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# Foreword



Elena Pisonero

*Coordinator of the study and of the H-Advisors Advisory Board*

This first report was born out of a sense of unease. The unease of those of us who have long observed the widening gap between the speed at which the world is changing and the slowness with which the public agenda responds. Between what concerns people and what occupies decision-makers. Between the real complexity of everyday life and the oversimplified responses it too often receives.

That unease was the starting point. From it came the brief: to develop a rigorous tool for social observation, to be shared every six months, helping those in positions of leadership – in politics, business and institutions – better read the environment in which they operate. Not to take comfort in the data, but to act with greater insight and purpose.

The result is set out in the pages that follow. And it confirms, with robust empirical evidence, something many of us had already sensed, but can now substantiate: uncertainty is no longer a passing crisis, but the structural condition of our time. This is not fear in the face of a specific threat. It is something more difficult to manage: active disorientation. The public has not disengaged from the world – the future matters to them, it keeps them engaged – but they lack the frameworks needed to interpret it and find their bearings.

The report develops this across five interrelated dimensions, each with its own internal logic. The world is perceived as more unstable and insecure than a decade ago, with multiple risks operating simultaneously, none of which provides a clear organising frame. Spain is progressing on key indicators, yet that progress is not translating into a felt sense of well-being, fuelling deep political disaffection and a growing perception that the country is moving in the wrong direction. Society is fragmenting across several lines at once – political, identity-based, territorial and generational – and is losing the shared frameworks of belonging that once held the collective project together. At the individual level, economic pressure is concentrated on basic, unavoidable expenses, while the link between effort and progress is eroding, particularly among younger people. The result is a pull-back in behaviour: greater caution, a preference for what is trusted, and a focus on what feels close and dependable.

Five dimensions. One underlying conclusion: when the environment becomes persistently uncertain, what people need most is orientation. Not artificial certainties. Not simplifications that reassure in the short term, but disorient in the long term. Orientation: the ability of a leader, an institution or an organisation to demonstrate that they understand what is happening, that it matters to them, and that they act accordingly.

This makes the study more than a diagnosis of public opinion. It is a direct call to those who lead. To political leaders, who urgently need to reconnect with people's real concerns – the cost of living, housing, the sense that effort no longer guarantees progress – rather than filling the agenda with debates that the public feel are given too much prominence. To business leaders, who in a context of structural uncertainty have the opportunity – and the responsibility – to provide stability and trust, and to show that the common good is not a slogan but a real guiding principle. To all those who shape the public agenda, who cannot afford to continue operating with 20th century maps in 21st century terrain.

The Advisory Board of H-Advisors / Acento was established precisely to serve this purpose: to observe society closely, to interpret its changes with real insight, and to offer perspective to those making decisions that affect people's lives. This report is a tangible expression of that commitment. A public service tool, in the most literal sense: placed at the service of those who seek to govern, lead or advise with a better understanding of reality.

What this study shows is that Spanish society has not given up. It is disoriented. And that, properly understood, is an opportunity. Because disorientation calls for orientation. And in complex times, orientation is the most demanding – and most necessary – form of leadership.



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## Executive summary

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### 01 Uncertainty has become the defining feature in how the global context is perceived

Looking ahead to the next five years, negative sentiment predominates among the public, with uncertainty clearly outweighing fear. That pessimism extends to the present: 81.8% of the public consider the world unstable, and 72.9% more insecure than a decade ago.

When asked about the main global risks, armed conflict (56.2%), economic or inflationary crises (49.7%) and climate change (41.1%) emerge as the most prominent. Together, they point to a scenario in which multiple risks operate simultaneously, reinforcing a sense of complexity.

Expectations for the future are similarly pessimistic: greater power for large technology companies (70.9%), increased international fragmentation (62.6%) and possible democratic backsliding (58%). In this context, even a third world war is seen as a plausible risk. Against this backdrop, the energy transition (48.2%) emerges as the main source of optimism.

56.8% believe the situation has worsened compared with their parents' generation, although this perception varies by profile: younger people with greater economic stability and higher use of artificial intelligence show higher levels of optimism, while pessimism is concentrated among more vulnerable groups.

Artificial intelligence is emerging as a key driver of transformation, with uneven uptake (56.8% use it compared with 25.5% who do not), concentrated among men, younger people and higher socio-economic groups. It is also changing how people access information (44.6% use it for that purpose), while concerns about its impact on employment remain high (46.9%).



## Executive summary

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### 02 Objective progress in the country sits alongside a critical public perception

Spain's trajectory over the past decade is viewed largely in negative terms. A sense of decline predominates: 60.4% see the country as less safe, 54.9% as less prosperous, and only 28.9% believe inequality has fallen.

This pattern is reflected in specific areas: assessments are predominantly negative in relation to trust in institutions (54.3%), living standards (50.1%) and social cohesion (44.3%). At the same time, there are positive perceptions in areas such as innovation and technology (57.8%) and gender equality (50.6%).

The cost of living (53.8%) is the main concern, followed by housing (42.9%), which has become more prominent in recent years. Healthcare and corruption are mentioned at a much lower level. There is also a mismatch between public priorities and public debate: housing is seen as the most under-addressed issue, while politics is seen as the most overemphasised.

Political disaffection is high: 65% say Spanish democracy does not represent them, and over half believe the country is moving in the wrong direction (34.1% think otherwise). This perception is shaped by political alignment: optimism is more common among those on the left, while pessimism predominates among those closer to the right.



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## Executive summary

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### 03 Society is retreating into the individual as the collective weakens

Seven out of ten perceive more individualism than a decade ago. At the same time, 43.9% feel lonely or have few social connections, while 43.4% report a greater search for meaning or spirituality. In addition, 52.2% say they have lost interest in public issues.

Around 67% believe society is now more fragmented and that the elements of common identity are weakening. This perception is widespread: only 3.2% do not see any divisions. Politics is seen as the main line of division (48.8%), followed by the divide between immigrant and native populations (28.6%), ahead even of class inequality (23.6%), pointing to a shift from economic divides towards tensions linked to identity and social coexistence.

In this context, Spain oscillates between social progress and cultural backlash. On issues such as feminism, LGBTI rights and immigration, society appears divided, with positions aligned along generational, economic and ideological lines. These tensions coexist with apparently contradictory views: 72.3% believe there is too much focus on identity and too little on economic issues, while 68.0% perceive growing hostility towards minorities, reflecting a more strained social climate.

All of this makes it harder to build a shared project: 62% say it is more difficult today than a decade ago. The erosion of shared reference points and the accumulation of divisions weaken frameworks of belonging. The challenge is to build cohesion from diversity.



## Executive summary

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### 04 Prosperity is not translating into a sense of security or personal progress

Spain is more prosperous today, but also more insecure: close to half of the population perceive financial instability, and 51.6% say they are unable to save. The main economic pressures are concentrated in basic expenses: food (39.5%), energy (39.4%) and housing (36.6%).

The idea of a middle-class lifestyle is moving further out of reach: 71.5% believe it is beyond most people, and 66.7% think it is harder to achieve than it was ten years ago, particularly among baby boomers. At the individual level, the picture is more nuanced: 17.0% say they have achieved this standard of living, 49.2% believe they could, and 33.8% see it as out of reach, revealing a gap between overall perception and personal experience.

A sense of stagnation is spreading: more than half feel they are not progressing in life. Views on what drives that progress are split between personal effort (30.2%), external factors (31.1%) and a combination of both (35.7%), in a context where 42% feel they have lost control over their lives.

The link between effort and progress is weakening: work is seen as only slightly more important than wealth (28.7% versus 26.5%), with a clear generational divide. Younger people are the only group who believe that getting ahead depends more on income from wealth – largely linked to inheritance – than on work. A deeper shift is taking shape: a generation that, while still valuing effort, no longer sees it as a sufficient guarantee of progress.



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## Executive summary

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### **05 Global uncertainty is driving a more cautious consumer who prioritises security and pays attention to the nationality of brands**

The economic impact of the war in Iran is clearly being felt: 75.6% expect negative effects on their own finances. Faced with this global uncertainty, Spanish society is adopting a more cautious stance: 59% say they are acting more carefully in their decisions. This is particularly the case among working-age groups, while younger and older people show a lower tendency towards self-protection.

This caution translates into specific behaviour: 85.1% avoid taking on debt, 75.3% cut back on non-essential spending, and 78.4% seek information before making purchases. Instability also influences brand choice: 54.4% take origin into account, and 74.9% prefer national options. At the same time, the perception of an unpredictable environment is driving the search for solid reference points: 83.7% prioritise brands that convey stability and trust.

In parallel, artificial intelligence is changing how people buy and access services: 32% say they use it, especially younger people, to make purchases or arrange services. Overall, a new consumer profile is emerging: more cautious, more informed and more sensitive to the global context, with uncertainty no longer an external factor but part of everyday decisions.



## About the study

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### SCOPE

National, excluding Ceuta and Melilla

### UNIVERSE

Residents aged 18 and over

### SAMPLING METHOD

Stratified with proportional allocation.  
Online questionnaire (CAWI)

### SAMPLE SIZE

2000 interviews

### QUOTAS

Sex, age, autonomous community, size of municipality, social class and country of birth

### MARGIN OF ERROR

±2.2% (95% confidence level)

### DATES OF THE STUDY

From 11/03/2026 to 13/03/2026

The survey analyses changes in the context of individuals and Spanish society using a comprehensive, continuous, 360-degree approach. The questionnaire covers, on the one hand, the profile of individuals in their sociodemographic, cultural and financial dimensions and, on the other, the social environment in which they operate, including global risks, the national context and dynamics of fragmentation.

Report prepared by:

**4OdB.**



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# Global Tension



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## Introduction

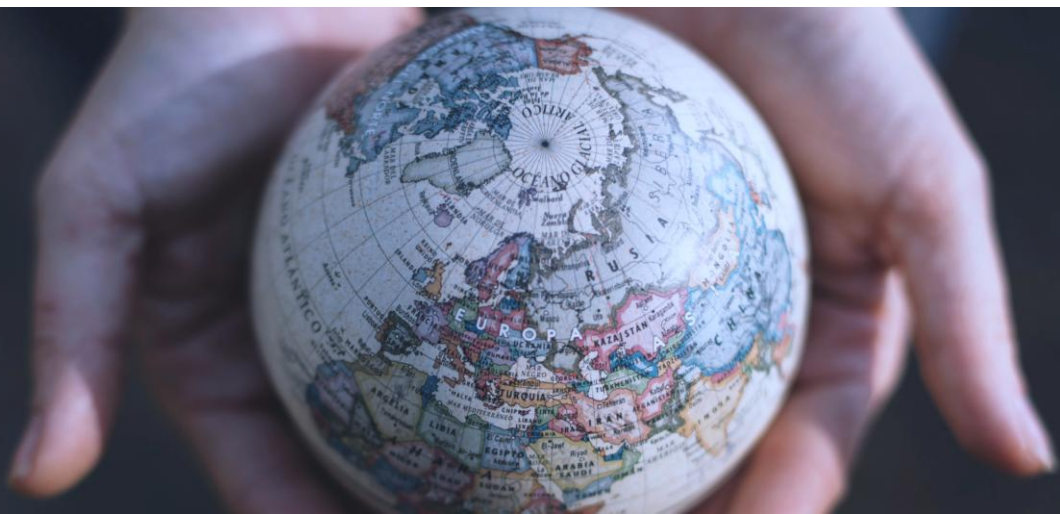
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The current international context is marked by increasing geopolitical volatility and a reconfiguration of the global order. Recent years have seen an escalation of conflicts across multiple regions, including the war in Iran, the ongoing war in Ukraine and rising tensions between major powers. These developments have eroded established security balances, while multilateral mechanisms for resolving conflicts have weakened.

At the same time, the global economy continues to show signs of fragility, with slower growth, persistent inflationary pressures and ongoing strain in supply chains, compounded by trade fragmentation and the spread of protectionist policies. These trends coincide with far-reaching technological change, particularly advances in artificial intelligence, which are reshaping labour markets, production systems and the balance of power between public and private actors.

They are further compounded by the climate crisis and the growing frequency of extreme weather events, which add another layer of pressure, with uneven impacts across regions and increasing geopolitical consequences, from competition over resources to population displacement. Alongside these developments, other sources of instability, including rising migration flows, political polarisation and the spread of disinformation, are contributing to an increasingly tense environment.

Taken together, these overlapping geopolitical, economic, technological and environmental forces are creating a more complex, interdependent and less predictable international landscape, with direct implications for how society interprets the world.



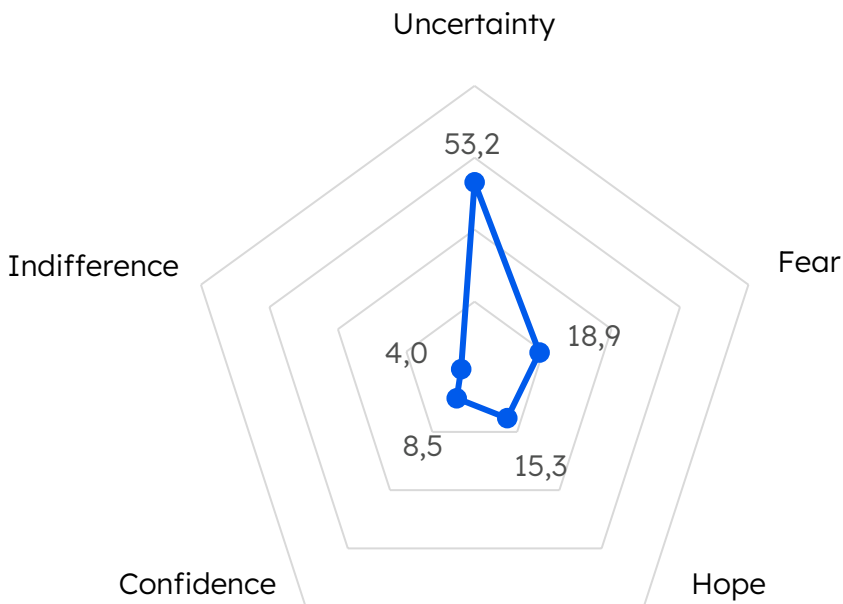
## A world perceived as uncertain, unstable and insecure

This context fundamentally shapes how people see both the present and the future. It is not only what is happening that matters, but the growing difficulty of interpreting it and anticipating its consequences.

