

SAMI MYLLYNIEMI & TOMI KIILAKOSKI

INFLUENCE ON THE EDGE OF EUROPE

YOUTH BAROMETER 2018. SUMMARY



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Sami Myllyniemi & Tomi Kiilakoski

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SUMMARY

FOREWORD

For decades, Finnish society has seen youth research as beneficial from the viewpoint of youth policy. There is a link between research and the nation's social development. Most of the youth research conducted in Finland is published in Finnish. One of the most central examples is the Youth Barometer, which is implemented every year jointly by the State Youth Council and the Finnish Youth Research Network to measure the attitudes of young people.

In this summary, the most interesting results of the 2018 Youth Barometer are presented to the international public. The theme of the barometer is politics and civic participation in Europe. By having chosen this theme, the State Youth Council wants to bring the perspective of young people in Finland into the European discussion. The theme is topical as Finland is acting as the chair of the Committee of Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the Council of Europe, between 21 November 2018 and 17 May 2019. In addition, Finland's term as the chair of the European Union begins on 1 July 2019.

Finnish young people's attitude towards Europe can be considered to be fairly positive. Studying their attitudes and views provides a perspective on the how young people's European citizenship and their attitudes towards Europe form, but it also shows how political activity and civic participation are visible in the youth cultures in the 2010s.

Youth Barometers have already been implemented in Finland for 25 years, since 1994. This makes it possible to conduct temporal comparisons and reveals changes, but also shows that

a lot of things do not change. With the results presented in this summary, we hope to be able to demonstrate that youth research provides interesting information that will help to make wiser decisions based on knowledge.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES

A total of 1,901 young people were interviewed for the Youth Barometer 2018. The population of the survey is young people aged between 15 and 29 living in mainland Finland. The personal data was sampled by the Population Register Centre as a random sampling. The information was gathered through telephone interviews. The material included quotas according to gender (male, female), age groups (15–19-, 20–24- and 25–29-year-olds) and mother tongue (Finnish, Swedish, other). The groups correspond to the proportions in the population. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and Swedish in January and February 2018. The average length of the interviews was 33 minutes 40 seconds. The results were published in March 2019 when Finland held the presidency of the Council of Europe.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EUROPE

Europe can be defined from many perspectives: depending on the point of view, it can be a limited geographic area, a project on political unification, a community of values based on human rights and democracy, an area glued together by a shared history that has at times been fairly sombre, or a narrative that brings the different national states together under one entity and at

the same time makes Europe stand out from other political and economic operators. The only definition people can unanimously agree on about Europe is likely to be the fact that Europe is one of the continents. The autonomy of the national states, the joint European citizenship and the shared European lifeworld have been tricky issues throughout the recent history of the European unification (Habermas 2012). Recently, Europe has been tested by the economic crisis and difficult phenomena such as the issue of immigration and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. As a result, issues related to the nature of Europe or the justification of the European Union have stimulated a wide range of discussions.

The attitude towards Europe can be seen to depend on the person's age or generation. It has been observed in studies that, having grown up in a global world, younger age groups have a more favourable attitude towards Europe than older age groups, who have been socialised into a different world based on national states (Rekker 2018). We will first look at the question dealing with how young people in Finland currently understand Europe (Diagram 1).

The essence of Europe

Finland joined the European Union on 1 January 1995 together with Sweden and Austria. More than one half of the age groups studied in the Youth Barometer have lived their whole life during Finland's membership in the European Union. Even the representatives of the older age groups studied have lived in a member state of the European Union since starting school. Clarifying young people's views on Europe as such is interesting as it enables us to look at those young people in whose growth environment the unifying Europe and the influence of the European Union on Finland's legislation and the Finnish culture have been a fact. Although the Council of Europe also has a central role especially in youth policy (Schildt 2015), this barometer focuses mainly on study-

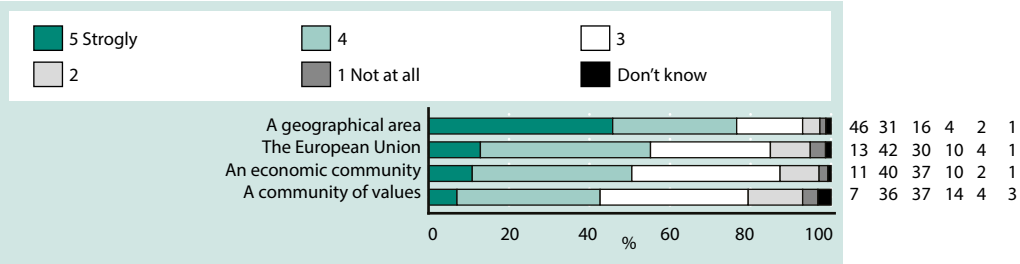
ing young people's views on Europe in general and particularly their views on the European Union.

Studying young people's relationship with Europe is interesting not only as proof that young people's identities cross national borders, but also more broadly as evidence of how successfully the European Union manages to make itself visible to young people in Finland. Studying the responses given by the young people also helps to form an understanding of how the different dimensions of Europe are visible in young people's experience.

In the barometer, young people were asked how they understood Europe. A total of 77% of the Finnish young people saw Europe strongly or fairly strongly as a geographic area. The proportion of young people who responded that they did not see Europe as a geographic area at all or were not able to say was only 2%. Fifty-five per cent of young people felt strongly or fairly strongly that Europe was the European Union. It is worth noting, however, that the proportion of those young people who did not see Europe as the European Union was 14%. The figure is close to the results of the study commissioned by JEF Finland, in which 11% of the respondents somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I see myself as a citizen of the European Union" (JEF Finland 2018). The figure was also similar to the result measuring all Finnish age groups in the Eurobarometer, according to which 13% are not happy living in the European Union (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 22).

The proportion of young people who see Europe as an economic community is fairly similar to the proportion of young people who see Europe specifically as the European Union. Europe is least commonly seen as a community of values. Forty-three per cent of the young people are strongly or fairly strongly of the view that Europe is a community of values, while 4% do not consider Europe to be a community of values at all. The majority of young people see the operation of the European Union mainly

DIAGRAM 1. “ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW STRONGLY DO YOU FEEL THAT EUROPE MEANS...”



as legitimate. The results of the Youth Barometer can be interpreted to indicate that, as a rule, young people trust the European Union and are interested in its operation. One half of young people consider themselves to be very European and almost nine out of ten at least somewhat European. At the same time, we must take into account that the proportion of young people who see Europe as a community of values is smaller than the proportion of young people who consider Europe to be an economic community. In this respect, the project on building young people’s European identity or European citizenship (Williamson 2015) is still half complete.

