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## Articles

# Citizen's political culture and electoral abstention in the border municipality of Tijuana

## Cultura política ciudadana y abstención electoral en el municipio fronterizo de Tijuana

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### Abstract:

The aim of this article is to identify whether the electoral abstention in Tijuana presents particularities given its border location and the time of residence of its citizens, as well as the characteristics of its political culture. Two sources were used for this study: *a*) electoral statistics for the period 1988-2016 to account for abstention trends, and *b*) the analysis of the results of a representative survey of the municipality. With these sources, indices and a logistical regression were developed to examine citizen opinions regarding the meaning of voting, political parties, and their ideological leanings. This study is relevant due to the growing trend towards abstention, which already is a serious and substantive problem for local electoral democracy. In political culture, native abstentionists consider voting as a form of expression regarding the functioning of the political system, and immigrant abstentionists show differential tendencies according to residence time.

Keywords: electoral abstention, elections, political culture, citizenship, ideology.

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### Resumen:

El objetivo de este artículo es identificar si la abstención electoral en Tijuana presenta particularidades dada su ubicación fronteriza y el tiempo de residencia de sus ciudadanos, así como las características de su cultura política. Se utilizan dos fuentes para su estudio: *a*) la estadística electoral en el periodo 1988-2016 para contar con las tendencias de la abstención, y *b*) el análisis de los resultados de una encuesta representativa del municipio. Con ellas, se elaboraron índices y una regresión logística para examinar las opiniones ciudadanas acerca del significado del voto, los partidos políticos y su ubicación ideológica. Este estudio es relevante dada la tendencia al incremento de la abstención, siendo ya un problema sustantivo grave para la democracia electoral de la localidad. En la cultura política, los abstencionistas nativos consideran el voto como una for-

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ma de expresión respecto del funcionamiento del sistema político y los abstencionistas inmigrantes presentan tendencias diferenciadas acorde al tiempo de residencia.

Palabras clave: abstencionismo, elecciones, cultura política, ciudadanía, ideología.

## Introduction

Political scientist Dieter Nohlen (2004) notes that in some Latin American countries it is very noticeable within political discourse to promote citizen participation in the electoral processes. He indicates that the underlying assumption is that democracy is legitimized and, at the same time, consolidated through a high electoral participation, this being the most important form of political participation in a democratic regime for three main reasons: *a)* because it includes the greatest number of citizens and at the same time guarantees the most equal participation of the members of a society; *b)* because it is the main channel that connects the electorate and its political preferences with power, which manifests in the election of its representatives; and *c)* because through this connection, the whole society relates or is affected by the result, which materializes in legislation as part of the public policies generated.

If electoral participation represents a fundamental expectation, it is necessary to investigate why some citizens decide not to cast their vote. During the electoral process, abstention manifests as an expression that is theoretically contradictory to the democratic principles; a political attitude not considered to be beneficial for the construction of citizenship, whose central axis is citizen participation (Sartori, 2007).

At present, electoral abstention is an issue that is being constantly discussed in the framework of contemporary procedural democracy. The latter indicates a set of principles that determine how citizens ought to conduct themselves under a democratic regime. These principles are also used as assumptions that guide democratic processes and the role of the citizen in its development, as well as their capacity to evaluate its quality. Said evaluation is issued on the election day, where the outgoing administration is evaluated to a certain extent, as well as the election of its new representatives, either by ratifying the same political party, alternating its party preference, or moving away from the polls.

In this sense, Merino (1995) states that the percentage of electoral participation depends, on one hand, on finding the balance between the reasons that encourage citizens to participate and their real possibilities to do so, and by other hand, on their willingness to actively intervene in public affairs; and although the best conditions exist in the procedure as well as a good political environment, in the end there will always be those who find more reasons to abstain than to participate.

Considering the foregoing, this article examines electoral abstention in the border municipality of Tijuana, located in the north of the state of Baja California, whose electoral participation is relevant given the growing trend towards abstention, for both local and federal elections, during the period of 1988-2016. Suffice it to say that in the last local election for 2016, on average, abstention reached 70% of the nominal list.

A starting point without which it is impossible to analyze this conduct is the context in which it occurs on a daily basis. Recent studies by the National Electoral Institute and El Colegio de México confirm that "political participation not only

reflects differences in socioeconomic terms or even the attitudes of citizens; political participation is also influenced by the social, economic and political context in which citizens find themselves" (Somuano, Nieto & Zaremborg, 2014, p. 22). This study is based on three assumptions: First, in addition to the individual characteristics of the citizen (socioeconomic profile) and their attitude towards politics, political participation is influenced by context; second, that the economic, political and social characteristics of the state affect the levels of citizen participation; and third, that the characteristics of the citizens and their attitudes towards politics are different in each state due to their context (Somuano et al., 2014). These three assumptions are also fundamental to analyze the distancing of the citizens from the polls, in the context of a border city to the north of Mexico, as is the case of Tijuana.

In view of this, it is important to first consider the demographic and economic dynamics of the city, typical of an area bordering the United States. And, secondly, its historical and political particularities, mainly its youth and development under economic and social policies dictated from the center of Mexico.

Regarding the demographic dynamics of Tijuana, it is impacted by immigration. This has been the main axis for its economic and social development from the early 20th century to present day; this municipality is a melting pot of citizen perspectives towards politics in general and electoral participation under the aforementioned assumption.