When people think about the next five years, **negative emotions clearly dominate**. Uncertainty (53.2%) and fear (18.9%) account for 72.1% of responses, compared with 23.8% for hope (15.3%) and confidence (8.5%). Indifference is very low (4.0%): the future matters and has a mobilising effect. There is no disengagement. People clearly feel involved, but lack the frameworks to find their bearings.

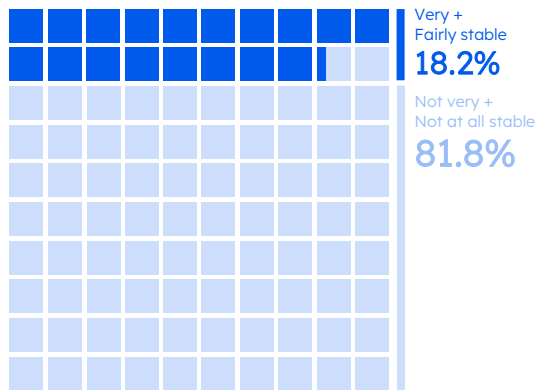
But there is also a decisive feature in this pattern: fear is not the dominant emotion; uncertainty is. What prevails is difficulty in anticipating and understanding what lies ahead: change is perceived, but shared reference points to make sense of it are lacking. More than fear or pessimism, what emerges is a state of active disorientation.

*When you think about the global future five years from now, which feeling predominates?*

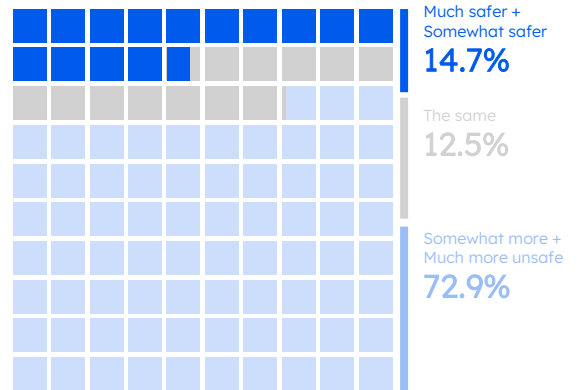


This emotional tone is clearly reflected in how the present is perceived: more than eight in ten people (81.8%) describe the world today as unstable. This view is accompanied by a clear sense of deterioration over time. 72.9% believe the world is less safe today than ten years ago, compared with 14.7% who think it is safer. This points not only to a widespread perception, but also to a clear direction: safety is seen to be declining. Rather than a temporary deterioration, what is taking hold is the sense that the global environment has been losing stability over time.

*In general, how would you describe the world today?*



*Compared with ten years ago, the world today is...*



## A risk landscape without a clear centre

The sources of this unease lie in a combination of risks that bring together both traditional threats and more recent challenges. Armed conflicts clearly top the list (56.2%), followed by economic or inflationary crises (49.7%) and climate change together with natural disasters (41.1%). These risks differ significantly in nature – geopolitical, economic and environmental – reinforcing the sense of a complex environment shaped by multiple fronts of uncertainty.

*From the following possible global risks, select the three that concern you most:*



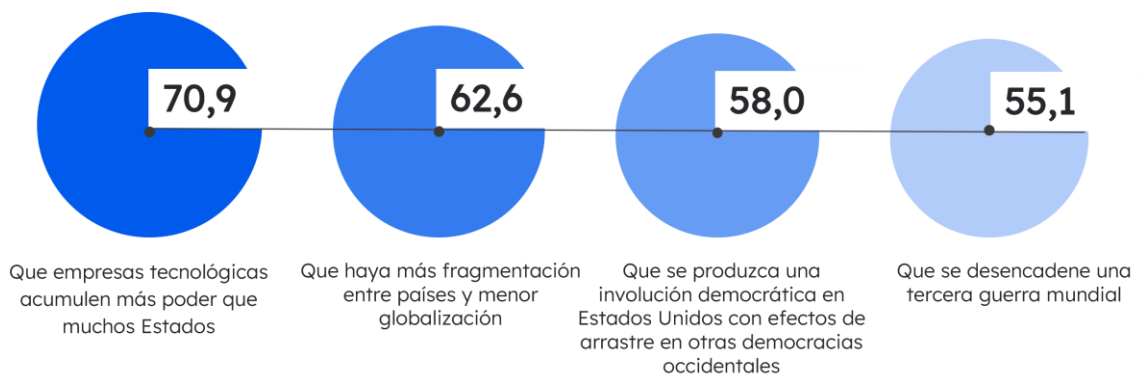
By contrast, other risks with high media visibility, such as migration flows (20.2%) and artificial intelligence (14.2%), generate lower levels of agreement. Rather than being seen as less important, this points to a process of prioritisation: in a context of multiple threats, some risks are pushed aside by others seen as more immediate or structural.

Overall, the risk landscape does not point to a single dominant threat, but to an overlap of factors operating at the same time. Uncertainty remains the dominant emotion, not because there is no single risk to organise perception, but because multiple risks overlap.

## Between global regression and rising technological power

Looking ahead to the next five years, expectations revolve around an implicit question – what might happen – and tend to lean towards pessimistic scenarios, though not without some grounds for optimism. The most likely scenarios are those pointing to a deterioration in the global order: the growing power of large technology companies relative to states (70.9%), greater fragmentation between countries and a retreat from globalisation (62.6%), and possible democratic backsliding in the United States with knock-on effects in other Western democracies (58%). More than half of the population (55.1%) also consider the outbreak of a third world war likely – 8.1 percentage points higher than a year ago – highlighting how far expectations extend to worst-case scenarios.

*How likely do you think the following situations are over the next five years?  
(% “Very likely” + “Fairly likely”)*



Beyond each specific fact, these scenarios are not seen as isolated events, but as interconnected dynamics that reinforce the idea of a global shift: a weakening of the state in relation to private actors, fragmentation of the international system and erosion of democratic reference points. Expectations about the future take the form not of a one-off crisis, but of a structural transformation perceived as regressive.

However, when assessing the likelihood of positive scenarios over the next five years, this climate of uncertainty translates into a clear predominance of negative expectations across most of the areas analysed. The greatest scepticism centres on global financial stability: only 23.4% think financial crises are likely to become significantly less frequent, reflecting low confidence in the system’s ability to become more stable in the coming years. The impact of artificial intelligence on employment also raises doubts: only 32.4% believe it will create more jobs than it destroys.

At a more intermediate level, though with less pronounced pessimism, is the overall view of the direction of the world: 42.6% think it is likely to move forward more than it moves backwards, pointing to a mixed outlook.

Against this broader pattern of caution and scepticism, the energy transition is the only area where optimism carries clearly significant weight. 48.2% of the population think a decisive acceleration in this area is likely, making it the main source of positive expectations.

***How likely do you think the following situations are over the next five years?  
(% “Very likely” + “Fairly likely”)***

		Don't know (%)
A decisive acceleration in the energy transition	48.2	11.9
The world moving forward more than it moves backwards	42.6	8.5
Artificial intelligence creating more jobs than it destroys	32.4	9.7
A significant reduction in the risk of global financial crises	23.4	7.7

## Two ways of experiencing global tension

Finally, the comparison between the current world and that of people’s parents’ generation captures much of how the present and the future are perceived: 56.8% believe the situation has worsened, compared with 28.7% who think it has improved. Although a negative view predominates, perceptions are not evenly spread; instead, they point to two clearly differentiated profiles in how people respond to global change.

On the one hand, the most optimistic profile is associated with younger people – particularly those in Generation Z (aged 18 to 28) –, with a stronger economic position, especially those able to save, and who use artificial intelligence, a practice already widespread among more than half of the population, either regularly or occasionally (56.8%). Overall, this group tends to interpret change as an opportunity for adaptation and progress rather than as a threat.

On the other hand, the most pessimistic profile is concentrated among older people – especially baby boomers (over 60) –, in more economically vulnerable situations, such as those in debt or struggling to make ends meet, and who do not use artificial intelligence. In these cases, the global context is seen primarily as a source of uncertainty, loss of reference points and declining stability.

In this regard, the difference between optimists and pessimists therefore reflects not only material or generational conditions, but also different ways of responding to global change: while some adapt and project possibilities, others experience it as an erosion of certainty. The comparison with their parents’ generation therefore not only assesses the past, but also reveals the position from which the future is imagined.

*Compared with your parents’ generation, would you say that the world today is...? (% “Much worse” + “Somewhat worse”)*

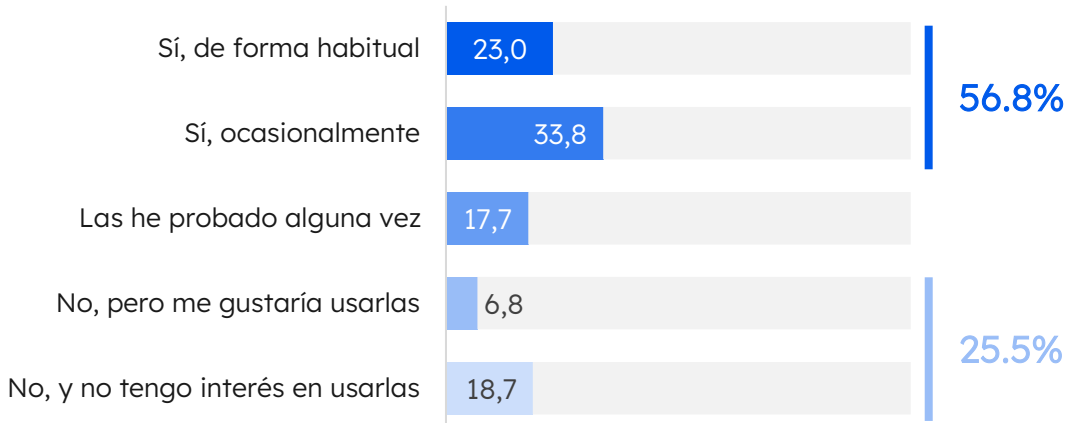
General population	Generation				Economic situation			Use of AI		
	Gen. Z	Millennials	Gen. X	>Baby Boomers	Able to save	Just about managing	Using up savings	Yes	At some point	No
56.8%	47.1	58.7	57.9	59.1	48.3	62.4	70.2	54.9	57.4	60.6

## Technology, inequality and new uncertainties

In this context of structural uncertainty, technology – and artificial intelligence in particular – does not act only as a tool, but also as a new factor reshaping risks and inequalities.

Use of AI tools remains uneven across Spanish society: 23% use them regularly, 33.8% use them occasionally and 17.7% have tried them at some point. At the other end of the scale, 6.8% have never used them but would like to, while 18.7% have neither used them nor shown any interest in doing so.

### *Do you use artificial intelligence tools in your everyday life?*



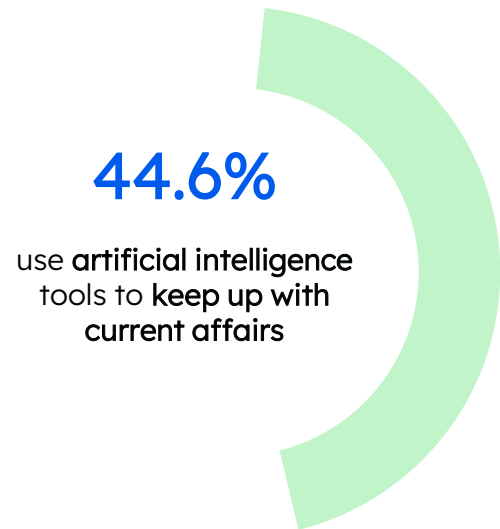
The profile of the heavy AI user has fairly clearly defined characteristics: male, young, university educated and from the upper-middle and upper classes. By contrast, variables such as nationality, family background and the size of the municipality of residence do not appear to have a significant influence on use of this tool.

The figures highlight a significant risk: the development and adoption of artificial intelligence could widen existing gaps, reinforcing social inequalities based on access, skills and use of these technologies, and creating a new form of inequality linked to technological capital.

Artificial intelligence is also transforming media consumption, changing not only the channels through which the public accesses information, but also the way people search for, select and interpret current affairs. 44.6% of the population say they use it a lot or quite a lot to keep informed.



*In the current global context, to what extent do...? (% “A lot” + “Quite a lot”)*



This change amounts to a reconfiguration of the information ecosystem, in which traditional mediation is losing ground to tools capable of synthesising, ranking and personalising content. This creates an increasingly direct relationship between the individual and information, without the usual filters of traditional media, with direct – and likely growing – implications for how public opinion is formed.