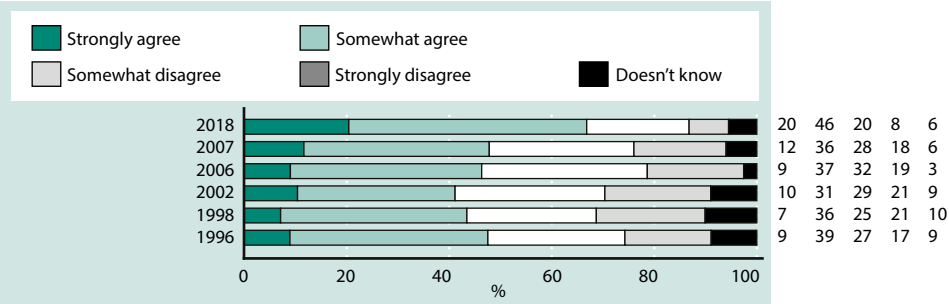
Benefits of the EU

Two in three young people find that EU membership has benefited Finland. This is clearly the largest proportion over the monitoring period of more than twenty years (Diagram 2). When interpreting how positive young people’s

attitudes to Europe are, we should bear in mind that the respondents of the current Youth Barometer have lived most or all of their childhood and youth during Finland’s membership in the European Union and while the country has been defined by globalisation (see Rekker 2018). Finnish young people are not alone with their views as, according to the Eurobarometer, the European Union is more popular than ever since 1983 or at least it has been found to benefit EU citizens more than ever before. In addition, 81% of all Finns reported in the Eurobarometer of spring 2018 that they were happy living in the European Union. (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 22.)

General knowledge about the European Union is likely to affect how people respond to the question about how beneficial they consider the European Union to be. In the 2018 Eurobarometer 74 percent of citizens in Finland believed to understand the operation of the European Union, which is clearly above the average (59%). On the scale of Europe, young

DIAGRAM 2. “EU MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN BENEFICIAL TO FINLAND.” COMPARISON 1996-2018. (%)



people also have a better understanding of the operation of the European Union than older age groups. (Standard Eurobarometer 89b, 128–130.) The view that the EU is beneficial for Finland is also supported by the study commissioned by JEF Finland, in which the same thing was asked using a question that was formed in a slightly different way. A total of 81% agreed or agreed to a fairly large extent with the statement “EU membership is good for Finland”.

Finland, the EU and interaction

For three decades, the European Union has systematically supported the mobility of young people across Europe. The Erasmus Programme, which focuses on student exchanges in higher education, was established in 1987. As the experiences gained from student exchanges were positive, there was a desire to also create similar structures for mobility in the non-formal learning that takes place outside school. As a result, different programmes focusing on voluntary work were established, among them Youth for Europe I-III, European Voluntary Service and Youth in Action. The first one was Youth for Europe I, which was launched in 1989. (Lejeune 2015, 48–51.) Supporting the mobility of young people has been a central part of European youth policy. According to Howard Williamson (2015, 85), Professor of European Youth Policy, supporting exchanges, mobility and dialogue has been seen as a central way of achieving the ambitious objectives of European youth policy.

The ideal of mobility and the opportunity for intercultural learning seems to be especially important also for young people in Finland. The 2017 Youth Barometer examined young people’s views on the most important skills required for doing well in life. Language skills were considered to be important by more than nine in ten young people and internationality by three in four young people. The perceived importance of both skills was on the increase.

(Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski 2018.) In the interviews conducted for this study, almost all respondents, 96%, agreed either strongly or somewhat that it is important for people to be able to travel freely and learn about other cultures. This partly reflects the international orientation of Finns in which not only young people but also older generations of Finns have a positive attitude to free movement. In the 2018 Eurobarometer, 71% of Finns considered the freedom to travel, study and work in the European Union to be what the European Union meant for them on a personal level (Standard Eurobarometer 89b, 72). The freedom to travel at least within Europe is important for young people. However, we may conclude that not everyone wants to extend this idea to immigration from outside the European Union as, although 96% of the respondents support free movement of people, 22% are of the opinion that Finland could “close” its borders as far as they are concerned.

Three in four young people agreed strongly or somewhat that they have a lot in common with young people of the same age living in the EU countries. One in four disagreed. For its part, this indicates that it is possible to identify with the situation of young people living in Europe and feel togetherness across the borders of national states. Although the majority of young people do not see Europe as a community of values, it still seems to be possible for the great majority of them to identify with the life situations of other young people in Europe.

In questions dealing with the status of the EU, respondents most often agree that Finland should increase its influence in the EU. Four in five young people agree either strongly or somewhat with this statement. There is strong support for increasing Finland’s opportunities to exert influence. Of course, the answer to this question may be positive even if the respondent is critical about the European Union as the question can be understood either as a demand to improve Finland’s national status or as

DIAGRAM 3. VIEWS ON THE EU AND FINLAND'S FOREIGN RELATIONS. (%)



Finland's commitment to the development of the European unification in general.

When the material for the study was being gathered, there was a lot of discussion about the development of the European Union, especially in connection with the euro crisis, the refugee policy and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, generally known as Brexit. Young Finnish people, who have a fairly positive attitude towards the European Union, do not think that the European Union has taken too much precedence over the national decision-making power. Almost two in three young people, 64%, disagree either strongly or somewhat with the statement that the unification of the European Union has gone too far. Correspondingly, about one third of the young people are of the opinion that the unification of the EU has been excessive. However, a fairly clear majority of young people seem to support the current situation of the EU and accept its unification development. Finnish young people's positive attitude towards Europe is again visible here. It can be concluded that the generations that have grown up in Finland during its membership in the European Union consider the European development to be positive and also see the impact of the European dimension on their own life.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND POLITICS

