Main problems affecting Basque youth

What concerns young people?

The "Basque Youth" survey series prepared by the Basque Youth Observatory every four years includes a question that allows young people to list spontaneously the three problems that concern them most.

A constant factor is problems linked to the labour market, which has been the most frequently mentioned by young people both before and after the beginning of the economic crisis. Until now, housing and emancipation issues were the second concern mentioned by young people. However, a new aspect regarding 2016 when compared to previous years is that education and studies now occupy, for the first time in the series, the second position on the list of concerns.

Economic issues come third, whether personal or the general economic situation. Fourth is personal health or the healthcare system in general, and fifth is housing and the difficulties of leaving home, which in 2008 (coinciding with the peak of the real estate bubble and the rise in housing prices) was the main concern of Basque youth, ahead of employment.

![Graph showing the evolution of concerns from 2008 to 2016](graph.png)

Source: Basque Youth Observatory (*"Basque Youth"* series)
The main problem young people face is employment; more specifically, the lack of jobs or poor working conditions

In 2016, 56.1 % of Basque youths have mentioned job-related issues, such as unemployment, job instability, temporary work, the labour market reforms and low salaries, etc. as their main concerns.

It is not surprising they should mention employment issues, taking into account that the unemployment rate among people aged 16 to 29 in the first quarter of 2016 (when the survey was conducted) stood at 25.8 %, according to data on the Population in Relation to Activity provided by Eustat (Basque Statistics Institute) to the Basque Youth Observatory. In other words, one young person in every four available for work cannot find a job despite actively looking for one.

This rate was ten points higher than the average rate for the EU28 in 2015 (15.7 % according to data from the European Statistical Office, Eurostat). Furthermore, the unemployment rate of the general population of the Basque Country in the first quarter of 2016 was 14.4 % (source: Eustat), i.e. the unemployment rate affecting young people is more than ten points higher than that of the general population. Therefore, this clearly points to the difficulties young people have in finding jobs in the Basque Country.

Moreover, once they get a job, they have the problem of job instability. Towards the end of 2015, a survey conducted by the Basque Youth Observatory found that 44.2 % of young workers stated they had a temporary job and another 5.9 % said they had not signed a contract. Also, one-third of young workers (34.6 %) claimed to have part-time jobs, in most cases against their will, because they had not been able to find a full-time job or because the company had implemented a Workforce Adjustment Plan that forced them to accept a reduction in their workday. The average wages of young people under the age of 30, calculated on the basis of the figures declared by young workers in the same survey, barely reached 1000 euros per month (more specifically, 996 euros). This is apart from the fact that almost half of them (46.7 %) stated that their jobs had little or nothing to do with their training.

Nevertheless, the number of times young people mention problems linked to the labour market has fallen when compared with 2012 when these issues reached their highest point: 72.4 % of young people mentioned them spontaneously.

We must qualify that we are talking about the percentage of young people who have mentioned this type of problem and not the percentage of responses given. Since three answers were allowed, each person will have mentioned two or three problems within the same field. What is expressed here is the number of young people who mention each type of problem, regardless of the fact that one person may indicate a given type several times.

Employment related issues are brought up more often as age increases. Thus, they are mentioned by 29.9 % of people under the age of 20, 64.0 % of people aged 20 to 24 and by 70.9 % of young people between 25 and 29.
These differences are consistent, taking into account that between the ages of 15 and 19, the vast majority of young people are studying and their concerns regarding this issue are more related to whether they will find jobs when they finish their studies. On the other hand, over the age of 25, most people have ended their educational phase and are dealing with a labour market with high unemployment rates and many unstable jobs.

There are barely any differences regarding this aspect when sex and territory of residence are considered, but there are differences regarding occupation. In fact, unemployed people are most likely to mention this type of issue, 80.9 %. However, most young employed people also mention these concerns (65.0 %).

**The second problem most frequently mentioned by young people is education**

The lack of job expectations poses a problem of such magnitude that it relegates any other concern to a secondary level and, therefore, the second problem (education) is mentioned rather less frequently (22.3 %).

The adoption of the LOMCE in late 2013 and the uncertainty surrounding its implementation, regarding the final exams at the end of the ESO (Obligatory Education) and of Secondary Studies, the rise in university fees, etc. are added to the traditional concerns students have about passing exams, having access to the studies they want, etc. Therefore, reference to this issue has risen substantially when compared with the figures for 2012 (15.4 %) and 2008 (14.6 %).

We saw that employment related issues were mentioned more frequently as age increased; however, with education, the opposite is the case. It is mainly mentioned by people in the younger group (most of whom are studying): 40 % of young people aged 15 to 19 compared to 8.9 % of those in the 25 to 29 age group.

In this case, we can see differences based on sex. Girls mentioned education and study related issues more frequently than boys: 26.6 % in the case of girls compared to 18.1 % for boys.

**The third problem most frequently mentioned by young people is related to economic issues, such as the lack of money, the family's economic situation, the high cost of living, etc.**

This problem is linked to the employment issue and, therefore, 2012 was the year when it was most frequently mentioned (32.0 %), together with employment issues; precisely, as a direct consequence of the economic crisis and its effects on the labour market.

In 2016, in a context of lower unemployment figures, it is not mentioned so often; as is the case with labour market related issues. Against the 32.0 % of 2012, only 15.2 % of young people mentioned economic issues spontaneously in 2016.

