

# The gender perspective contribution in explaining the abstention rate: a comparison among Italy, France and Germany

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## Introduction

The electoral participation is the only political experience shared by all the population that can be compared across countries: a very interesting feature for political science researchers.

Vote is both the starting and the ending point of every democracy system; monitoring electoral participation is very important, because democracy necessarily implicates and needs citizens' participation. If citizens do not have an hand in political things (especially elections) democracy is exposed to weakening risks (Pasquino 1983).

The connection between democracy and electoral participation is more complex as Lipset (1960) suggests. It is not correct that high electoral participation rate are always a good thing: an high participation rate in the elections is, or could be, a symptom of society's division and political conflict. So, raised abstention rates, far from be a negative signal, indicate stability and a society without (or with a little) strife.

If we could consider the decision to abstain as individual, maybe Lipset's arguments can work. But as Lijphart (1997) underlines "*low voter turnout is a serious democratic problem*", above all because the differences in the level of electoral participation are not randomly distributed, but affected by a systematic bias. Furthermore, democracy is base on equal rights (and opportunities) for all citizens, apart from census, religion, race and gender. L'elettorato attivo e passivo non ha ancora compiuto un secolo, even in Europe.

In European countries, until the '80s, the abstention rates was stable, not very high and not decisive for the electoral results (Montero 1984, Topf 1995).

The huge and slow changes in western societies (political transformation, media revolution, change in attitudes, feelings and perspectives) etched in the political behavior too (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997). Actually, in the last twenty-five years, with the increase of abstention rate in Europe, it emerged that abstention can be a witting decision.

## Abstention

The electors who decide to do not vote increased and became an interesting phenomenon which needed to be analyzed. And, by no means, it is worth to study women's behavior regarding vote, la loro propensione ad affermare un diritto relativamente recente.

The three most employed abstention dichotomies suggested by literature are:

- against one's will/picking abstention;
- apathy/ voice abstention;
- floating/ permanent abstention.

It is a big mistake to suppose that non-voting it is always an out-and-out decision. A portion of electors, the 20% of all who abstain (Manheimer and Sani 2001), are prevent from voting by circumstances beyond one's control (invalid, sick, very old people, people resident elsewhere etc). This quota was all along present, and it is not avoidable (in fact it was present in regimes with compulsory vote too).

Instead, the picking abstention is often a consequence of circumstances, and it has an evident political meaning. In fact it is determined by the type of election (presidential and parliament election have more participation), the candidates' credibility, but also by a more general disaffection and a loss of legitimacy of relations between citizens and institutions.

Indeed, when abstention is a witting choice, the main motivations are apathy or protest (that Hirschman calls *voice*).

Abstention caused by apathy is caused by the distance from politics that a lot of citizens feel (Sani 2000). For these citizens politics is not so relevant, and they pay more attention to other aspects of their life, as job, family, relationships, religion etc. They are not hostile to politics, but simply indifferent. There are three main explications for this indifference:

**apathy as expression of citizens' distance from politics** because of several socio-economic, cultural, gender, demographic reasons (Milbrath 1965, Milbrath e Goel 1977). In this case the exit from "electoral market" tends to be stable (Ferrarotti 1989);

**apathy as consequence of post-modern culture** , which is a consequence of societies with high wealth. The problem is that values which legitimate the social system and the individual happiness seeking do not fit anymore (Fuchs and Klingeman 1995);

**apathy as crises of parties' ability in representing and mobilizing people**  
: the electors do no attend parties and other organizations, then they do not learn to participate (Corbetta and Parisi 1987)

We can advance also that, for women, apathy could be generated from a minore presenza nelle liste elettorali; oppure, viceversa, their disinterest in politics could be the origin of a minor presence in parties.

Things radically change if the electors decide to do not vote to protest against parties or institutions. In this case the abstention becomes a way to express the

own thought and evaluation about political picture. In this sense, to abstain is a proper political action that an elector can choose among others (Kaase and March 1979).

In this case too it is possible to categorize this voice abstention:

**ideological abstention** : it shows in citizens with no political views, who is against all political field (Corbetta 2000);

**punitive abstention** : when an elector can't trust any party or candidate, or when the favorite party has not chances to win (Mannheimer and Sani 2000);

**abstention as the first step to modify political preferences** , as asserted by Nohlen and Sturm (1983).

To recover people who do not vote to protest it is not impossible, but it is harder than to recover the one do not vote because of apathy. As we said, it is not infrequent that a either who do not vote in one election, can decide to do it the following time. These are defined *floating* voters, different from voters who permanently abstain (Lancelot 1968). The indecision of floating voters depends on situation details (i.e. the type of election), and they are often decisive for the elections results.

Some Italian researches (Cuturi, Sampugnaro, Tomaselli 2000, Segatti 2000, Legnante e Segatti 2001) find that the socio-demographic profile of floating voters is different from the profile of people who permanently abstain: permanent no voters are younger, women, less educated, poorer, and less involved in politics than others.

European abstention has grown in the last 25 years because of the increase of people who willfully decide to do not vote.

At the present, the European abstention average is around 18%, far from the 50% of United States (or Switzerland, the only case in Europe). But the fluctuation range is wide: from the 8% of Belgium to the 40% of France.

Classifying European countries on the basis of their abstention rates, it is possible to identify four profiles (Raniolo 2000):

- high participation countries: Belgium, Luxemburg, Austria, Italy, Denmark, where abstention rates are around the European average;
- instable countries: Great Britain, Finland, Spain, France, where there are high rates of abstention and great fluctuation in these rates between elections;
- stable abstention countries: Greece, Norway, Ireland, where the abstention rate is around the 20%;
- turbulent countries: Germany, Sweden, Holland, Portugal, where the transformations of the last twenty years bring about a wide exchange of votes between voters and no voters.

## Gender abstention

Since the beginning of right to vote recognition, women participation in elections has been always lower than the men's one. The classical literature explained this result as a combination of psychological and sociological causes, in which the sexual division of roles confined women in the private sphere, leaving men in the public one, and especially in politics. However in the last years elections results showed the reduction of gender gap in abstention<sup>1</sup>, so that recent studies stated the non direct connection between abstention and gender. An analysis at the end of 90's in 19 countries (Norris et. al 2003) confirmed this trend, so that Norway had a female participation rate significantly higher than men, in Germany, Great Britain and Spain men and women abstention rates were very close, and in all countries there was an inversion in the youngest ages, female children vote more then their mothers.