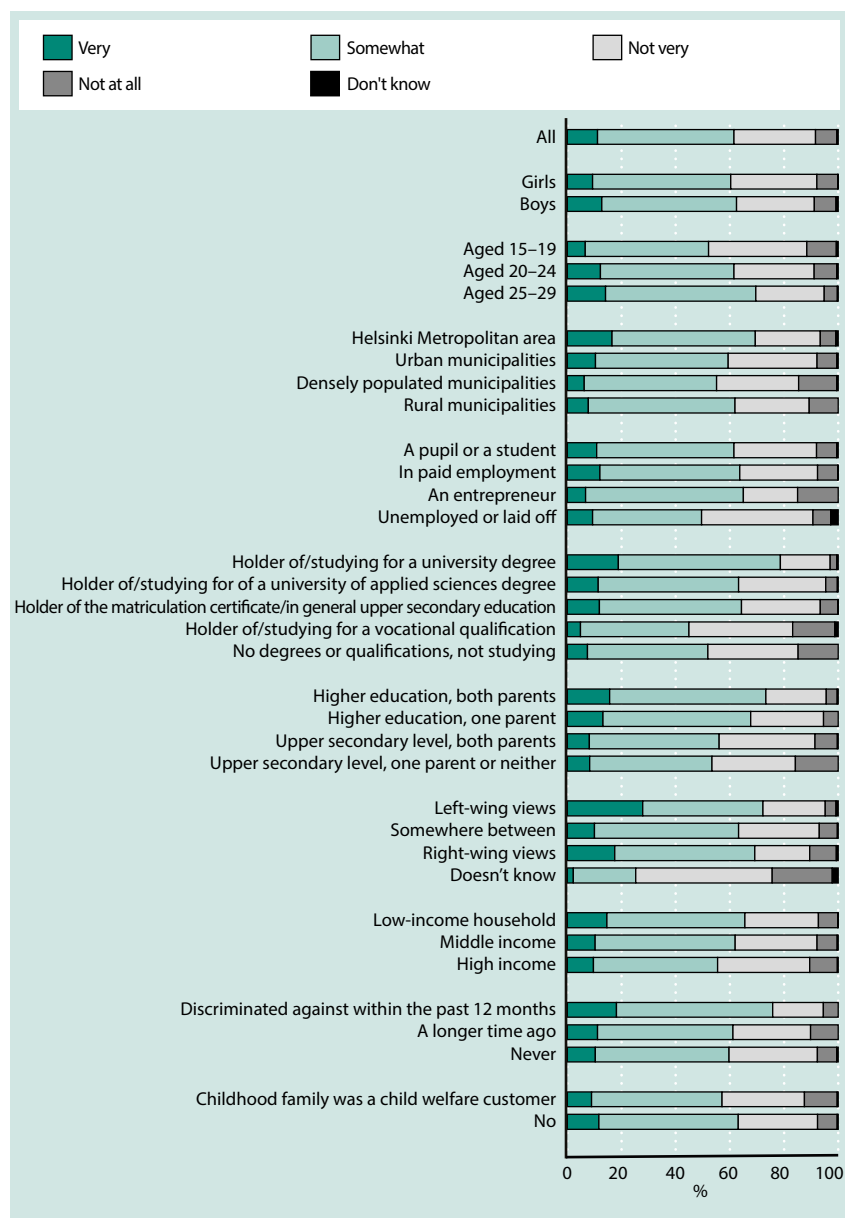
Interest in politics

The studying of the involvement and civic participation of young people can be started by investigating how young people see their relationship with politics. When asked how interested they are in politics, the majority (61%) of young people are at least somewhat interested, just under one third are not very interested and fewer than one in ten are not interested at all (Diagram 4).

Some kind of reference point is useful when we consider whether the level of interest in politics shown by young people is high or low. In international comparisons, such as the ICCS studies of 2009 and 2016, Finnish young people have been at the lower end in showing interest in social issues (Schulz et al. 2010; Mehtäläinen et al. 2017). In the Myplace research project, a comparison of 14 European countries implemented between 2011 and 2015, Finnish young people were the eighth most interested in politics (Saari 2017).

The young people were asked about their interest in politics without providing them with any kind of definition of politics in the interview situation. In other words, the interviewees

FIGURE 4. "HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN POLITICS?" (%)



were allowed to understand politics the way they wanted. It has been suggested that different generations have a different perspective on politics and its manifestations (e.g. Lepola 2015, 61). The role of political participants and citizens also varies in different situations

(Gretschel & Kiilakoski 2012). Some may see politics in a narrow sense as an institutional and representative power game involving parties, elections, elected representatives and institutions. According to this view, the citizen's role is to vote at certain intervals and choose the

decision-makers. For others, politics may mean discussions about a good society, its values and goals, in which case politics is no longer a separate island but permeates all aspects of life. According to this view, citizens carry out political activities in several everyday environments. (cf. Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005, 253–254.)

In principle, the increasing interest in politics observed in Diagram 5 can be interpreted to mean that the way young people understand politics has broadened. Two different interpretations of political engagement among young people are proposed in research literature: according to the interpretation based on the falling voter turnout, young people are increasingly unpolitical and do not engage in traditional politics. The other interpretation emphasises young people's new political activities, such as consumption, media activism and new political movements, and finds that young people engage in shared matters in a way that is different from representative democracy (see Bessant & Farthing & Watts 2016). The view that the political activities of young people have changed is supported by the fact that especially the forms of influencing society outside representative democracy, such as exerting influence through purchase decisions, have strengthened most (Diagram 8). However, based on such a short time span, it is probably too early to conclude that the way young people understand politics has changed, especially as it can be interpreted to be fairly traditional.

Those interested in politics report more often than others that they have previously voted in elections and similarly that they intend to vote in the next parliamentary elections. Some young people see not voting as a way of exerting influence; however, those who think this way are not very interested in politics. Interest in politics largely goes hand in hand with how actively the person votes, indicating that the majority of young people have a traditional understanding of politics. The reason may also be that they have been brought up to perceive politics specifically through representative

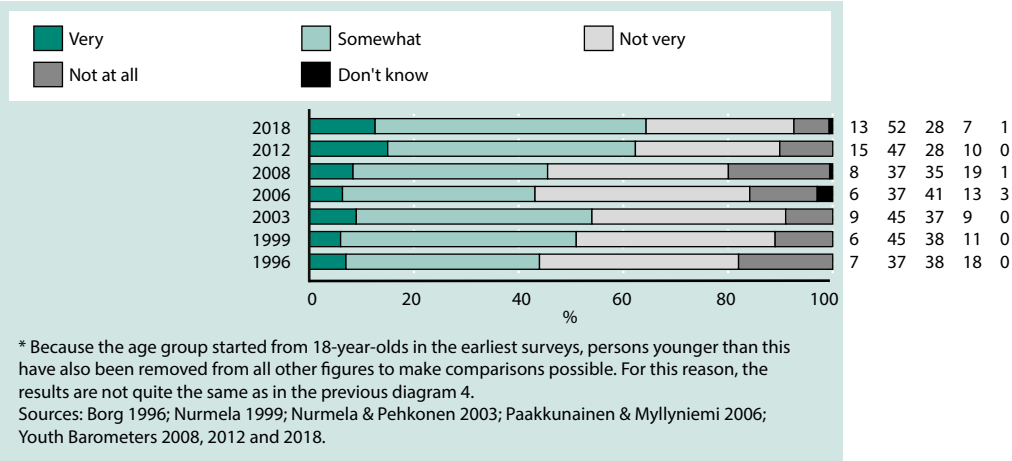
democracy. Many of the channels of civic participation available to young people, including school councils and youth councils, also repeat the traditional representative structures of the adult society (Kiilakoski 2017).

The results of the Youth Barometer do not provide strong support for the idea that a significantly large group of active young people would primarily operate outside the representative structures, by using only new ways of participation. Instead, the different forms of participation are largely used by the same young people. Young people who vote are more active than others also in the area of extra-parliamentary activism. Young people who are interested in politics have used all the ways of civic participation presented in Diagram 7 more than on average, except for violence. An interest in politics can thus be interpreted as an indicator of not only attitude but also of preparedness to engage in activities. In this preparedness, representative democracy also plays a large role in the different forms of political activity.

Boys were previously more interested in politics than girls but there are currently no significant differences between the two sexes. This is due to an increase in girls' interest in politics, while especially the interest of teenage boys is on the decline. As they get older, both girls and boys show more interest. The high educational level of both the young people themselves and their parents is strongly linked with finding politics interesting.

What stands out in the regional variables is the greater interest in politics among young people living in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area than among those living in other parts of the country. Education partly explains the differences between different types of municipalities, but not completely. Interestingly, young people in Uusimaa, the region surrounding the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, are less interested in politics than young people elsewhere in Finland. When a separate sampling was made in sparsely populated areas as part of the 2017 Youth Barometer, no differences were detected

DIAGRAM 5. “HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN POLITICS?” COMPARISON 1996-2018. AGED 18-29. * (%)



in civic participation between young people living in remote areas and those living in other areas (Pulkkinen & Rautopuro 2018, 38).

Young people with an immigrant background are on average less interested in politics than young people with a Finnish background. Girls who were born abroad become more interested the longer they live in Finland, but a similar increase in interest is not seen among boys. The educational level of the parents is connected with greater interest in politics.

A change in the level of interest in politics

The same scale has been used to find out about young people’s interest in politics since 1996. Diagram 5 indicates a relatively clear shift: 18–29-year-olds’ interest in politics increased from the 1990s until the early 2000s and, after a small dip, has again turned to a relatively powerful growth. Now, in the 2018 survey, the proportion of those interested in politics is larger, while the proportion of those entirely indifferent is smaller than ever before during the monitoring period of more than 20 years. In addition to interest in politics, trust in social institutions has strengthened.

