strongly the performance of the party in office (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981a, Ferejohn 1986; Lewis-Beck 1988; Manin 1997; Przeworski, Manin and Stokes 1999). Thus, positive assessments of the incumbent's performance will yield a vote for it. Second, voters may put their attention on the main traits of each candidate in the electoral race –to name only a few, if the candidate is knowledgeable, reliable or inspiring, and if the candidate performs a strong leadership within their ranks. As a matter of fact, better-equipped candidates will attract leadership-prone voters (King 2002; Wattenberger 1991). Third, those voters rejecting prior shortcuts may still own an enduring leaning toward some of the parties in competition (Campbell *et al* 1960; Schickler & Green 1997; Bartels 2000). Party Identification allows the parties to gather votes from partisans regardless of whether their performance was good enough, since the followers of a concrete party will always think that party rivals will do the job worse.

By building from those potential alternative shortcuts, we throw out three hypotheses that may explain the differences between located and unlocated voters. The first hypothesis comes from retrospective voting literature, where some authors consider that governments are less accountable to ideological voters because ideology constrains the effect of government performance on voting calculus. Therefore, unlocated voters would vote more for the incumbent because of their better evaluations of the incumbent's job in office. Although anecdotal evidence[10] puts some caution on this hypothesis, we will need better tests in order to determine its validity.

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[10] Unlocated voters show a pro-incumbent bias even in 1993 and 1996 when the economic performance of the social-democratic government was manifestly poor. For instance, in 1993 the Spanish economy was in its

The second hypothesis would emphasise that unlocated voters vote more for the incumbent because they give more importance to candidate evaluations than ideological voters. The mechanism would go as follows: voters without ideology will rely heavily on leader characteristics when voting. Provided that incumbents get more visibility than challengers, unlocated voters will turn out for the incumbent in higher numbers than for potential rivals. We already know that incumbents have always an advantage in terms of higher popularity than challengers as long as they control the political agenda and monitor the media. As a matter of fact, the unlocated propensity to vote for the incumbent could be driven by better evaluations of the incumbent's leadership and/or higher importance laid on leadership when voting.

Finally, the third hypothesis would underline that those not having ideology may still consider themselves as followers of concrete parties with the result of voting for them regardless of their performance in office. The argument is straightforward: to get information about politics is costly and hardly profitable. Subsequently, unlocated voters will prefer to invest in building a strong party identification by exchanging party loyalty for resources – whatever they are. Unfortunately, "party identification" has not been a topic extensively investigated in Europe, since this variable has been traditionally rejected under charges of being a pure correlate of the vote. In so being, we have not been able to collect enough data as to run models for the whole range of Spanish elections. Notwithstanding this caveat, we will present a couple of tests for this hypothesis.

In the following two sections we will present more extensively the hypotheses that we have just pointed out and we will test their empirical validity.

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worst moment with a negative growth of 1.2 points, one below the European Union average, and with the unemployment rate climbing up to 24 percent.

4. The effects of government performance

It is reasonable to think that voters with no ideology would rely in other types of shortcuts. As they report lower levels of information about politics (see table 2), the need of alternative shortcuts becomes even more important. Thus, a plausible hypothesis is that instead of using ideology as a shortcut, non-ideological voters decide to use government performance as a substitute in facilitating their voting decision. As accountability theories based on retrospective voting models focus on government performance as a sort of electoral shortcut, they may be helpful to throw light on how non-ideological voters behave.

In general, this field of research supports government's economic performance using the same kind of arguments present in the spatial theory of politics when explaining ideology as a shortcut. For instance, Kinder & Kiewiet hold that "since most citizens are indifferent to and generally poorly informed about much of what happens in political life what is required for them doing political judgements is much more tractable: merely that they form impressions of how the economy is performing, of what national problems seem the most pressing, and of how the incumbent administration is handling economic issues and problems" (1981: 156). In brief, individual evaluations of the incumbent's performance could do the same job as ideology currently does.

Precisely, for the way of reasoning implied in retrospective voting, this literature states that incumbents have an outstanding advantage relative to challengers, which is coherent with our results in table 3. To account for this finding almost all the authors rely on the same sorts of explanations: incumbents, either politicians or parties, have an observable record whereas challengers do not have it (Ragsdale 1981). Obviously, challengers trying to defeat the incumbent do not have the same weapons at their disposal.

Traditionally, all these accountability models have either overlooked or just consider ideology as a *control* variable. However recent research on accountability models has stood out very different conclusions. Stokes (1996) and Maravall & Przeworski (1998) in their application of the Stokes' model for the Spanish case have found that ideology mediates the relation between vote choice and government performance. Government responsibility of

economic conditions is filtered by voter's ideological lens: for instance, those voters closer to the government may look for exogenous causes to explain economic crisis and, contrarily, they may consider as an incumbent merit when the economy is in good health. Hence, governments can be rewarded or punished regardless of its actual performance in office when ideology is taken into account.

An implication of this theory is that we should expect that voters without ideological lens will follow a stronger pattern of economic voting. Therefore, governments should be more accountable to non-ideological voters for their performance. The arguments of these authors strengthen the hypothesis that a reasonable alternative heuristics for non-ideological voters may be incumbent performance.