In this case, the differences among groups can be seen between people over and under the age of 20. People aged 15 to 19 mention economic issues in 9.3 % of cases, while this figure stands at 18.1 % in the case of people aged 20 to 24 and at 17.7 % among people aged 25 to 29.
18.0 % of employed young people and 17.8 % of unemployed people mention these issues; slightly more than the student group (12.5 %).

**Main concerns of youth in 2016, based on age groups (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>70.9</td>
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<td>8.9</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Basque Youth Observatory (data preview from "Basque Youth 2016")

**Other issues are mentioned by less than 10% of young people in each case**

Fourth on the list of issues that concern young people is, as stated above, **health and the healthcare system**. In 2016, 8.4 % of young people mention these issues as major concerns.

The number of times this issue has been mentioned has changed rather irregularly over time. In 2008, it was mentioned by 3.2 % of young people, while in 2012, the figure was 10.7 %. These variations are surely not due to any deterioration in the health of young people but the various cutbacks affecting the healthcare system caused by the economic crisis.

**Housing** comes fifth. Concern for housing, mentioned by 8.1 % of young people in 2016, has fallen spectacularly among over the last eight years. It has gone from being the main problem in 2008, mentioned by 67.1 % of youth (coinciding with a peak in housing prices) to 18.3 % in 2012 and 8.1 % in 2016.

One hypothesis that may explain this fall is that, given the unemployment and unstable job situation, many young people are not trying to become independent in the short term and, therefore, they are not looking for housing. If employment and economic conditions do not favour access to housing, however slightly, this issue ceases to be a practical prospect.

To contextualise this situation, we can also point out that, according to data from the General Association of Notaries, the average sales price of vacant housing in the Basque Country in 2015 was 196,000 euros (average calculated on new and used housing). To these high prices, we must also add the difficulties of getting a mortgage if one does not have a fixed job and sufficient income. In addition, the average rental price for housing was 872 euros per month, according to the Basque
Housing Observatory. Taking into account that, as we previously pointed out, the average wages of young workers is 996 euros a month; housing and emancipation are beyond the reach of most young people (more so if we consider that young employed people and, therefore, people earning wages, are a minority among the group of people under the age of 30).

Housing and emancipation issues are mentioned more frequently by people aged 25 to 29; 14.4 % of whom mentioned them in 2016.

After housing, other problems are mentioned by young people with the following percentages in each case:

- Family (family relationships, the situation of a specific relative…), mentioned by 7.2 % of young people.
- Social inequalities and sexism, mentioned by 6.4 % of young people.
- The political situation, the confrontation between parties, lack of political agreement…, mentioned by 6.3 %.
- Concern for the future (4.4 %).
- Violence against women (3.3 %).
- Corruption and Fraud (3.2 %).
- Drugs (3.2 %).
- Environmental problems (2.9 %).
- Crisis or lack of values: selfishness, intolerance, lack of respect… (2.2 %).
- Problems with friends (2.1 %).
- The peace process, the situation of ETA prisoners… (1.6 %).
- Immigration and problems associated with it, such as racism … (1.8 %).
- The functioning and coverage of public services and aid (1.7 %).
- All kinds of problems related to the Basque language, whether due to a lack of use or because it is a requirement to access certain jobs (1.4 %).
- Crime and public insecurity (1.0 %).
- Problems related to a lack of locales for young people, limited leisure facilities… (1.0 %).
- Bullying (0.6 %).
- Problems related to love or couples (relations with your couple, lack of a partner…) (0.6 %).
- Pensions (0.5 %).
- Issues related to infrastructure and transport (0.4 %).
- Cutbacks (0.3 %).
- The functioning of the justice system (0.2 %).
- International terrorism (0.2 %).

Do young people and the total population over the age of 18 have the same concerns?

If we compare the personal concerns of young people with those of the general population over the age of 18, we can see that the issue that concerns both groups most is the employment issues: 56.1 % in the case of young people and 53 % in the case of the total population over the age of 18.
The differences appear when we look at the second problem. While the second most important issue for young people is education (22.3 % compared to 7 % of the general population), 15 % of the population as a whole mentions health (compared to 8.4 % among people aged 15 to 29).

Economic issues, with similar percentages, occupy the third place in both cases: 15.2 % of young people and 13 % of the general population have mentioned them.

Other outstanding differences can be seen in the number of people who mentioned pensions (0.5 % in the case of young people and 6 % of the general population) or concern for the future (4.4 % of youth while among the general population this issue is mentioned by less than 1 %).

Where do these data come from?

Data on young people come from the four-yearly "Basque Youth" series (the 2016 edition is still in the drafting stage), which is based on a home visit survey carried out in the Basque Country involving 1500 young people aged 15 to 29. It deals with a wide range of subjects, including their main problems or concerns. The Basque Youth Observatory conducts this study.

Data corresponding to the general population come from the "Sociometro vasco 60. 20 años de opinión pública vasca" (Basque Sociometer 60. 20 years of Basque public opinion), prepared by the Sociological Survey Office of the Presidency of the Basque Government. This study is also based on a survey; in this case involving 2310 people aged 18 and over who reside in the Basque Country.
Both surveys coincide in time since they were both prepared in the first quarter of 2016.