However, interest and trust do not automatically develop into activities and a culture of participation. Although civic participation has

increased over the past five years, a minority still say that they have tried to influence matters they find important in society in the past twelve months and only 15% say they have been involved in political activity (Diagram 6). When asked about future goals, the willingness to be personally involved in politics is rare and has not increased in the same way as general interest in politics (Myllyniemi 2017, 29). Interest in politics does not necessarily lead to willingness to interact with the political system, nor is it primarily channelled into voting or participation in political organisations.

When we look for background factors for the increasing interest in politics, it is worth noting that purchase decisions, online discussions and demonstrations in particular are considered to be more effective ways than previously and especially exerting influence through purchase decisions has become dramatically more common (Diagram 8). Young people invest more time and effort in extra-parliamentary ways of civic participation whereas a similar increase is not seen in involvement in political organisations or in voting. This can be understood as a difference between participatory democracy and representative democracy (see Gretschel & Kiilakoski 2012). In the first, many fields of the daily life are seen as political, whereas in the

latter, politics is limited to different arenas of representative democracy in municipalities and central government.

Trust in the functioning of democracy and the interest attracted by politics are not sufficient preconditions for active engagement and becoming inspired by politics. Young people may find the structures of society ready and complete, which does not necessarily motivate them in the best possible way to participate actively in their development (Harinen 2000, Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005). Understanding that someone is promoting their cause is a precondition that enables young people's trust to develop into active interest, and channelling this interest into active participation requires an understanding of one's own opportunities to exert influence. Young people who think that most politicians do not care about the people are also not interested in politics. Other statements related to anti-elite populism, such as "politicians are the biggest problem in Finland", "the people should make the most important political decisions" and "none of the parties promote my cause" are also inversely linked with young

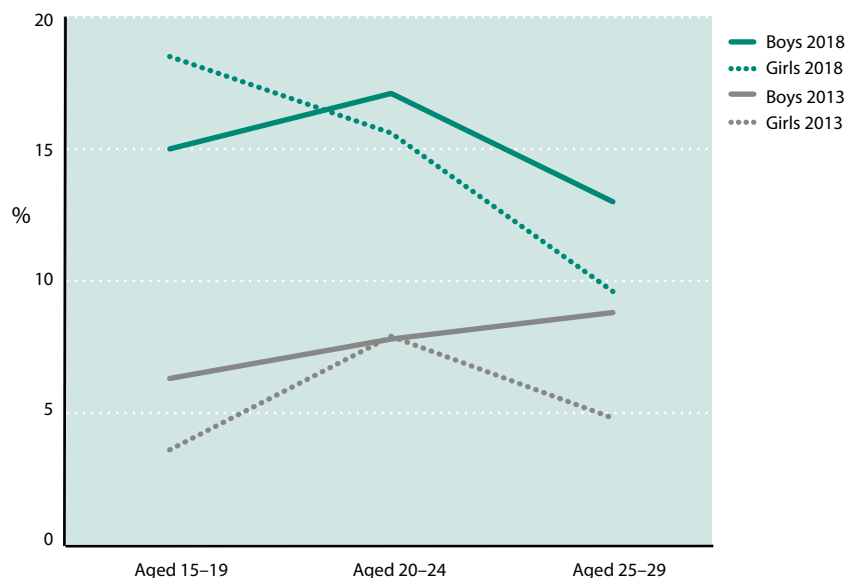
people's interest in politics. Correspondingly, interest in politics is linked with strong trust in the municipal council, Parliament and political parties.

Participation in political activities

Recently, the proportion of those who are interested in politics has grown (Diagram 5). Diagram 6 shows that young people are also involved in political activities more than before. There is a fairly obvious link between these developments and participation is significantly more common among those interested in politics than among others. Still, only 41% of even those young people who are very interested in politics have participated in political activities themselves during the past twelve months. Although interest in politics indicates preparedness to participate in it oneself, it does not mean that the interest shown by the majority will automatically turn into political activities.

Especially the participation in political activities by those aged under 20 has become more common. Unlike five years earlier,

DIAGRAM 6. PROPORTION OF THOSE ENGAGED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS IN 2013 AND 2018.



participation that is seen as political is now most common in the youngest age groups. This may indicate the emergence of a generation that is more willing to exert political influence, or that topical matters affect citizens of different ages in different ways. Phenomena such as the cuts made in education or the citizens' initiative on free upper secondary education are topical for those aged under 20 in a different way than for those who are older and may result in more active participation among the youngest ones.

In five years, participation in political activities has increased more than influencing society through exerting influence through concrete activities (Diagram 8). We can therefore infer that the change is related to how “political” is understood, which means that young people consider more and more ways of participation to belong to the sphere of politics. Of course, it is also possible that civic participation has increased in areas that cannot be identified through the questions posed in this study.

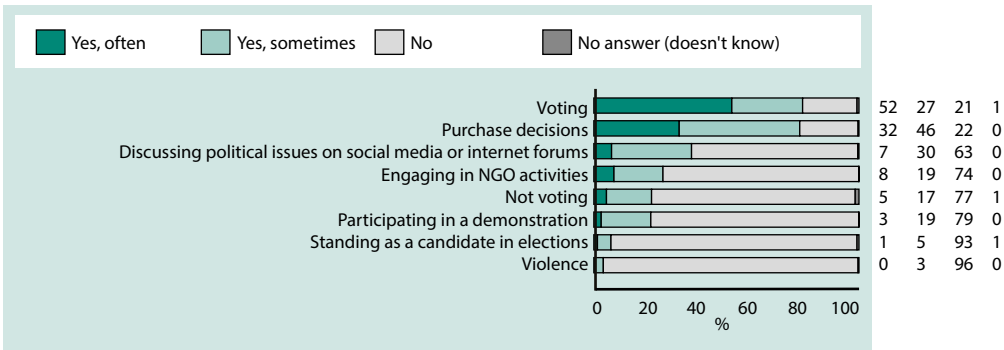
On the other hand, participation in demonstrations and organisations seems to also strongly indicate political activity, as about one half of those who have often participated in these activities feel they have participated in politics. The different types of organisations young people participate in were not studied more closely in this Youth Barometer. However, in a study on children's and young people's

free time implemented at the same time, the clearly most common types were organisations in the field of sports or physical activity. Twenty-seven per cent of 15–29-year-olds were members or involved in the activities of such organisations (Hakanen et al. 2019). However, only 4% of this age group are involved in political organisations. According to Diagram 7, more than one in four young people say they have influenced matters by being active in an organisation at least sometimes. Almost one in ten say they have done it often. We can therefore infer that most of the influencing through organisations takes place somewhere else than in the actual political organisations.

Those who consider not voting in elections a way of exerting influence do not, however, find that it is a form of political activity. This may partly be because few of those who do not vote regard not voting as a protest (Myllyniemi 2013, 38).

These observations support the interpretations that young people's understanding of politics is broadening but also in some ways traditional. The threshold for seeing one's own ways of exerting influence as political activity is still high, higher than identifying the activity as influencing society. Young people often do not consider personal to be political, and involvement in “politics” is therefore something out of their reach and off-putting for many of them, even if they are willing to exert influence.