Though, we have seen in the previous section that unlocated voters have a systematic incumbent bias even in economic crisis, which apparently seems incompatible with retrospective voting. One possible explanation is that these voters always report better evaluations of government performance and, as a result, they punish them in less extent. Table 4, which collects average evaluations of the incumbent's performance for the whole range of Spanish elections out of 1979,[11] clearly shows that this is not the case. In seven out of eight elections unlocated voters showed on average less positive evaluations than their counterparts –only in 1982 they plainly report a better opinion of the incumbent's job. No doubt this result *freezes* potential interpretations of the incumbent bias emphasising larger positive unlocated evaluations of the incumbent's performance.[12]

Yet, we need stronger statistical methods to convincingly show that being an unlocated voter really means something different from being a voter weighing incumbent's performance uppermost. Even though we have already illustrated that the incumbent bias

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[11] See foot note 13 below for a description of the data we used to build this table.

[12] A counter-critique would underline that unlocated voters might have fewer *better* evaluations and at the same time larger *mean* evaluations of the performance. For example, in 1986 ideological voters have a four-point percentual gap in positive evaluations of the incumbent ahead from non-ideological voters. However, they have on average an evaluation of 3.4 points, whereas unlocated voters take 3.6 on average. If we run test of mean differences for all the Elections we will come up with no significant positive results. In brief, unlocated voters do not hold better evaluations of the government's performance than ideological voters.

Table 4. Voter's evaluations of the incumbent's performance

Election year	Performance	Ideological voters	Unlocated voters	Total
1979	Can't complain	45.54	45.50	45.54
	Very serious	54.46	54.50	54.46
1982	Not government responsibility(a)	69.45	80.54	70.8
	Government responsibility	30.55	19.46	29.2
1986	Very good/Good	33.30	27.53	32.06
	Average	46.63	52.56	47.9
	Bad/Very bad	20.08	19.90	20.04
1989	Very good/Good	34.14	24.69	32.06
	Average	46.19	52.65	47.62
	Bad/Very bad	19.67	22.65	20.33
1993	Very good/Good	7.75	6.28	7.35
	Average	38.82	38.27	38.67
	Bad/Very bad	53.43	55.45	53.99
1996	Very good/Good	11.48	7.57	10.58
	Average	43.72	41.25	43.15
	Bad/Very bad	44.79	51.17	46.26
2000	Very good/Good	44.78	40.68	44.11
	Average	38.78	44.62	39.74
	Bad/Very bad	16.44	14.70	16.16
2004	Very good/Good	31.55	30.64	31.41
	Average	38.86	48.06	40.33
	Bad/Very bad	29.59	21.29	28.27

does not seem to be led by better unlocated evaluations of the incumbent's performance, more robust proofs will be presented below. Basically, we shall run statistical models of the vote for the incumbent by taking into account ideological placement as well as performance evaluation.[13] We shall do it in a three-step process: First, we shall demonstrate whether being

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[13] The post-electoral CIS surveys that we used in previous section do not have items on incumbent's performance. Thus, we had to recur to alternative data that includes *performance*: for 1982-2004 elections we use pre-electoral CIS surveys (see the appendix for its complete list) and for 1979 we use DATA survey. However, pre-electoral surveys do not go without fault: they report lower percentages of people voting at all – because of the "not decided yet" item. For this reason, we expect our results will be conservative with respect to the incumbent bias hypothesis, since potential unlocated voters may be part of the undecided group in higher numbers than potential ideological voters.

an unlocated voter still makes a difference on the odds of voting for the incumbent on its own (model A);[14] Second, we shall include individual evaluations of the government's performance in the model to check whether the individual effect of being an unlocated still remains (model B); Finally, we shall run several refinements of the last model to verify that our findings are robust enough (models C and D).

Models A[15] in table 5 confirm our previous finding that being an unlocated makes an influence on the odds of voting for the incumbent: 7 out of 8 elections report significant and positive coefficients. Only the 1982 model comes up with a non-significant coefficient for *unlocated*.

Once we have checked the reliability of the data, we will go back to the performance hypothesis. As indicated above, the literature on economic voting has assumed that voters usually take the incumbent's performance into account as a shortcut to cast their ballot. As a matter of fact, to have an ideological location would not enclose a big effect on the way in which people vote.

To test that, the second model (model B) for each election takes under control if the voter has an ideological position or does not and her evaluation of the incumbent's performance. Leaving model 1982B aside, only in model 1993B the effect of not being located in the ideological continuum disappears when incorporating individual evaluations of performance into the model. The rest of B models keep significant coefficients with the expected positive sign for the *unlocated*. Thus, we can be confident that being a non-ideological voter makes a difference in terms of higher odds of voting for the incumbent regardless of the huge effect that performance evaluations have on that probability.

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[14] As we indicated in foot note 13 above, use of preelectoral surveys could plausibly dwarf the incumbent effect that we found when working with postelectoral surveys. For this reason, our first model tests again this finding.

[15] From now on, all models run logit regressions with voting for the incumbent vs. vote for all other parties as their dependent variable. On the statistical premises of those models, see Long & Freese 2003.

Table 5. Logit models of voting for the incumbent by performance in the Spanish elections, 1979-2004

Elections	1979			1982			1986				1989		
Variables	1979A	1979B	1979C	1982A	1982B	1982C	1986A	1986B	1986C	1986D	1989A	1989B	1989C
Unlocated	0.277***	0.256**	0.142	-0.069	-0.183	-0.315	0.279***	0.417***	1.264***	0.387**	0.604***	0.726***	0.419
	0.109	*0.113*	*0.366*	0.396	0.490	1.759	*0.057*	*0.063*	*0.188*	0.184	*0.165*	*0.216*	*1.490*
Performance		-0.657***	-0.664***		0.281****	0.280***		0.905***	0.944***	0.320***		2.332***	2.324***
		0.068	*0.072*		0.097	0.098		*0.024*	*0.026*	0.024		*0.128*	*0.133*
Interaction			0.074			0.056			-0.355***	-0.032			0.100
			0.226			0.707			*0.074*	0.073			*0.478*
Constant	-0.348***	0.650***	0.661***	-1.929***	-2.685***	-2.682***	0.271***	-2.069***	-2.169***	-0.549***	0.130**	-7.350***	-7.324***
	0.035	*0.109*	*0.114*	0.122	0.279	0.281	*0.018*	*0.064*	*0.068*	0.064	*0.056*	*0.415*	*0.432*
N	3729	3650	3650	674	602	602	14071	13649	13649	13574	1484	1431	1431
Prob>Chi2	0.0111	0.0000	0.0000	0.861	0.019	0.048	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000	0.0002	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.0013	0.0199	0.0200	0.000	0.018	0.018	0.0013	0.0915	0.0927	0.012	0.0068	0.3445	0.3445

