

42% of Basque youths are responsible consumers: they look around for the best prices, complain if there are any problems and try to protect the environment

according to a new publication by the Basque Youth Observatory: "Youth and responsible consumption in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country"

The sixth issue of the *Basque Youth Trends* collection includes the study, [*Youths and responsible consumption in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country*](#), prepared by a team from the [Basque Youth Observatory](#). The purpose of the publication is to study the consumption patterns of young people, based on how they consume rather than on what or how much they consume. The idea is to identify the personal, social and environmental implications of consuming a given product or service.

The study measures attitudes linked to four ways of consuming; namely, rational, sustainable, alternative and ethical consumption. From the combination of these four aspects, a synthetic responsible consumption index has been compiled showing that 42% of young people in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country are responsible consumers.

Rational consumption, performed by 58% of Basque youths, implies "considering what one is going to buy in advance" and "how much one is prepared to spend", "comparing prices at different stores", "checking the bill" and "the warranty" and "complaining if there is a problem". The criteria used to determine the percentage of young people who consume in a rational manner require considering those who regularly meet four of these six "rational" behaviours.

The second type of consumption studied, **sustainable consumption**, is displayed by 41% of Basque youths. When preparing the sustainable consumption index, five aspects are considered and at least four must be performed on a regular basis: "Try to buy products that do not use excessive packaging", "bring your own bag or shopping cart", "separate household waste by type of waste", "reduce water use" and "use public transport or share cars".

Alternative consumption is performed by those who, on occasion, have participated in minority consumption actions in society, such as purchasing fair trade products or second-hand products, participating in barter markets and shared purchases. Based on this criterion 22% of young people use alternative consumption methods.

Finally, **ethical consumption** reflects the degree of awareness regarding any impact caused by consumption actions on other people and on the environment. To calculate the corresponding index, people were asked whether they took three or more of the following five aspects into consideration when buying: "Do you really need the product", "the garbage or waste it will generate", "the raw material with which it has been manufactured", "whether its production gave rise to any social injustice" and finally, "the environmental impact of its production or transport". Ethical consumption is more demanding and, of the four types, presents the lowest percentage among Basque youths: only 15% consume ethically.

The study shows that **responsible consumption habits increase with age**. While the younger section of the population, people aged 15 to 19, often present habits that cannot be termed responsible, habits based on consumption patterns subject to the impulses of advertising, marketing, personal desire rather than need, we have also noted that these trends decrease with age.

This is a very positive conclusion that, on one hand, confirms the success of the work performed by the government: the Kontsumobide training centres, Consumer and User Offices, the various didactic materials published, awareness campaigns, information leaflets, Web sites, etc. There is also no doubt that **the development of respectful behaviours regarding the environment** has been facilitated by the extensive presence of recycling-related infrastructure such as recycling containers and Garbigunes; campaigns featuring the free distribution of low-consumption light bulbs, campaigns aimed at reducing water consumption, the elimination of single-use plastic bags, etc.

However, on the other hand, the study encourages us to continue working in this direction, since the youngest in our society still seem to be attracted by intense consumerism, associating that consumption with obtaining satisfaction and even personal happiness.

It is also necessary to strengthen consumption-related aspects that lead to the **elimination of the traditional consumption formula based on disposable elements** by promoting the reuse of products, the collective acquisition of goods, bartering and buying fair trade products. It is also necessary to realize that purchasing a product in a global world can mean the perpetuation of social injustices.

This research is based on a survey of young people aged 15 to 29 and, in addition to the analysis of the most important results, the publication provides the questionnaire used in the survey and the possibility of consulting all the data collected based on eight variables: province of residence, sex, age group, size of the town, main occupation, emancipation, available monthly spending money and subjective social class.