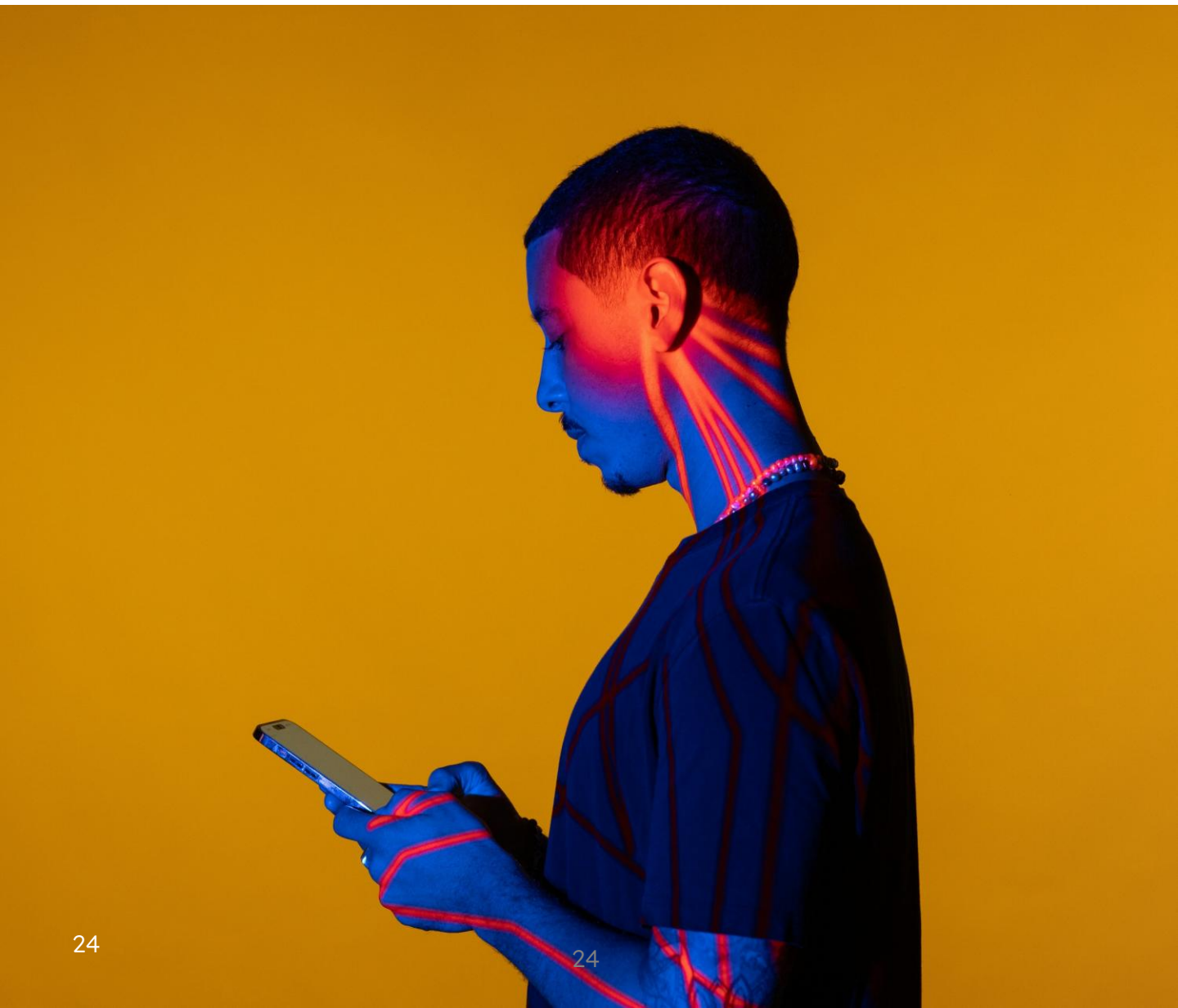
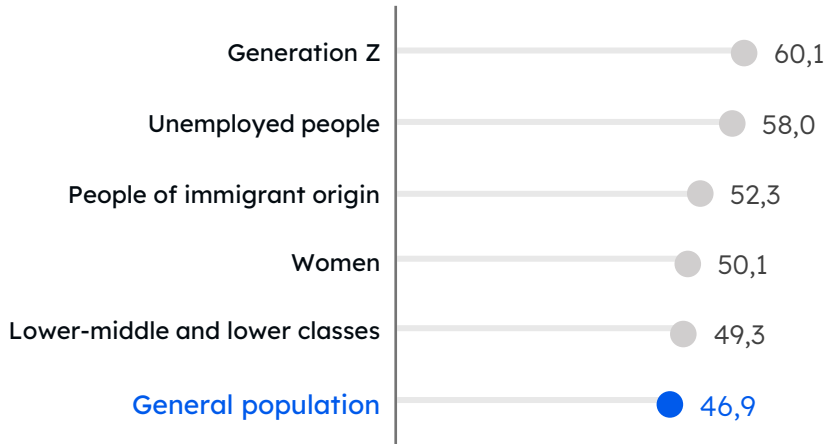
One of the most frequently cited risks in relation to the impact of artificial intelligence is the possible replacement of jobs: 46.9% say they are concerned about its impact on employment, compared with 53.1% who are not. Society, therefore, is divided.

Concern that AI could replace jobs is more widespread among women, the lower-middle and lower classes, unemployed people and people of immigrant origin. Generation Z (aged 18 to 28) stands out as the most concerned group, reflecting the greater uncertainty among those still building their life and career paths.

What emerges is not so much an accumulation of threats as a transformation in the framework through which the world is interpreted: an environment in which uncertainty is no longer exceptional but structural, and in which societies must learn to find their bearings without clear points of reference.

*In the current global context, to what extent...? (% "A lot" + "Quite a lot")*

Are you worried that artificial intelligence could replace your job



# 02

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## Spain: economic progress and social discontent



## Introduction

In 2025, the Spanish economy grew by 2.8%, above the eurozone average, and the labour market continued to improve, with the unemployment rate falling below 10% for the first time in 17 years. However, these gains have not translated into an equivalent public assessment, and the prevailing view is that the country has worsened in key respects. Spain is making progress on some indicators, but not in public perception.



This perception is shaped above all by concerns closely linked to everyday experience. The cost of living, housing and healthcare account for much of the public's concern. This is compounded by growing disaffection with the political system, expressed in a sense of not being represented and in the widespread belief that the country is moving in the wrong direction. This discontent is not unique to Spain, but forms part of a broader trend across European democracies.

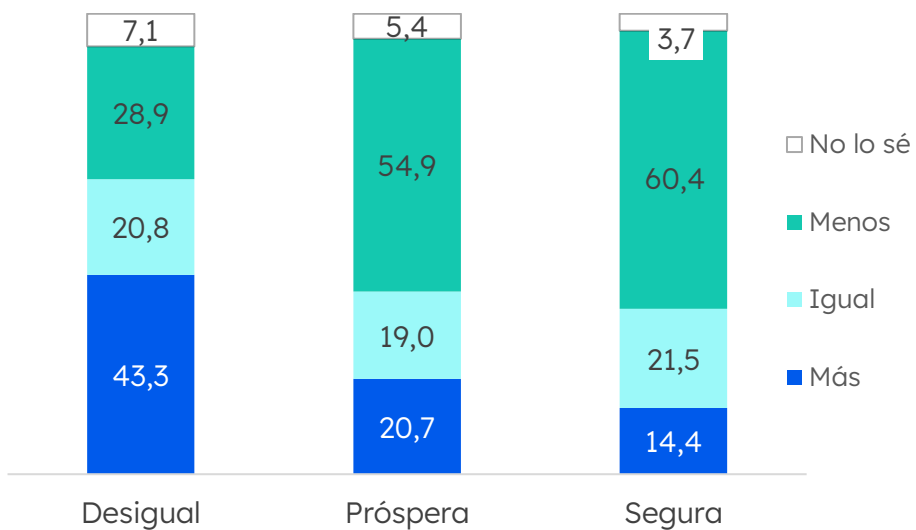
Overall, the prevailing perception is one of partial progress and a general sense of deterioration, shaping how the country's direction is viewed.

## A country between progress and reversals

Assessments of Spain’s development over the past ten years are largely critical. A large majority (60.4%) believe the country is less safe today than it was a decade ago. The economic reading is also negative: 54.9% believe Spain is less prosperous. With regard to inequality, only 28.9% believe it has fallen, compared with 43.3% who think it has increased.

At the other end of the scale, positive perceptions are clearly in the minority: 14.4% believe the country is safer today and 20.7% that it is more prosperous.

*Compared with ten years ago, would you say Spain today is...*

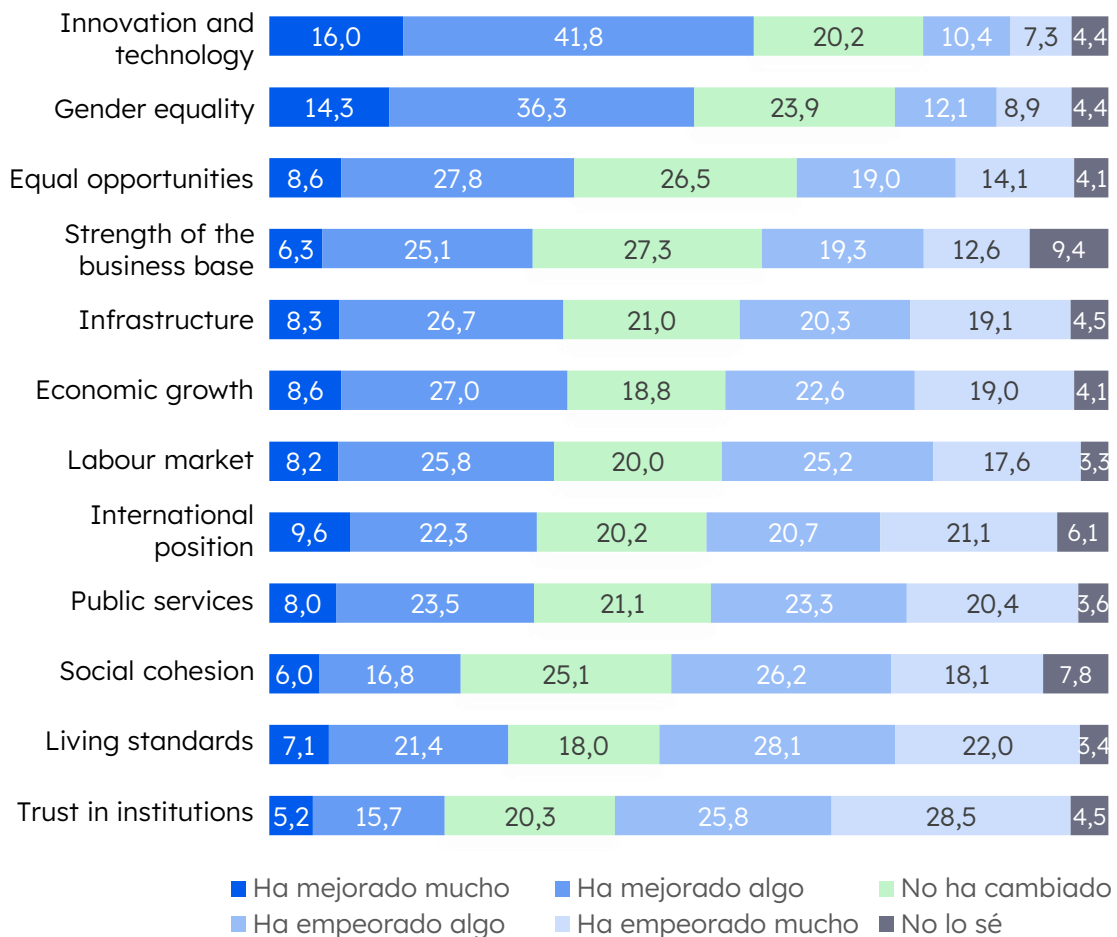


Overall, the view is taking hold that progress has been insufficient or, at any rate, uneven, and has not translated into clear, shared improvements in living conditions. This overall assessment is confirmed when looking at the detail: when people are asked about changes in specific areas of the country over the past decade, views remain clearly negative. Of the twelve areas analysed, only three are seen as having improved more than they have worsened. Perceived reversals are concentrated above all in areas such as trust in institutions (54.3% believe it has worsened), living standards (50.1%) and social cohesion (44.3%). Negative assessments are also recorded in areas such as public services, the labour market, economic growth and Spain’s international position.

However, the diagnosis is not wholly pessimistic. There are some areas where perceptions of improvement predominate, particularly those linked to modernisation and social change. This is the case for innovation and technology (57.8% believe it has improved) and gender equality (50.6%). Equality of opportunity, meanwhile, produces a more divided view, though slightly favourable: 36.4% believe it has improved, compared with 33.1% who believe it has worsened.

Overall, Spain is seen as a country making progress in areas linked to modernisation and rights, while at the same time failing to improve – or even worsening – in more basic areas that affect everyday life and trust in the system.