Elections	1993			1996			2000				2004		
Variables	1993A	1993B	1993C	1996A	1996B	1996C	2000A	2000B	2000C	2000D	2004A	2004B	2004C
Unlocated	0.276**	0.236	1.118**	0.441***	0.455***	0.956***	0.312***	0.447***	3.157***	-0.057	0.465***	0.418***	2.248***
	0.143	*0.160*	*0.510*	*0.081*	*0.090*	*0.323*	*0.083*	*0.106*	*0.505*	0.429	*0.057*	*0.080*	*0.442*
Performance		1.113***	1.174***		1.086***	1.119***		1.899***	2.018***	0.619***		2.695***	2.750***
		0.076	*0.085*		*0.045*	*0.050*		*0.057*	*0.063*	0.047		*0.043*	*0.046*
Interaction			-0.352*			-0.188*			-0.797***	0.178			-0.561***
			0.195			*0.117*			*0.145*	0.124			*0.133*
Constant	-0.430***	-3.195***	-3.352***	-0.616***	-3.529***	-3.620***	-0.169***	-6.670***	-7.086***	-2.405***	-0.358***	-9.029***	-9.213***
	0.058	*0.205*	*0.227*	*0.339*	*0.131*	*0.144*	*0.030*	*0.203*	*0.224*	0.173	*0.017*	*0.144*	*0.153*
N	1500	1486	1486	4572	4501	4501	5165	5007	5007	5007	14981	14831	14831
Prob>Chi2	0.0549	0.0000	0.0000	0	0.000	0.000	0.0002	0.0000	0.0000	0.000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.0018	0.1366	0.1382	0.0049	0.126	0.126	0.0020	0.2685	0.2724	0.038	0.0032	0.4594	0.4602

In spite of that, further proofs are necessary in order to make the *unlocated bias* more empirically robust. For instance, a defender of the performance hypothesis may claim that the key coefficient to look for is the interaction between *performance* and *unlocated*, since her theory would call for a higher effect of performance on those not having ideology. To check this claim we run C models. By building from B models, we incorporate the interactive effect of being an *unlocated* by *performance*. The results do not afford any empirical support for that expected higher effect of the performance evaluations on unlocated voters. Rather on the contrary, when significant, the effect of performance on the odds of voting for the incumbent for unlocated voters is lower.

For instance, by building from model 1986C we can simulate the odds of voting for the incumbent in that year. An ideological voter evaluating very positively the incumbent's performance has a probability of voting for the current government around 92%, while a non-ideological voter has only two more points ahead. Instead, an ideological voter with the most negative evaluation of the government has a 24% chance of voting for the incumbent, while a non-ideological voter with similar performance's evaluations shows a 32% probability. In other words, a two-point gap when the performance evaluation is very good turns out to be a nine-point gap when the evaluations are very bad. Therefore, unlocated voters seem to be more reluctant to relinquish from the incumbent files as long as the evaluations get worse -or just the way around: ideological voters show a steeper slope in their relationship between performance evaluations and odds for voting the incumbent than their non-ideological fellows.

It could be the case that performance evaluations of ideological voters are mediated by their party identification and their location in the ideological dimension. For instance, we may observe higher coefficients for ideological voters because performance evaluations are influenced by how voters are ideologically close to the party in government. Once we discount the projection effect of ideology and party identification on individual evaluations of the incumbent's performance, we would come up with clearly higher coefficients for the unlocated.

In order to check this, we finally run D models.[16] The results of these new two models confirm previous findings: once the projection effects of ideology and party identification likewise are discounted, performance does not have a bigger effect for those not having ideological positioning compared to those ideologically located. Figures 2 and 3 trace out the effect of performance (with and without projection effect discount –models D and C, respectively) on voting for the incumbent for both ideological and unlocated voters.

Figures 2 and 3 clearly show that if we do not take the projection effect into account the slope of ideological voters is bigger, which means that votes from ideological voters are more responsive to how government performs the economy. In other words, when the economy goes bad, voters with ideology have a lower probability to vote for the incumbent, but the opposite happens when the economy is in good health. However, the difference between our two groups is considerably reduced when we discount the projection effects from voter's economic performance evaluations. This is especially visible in the 1986 case, where the slope of the curve is virtually the same for both ideological and non-ideological voters. Hence, we can be confident to reject the hypothesis: non-ideological voters do not take performance much more into account when picking a ballot.

