



# **Youth and Trade Unions in Spain: Re-building Links in Turbulent Times**

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# Structure

- Some theoretical considerations and state of art
- Youth and the labour market in Spain
- Youth in trade unions: membership, delegates and organisational presence
- Young people's view of trade unions
- Trade Union Strategies



- Power resources: Old vs New (Gumbrell McCormick y Hyman 2013):
  - Structural: labour market position of members
  - Associational (membership)
  - Organizational (passive or active membership)
  - Institutional
  - Moral / discursive / communicative: capacity to effectively transmit the role of trade unions in society
  - Collaborative / coalition: capacity to develop alliances with other organizations and / or social movements
  - Logistical / Strategic

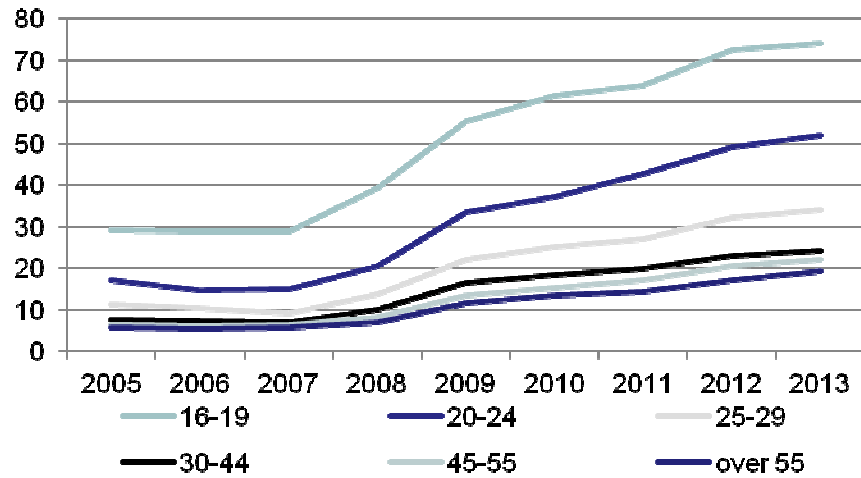


# Youth in the labour market

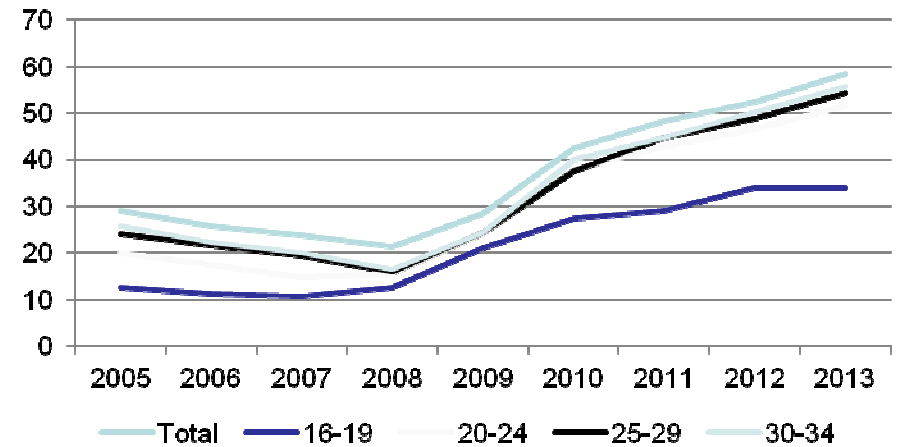
- Structural characteristics of the Spanish labour market
  - High Structural Unemployment; also for young people
    - With high long-term unemployment rates
  - High levels of Temporary Employment
    - With very short duration
  - High levels of early school leavers (especially during the construction boom preceding the economic crisis)
  - Segmented labour market
  - Labour market trajectories of young people characterised by:
    - Chaotic trajectories
    - Instability
    - De-skilling
    - Low wages
    - Insecurity; low levels of unemployment protection