DIAGRAM 7. “HAVE YOU PERSONALLY EXERTED INFLUENCE BY MEANS OF...” (%)



Forms of civic participation

Diagram 7 shows the involvement of young people in eight different forms of civic participation. Based on the results, the most common ones of the forms examined are voting and exerting influence through purchase decisions, which a clear majority of at least four in five young people have done at least sometimes. The proportion of those who have exerted influence at least somewhat through their purchase decisions has grown significantly compared to 2013, when 60% had sometimes exerted influence through their purchase decisions. The proportion of these respondents in this survey is 77%. The number of those who have exerted influence as consumers is therefore clearly on the increase. As we already pointed out in the previous section, the proportion of young people who consider this an effective way of civic participation has grown. In the Youth Barometer of 2013, participation was examined more widely in terms of 22 ways of civic participation. Voting and consumer choices came first also in that survey, together with signing initiatives and giving feedback on services.

Discussing political issues online is likely to be relatively common, but only one in three young people feel that it has been a way for them to influence matters. Not voting is also common in young age groups, but only just over one in five young people think it is a way of exerting influence. This corresponds to the result of the 2013 Barometer, according to which not voting was seen as a protest against politics by only a small proportion of those who did not vote and an even smaller group did not vote because of their principles (Myllyniemi 2013, 38). For the majority of young people, the primary reasons for not voting are not political.

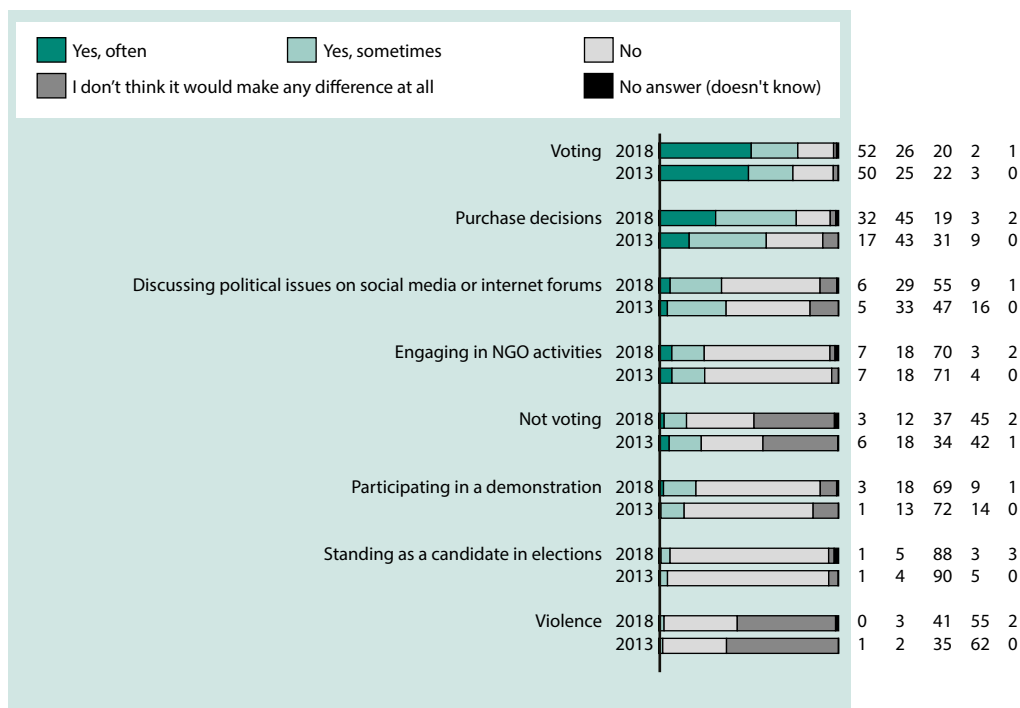
At least one in five young people, or 22%, have participated in demonstrations at least sometimes. The proportion of Finnish young people who could participate in a peaceful demonstration was more than 30% in the ICCS study measuring the societal attitudes of

young people of comprehensive school age (Mehtäläinen et al. 2019, 49). The majority of young people in Finland are not interested in demonstrations or other similar activities. The proportion of those who have used violence as a way of civic participation at least sometimes is 4%. Collective activities in general, such as participation in organisations or discussions about politics, are less popular ways of civic participation than voting or purchase decisions, which the individual can control himself or herself.

Diagram 8 presents temporal comparative data on different ways of civic participation. The category “I don’t think it would make any difference at all” is also included. It can be concluded that young people’s engagement in the forms of civic participation studied has become more common over the past few years. This is a continuation of a trend that was already observed in the 1990s. Especially participation in payment boycotts and purchase boycotts has already been increasing for a long time and, according to Diagram 8, the strongest increase can now be seen especially in influencing through purchase decisions. Finnish young people have already stood out in earlier European comparisons with their willingness to make politics by consuming, both through purchase boycotts and through purchase decisions that include political consideration (EUYOUPART, 2006; Paakkunainen & Hoikkala 2007, 140). According to the material of the European Social Survey, Finnish young people have participated in boycotts significantly more often than the average in the EU (14%) as about one third of Finnish young people have done so during the period considered (Sloam 2016).

Young people who exert influence through their purchase decisions consider environmental values more important than on average. This supports the interpretation that influencing through purchase decisions is at least partially related to the themes of ecologically sustainable consumption. For example, according to the Statistics Finland study on consumption, a meat-free diet has over the past few years

DIAGRAM 8. ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT FORMS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN 2013 AND 2018. (%)



increased most in the age group of 17–24-year-olds (Lehto 2018). On the other hand, the proportion of vegetarians has been estimated at about 5% and that of vegans at less than 1% (Myllyniemi 2015, 46; Sjöblom 2017), based on which the impacts on consumer behaviour in the entire age group would be modest. However, these estimates are misleading in the sense that the figures do not include those who favour vegetarian food but also sometimes eat animal-based food. Dietary choices are examples of individual choices that may have extensive societal impacts.

Violence has not become more common as a form of exerting influence and only about 4% say they have sometimes resorted to it with the view of influencing matters. On the other hand, in proportion to the size of the age class of 15–29-year-olds, each percentage unit corresponds to about 10,000 young people. We should also not ignore the fact that an increasing

number of young people consider violence to be an effective way of exerting influence.