Figure 2. Odds of voting for the incumbent by performance, 1986

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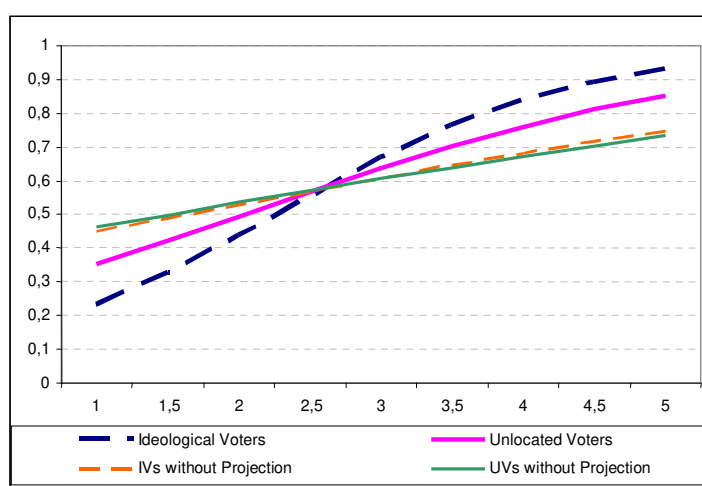
[16] Models D are only run in 1986 and 2000 because of the lack of a good proxy for party identification in the remaining years. The methodology used to discount the projection effects of party identification and ideology is explained in appendix A.

Figure 3. Odds of voting for the incumbent by performance, 2000
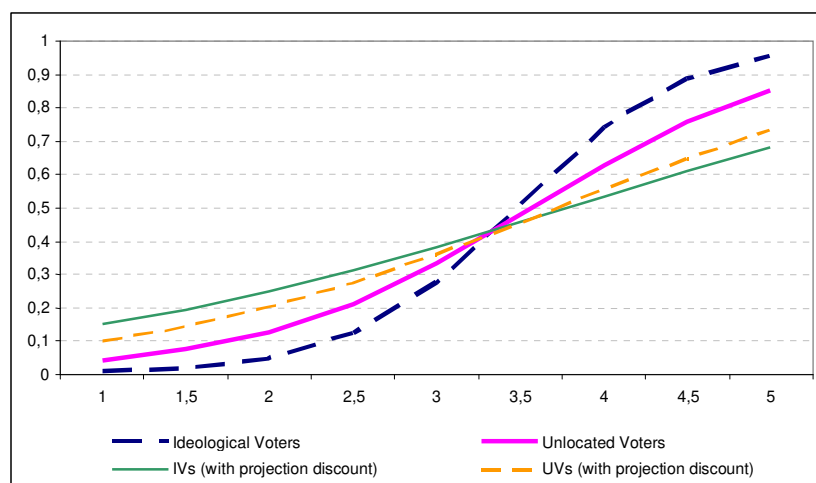
5. The effects of leadership and party identification

In this section, we will test if candidate evaluation and/or party identification may account for the incumbent bias that non-ideological voters persistently show. We will focus mainly on the effect of leadership on voting, since there is no enough data as to offer decisive results on the party identification hypothesis.

The literature on the effect of candidate evaluation on the vote is far from conclusive. On the one hand, several authors (Bartle 2005; King 2002; Wattenberger 1991) have emphasised the strong effect of leadership over those voters not using other relevant shortcuts to vote. On the other hand, mainstream electoral studies downgrade that effect by highlighting that the strong correlation between vote and candidate evaluation is a by-product of other underlying mechanisms not correctly captured by the models. In fact, according to this literature, candidates' traits have, at best, an indirect influence on the vote caused by respondent's more general political attitudes such as ideology, partisanship or evaluations about candidate performance (Bartels 2002).

A radical version of these mild effects of candidate's evaluations on voting is to neglect having any role at all (Brettschneider & Gabriel 2002), according to this view voters are

attached to more long-standing political phenomena than the simple opinion about candidate's character. However, once again, all of these studies either in favour or against are focused on ideological voters without saying anything specific about the implications of candidate-centered politics for non-ideological voters. Only Bartels, in the article cited mentions the possibility of stronger effects of candidate evaluations on voting for moderate voters (those not holding strong PID or who are ideologically moderates).

However, the empirical evidence seems to refute this hypothesis. As far as we know, only a recent article by Lavine and Gschwend (2005) deals with the very interrogating question of how voters with different levels of ideological capacity make up their minds in order to cast their vote. Using US data between 1984 and 2000, they found that voters use different shortcuts according to their level of political sophistication.[17] Even though issue voting is highly costly, ideology allows voters to form political opinions on different topics. Instead, non-ideological voters use PID and assessments of candidate character when deciding whom to vote.

In this section, our empirical analysis is designed to test to what extent these findings hold also in the Spanish case. Table 6 reproduces the same statistical procedure that we used in table 5. First, A models only include *unlocated* together with *leadership*. Second, B models test whether the effect of leadership is higher for non-ideological voters than for their ideological counterparts.

Again, our relevant independent variable (*unlocated*) turns out significant coefficients in 1986, 1989, 1996 and 2004 (models A). On the contrary, to be a voter without ideology does not make a difference on the odds of voting for the incumbent in the rest of elections – that is, 1979, 1993 and 2000- once we take voter evaluations of the incumbent under control. Given that performance already drove *unlocated* out of significancy in 1979 and 1993, only

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[17] They measured political sophistication through the concept of "ideological capacity", that is, the variation in the level of "think[ing] abstractly about politics and form policy attitudes and other political beliefs that cohere both with their abstract ideological identifications and with each other".