The studies by Zenteno (1995), who identifies very clear characteristics in the growth of Tijuana through great immigration waves, are useful in clarifying this issue. He notes that Tijuana is the clear example of contemporary history characterized by a strong dependence on the United States and zero dependence on the rest of Mexico in its early years of development (1920-1930). In this sense, the economic ups and downs of the following decades in the American Union impacted migratory flows in two ways: the demand for Mexican workers, as well as the deportation of the same; aspects that have defined the economic and social dynamics of the municipality to date. A significant fact is that the United States was, is, and will continue to be a strong driver in the demand for workers; therefore, Tijuana becomes a border center and "an important place to wait for labor insertion in the U.S. economy" (Zenteno, 1995, p. 130). However, not everyone is able to cross the border and eventually stay in Tijuana.

Another angle is that, since the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), public policies that economically detonate the border area of northern Mexico have been implemented, and with them a new social, economic, and political context is initiated in the region, particularly in the municipality of Tijuana, with improvements in infrastructure and media, which also attracted numerous migratory flows in search of a labor market with greater economic advantages (Zenteno, 1995). This was reflected in high population growth rates for the municipality. For example, since 1940 to the early 1970s, Tijuana surpassed national growth rates and even those of other border municipalities. In the 1970s there was a slight decrease, but this indicator recovered in the 1980s (Zenteno, 1995). Finally, during the 1990s there was a population growth rate of 5%, and of 2.5% in the decade of 2000-2010 (Consejo Nacional de Población [Conapo], 2012), which continues to contribute to the rebound in immigration and, consequently, to population growth.

The central questions of this study are the following: Does the electoral abstention in Tijuana present particularities derived from its border location? Does electoral

abstention show behavioral patterns differentiated according to the time of residence of its inhabitants?

Regarding these questions, let us consider that said abstention, according to our empirical research, has two particularities in the political culture of border citizens. First of all, there is the existence of an involuntary electoral abstention due to technical-administrative and institutional factors, for example, the need to carry out an address update procedure in the nominal listing for recent arrival immigrants; and secondly, there is the voluntary electoral abstention. The latter has two aspects, the first is social or individual abstention, where the concept of *city appropriation*<sup>1</sup> and the transitory nature of border life is inserted. The second is an attitude that encompasses a complex form of expression used by the citizen to convey their negative assessment on a part of the development of the democratic regime, which manifests in: *a*) the lack of confidence in the candidates proposed by political parties in elections; *b*) the disenchantment derived from the failure of political parties to fulfill subsequent electoral promises; and *c*) the lack of democratic reciprocity of municipal governments in solving local problems (Coutigno, 2012).

In light of the above considerations, the first section of this article analyzes the electoral statistics of the municipality of Tijuana in order to identify and confirm the growing trend towards electoral abstention, as well as its concentration, regardless of whether it is a federal or local election; and identifies whether abstention in Tijuana can be described as a real problem.

In the second section, we present a first approach to the political culture of the citizen voter residing in the municipality of Tijuana through the generation of indices to identify significant relations around electoral abstention. The data used for their elaboration are exclusive to the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.<sup>2</sup> In the third section, a logistic regression model is used with data from the aforementioned survey to estimate the sociodemographic elements associated with the probability that a person is an abstentionist. The fourth section presents the conclusions and some final reflections.

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<sup>1</sup> The degree of appropriation of the city is taken from the study by Acosta, Solís and Alonso (2012), who considered three dimensions: the level of commitment with the city, the intensity of social relations in the city, and the intensity of public space use.

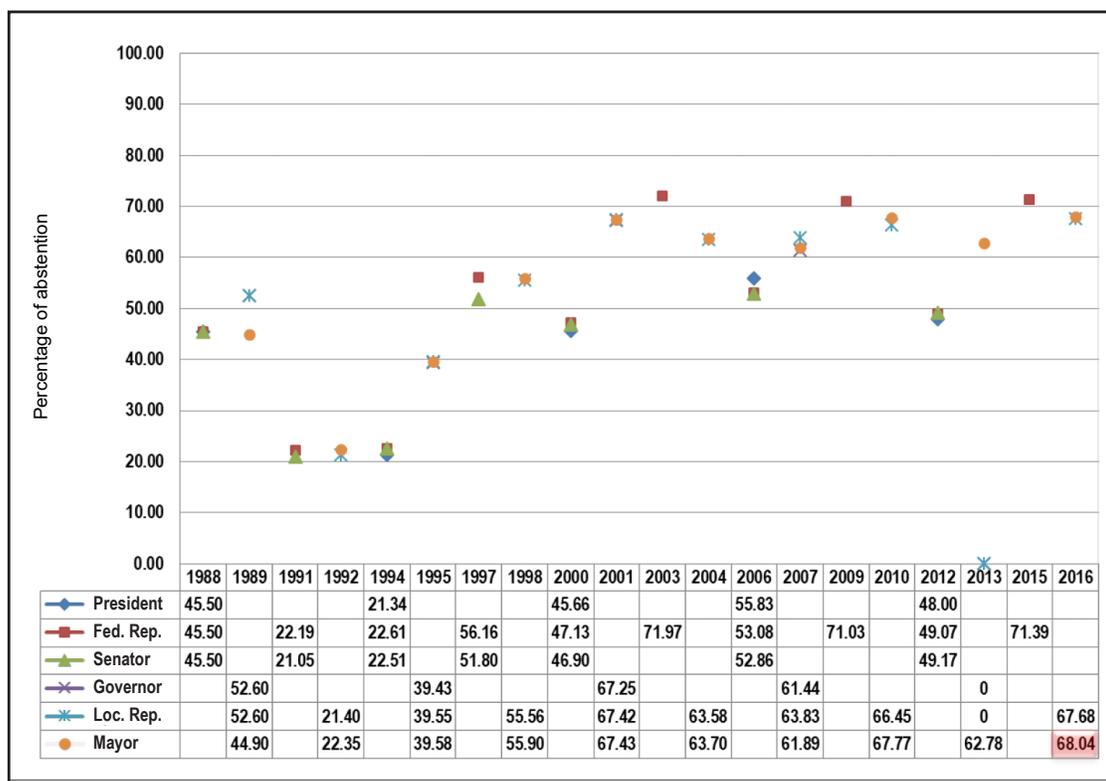
<sup>2</sup> The survey was carried out for the purposes of this research through Berumen and Asociados, S.A. de C.V. from February 27th to March 1st of 2010, a period preceding the pre-election campaigns that began on March 12th of the same year, with the aim of ensuring that they did not affect the opinion of voters. It was applied to 300 people residing in the same number of households (over the age of 18), who had their voting credential with an address in the municipality of Tijuana. A probabilistic sample of 60 electoral sections of the municipality of Tijuana was selected, using as a sampling frame the list of electoral sections and their electoral roll according to data from the National Electoral Institute (INE for its acronym in Spanish) for February 2010. The electoral sections were selected with a probability proportional to the size of their electoral roll. From each section included in the sample, one block was randomly selected per section, and from each of these around seven households were selected to obtain five interviews per electoral section.