Concentration of participation

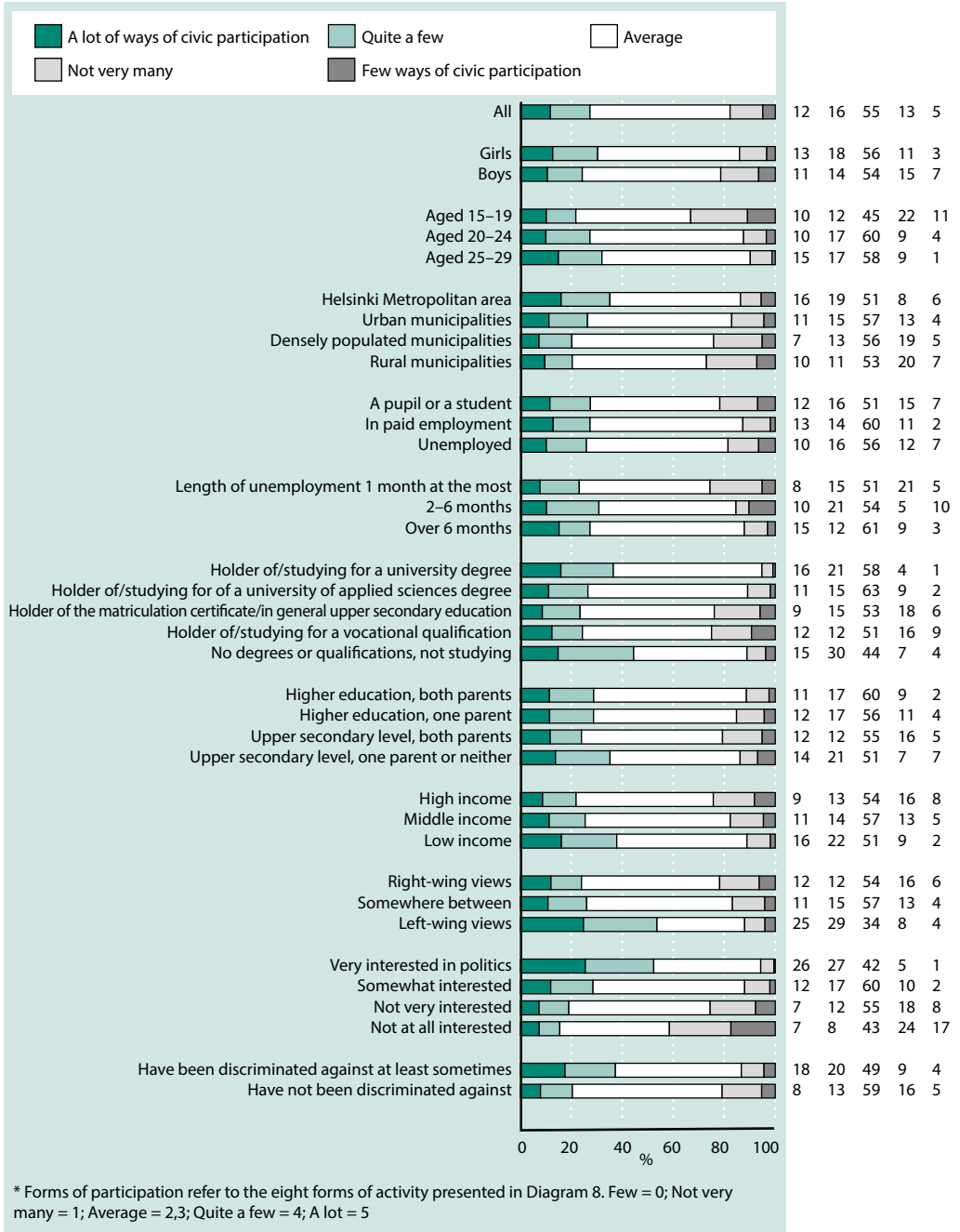
Above, we looked at how common the different individual forms of civic participation are. However, this does not tell us how many young people have participated in at least one of the forms of activity studied or how much the different forms of activity are concentrated among the same young people. To find this out, the afore-mentioned eight ways of civic participation have been added up in Diagram 9. Participation at least “sometimes” was used as the criterion. The values vary between zero and seven, the average being 2.7, the most common value two and the median three.

In Diagram 9, the total number of ways of civic participation have been divided into five categories. If the respondents do not use

any of the ways of civic participation, they use “few” of them (such cases account for 5% of the material) and if they use one way of civic

participation, they use “not very many” (13%). Values 2 and 3 have been named “average” (55%), value 4 “quite a few” (16%) and young

DIAGRAM 9. TOTAL NUMBER OF THE FORMS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION USED. * (%)



people who use at least five ways of civic participation use “a lot” of them (12%).

Measured by the number of forms of civic participation, girls are more diversely active than boys and the number of different ways of participation increases as the person grows older. Respondents living in cities use more ways of influencing than young people living in the countryside, but for example the opportunities to engage in organisational activities are likely to be fewer in the countryside. Differences based on the level of education are not straightforward as there are ways of civic participation for both those with the highest and those with the lowest level of education. The ways of civic participation are emphasised in completely different ways in these groups: those with a higher education degree vote and participate in the activities of organisations more actively, while those with no education or training stand out by having exerted influence through online discussions, by using violence and by not voting more often than the others. On the other hand, the entire material included only 27 young people with no education or training, so generalisations do not have a strong statistical basis.

The perceived level of income is inversely linked with the diversity of ways of civic participation. A similar observation was made in the 2013 Youth Barometer regarding income in the childhood home: children of low-income families participated in the most diverse ways (Myllyniemi 2013). Perhaps the observations are an indication that dissatisfaction may sometimes motivate activity.

In the interviews conducted in this study, young people who had experienced discrimination reported more ways of civic participation than others. Similarly, in the 2014 barometer, those who had been victims of discrimination engaged more actively in organisations (Myllyniemi 2014).

Participation is heavily concentrated among the same young people. Almost all of those who use only one way of civic participation vote or make consumer choices. Therefore, voting or

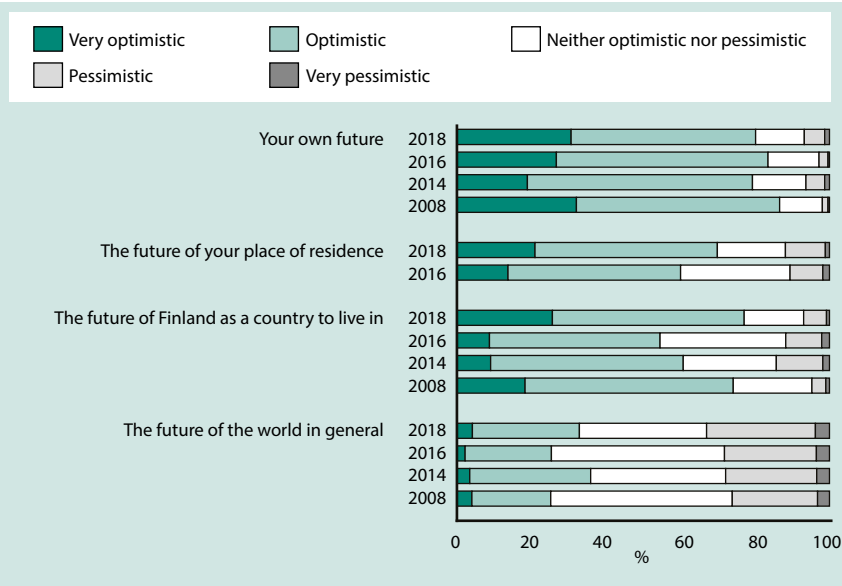
influencing through purchase decisions do not as such indicate broad-based civic participation. Instead, standing in elections is a fairly strong indication of diverse and active participation, as is taking part in organisational activities and demonstrations. The results show signs of a division into two in terms of participation: some young people exert influence by using ways that require less commitment, such as consumer choices, while a smaller number are actual activists aiming to influence politics and society, for example, through organisations.

Although voting is in a way low-threshold civic participation, young people who vote are also more active than on average in extra-parliamentary activism. Similarly, young people who exert influence through consumer choices, online discussions and demonstrations are also more active voters than on average. The interview material in the Youth Barometer does not support the idea that young people would choose the most suitable form of participation for them from a “buffet table” of civic participation. The concentration of the different forms of civic participation among the same active young people is a central observation. The downside is that the same also happens with regard to passivity.