*Table 6. Logit models of voting for the incumbent by leadership evaluation
in the Spanish elections, 1979-2004*

Elections	1979		1982		1986		1989	
Variables	1979A	1979B	1982A	1982B	1986A	1986B	1989A	1989B
Unlocated	0.186	0.229	0.407	2.779***	0.492***	2.082***	0.784***	1.677**
	0.138	*0.550*	*0.555*	*1.161*	*0.092*	*0.259*	*0.263*	*0.861*
Leadership	0.645***	0.646***	0.523***	0.568***	0.694***	0.720***	0.853***	0.869***
	0.022	*0.023*	*0.067*	*0.073*	*0.013*	*0.014*	*0.045*	*0.048*
Interaction		-0.006		-.3767**		-.234***		-0.143
		0.073		*0.182*		*0.036*		*0.132*
Constant	-4.979***	-4.984***	-5.415***	-5.750***	-4.632***	-4.814***	-5.559***	-5.671***
	0.167	*0.175*	*0.508*	*0.559*	*0.094*	*0.101*	*0.316*	*0.337*
N	3673	3673	596	596	12191	12191	1357	1357
Prob>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R2	0.317	0.317	0.210	0.219	0.353	0.355	0.424	0.424

Elections	1993		1996		2000		2004	
Variables	1993A	1993B	1996A	1996B	2000A	2000B	2004A	2004B
Unlocated	-0.087	-0.667	0.404***	1.645***	0.172	1.656***	0.488***	3.103***
	0.225	*0.926*	*0.129*	*0.415*	*0.119*	*0.376*	*0.097*	*0.341*
Leadership	0.715***	0.705***	0.738***	0.769***	0.643***	0.670***	0.962***	0.998***
	0.039	*0.042*	*0.022*	*0.025*	*0.019*	*0.021*	*0.017*	*0.018*
Interaction		0.078		-0.165***		-0.210***		-0.379***
		0.120		*0.053*		*0.051*		*0.048*
Constant	-5.318***	-5.244***	-5.907***	-6.145***	-4.523***	-4.715***	-6.839***	-7.094***
	0.292	*0.310*	*0.178*	*0.200*	*0.140*	*0.152*	*0.120*	*0.128*
N	1377	1377	4354	4354	4887	4887	13634	13634
Prob>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R2	0.391	0.391	0.431	0.432	0.326	0.328	0.463	0.466

in 2000[18] *leadership* makes *unlocated* non-significant. For the rest of the elections, it is easy to observe that being an unlocated voter remains a robust predictor of voting for the incumbent.

Yet, before taking strong conclusions, we need to look at models B. It could be possible that both types of voters bear candidate evaluation into mind when voting, but those without

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[18] The 2000 model is very sensitive to how it is specified. If we incorporate performance into the model, then *unlocated* recovers a significant coefficient. The same happens when socio-demographic controls are included -see table 8, model 2000E.

ideological self-location give more weight to the evaluation of the incumbent's leadership. Once more we have to reject the hypothesis, since in no election did unlocated voters show a higher positive influence of the incumbent's evaluation on the odds of voting for the incumbent than ideological voters. In sum, we are confident that leadership evaluations of the incumbent do not depress the effect of having no ideology over the chances of picking the re-election ticket.

To finish with, we ask whether party identification can bring down the effect of *unlocated*. We recognise that "party identification" works as a *second-best* type of shortcut for voters willing to vote without spending too many resources in political information. However, there are important reasons to be cautious with this shortcut, at least in the European context where party identification tends to vary much more than in the US context and there is also a high correlation between vote recall and party identification (Barnes 1990).

First, voters without ideology exhibit strong lack of "party identification". That is true for all the countries included in the CSES database –with the only exception of 1997 Great Britain, 2000 Mexico, 1996 Australia, and 1996 Israel- as well as for Spain.[19] Second, practical matters prevent us from analysing party identification in Spain due to the high correlation between vote and party identification on the one hand (for instance, in 2000 only 0.79% out of all socialist partisans did not vote for their party); and the absence of good items in Spanish surveys to study "party identification" on the other. Only the 1986 and 2000 preelectoral surveys include clear items on that topic. In both of them, the Spanish unlocated voters openly present lower numbers of party identification than ideological voters (for instance, in 2000 three out of four unlocated voters did not manifest to have "party identification" opposite to half of ideological voters). All these caveats arise doubts on the potential results coming from the use of this shortcut with the data available. However, we still run models for both elections that are included in table 7.

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[19] For instance, in 2000 Spain only 58% of the electorate did recognise to have a party leaning. While 63% of ideological voters reported to have party identification, this figure went down to 31% for unlocated voters.

Table 7. Logit models of voting for the incumbent by party identification, 1986 and 2000

Variables	1986pid	2000pid
Unlocated	0.947***	0.506***
	(0.072)	(0.098)
Pro-govn Partisans	3.351***	5.226***
	(0.056)	(0.339)
Anti-govn Partisans	-3.304***	-3.256***
	(0.119)	(0.205)
Constant	-0.852***	-0.425***
	(0.034)	(0.040)
N	14071	5165
Prob>Chi2	0.000	0.000
R2	0.464	0.376

Doubtless to say, the incorporation of Party Identification in the 1986 and 2000 models pushes extraordinarily up the general fit of the models, which is partial evidence of high correlation between being a partisan and to vote for your favourite party. Despite that better fit, *unlocated* still works in the expected direction and with a very significant coefficient. In few words, even though we take Party Identification under control, voters without ideological leanings tend to vote for the incumbent in higher numbers than their ideological counterparts.

6. The incumbency advantage: the effects of education and information

How can we account for this incumbent bias pattern of voting if it is not explained by the main shortcuts? We tackle this question in this last empirical section.

There are some interesting works devoted to explaining the pro-incumbent bias effect in American politics that give us interesting insights applicable to non-ideological voters. A considerable amount of this literature use aggregate data in order to find which specific government resources (i.e. case-work services, transfers, informational saliency) explain his

advantage over the challenger (Mayhew 1974, Cover 1977, Fiorina 1981b, Cox & Morgenstern 1995). However, these findings usually cannot shed much light on what particular characteristics of unlocated voters make them more biased toward the government.

