

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



Fundación
Felipe González

Youth, Internet and Democracy

New GENERA Report
November 2019



Prepared by

40dB.

Data. Insights.
Solutions.

In collaboration with



With the financial support of





About FEPS

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) is the only progressive think tank at European level. FEPS establishes an intellectual crossroads between social democracy and the European project, putting fresh thinking at the core of its action. As a platform for ideas and dialogue, FEPS works in close collaboration with social democratic organisations, and in particular national foundations and think tanks across Europe, in order to tackle the challenges that Europe is facing today. In spite of its ideological independence, it collaborates with the Party of European Socialists (PES), the S&D Group in the European Parliament, the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions, the Young European Socialists and PES Women. FEPS embodies a new way of thinking on the social democratic, socialist and labour scene in Europe.



About Fundación Felipe González

The Felipe González Foundation was established with a dual purpose: learning from the past and contributing to the future. Based on this principle, it is responsible for managing Felipe González's document archive so that every citizen can access it. It also organizes and supports activities and projects that contribute to progress and provide society with tools in order to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. The GENERA Intergenerational Forum project is an initiative of the Felipe González Foundation in collaboration with La Caixa Foundation, Public Agenda, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the Resolution Foundation, which aims to be a meeting point between generations. Through seminars and studies, this project offers a better understanding of the current intergenerational disagreement so that changes for the strengthening and renewal of the social contract between generations can be suggested.

40dB. About 40dB

40dB is a research agency born in 2012 with the name MyWord. Our primary resource is data. We work with advanced analytical techniques. We provide solutions. We invest in getting to know society. We carry out continuous studies. Our knowledge aims to benefit our clients. We have built experience in almost every sector. A 360 degree view of people stems from the diversity of our trajectory. The BBC or The Economist have talked about us. We are one of the most quoted research agencies in the media. At 40dB, sociologists, psychologists, methodologists, statisticians, economists, data scientists and mathematicians work together, rigorously and empathetically. We believe in diversity and practise reconciliation.



With the financial support of the European Parliament and Fundación Bancaria "la Caixa". This study does not reflect the views of any of these two entities.

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OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



Objectives and Methodology

The goal is to analyse the political disaffection of the youth in our country, taking into account their relationship with the internet, the new media consumption and “fake news”.

The aim is to map the political disaffection of digital natives.

...Using a mixed methodological approach...

Quantitative

1 500 interviews

Young people aged 18-34.

Gender and age quotas, socio-economic index, autonomous region and habitat size.

Qualitative

32 participants in an Online Community.

Youth aged 18-35, homogeneously distributed in two segments: 18-24 | 25-34

Homogeneous representation by sex, autonomous region and habitat size.

Representation of the broad middle class: lower, middle and upper.

Segmentation by interest in politics and disaffection behaviour .

MAIN FINDINGS





#1 Youth is in the midst of change, but has clear ideas.

In spite of being in a situation of **change** in their lives and surroundings, they know what they want and share an ethical framework **dominated by the values of tolerance, honesty and diversity**. Material aspects, even if important, are relegated to second place.
Their ideals and worries are dominated by post-materialist values.

"To achieve my goals and objectives in life, I would need to have those who are close to me by my side, the support of my family and friends, as well as to have trust in myself and my actions, and most importantly, hard work and effort".

"Solidarity, responsibility and, above all, justice: these are the values that drive my life".

"We, the youth, are standing strong".

"In 5 years time, we won't be a new society, not at all, (...) but as time goes by we'll have more voice, so I hope we will progressively achieve our goals".





#2 Technology and the internet are the backbone of their present and future.

The internet and the new technologies are their best **allies, even though they allegedly pose risks**. Despite being socialized in a digital era and reaping its benefits, big **fears and concerns arise** regarding dehumanization, job destruction due to robotization, the risk of disinformation, and the increase in individualism. . . . **They believe we need an ethical framework that sets limits in order to build the society they want.**

"Technology is harming us a little, by constantly looking at our phones we don't realize what is happening around us and that scares me a little bit".