Many researchers (for example, CITARE- **NON LO SO**) stated that in the last years the abstention was not related to gender but to structural and cultural changes experimented. First of all, women entrance in the labour force gave them the possibility to achieve an independent economic status which promote the creation of an autonomous political identity, secondly the revision of classical sex division roles, due above all to choices in personal career (such as marriage delay or births reductions), moreover with better levels of education women started participating actively in politics also entering in governments (even if with less power than men).

From a cultural point of view, as underlined by Norris and Inglehart (2003), the youngest generation of women who experiment better conditions of life (more welfare after the war) adhere more easily to new post-material values dealing with sexual liberation and equal opportunities, very close to women sensibility and interest.

## Research questions

In this paper we want to analyse the electoral abstention phenomenon trough the gender perspective. The aim is try to understand how the women abstention can contribute to explain the general abstention in elections. The context chosen for the study is Europe, specifically three western countries: Germany, France and Italy. The choice is justified by two main reasons, the first is that, as literature described above, the three countries represent three different profile of abstention: Germany is one of the so called turbulent countries; France is instable, while in Italy there is a great participation on elections. The second reason is also the different situation of the countries in relation to the women participation in government: in Germany the present chancellor is a woman, Angela Merkel, in France in the last elections for the first time a woman, Ségolène Royal, though not winning, submitted to the elections and she was the first woman candidate who overcome the first ballot for the election as President of the Republic, and finally Italy which can be considered a borderline case, not only because a woman has never been elected at the top of the country, but also because the Parliament has a proportion of women under the European average, and now even less than first elections after Second World War.

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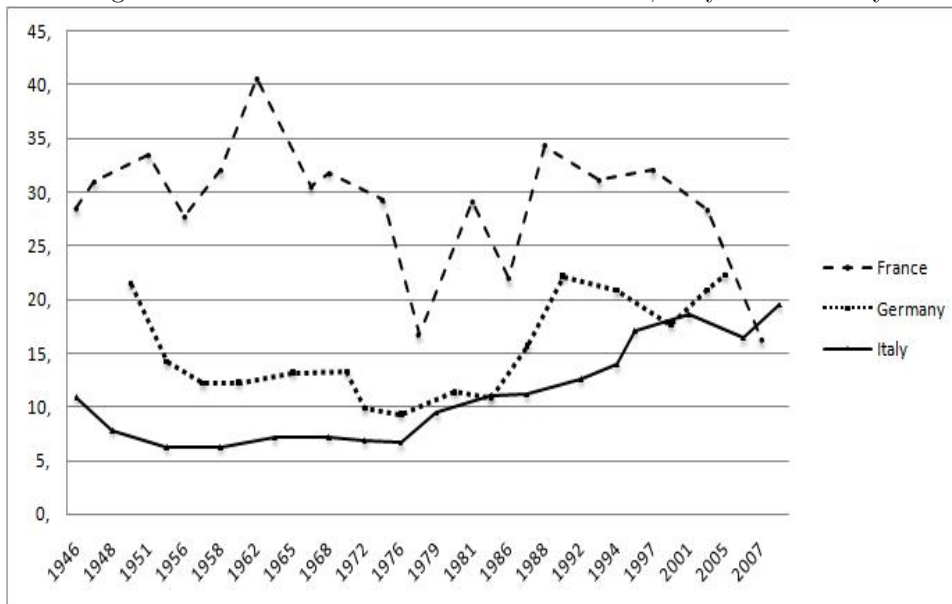
<sup>1</sup>It remained more or less stable for less educated and old women only.

## The countries

Even at a first glance, abstention rate in political elections shows very different patterns in Germany, Italy and France, as shown in Fig.1. France has a very instable profile, Germany has become turbulent and Italy has lower abstention rate. Since the post-war period the electoral participation in Italy has been very high. Among Western countries Italy showed always one of the lowest abstention rate: starting from the 1946, in fact, it never went over the 6-7% of voters, so that the abstention was considered as a sort of “physiological” phenomenon.

Things changed in the last thirty years, since the end of 70’s in which non-vote has increased almost constantly (the only exception was 2006 elections). It was clear that the abstention, as well as not valid votes<sup>2</sup>, was not a marginal aspect, and it assumed a great importance on the analysis of elections results<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 1: Trend in the abstention rate in France, Italy and Germany



It is worth to recall that in Italy 1946 referendum (monarchy or republic) was the first time that women could vote, while in France women vote since 1944 and in Germany from 1917. A complete renovation of parties and candidates took place in Italy and Germany in the years immediately after Second World War, and in Italy women were more represented than today in Parliament.

In the fig.1 it is possible to observe that the electoral participation trend in Italy is divided into two periods of 30 years: the first one from 1946 to 1976, with an abstention rate around 6,6%, and from 1979 to 2008, when abstention start to increase, to arrive to the record of 19,5 % in the last elections.

<sup>2</sup>Not valid votes are “schede bianche e nulle”.

<sup>3</sup>Obviously the phenomenon presented geographical differences. North of Italy showed since the first elections after war higher rates of participation in elections. However after the 1979, and above all in 2001, higher levels of abstention were registered more in north regions than in others, especially in the “Red Regions” – Tuscany and Emilia Romagna – traditionally more active.

In Italy women abstain more than men, but, differently from many other countries, women abstention in Italy is a peculiar case. Since the beginning of the Republic, women participation to vote was very high, in the first ten years it was even higher than men. The reason is easy brought back to the presence of an important Catholic Party, *Democrazia Cristiana*, and a lot of religious organizations, very close to women, spread in all the territory and able to mobilize feminine electoral participation. But we cannot disconoscere che il maggiore afflusso alle urne potrebbe essere dovuto all'appropriarsi di un diritto appena acquisito.

Things changed when the abstention rate increased in Italy in the 80's and 90's, while the gender gap in abstention in other countries was diminishing. In Italy women votes reduced more than men, and this could be explained both, by a reduction of religious influence in determining the vote, and by a demographic effect: population aging increased the old women weight, traditionally inclined to abstain.

However rates differences between men and women in abstention remained always very contained and acquire an importance just for older generations of women. A research carried out by Istat (2006) (Sabbadini) states that starting from 1983 women abstention is just two percentage points higher than men. The others outlines are confirmed (participation linked to education, work, interest in politics).

In France, there was a difference in the choice of voting/non-voting between males and females. In 1953, with the local elections, 25% of the women abstained against 13% of men. In 1958, with legislative election, the abstention rate raised and there was still a huge difference between males and females: 31% of the women and 23% for the men did not go to polling stations. In 1965, with presidential election, the female abstention reached 30% with the first round against 22,5% for the men. Since 1973, the women took part more and more in the political life, and the gap between the female and male abstention was on average only 3 to 4 points (Jerôme and Lemennicier 2005).