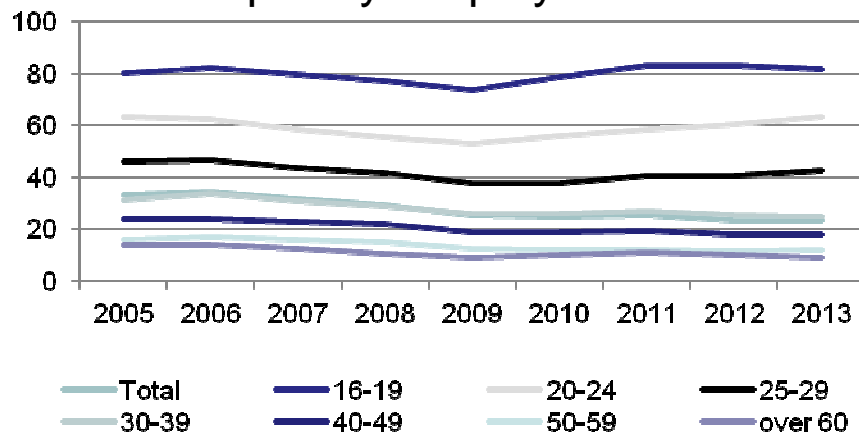
## Unemployment Rate



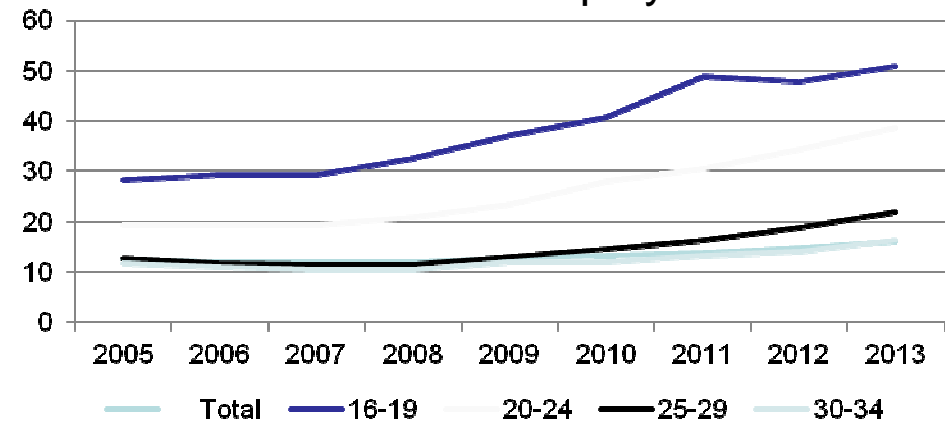
## Long-Term Unemployment Rate



## Temporary Employment



## Part-Time Employment



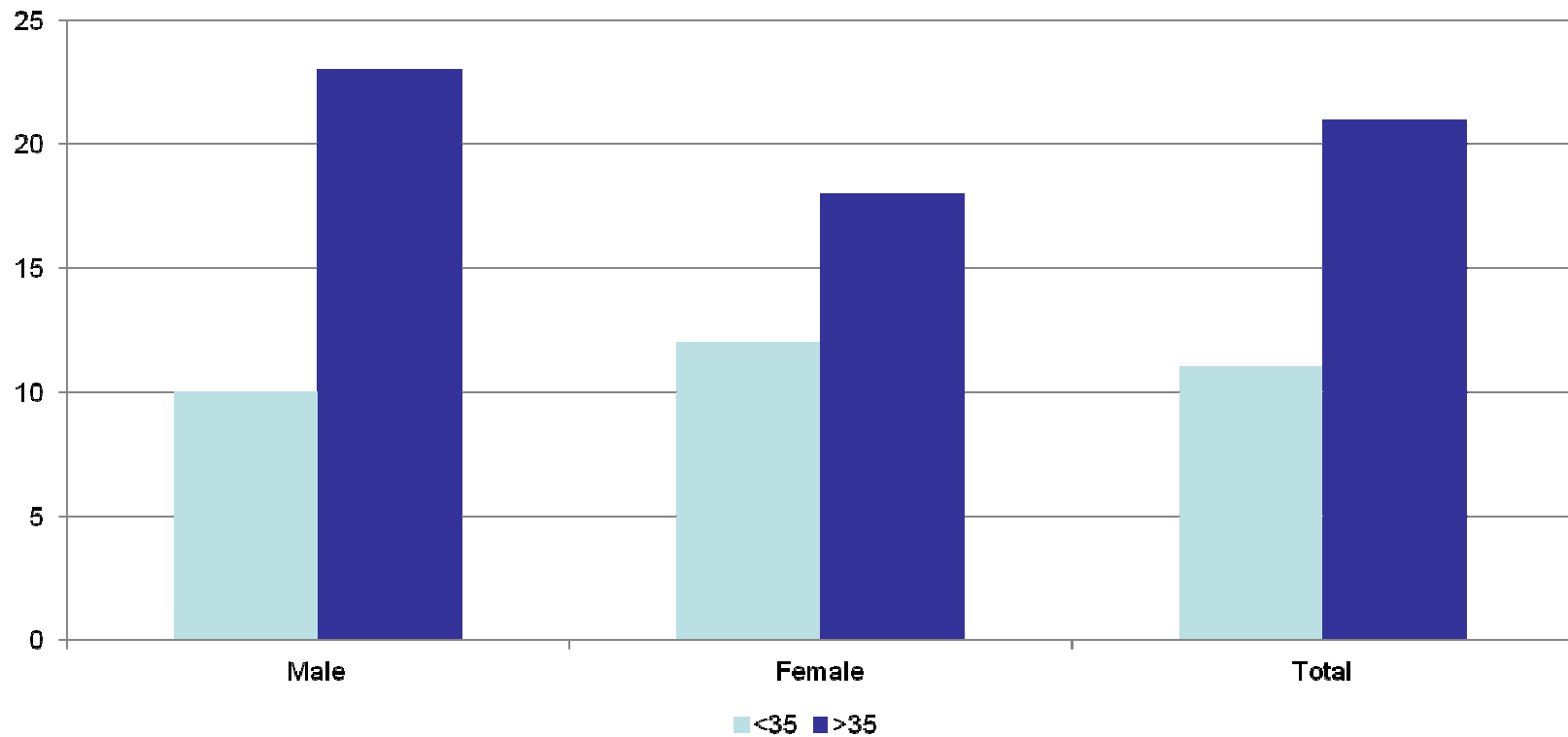


# Youth in trade unions

- Youth membership is low, and lower than other age groups
- Differences between sectors: higher in retail sales and public sector
- Causes of low membership specific to young people:
  - Labour market position: temporary + SMEs
  - Historically low levels civic engagement in Spain, and particularly among youth
  - Negative view of trade unions; undemocratic; youth un-sensitive
- However, it is important to note that membership is not really a priority (see below)
- Retention policies do not exist