### Levels and trends of abstention

The concept of electoral abstention used in this document is defined as the non-participation of those who have the right to vote in the act of voting and is, at the same time, an indicator that shows the percentage of non-voters over the total of those who have the right to vote (Alcubilla, n.d.). In the case of this study, abstention is measured on the basis of citizens registered in the nominal list and not on the basis of the electoral roll or the general population who has the right to vote, since this leads to a different result and mainly to another interpretation.

The electoral statistics for the municipality of Tijuana are broadly presented in Figure 1. Said figure shows the results of abstention during the period of 1988 to 2016. And as can be observed, it is from the 1997 electoral process that the clear growing trend towards abstention is identified. The data indicate that at the end of the analysis period (2016 election) only three out of every ten citizens voted, suggesting the construction of a separation process between citizens and electoral democracy.

Figure 1: Trend of electoral political abstention in Tijuana, Baja California, 1988-2016



Source: Own elaboration with information from the Instituto Estatal Electoral de Baja California (IEEBC, 2016) and INE (2016).

In short, based on the analysis of the electoral results, we can assume that citizens who reside in the municipality of Tijuana are moving away from the polls, regardless of the type of electoral process. This shows the complexity of the electoral behavior of these citizens, even if only the statistical data is considered. The obligatory questions at this time are: Could electoral abstention already be considered a structural or substantial problem? What factor or factors are affecting border citizens causing them to not exercise this right? Why is it steadily increasing in local elections? What effects will this have in electoral democracy and in political representation if this systematic trend of abstention continues?

A first point of reflection to argue the causes for the oscillatory trend of electoral participation in the citizens of Tijuana in a general manner is that, according to what the studies on the institutional design of the electoral system indicate, the simultaneity or concurrence in elections significantly impacts on a greater electoral participation, regardless of the call of political parties and even more so if it is a presidential election (Espinoza, 2007; Gómez, 2009, p. 88; Nohlen, 2003). In the case of elections in the state of Baja California, these are not concurrent with the federal elections; thus, this point should be considered but not as a determinant.

Bearing in mind that electoral participation decreases in the intermediate elections for federal deputies, the increase in abstention that occurred in Tijuana in 2003, 2009 and 2015 may seem normal, having reached more than 70%; with 2015 being the year that presents the highest abstention rate nationwide in the municipalities as a whole. Furthermore, as also shown in Figure 1, with regard to the elections for the federal executive in 2006 and 2012, the results indicate a decrease of 7.8% in abstention from one election to another, which is the effect of a presidential election, as has already been mentioned in previous paragraphs. However, by analyzing the local elections of 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016, abstention from the presidential elections is on average higher by 10%, regardless of whether or not there is an election for governor.

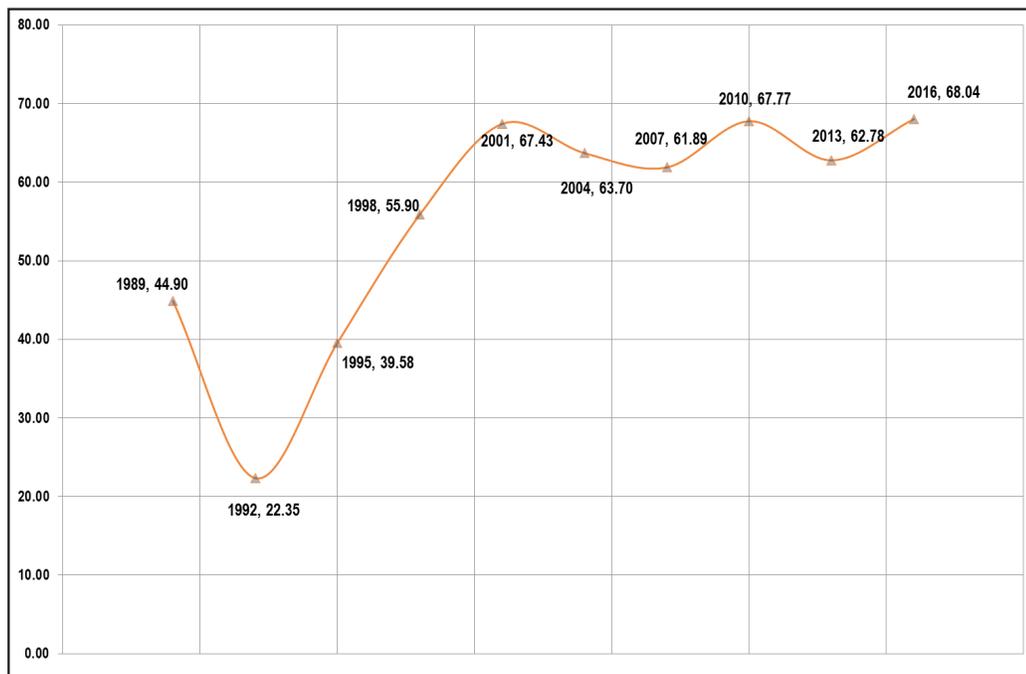
In order to analyze abstention in Tijuana thoroughly, we have selected the elections for municipal presidents from 1989 to 2016, because this political phenomenon represents the election of a local authority that is in a way close to the citizenry, which identifies and solves the main problems that directly affect the municipality and therefore, the assumption is that the citizens are more attentive to their campaign proposals and to the electoral process in general. However, the electoral statistics indicate that this is not the case.

