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Commission

EU Citizenship 2020

Final report

Results of the Public Consultation
on EU Citizenship Rights 2020

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and Consumers

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Results of the Public Consultation on EU Citizenship Rights 2020

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Disclaimer: This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders to the public consultation on EU Citizenship Rights. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services.

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1 Introduction

EU citizenship is a significant achievement of the European project. It does not replace national citizenship but complements it. Nationals of 27 EU Member States are European citizens. EU citizens enjoy, for instance, free movement in the EU, consular protection when travelling abroad, as well as political and democratic rights, such as the right to participate in elections to the European Parliament.

The Commission reports on the application of the EU citizenship provisions every 3 years and proposes new priorities for the next 3 years. The Commission held a public consultation on EU citizenship rights between July and October 2020, which together with the Eurobarometer on EU Citizenship and Democracy as well as other dedicated consultations, informed the 2020 Citizenship Report¹.

Open public consultations are not, by nature, statistically representative of the population (unlike, for example, public opinion polls). Therefore, their purpose is not to find answers that could be generalised, but rather to gain in-depth insights that can shed new light on a range of issues. In order for the consultation to provide this in-depth evidence, it contained a number of open and closed questions. In addition to the responses to the survey, 23 position papers were submitted. The majority of the papers came from citizens' rights advocacy organisations².

This report provides a summary of the consultation's outcomes and some additional insights. It is structured following the questions posed in the survey. In order to indicate the sources and differences between analysis of the closed questions and contributions by EU citizens, UK citizens and the position papers, the report shows these differences through coloured boxes:

Opinions based on EU citizens are marked in light green.

UK citizens' views are marked in pink.

Informative views from the position papers are coloured in yellow. The organisations providing the information are mentioned as well.

¹ The public consultation received a lot of interest from UK citizens. UK citizens are no longer EU citizens since the UK's withdrawal from the EU at the end of January 2020, although they still can exercise several EU rights (such as travelling and working in the EU) in the current transition period. Where this report uses the term "EU citizen" or "EU citizens", this therefore does not include UK citizens, and their responses are not included in the analysis. However, where useful, views from UK citizens are included.

² There were also written contributions and 1650 emails from UK citizens.

2 Profile of respondents

The public consultation received 343 responses through the EUSurvey tool. 258 responses came from citizens of 26 EU Member States and 52 came from UK citizens. No responses were submitted by citizens of Malta. 56% of respondents were male (155), and 41% female (112). One respondent chose “other” and five did not provide this information.

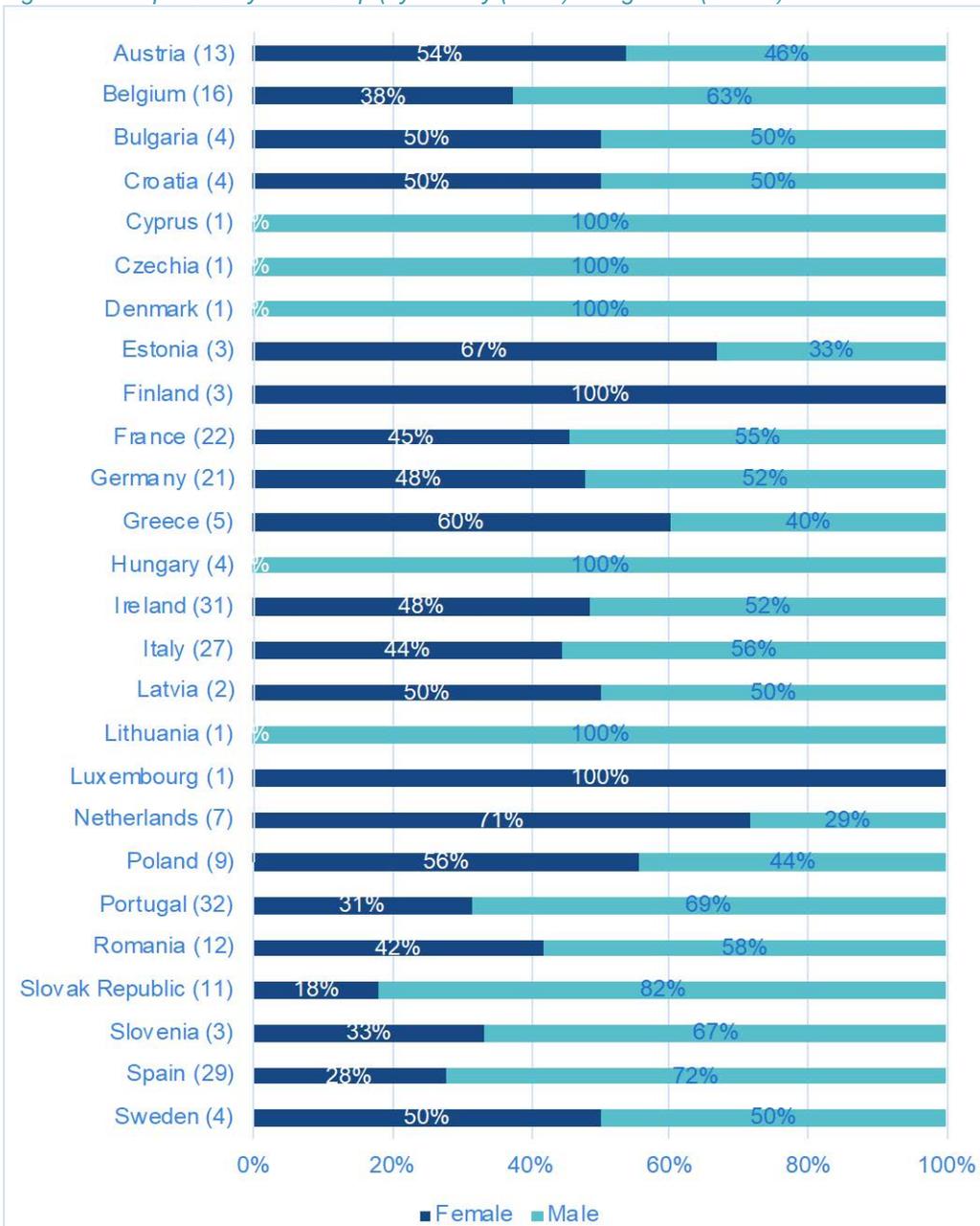
Almost 90% of the responses came from citizens, while about two dozen of the responses came from organisations or fell in the “other” category. A few respondents, despite being affiliated to an organisation, responded to the survey in their individual capacity. Five respondents also answered on behalf of public authorities. Not all respondents provided all demographic information³.