"I imagine a more automated society (...) that replaces many daily jobs that are today performed by people (...), everyone wants their lives to evolve, but sometimes we don't realize that the only thing we are achieving is to nullify people".



ARGENTINA 2016
BUENOS AIRES



#3 They don't identify themselves with today's society, and therefore, neither with politics.

They think that today's society **lacks empathy**. They are **critical of politics**, which they feel to be distanced from the "ordinary people". They don't feel their battles, challenges and interests are represented in the political agenda; they perceive a **lack of awareness towards the youngest ones**, the most vulnerable ones, and their future; and **they don't find a voice that represents their views**.

"I honestly think they don't think about us (...) To me, it seems they just think about people in their 40s or 50s, economists or lawyers, for instance".

"I see a society without the principles and values that are necessary to me, such as respect for the environment or gender equality, which is something I really worry about. I see a very consumerist society, which doesn't fear anything and is extremely short-sighted".

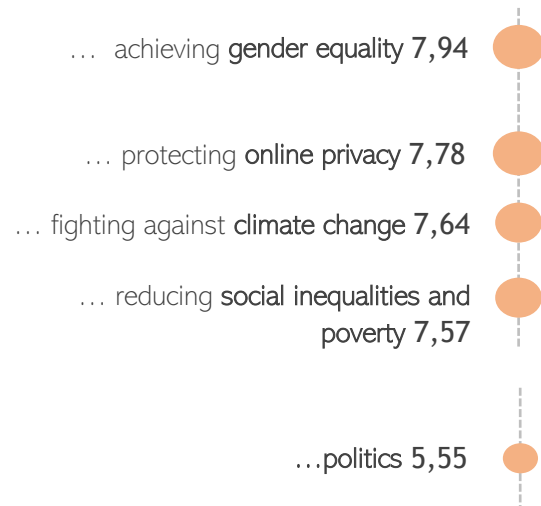


#4 The negative connotation of politics is transversal: complexity, corruption and controversy.

Politics is associated with something **complex and far away from citizens**: confusing information, technicalities, manipulation...A world tainted by corruption: **politicians are perceived as selfish and self-interested**. Politics is “what is happening up there”, distanced from the interests and tangible realities of the daily life of young people. Besides, **talking about politics means conflict**, lack of understanding. But it is a **necessary evil**: it is linked to order. And order is what prevents chaos.



The biggest concerns...



