

In Eurovision, juries prefer ballads

Written by Jesús Manuel Rodrigo Céspedes (@Euronumerics) 19/09/2023

Every year we observe differences between the jury scores and those of the televoting. In fact, there is a feeling that the jury tends to vote for slower or more intimate songs than the audience, while the televoting prefers innovative, hard-hitting and groundbreaking songs. In this blog we look at the data to check to what extent these hypotheses are met.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HYPOTHESIS: THE WINNERS

Before getting into numbers, science values direct observation as a good method to appreciate facts and relationships and then launch into research. In the following table we have collected the winning songs by televoting and the jury from 2016 to 2023. Only in one of these years, 2017, the winner coincided for both criteria. On the other hand, the winners of Eurovision 2016 and 2019, 1944 by Jamala and Arcade by Duncan Laurence, respectively, do not appear in this table, since they did not triumph on either side.



The infographic features a blue and yellow border with a white background for the table. At the top left, there is a logo with the number '1' and the text 'FESTIVAL DE EUROVISIÓN (2016-2023) GANADORES DEL TELEVOTO Y DEL JURADO EN LA FINAL'. At the top right, there are social media icons and the handle '@euronumerics'. The table has three columns: 'GANADOR TELEVOTO', 'AÑO', and 'GANADOR JURADO'. The 2017 row is highlighted in green.

GANADOR TELEVOTO	AÑO	GANADOR JURADO
Sergey Lazarev "You are the only one"	2016	Dami Im "Sound of silence"
Salvador Sobral "Amar pelos dois"	2017	Salvador Sobral "Amar pelos dois"
Netta "Toy"	2018	Cesar Sampson "Nobody but you"
Keiino "Spirit in the sky"	2019	Tamara Todevska "Proud"
Måneskin "Zitti e buoni"	2021	Gjon's Tears "Tout l'univers"
Kalush Orchestra "Stefania"	2022	Sam Ryder "Space man"
Käärijä "Cha cha cha"	2023	Loreen "Tattoo"

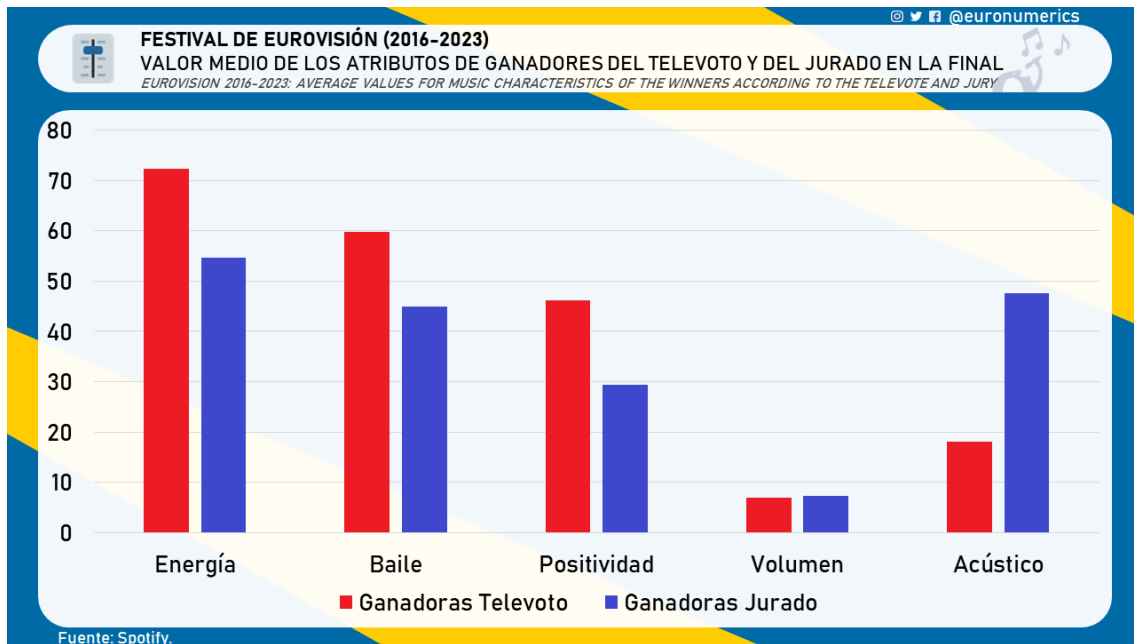
Comparing the winning songs within each year, we can see that indeed the juries tend to make winners songs with louder voices, intimate melodies and ballads. On the other hand, televoting scores more visual, more energetic songs with a much faster rhythm.

