

Díez Nicolás, Juan: "Spain" en John G. Geer, Public Opinion and polling around the word: a Historical enciclopedia, Volume 2. Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2004

Spain

Public opinion polling in Spain began in October 1963, when the Instituto de la Opinión Pública (IOP, Public Opinion Institute) was created as a government organization within the Ministry of Information and Tourism by Minister Manuel Fraga-Iribarne, who joined Franco's cabinet in 1962. By comparison with previous cabinets of the 1940s and 1950s, this cabinet was labeled liberal because of its new economic, information, and foreign policies (though still authoritarian with respect to civic, labor, and political rights). Before 1963 there were a few unreliable social surveys, generally based on nonrepresentative samples and lacking the usual methodological requirements. A bulletin entitled *Opinión* had been published nonperiodically a few years before 1963 by an obscure section of the Ministry of Information and Tourism under the previous incumbent, but there is no evidence as to how the published data were collected, or

if they were collected at all. No academic publication or researcher has, at any time, made any reference to those data, and the bulletins are not accessible in university or specialized libraries.

The Instituto de la Opinión Pública was established in Madrid under the direction of Professor Luis González-Seara, as secretary general and acting director, and Juan Díez-Nicolás, a returnee from the University of Michigan where he had done graduate work as a Fulbright scholar for the two preceding years, as technical director. The two had the challenging task of establishing a true research institute for conducting social surveys following the model of the Institute for Social Research (ISR) in Ann Arbor (with much more limited resources, certainly), in a country with a dictatorial or authoritarian regime, in which there was no public or private institution at the time conducting social survey research in general or public opinion research in particular. In summary, they had to start from scratch with the goal of conducting scientifically based surveys in a hostile environment, because they were accused by the most conservative (and authoritarian) members of the government as constituting a danger to the political regime. They were also accused by the underground opposition of legitimizing the political regime.

All surveys conducted during this period but two (one on public opinion around the Gibraltar area regarding the closing of the Spanish-Gibraltar border, another on municipal elections in Madrid) were published in the *Revista Española de la Opinión Pública* (*Spanish Public Opinion Journal*), the professional quarterly journal of the IOP, which was widely distributed and used by both Spanish and foreign scholars and researchers

and which is accessible in most university and public libraries.

Since 1965 all surveys were based on national representative samples of the population 21 years and over (18 years and over since 1978). Surveys were based on face-to-face interviews and used census sections as main territorial sampling units.

The IOP conducted more than 100 national surveys from 1963 to 1969, providing a great amount of data on the Spanish social structure, attitudes, and opinions about a great variety of topics, mainly on current world and national events, that were widely used and cited by social researchers regardless of their political or ideological preferences. Many assumptions about what Spaniards thought, aimed for, or wanted were thus rejected when confronted with empirical data obtained by the IOP. In 1966 the IOP participated in its first international comparative research project, on decisionmaking, coordinated by the University of Amsterdam and the Steinmetz Foundation. In 1967 it carried the Spanish survey for the Images of the World in the Year 2000, a research project coordinated by Johan Galtung in six countries under the sponsorship of the UNESCO European Center for the Coordination of Documentation and Research in the Social Sciences in Vienna.

The establishment of the IOP was in itself an element of social change, as its foundation was used by other interest groups to demand and obtain from the government permission to conduct commercial, marketing, and even public opinion research. Some private firms were therefore established during the late 1960s and early 1970s (ECO, DATA, ICSA-GALLUP, EMOPUBLICA, SOFEMASA, METRA-SEIS, and many

others), though they relied more on marketing than public opinion research until the death of Franco and the recovery of democracy in 1975. However, interviewers were frequently arrested for a few hours at police stations, including those of the governmental IOP, as security forces were not informed (or did not acknowledge) that these activities were legal. To give an example, when the technical director of the IOP went in person to supervise the fieldwork of the sensitive survey on the Gibraltar region after the closure of the border, he had to take a letter of presentation written by Minister Fraga to the general-governor of Gibraltar. The governor carefully read the letter and then concluded, "OK, you may proceed, but . . . if the government wanted to know the opinion of people in this area, instead of spending so much money, why didn't they ask me?"

The Growth of Public Opinion Research

After a political crisis in 1969, most of the founding team abandoned the IOP. During the following years, there was a great expansion of marketing and public opinion research. And though there were attempts to limit their activities and, especially, to censor the publication of results through some governmental agency, with the excuse of caring for the technical and professional quality of published data, it proved impossible to undo the way that had been opened by the IOP. A good example was the censorship enforced on the publication of the second report on the *Situación social de España* (*Social Situation of Spain*) published by FOESSA in 1970 (the first one was published in 1966). Chapter 5, devoted to political attitudes, had to be removed from the printed book such that reference

to it was in the book's table of contents, but pages 371–431 were missing. That chapter, photocopied, probably had a much larger circulation and diffusion than if it had been included in the book. Another example was that IOP director Ramón Cercós (1971–1972) was dismissed for having conducted a survey of public opinion on the wedding of one of Franco's granddaughters to Alfonso de Borbón, a cousin of the king-to-be, Juan Carlos I, who thought that his new relationship with Franco would help him to the crown.