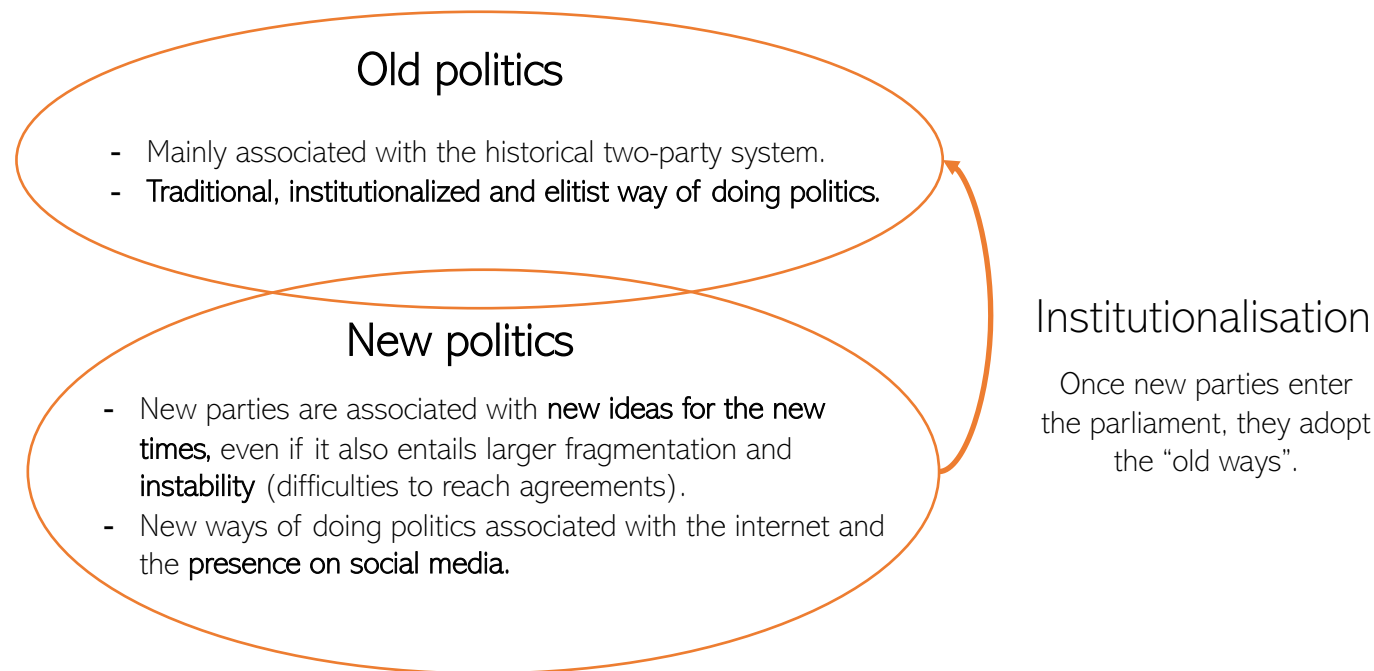
Spontaneously, their battles, concerns, awareness and mobilization go hand in hand with **post-materialist values**: feminism, climate change, equality, education, etc...**but all of them fall outside the scope of the term “politics”**.

“Politics does not play an important role in my daily life. It just shows up when they cut down on aids, grants, when it affects education, and especially, assistance for disabled kids”.



#5 They don't perceive any change in the way of doing politics: new or old parties, just more of the same.

The negative connotation of politics is translated into **new parties**. Renewal and the emergence of new ideas that are more adapted to today's society are welcomed, but **the entry of new parties into the institutions reduces their capacity to innovate**, and leads them to adopt "the old ways".



#6 Young activists: the negative perception of politics does not always translate into an estrangement from it.

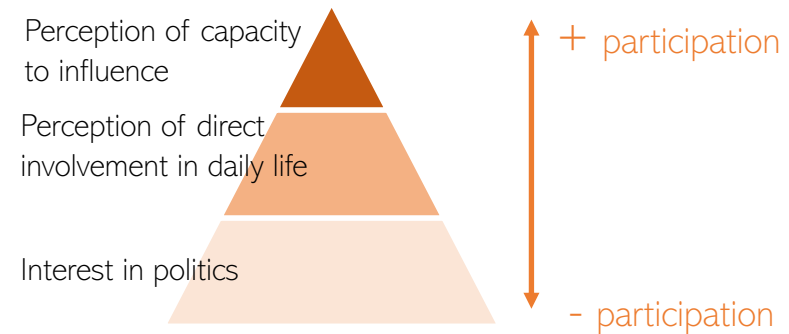


Young people believe that **participation is necessary**, they see in it **a path to change or progress**. Leaving aside elections - which are largely understood as a moral or ethical obligation - **only 28.0% of the youth has not participated in any political activity** in the last 12 months. The internet facilitates political activism.

Participates in at least one political activity...



What leads to participation?



At the base: dissatisfaction, disappointment, criticism.

#7 Political information is also perceived as essential: the preliminary step in order to influence public affairs.



Even though the lack of trust in the media is transversal, most of the youth gets **informed with a relatively high frequency**: 70% gets informed at least once a week.

The advantages of the internet are also reflected in that field: **online participation gains strength, mainly through social media**. However, the youth is **aware of the risks that the internet implies**: there's a great deal of **unreliable information**.

59,9% ... distrusts or really distrusts news received through non-traditional channels (social media, fora...)

54,3% ... is more distrustful of the new media that have emerged on the internet than of the big media groups (El País, El Mundo, Antena 3, Telecinco, TVE...)