At this point we can think that there is a difference between what one criterion votes for and another. What do the numbers tell us?

THE NUMBERS TO SUCCEED IN EUROVISION

Spotify throws us some variables or attributes about the songs in order to design the music lists you listen to. That is, it assigns numerical values to qualities such as the energy or acoustic level of a song. How it does it is a mystery, but in the blogs we have been verifying that it is quite fine.

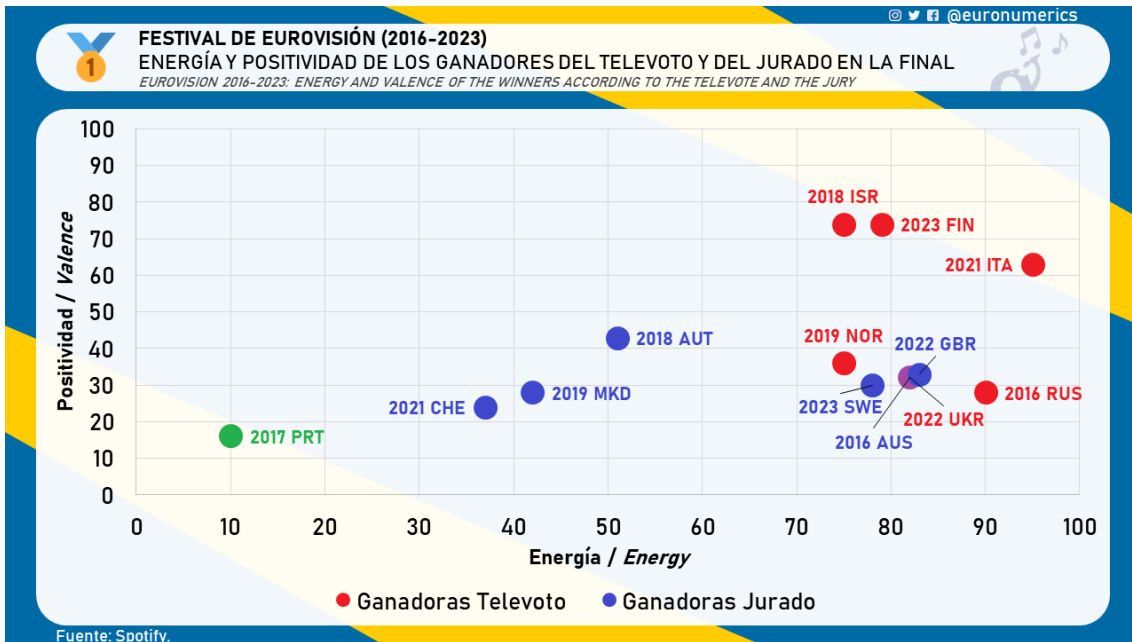
Taking the values of the winning songs from the previous list, we have prepared the following graph. The bars represent the average values of each group of songs for each of the attributes studied, with red corresponding to the winners of the televoting and blue to those elevated by the experts.



As observed, the winners of the televoting have higher values in terms of energy, dance and positivity. The “volume” variable is presented to us in negative values, therefore, the jury winners are further from a high (positive) volume. Also the best rated by experts have higher values of resembling an acoustic.

In short, the winning songs of the televote are more energetic, danceable, positive, loud and less acoustic. The opposite occurs with those of the jury.

