



THE YOUTH UNITED INSTITUTE'S 2011 SURVEY SUMMARY



- AN EXCLUSIVE SURVEY BY AFEV, AUDIREP AND THE BNP PARIBAS FOUNDATION
- COMMENTS BY TWENTY INFLUENTIAL FIGURES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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Presentation

For the third consecutive year, the Association of the Student Foundation for the City (Afev) considered it necessary to provide a tool for measuring French perceptions of young people: the Youth United institute. The cornerstone of this institute is a yearly survey whose results are, in the first instance, reflected and commented upon by a panel of influential figures in politics, economics, the arts, academia and social work.

Last year, Cécile Van de Velde, an expert in the comparative sociology of youth, age and generations in Europe, accepted the role of patron to the Youth United institute. In 2011, this precious ally renewed her agreement, whilst the BNP Paribas Foundation included the Youth United institute in the scope of its ten-year-long partnership with Afev.

Approach

In its first edition in 2009, the Youth United institute focused on new trends in youth participation in social work. It shed light on the discrepancy between the prevailing perception of young people as “individualistic” and intolerant, and the new realities of social participation.

In 2010, the Youth United institute concentrated more specifically on the allocation of public assistance and on voluntary work, reaching two conclusions: though inter-generational exchanges, based around the notion of sharing, were perceived favourably, a divide remained regarding the definition of values held by the other generations. On the other hand, almost 3 out of 4 French people supported the idea of dedicated public assistance to be directly distributed to young people.

However, the key statistic in these first two surveys conveyed the mistrust towards the young as shared by 51% of French people.

Youth, a strong political hand to play

With the next presidential election in mind, Afev has chosen to assess the place that French people think young people's issues should occupy in political debating. The results on this subject are almost unanimous: 95% of them think that these issues should be one of the priorities of the campaigning. More precisely, 54% of those polled consider this question to be “very important”, with another 41% declaring it to be “quite important”. In light of this, the political parties would be making a gross mistake in deciding to evade the issues of education, social and professional integration of young people, access to higher education and accommodation, young people's autonomy and their involvement in social and charity programmes. Parents and grandparents who are concerned with and have invested in the construction of their children's future expect political decision-makers to take a stand.

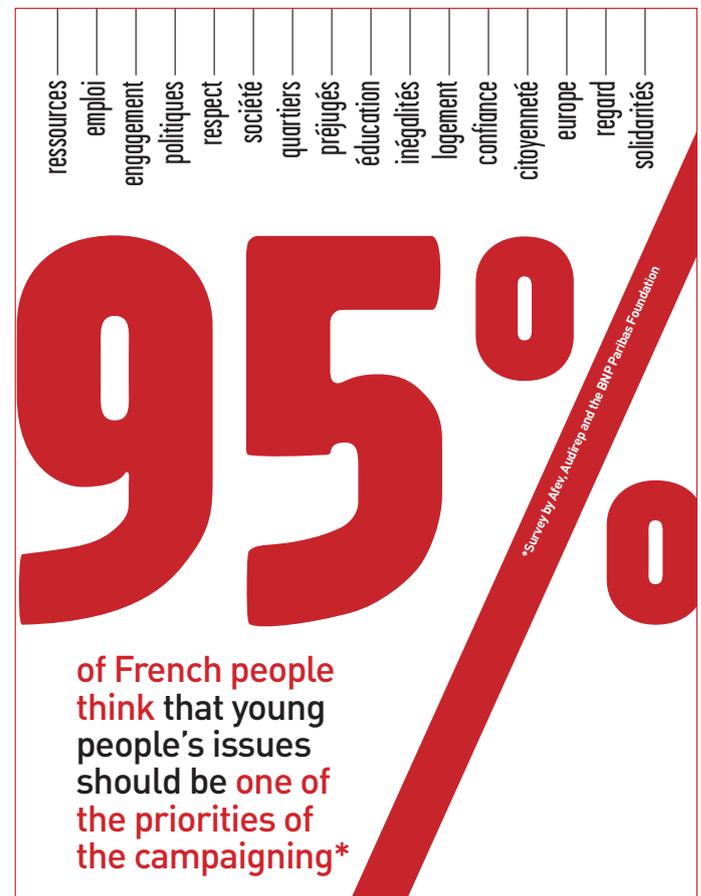
Indeed, although 47% of the 15-24 age group consider the inclusion of youth issues in the political agenda to be “very important”, this figure continues to rise as we progress through the population pyramid, standing at 51% for the 25-34 age group, 53% for the 39-45s, 60% for the 50-64 year olds. Lastly, 56% of the over-65s are also concerned. Moreover, whilst the highest socio-professional categories are over-represented in the group which replied “rather important” (46% versus 41% of the overall average) and under-represented in the “very important” group (48% against 54% of the overall average), the lower socio-professional categories and the unemployed, who are certainly more directly affected by hardship, emphatically gave the response “very important” (54 and 58%).