In Germany, federal elections abstention increase from 1990 for the first time, and then in the 2002 elections, as shown in figure 1, but without differences between males and females, as reported in tab. .

Table 1: Abstention rate by gender in Germany

	Male	Female
1983	9.9	10.9
1987	14.3	16.0
1990	20.4	21.7
change 1990 – 1983	+10.5	+10.8

Source: Anderson and Zelle (1998)

## Last elections

The low presence of females at the top of political parties and government, common characteristic in all the European countries, changed in the last French and German elections.

The last France Presidential elections were characterized by a head-to-head match between Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal. For the first time, one of the competitors was a woman, but the woman's effect was not strong enough, and, at the end, Sarkozy won.

The general national context (the *banlieu* riots and other great demonstrations), which showed signals of political protest, it guessed that electoral participation could be raised, and really it was: actually, the 83.8% of French electors went to polls. The participation increased by 12.2% compared to 2002. To find such a level of participation in the past, it needs to go back to 1974 elections<sup>4</sup>.

In a social perspective, a research conducted before last elections (Muxel 2007) tried to estimate the potential abstainers quota (24% summarizing certain abstention and indecision), and to outline a social profile of electors, finding, as the international literature suggests, that also in France people who decide to do not vote are less educated, poorer, less interested in politics and women. In fact, with regard to women electoral behavior, the research shows that women who certainly decided to abstain were more than males (53% vs. 47%), there were more than male also the women who were still undecided if to go or not to vote (55% vs. 45%).

As in France, in Germany, in the last elections, the two competitors as Chancellor were a man, Gerhard Schröder, and a woman, Angela Merkel. But differently from France, in Germany the woman candidate won, even if with an advantage so tiny that the government ends in the so-called Grand coalition. Of course, the gender factor was not crucial in the result, as the politics factors actually were, but la vittoria di una donna come capo di governo può essere interpretato come un segnale di crisi con il passato, data la concomitanza con la candidatura della Royal in Francia.

More static the situation in Italy. The two major competitors in the last elections (2006) were men: Silvio Berlusconi and Walter Veltroni. From these

considerations, it emerges the interest of exploring the causes of the abstention behavior, using as keys of reading social variables, such as identity, social exclusion, personal perception of happiness, along with other classical demographics, like age, formal education, residence. This study is a first approach, so data from social surveys has been used. This decision places some limits to the possible analysis ability, but it allows to compare different European countries.

## Data and Methods

### Data

Information and data are taken from the European Social Survey, investigating and comparing changes on institutions, attitudes, beliefs and patterns of diverse populations and from Multipurpose Survey conducted by Istat in Italy.

The European Social Survey (the ESS) is an academically-driven social survey aimed to study and explain cultural, social and political changes in European countries and populations<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>we refer to the first election turn

<sup>5</sup>The survey has been funded through the European Commission's Framework Programmes, the European Science Foundation and national funding bodies in each country. ESS

Actually the ESS is arrived on its fourth round. The first was held in 2002, the second in 2004 and the third in 2006.

To have the temporal trend of the situation we use for our analysis data from first round (2002) for the three countries, and data from the third round (2006) for Germany and France. To explore more recent situation in Italy, we used Istat Multipurpose Survey 2005, because Italy participate only to first wave of ESS. More details about these surveys are shown in table .

Table 2: Summary of surveys used

	ESS wave 1		
	Germany	France	Italy
Field work start	20.11.2002	15.09.2003	13.01.2003
Field work end	16.05.2003	15.12.2003	30.06.2003
# interviews	2,919	1,503	1,207
Response rate	55.7%	43,1%	43,7%
	ESS wave 3		Multipurpose ISTAT
	Germany	France	Italy
Field work start	01.09.2006	19.09.2006	jan 2005
Field work end	15.01.2007	07.04.2007	feb 2005
# interviews	2,916	1,986	49,288
Response rate	54.5%	46,0%	81,0%

## Methods

Starting from ESS survey records, we calculated a new variable, named "‘political interest’", as an additive scale of 4 original variables, assigning subjective weights to each answer, as reported in table <sup>6</sup>.

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the additive scale are good, for all countries and for each wave, as shown in tab.. Boxplots of the scale, computed by gender and country show not only the buone capacità di differenziazione della nuova variabile (figg.2 and 3), but also that abstention rate is highly inversely related to interest in politics by country. To be noted that within each country, females are less interested in politics than males.

Several logistic regression analyses were performed: response variable is the declaration of vote and we used as regressor a set of social and demograph-

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is a well known comparative survey able to reveal contrasts and similarities between over 30 European countries. It is the first social science project to win Europe’s prestigious Descartes Prize “for excellence in collaborative scientific research”, and is also one of the first to become a European Commission ‘Infrastructure’, a recognition of how much the ESS’s high technical and academic standards are advancing the field of comparative social measurement. More information about ESS are available on its web site <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> where it is possible to discover details both on theoretical aspects then on practical and methodological one of ESS.

<sup>6</sup>Data from ESS-wave1 permitted to calculate the "‘Political interest’" scale for Germany, France and Italy. As to 2006 data (ESS-wave3), the scale was calculated with only 3 variables – question about "‘how interested in politics’" was not used – and only for Gemany and France data. Values obtained are divided by number of variables, in order to obtain a 0-10 scale.



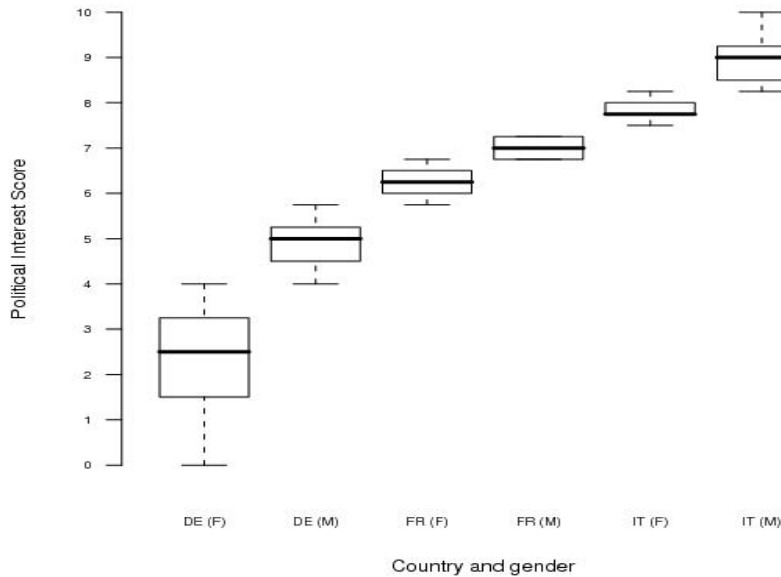
Table 3: Additive scale of political interest: weights assigned to answers for each variable used