In the statistical results presented in Figure 2, there is a clear growing trend towards abstention from elections in Tijuana from 1989 to 2016, with 2016 being the highest point. It is important to note that this longitudinal analysis makes it evident that municipal authorities are only elected by three of every ten citizens. Justifiably, this makes us question the limit of legitimacy for this electoral exercise.

Having said this, it could be assumed that at present, electoral abstention can be considered a substantive problem in the municipality of Tijuana. Nevertheless, if we take our analysis to the territorial dimension indicated by Raventós (2003), that is, if the abstention trend is systematic, it can be considered problematic in and of itself; but when it tends to concentrate in specific sectors or spaces of the population, such as the poorest or least educated population, people living in remote places, the indigenous population, or a particular genre, we are entering into social or political exclusion. Furthermore, Raventós mentions that the risk of this type of localized and systematic

abstention is the definition of the profiles of those who determine the electoral results, making it possible to lean towards forms of elitist centralization.

**Figure 2: Percentage of abstention in municipal president elections in Tijuana, Baja California, 1989-2016**



Source: Own elaboration with information from the IEEBC (2016).

The concentration of electoral abstention is, therefore, a serious problem for democratic electoral systems that merits a more detailed analysis. For this reason, it is important to locate citizens who reside in the municipality of Tijuana and who choose not to vote under the scheme of their location by districts and electoral sections. As noted in previous paragraphs, abstention amounts to more than 68% in local elections, and is above 70% in the election of the Federal Congress. The spatial analysis will allow to confirm whether or not there is concentration of abstention in the municipality, and to know if we are already entering a substantial problem in our democratic electoral system in the border region. To this end, we will use the analytical resource of the geographical and systematic location of abstention results by electoral district and section from 2004 to 2016.

In relation to this issue, the municipality of Tijuana is divided, at the federal level, into four districts (4, 5, 6 and 8); and for local elections it is divided into seven districts (VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII and XVI). For both divisions there is a total of 758 electoral sections<sup>3</sup>, which have the advantage of being the same at both federal and local levels.

<sup>3</sup> Methodologically, one of the advantages of the study at the electoral section level is that it allows to study both local and federal elections, since they are the same sections at both levels. However, in a longitudinal study of this nature, redistricting processes, the creation of new sections, including merging between sections and the disappearance of others, must be controlled. For this analysis, only those sections that have remained unchanged over time were considered.

For a first approach to the analysis of abstention at the electoral section level, the sections have been regrouped according to the percentage of abstention reported in the statistics, and by the district that corresponds to it at the local level. Subsequently, abstention behavior is observed in the sections and those that maintain the highest abstention average and their fluctuation over time are identified. From the empirical result, it is concluded that electoral abstention presents a differentiated trend in terms of its intensity at this level and the following classification for the electoral districts is proposed (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Classification of the electoral abstention trend in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2004-2016**

Classification	Abstention trend
Group A	With a constant abstention with substantial increases.
Group B	With a constant abstention with not so substantial increases.
Group C	Changes from participation to substantial circumstantial abstention.

Source: Own elaboration with information from the IEEBC (2016).

Thus, with the application of this analytical resource, the concentration of abstention in the electoral districts was identified as follows: in Group A, there is district XII, which represents a political-electoral area with a historical presence of abstention and with a markedly growing trend towards this phenomenon; in Group B the electoral districts XI, XIII and XVI are included, characterized by their stability in the pattern of constant abstentionists, which is maintained with not so substantial increases; finally, in Group C, there are districts VIII, IX and X, distinguished by the cyclical emergency (in the last election of 2013) of a high abstention index, despite having been districts with a relatively high electoral participation compared to the other elections.

In short, according to Raventós (2003), district XII of the municipality of Tijuana is the area with the greatest social and political exclusion given its concentration and increase in the number of citizens who have decided not to exercise their right to vote. The next step would be to identify its sociodemographic profile, to be presented in further research.

## Political culture and abstentionist profile

With the aforementioned data in mind, and in order to take a closer look at citizen thinking about the democratic system, the objective of this section is to understand the political culture of the citizen voter who resides in the municipality of Tijuana. More specifically, it seeks to identify the meaningful relations around electoral abstention and political culture, this latter understood as "the values, conceptions and attitudes that are directed specifically towards the political sphere. That is, the set of elements that configure the subjective perception that a population has of power" (Peschard, 2001, p. 3), considering the voter as "the person who fulfills the conditions required by the Constitution or laws to exercise the right to vote and who, therefore, has the power

by their *vote* to influence the *election* or appointment of councilors, deputies, senators, and even the Head of State” (Cabanellas, cited in Barquín, 2003, p. 163).

In this way, the voter constitutes the basic unit of analysis, since the citizen residing in Tijuana and their political culture can be studied through them. The data in this study is based exclusively on the Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of February 2010. The analytical route we shall follow is, first of all, the description of the sociodemographic profile of the abstentionist; and secondly, the presentation of four indices developed to distinguish and weight the political culture of the elector who votes and of the elector who abstains. In addition, as an analytical vector, the time of residence of the citizens<sup>4</sup> is included as a factor that can mark the difference in their political attitude.