Political information media

They inform themselves at least through one medium...

traditional: **66,3%**

online: **82,7%**

"There's a great deal of deceit, but if you're able to contrast information and have a formed opinion, the internet is a great channel to express your views and find information in an immediate manner".

"The internet has greatly facilitated the access to information - you get almost unintentionally informed - but you also have to be careful, as there's too much information and many risks".



#8 The phenomenon of “fake news” has led to mistrust towards news, also in politics.

Young people distrust both current and older media. Three quarters of them believe that fake news have led to the weakening of their trust in the information they receive.

Nevertheless, in their discourse, they perceive that there is more manipulation than falsehood in the political news, as ideological biases and strategic interests tend to prevail. In topics beyond politics, fake news are linked to alarmist or absurd headlines.

All in all, young people trust their own capacity to detect fake news.

13

75,4%

...Their lack of trust towards the information they read has increased a lot or substantially, due to the “fake news” phenomenon.

74,0%

... On a weekly basis, they watch news reports whose veracity they question.

...And **61,4%** of them consider that the topic about which they read more fake news is politics.

“There is a manipulation of political information. Maybe they don’t change figures, but they omit information that could discredit them”.

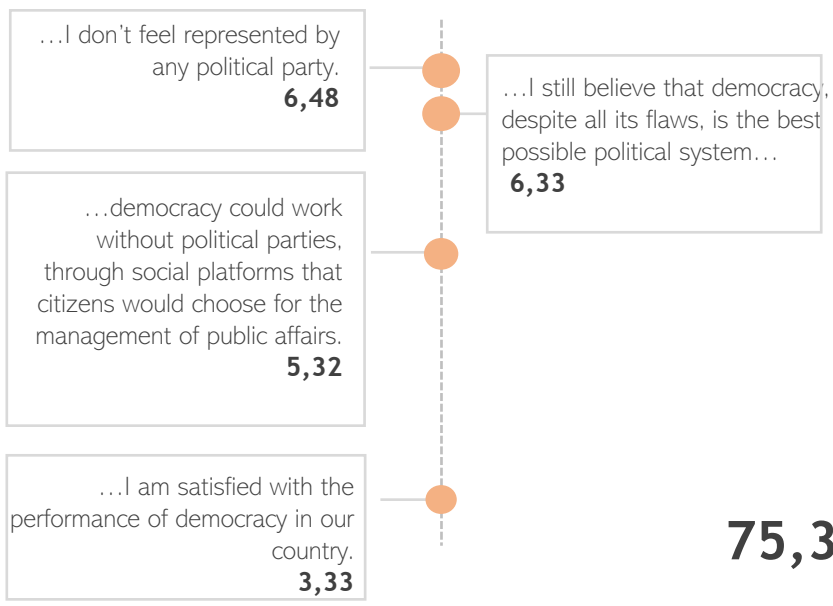
“I don’t think I’ve seen a fake news report lately, it is just that it changes when you tell the story one way or the other”.



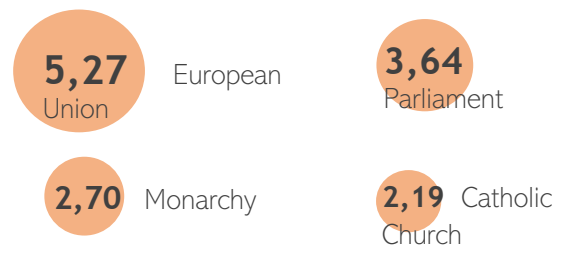
#9 They are critical of the performance of political parties and democracy, even though they believe that it is the best possible system.

Youth is **critical of the functioning of parties, of democracy and its institutions** (with the exception of the European Union, which they value more positively): **Disaffection is widespread amongst them** and it is partly related to frustrated expectations.

To which extent do you agree with...?



How would you grade the...?



In comparison with adult generations...

They are a generation with the necessary means to achieve their dreams, but with structural constraints that do not let them do it.