Trust in the future

The future prospects of young people were investigated at several levels. When the perspective widened from one’s own life to a global perspective, young people’s future prospects become significantly gloomier. A total of 79% have an optimistic view of their own future, 69% of the future of their place of residence and 77% of the future of Finland. Forty-nine percent still have an optimistic view of the future of Europe, but only 32% of the future of the world. Future prospects for which there is reference data in earlier Youth Barometers have been compiled in Diagram 10 and the results of the new question concerning the future of Europe, are presented separately in Diagram 11.

DIAGRAM 10. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE 2008-2018. (%)



The trends in Diagram 10 show that optimism has mainly become stronger. As regards views of one's own future, the changes are on average small, but the proportions of both those very optimistic and those very pessimistic are increasing. The biggest changes are related to young people's views of Finland as a country to live in. Previously, trust in the future declined in every survey, but the latest change is a sharp increase in optimism. When considering the reasons for it, at least the end of the long economic depression and the improved employment rate can be taken into account, and perhaps also the positive spirit provided by the public celebrations that were part of Finland's centenary in 2017. The context of the interviews should always be taken into consideration. This time the perspective is more international than usually, which means that new aspects have to be considered when reflecting on the future of Finland as a country to live in.

The question about Finland as a country to live in is presented at a very general level, but the other sections of the Youth Barometer provide more information on what part

of Finnish society these future prospects are related to. Those who feel uncertainty because of the future of the welfare services, the growing inequality of Finns, the social exclusion of young people and the increasing number of immigrants see the future of Finland in a particularly gloomy light.

Diagram 13 reveals that more and more young people feel uncertainty related to climate change, the global political situation and international terrorism. In the light of all this, it may be surprising that young people's view of the future of the world is on average more optimistic than before. There is a strong statistical link between global causes for concern and a pessimistic view of the future of the world, but there are also people who have a positive view of the future of the world in spite of the uncertainty caused, for example, by climate change. Therefore, uncertainty and concern do not necessarily lead to pessimism, which seems to be positive from the viewpoint of both individuals and civic participation. Young people who are concerned about the state of the world, such as the international political situation or climate

change, are also more likely to be active social influencers. On the other hand, there does not seem to be a strong link between a pessimistic view of the future of the world and active civic participation, although the most pessimistic young people use non-parliamentary means of participation such as purchase decisions or demonstrations more actively than others.

The percentage of those with a pessimistic view of the future of the world is more or less the same (33%) as the percentage of those with an optimistic view (32%). The proportion of those who are not inclined to be optimistic or pessimistic is clearly larger (33%) than in the other future perspectives in Diagram 10. This is understandable amid a flood of conflicting information, as it is difficult even for those who monitor the issue in a professional capacity to form a comprehensive understanding of the future of the entire world. One might think that young people in particular reflect on future trends as their life will already be affected by the worldwide, often slow developments. It is therefore an interesting observation that the proportion of both the optimistic and the pessimistic young people is increasing. Even just the ability

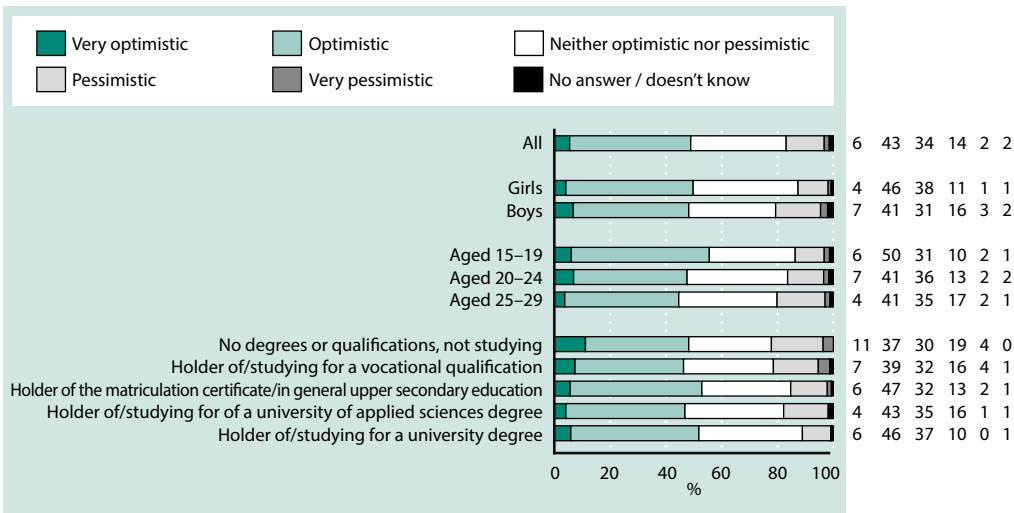
to position oneself regarding this question indicates that the person finds the theme interesting and important.

The future of Europe

About one half of young people (49%) are optimistic about the future of Europe while the other half are pessimistic (48%). Compared with their view of the future of Finland, the view is considerably gloomier, but brighter when compared to the future of the world. There are more pessimists among boys than among girls, but the differences between the two sexes are not very big. Young people aged under 20 are more optimistic about the future of Europe than their slightly older peers. The link with the level of education is not very strong, but those with a low level of education are slightly more pessimistic. Those who consider themselves racist and radical have the most pessimistic view of the future of Europe in the comparison of value dimensions.

We should note that the wording used in the question is Europe, not the European Union. As we can see in Diagram 1, a majority of the young people strongly consider Europe to be

DIAGRAM 11. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF EUROPE. (%)



specifically the European Union. Those who think this way are more optimistic than average about the future of Europe. The future of Europe is seen as bright especially by those who consider Europe to be a community of values. Overall, optimism is linked to a positive attitude to the European Union, how close the union is and the benefits to Finland.

Uncertainty and insecurity

Thirteen questions (Diagram 12) were used to explore young people’s experiences of uncertainty or insecurity. There is previous information on four of them, which makes a temporal comparison possible (Diagram 13). The topics examined were societal or global by nature. Youth Barometers also monitor more individual causes of uncertainty, such as the state of health, studies and loneliness. However, in the past few years, concerns of different scales have been asked about in alternate years, as the comparison that follows almost inevitably when such different causes for uncertainty are presented side by side is not very sensible. The presentation of the fairly different types

of threats side by side in Diagram 12 can also be questioned, but discussing them together is supported by the fact that, however big or small, real or unreal their causes, they are still feelings of insecurity felt by the persons themselves. Almost all of the reasons for insecurity presented here have a significant positive correlation.

Diagram 12 shows that many young people feel insecure about global threats: climate change (at least quite a lot 67%), international terrorism (49%), the global political situation (42%) and weapons of mass destruction (40%). The trend information in Diagram 13 shows that the uncertainty related to these themes of a global scale has increased sharply in the minds of young people over ten years.