***In which areas do you think Spain has improved or worsened over the past ten years?***



## Public priorities and mismatches in the public agenda

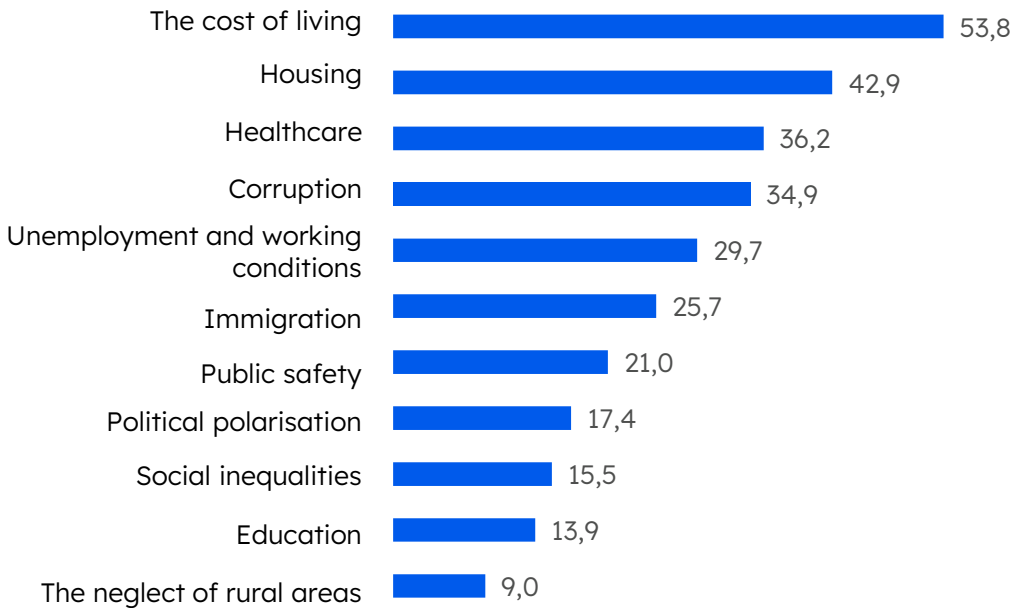
When people are asked to identify the country’s three main problems from a list of eleven issues, a very clear hierarchy emerges. Only one exceeds the 50% threshold for mentions: the cost of living (53.8%), which is by far the main concern.

Next comes housing (42.9%), an issue that has become more central in recent years in a context marked by increasingly expensive access, limited supply and difficulties in leaving home, particularly among young people.

At a second level are healthcare (36.2%) and corruption (34.9%), already some distance behind the first two. At the other end of the scale, issues such as the neglect of rural areas (9%) and education (13.9%) generate significantly lower levels of concern.

Overall, the landscape of concerns is clearly centred on everyday economic pressure and material security.

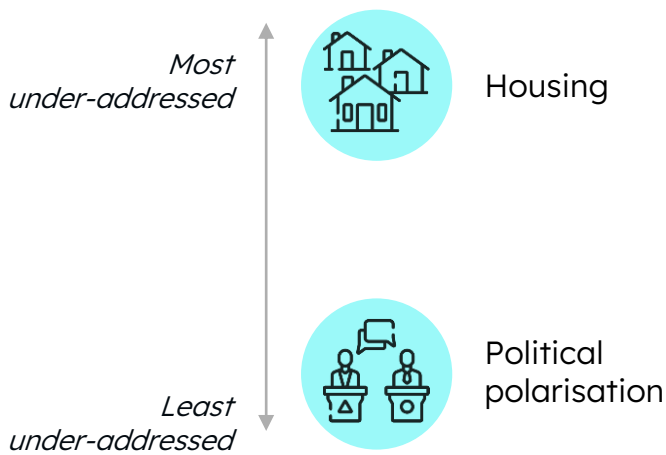
*From the following problems, select the three that concern you most:*



In this context, it is particularly revealing that, when asked which of these eleven issues receives too little attention in public debate, housing is clearly ranked first (16.5%), ahead even of the cost of living (12.5%) and corruption (11.9%). In other words, it is not only one of the issues that causes the greatest concern, but also the one where there is the strongest sense that insufficient attention is being paid.

At the other end of the scale, political polarisation appears as the most overemphasised problem.

*Of these problems, which do you think receives too little attention in public debate?*



This mismatch also suggests an inversion of priorities in public debate. The problems that most affect everyday life are not necessarily those given the most space, while others, such as political polarisation, gain visibility without being seen as equally urgent. Yet the role of politics is precisely to respond to the public's concerns.



## A democracy that fails to represent

In this context, it is unsurprising that disaffection with the political system is spreading: 65% say Spanish democracy does not represent them. This does not appear to be simply a rejection of specific political figures, but something deeper: a crisis in the relationship with the mechanisms of representation.

Disaffection with the democratic system is higher among those who struggle to make ends meet – or cannot make ends meet at all – as well as among right-wing voters, especially Vox voters. This suggests that assessments of the democratic system are also shaped by political positioning and by identification with the government of the day.

65%

believe the current  
democratic system  
does not represent  
them



This perception is further reinforced by international comparison: according to a study by the Pew Research Center, Spain ranks first – among the 24 countries analysed – in the perception that political representatives do not take ordinary people into account (85%). It also ranks second for the view that no party represents the public (60%), behind only Argentina (62%). Together, these two figures point to a clear diagnosis: a strong sense of disconnection between the public and its representatives, accompanied by weak identification with the existing political options. Spain therefore appears caught in a persistent crisis that neither the crisis of two-party politics nor the emergence of new parties has managed to resolve, and whose main consequence is growing democratic disaffection.

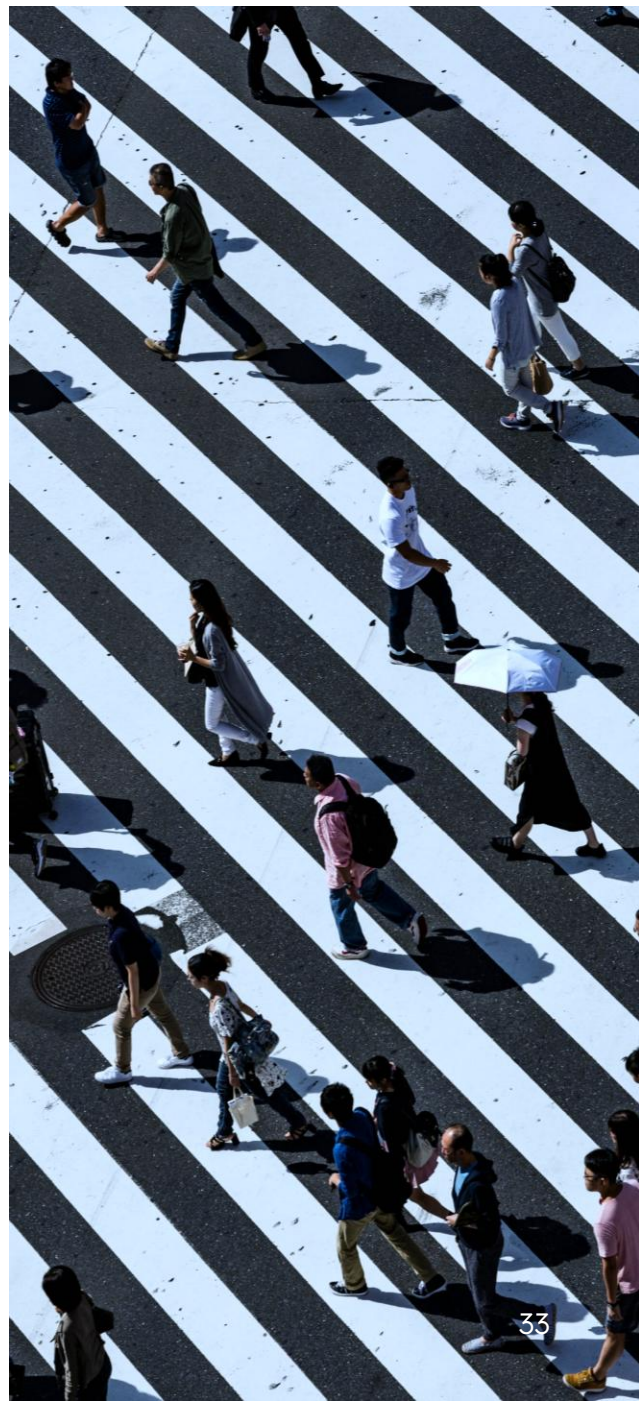
## The country's direction depends on who is looking

More than half of society (53%) believe Spain is moving in the wrong direction, compared with 34.1% who believe it is moving in the right direction and 8.5% who take an intermediate position. However, this discontent is not unique to Spain: across European democracies, there is also a widespread perception that countries are not moving in the right direction. Rather than a reaction to the present moment, this perception is shaped by accumulated experience over recent years, marked by doubt over whether negative trends can be reversed.

This view is not evenly spread, but divides society into clearly differentiated profiles. The most optimistic group is concentrated among young people – especially Generation Z men (aged 18 to 28) –, with a more comfortable economic situation – particularly those able to save – and regular use of artificial intelligence.

Beyond these characteristics, the factor that most clearly defines this position is once again party politics: supporters of parties such as PSOE and Sumar are those with the most positive view of the country's direction.

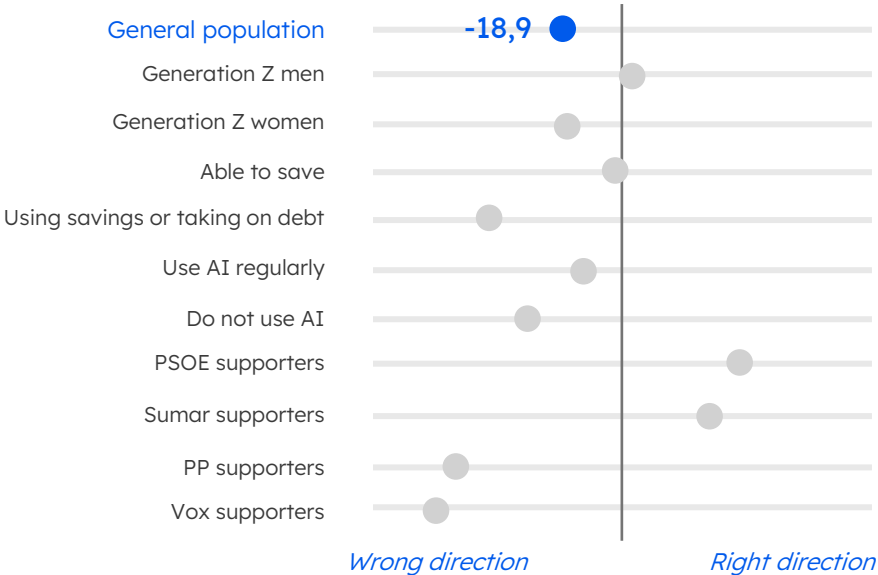
At the other end of the scale, the most pessimistic profile is concentrated among people in more economically vulnerable situations – such as those in debt or struggling to make ends meet – and who do not use artificial intelligence. However, the most decisive factor remains political: supporters of parties such as PP and Vox are those who express the most negative view of the country.





This suggests that assessments of Spain’s direction are shaped not only by material or generational conditions, but also – and to a large extent – by the political position from which reality is interpreted.

*Net perception of the direction in which Spain is moving*



03

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# A fragmented society



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## Introduction

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In recent decades, the value system has undergone a profound transformation, driven by the expansion of civil rights – in areas such as feminism and recognition of the LGBTI community – and the strengthening of individual freedoms. This change, which began in the final decades of the 20th century, has been intensified by a technological revolution – linked to digitalisation and the development of artificial intelligence – that is advancing rapidly amid persistent inequalities.

As a result, society is becoming more plural, more digital and also more complex: living arrangements and household types are diversifying, traditional shared frameworks are losing influence, and more individualistic patterns are taking hold. In this context, society appears increasingly atomised, with fragmentation taking precedence over the elements that hold it together and the individual gaining ground over the collective.

This evolution contains a central paradox: the same processes that have expanded individual freedom have also helped weaken the collective bonds that sustain social cohesion. The result is a society that is more autonomous and diverse, but also more fragmented and facing greater difficulty in building a shared project.

At the same time, society is increasingly marked by action and reaction: while some promote and defend the advance of identity-related debates, others believe they have become too prominent or gone too far, reflecting growing tensions around values, identity and social coexistence.

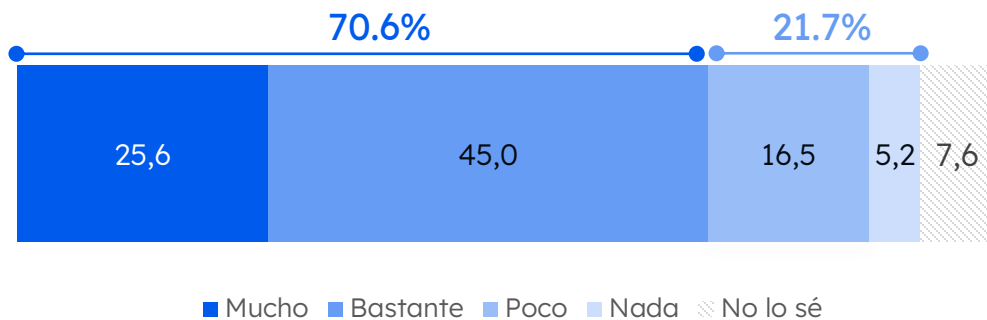


## Individual retreat and weakening of the collective

Seven in ten people believe Spanish society is more individualistic today than it was a decade ago. This figure reflects not only a widespread perception but also the consolidation of individualism as one of the defining features of the present, in a context of greater personal autonomy and expanded life choices.

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:*

Spanish society is more individualistic today than it was ten years ago



Increase in the search for meaning and a spiritual dimension in life

First, the figures suggest a turn towards a more individualised experience of life, marked by greater introspection and a weaker orientation towards the collective. 43.9% say they feel lonely or have little connection with others, while a very similar proportion (43.4%) report a greater need to find meaning or a spiritual dimension in their life. Both indicators reflect a shift towards the personal sphere as the main space for experience and searching.