Concerning the sociodemographic characteristics of the abstentionist group, these show a very similar percentage of electoral abstention between women (50.8%) and men (49.2%). And with respect to their age distribution, a little over two thirds of them are in the range of 30 to 44 years of age, with a relatively low percentage in the extreme age groups. When analyzing the factors related to age and genre, in the case of women, 66% of abstentionist are between the ages of 35 and 44 years, whereas in the case of men, three of every four abstentionist are between the ages of 25 and 44 years.

In this same profile, a significant variable is the level of education, which has been broadly discussed in academia as a variable that intervenes in the electoral behavior of citizens. In these terms, six of every ten abstentionists who reside in the municipality of Tijuana attended basic education as the highest level of education. However, it is necessary to note that there is a significant group of abstentionists with technical studies and others with high school studies. In relation to the main activity of this group of votes, the survey data reveal that the vast majority are a working population; this percentage is more marked in the case of men, whereas a quarter of women are engaged in household chores. It should be noted that, in terms of their immigration status, 53.8% of abstentionists are natives of the municipality and the remaining 46.2% were born in a state other than Baja California, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

The four statistical indicators that allow weighing the political culture of voters who reside in the municipality were constructed as follows:

- a) *Ideological location index*: for the integration of this index, the citizen is ideologically self-positioning themselves on a scale of values ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 to 4 is left, 5 is center, and 6 to 10 is right. Subsequently, the results were standardized, and three categories of the variable were constructed: left, center, and right.
- b) *Citizen participation index*: this index measures the degree of citizen participation of votes in 13 different organizations, such as neighborhood associations and parent associations, among others. The responses and their results are divided into the total number of organizations analyzed to develop three categories for analysis: citizens without participation, citizens with participation, and citizens with high participation.
- c) *Institutional confidence index*: this index measures the degree of confidence that citizens have in 19 organizations. Based on this information, four categories of analysis are constructed: no confidence, low confidence, medium confidence, and high confidence.

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<sup>4</sup> Citizens interviewed had, at the time of the interview, their voting credential issued in Baja California.

d) *Electoral participation index*: one of the important aspects in the electoral behavior identified in this study is the presence of three types of electors: those who vote, constant abstentionists, and those who vote in some elections and abstain in others (itinerants). Perhaps the behavior of the latter has to do with factors relating to the political system in an individual and circumstantial dimension. With the aforementioned results, the electoral participation index is constructed with three categories of analysis: participants, itinerant abstentionists, and constant abstentionists.

The first relation of these indices is their *ideological location*, as according to Alcántara (2008), the concepts of left and right are simplifying components of the political concept and play a guiding role when it comes to typifying the different political leanings of the voters. In this sense, Table 2 shows the time of residence in Tijuana and the ideological *self-positioning*. In general, immigrants are located in the ideological center. Those with between one and five years of residence position themselves more on the right (24.8%) and less on the left (23.7%), whereas those who have live for more than 11 years in Tijuana position themselves more on the left (28%), almost reaching the natives in the state (31%). In their affinity for some political parties, significant differences have been observed depending on the time of residence; the first is that those who have one to ten years of residence sympathize more with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*- PRI) and of those with 11 years or more, 53% sympathize with the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional* - PAN), with a higher percentage than the natives (35.9%).

**Table 2: Ideological location index and affinity for a political party according to the time of residence of the voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010). Percentage distribution**

Time of residence (in years)	Ideological location				Total
	Left	Center	Right		
Native	31.0	59.8	9.2		100.0
01 to 05	23.7	51.5	24.8		100.0
06 to 10	26.2	65.8	8.0		100.0
11 or more	28.0	66.7	5.3		100.0
	Affinity for a political party				
	PRD	PRI	PAN	Other/none	Total
Native	6.4	27.0	35.9	30.7	100.0
01 to 05	23.2	48.1	6.9	21.8	100.0
06 to 10	1.5	46.0	26.6	25.9	100.0
11 or more	6.2	15.1	53.0	25.7	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

The combination of the *citizen participation* and *ideological location* indices (Table 3), indicates that the (ideological) right has two strong options: they participate electorally (73.4%) or are itinerant abstentionists (24.8%), since constant abstentionists are few (1.8%). Those who self-position themselves on the left participate a bit more, electorally speaking, than those on the right (75.6%), but their percentage of constant abstentionists increases by seven percentage points over those on the right. Those who self-position on the ideological center are more constant abstentionists than those on the left and right (10.2%).

**Table 3: Ideological location and electoral participation indices of the voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

Ideological location	Electoral participation index			Total
	Participates	Itinerant abstentionist	Constant abstentionist	
Left	75.6	15.4	8.9	100.0
Center	76.5	13.4	10.2	100.0
Right	73.4	24.8	1.8	100.0
Total	75.9	15.1	9.0	100.0