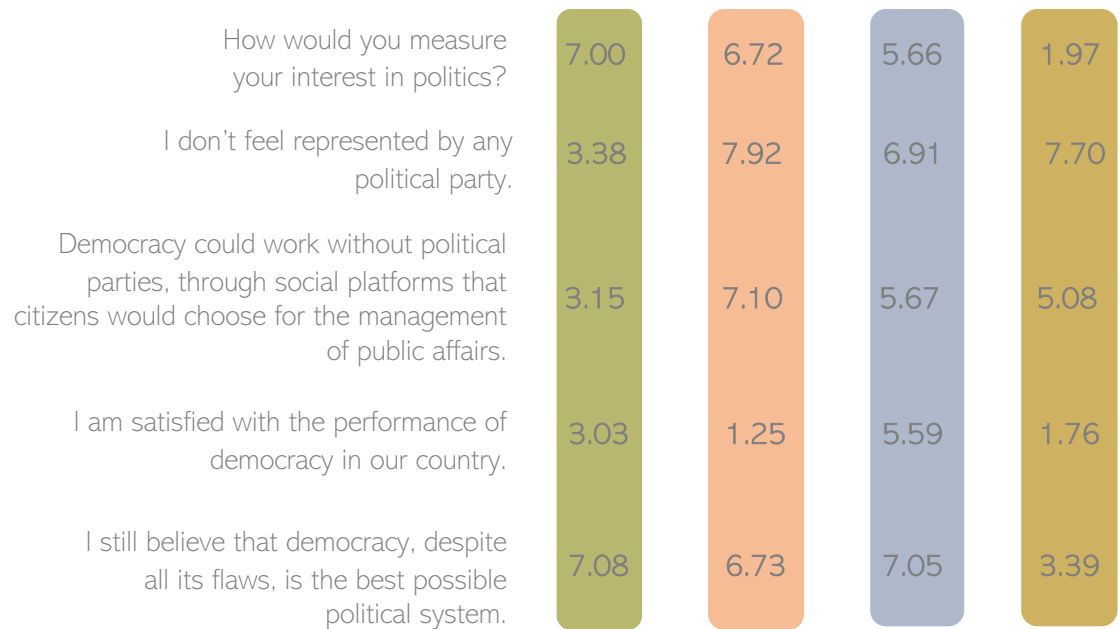
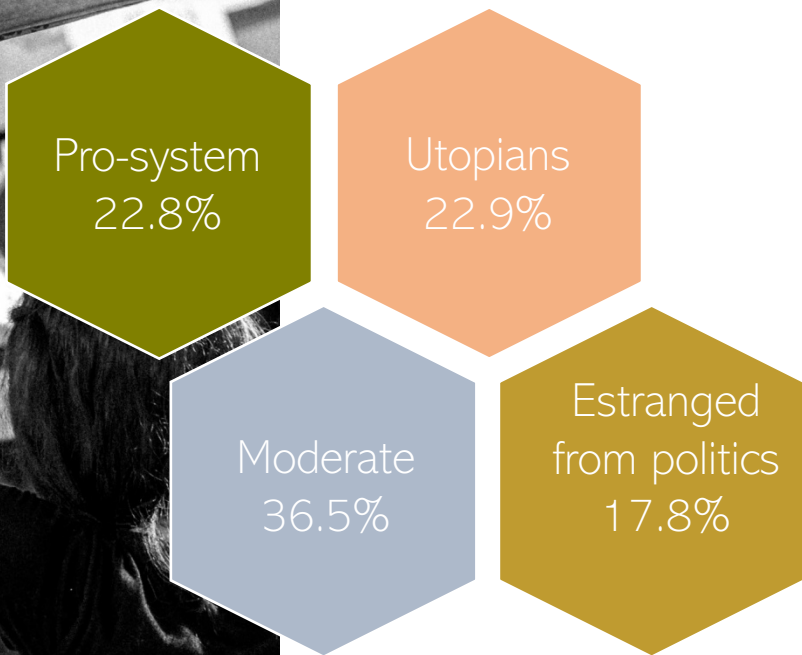
75,3% agrees or really agrees that young people, in the future, will have a worse economic situation than their parents'.