# Youth Membership 2011

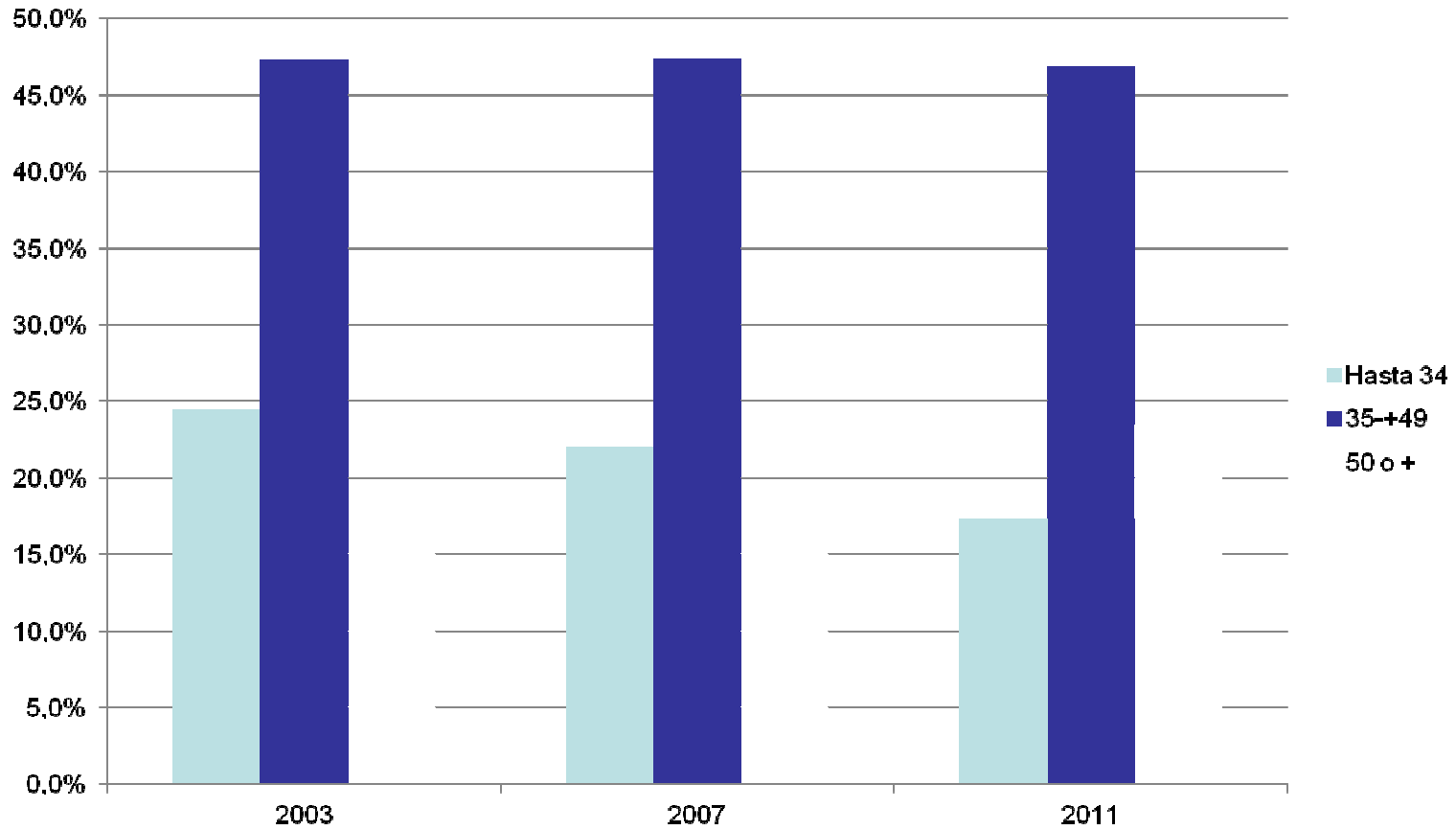




# Youth Delegates

- Important according to directors of regional youth organizations
- Symbolic value; young workers whose company representative is young will perceive the trade union closer to his/her interests
- This is why most (financial and human) resources of regional youth organizations are devoted to training company representatives





YOUunion - Union for Youth is a project co-funded by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, budget heading VS/2013/0401, Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue



- Both confederations (CCOO, UGT) have their own youth departments / sections
  - However, the organizational position is different; more autonomy within CCOO
- Their role is simply of coordination of campaigns and activities developed by lower level youth organizations
- Defense of youth interests within the union



# Regional Youth Organizations

- Large autonomy within their regional federations; greater in the case of Avalot-UGT
- Democratic decision-making procedures
- Lack of resources; develop campaigns, but most of the resources are dedicated to training young company representatives