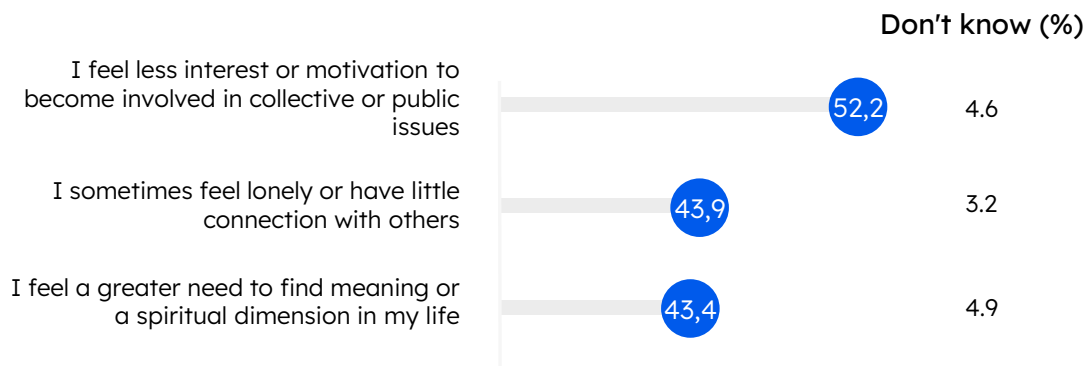
This trend is not evenly distributed, but is especially pronounced among young people, people of immigrant origin and groups in situations of economic vulnerability.

This retreat into the individual has direct effects on the collective. More than half of respondents (52.2%) acknowledge feeling less interest or motivation to become involved in public or collective issues, pointing to a weakening of civic commitment and social participation. This creates a feedback loop: as social bonds and the sense of belonging weaken, involvement in the shared sphere declines, which in turn deepens fragmentation and makes it harder to rebuild shared projects.

Taken together, these indicators point to a shift in the balance: as the individual gains centrality and autonomy, the collective loses its power of attraction. This is not a rupture, but a reconfiguration in which the individual is strengthened while the shared sphere weakens, creating new challenges for social cohesion.



*Thinking about your life in recent times, to what extent do you identify with the following situations? (% “A lot” + “Quite a lot”)*

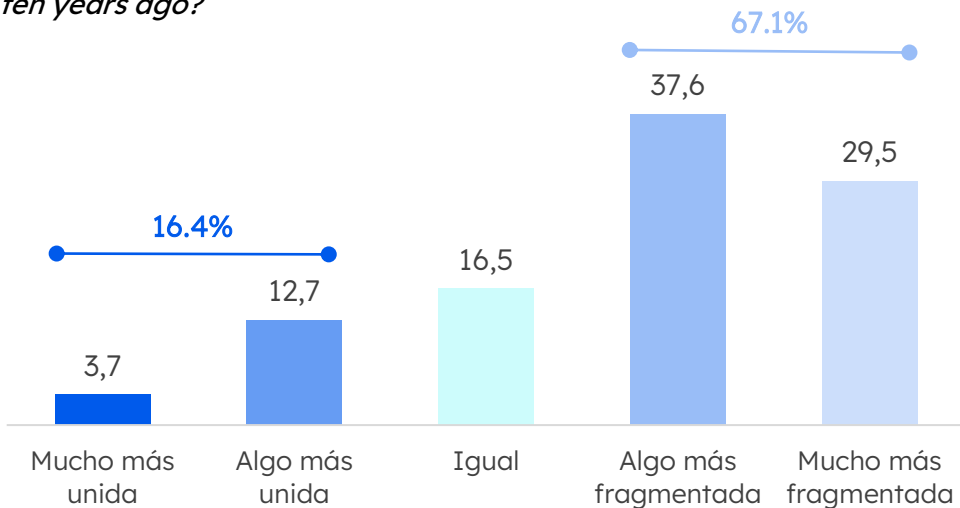


## A fragmented society

67.1% of the population believe Spanish society is more fragmented today than it was ten years ago, compared with 16.4% who believe it is more united and 16.5% who see no change. This is accompanied by another widely held view: 67.6% believe the public is losing the elements that once gave it a common identity. In other words, people perceive not only greater division, but also an erosion of the shared frameworks that helped sustain social cohesion.

This dual diagnosis – greater fragmentation and weaker common identity – reinforces the idea that this is not an isolated phenomenon, but a deeper transformation in the way individuals relate to one another and to society as a whole. In this context, fragmentation does not appear as an isolated phenomenon, but as the expression of a society in which common bonds are losing weight and in which it is increasingly difficult to build a shared “we”.

*Do you think Spanish society is more united or more fragmented today than it was ten years ago?*



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## New lines of division

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Only 3.2% of the public say they do not see significant tensions in any of the areas asked about, showing how widespread the sense of fracture has become.

Of the seven areas considered, politics clearly stands out as the main line of fragmentation: 48.8% perceive social divisions in this area. This perception connects directly with the strong sense of polarisation running through the country and points to a broader idea: politics tends to be seen more as a source of conflict than as a route to solutions.

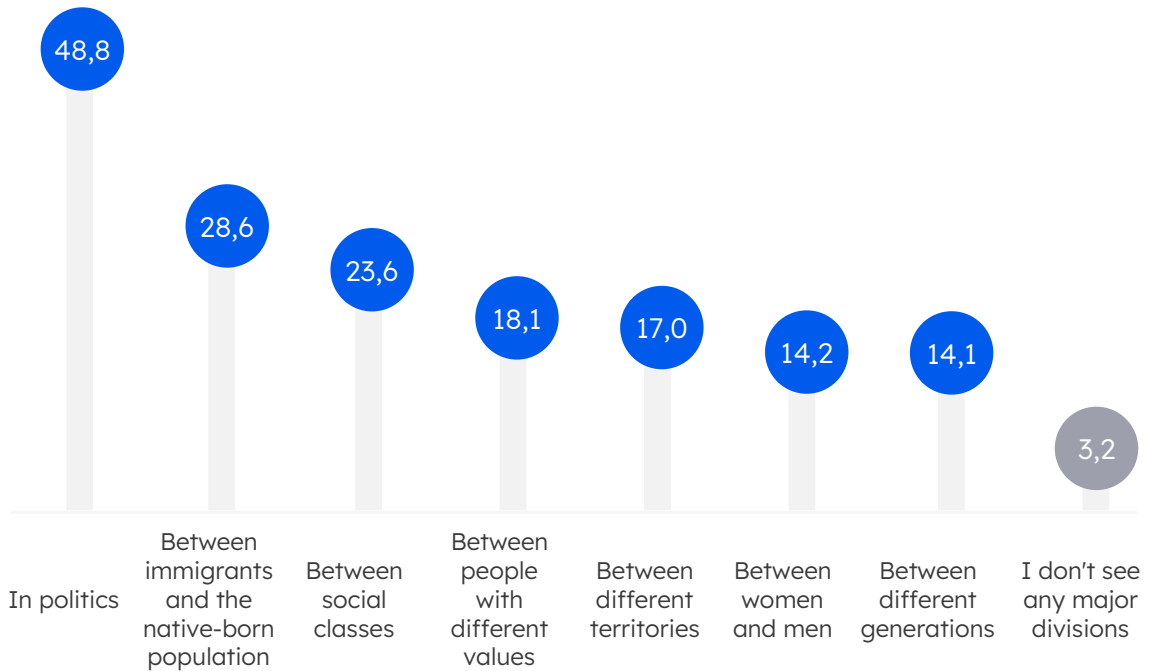
Next comes the division between the immigrant and native-born populations (28.6%) - in a context of sustained growth in the foreign-born population, which now exceeds ten million people and accounts for around 20% of the total - ranking even ahead of the traditional divide between social classes (23.6%). This is especially significant, as it points to a shift away from the classic line of social division and towards a society in the process of adapting to a new demographic reality.

The perceptions captured suggest that tensions linked to identity, belonging and social coexistence are gaining weight relative to traditional economic divisions. In areas such as immigration, both dimensions - cultural and identity-based on the one hand, and material or economic on the other - appear closely intertwined, creating a more complex area of conflict than traditional divides.



Alongside these main lines, other fault lines emerge that reinforce the idea of multidimensional fragmentation: differences in values (18.1%), territories (17.0%), gender (14.2%) and generations (14.1%). The accumulation of these divisions suggests that society is no longer structured around a single central conflict, but around multiple simultaneous tensions.

*In which areas do you perceive the greatest social division? You can select up to two options.*



## Between social progress and cultural backlash

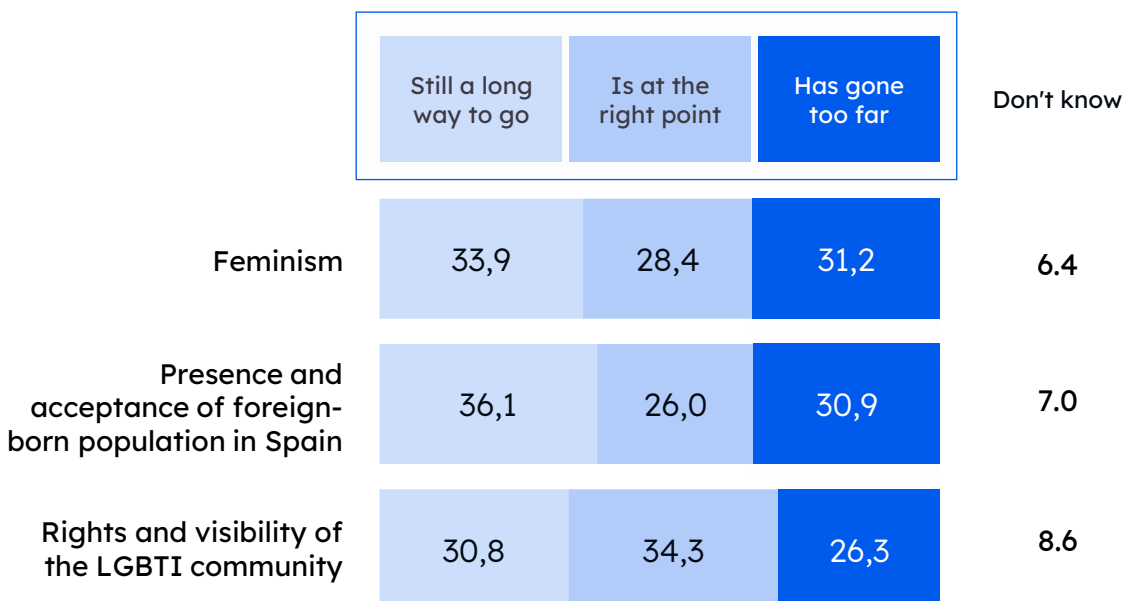
Although Spanish society has traditionally been at the forefront in its positions on feminism and the rights of the LGBTI community, a certain backlash is now emerging that should not be overlooked. Similarly, Spanish society’s favourable attitudes towards the immigrant population are showing signs of change.

When the public is asked whether Spain has gone too far in these areas, is at the right point or still has a long way to go, the picture that emerges is one of a clearly divided society.

On feminism, 31.2% believe Spain has gone too far, 28.4% believe it is at the right point and 33.9% think there is still much further to go. On the rights and visibility of the LGBTI community, the figures are similar: 26.3% believe Spain has gone too far, compared with 34.3% who believe it is at the right point and 30.8% who think there is still room for progress.

As regards the presence and acceptance of the foreign-born population, 30.9% believe Spain has gone too far, 26% believe it is at the right point and 36.1% think there is still some way to go.

*In your opinion, would you say that in the following areas, Spain has gone too far, is at the right point or still has a long way to go?*



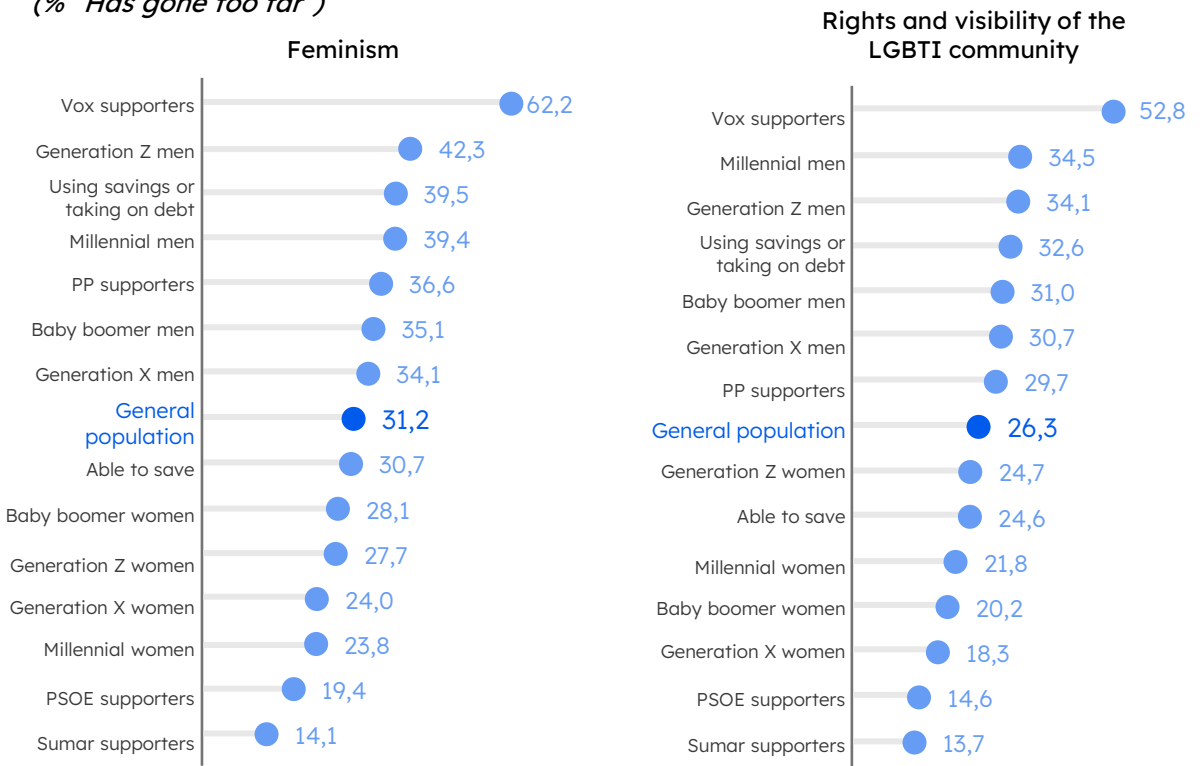
Those who believe Spain has gone too far in these areas have relatively clearly defined profiles. They are particularly likely to be men – especially younger men from Generation Z and the millennial generation –, people in more economically vulnerable situations (who are using their savings or taking on debt) and those who sympathise with right-wing parties, particularly Vox.