Discuss politics/current affairs, how often		How interested in politics		Politics too complicated to understand		Making mind up about political issues	
Every day	10	Very	10	Never	10	Very easy	10
Several t. a week	8			Seldom	8	Easy	8
Once a week	7	Quite	7			Neither difficult nor easy	6
Several t. a month	5			Occasionally	6		
Once a month	3	Hardly	4	Regularly	3	Difficult	3
Less often	1						
Never	0	Not at all	0	Frequently	0	Very difficult	0

Table 4: Cronbach alpha coefficient for additive scale of political interest

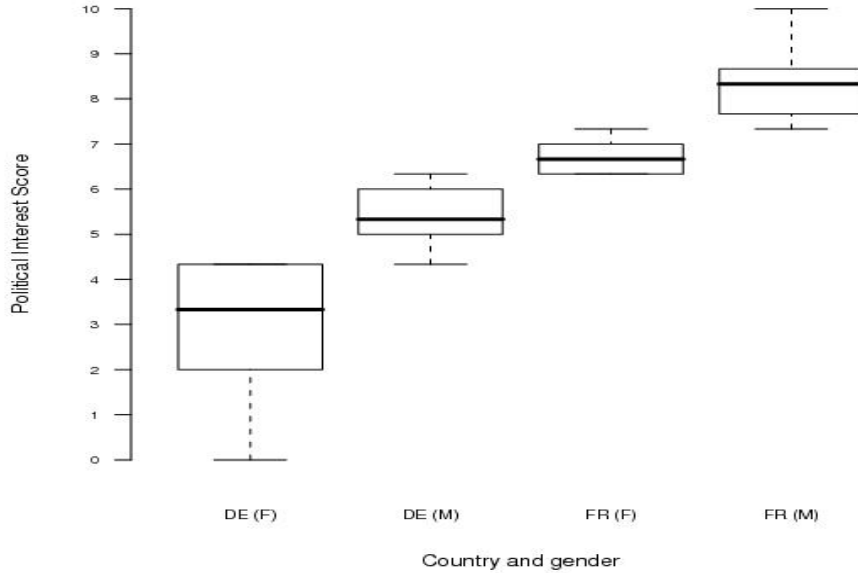
	Country		
	Germany	France	Italy
2002	0,860	0,842	0,861
2006	0,858	0,837	n.d.

Figure 2: Summary statistics for "political interest" scale by country and gender. ESS 2002



ics variables, obviously including gender. A complete list of variables used is reported in Appendix, along with the complete output of the best six logistic

Figure 3: Summary statistics for "political interest" scale by country and gender. ESS 2006



regressions estimated (for each country and each period).

## Results

The analysis of ESS data confirms (see Fig.1) that in the three countries there is a different level of abstention rate<sup>7</sup>.

Male and female voting behaviour (or better, declaration of vote) is different for France and Italy in 2002 (see Fig.4), while in 2005 (see Fig.5) no difference is detected in France, and in Germany there is a significant difference.

Everywhere a statistical difference is detected, women have a larger abstention rate: so, it is relevant to explore our data in order to detect which variables are associated or could explain these differences.

We obtained more interesting results from logistic regression analysis<sup>8</sup>.

Here we summarize some comparative results for Germany (table ) and France (table ) between 2002 and 2006. Comparison is more difficult for Italy, due to the different source of data (table ).

In Germany estimated probability for 2002 to vote is higher for male, very young, still students, not member of a party, religious, not citizen (it seems perhaps picture of a well integrated immigrant). Probability to vote decrease as increase the number of education years, interest in politics and happiness, belonging to not discriminated group, but decrease is counterbalanced by central

<sup>7</sup>It is worth to mention that sample data give an under estimation of abstention rate, and this result is not surprising, because the question relates to behaviour of months and even years before interview time. For our goals, we underline that the rank of countries for abstention rate is the same in real and sample data

<sup>8</sup>see in Appendix, tables from to .

Figure 4: Declaration of Vote in last election. ESS wave 1. Countries: France, Italy and Germany

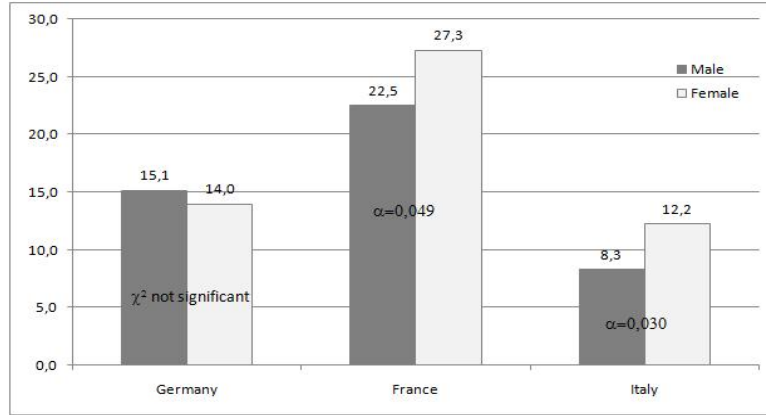
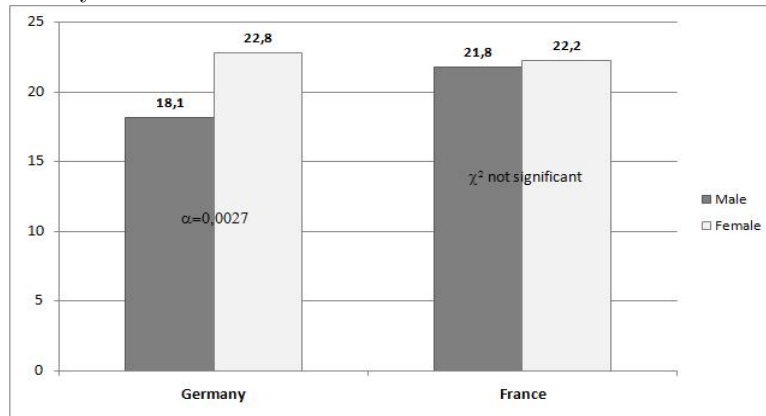


Figure 5: Declaration of Vote in last election. ESS wave 3. Countries: France and Germany



ages (36 to 55) with more years of education (effect of interaction). Being female decreases the probability to vote. In 2006 analysis, there are a confirmation of some regressors variables, like years of education, age 16-25 (and its interaction with years of education), political interest, happiness, not discriminated and not citizen. But there are some new regressors which are significant: concerning the religious life, going to the church every day becomes significant (substituting the ones who go to the church a few times per week), increasing the probability to vote, while this probability decrease for people who go to the church less regularly (one a month). Gender is not significant anymore, but its effect is in the modality “to be an housewife”. There is a significant increase in the number of aged non-voters (56-75), with an higher propention to vote if they have an higher level of education. People living in big cities tend to vote less.