The particular situation of Brexit is reflected in this survey report. 21 UK-born citizens responded having a nationality of an EU Member State. Irish is the most often mentioned second nationality of the UK-born European citizens. Many of the UK-born respondents identify themselves as “EU citizens”. For several of them, responding to the survey provided an opportunity to express their regret with respect to the loss of their EU citizenship rights.

The public consultation attracted respondents with a wide profile. For 62% of the respondents, the country of origin (or home country), the country of residence (or host country) and the nationality (citizenship) were the same. For the 38% where these three factors were not identical, this is mainly due to the change of residence – a larger number of mobile citizens for example can be found in Belgium, or due to a change in nationality – for example ten UK-born citizens now have Irish citizenship. Figure 1 provides an overview of the distribution of respondents by citizenship and by gender. The highest number of responses came from Portugal (32), followed by Ireland (31) and Spain (29).

³ For example, some did not share information on their year of birth and/or their sector of employment. This is factored into the survey respondents’ profile descriptions, and the notes below each graph and table state the relevant number of responses (i.e. the base/number of observations).

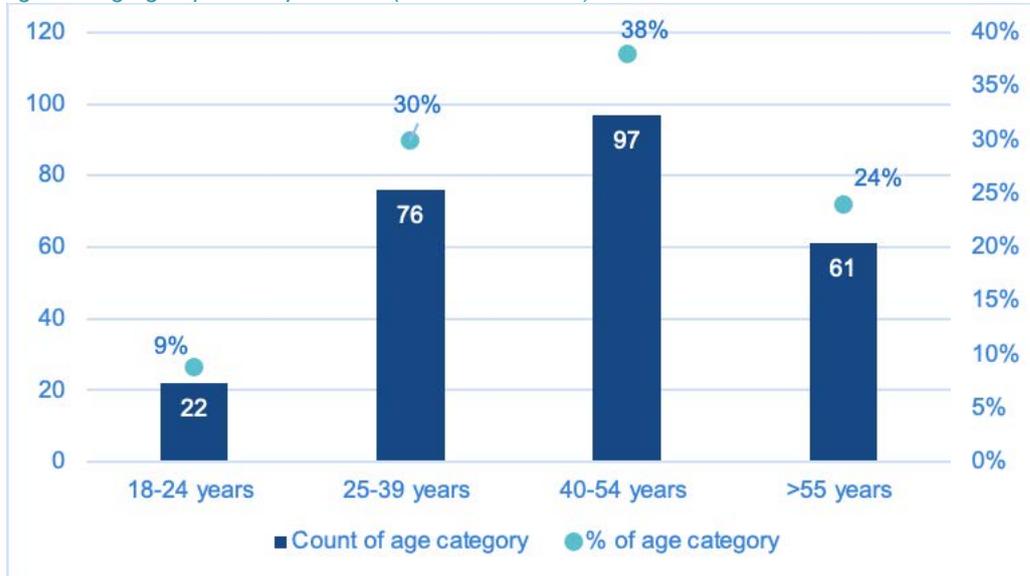
Figure 1 Responses by citizenship (by country (totals) and gender (shares))



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
 Note: Nr of observations =267, based on Q3. What is your nationality?

When it comes to the age of the respondents (Figure 2), about 90% were older than 25 years. Within this group, those aged between 40 and 54 represented the largest sub-set. The smallest group was made up of those aged between 18 and 24 (22 responses, 9%).