#10 The map of youth disaffection shows four different profiles of young people.

The map of disaffection, drawn using cluster analysis, reveals that there are four profiles of young people: **Pro-system, utopians, moderate and estranged from politics.**

This mapping is defined by their different positions regarding interest in politics, political parties, the political system and the functioning of democracy.



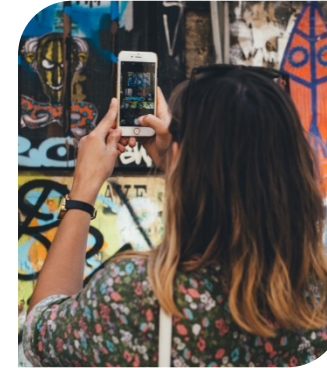
#1 1 The map of youth disaffection

PRO-SYSTEM



They are well-off, well-informed, interested and activist young people. They are conservative, more men than women. They believe in the system and feel represented by it, but are critical of its functioning. They have a positive perception of the internet as a source of information. They are less worried about the existence of fake news, as they believe in their capacity to detect them. This self-confidence, however, makes them possible victims. They are the youth that more frequently votes for *Vox*.

MODERATE



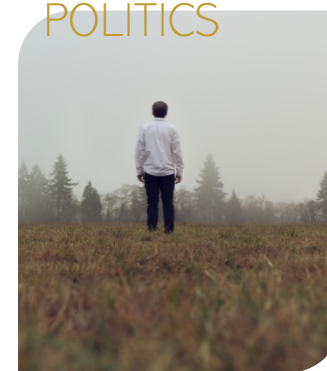
They are the segment of the youth that does not view politics as one of its main priorities, even though they think it matters. They are located in the middle between the two extremes, both inside and outside politics. They are digital, materialists and get informed occasionally. They participate, but are not characterized by their activism. They are the ones that mistrust the information they receive the least. They highlight job insecurity as one of their main concerns. They are more present amongst the voters of *PSOE* (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) and *Ciudadanos* (Citizens Party).

UTOPIANS



With a high cultural capital, they are progressives. They are well-informed and activists. This segment of the youth believes in daily political involvement, not only by conventional channels. They are more critical of the information they receive, and thus, are more concerned with fake news. This is why they like to verify news stories. They believe in the democratic system, despite being critical of it. Their lack of trust is linked to the economic powers, which they perceive as "real rulers". They want a more participative democracy. They are abundant amongst *Unidas Podemos* voters.

ESTRANGED FROM POLITICS



They are the young people in the worst socioeconomic situation and the ones that think they will have a worse future than their parents. They feel disappointed and forgotten. They feel politicians do not cater to their needs. They don't trust the system, neither do they inform themselves. They don't participate much. They don't trust their capacity to detect fake news either. They are more present amongst the abstainers.

Pro-system

22,8%

What differentiates them...

- ▲ **37.5%** inform themselves about politics on a daily basis.
- ▲ **23.0%** state that the phenomenon of fake news has not really influenced their trust in news stories.
- ▲ **for the 43.8%**, the main criteria to spot a fake news story is how much they trust the corresponding medium.
- ▲ **41.6%** of them follow accounts with political or social content in their social networks.
- ▲ **18.9%** have participated in an online citizens' consultation from the administration in the last 12 months.
- ▲ **13.3%** have attended a political rally in the past 12 months.

More present amongst Vox' electorate.
44.0% of Vox voters are pro-system.

▲ ▼ 95% significant difference with respect to the population.