Among Vox supporters, moreover, this perception is expressed more strongly: it is here that the idea that certain forms of social progress have gone beyond a point of balance is most clearly consolidated, helping to explain both Vox’s growth in recent years and its ability to give voice to a reaction against cultural change.

At the other end of the scale, women – especially from the middle generations (millennials and Generation X) –, people with greater economic stability (particularly those able to save) and those closer to left-wing parties, especially Sumar, tend to believe that there is still some way to go or that the current situation is at the right point.

*In your opinion, would you say that in the following areas, Spain has gone too far, is at the right point or still has a long way to go?*

(% “Has gone too far”)



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Beyond specific positions in each area, there is also a growing critical view of the place these debates occupy in the public agenda. 72.3% of the population believe there is too much talk about identity issues and too little about real economic problems, reflecting a mismatch between the focus of public debate and the public’s everyday concerns.

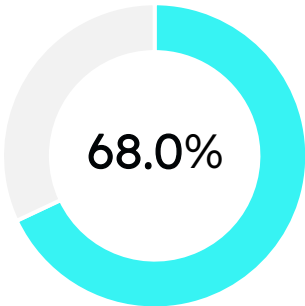
However, this perception coexists with another reality that introduces an apparent contradiction: 68.0% believe the social climate has become more hostile towards certain minorities.

This coexistence of perceptions – too much debate about identity and, at the same time, increased hostility – points to a certain tension in the way these issues are experienced socially. On the one hand, there is a sense of fatigue or saturation with their centrality in public debate; on the other, there is recognition that the conflicts running through them are real and have concrete effects on social coexistence.

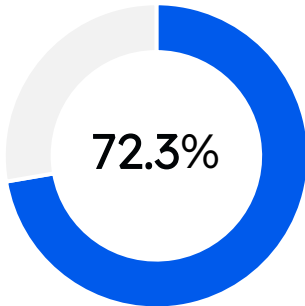
In this respect, identity is not only a source of division but also an area where social ambivalences and contradictions are concentrated, reflecting a society that, while undergoing transformation, has not yet found a shared balance around diversity and social coexistence.

In this context, identity is not only a source of division but also an area where social ambivalences and contradictions are concentrated.

*Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements (% “A lot” + “Quite a lot”)*



believe the **social climate** has become more **hostile** towards certain minorities



believe there is too much talk about identity and **too little** about **real economic problems**

## No shared project

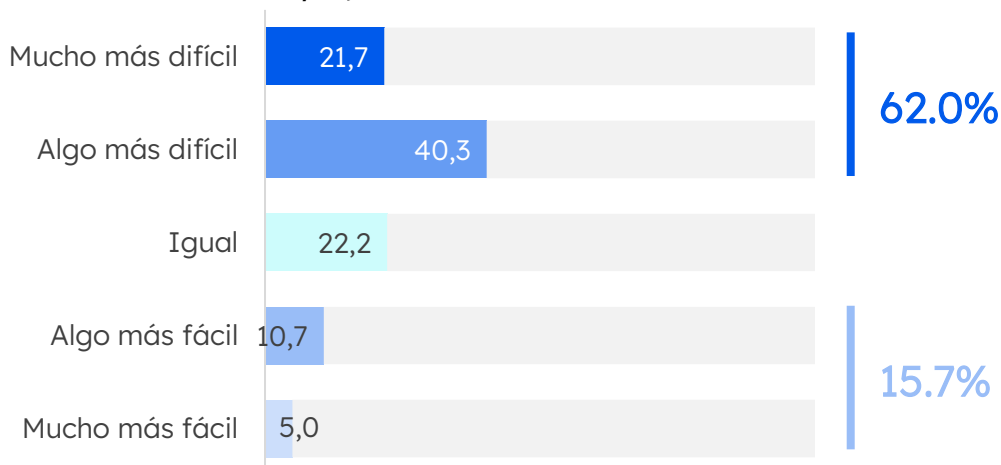
The dynamics described – the retreat into the individual, the perception of fragmentation and the centrality of identity conflicts – converge in a consequence of greater significance: the growing difficulty of building a shared project for society. 62% of the population believe it is harder today than it was a decade ago to feel part of a shared national project, compared with 22.2% who believe it is the same and 15.7% who believe it is easier.

This figure brings together the set of transformations observed. The loss of elements of common identity, the multiplication of lines of division and the perception of a strained public debate all contribute to the weakening of frameworks of collective belonging.

At the same time, this difficulty does not necessarily imply the absence of shared values, but rather the difficulty of bringing them together in a common narrative in a context of greater social, cultural and personal diversity. The expansion of individual freedoms and the pluralisation of ways of life, which have been among the great advances of recent decades, also introduce new challenges for cohesion.

In this regard, the challenge is no longer so much to rebuild a model of social homogeneity associated with earlier periods, but to find ways of building community in diversity. The fundamental question is not only the existence of differences, but the ability to bring them into a shared framework that can sustain social coexistence and project a common horizon.

*Compared with ten years ago, do you think it is easier or harder today to feel part of a shared national project?*



# 04

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## Lives under pressure



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## Introduction

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Against a backdrop of global uncertainty, economic issues are becoming increasingly central to how people interpret their present and imagine their future. Beyond macroeconomic indicators, which are positive in many cases, it is in everyday experience that social tensions are most clearly expressed.

The figures point to a dual reality: while part of the population maintains reasonable levels of stability, another lives with very narrow margins, difficulty covering basic expenses and little capacity to plan ahead. This fragility not only shapes day-to-day life but also limits expectations for the future.

In this context, the perception of access to the middle class is weakening and doubts are emerging about the real possibility of getting ahead. Thus, in a society that is more prosperous in aggregate terms, the sense of insecurity, limited opportunities and loss of control over one's own life path is intensifying.



## More wealth, less security

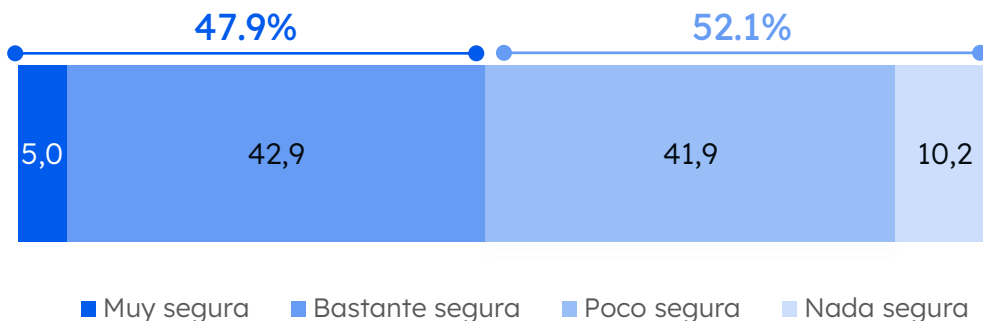
In a context marked by volatility, the Spanish economy is performing positively in aggregate terms, with indicators pointing to growth, job creation and improved activity. However, this performance is not translating evenly into people’s experience.

The figures reveal a dual society: close to half of the population feel they are living in a situation of financial insecurity. Specifically, 52.1% describe their situation as not very secure or not at all secure, compared with 47.9% who perceive it as fairly or very secure.

This imbalance is not evenly distributed. Women, people aged 45 to 54, rural residents and people of immigrant origin make up the profile of the part of Spain facing greater financial vulnerability.

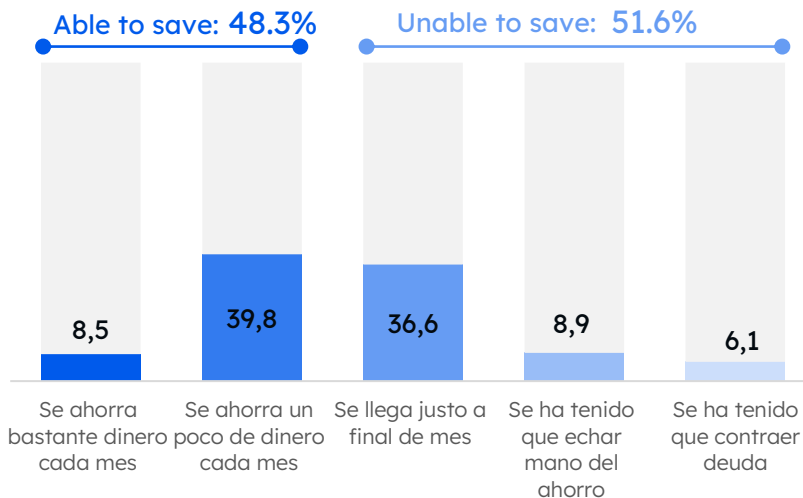


*How would you describe your financial situation?*



Almost the same proportion as those who perceive themselves as financially insecure – just over half – are living with very narrow margins, with no capacity to save and, in many cases, relying on their reserves to get by. Thus, when describing their household’s economic situation, 51.6% say they do not save, either because they just about make ends meet, have had to dip into their savings or have been forced to take on debt.

*Which of the following statements would you say best describes the economic situation of your household/family?*



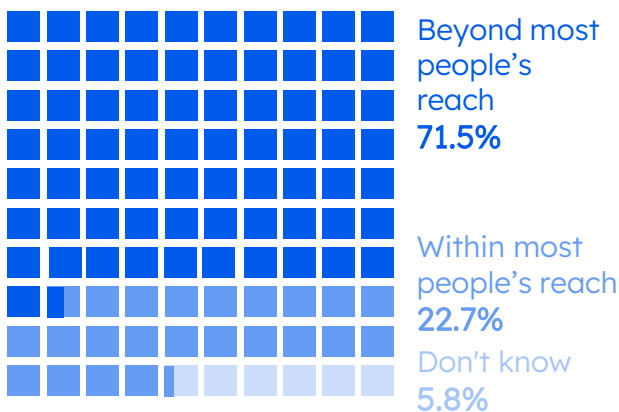
The main sources of economic pressure are concentrated in the most basic expenses. Food (39.5%), energy – including electricity, gas and fuel – (39.4%) and housing (36.6%) are the items placing the greatest strain on households, well above others such as debt, care for children or dependants, education or transport. Economic pressure therefore falls not on discretionary spending but on expenses where there is little room for adjustment.

## The middle class, increasingly out of reach

Economic insecurity, which affects one in two people, largely explains the widespread sense that living a middle-class life – that is, with a degree of financial stability, the ability to cover day-to-day expenses without shocks and some room for personal enjoyment – has become an increasingly difficult prospect.

Indeed, when asked whether a middle-class lifestyle is within reach for most people in Spain today, 71.5% say it is not, compared with 22.7% who believe it is possible and 5.8% who are undecided. Middle-class life is therefore no longer seen as a widespread reality, but increasingly as an aspiration.

*In your opinion, is a middle-class lifestyle in Spain today...?*

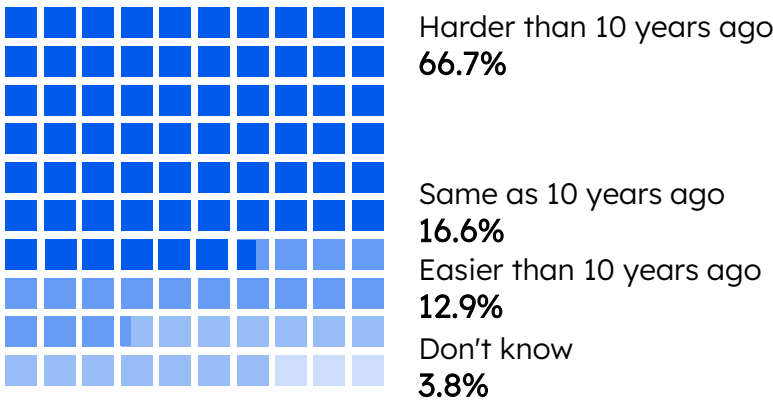




The comparison over time reinforces this trend: 66.7% believe that living a middle-class lifestyle is more difficult today than it was ten years ago, compared with 16.6% who believe the situation has not changed and 12.9% who see it as easier.

This perception is particularly pronounced among those who have lived through other periods. While 56% of young people aged 18 to 24 believe it is harder today, this figure rises to 74.1% among those aged over 65, almost twenty percentage points higher. The sense of loss is therefore stronger among those who compare the present with a past in which this lifestyle was – or was perceived to be – more accessible, even though Spanish society is more prosperous in aggregate terms today.

*And would you say that living a middle-class lifestyle in Spain today is...*

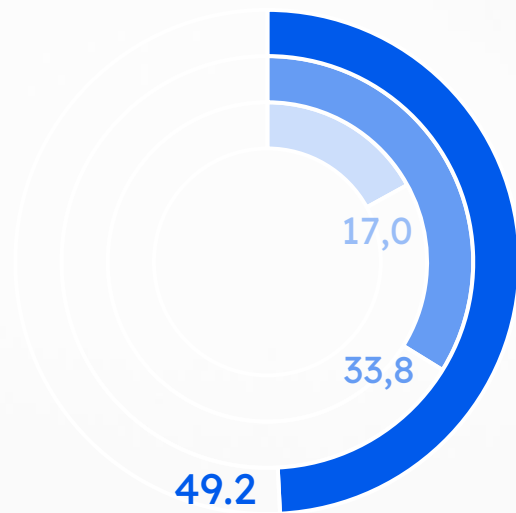


While the figures above reflect a widespread perception that access to the middle class has become more difficult, the picture becomes more nuanced at the individual level, though it remains problematic. Only 17.0% of the population say they have achieved a middle-class lifestyle, showing how far it has moved out of reach as a standard way of life. Alongside them, 49.2% believe it is within their reach, while 33.8% see it as beyond their reach.