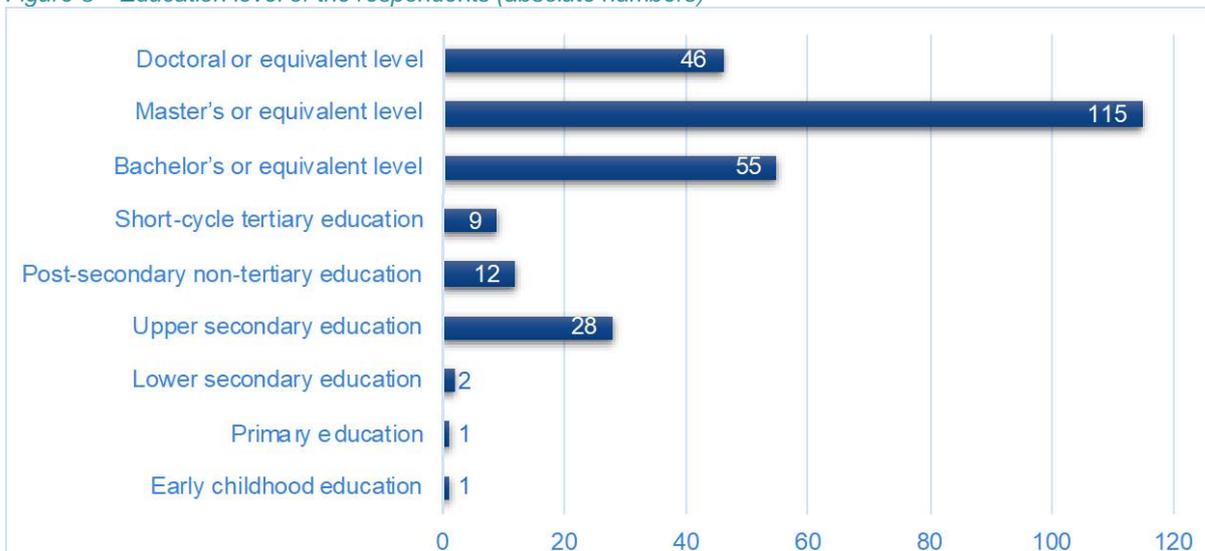
Figure 2 Age groups of respondents (totals and shares)



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
 Note: Nr of observations =256, based on Q39. What is your year of birth?

When asked about their level of education, 115 (42%) reported a Master's degree or equivalent, followed by Bachelor's (20%), and doctoral (17%) levels. Post-secondary non-tertiary and short-cycle tertiary education, which are typically vocational, were much less represented (8%).

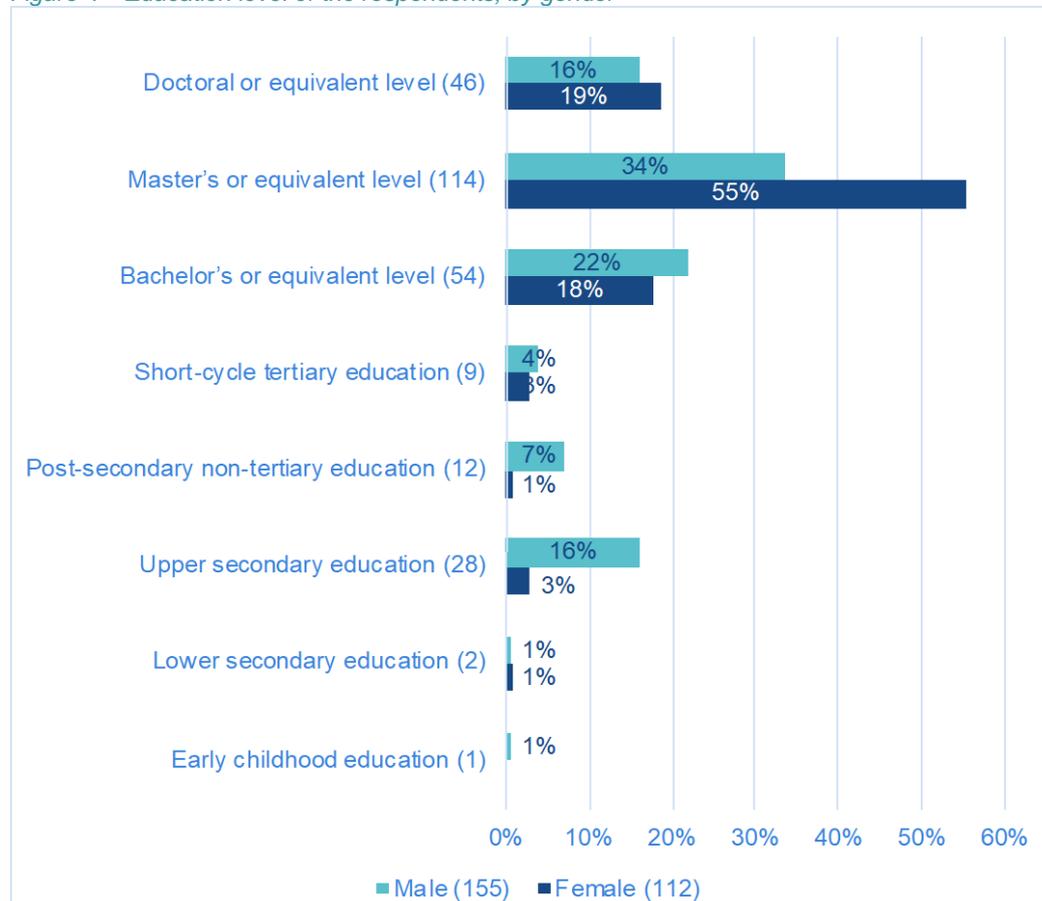
Figure 3 Education level of the respondents (absolute numbers)