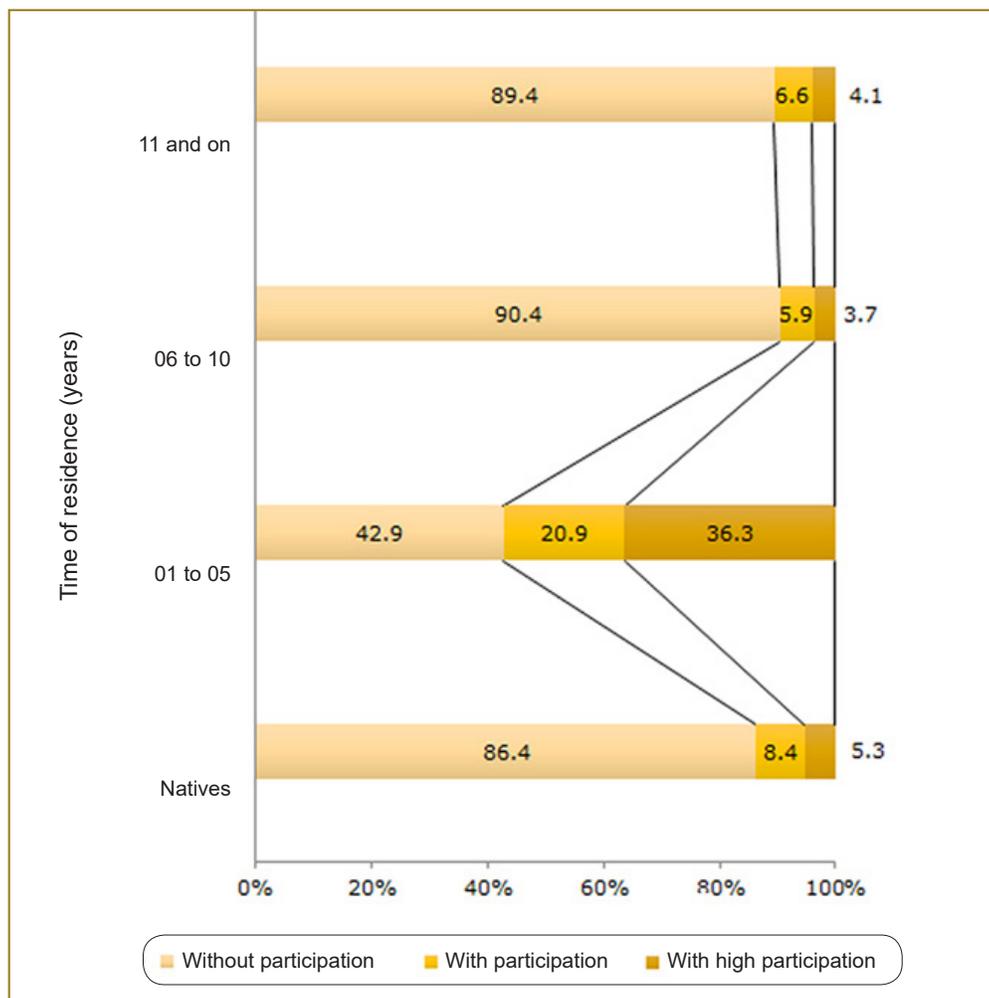
Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010* (*Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010*).

Similarly, the *citizen participation index* provides a wealth of information to identify different forms of intervening in the public sphere. An important aspect to discuss in the participation of migrants, which is taken from the studies by Acosta et al. (2012), is the relation of the inhabitants with the territory (which we shall also call context). For the municipality of Tijuana, this context is mediated by its transitional nature, due to its border location, being also a bridge for insertion into the labor market of the United States, as has been analyzed. This can imply “low degrees of appropriation of the city and that, despite the economic and social development achieved in these areas, the inhabitants perceive delays in aspects related to the urban environment” (Acosta et al., 2012, p. 11). In addition to this, Castells and Cusminsky (cited in Acosta et al., 2012, p. 11) indicate that this diffuse, precarious and fragmented relation between citizens living in the border city can have a negative impact on the quality of life, since these are fundamental factors to generate citizenship and fostering commitment to the community in which they reside and “which, in order to live with ‘quality’, demands their rights and fulfills their obligations” (Acosta et al., 2012, p. 11).

Having said this, we present the results of citizen participation of the voters, according to their residency in the municipality. First, citizens who have between one and five years of residence have a high citizen participation (36.27%), and from six years onwards their participation in the public sphere decreases substantially, less than ten percent

(totaling with high participation and with participation). The percentages without participation exceed the native citizens. This information can be associated with the degree of appropriation of the city, as has already been mentioned (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Political participation according to time of residence of the voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution.**



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010* (*Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010*).

Added to the previous analysis, we now combine the citizen participation index and the electoral participation index. The result of this is that the voters who do not participate in any organization, but who do participate in the electoral processes, amount to 75.2%. In this sense, even though this group casts its vote, its participation stops there, remaining on the sidelines of another form of participation in public affairs, and it delegates responsibilities and decision making to the government that obtains

the majority of votes. It is in this same category that we find citizens who choose not to participate in the electoral processes and do not participate in any other type of public or social interest activity, as such they could be said to be indifferent or completely withdrawn from public interest issues, representing 10.2% as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Citizen participation index and electoral participation index of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

Citizen participation	Electoral participation index			
	Electoral participation	Itinerant abstentionist	Constant abstentionist	Total
No participation	75.2	14.6	10.2	100.0
Participation	92.9	6.0	1.1	100.0
High participation	62.7	32.8	4.5	100.0
Total	75.9	15.1	9.0	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

The group that casts its vote, but also participates in public affairs through different organizations, whether those are promoted by the government or are derived from social organizations, represents 92.9%. The members of this group could be called active citizens in democracy. The group of citizens with high participation deserves special attention, since only 62.7% are constant in their electoral participation and 32.8% are itinerant abstentionists; the latter could refer in some way to conjunctural circumstances, which make them participate in an electoral differential manner.

It is also important to consider the group of citizens which, although does not participate in the elections, is involved through other forms of intervention in public affairs, in this case in some type of organization, and it is there where these citizens prefer to make their participation in democracy effective; 4.5% reported that they are this type of voter (Table 4).