Summarizing, the comparison between these two years shows a sort of coldness for voting of the more aged and less educated generations. These analysis shows that gender is not a significant variable in explaining the vote-non vote

Table 5: Germany: comparison of significant variables at 2002 and 2006

Variable	GERMANY					
	2002			2006		
	Estimate	Pr >	ChiQuadr	Estimate	Pr >	ChiQuadr
Intercept	-3.8262		<.0001	2.0409		0.9913
Female	0.2932		<.0001			
age 16 - 25	-3.8567		0.0002	-3.6222		<b>0.0010</b>
age 36 - 45	1.3710		0.0362			
age 46 - 55	1.4708		0.0217			
age 56 - 65				1.3624		<b>0.0232</b>
age 66 - 75				2.1163		<b>0.0014</b>
years of education	0.1613		<.0001	0.1654		<.0001
years educ & age 16 - 25	0.2642		0.0017	0.2197		<b>0.0103</b>
years educ & and age 36 - 45	-0.1057		0.0381			
years educ & and age 46 - 55	-0.1071		0.0405			
years educ & and age 56 - 65				-0.1018		<b>0.0362</b>
years educ & and age 66 - 75				-0.1334		<b>0.0196</b>
student	-0.6667		0.0291			
paid worker	0.4447		0.0241			
housewife				-0.4493		<i>0.0715</i>
big city resident				0.2747		<i>0.0737</i>
no member political party	-0.8863		<i>0.0525</i>			
scale of political interest	0.3526		<.0001	0.3029		<.0001
happiness	0.0702		0.0406	0.1691		<.0001
going to church more than once a week	-1.1243		0.0090			
going to church at least once a month				0.5544		<b>0.0341</b>
going to church every day				-1.8693		<i>0.0946</i>
Not discriminated	0.2758		<i>0.0548</i>	0.4257		<b>0.0004</b>
Not citizen	-1.1853		<.0001	-1.2689		<.0001

decision, in Germany.

The analysis of French data (tab.) does not show the variable gender like meaningful. Age has an effect on the voting probability, both in 2002 and in 2006: the very young vote more than the oldest, with the widening in 2006 of this effect of abstention also to class 46-55, with the exception of those who have a high education (interaction effect). While the retired tend more to do not vote in the two years, the unemployed people or the one looking for a job vote more. The residence place has an effect in the 2002 - people living in big cities vote more than who live in the countryside - but this variable loose significance in 2006.

The religious attitude influences the decision of voting, in the more recent survey: the very religious people (those who go to church more than one time a week) vote more compared to the *more standards* religious (those going to church once a week).

Table 6: France: comparison of significative variables at 2002 and 2006

Variable	FRANCE				
	2002		2006		
	Estimate	Pr > ChiSquare	Estimate	Pr > ChiSquare	
	Estimated coefficients with $\alpha < 0.10$				
Variable	-8.4117	0.9715	-1.7932	<b>0.0114</b>	
age 16 - 25	-2.5405	0.0074	-3.0951	<b>0.0055</b>	same
age 46 - 55			1.5940	<b>0.0016</b>	new
age 56 - 65	1.0475	<i>0.0911</i>	1.8272	<b>0.0024</b>	same
age 66 - 75	1.4065	<i>0.0656</i>	0.9191	0.2452	same
years of education	0.0668	0.0099	0.1108	<b>&lt;.0001</b>	same
years educ & age 16 - 25	0.1351	0.0488	0.1277	<i>0.0999</i>	same
years educ & age 46 - 55			-0.1148	<b>0.0050</b>	new
retired	0.8550	0.0115	0.7847	<b>0.0172</b>	same
paid worker	0.3599	<i>0.0657</i>			no more
unemployed.					
looking for job	-0.9661	0.0079			no more
no member of					
political party			-0.9607	<b>0.0327</b>	new
big city resident	-0.3246	0.0443			no more
countryside resident	0.7907	0.0224			no more
scale of political interest	0.1913	<b>&lt;.0001</b>	0.1633	<b>&lt;.0001</b>	same
going to church more					
than once a week			-0.9681	<i>0.0786</i>	new
going to church					
once a week			1.1877	<b>0.0173</b>	new
Not discriminated			0.2498	<b>0.0215</b>	new
Not citizen			-1.0739	<b>0.0008</b>	new

Not belonging to discriminated groups reduce the probability to vote, while the not citizens assert their presence mainly exercising their voting right. Perhaps it has to be emphasized that these variables are significant only for 2006, as a possible effect of the greater social tensions in France of the last years, and that these results are similar to the German ones, where the variables are significant also in 2002.

The Italian situation is more difficult to be read, as the different data source moves behind of one year the comparison, and it obliges also to use the available variables, which of course, are different from a survey to another. In particular, it was not possible to compute the scale of political interest for 2005. Other variable related to social and private sphere have been used, like the state of health and the satisfaction for social relations. In tab. ref compIT it emerges the greater propension of women to vote (even if  $\alpha = 0.0863$ ) in 2005. Between the two years it has to be emphasized the effect of the variable age: if in 2002 they are the younger that vote more (16-25) compared to the more aged (46-65 vote more the persons years), in 2005 the propensity of going to vote is higher also to the 30 years old people, but is smaller for the over 65. The effect of education is less clear (also in comparison with the other countries), also because of the different classification of the question in the two survey. In Italy

Table 7: Italy: comparison of significative variables at ESS 2002 and Multiscope Istat 2005