Although perceptions remain mostly negative, these figures introduce an important nuance in relation to the overall view. It is easier to recognise the difficulty of access to the middle class when speaking about society as a whole than when assessing one's own situation. This difference suggests a gap between collective perception and self-perception, in which individuals tend to place themselves in a less unfavourable position than the one they attribute to society as a whole.

*Personally, would you say that a middle-class lifestyle is within your reach?*

- Within my reach
- Beyond my reach
- Already achieved it

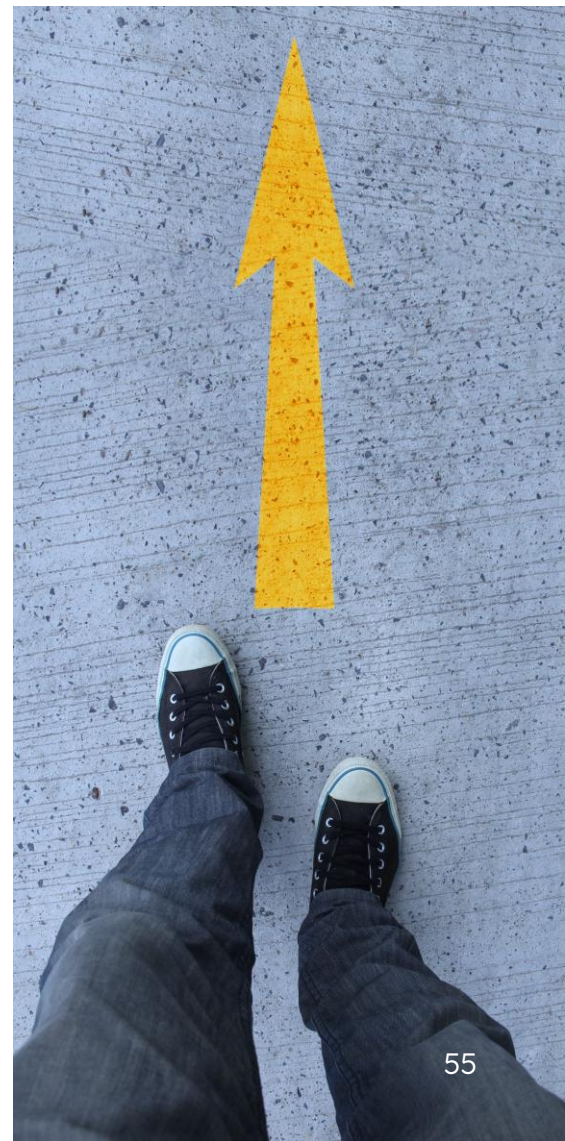
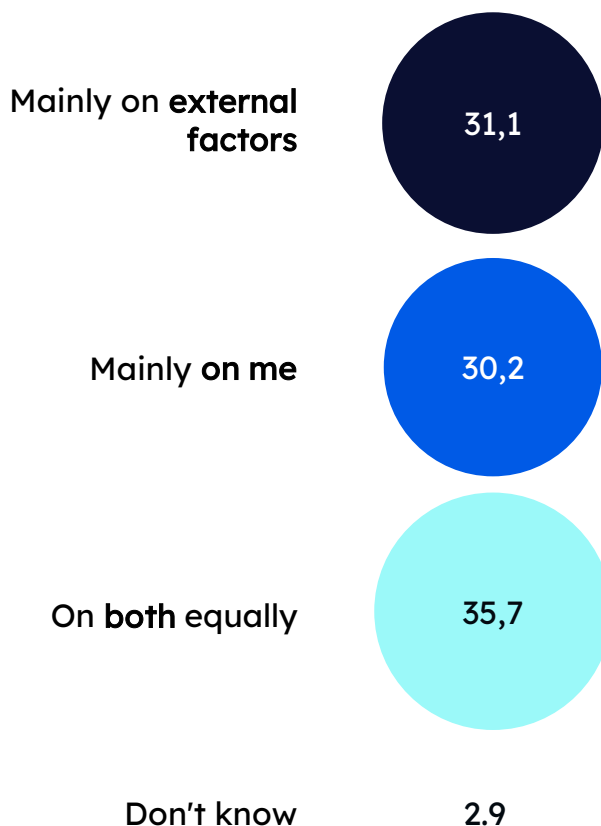


## Progress called into question

Economic insecurity and the difficulty of seeing oneself as part of the middle class are compounded by a growing perception that opportunities for progress are not accessible to everyone. When respondents are asked whether they feel they are making progress in life, more than half (55.7%) say they are doing so little or not at all, compared with 44.2% who say they are doing so a lot or quite a lot.

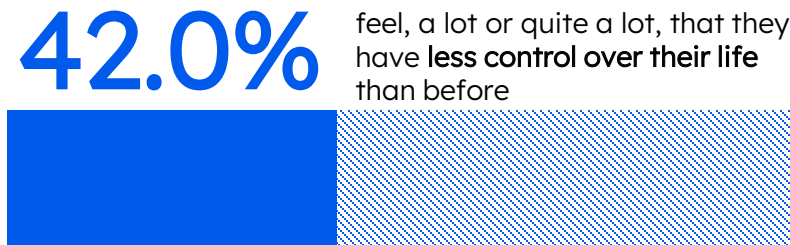
When asked what that progress depends on, opinions are evenly divided: 30.2% believe it depends mainly on themselves, 31.1% attribute it to external factors and 35.7% believe it depends equally on both. This distribution reflects a divided perception of control over one's own future.

*Do you think your personal progress depends mainly on you or on external factors?*



In fact, around 42% say they identify a lot or quite a lot with feeling less in control than before. When it is no longer clear what progress depends on, the sense of being able to plan, decide and steer one's own course also weakens.

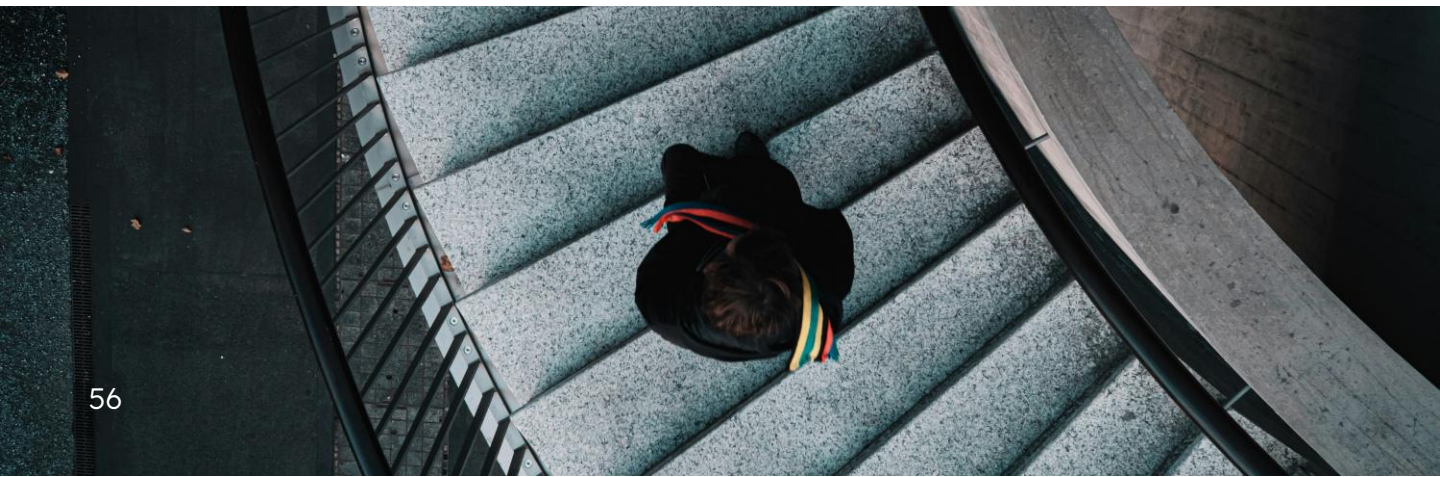
*Thinking about your life in recent times, to what extent do you identify with the following situations?*



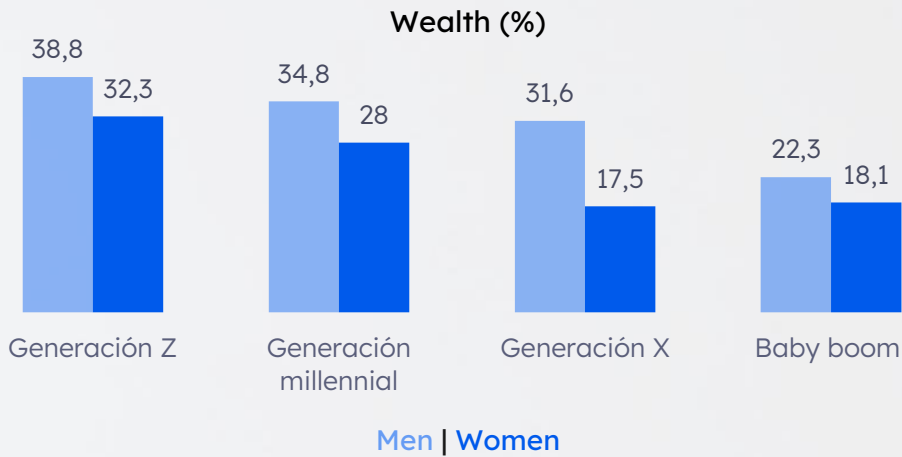
The differences between generations are especially significant. In general, younger people are the most likely to believe that progress depends on them: 38.6% of Generation Z (aged 18 to 28) say this, a figure significantly higher than among baby boomers (24.6%).

Along the same lines, when asked about the specific drivers of economic progress in Spain, work or personal effort only narrowly exceeds wealth (28.7% compared with 26.5%), whether in the form of property or financial investments. 40.1% consider that both factors are equally important.

However, when specifying whether economic progress depends on effort or wealth, a generational break emerges in the opposite direction: young people - Generation Z - are the only group who believe that getting ahead depends more on income from wealth than on income from work, with wealth understood largely as inheritance, reflecting an early perception of the limits of meritocracy.



*Today in Spain, economic progress depends most on...*



This seeming contradiction can be explained by the coexistence of two different levels: while effort remains the ideal, everyday experience – marked by difficulty accessing housing, job insecurity and the growing weight of wealth – reinforces the idea that progress does not depend solely on individual merit.

This seeming contradiction points to a deeper shift: the emergence of a generation that, while still valuing effort, no longer sees it as a sufficient guarantee of progress, which may have lasting effects on its expectations and its relationship with the economic and social system.



# 05

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## The consumer in an uncertain world



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## Introduction

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The global context has ceased to be a distant backdrop and has become a factor that directly affects everyday life. Geopolitical conflicts, tensions between major powers and changes in the world order affect not only markets but also how the public perceives its economic situation and makes decisions in everyday life.

This scenario gives rise to a more attentive, more cautious consumer who is more sensitive to risk. Global instability does not remain abstract, but becomes part of spending decisions, relationships with brands and the adoption of new technological tools.



In this context, consumers are redefining their strategies: they prioritise security over risk, place renewed value on what is close and trusted, and are beginning to incorporate artificial intelligence as a support in their decision-making. Consumption thus becomes an adaptive response to an uncertain global environment.

## The economic impact of the war in Iran

In a context marked by global uncertainty, the war in Iran stands out as one of the international events with the greatest impact on public perceptions. The war in Iran has had a strong media presence - as shown by the level of interest recorded in a 40dB. study for El País and Cadena SER - and has become one of the main issues in recent weeks.

This conflict is also taking place in an environment in which reports by national and international bodies warning of its possible effects on the global economy and, by extension, on Spain's economy are multiplying. In this context, the public is not unaffected by the messages it receives.

A large majority of the public - 75.6% - believe to a considerable or great extent that the war in Iran will have a negative impact on their finances. This figure points to possible effects on household economic decisions, especially if the war continues over time, in an environment highly sensitive to uncertainty.



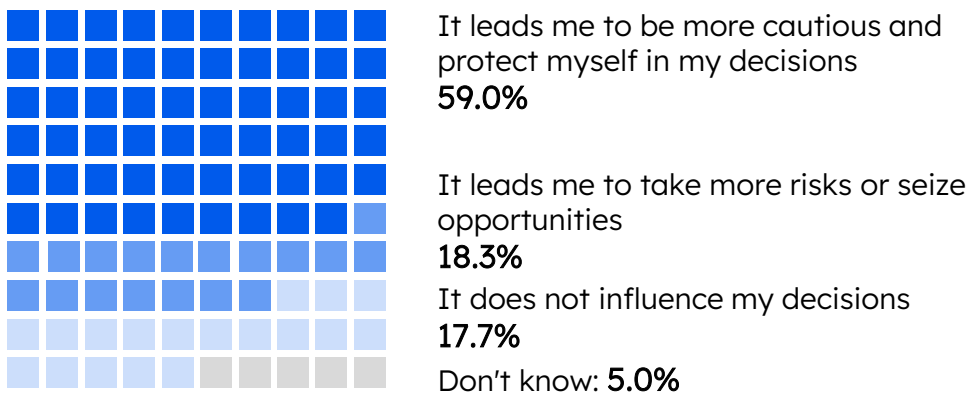
**75.6%**

Feel that the **war**  
in **Iran** will  
**negatively** affect  
their **finances** a  
lot or quite a lot

## In the face of uncertainty, prudence

Beyond the war in Iran, the global environment – characterised by tensions and volatility – has a direct impact on consumer behaviour, which tends to become more conservative and to develop protective strategies. In this respect, 59% say this context leads them to act with greater caution in their decisions, while 18.3% choose to take more risks or seize opportunities, and 17.7% say it does not influence their behaviour.

