

ICIP 2023 Survey

Coexistence and security in Catalonia

November 2023

Introduction

In 2007, the Parliament of Catalonia created ICIP with the mandate to “promote the culture of peace in Catalan society and internationally, and to have Catalonia play an active role as an agent of peace in the world.”

The promotion of the culture of peace is necessary, not only in areas immersed in armed conflicts, but also in societies with more consolidated democracies, in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage conflicts in a constructive manner.

Since 2018, in fulfillment of its institutional mandate, ICIP has produced surveys on the perception of coexistence in Catalonia with the aim of assessing the degree of support of the culture of peace in our society.

The ICIP 2023 Survey, as well as the previous surveys, aims to provide information to raise public awareness on the need to promote the culture of peace and to guide political and institutional actions in this direction.

The current survey focuses on security-related issues from the paradigm of “human security,” which focuses on the minimum material and social conditions for a dignified life, in contrast to the dominant conception in the public debate, related almost exclusively to the criminal act and, therefore, to police responses.

Objectives

- Evaluate perceptions of coexistence and social trust in Catalonia and its evolution in the last five years.
- Examine the attitudes of the citizenry in the face of everyday violence.
- Detect the degree of ideological and emotional polarization in Catalonia.
- Evaluate the perception of citizens on different aspects related to security, from a personal, political and economic point of view.
- Collect opinions on certain local and foreign security policies such as the reduction of inequalities, military spending and arms exports.
- Evaluate citizen commitment to the culture of peace.

Executive summary

COEXISTENCE

- The downward trend in the assessment of coexistence continues, both in Catalonia as a whole and at the municipality/neighborhood level.
- Most citizens define themselves as conciliatory and cooperative, and have little tolerance for various situations of everyday violences.
- One third of citizens believe that the best way to avoid coexistence problems is to interact little with the people around them.

TRUST

- Citizens tend to trust other people and the level of social trust stands at around the European average.
- In Catalonia, trust in institutions is low – lower than the European average. The level of satisfaction with the functioning of our democracy does not obtain a passing grade and a third of the population is dissatisfied with the democratic system.

Executive summary

POLARIZATION

- Positive emotions towards people who think differently are increasing.
- Polarization has increased slightly in all the debate issues analyzed except for the pro-independence movement.
- The political conflict in Catalonia continues to be the issue that most polarizes society although less so than in previous years.
- The media in general, political parties and social media are perceived as the main culprits of polarization.

SECURITY

- Half the population considers that security in Catalonia has worsened in recent years and 73% believe that it has gotten worse worldwide. However, a majority of the people surveyed stated that their personal security has remained stable.
- One out of every five people has felt afraid when expressing their opinions and one out of every four has been afraid to take part in a demonstration in the last two years.

Executive summary

- Eighteen percent of citizens believe that they belong to a group that is discriminated against.
- Corruption, crime, the economic crisis and climate change are the issues that most concern citizens. On the other hand, the Catalonia-Spain relationship and racism are the issues that generate the least concern.
- In order to increase personal security, a majority of citizens are in favor of social policies rather than punitive policies.
- Seventy percent of the population believes that wars are avoidable and 46% think that Spanish military spending is excessive.
- Arms exports are viewed negatively, with an average score of 3.5 out of 10.

Conclusions

Positive Indicators

- People tend to trust other people and show little tolerance for everyday violences.
- Positive emotions towards people who think differently are increasing.
- The perception of personal security remains mostly stable.
- Social policies, especially those related to education and that provide training in values, are prioritized as a way to increase security.
- A majority of citizens rejects arms exports and military spending, and believes that wars are avoidable.

Conclusions

Warning signs

- The assessment of coexistence maintains a downward trend, both in Catalonia and at the municipality/neighborhood level.
- A majority of the population believe that security in Catalonia and the world has worsened in the last year.
- A part of the population accepts the use of physical and verbal violence on certain occasions. There is also a certain degree of tolerance for structural and cultural violences, related to housing and racism, for example.
- The population's mistrust of the functioning of democracy is high – higher than the European average.
- The pro-independence movement continues to be perceived as the most polarizing debate issue, a fact that confirms that the political conflict in Catalonia has not be resolved. Furthermore, there are people who state that they are afraid to express their ideas or go to a demonstration.

Final considerations

- A majority of the population expresses itself with attitudes and opinions that correspond to a culture of peace.
- Catalan society shows signs of a better coexistence with disagreement: the pro-independence movement is perceived as the most divisive issue while, at the same time, the Catalonia-Spain relationship is the issue that generates the least concern.
- There is a need for a constructive public debate on security:
 - The perception that external security has gotten worse (in line with the messages coming out of the political and media debate) contrasts with the perception that personal security remains stable.
 - Political commitment to combat insecurity is often limited to an increase in surveillance cameras and police officers while, on the other hand, social support for educational and social policies, and policies aimed at reducing inequality, is significant.



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