Instead Erikson's work (1972) looks more useful, regardless of still working with aggregate data. He considers that the increase of independent voters in the 60s may be behind the rise of the incumbency advantage in the US. Indeed, the lack of partisan attachments would lead to the enhancement of the incumbent's visibility in voter decisions (172: 1240). This finding has been more rigorously confirmed by investigations at the individual level, either using cross-sectional data (Ferejohn 1977; Cox & Katz 1996) or panel data (Romero and Sanders 1994). A plausible implication is that the same may be said for those with no ideological attachments, as long as we know political competition in Europe is made up around ideology attachments rather than party identification (Fuchs and Klingemann 1989).

Finally, Bartels (1996) finds a very interesting pattern of electoral behaviour among less informed voters for the American context. He stands out that relatively uninformed voters are more likely, other things being equal, to support parties in government and Democrats. On average, Democrats perform almost two percentage points better and incumbents do almost five percentage points better than they would if all voters in presidential elections were, in fact, fully informed. He suggests that perhaps supporting the incumbent is simply a kind of natural default option for voters too uninformed to compare the candidates on their merits. And his conclusions point to the same directions that ours: "Whatever the sources of the aggregate discrepancies between actual vote choice and hypothetical *fully informed* vote choice may be, however, they suggest very clearly that political ignorance has systematic and significant political consequences."(1996: 220)

If Erikson considers that being non-partisan has an impact *per se* on incumbent saliency and electoral advantage, Bartels finds a possible causal chain between them. It may be possible that non-partisan voters have lower information levels which it would explain why they tend to vote more for the incumbent. The parallelism with the unlocated voters strongly emerges as we take into account that this type of voters are less educated and informed about politics (see table 2).

In models E, we include personal characteristics (sex, age, education and information) together with *performance*, *leadership* and *party identification*.[20] We are especially interested in picking up the effect of political information: either directly (with the "information" variable) or indirectly (through education levels). If we hypothesize that the incumbent bias of non-ideological voters is led by their lack of information, then we should expect the *unlocated* coefficient to become non significant.

The results included in table 8 do not show a clear pattern. In most elections (1986, 1989, 2000 and 2004) the incumbency bias of unlocated voters remains significant, but the opposite occurs in the 1979 and 1996 elections.[21] In these latter elections, the disappearance of the unlocated effect cannot be due to *political information* since this variable is not significant. Instead, *age* and *education* stand out as the relevant variables in both elections. Data supports Bartels' hypothesis in the sense that less political knowledge (*information*) inflates the odds of voting for the incumbent information.[22] But results also confirm that not being constrained by ideological positions enhances on its own the strength of the incumbent as Erickson would predict for non partisan voters.

The results thus do not seem to clarify the causal mechanism that is behind the relation of not having an ideology and voting for the incumbent. It is difficult to think about governmental-particularised benefits or services such as transfers or constituency casework, as plentifully focused to non-ideological voters. They tend to be older people, which imply that they are net receptors of pensions and other social transfers. But this is not what is behind the incumbent bias. Elderly people vote more for the incumbent in most elections, except for the 1986 and 1989 elections where, surprisingly, the relation is reversed. However, age is only influential in dropping the significance of unlocated variable in a couple of elections (1979 and 1996), though with the support of other variables. Neither can unemployment

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[20] A detailed account of how variables are built is included in the appendix.

[21] Additionally, in a couple of elections *unlocated* reports non-significant coefficients either when on its own (1982) or when taking performance under control (1993).

[22] This result is much more robust for the PSOE-based governments than for the PP ones, which points to plausible different socio-demographic profiles of the unlocated in those long government periods.

Table 8. Voting for the incumbent by taking social characteristics under control

	1979E	1982E	1986E	1989E	1993E	1996E	2000E	2004E
Unlocated	0.101	0.577	0.736***	0.633***	-0.326	0.091	0.331**	0.379***
	0.146	*0.569*	0.112	*0.289*	*0.247*	*0.176*	0.146	*0.118*
Performance	-0.210***	0.280***	0.428***	1.395***	0.571***	0.686***	0.938***	2.101***
	0.088	*0.123*	0.042	*0.152*	*0.102*	*0.074*	0.081	*0.053*
Leadership	0.611***	0.490***	0.456***	0.648***	0.666***	0.681***	0.413***	0.713***
	0.023	*0.073*	0.016	*0.050*	*0.041*	*0.029*	0.025	*0.020*
	0.092	*0.317*	0.065	*0.173*	*0.157*	*0.111*	0.096	*0.063*
Age	0.020***	0.020**	-0.018***	-0.020***	-0.002	-0.004	0.003	0.000
	0.003	*0.010*	0.002	*0.006*	*0.005*	*0.003*	0.003	*0.002*
Education	0.021	-0.050	-0.248***	-0.159***	-0.479***	-0.370***	0.004	-0.027
	0.026	*0.083*	0.020	*0.050*	*0.103*	*0.068*	0.035	*0.024*
Information	-0.254***	0.036	-0.052***	-0.111**	-0.313***	-0.404*	-0.033	-0.006
	0.059	*0.309*	0.017	*0.057*	*0.089*	*0.229*	0.031	*0.024*
Pro-govnt Partisans			2.660***				4.794***	
			0.067				*0.363*	
Pro-oppo Partisans			-2.998***				-2.816***	
			0.138				*0.221*	
Sex	0.170911*	0.252	0.090	0.031	0.066	0.277***	0.283***	0.135***
Constant	-4.982***	-7.160***	-2.979***	-6.480***	-3.981***	-5.534***	-6.720***	-1.207***
	0.378	*2.430*	0.261	*0.842*	*0.702*	*1.002*	0.437	*0.287*
N	3552	554	11793	1318	1364	2968	4782	12755
Prob>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R2	0.336	0.227	0.593	0.500	0.432	0.434	0.558	0.599

benefits explain incumbency bias as non-ideological voters do not have a different propensity to being unemployed.[23]