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
 Note: Nr of observations =269, based on Q42. Which of the following best describes your latest educational level?

Figure 4 cross-references the education level with gender. While there were in total more male than female respondents (56% and 41% respectively), in absolute and relative numbers, women were more represented in the *Master's* level sub-set, while male respondents dominated the vocational education categories.

Figure 4 Education level of the respondents, by gender

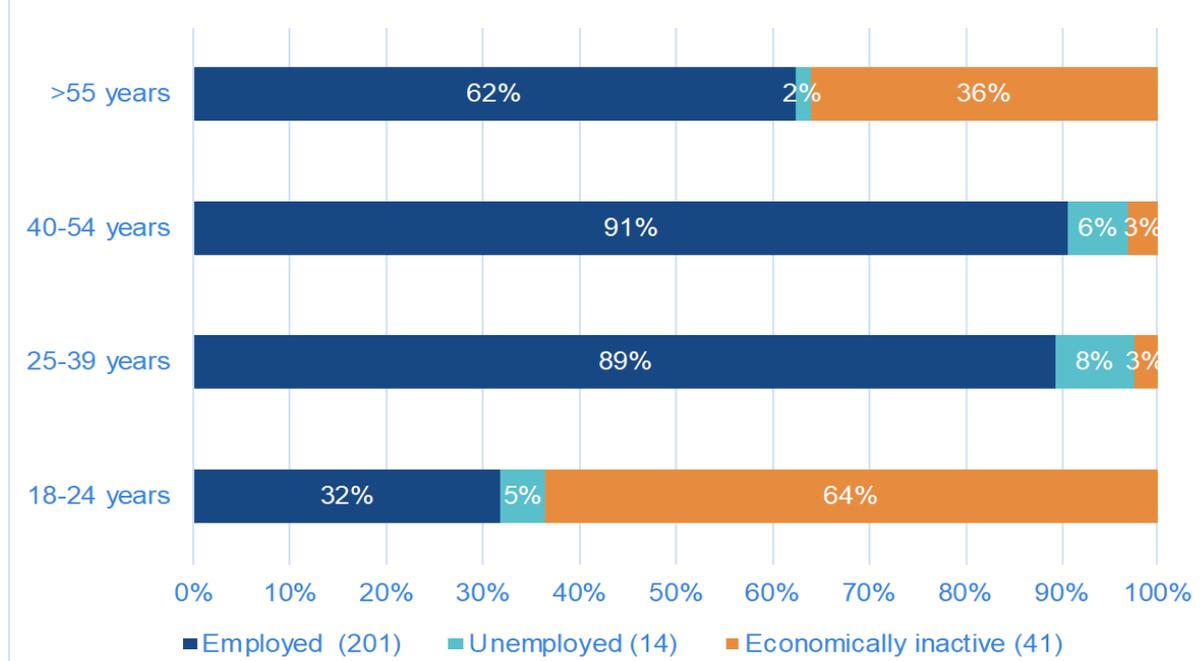


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =267, based on Q42. Which of the following best describes your latest educational level?

Figure 5 shows the employment status by age group. 79% of the respondents were in employment, 16% were inactive and 5% were unemployed. A few respondents did not provide information.

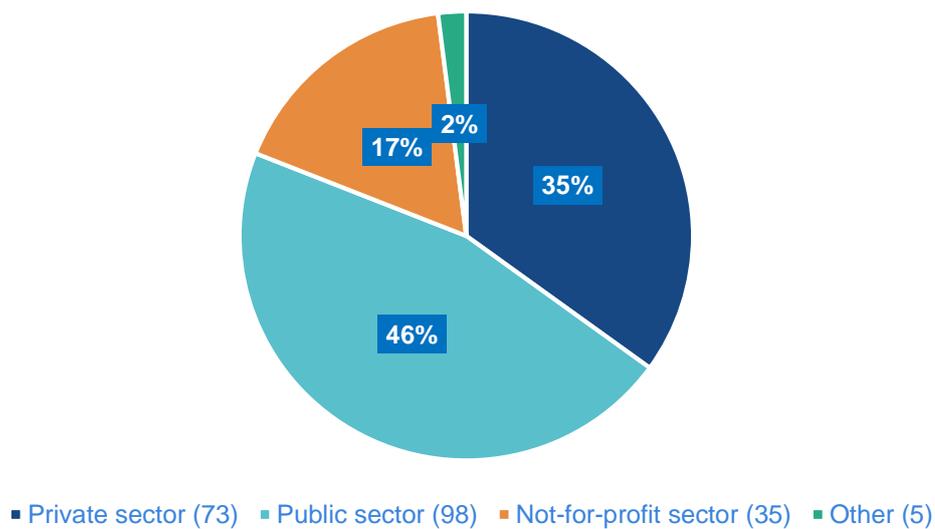
Figure 5 Employment status by age group



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
 Note: Nr of observations =226