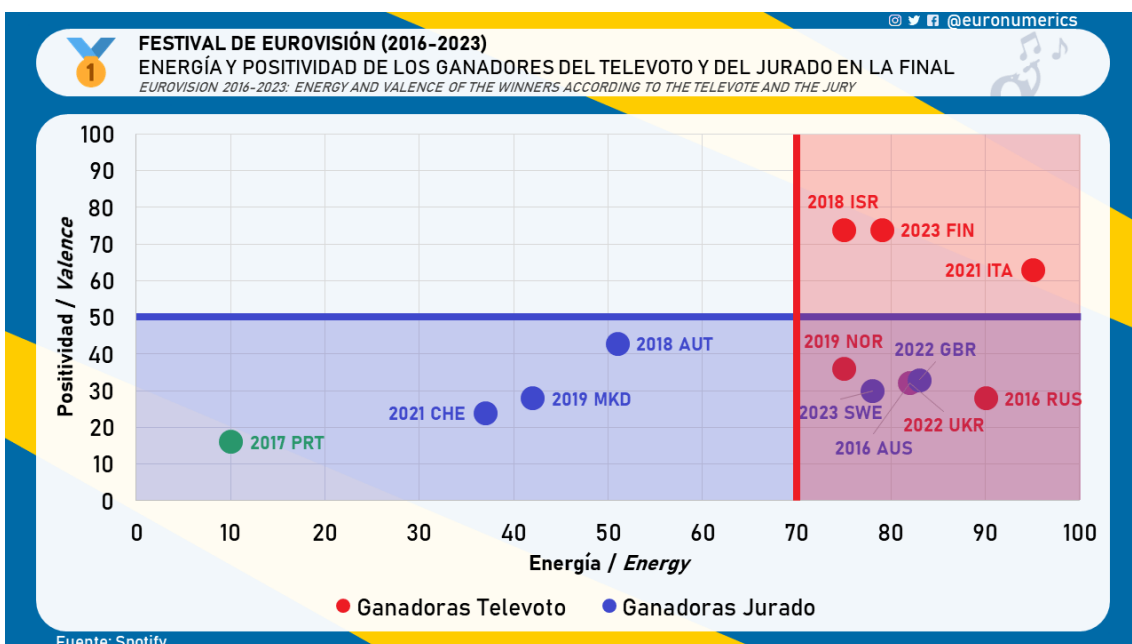
In the following graph we have represented this group of songs (see table above) according to their two most distinctive attributes, energy and positivity, with values between 0 and 100. Before continuing reading, are you able to identify any patterns? An appreciation, both Australia 2016 and Ukraine 2022 have the same values, not because they are really the same songs (far from it) but for these attributes Spotify considers it that way.



Let's start with televoting, that is, the red dots. If we look closely, all those who won the televote have energy values above 70. The only exception is Salvador Sobral, who also had abnormally low energy values. Except for this exception, it becomes quite clear that to win the televote you have to have a very energetic song.

Let's now focus on the experts, the dots in blue. In this case we can also draw another border, but this time in the attribute of positivity. No song with more than 50 in positivity won the jury. In short, the juries give the victory to songs that are more closed, tragic, torn, not necessarily less positive (in English this attribute is called "Valence").

In short, we have a purple zone that includes both characteristics to be a candidate for victory: having more than 70 in energy and less than 50 in positivity. In this area we have the last two winners: Ukraine in 2022 and Sweden in 2023.