One aspect that is closely related to electoral behavior is the *confidence in institutions*, one of the most discussed issues due to its impact in Mexico in various forums and surveys at the national level. Furthermore, according to Salazar and Temkin (2007), confidence is a variable that intervenes in the subjective judgments that voters make of their institutions in response to the uncertainty inherent in democratic processes. In general, it could be said that there is a positive association between the non-confidence and abstentionist categories, decreasing as confidence in the institutions increases in the following two categories (low, and medium confidence). An interesting case to analyze is the category of high confidence and itinerant abstentionist which, although its electoral participation is itinerant, it is probably circumstantial (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Confidence in institutions index and electoral participation index of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

Confidence in institutions	Electoral participation index			
	Participates	Itinerant abstentionist	Constant abstentionist	Total
No confidence	69.8	20.6	9.5	100.0
Low confidence	72.8	11.2	16.1	100.0
Medium confidence	79.4	13.1	7.5	100.0
High confidence	74.4	19.5	6.1	100.0
Total	75.9	15.1	9.0	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

The democratic regime argues that the elected political representatives in public office must consider the interests of citizens and that these should be reflected in the decision-making process. The interviewed voters, regardless of the category in which they are placed in the electoral participation index, lean towards a regular to bad representation of citizen interests, with constant abstentionist being more critical. This variable does have a significant value for abstaining or voting in the electoral processes (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Degree of representation of citizen interests by political parties and electoral participation index of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

Electoral participation index	Representation of citizen interests by political parties				
	Very good	Good	Ok	Bad	Total
Participates	0.3	21.5	56.5	21.7	100.0
Itinerant abstentionist	0.7	40.1	24.2	34.9	100.0
Constant abstentionist		2.4	55.3	42.3	100.0
Total	0.3	22.6	51.5	25.6	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

On the subject of democracy, the experience and method used by Lechner (2002) is used in a survey applied in Chile to capture the idea that citizens have of democracy. The result of the combination of the electoral participation index and the conception of democracy reflects that the interviewed voters, who participate electorally, have a consensual and procedural view of democracy particular to the theory of democracy. On the other hand, abstentionists, whether itinerant or constant, have the idea of democracy as a utilitarian instrument detached from the social bond (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Example to explain what democracy is to a child, and electoral participation index of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

Idea of democracy	Electoral participation index			
	Participates	Itinerant abstentionist	Constant abstentionist	Total
Random game where many play and few win.	7.9	39.2	0.0	11.9
A supermarket, where everyone gets what they need.	22.6	34.8	58.1	27.7
A game of football, where there are equal rules for everyone.	25.8	2.0	32.5	22.8
Like a ship, where everyone needs to pull their own weight.	43.7	24.0	9.4	37.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

Added to the above is the idea that citizens may have a vote; a fundamental aspect in the political culture of citizens. To capture this idea, five sentences were formulated. The first three have to do with the theoretical principles of democracy and the last two seek to identify citizens who use voting as a form of expression (evaluation) towards the functioning of the political system (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Concept of the vote and electoral participation index of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**

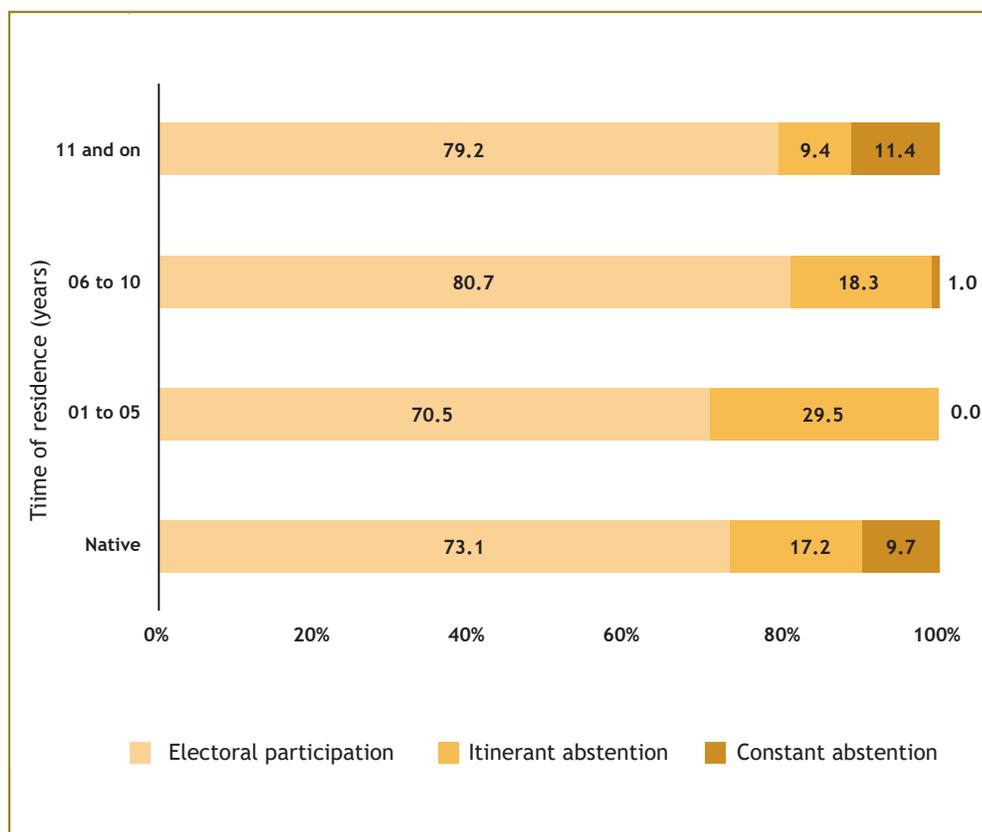
Concept of the vote	Type of electoral participation			
	Participates	Itinerant abstentionist	Constant abstentionist	Total
It is both a right and a duty.	58.9	62.5	57.1	59.3
It serves to elect our representatives.	23.4	11.0	14.4	20.7
It serves to participate in politics.	2.8		4.9	2.6
It is the only way to have a say in what the government does.	6.1	12.4	18.9	8.2
It is the best way to express disagreement with the government.	8.7	14.2	4.7	9.1
Does not know.	0.1			0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

As a result of the combination of the electoral participation index and the idea of the vote, it is observed that between 50% and 60% of the interviewed voters identify it as a right and a civic duty. In the subgroup of itinerant abstentionist, 26.6% are of the opinion that the vote is a form of expression towards the functioning of the political system. For constant abstentionist, this same idea is held on average by 23.6% of them (see Table 8).