The employed respondents (79%) were also asked about their sector of employment. Almost half were employed in the public sector and around a third in the private sector. 17% of the respondents worked in the non-profit sector. The category “Other” employment attracted only a few respondents.

Figure 6 Sector of employment



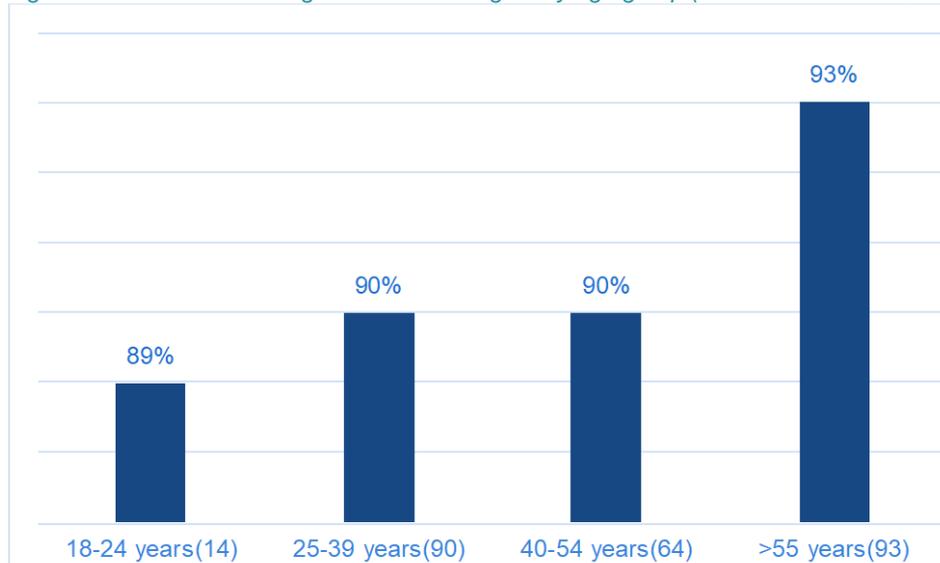
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
 Note: Nr of observations =211, based on Q43; In which sector do you work?

Level of knowledge about citizenship rights

Roughly 67% of the respondents went through an initial (optional) round of seven questions, which indicated their level of knowledge about the EU citizenship rights.

There was no clear pattern in terms of shares of correct answers to the seven questions (Figure 7). The eldest group of respondents tended to answer correctly more often than the other age groups, but the difference is marginal.

Figure 7 Level of knowledge about citizen rights by age group (share of correct answers per age group)



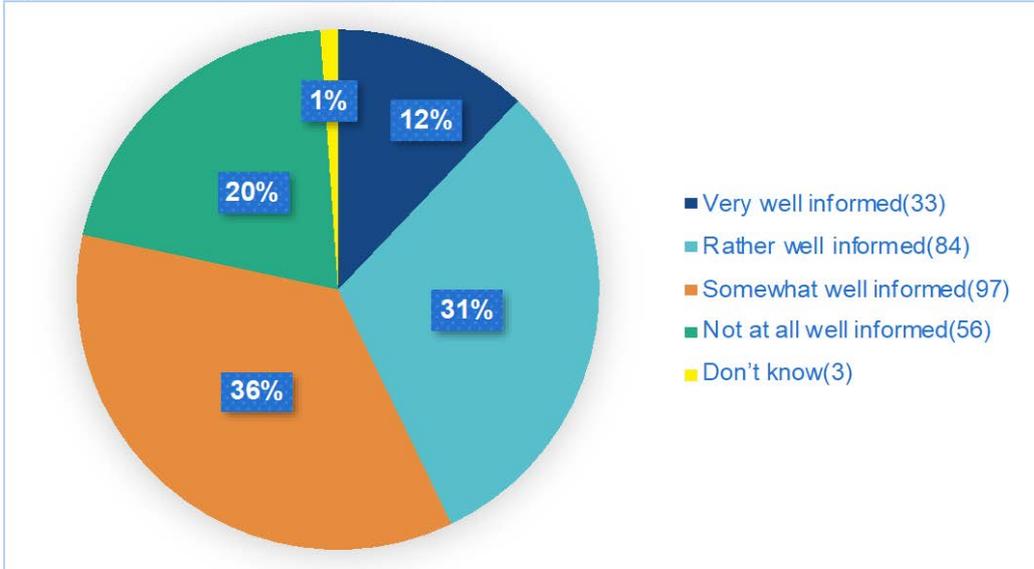
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =183

Information level of respondents

The first question asked how well-informed respondents felt about what they can do when the EU citizen rights are not respected. While 12% felt “very well informed”, more than two thirds felt “somewhat well informed” or “rather well informed”. Around 20% of respondents felt “not at all well informed”. Analysing the responses to the open questions of the public consultation coming from the group of respondents feeling not at all well informed is a very important element and taken up later in section 7.