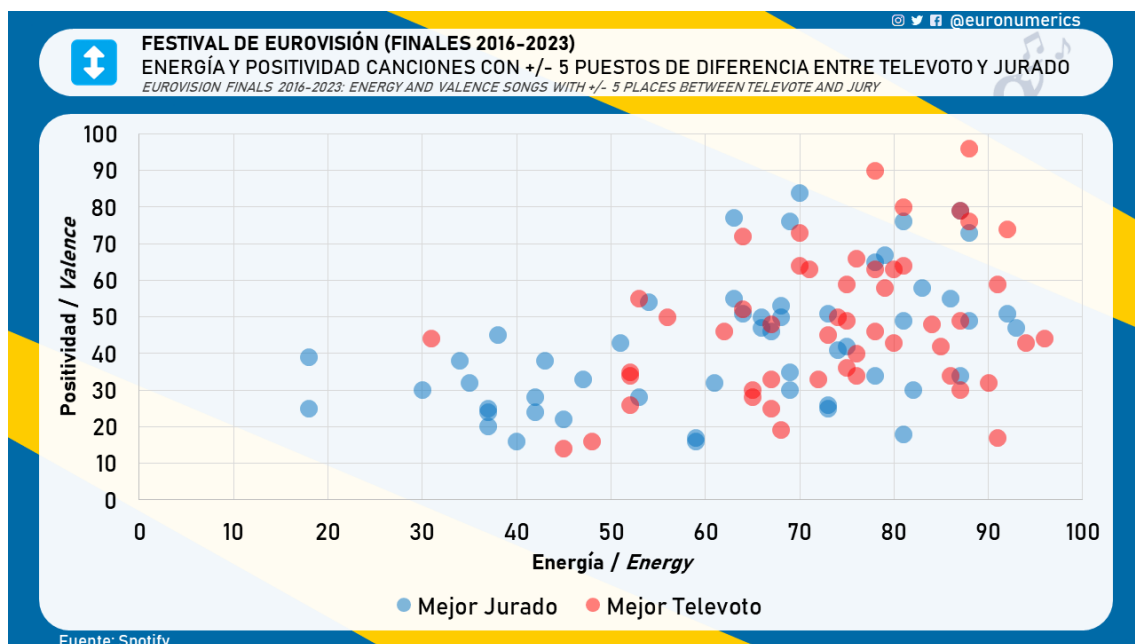


In fact, the graph also reveals the power of televoting over the jury: in the exclusively red zone there are two winners (Israel 2018 and Italy 2021), while in the exclusively blue zone there is only Portugal 2017 and it won in both criteria.

RESCUING INTIMITIES

Until now we have focused on the winners, who are the greatest exponents of the public and jury results. For this level we have verified that there are certain behavioral patterns. Now, let's go down one step to cover all the other songs.

The following graph shows all the songs from 2016 to 2023 that, at least, had a difference of 5 positions between their results in the televoting and in the jury. For example, Slomo is not represented because she was third in both criteria and the difference is zero. On the other hand, there is Queen of Kings since she was 3rd in the televoting and 17th in the jury, more than 5 places difference. The color of the dot represents whether it obtained a better position in the televoting or in the jury (in the case of Norway 2023, it appears in red because it placed better in the televoting).



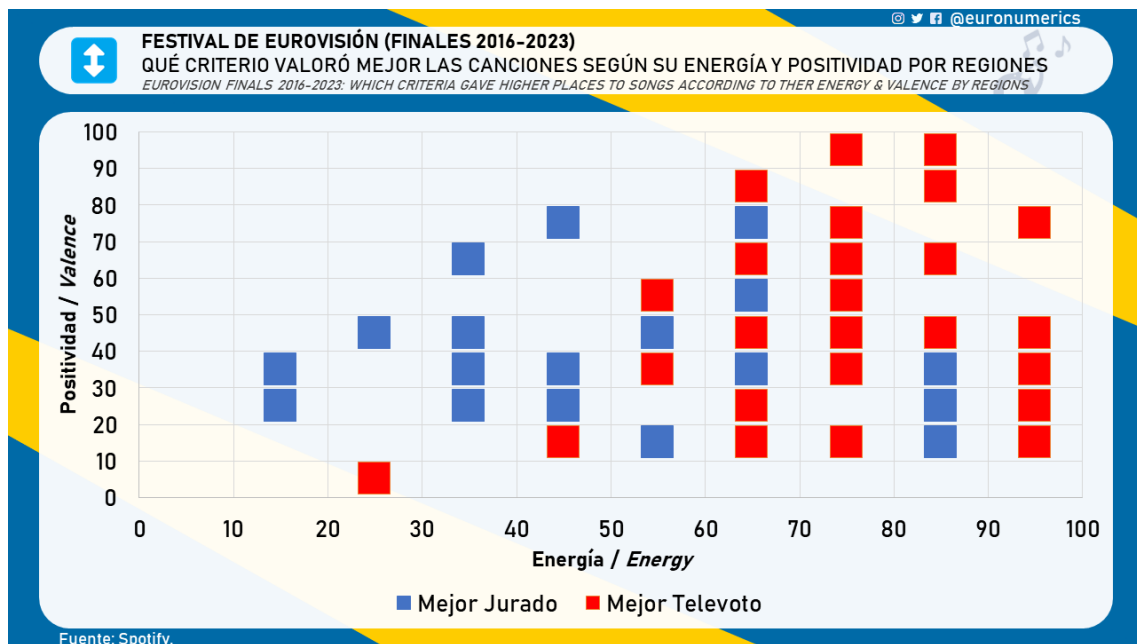
Both blue and red point clouds present a lot of randomness and, therefore, similar behavior. However, the distribution is more uneven in the lower left area. In this area of low energy and low positivity we find a greater concentration of blue dots, or in other words, songs with these attributes have been significantly better valued by the jury than by televoting. This coincides with what we saw before with the winning songs.