Variable	ITALY				
	2002		2005		
	Estimate	Pr > ChiSquare	Estimate	Pr > ChiSquare	
intercept	0.8938	0.9918	3.3970	0.8302	
female			-0.0402	<i>0.0863</i>	new
age 16 - 25	-4.4466	<.0001	-0.2374	<b>0.0037</b>	same
age 26 - 35			-0.2864	<.0001	new
age 46 - 55	1.7829	0.0059	0.2719	<.0001	same
age 56 - 65	1.5670	0.0219	0.5227	<.0001	same
age 66 - 75			0.2160	<b>0.0011</b>	new
years of education	0.1106	0.0019			
high school			0.2274	<.0001	
years educ & age 16 - 25	0.3547	0.0003			
years educ & age 46 - 55	-0.1414	0.0177			
scale of political interest	0.0986	<i>0.0793</i>			
not religious	-0.3010	0.0245			
going to church more than once a week	-0.7612	0.0360			
going to church once a week	0.7837	0.0059	0.4431	<.0001	same
never go to church			-0.9172	<.0001	
going to church sometime			0.2566	<.0001	
quite satisfied friendship			0.3316	<.0001	
very satisfied friendship			0.2659	<.0001	
no satisfaction friendship			-0.5232	<.0001	
never talk politics			-0.3668	<.0001	
never informed on politics			-0.2551	<b>0.0045</b>	
no member political party			-0.3757	<.0001	
no political information through radio			-0.0631	<b>0.0416</b>	
no political information through TV			-0.1214	<b>0.0123</b>	
no political information through newspapers			-0.1270	<.0001	
bad health perception			-0.5839	<.0001	
poor health perception			-0.1334	<b>0.0210</b>	
quite good health perception			0.2509	<.0001	
good health perception			0.2102	<.0001	

the attitude toward religion has a very strong and clear effect: the *standard* religious (the one going to church once a week) tend to vote less in both years; it is higher the propensity to vote among people who declared to be not religious (in 2002) or among people who never go to church (in 2005). People going to church more than once a week tend to vote more (2009). In order to fulfill the lack of the political interest scale, other variables (in some way proxy or similar)

have been used . There is a greater propensity to vote among people who talk less about politic, who do not inform themselves about politics neither through radio, TV or newspaper. The personal uneasiness (unsatisfied with the relations with other people and the good state of perceived health) is not expressed in a greater propensity to vote in 2005.

## **Conclusions**

The results obtained from this first exercise show that the effect of the gender is not so strong as assumed at the beginning of this work, at least for the three countries under investigation. Further and more deepened analysis could be done in order to verify the characterization of the voting attitude only among women: the next step of deepening must, in our opinion, go just in this direction.

## Appendix

Table 8: Variables used as regressors

Gender	Female Male
Age Class	16 - 25 26 - 35 36 - 45 46 - 55 56 - 65 66 - 75 76 or more
Main activity	Community or military service Education Housework, looking after children, others Other Paid work Permanently sick or disabled Retired Unemployed, looking for job Unemployed, not looking for job
Domicile, respondent's description	A big city Country village Farm or home in countryside Suburbs or outskirts of big city Town or small city
Member of political party	No Yes
Belonging to particular religion or denomination	No Yes
How religious are you	At least once a month Every day Less often More than once a week Never Once a week Only on special holy days
Member of a group discriminated	No Yes
Citizen of country	No Yes



Table 9: Logistic regression model. ESS wave 1 - 2002. Germany

Germany				
Maximum likelihood estimation				
	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
Intercept	-3.826	0.741	26.653	<.0001
Female	0.293	0.073	15.978	<.0001
age 16 - 25	-3.857	1.041	13.716	0.000
age 26 - 35	-0.165	0.721	0.052	0.819
age 36 - 45	1.371	0.655	4.386	0.036
age 46 - 55	1.471	0.641	5.266	0.022
age 56 - 65	0.822	0.646	1.615	0.204
age 66 - 75	0.216	0.792	0.074	0.785
years of education	0.161	0.030	29.286	<.0001
Community or military service	0.576	1.002	0.330	0.566
Student	-0.667	0.306	4.762	0.029
Housewife	0.100	0.246	0.164	0.686
Other	-0.449	0.509	0.778	0.378
Paid worker	0.445	0.197	5.090	0.024
Permanently sick or disabled	-0.113	0.467	0.059	0.808
Retired	0.359	0.260	1.904	0.168
Unemployed. looking for job	-0.111	0.270	0.170	0.680
big city resident	-0.147	0.154	0.918	0.338
Country village resident	0.208	0.149	1.940	0.164
countryside resident	-0.191	0.348	0.302	0.583
Suburbs of big city resident	-0.023	0.173	0.018	0.894
no member political party	-0.886	0.457	3.759	0.053
scale of political interest	0.353	0.036	93.938	<.0001
happiness	0.070	0.034	4.191	0.041
Not religious	-0.120	0.085	1.966	0.161
going to church at least once a month	0.463	0.295	2.468	0.116
going to church every day	-0.932	1.281	0.529	0.467
going to church very rarely	0.415	0.261	2.527	0.112
going to church more than once a week	-1.124	0.430	6.829	0.009
never go to church	0.192	0.262	0.534	0.465
going to church once a week	0.383	0.314	1.489	0.222
Not discriminated	0.276	0.144	3.689	0.055
Not citizen	-1.185	0.298	15.822	<.0001
years education and age 16 - 25	0.264	0.084	9.830	0.002
years education and age 26 - 35	-0.017	0.055	0.094	0.759
years education and age 36 - 45	-0.106	0.051	4.299	0.038
years education and age 46 - 55	-0.107	0.052	4.197	0.041
years education and age 56 - 65	-0.080	0.055	2.083	0.149
years education and age 66 - 75	0.012	0.075	0.024	0.877
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	78.4	Somers D	0.572	
Percentage Discordant	21.2	Gamma	0.575	
Percentage Tied	0.4	Tau-a	0.139	
Pairs	802620	c	0.786	