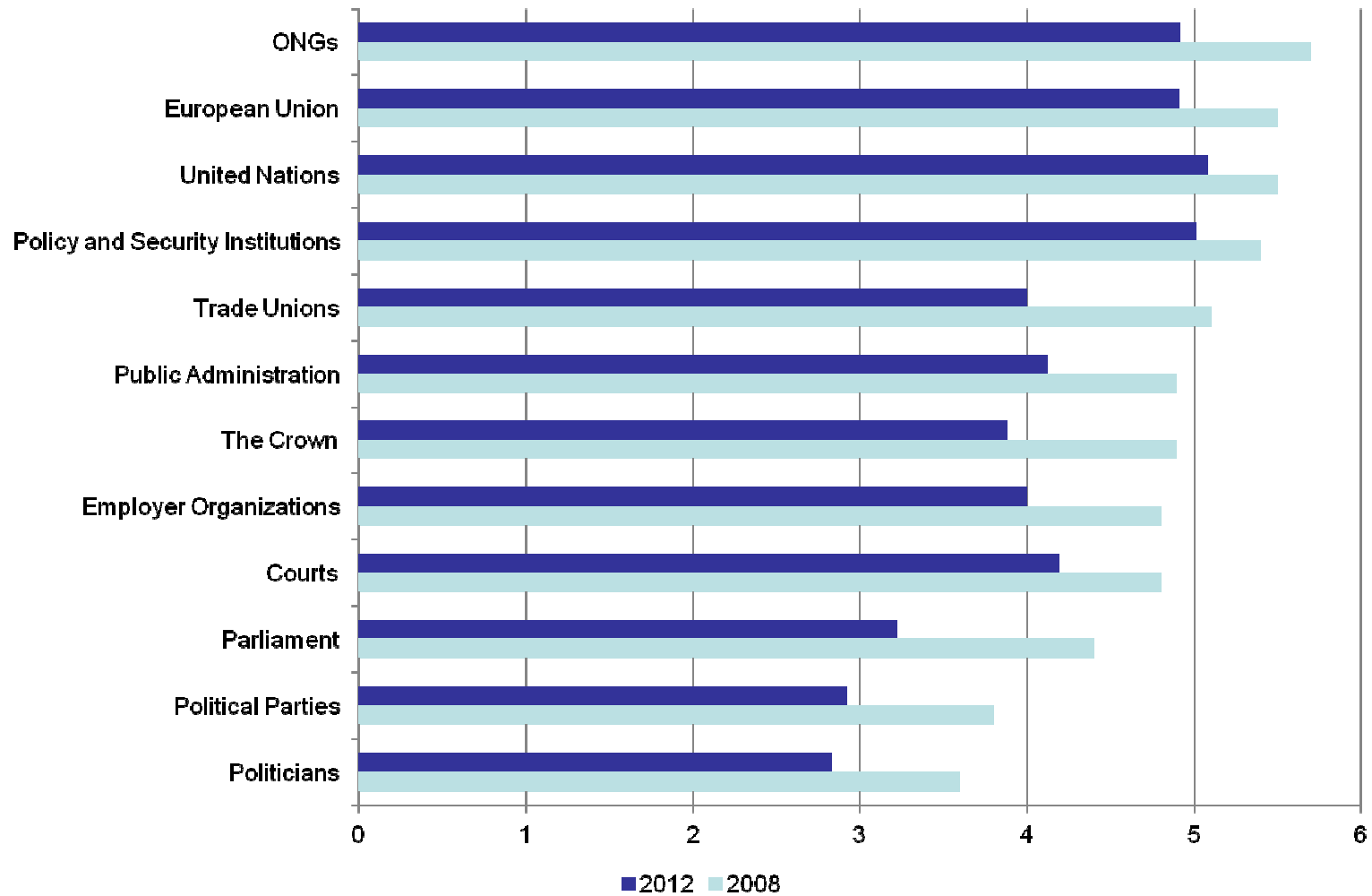


- Different views of how to reach young people:
  - CCOO emphasises the workplace as the main locus of action
  - UGT is more favourable to moving beyond the workplace and develop joint campaigns with local level organisations; social movement unionism



# Young people's views about TUs

- Young people have an increasingly negative perception of trade unions
- A similar process can be observed regarding all political institutions
- However, developments during the crisis, and in particular the rejection by the 15M of trade unions, is particularly worrying
  - Because unions were considered the drivers of discontent





- Negative views on trade unions:
  - Undemocratic
  - Biased towards the interests of stable adult males
  - Politicized and institutionalised
  - Part of the political status quo; corrupt



# Social Dialogue and CB

- The youth question has not been present in social dialogue and collective bargaining until the late 1980s
- Main problem for unions in the early 1980s; controlling conflict and helping adult long-term unemployed male
- Youth Employment plan in 1988; general strike
- From then on, two main youth-related issues on the agenda:
  - Employment Stability (related to quality of employment)
  - Training





# Social Dialogue and CB

- The little influence of union action regarding the reduction of temporary employment, has widened the gap with young workers
- Youth sections against positive discrimination; youth problems are labour market problems
- Recent employment policies towards youth include incentives to self-employment; criticized by trade unions



# Campaigns and Strategies: Membership

- Membership actions differ between confederations:
  - CCOO has implemented a super-reduced fee for students
  - UGT has no specific youth fee
- In general, the approach towards membership is in general passive (no organizing)...
- ...thus showing it is not a priority
- Little emphasis on retention



# Communication Strategies

- Relationship between communication strategies and organizational characteristics of trade unions
  - Top-down (vertical organizations)
  - Differences between trade unions
- The use of web pages since the early 1990s didn't mean a qualitative change (only quantitative)
- Web page used only to provide information (one way communication)



# Communication Strategies

- Second wave; social networks. Offer opportunities for a qualitative change
- Opens new spaces to interact with members; two way communication process
- Moreover, could favour new forms of participation and empowerment
- However...
  - No explicit communication strategy developed; ad hoc
  - Use of social networks follows same logic as first wave; organisational resistance



# Communication Strategies

- Some differences between trade unions; UGT's webpage is more interactive (particularly the youth organization) whilst CCCO is more informative
- Regional youth organizations make greater use of social networks and other apps like wup in order to mobilize for a protest or when preparing an assembly



- Importance of 15M: realization of the potential offered by social networks in order to reach and mobilize young people
- This came out very strongly in the interviews
- However, social networks are only an instrument; cannot be an end in themselves
- In order to get the maximum from social networks, unions must change other things



- Main challenges: precariousness and distrust
- Limited capacity to develop organising strategies



# Policy Recommendations

- Strengthen the alliances and linkages with other civic / social movements: beyond the workplace
- Participation: internal vs external democracy
- Stronger role of social partners in designing plans to fight against youth unemployment: ALMP
- Enhance the local / territorial dimension
- More presence in organisations