A possible alternative explanation would say that this bias is not caused by the lack of information but by the source of information that unlocated voters use. It may be the case that these voters are more likely to pay attention to those media biased toward the incumbent. In

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[23] Voters with no ideology are underrepresented within employed population, but this is not due to unemployment but to retired people and housewives (or husbands). Data is available on request.

the Spanish case, for instance, there is some evidence that goes in that direction. Table 9 reports TV channel preferences of Spanish voters in two different years, 1993 and 2004.[24] It is interesting to see that unlocated voters are more prone to watch those channels that favour the government. In 1993, when the socialist PSOE was in office, unlocated voters were more likely to watch the pro-governmental public station (TVE1). In contrast, the pro-conservative Antena3 channel was more likely to be watched by located voters. Similar results come out from 2004, when government was held by the conservative PP. In this year also appears a correlation between unlocated voters and pro-incumbent media.

Table 9. TV audience and party favouritism according to the electorate

	Tv watched by…		Tv favours…		
	Located	Unlocated	PP	PSOE	Others
TVE1					
1993	59	65.4	2	97.3	0.67
2004	40.2	46.4	88.1	7.6	4.3
TELE5					
1993	11.5	11.5	17.65	82.35	0
2004	40.7	29.72	23.3	72.5	4.2
ANTENA3					
1993	23	13.5	75.9	24.1	0
2004	15.6	21	74	20	6
OTHERS					
1993	6.5	9.6	0	14.3	85.7
2004	3.4	2.8	0	62.5	37.5

There is evidence elsewhere that the electoral influence of the media is especially important for those voters with weak ideological attitudes (Gunther, Montero and Wert,

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[24] See appendix on data used in this table. In these surveys, people are asked about channel preferences and about which political party favour them. We cannot complete the series for other years because there is no survey apart from these two that contain the suitable data.

1999). Therefore, the potential influence of this incumbent-biased media on unlocated voters is especially worth taking into consideration.

However, it is difficult to explain why this pattern occurs. It is reasonable to think that they prefer TVE1 because unlocated voters are older people, who have always been loyal to the first national channel. But it is less clear the patterns that we found for private-channel preferences. Perhaps we might seek the answer in the pro-governmental behaviour of those private TV stations in different time-periods. Thus, and according to the interviewed, while Telecinco showed a clear-cut support for the PSOE government in 1993, Antena3 did the same with respect to the PP government in 2004; exactly the same bias that we found in the TV patterns of the unlocated.

In so doing, it looks as if non-ideological voters were able to follow the steps of the current government until watching those channels closer to it. In other words, unlocated voters would update their channel preferences by taking into account which party takes over the government. In that sense, channel preference would be a by-product of party preference.

The results appearing in this section do not clearly show the causal mechanism that is behind the incumbency bias of non-ideological voters. In some election years it can be explained by differential levels of information, education and age. However, most years remain with no answer. Further research has to focus on which unmeasured incumbency resources make him more visible for unlocated voters compared with their counterparts. But it could be the case that this incumbency bias is not related with governmental resources or strategies, but instead it may essentially be voter attitude's related. As Mayhew (1974) hypothesised "incumbency cue" may be a plausible alternative for voters that lack party identification. Possibly, the absence of ideology may lead to the same outcome.

7. Conclusions

This article started from the idea that electoral studies have to pay more attention to those voters having no ideology. We saw that the numerical relevance of this group varies across countries, but in most of them they are sufficient as to deserve the study of their electoral behaviour. Focusing in the electoral patterns of Spanish non-ideological citizens we found that they tend to vote more for the party in government. This incumbency bias has taken place in all but one Spanish election since democracy came back in 1979 regardless of the ideological tendency of the party in office. As non-ideological voters represent about one fifth of the Spanish electorate, this bias has important implications for the chances of government re-election.

We have tested if alternative shortcuts could account for the way in which unlocated voters vote. Concretely, we have considered the effects of the incumbent's economic performance and leadership evaluation and party identification on the odds of voting for the incumbent. On the one hand, we do not find conclusive evidence that the pro-incumbent bias of non-ideological voters is a statistical artefact that disappears when bringing those alternative shortcuts into the models.

On the other hand, we do not find support for the hypothesis that non-ideological voters take incumbent performance or candidate evaluation more into account than their ideological counterparts when they vote. The lack of the ideological shortcut does not seem to push these voters to use these heuristics in a differential fashion.

We neither find support that behind this behaviour of non-ideological voters lies the lack of political information as Bartels suggests for explaining the incumbency bias in American politics. However, there is some tentative evidence that this group of voters tend to watch TV channels that favours the government. This fact points out that there may be some factors that we cannot observe that make governments more visible to citizens without ideology.