In any case, the expansion of research kept growing, though much more in the private sector, whose clients were private firms and, in many cases, the public administration itself. Though the IOP satisfied demands from the public administration, especially on tourism, youth, sports, mass media, international affairs, and so on, it could not satisfy all of that demand, as it had its own research priorities on more academic topics and on public opinion about current events.

But the IOP was the mirror with which many of the private firms compared themselves, to the point that the IOP research design and methodology, themselves following the ISR model, were imitated by most private marketing and public opinion agencies, even with respect to the structure of reports and tables. But it remained a fact that, with a few exceptions like the FOESSA reports, the only published data were those of the IOP. Some other journals published articles based on survey data, IOP being the source for many of them.

Public Opinion Polls and the Political Transition to Democracy

Seven months after Franco died, King Juan Carlos appointed Adolfo Suárez-González president of the government,

with the task of leading the political transition from the former authoritarian regime to a true parliamentary democracy similar to those in the Western world. And four months later President Suárez appointed Díez-Nicolás as director-general of the IOP (from 1976 until the second general elections in 1979), with the responsibility of carrying out all the necessary polls and survey research to furnish reliable information that could be instrumental to achieving the goal of a true parliamentary democracy in Spain. Thus, in less than a year a few dozen polls were conducted to help decisionmaking during that challenging and interesting period. These ranged from polls to predict the result of the referendum on the Law of Political Reform (in 1976) to the massive surveys (three waves of about 30,000 interviews each prior to the first general parliamentary elections of 1977), in addition to polls about political amnesty, political rights, regional demands for decentralization, legalization of all political parties, political preferences, and a very long list of topics.

Some anecdotes may be representative of that period. The first one is related to the referendum on the Law of Political Reform in December of 1976. The director of the IOP had called a press conference three days before Referendum Day to present the forecast of those results based on several national surveys, which showed an affirmative vote of over 90 percent of voters, with only 2 percent negative votes, and a participation rate between 75 and 80 percent of the total electorate. At the very last minute the vice president for political affairs called off the press conference, under the conviction that the negative vote would be much higher than 2 percent, disregarding the IOP's claims about the reliability of its forecast. The official

count of results showed a participation rate of 77.4 percent of the total electorate. Taking into account only the voters, the result was 94 percent in favor and 2.6 percent against the proposed law, the rest being blank or invalid votes.

A second anecdote has to do with the legalization of all political parties for the first democratic elections in June 1977. President Suárez asked the IOP to take a poll on these issues, and results showed that more than 70 percent of the electorate would not consider the elections legitimate and democratic unless all political parties, including the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and other parties farther to the left, were legalized, so that they could participate in the election. But only around 10 percent of those who intended to vote said they planned to vote for the PCE. So President Suárez took these results to the Council of Ministers, where the four military ministers (army, navy, and air force, plus the vice president for defense) rejected the results on the basis that the sample was too small (a probability national sample of 1,200). Therefore, the IOP repeated the survey with a sample twice the size of the previous one, and the results were practically the same, with differences of 1 point up or down. The PCE and all parties, with no exception at all, were legalized and allowed to participate in the 1977 elections. The PCE obtained 7 percent of the votes over the total electorate (9 percent over the total number of voters).

All in all, the IOP's forecasts for the first democratic elections of 1977, the first ones since those held under the Republic (1931–1936) and before the Civil War (1936–1939), were quite accurate not only at the national level but also at the provincial level, the province being the electoral district. It must be taken into

account that the electoral law that was designed for the first elections, and which has not been modified since then, makes it very difficult to predict results at the provincial (district) level. There are 52 such districts, and the 350 seats in Congress are distributed so that each of the 50 provinces receives three seats, the remaining seats being distributed proportionally to the electoral population. In addition, district seats are distributed proportionally to the votes obtained by participating parties in that district (there were 82 parties competing in the first election of 1977, though not even half of them participated in all districts).

After the 1977 elections, the IOP changed its name to the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS, Center for Sociological Research), and its journal also changed to *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (REIS, *Spanish Journal of Sociological Research*). The establishment of CIS meant more than a change in name. Its data archive, including all surveys conducted by the former IOP, was opened to the general public; all surveys had to be archived before six months after completion; its activities were widened to offer a greater cooperation with universities; and several book series were established in addition to the REIS. The good reputation of CIS has therefore remained after a change of regime in 1976, and after changes of the party in government, the Democratic Center Union (UCD, 1976–1982), the Spanish Workers Socialist Party (PSOE, 1982–1996), and the Popular Party (PP, 1996–), which usually implied changes in the director general.

The IOP and the CIS provided accurate information not only to politicians but also to mass media, scholars, and the public at large. Its most important contribu-

bao, and University of Navarra in Pamplona, among others.

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