Figure 8 Level of information on rights as EU citizen



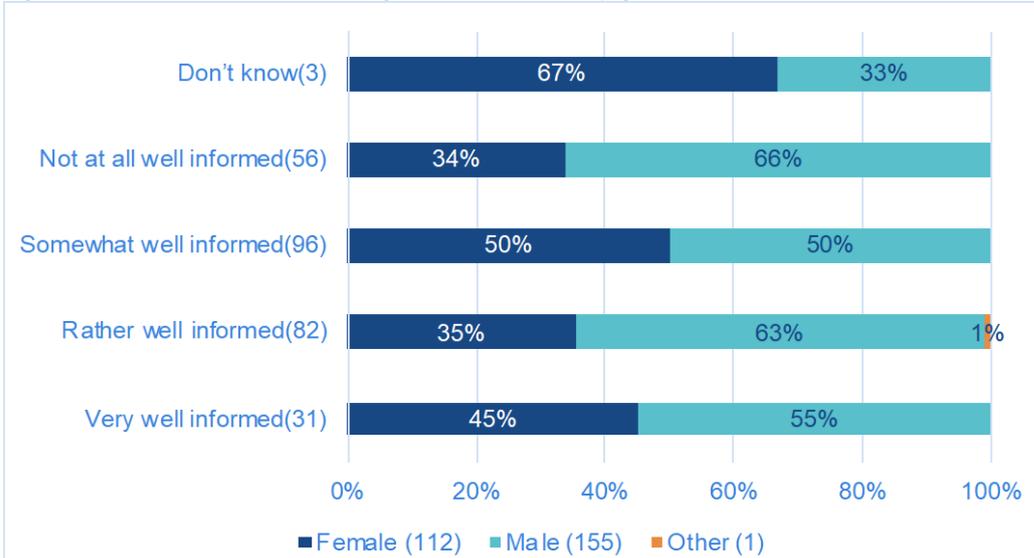
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =273, based on Q2. How well informed do you feel about what you can do when your rights as an EU citizen are not respected?

Figure 9 breaks down the level of knowledge of/familiarity with the EU citizen rights by gender.

Relatively speaking, more men than women felt well informed. They represented, for example, 55% of the respondents who felt very well informed, and 63% of the respondents who felt rather well informed.

Figure 9 Level of information on rights as EU citizen, by gender



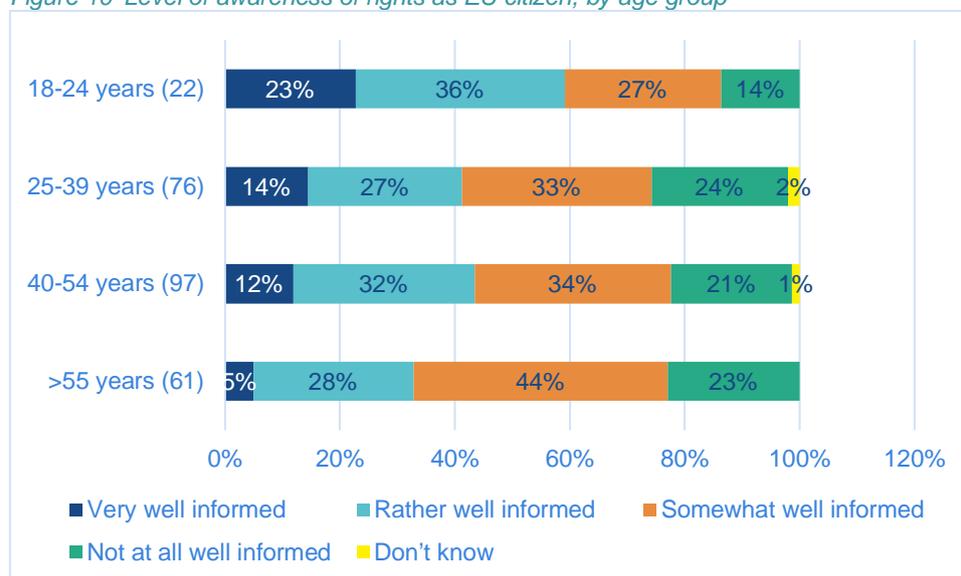
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =273, based on Q2. How well informed do you feel about what you can do when your rights as an EU citizen are not respected? Scaled by level of information.