Table 10: Logistic regression model. ESS wave 1 - 2002. France

France				
Maximum likelihood estimation				
	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
Intercept	-8.412	235.500	0.001	0.972
Female	-0.045	0.080	0.318	0.573
age 16 - 25	-2.541	0.948	7.181	0.007
age 26 - 35	-0.215	0.595	0.130	0.718
age 36 - 45	-0.166	0.623	0.071	0.790
age 46 - 55	0.804	0.591	1.852	0.174
age 56 - 65	1.048	0.620	2.855	0.091
age 66 - 75	1.407	0.764	3.391	0.066
years of education	0.067	0.026	6.656	0.010
Student	-0.508	0.341	2.219	0.136
Housewife	0.013	0.264	0.002	0.961
Other	0.518	0.752	0.475	0.491
Paid worker	0.360	0.196	3.388	0.066
Permanently sick or disabled	0.166	0.472	0.124	0.725
Retired	0.855	0.338	6.384	0.012
Unemployed. looking for job	-0.966	0.364	7.057	0.008
big city resident	-0.325	0.161	4.044	0.044
Country village resident	0.038	0.152	0.062	0.803
countryside resident	0.791	0.346	5.212	0.022
Suburbs of big city resident	-0.264	0.216	1.489	0.222
no member political party	-0.781	0.520	2.258	0.133
scale of political interest	0.191	0.039	24.368	<.0001
happiness	0.051	0.040	1.594	0.207
Not religious	0.021	0.087	0.061	0.805
going to church at least once a month	0.275	0.363	0.574	0.449
going to church every day	-1.053	1.196	0.775	0.379
going to church very rarely	0.176	0.290	0.367	0.545
going to church more than once a week	0.116	0.694	0.028	0.868
never go to church	-0.303	0.270	1.257	0.262
going to church once a week	0.506	0.414	1.492	0.222
Not discriminated	0.004	0.136	0.001	0.977
Not citizen	-8.111	235.500	0.001	0.973
years education and age 16 - 25	0.135	0.069	3.884	0.049
years education and age 26 - 35	-0.031	0.043	0.537	0.464
years education and age 36 - 45	0.013	0.049	0.064	0.800
years education and age 46 - 55	-0.014	0.051	0.071	0.790
years education and age 56 - 65	-0.058	0.055	1.096	0.295
years education and age 66 - 75	-0.080	0.074	1.155	0.283
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	76.4	Somers D	0.531	
Percentage Discordant	23.3	Gamma	0.532	
Percentage Tied	0.3	Tau-a	0.199	
Pairs	287990	c	0.765	

Table 11: Logistic regression model. ESS wave 1 - 2002. Italy

ITALY				
Maximum likelihood estimation				
	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
Intercept	0.894	87.366	0.000	0.992
Female	-0.055	0.131	0.177	0.674
age 16 - 25	-4.447	1.078	17.020	<.0001
age 26 - 35	-0.802	0.720	1.239	0.266
age 36 - 45	1.067	0.717	2.215	0.137
age 46 - 55	1.783	0.648	7.572	0.006
age 56 - 65	1.567	0.684	5.253	0.022
age 66 - 75	0.267	0.651	0.168	0.682
years of education	0.111	0.036	9.601	0.002
Community or military service	10.717	698.900	0.000	0.988
Student	-2.485	87.364	0.001	0.977
Housewife	-0.718	87.363	0.000	0.993
Other	-1.347	87.364	0.000	0.988
Paid worker	-0.008	87.363	0.000	1.000
Permanently sick or disabled	-3.421	87.373	0.002	0.969
Retired	-0.631	87.363	0.000	0.994
Unemployed. looking for job	-0.420	87.364	0.000	0.996
big city resident	-0.177	0.417	0.180	0.672
Country village resident	0.080	0.233	0.119	0.730
countryside resident	0.375	0.392	0.919	0.338
Suburbs of big city resident	-0.484	0.345	1.971	0.160
no member political party	-0.500	0.476	1.102	0.294
scale of political interest	0.099	0.056	3.079	0.079
happiness	0.050	0.053	0.879	0.348
Not religious	-0.301	0.134	5.059	0.025
going to church at least once a month	0.505	0.340	2.204	0.138
going to church every day	-0.712	0.585	1.478	0.224
going to church very rarely	-0.177	0.238	0.554	0.457
going to church more than once a week	-0.761	0.363	4.398	0.036
never go to church	-0.042	0.295	0.021	0.886
going to church once a week	0.784	0.285	7.581	0.006
Not discriminated	0.050	0.409	0.015	0.903
years education and age 16 - 25	0.355	0.099	12.926	0.000
years education and age 26 - 35	0.024	0.062	0.150	0.699
years education and age 36 - 45	-0.093	0.066	1.963	0.161
years education and age 46 - 55	-0.141	0.060	5.626	0.018
years education and age 56 - 65	-0.099	0.070	1.992	0.158
years education and age 66 - 75	0.013	0.086	0.024	0.877
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	75.8	Somers D	0.523	
Percentage Discordant	23.5	Gamma	0.526	
Percentage Tied	0.6	Tau-a	0.094	
Pairs	100065	c	0.761	

Table 12: Logistic regression model. ESS wave 3 - 2006. Germany

GERMANY				
	Estimate	Standar Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
Intercept	2.041	187.300	0.000	0.991
Female	0.057	0.064	0.783	0.376
age 16 - 25	-3.622	1.100	10.840	<b>0.001</b>
age 26 - 35	0.041	0.694	0.003	0.953
age 36 - 45	0.560	0.594	0.890	0.346
age 46 - 55	-0.810	0.619	1.714	0.191
age 56 - 65	1.362	0.600	5.155	<b>0.023</b>
age 66 - 75	2.116	0.663	10.190	<b>0.001</b>
years of education	0.165	0.027	38.217	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Community or military service	0.613	1.370	0.200	0.655
Student	-0.175	0.321	0.299	0.585
Housewife	-0.449	0.249	3.248	<i>0.072</i>
Other professional status	0.824	0.621	1.760	0.185
Paid worker	-0.108	0.219	0.241	0.624
Permanently sick or disabled	-0.142	0.398	0.128	0.721
Retired	-0.189	0.286	0.436	0.509
Unemployed. looking for job	-0.383	0.286	1.797	0.180
big city resident	0.275	0.154	3.199	<i>0.074</i>
Country village resident	0.153	0.138	1.232	0.267
countryside resident	-0.446	0.358	1.546	0.214
Suburbs of big city resident	0.149	0.158	0.892	0.345
no member political party	-7.250	187.300	0.002	0.969
scale of political interest	0.303	0.033	84.357	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
happiness	0.169	0.030	31.241	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Not religious	-0.024	0.076	0.096	0.756
going to church at least once a month	0.554	0.262	4.492	<b>0.034</b>
going to church every day	-1.869	1.118	2.795	<i>0.095</i>
going to church very rarely	0.278	0.228	1.487	0.223
going to church more than once a week	0.121	0.399	0.092	0.761
never go to church	0.061	0.232	0.069	0.793
going to church once a week	0.350	0.273	1.637	0.201
Not discriminated	0.426	0.121	12.447	<b>0.000</b>
Not citizen	-1.269	0.234	29.447	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
years education and age 16 - 25	0.220	0.086	6.583	<b>0.010</b>
years education and age 26 - 35	-0.032	0.051	0.384	0.535
years education and age 36 - 45	-0.043	0.046	0.865	0.352
years education and age 46 - 55	0.056	0.050	1.246	0.264
years education and age 56 - 65	-0.102	0.049	4.390	<b>0.036</b>
years education and age 66 - 75	-0.133	0.057	5.450	<b>0.020</b>
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	78.2	Somers D	0.566	
Percentage Discordant	21.5	Gamma	0.568	
Percentage Tied	0.3	Tau-a	0.179	
Pairs	1019457	c	0.783	