In the zone of less than 50 both in energy and positivity there are only 3 songs that were much better rated by televoting: Israel 2019 with Kobi Marimi with "Home", Belgium 2017 with Blanche "City Lights" and Serbia 2019 with Nevena Bozovic "Kruna." The two songs from 2019 can be explained by neighborliness (Israel was propelled by the French televoting in the last

positions and Serbia by its traditional neighbors). All this highlights the milestone in televoting that Belgium achieved in 2017.

SIMPLIFY TO SEE MORE: DIFFERENCES BY ZONE

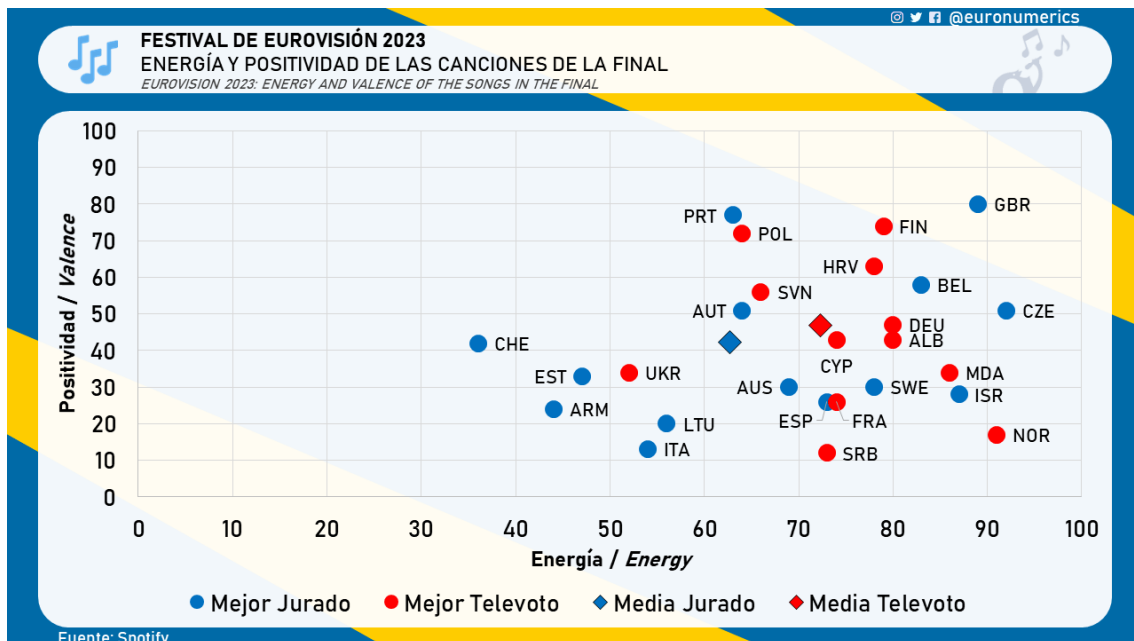
The dispersion of point clouds sometimes does not allow us to see real effects. To do this, we have summarized the points into sectors. Imagine that we put a network of squares on top of the area of the previous graph. If more blue dots fall inside each square, we will paint it all blue, but if more red dots fall, we will paint it that color.



In this case, the left-right distinction is more evident, that is, depending on energy. The songs best valued by the jury are those that present the least energy, the opposite occurring with televoting. In fact, it even seems easy to apply limits: with less than 50, experts are better; with more than 70 best for the audience; and between 50 and 70 it can fall on one side or the other.

IT ALSO HAPPENED IN 2023

And what happened in 2023? In the following graph we have collected the energy and positivity of the 26 finalist songs of 2023, distinguishing two groups: in blue those that achieved a better position in the jury and in red those that were positioned better by the public.



If we look at the averages, those rated highest by the jury present less energy and positivity than those rated best by televoting, which coincides with what we already saw in the graph in recent years.

Similarly, we only observed differences in the distribution in the lower left area. All of these songs were taken into account more by experts, with only one atypical case, Ukraine with Tvorchi “Heart of steel”.

AND WHY?