"Currently, I think I'm good but I feel I still have a lot to learn. 5 years from now, I see myself working in another country, and I would like this job to be related to the aeronautics sector"

"In 5 years, we will be far from being the perfect society, but new generations are becoming better and better and we are having more and more voice, so I hope we can progressively reach our goals"

"Informing oneself about politics means trying to stay up to date with different events related to the different governments, both national or international"

"My ritual to inform myself about politics, with very few exceptions, is usually the same: while having breakfast I have a look at online newspapers, then later in the day, at a financial newspaper, and in the evening, I watch the news"

"Being well informed is very complicated; you need to verify information through the media that you consider to be more trustworthy"

"Demonstrating can help, but the most important thing is voting while knowing what each party is offering, and not letting oneself get carried away by the masses, without having one's own opinion"

"The phrase 'they don't represent us' has become viral; it certainly hasn't appeared by chance, but there are some partisan interests behind it. Obviously, I cannot agree with everything, but I believe that, in politics, you must vote for the party that is more closely aligned to your ideals"

"I would define politics as a fundamental pillar in society. It is a strictly necessary aspect in society, as society needs order, or else we would be in chaos. It is necessary so that everything evolves correctly".

Utopians

22,9%

What differentiates them...

- ▲ **37.5%** inform themselves about politics on a daily basis.
- ▲ **23.0%** believe the fake news phenomenon has greatly influenced their mistrust towards news stories.
- ▲ **15.4%** have more confidence in the new media that have emerged online than in the big media groups.
- ▲ **73.3%** think that politics is the field where more fake news come up.
- ▲ **54.4%** have signed some online petition in the last 12 months.
- ▲ **26.8%** have participated in a feminist, labour strike, etc. in the last 12 months.

More present amongst the electorate of *Unidas Podemos (UP)*.
34.8% of UP voters are utopians.

▲ ▼ 95% significant difference with respect to the population.

"The most important values to me are: solidarity, responsibility and especially, justice. I think that these three values drive part of my life as I always help when is needed, I take responsibility for my actions, and I always find the fairest solution to the problems that arise"

"From my point of view, society is constantly changing due to its excessive reliance on technology [...] In 5 years, I imagine a more technologically developed society and I hope, for our own good, that one that is more aware of the greenhouse effect and reforestation"

"As I say, politics is the tool that organizes the system. Therefore, the role it plays in the system's functioning is obvious. While I don't think there is a select group that "pulls the strings", it is true that, currently, the economic elites hold greater power in decision making"

"The topics that prompt me to take action are those that bring us back to the past [...]. I mean topics such as feminism, sexuality, bullfighting, climate change, the education system or the drug culture. Topics that need, at least, some review and updating but which are not addressed due to fear, comfort or 'tradition'..."

"The new technologies make it possible to easily share large amounts of information. But this is a double-edged sword, as it is also a disinformation weapon: there are a lot of fake and manipulated news stories. For this reason, it is important to inform oneself from different sources and cross-check data: that's what being informed means"

Moderate

36,5%

What differentiates them...

- ▲ **8.9%** inform themselves about politics three times a month.
- ▼ **21.4%** see less often news stories whose veracity they doubt.
- ▼ **53.4%** believe, to a lesser extent, that politics is the topic where more fake news come up.
- ▼ **5.7%** do not really trust the new media that have emerged on the internet.
- ▲ **40.1%** follow influencers on their social media.

They participate less: the average number of actions in which they have participated in the last 12 months is **2.28**

More present amongst the electorate of *PSOE* and *Ciudadanos*.

47.5% of *PSOE* voters are Moderate.

40.0% of *Ciudadanos* voters are Moderate.

▲▼ 95% significant difference with respect to the population.

"Currently, I see myself as a happy person, that fights for her dreams, with motivation and the will to undertake a future and conquer the world. My objective is to prepare myself academically, find a job and have some stability. In 5 years time, I see myself working in the field of childcare, with a steady job, and living with a partner".

"We are all about online participation. The youth is now more aware of politics thanks to the internet [...] We open Google in our smartphones and all the latest news stories come up, without having to search for them, and otherwise you find them through social media. You just go in Instagram and see stories of young people demanding something or posting a political news story [...] People could start to vote via the Internet without a problem".