Table 13: Logistic regression model. ESS wave 3 - 2006. France

FRANCE				
	Estimate	Standar Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
intercept	-1.793	0.709	6.401	<b>0.011</b>
Female	0.098	0.073	1.772	0.183
age 16 - 25	-3.095	1.114	7.718	<b>0.006</b>
age 26 - 35	-0.552	0.606	0.829	0.363
age 36 - 45	-0.455	0.616	0.547	0.460
age 46 - 55	1.594	0.507	9.905	<b>0.002</b>
age 56 - 65	1.827	0.602	9.227	<b>0.002</b>
age 66 - 75	0.919	0.791	1.351	0.245
years of education	0.111	0.027	16.322	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Student	-0.497	0.404	1.517	0.218
Housewife	-0.336	0.251	1.801	0.180
Other professional status	-0.108	0.446	0.058	0.809
Paid worker	0.209	0.160	1.704	0.192
Permanently sick or disabled	0.208	0.366	0.322	0.570
Retired	0.785	0.329	5.674	<b>0.017</b>
Unemployed. looking for job	-0.032	0.304	0.011	0.917
big city resident	-0.030	0.158	0.037	0.848
Country village resident	-0.090	0.131	0.470	0.493
countryside resident	0.343	0.263	1.693	0.193
Suburbs of big city resident	-0.247	0.171	2.071	0.150
no member political party	-0.961	0.450	4.562	<b>0.033</b>
scale of political interest	0.163	0.036	20.552	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
happiness	0.058	0.040	2.138	0.144
Not religious	-0.031	0.081	0.151	0.697
going to church at least once a month	0.675	0.346	3.802	0.051
going to church every day	-1.106	1.031	1.152	0.283
going to church very rarely	-0.044	0.258	0.030	0.863
going to church more than once a week	-0.968	0.550	3.094	<i>0.079</i>
never go to church	0.029	0.243	0.014	0.905
going to church once a week	1.188	0.499	5.670	<b>0.017</b>
Not discriminated	0.250	0.109	5.284	<b>0.022</b>
Not citizen	-1.074	0.320	11.252	<b>0.001</b>
years education and age 16 - 25	0.128	0.078	2.708	<i>0.100</i>
years education and age 26 - 35	-0.048	0.043	1.235	0.266
years education and age 36 - 45	0.030	0.048	0.396	0.529
years education and age 46 - 55	-0.115	0.041	7.897	<b>0.005</b>
years education and age 56 - 65	-0.084	0.052	2.583	0.108
years education and age 66 - 75	0.008	0.078	0.011	0.917
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	77.1	Somers D	0.544	
Percentage Discordant	22.6	Gamma	0.546	
Percentage Tied	0.3	Tau-a	0.184	
Pairs	471240	c	0.772	

Table 14: Logistic regression model. Multiscope Istat - 2005. Italy

	Italy			
	Estimate	Standar Error	Wald Chi-square	Pr> Chi-square
Intercept	3.397	15.844	0.046	0.830
Female	-0.040	0.024	2.943	<i>0.086</i>
age 16 - 25	-0.237	0.082	8.432	<b>0.004</b>
age 26 - 35	-0.286	0.051	31.062	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
age 36 - 45	0.023	0.050	0.203	0.652
age 46 - 55	0.272	0.054	25.071	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
age 56 - 65	0.523	0.060	75.075	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
age 66 - 75	0.216	0.066	10.668	<b>0.001</b>
high school	0.227	0.042	29.276	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
University	-0.077	0.060	1.626	0.202
compulsory education	0.053	0.034	2.438	0.118
Other professional status	-1.165	15.844	0.005	0.941
Housewife	-0.999	15.844	0.004	0.950
Unemployed. looking for job	-1.138	15.844	0.005	0.943
Unemployed. looking for first job	-0.944	15.844	0.004	0.953
Permanently sick or disabled	-1.936	15.844	0.015	0.903
Paid worker	-0.994	15.844	0.004	0.950
Retired	-0.769	15.844	0.002	0.961
Civil service	8.718	126.700	0.005	0.945
bad health perception	-0.584	0.066	77.620	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
poor health perception	-0.133	0.058	5.327	<b>0.021</b>
quite good health perception	0.251	0.043	34.693	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
good health perception	0.210	0.040	27.395	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
going to church once a week	0.443	0.050	78.680	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
never go to church	-0.917	0.045	420.909	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
going to church more than once a week	-0.026	0.068	0.148	0.700
going to church few times a month	0.257	0.054	23.032	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
going to church few times a year	0.037	0.044	0.714	0.398
quite satisfied friendship	0.332	0.033	102.984	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
very satisfied friendship	0.266	0.041	42.004	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
no satisfaction friendship	-0.523	0.061	73.543	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Talk politics one a week	-0.062	0.086	0.521	0.471
never talk politics	-0.367	0.052	50.274	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
talk politics few times a week	0.073	0.056	1.703	0.192
talk politics few times a month	0.028	0.058	0.242	0.623
talk politics few times per year	-0.008	0.059	0.017	0.897
information on politics ones a week	-0.155	0.095	2.678	0.102
never informed on politics	-0.255	0.090	8.059	<b>0.005</b>
information on politics few times a week	0.060	0.054	1.217	0.270
information on politics few times a month	0.094	0.068	1.880	0.170
information on politics few times a year	0.006	0.068	0.008	0.928
no member political party	-0.376	0.084	19.860	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
no political information through radio	-0.063	0.031	4.152	<b>0.042</b>
no political information through TV	-0.121	0.049	6.268	<b>0.012</b>
no political information through newspapers	-0.127	0.029	18.957	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
no political information through magazines	0.004	0.044	0.010	
Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses				
Percentage Concordant	22	76.5	Somers D	0.537
Percentage Discordant		22.8	Gamma	0.541
Percentage Tied		0.7	Tau-a	0.092
Pairs		101242064	c	0.769

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