In the questions that can be interpreted to primarily concern society in Finland, young people feel a fairly high level of uncertainty because of the social exclusion of young people (60%), racist violence (46%), the future of the welfare services (45%) and increasing inequality among Finns (41%). The insecurity felt by young people in relation to the increase in the number of immigrants (26%), the possibility of a military

DIAGRAM 12. “HOW UNCERTAIN OR INSECURE DO YOU FEEL BECAUSE OF THE FOLLOWING MATTERS?” (%)

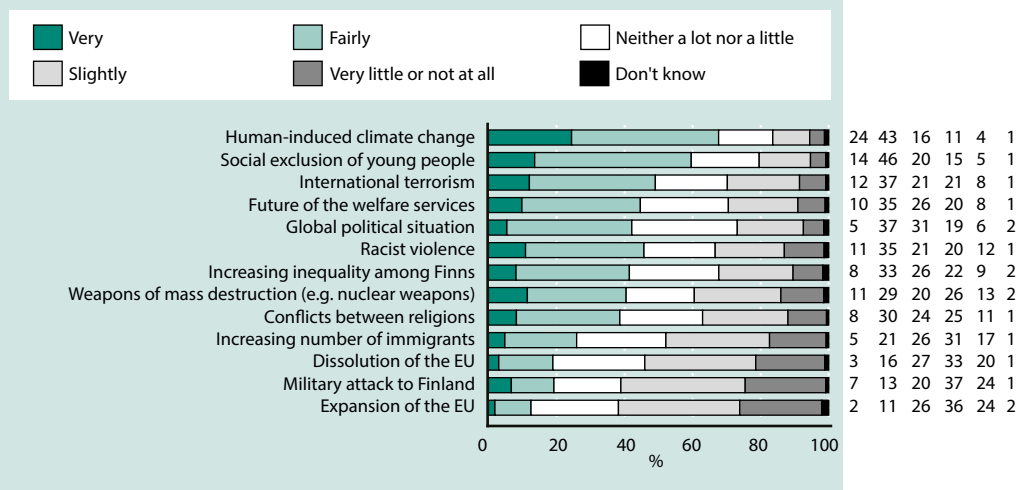
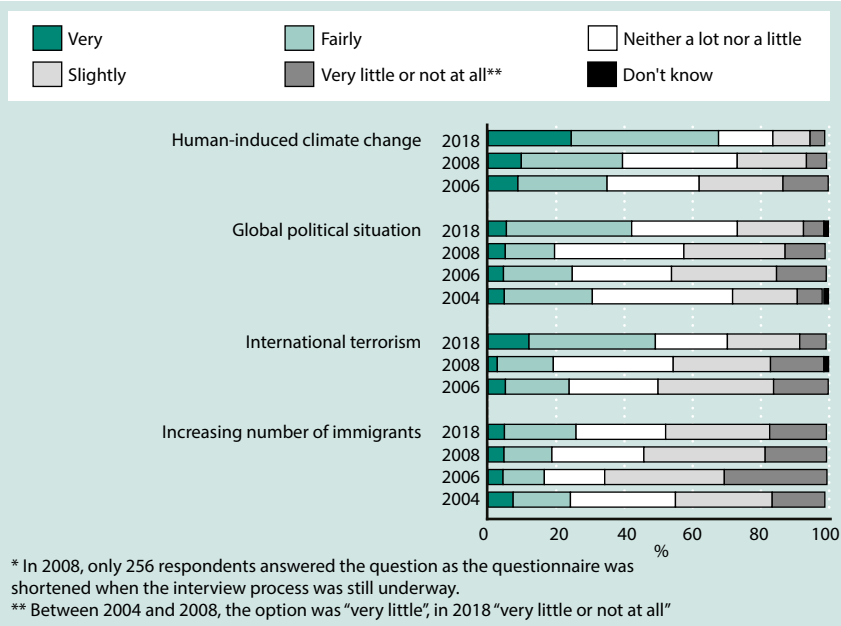


DIAGRAM 13. “HOW UNCERTAIN OR INSECURE DO YOU FEEL BECAUSE OF THE FOLLOWING MATTERS?” COMPARISON BETWEEN 2004, 2006, 2008* AND 2018 (%)



attack targeted at Finland (20%), the possibility of the dissolution of the EU (19%) and the expansion of the EU (13%) is slightly rarer. Even in relation to these themes, the large majority's sense of security is not on a firm basis. It is worth noting that fewer than one in four young people are not worried about the possibility of a military attack to Finland and one in five feel quite a lot of insecurity related to it. Youth Barometers do not as yet show this uncertainty as a trend, but the concern expressed by so many young people about the possibility of a military attack, especially when combined with the insecurity related to the current global political situation in Diagram 13, tells us something about the spirit of the times. An increasing number of people consider it important to prepare for the threat of an armed attack also according to the opinion polls carried out by the Advisory Board for Defence Information (MTS 2017, 69).

The majority of the respondents feel insecurity due to the social exclusion of young

people. Finnish society as a whole seems to be fairly worried about the social exclusion of young people. It is therefore interesting that when the issue was last investigated, only a few per cent of the young people interviewed were even slightly concerned about their own social exclusion (Myllyniemi 2014). This is explained by the strong trust of young people in their own ability to cope, which can be seen, for example, in their positive view of their own future, a significantly gloomier view of the future of Finland and a considerably pessimistic view of the future of the world (Diagram 10). Another explanation for why concerns about one's own social exclusion are not visible in the interviews is related to the concept of social exclusion and its vagueness. When examining young people who were not working or in education, it was observed that one half of them found their own level of social exclusion low or did not think they were socially excluded at all, and even the proportion of

those who found their level of social exclusion fairly high was only one in six. However, these young people with the so-called NEET status would be considered socially excluded in many statistical studies on social exclusion, as the definition of the concept is usually based on not having paid employment and not studying

(see Myrskylä 2012). When young people with the NEET status are asked about the reasons for their social exclusion, the main factor that emerges is a lack of friends, while not having paid employment and not studying is less central to their understanding of social exclusion. (Gretschel & Myllyniemi 2017, 32–33.)



ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENTING THE YOUTH BAROMETER

The State Youth Council

The State Youth Council is an expert body on youth work and youth policy appointed by the Government, with invited members representing broad experience in the living conditions of children and young people

According to the Youth Act, the Council's responsibility is to:

- address issues of fundamental and far-reaching importance to young people and assess the impact of the measures taken by central government on the young people and the services and activities intended for them
- introduce initiatives and proposals to develop youth policy;
- generate up-to-date data on young people and their living conditions;
- issue a statement to the Ministry of Education and Culture on the issues to be addressed in the national youth work and policy programme;
- monitor international developments and cooperation in this field. The Council may include sub-committees responsible for the preparation of the issues to be addressed.

The State Youth Council functions as an expert in issues relating to the growing and living conditions of young people. The State Youth Council gives opinions and prepares action plans with the aim to raise issues concerning young people on the agenda in public discussion.

The Finnish Youth Research Society

The Finnish Youth Research Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1988, for the purpose of promoting multidisciplinary youth research in Finland. The goal of the Youth Research Society is to develop youth research and to provide information and expertise on matters relating to young people – studies, perspectives, interpretations and political stands.



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INFLUENCE ON THE EDGE OF EUROPE

Youth Barometer studies the values, well-being and everyday life of young people aged 15–29 who live in Finland. It has been carried out annually since 1994.

The Youth Barometer 2018 is on the theme of politics and influence in Europe. According to the results, the young people have chiefly participated by voting, with purchase decisions and by discussing political issues. 66 per cent of the young people feel that membership of the European Union has been of benefit to Finland. The share is now at its highest level in the history of the Youth Barometer.

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