Finally, the electoral participation of citizens residing in the municipality will be differentiated according to the time of residence in the city. The survey data show that citizens who have just arrived in the municipality (1 to 5 years) is the group that votes the least (70.5%), in comparison with other immigrants and natives, but a good percentage is itinerant (29.5%). This could be interpreted as a period of adaptation to the context during which they do not vote in principle but do so eventually. As the time of residence increases, migrants begin to vote a bit more (80.7% and 79.2%) than natives (73.1%). However, migrants that have resided between six and ten years show greater percentages of itinerant abstentionism than natives, that is, they have a more circumstantial vote. And migrants who have more than ten years of residing in Tijuana are more constant abstentionists than natives, 11.4% and 9.7%, respectively, a figure that contributes to the theory of the degree of appropriation of the city (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Electoral participation index according to the time of residence of voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010. Percentage distribution**



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010* (*Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010*).

In relation to the last type of analysis, a logistical regression model and data from the Survey are used to estimate the sociodemographic elements associated with the probability that a person is an abstentionist. The model analyzes the relation between a set of sociodemographic values, political culture and the probability that a citizen is an abstentionist (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Logistical regression model for the probability of being abstentionist. Voters in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, 2010**

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp (B)
Age	-0.058	0.017	0.001	0.943
Level of education	-1.893	0.425	0.000	0.151
Affinity for a political party	0.762	0.352	0.030	2.143
Evaluation of political party performance	0.838	0.361	0.020	2.311
Constant	1.741	0.850	0.041	5.705

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the *Survey on political culture and electoral behavior of citizens residing in the municipality of Tijuana, Baja California, February 2010 (Encuesta sobre cultura política y conducta electoral de los ciudadanos residentes en el municipio de Tijuana, Baja California, febrero 2010)*.

Among the main results obtained from the aforementioned model are the following:

- a) Age. It is observed that at an older age there is a lower probability to be abstentionist. For every year of age, the probability to be abstentionist decreases by approximately 5%.
- b) Level of education. People with secondary, high school and professional education have a lower probability to be abstentionist compared to those who only have primary education (around 85% less likely).
- c) Affinity for a political party. Those who have an affinity for the PAN are more than twice as likely to be abstentionists than those who sympathize with any other political party. But even those who do not sympathize with any political party are more likely to be abstentionists.
- d) Local government assessment. The less favorable the citizen evaluation on the performance of the local government, the more likely they are to be abstentionists.
- e) Assessment of political parties. If the citizen assessment on political party performance is less favorable, the more likely they are to be abstentionists.
- f) Young people with high levels of education, who do not sympathize with a political party, who make a bad assessment of the local government, and also of the performance of the political parties, are more likely to be abstentionists.

## Conclusions

From the scope of electoral statistics, the relatively high electoral participation at the end of the 1980s in the municipality and its considerable decline in subsequent elections, up to almost 70% in the 2016 local elections, stands out among the main results of this study.

With regard to the place of residence of the abstentionists and the frequency with which they carry out this political attitude, the results indicate that this is a real and important problem. Although abstention occurs throughout the municipality, its concentration and increase in the period of 2004 to 2016 has been different for each electoral district, where district XII stands out as a political-electoral area with a historical presence of abstention and with a markedly growing trend of this phenomenon.

Three groups stand out regarding the main results of the sociopolitical profile of the border elector: *a)* those who participate, *b)* itinerant abstentionists, and *c)* constant abstentionists. This made it possible to identify important differences, in light of the development of indices and a logistical regression model. In other words, political culture and electoral attitude have identified clear nuances between native voters and immigrants according to their time of residence in the municipality.

The main features of the political culture of abstentionists are the following:

- a)* There are significant differences between the electoral results in federal and local elections. From attendance to the polls to the perspective of the vote.
- b)* Abstentionists consider voting as a form of expression and of assessing the functioning of the political system.
- c)* Native abstentionists think of democracy in more instrumental and utilitarian terms.
- d)* Immigrant voters who have between one and five years of residence in Tijuana self-positioned themselves on the ideological right and participate electorally or are itinerant abstentionists.
- e)* There is a significant positive association between the variable "no confidence in institutions" and abstention.
- f)* There is a positive association between the assessment of government performance, the representativeness of the political parties, and abstention.

Finally, it is important to note that two control groups were considered in this study, natives and immigrant citizens given the historical perspective of the migratory phenomenon in the municipality and the complex context of a border society. In the words of Espinoza and Ham (2011) "the fluctuations in its demographic increase (of Tijuana) are in function of the factors that attract, expel and condition the composition and characteristics of both the migrant population and the population that is already settled" (Espinoza & Ham, 2011, p. 177). Among the factors that could be identified in some points, such as the difference between the political attitude of natives and non-natives regarding their intervention in the public sphere, are for example, a more intense citizen participation among immigrants than natives and, the constant abstention among immigrants with more than 10 years of residence in the municipality.

In this sense, it is necessary to continue studying the electoral participation of immigrants residing in the municipality by time of residence and the border factors that affect it, such as deepening the degree of appropriation of the territory or of the city, with the objective of identifying the variables that intervene in the construction of citizenship or the factors that are inhibiting it.

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