Figure 10 breaks down the level of awareness of the EU citizen rights by age. The results showed that in particular respondents between 18–24 years old feel either very well or rather well informed (60%). In all other groups, almost a quarter of the respondents did not feel well informed at all. By and large, the level of awareness decreases over the different age groups reaching only 33% in the group of +55

year-olds. Checking for the educational level, respondents with a Master's or Doctoral level or equivalent degree felt the most informed, while lower degrees such as post-secondary non-tertiary education and Bachelor's or equivalent levels are more often found among the respondents expressing to be not at all well informed.

Figure 10 Level of awareness of rights as EU citizen, by age group



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =256, based on Q2. How well informed do you feel about what you can do when your rights as an EU citizen are not respected?

Key insights on ... the respondents

- The consultation received 343 replies. 90% came from citizens, with 258 from citizens of 26 EU Member States and 52 from UK citizens. 10% were submitted by academia, civil society and public authorities.
- 56% of respondents were men (155), and 41% women (112).
- Two thirds of the respondents were between the age of 25 and 54.
- 201 respondents were in employment, only 14 were unemployed, and 141 were inactive (for example students or pensioners). About half of the respondents worked in the public sector and 17% worked in the not-for-profit sector. More than a third worked in the private sector.
- 23 position papers were shared with the Commission in order to accompany the public consultation responses.
- Young respondents felt more well informed than older age groups.

3 Right to move freely within the EU

The rights to move freely and to reside within the EU territory are among the cornerstones of the European Union. Everyone travelling to another Member State for work or vacation exercises the right to move freely within the EU. The following sections look at the relevant survey sections on travelling and residing within the EU.

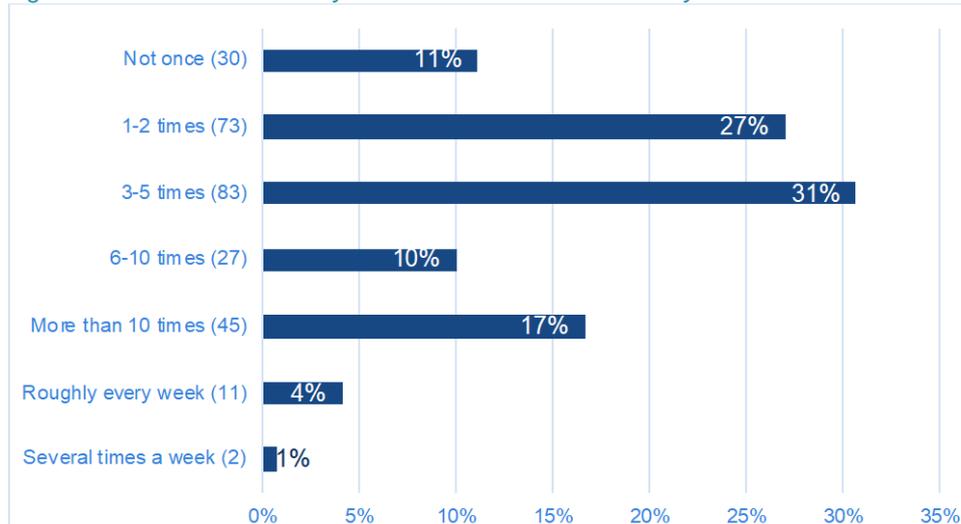
Other research has been conducted recently on the level of awareness of EU citizenship rights. On the right to move freely within the EU, the below provides a summary of the results:

The results of a recent Eurobarometer survey (2020) on EU citizenship rights show that the right to move [within the EU] is the right most well-known and appreciated by the EU citizens. This was also confirmed by several surveys carried out by pan-European civil society organisations: “*Out of all EU citizens’ rights, free movement is definitely the most used and the most cherished by EU citizens. In fact, the number of mobile EU citizens is constantly growing – between 2017 and in 2018, there was an increase of around 600,000 mobile citizens residing in an EU country other than their own.*” (European Citizen Action Service).

The right to move and reside freely within the EU “*is the most visible and recognised right of EU citizens. It really expresses that the European Union and European cooperation is something ‘tangible’ and visible*” (European House – Budapest), and as such, “*demonstrates and promotes a better understanding of the value of European integration, as well as citizens’ participation in shaping the Union. The positive economic effects of intra-EU labour migration for the receiving countries have now been recognised by a majority of the citizens*” (Europeans Throughout the World).

When asked about their travelling within the EU in 2019 (outside the country of residence), four out of five respondents travelled at least once in 2019 within the EU. The broad majority of 85% travelled occasionally or quite regularly to other EU Member States while less than 15% of respondents did not travel outside their country of residence. Almost one in three respondents travelled once or twice (27%), or up to 5 times (31%), and only few up to 10 times (10%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11 Number of travels by EU citizens outside their country of residence and within the EU in 2019