"It could be said that I am someone who tries to find a balanced point in everything, not too much of an optimist nor a pessimist".

"I think the political and societal topics that are more likely to mobilize are those that have to do with employment, as this is how we earn our living and we need good living conditions and salaries. Also social and environmental topics".

"I imagine a world in which young people can have a job, where work-family balance is a reality and not just words, and where older people can enjoy their retirement without having to worry, since they have earned it".

"I think the same as my colleagues: the best way is to vote because like this you are free to contribute to the election of a party, and through it, to bringing benefits to the country [...] I have always, when possible, taken part in demonstrations, but it hasn't been as often as I would have liked. In the end, you always have something to do, such as working or studying".

Estranged from politics

17,8%

What differentiates them...

- ▲ **18.2%** are unemployed, have previously worked.
- ▲ **43.5%** think that the youth, in the future, will have a worse economic situation than their parents'.
- ▲ **29.4%** never inform themselves about politics.
- ▲ **30.5%** have little confidence in their ability to spot fake news.
- ▲ **6.7%** never see news stories whose veracity they doubt.
- ▲ **46.5%** do not participate in any political action.

More present amongst the abstainers.

36.9% of non-voters are estranged from politics.

"How do I currently see myself? I honestly do not know. I take one day at a time and I don't look at the future [...] My goals and objectives can be summarized in my children studying and having a career [...]. I don't know how I'll be in 5 years, really. I have no idea. I hope my situation improves, and that within 5 years everything works better for me than now".

"Politics, to me, is a loss of time [...]. When I speak with my friends or family about politics, I generally only speak about how bad everything is".

"Politicians are those representing us but I don't see them doing much for us".

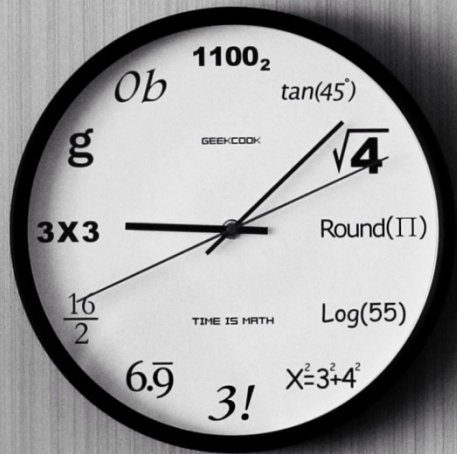
"I don't really understand much about politics. I wouldn't be able to tell what is traditional politics and what is new politics. I don't think there are two ways [...]. Based on what my dad tells me, old politics was better, as before there wasn't as much corruption".

"Politics tires me, it is a section that takes up a lot of time in the news, and if you stop and listen to political news stories, you don't reach any clear conclusion [...]. In the end, politics is only about politics, and nobody actually speaks about the issues that really affect citizens. Personally, I am too lazy to be hearing about politics".

TECHNICAL
DETAILS



Technical details: Quantitative phase



SCOPE

National.



SAMPLE SIZE

1,500 interviews.



TIME FRAME

1st to 6th August 2019.



WEIGHTING

Gender by age, socioeconomic level, autonomous region and habitat size.



UNIVERSE

Population residing in Spain aged 18 to 34.



SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Online interviews based on a panel (Internet community)



SAMPLING ERROR

± 2.53 p.p., for $p=q=50\%$ and a confidence level of 95.5% assuming there is simple random sampling.

Technical details: Qualitative phase

Online Community

32 participants homogeneously distributed in four fora (one for each profile)

4 profiles extracted from attitudinal segmentation clusters

Young people aged 18 to 35, homogeneously distributed in two segments: 18-24 | 25-34

Homogeneous representation by gender and of different autonomous regions and habitat sizes.

Representation of the broad middle class (lower, middle and upper)

Representation of different working situations (unemployed, students, workers and mixed)

Utopians	Estranged from politics	Pro-system	Moderate
8 participants	8 participants	8 participants	8 participants

Time frame: 12th to 22nd September 2019

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