Now that we have seen that there is a structural difference between what the televoting thinks and what the jury thinks, it is worth asking why this is the case. We don't have much evidence to prove it, but it could be due to two factors, basically.

The first is that the characteristics of both populations are surely not coincident. And by this I especially mean age. From audience data we know that Eurovision is successful among the younger population. Be careful, this does not mean that they are the ones who actually vote. On the other hand, older people predominate on the juries, although the rules state that the composition of the juries must be representative, among others, of age.

In a previous blog we already highlighted differences between those who voted for La banda: those over 40 liked it more. Also when we analyzed the voting by age of the Melodifestivalen we discovered that voting is not the same based on age.

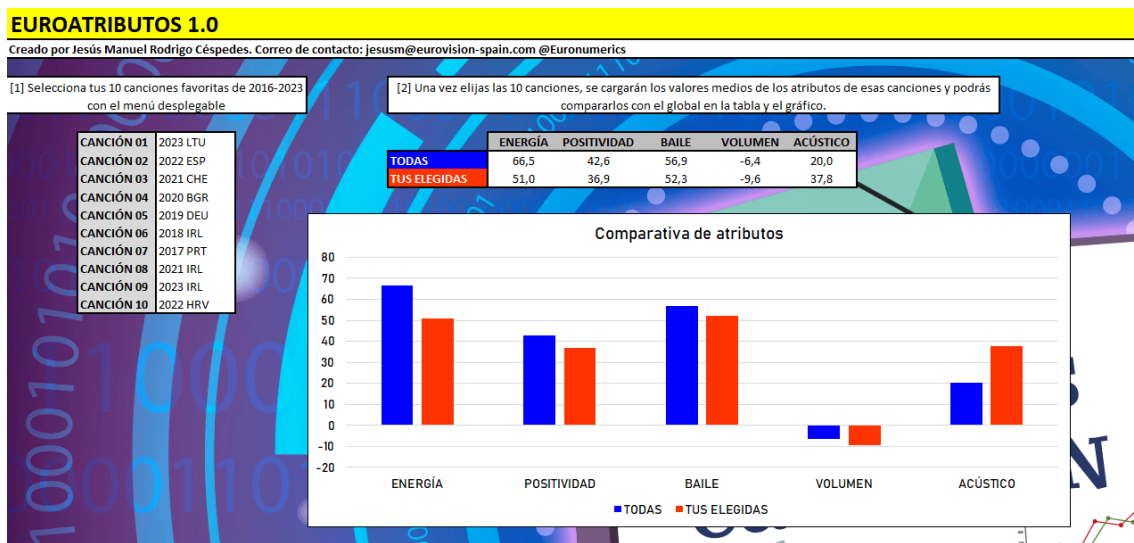
The other factor is that the jury, as established in the rules, must vote based on certain criteria. Televoting, on the other hand, is governed by your own tastes and affinities. It is very easy for differences to arise from here that reward one song or another.

EUROATRIBUTOS 1.0: SO YOU CAN CALCULATE YOUR ENERGY AND POSITIVITY

In this blog we do not miss the opportunity so that you yourselves can experience the data that we analyze in the blog. In this case we have brought you a new spreadsheet, EUROATTRIBUTES 1.0 so that you can put into practice what you have seen in this blog.

You can download EUROATTRIBUTES 1.0 in the web versión.

Its operation is very simple. Simply download it and when you open it you will be asked to select the 10 songs you like the most from 2016 to 2023 in the left menu. When you complete the 10 songs, the right table and the bottom graph will update to show your data. In this way you will be able to compare your characteristics with those of the general average of Eurovision in those years.



In the screenshot above, we see an example of the 10 songs chosen by an undetermined person. It is observed that this person likes songs with less energy and positivity than average, as well as dancing. He also likes songs with lower volume than average and with a higher acoustic level. From what we have seen, this attitude is typical of juries, so this person will probably align more with the criteria of the experts than with that of televoting.

And for you, what results have you gotten? We would love for you to share them on networks!

In conclusion, the data show that there are differences in behavior between what the jury and the televoting think, based exclusively on attributes such as the energy or positivity of the songs. Furthermore, it is evident that the biggest difference occurs in the juries' support for songs with low energy and positivity, that is, intimate songs, ballads or quieter ones. None of this is decisive for victory or a good result, but history reflects these trends. Will any be fulfilled in 2024?