It is not surprising for us that non-ideological voters behave differently as several findings in political science have proved the key position of ideology in the vote choice. Hence, it does not seem implausible to think that having no ideology apparently must have some implication in how voters rationalize their decisions in politics. What is more puzzling is the specific pattern that emerges from the Spanish case. As the incumbency advantage persist in most years after introducing our controls, many questions remain without answer. Future research has to continue exploring what specific features allow governments to be more attractive to non-ideological voters and what kind of heuristics these voters have in their minds when they vote for the incumbent. The research agenda must not be limited to Spain; it is important to find out whether this incumbent bias can be generalised to other countries or if it is rather a "country effect". But, as we already know that ideology has analogous implications on political behaviour of different countries, it is reasonable to expect the same with the lack of ideology.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Discounting party identification and ideology on incumbent performance evaluations

In model C, where the interaction between government performance and unlocated is introduced, we have found the counterintuitive result that the government is not more accountable to non-ideological voters. Besides, some models report that the effect of performance is even significantly higher for ideological voters. We hypothesize that this fact may be due to a projection effect. In order to solve these problems we discount both the effect of ideology and party identification in the following way:

Ideology. In order to discount the distortion caused by ideology on government performance we need to make an assumption of how performance is biased by this variable. The method and assumption that we use is inspired in Merrill and Grofman (1999) work. We assume that the distortion of government performance is a linear function of ideological dissimilarity between government and voter ideology. Formally:

$$\text{Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times (|Inc_i - V_i|) \qquad (1)$$

Inc_i is the party in government placement on left/right scale reported by individual i and V_i is the self-placement in the same scale. The coefficient β_1 represents the distortion effect caused by ideology. As shown in expression 2, we obtain the unbiased government performance by deducting the distortion that we have found from the original performance variable:

$$\text{Unbiased Performance} = \text{Performance} - \beta_1 \times (|Inc_i - V_i|) \qquad (2)$$

As unlocated voters have no reason to bias government performance we impute them the value 0 in the ideological distance variable so that β_1 effect is annulled. An implication of our assumption is that those with the same ideology as the government evaluate incumbent performance with no bias. It may be though that it would be more realistic to place the unbiased voter in another position, but (leaving aside the difficulty to find a plausible

placement) the alternatives make the expression much more complicated. And, in any case, the essential assumption holds: bias is produced by party and voter ideological dissonance.

Party ID. Here consider that the unbiased government performance value is the one that results from doing the counterfactual that voter has no party identification. We first estimate the model (3) where performance is the dependent variable and party identification is the independent variable, with having no party identification as base category.

$$\text{Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{IDinc} + \beta_2 \times \text{IDoppo} \qquad (3)$$

B1 and B2 represent the bias caused by government and opposition party identification respectively. As before, we deduct these coefficients from the original incumbent performance variable (see expression 4) .People with no party identification are assumed to have no bias and, hence, we keep the original values.

$$\text{Unbiased Performance} = \text{Performance} - \beta_1 \times \text{IDinc} - \beta_2 \times \text{IDoppo} \qquad (4)$$

DATA AND VARIABLE-BUILDING APPENDIX

Surveys used in this paper

In table 1. Data from Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).

In figure 1 and tables 2-3. Post-electoral surveys of Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) for 1982, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000 and 2004 (catalogue survey numbers 1327, 1542, 1842, 2061, 2210, 2384 and 2559 -respectively) and the post-electoral survey of DATA for 1979.

In tables 4-8 and figures 2 and 3. Pre-electoral CIS surveys for 1982, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000 and 2004 (catalogue survey numbers 1325, 1526, 1838, 2059, 2207, 2382 and 2555 -respectively) and for 1979 we use DATA survey.

In table 9. Spanish national sample for 1993 of the Cross-national election study project (CNEP) and Post-electoral data of Demoscopia 2004.

Variable construction

Non-ideological voter (unlocated). For all surveys we dichotomized self-placement in 1-10 ideological scale where the answers "don't know" and "don't answer" become value 1 and the remaining values are coded as value 0. The original question in the survey is formulated as following: "When we talk about politics we usually use the terms left and right. In this card [where it shows a ten point scale] there are different boxes that go form left to right. In which box would you place yourself?"

Political Information. Index of main party leader knowledge where 1 means that no leader was recognised and maximum value means knowledge of all leaders. The highest value changes across surveys: 10 in 1986, 9 in 1982 and 1989, 8 in 2000 and 2004, 7 in 1979, 6 in 1993 and 4 in 1996. The original question in the survey is formulated as following: "Now I will quote some names of different political leaders. I would like you to tell me if you

know them and to score their work. Score them from 0 to 10, regarding that 0 means very bad and 10 means very good".

Performance. Variable based on voter's evaluations of the national economic performance measured on a scale from 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad). The orginal question in the survey is formulated as following: "Focusing on the current general economic situation of Spain, would you describe it as very good, good, regular, bad or very bad?"

Sex. Dichotomous variable where female is coded as 1 and male is coded as 0**.**

Age. Continuous variable where the minimum value is 18 years old.

Education. Continuous variable where that ranges from 1 to 6 (where 1 means no studies, 2 means primary school, 3 means high school, 4 means occupational training, 5 means university studies (3years degree) and 6 means university studies (5 years degree). The original question in the survey is formulated as following: "Which are the official studies of higher level that you have?"

Leadership. Variable (from 0 to 10) that evaluates the political performance of the leader of the party in government, which in Spain have been always the president of the government as well. For constructing this variable we used the same survey question as for *Political Information.*

Party identification. Dichotomous variable where 1 means that the voter is identified with the party and 0 that she is not. For 1986 we use the survey question: "I will give you some political parties. I would like you to tell me if you feel very close, close, indifferent, far or very far from each party". We code as being identified of the party if the voter feels close or very close to the party. For 2000, the survey item is as follows: Would you mind telling me if you think close to some party and whom? Those recognising themselves as close to the party in office or to the main oppositional party are coded as 1 in "pro-government partisans" and "anti-government partisans" respectively.

Incumbent. Variable takes on value 1 whenever the interviewed cast a ballot for the current party in office. Otherwise, 0 (we considered as missing cases those not turning out). As there have not been formal coalitional governments in Spain, we have not had trouble with the definition of who holds the incumbency.

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