This clear-cut, indisputable figure of 95% has been accorded due importance by Afev, which has given it the status of the key statistic taken from the Youth United institute's survey of 2011.

From its earliest publications, the institute's approach has been based upon the advice and analysis of researchers working on matters of youth participation for highly respected organisations such as the Institute for Public Adjudication, the Institute for Research into Inequality, the Fondation de France Institute, the Anacej (National Association of Youth Councils) and Injep (National Institute for Trends in Further Education and Young People).

This collective effort led on to the third edition of a twenty page report, aimed at the Afev partners, major institutional players and an abridged version was taken up by the newspaper association, *Volontaires* !

By conducting the survey again this year, the Afev, with Audirep, wanted to go deeper into the question of the relationship between our society and its young people and to hone it using a new methodology: interviewing the French by telephone rather than using the internet like before. The following themes were covered : are French opinions still so negative? How do they perceive the ways in which young people adapt to the social and cultural changes in our society? What do they think about the changes in inequalities among young people, and to what do they attribute these changes? Finally, should young people's issues form part of political debate on the eve of a presidential election?

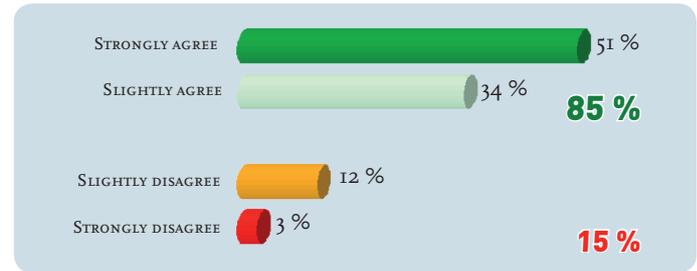


Rising inequality amongst young people

If the French often waver between media-generated fantasies and objective analysis when they talk about today's youth, as realists there are still 84% of people who acknowledge that not all young people enjoy the same chances to succeed socially. Moreover 85% reckon that the gap in intra-generational and social inequality has widened over the course of the last few years. These inequalities seem particularly striking in the field of professional integration, as four out of five people polled insist that this area is a breeding ground for social injustice. Three out of four people also pronounce the same verdict upon financial autonomy and academic success, while two out of three respondents blame the unequal capacity young people have for taking part in the life of the community.

When young people are asked about the variables on which their success depends, the French express relatively schizophrenic views. On the one hand, 88% of them think that young people can only count on "their own endeavours to overcome difficulties". Consequently, they would be the sole architect of their personal

Do you feel that the gap in social inequality is widening amongst young people?



fulfilment – and their failures would then be considered the outcome of their apathy. On the other hand, around two French people in three acknowledge the crucial effect of external social determining factors on the simple goodwill of young people, such as social background (68%) or even – the identical figures begin to suggest the possibility of a correlation – where you live and where you go to school (64%).

Young people from working-class neighbourhoods: a double social sentence

The observation is not new: the French prefer the young people they know to those they do not, and are more severe upon those coming from working class neighbourhoods than towards young people in general. For all that, the extent of the gap on this latter point borders on particularly worrying proportions: though three out of four French people have a positive image of young people in general, only two out of five look positively upon young people from working-class neighbourhoods.

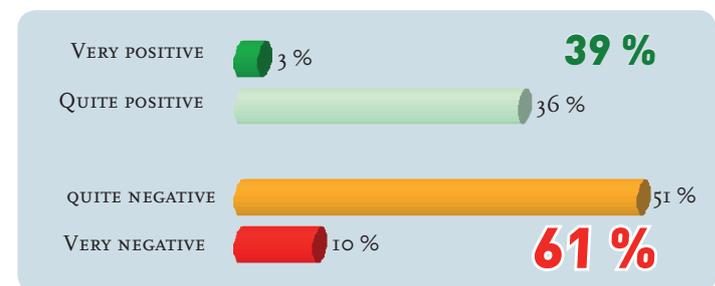
When asked about the reasons for such suspicion, the respondents mainly highlight the negative image peddled by the media, which, for a considerable number of them, who live a good distance away from such neighbourhoods, constitutes the only source of information on this topic. They also emphasise the impression they have that "they [young people] are all delinquents", drug-addicts and troublemakers who disturb the peace. Other aspects which also come into play, though to a lesser extent, include the role of the family in the education of young people (or in this case, the absence of this role) and the lack of respect both for social rules and for other members of the community.

These ideas of disrespect and delinquency also come up in the responses of the minority of people polled who generally apply derision to all young people, who they too accuse of playing waiting games, not taking responsibility for themselves, and, yet again, of being disengaged with their own personal achievement. However, those who have a milder attitude towards young people from working-class neighbourhoods insist on highlighting that they have spent time with them -yet more proof of the distorting filter that the media apply to the issue - and that they are particularly brave in the light of the hardships they face everyday.

How would you describe the image you have of young people as a result of their social behaviour and actions?



More specifically, what is the image you have of young people from working-class neighbourhoods...



Methodology

The study was conducted from January 19th to 25th by telephone using the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews) system on a nationwide sample of 1000 members of the French population aged from 15 years old.