*How does the current global context affect you personally?*



The generational pattern is particularly relevant. The generations of active working age are the most likely to adopt cautious behaviour, while the youngest group, Generation Z, and those aged over 64 – more dependent on their families in the former case and on pensions or support networks in the latter – show a lower tendency towards self-protection. Even so, caution predominates even among these groups, pointing to an increasingly defensive consumer in contexts of prolonged uncertainty.

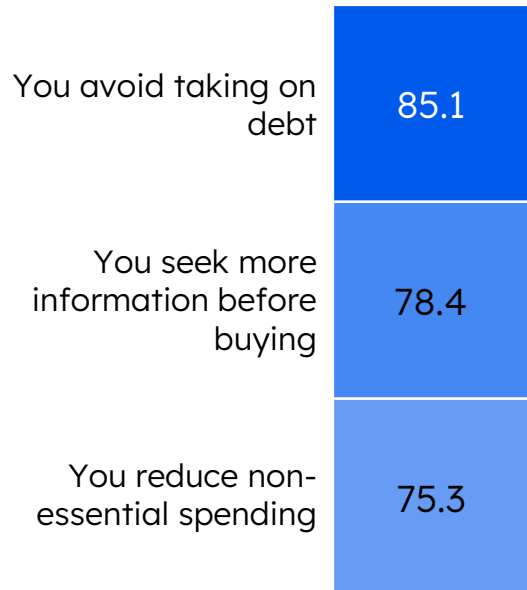


Prudence is reflected in specific consumer behaviours that directly affect spending decisions. Thus, in response to the global context, 85.1% say they avoid taking on debt, while 75.3% reduce non-essential spending. These strategies are especially frequent among the lower-middle and lower classes, people of immigrant origin, unemployed people and residents of small municipalities, who are the groups most likely to adjust their consumption.



**78.4%**  
say they seek information before buying, reinforcing a more rational pattern of consumption aimed at optimising spending.

*In the current global context, to what extent do...?  
(% “A lot” + “Quite a lot”)*



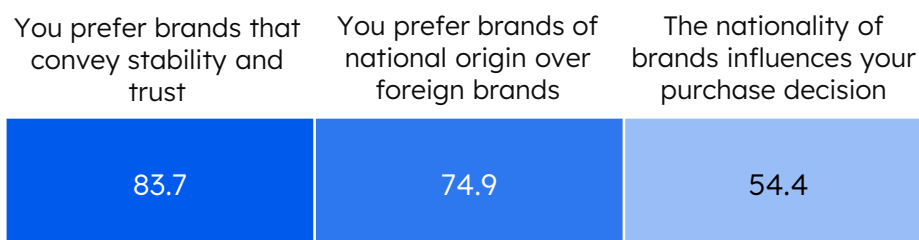
## Implications for brands

The context of instability also inevitably affects consumers' brand choices. Global tensions are leading people to pay closer attention to their origin. When asked how much the nationality of brands influences their purchase decision, 54.4% say it does so "a lot" or "quite a lot".

It cannot therefore be ruled out that brands from countries whose reputation is affected by the international context may suffer as a result. This is the case, for example, with the United States, whose image is under strain in the current geopolitical landscape. Indeed, another 40dB. study shows that the Spanish public sees Donald Trump as the main threat to world peace, slightly ahead of Vladimir Putin and some distance ahead of Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the same vein, when consumers are asked how much they prefer brands of national origin over foreign brands, 74.9% choose the former. This points to a shift towards what is close and familiar, in a context in which international players traditionally seen as trustworthy are being called into question.

### *In the current global context, to what extent do...? (% "A lot" + "Quite a lot")*



At the same time, the world order, perceived as chaotic and unpredictable, is driving the search for solid, reliable reference points. In this context, large established brands are positioned as anchors of stability: their experience, solidity and consistency generate trust and give them an advantage over smaller or less well-known competitors. As a result, 83.7% say that, in the current global context, they prefer brands that convey stability and trust, reinforcing the value of the brand as a safe haven in uncertain environments.

Beyond the product and price, **trust** becomes a **competitive advantage** for brands.

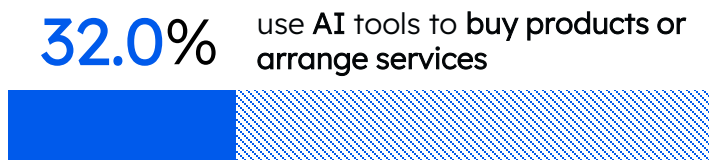
## The incorporation of AI into buying behaviour

In the current global context, artificial intelligence tools are not without risks, but they also open up new opportunities, expanding the tools available for consumption. 32% say they use them to a large extent to buy products or arrange services, compared with 68% who still use them little or not at all. Their main advantages include making it easier to compare options, personalising recommendations and saving time in decision-making; however, their use also poses risks, such as the possible restriction of alternatives, lack of transparency in recommendation criteria and concerns around data protection.

This use is especially strong among young people, who are becoming the main users: almost half of them (45.3%) use AI for purchases and service arrangements, pointing to a social shift in digital consumption habits.



*In the current global context, to what extent do...?*



Overall, the figures show the emergence of a new consumer profile: more cautious, more informed and sensitive to the global context. Uncertainty is no longer an external factor, but an element incorporated directly into everyday decisions, shaping spending, the relationship with brands and the adoption of new tools.

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# Perspective





## Perspective

José María Lassalle

*H·Advisors Advisory Board*

Spanish society is living with a sense of unease because the horizon it sees, both at home and abroad, gives little cause for peace of mind. Nor does it offer hope that the future will be better. This is compounded by the everyday sense that things are not going well in the world or in our democracy, which people increasingly feel is failing them. It makes people turn inwards and mistrust others, as if cooperation and community bonds were a pipe dream and someone had shouted: "Every man for himself!". This is undoubtedly reinforced by the widespread sense that it is becoming harder and harder to make ends meet, that our prosperity is hanging by a thread, and that the constant uncertainty in which we live imposes a forced prudence that ties our hands in our decisions and weakens confidence that things will improve in the near future.

Given these indicators of the broader climate, it is only logical that optimism is scarce and collective unease is widespread, as are criticisms of democratic politics, which seems to be concerned with its own affairs rather than everyone's. Some might say that this is nothing new. That people have always said each day brings its own troubles. No doubt, but today those troubles seem to offer no respite and to have become the structure of our everyday lives.

That is why the gaze we cast over this landscape is short, like that of a tired runner who knows they cannot look too far ahead if they want to reach the finish line and not throw in the towel too soon. That means few people smile at tomorrow, because many shadows fall over our peace of mind. The report names them: major corporations, the breakdown of the international order, the authoritarian threat pushing liberal democracy into a corner and, in addition, artificial intelligence (AI), which is forcing its way into the collective imagination as a source of anxiety. It even identifies a qualitative dividing line in opinion based on how people position themselves towards it. It is already so relevant culturally that perhaps tomorrow it will be politically relevant too. Among other things, because it is a factor in inequality in favour of those who use it, who are also male, young and high-income users.

The findings we present give much food for thought and contain layers of highly valuable insight. Findings that bring together deep-seated moods, which do not rise to the surface of collective perception only because of the global risks we face in the form of wars, crises of every kind and natural disasters.

Something is stirring in the collective unconscious, striking at cultural paradigms and perhaps reflecting a global and technological change of era.

The most important aspect of the report is that it shows a society that is not at ease with itself. It feels less safe, without the well-being it once had and with the sense that inequality is growing. This makes the atmosphere more tense. It leads people to think that institutions are not doing their job. Starting with democracy, towards which people express an alarming level of civic disaffection. In that sense, politics now falls badly short in the eyes of many just as our Constitution is about to turn fifty. It is as if a mid-life crisis were trying to take us back to a lost youth, just as we face the problems that come with maturity.

Even so, people criticise our democracy on the basis of facts, not perceptions. They reproach it for embracing polarisation and for failing to do what it should do: prevent problems from growing and remedy those that are already very serious. As is the case with the cost of living and housing. This is compounded by the growing economic pressure on household well-being, despite what the headline figures say, which people do not see reflected in everyday life.

It is alarming to see in the report how the status, mindset and economic indicators that defined the middle class have evaporated in our country. Even the idea of effort as a driver of upward mobility is being called into question. What is more, young people have lost faith in work. They no longer see it as a form of merit that is rewarded and prefer inherited wealth as a safeguard of status and a lever for future prosperity. This is an unsettling regression in outlook, shaping a younger generation that, as a matter of principle, places more trust in the past than in tomorrow.

Finally, if democracy ceases to be our common home, it is hardly surprising that a majority of Spaniards have lost interest in public issues. Nor is it surprising that people feel that whatever comes from beyond their own private home is hostile. This leads to the loneliness that many suffer in silence, especially older people, and to an individualism that weakens the desire to connect with others and share our lives with them. This means that spaces of common ground are becoming increasingly scarce, while cultural frictions grow around the difficulty of reconciling evolving mindsets with resistance to the speed of change.

Since no one knows quite what to expect for now, uncertainty is likely to remain with us as we enter a change of era, signalled, for example, by the technological revolution suggested by the collective perception generated by the widespread adoption of AI in our lives. This finding matters because it paralyses some and mobilises others. That is an opportunity not without risks. As with many of the things happening to us, it is making the collective mindset adapt quickly, making us more cautious, more inclined towards security and towards an everyday conservatism that keeps us focused on preserving what we can in the immediate term and practising a day-to-day realism that puts distance between us and larger hopes.

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# Epilogue





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## Epilogue

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Belén Barreiro  
*40db. Director*

Living in 2026 is like tossing a coin. In a geopolitical context that the public perceives as profoundly uncertain, events that until recently seemed unimaginable have entered the realm of possibility. Just over half of the population consider it plausible that, within just five years, democratic backsliding could occur in the United States and pull other Western democracies along with it – the country with the world’s longest liberal and democratic tradition, with more than two centuries of history – or even that a third world war could break out, eighty years after the end of the Second World War, the longest period of global peace in contemporary history.

The fact that these predictions come from ordinary people, with no specialist knowledge of international relations or geopolitics, is especially significant. They are not forecasts of the future, but signs of a present mood in which democracy and peace seem to be caught in a kind of Russian roulette.

Like the global situation, personal progress seems to have become uncertain, almost subject to chance. Just under half the country feels financially secure, makes ends meet and feels it is making progress, while the other half is unable to stabilise or move forward. In this context, individual progress is perceived as depending as much on personal effort as on external factors; moreover, wealth (inheritance) carries almost as much weight as work in determining each person’s opportunities. It is therefore no coincidence that 42% of the population feel they have less control over their own lives than before.

Uncertainty has become a defining mark of the times, shaping both the environment and the individual. On the one hand, the world may slide towards authoritarianism and war, or remain suspended in an unstable balance. On the other, people do not know whether they will end up among those who prosper or among those left behind by progress. The dominant perception is that what happens does not really depend on us, but on chance, on sheer luck, as if our lives were subject to the fragile balance of a tightrope walker.

As if that were not enough, there is widespread awareness that society is more individualistic today than it was a decade ago. This change has two sides: it increases the freedom to choose one's own way of life, but also increases loneliness and disconnection from others. At the same time, this retreat into the individual has effects on the collective.

More than half of the public acknowledge feeling less interest or motivation to become involved in public issues, while society is perceived as more fragmented and with a weakened common identity. There is a widely shared view that it is harder today than it was ten years ago to feel part of a collective national project.

Without control over the environment, without control over one's own life and without a shared horizon, the public is left to its fate, each individual reduced to their own destiny. In this scenario, anything that can still generate trust, offer a degree of security and build collective frameworks from common reference points takes on particular importance and will be better placed to operate successfully in a context such as the present.

# Public affairs must remain the great shared space

We live at a time when reality is moving faster than our ability to understand it. A time when the figures say one thing and social perception often says another. When that happens over a sustained period, it is not only the diagnosis that suffers, but the quality of public debate.

This H/Advisors report, prepared in collaboration with 40dB., was not conceived as just another analytical exercise, but as an attempt to listen better and bring order to what today appears scattered: what really concerns Spanish people, how they interpret what is happening and how far they feel those concerns are reflected in the public agenda.

This work forms part of H/ORIZONS, an initiative based on the conviction that understanding the context is no longer enough if we cannot create spaces where that knowledge is translated into useful dialogue and better decisions.

An effort to read what lies ahead, yes, but also to connect. That, ultimately, is the purpose of H/Advisors in this new stage. To continue a project – that of Acento – born of a commitment to making understanding possible and helping companies and institutions come together around shared interests.

In just a few years, that approach has positioned our firm as a leading player in public affairs in Spain, now strengthened by our integration into H/Advisors, the Havas Group's global public affairs and strategic communications network, thereby expanding our reach and capabilities.

Public affairs – it is worth remembering – do not belong to anyone in particular. They are, and must remain, a shared space from which to drive solutions, build trust and shape the future.

The background consists of several overlapping geometric shapes. A large, dark blue triangle points downwards from the top center. To its left, a lighter cyan triangle points downwards from the top left. The rest of the background is a solid, vibrant blue. The text 'H/ADVISORS' is centered horizontally and partially overlaps the cyan triangle.

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