THE SAMPLE'S PROFILE

SEX :
Men 48%
Women 52 %

AGE :
15-24 years old 17%
25-34 years old 18%
35-49 years old 28%
50-64 years old 20%
+ de 65 years old 17%

SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY :
CSP + 23%
CSP - 50%
Unemployed 27%

AREA POLLED :
Ile-de-France 18%
North 7%
West 23%
East 17%
South-East 24%

RESIDENTIAL AREA :
City centre 35%
Suburban area 29%
Rural 36%

FULL VERSION

FIND THE UNABRIDGED
INTERVIEWS ON THE WEBSITE
WWW.JEUNESSESOLIDAIRE.ORG

AND COMMENTS FROM ALL
OUR CONTRIBUTORS IN THE
YOUTH UNITED INSTITUTE'S
2011 REPORT

In alphabetical order, in addition
to the people featured opposite:

- Béatrice ANGRAND, General Secretary of the FGYO (The Franco-German Youth Office),
- Guillaume CASSAGNE, a young man supported by the local mission in Bordeaux in partnership with Afev,
- Emmanuel DAVIDENKOFF, Editorial director of magazine l'Étudiant, columnist on France Info radio station,
- Jean-Jacques GORON, Deputy Chief representative of the BNP Paribas foundation,
- Marc HATZFELD, Professor and researcher at the EHESS (Graduate School for Social Sciences), author of "Les lascars, une jeunesse en colère" ["The wideboys, angry youths"] (*Edition Autrement, 2011*)
- Philippe MEIRIEU, President of the Youth Commission of the Association of French Regions,
- Olov OSKARSSON, President of the Assembly of European Regions' Council and Youth Organisations,
- Elise RENAUDIN, Deputy director of Afev,
- Jean-Claude RICHEZ, Coordinator of the Injep (National Institute for Trends in Further Education and Young People) Mission for Observation and Evaluation,
- Joy SORMAN, Author, co-writer with François Bégaudeau of *Parce que ça nous plaît - L'invention de la jeunesse* [Because we like it – the discovery of youth] (*Larousse, 2010*)

A few reactions

CÉCILE VAN DE VELDE, SOCIOLOGIST, PATRON OF THE RESEARCH

« In the event of a crisis (...) the group that will be treated as a balancing variable – that is, young adults – are at risk of having to pay throughout their life. »

JEANNETTE BOUGRAB, STATE SECRETARY FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITY LIFE

« Clichés die hard, but they do not supersede fact. I am convinced that all of them will eventually be broken. »

RAMA YADE, AUTHOR OF LETTRE A LA JEUNESSE (GRASSET, 2010)

« I became quite emotional on reading the statistics regarding the worth and courage of young people, for example. In the end, we show some understanding towards them. The challenges faced by young people do not concern them alone: French people feel that the future of our country rests on their shoulders. »

NAJAT VALLAUD-BELKACEM, DEPUTY MAYOR IN LYON, DIRECTOR OF EVENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY LIFE, COUNCILLOR FOR THE RHÔNE DÉPARTEMENT

« There is a broad consensus regarding the seriousness of the social crisis sweeping young people and the major implications this represents for our country. Yet, at the same time, we can see a rather obvious rejection of any specific policy which would aim to absorb the shock on society or directly reduce inequality, as this is perceived as a sort of nannying which would further aggravate the situation. »

OLIVIER FERRAND, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF TERRA NOVA

« The young are perceived as "brave". Why? Because society, in order to fight the crisis, has transformed these "newcomers", new members of the workforce, into a systematic balancing variable which serves to protect the "insiders". We place the entire weight of the crisis onto these newcomers. »

DOMINIQUE REYNIÉ, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FONDAPOL

« Twenty five years ago, the phrase "working-class neighbourhood" was associated with the idea of the "working-class background" and evoked compassion and solidarity. Now, in "working-class neighbourhood", we hear "realm of the relegated": the first feeling that wells up is fear instead of empathy. »

PATRICK FAUCONNIER, JOURNALIST, AUTHOR OF LA FABRIQUE DES MEILLEURS (SEUIL, 2005)

« The young are by nature perceived as bad eggs: they ask questions which shake up the established order. "Shaking things up" is necessary to ensure that society progresses, regardless of how calls for change are to be answered. »

JUSTINE DELAUNOIS, STUDENT, MEMBER OF THE ANACEJ COMMITTEE

« We should be the ones revitalising the work place, the community; but, as things stand, they seem to be compromised. Besides, this is why the survey's respondents highlight our worth and our courage. »

HANDE ÖZSAN BOZATLI, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH COMMISSION AT THE EUROPEAN REGIONS ASSEMBLY

« Those people who have such bleak opinions of young people from working-class neighbourhoods, where do they come from? I would not be surprised if they had never even set foot in a neighbourhood in jeopardy. The fear spread by the media coverage of incidents in those areas leadsto general apprehension about the people who live there – principally the young people. »

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