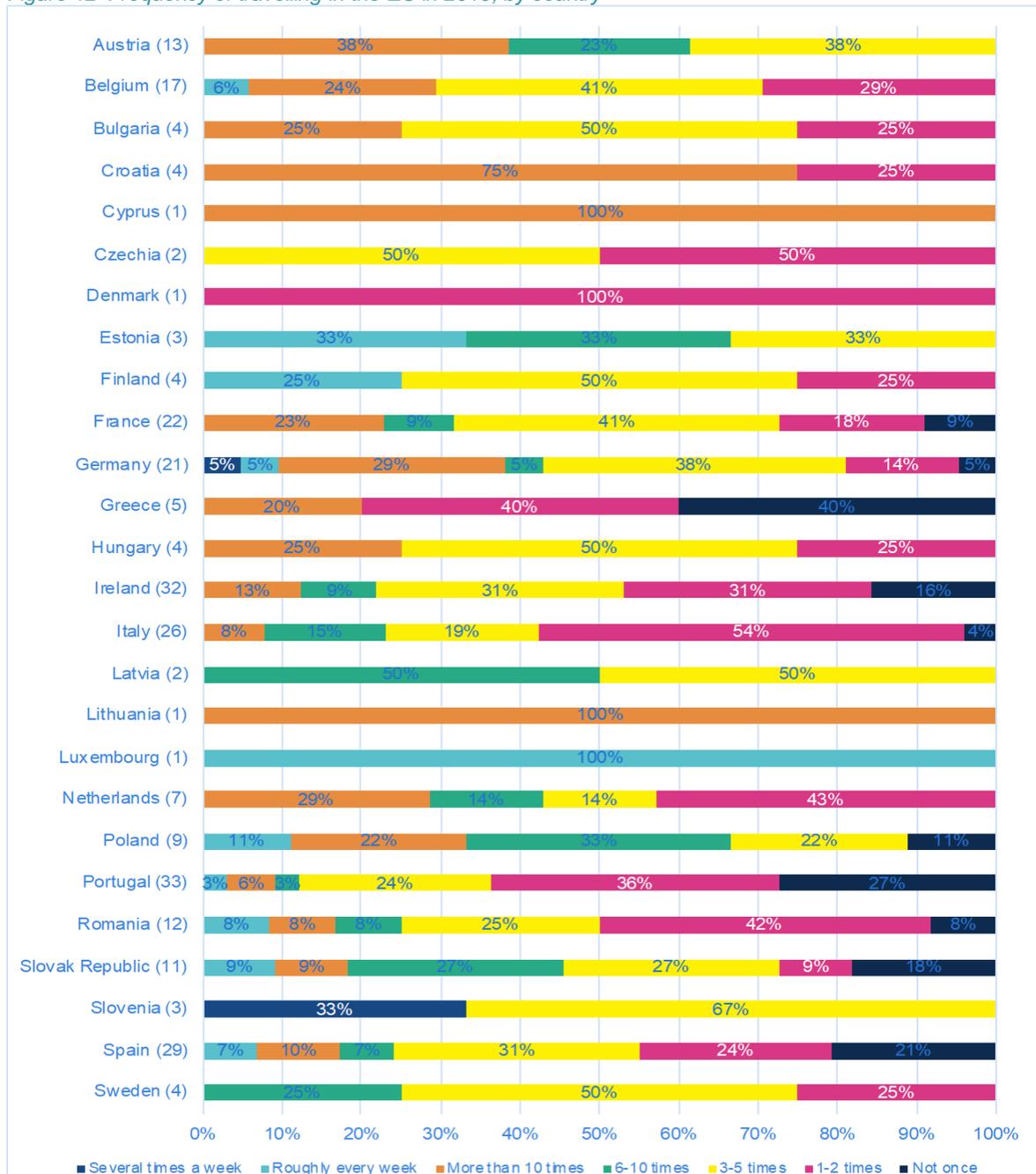
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =271, based on Q4. As an EU citizen, you have the right to travel freely within the EU. In 2019, how often did you travel to EU countries other than the one of which you are a national or the one in which you reside? Scaled shares

Figure 12 shows the share of respondents per Member State by frequency of travel. Respondents from 11 countries reported travelling very frequently, i.e. travelling on a weekly basis. However, given the limited number of observations, there is no clear pattern that can be discerned.

The share of citizens not travelling at all in 2019 was somewhat higher in Greece, Spain, or Portugal. In these countries, but also in Italy and the Netherlands, the share of respondents travelling not at all or only once or twice ranged from 43% in the Netherlands to 80% in Greece.

Figure 12 Frequency of travelling in the EU in 2019, by country



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =271, based on Q4. As an EU citizen, you have the right to travel freely within the EU. In 2019, how often did you travel to EU countries other than the one of which you are a national or the one in which you reside?

Respondents were asked to select the main reasons for travelling to an EU Member State (other than the one of their residency and/or their nationality) from a list of options. Respondents were able to indicate multiple options. Among those who selected only one option, “holidays” was the predominant purpose of travelling followed by “work-related” reasons.

This finding is repeated on the general level, where “holidays” was the most frequently chosen reason (65%) for travelling to another EU country for a short period of time. The next most frequently indicated reason was “visiting family and friends”, followed very closely by “work-related”. In total, 42% of all respondents indicated both these reasons.

“To go shopping” is often associated with the geographic location of citizens in cross-border regions. Overall, this reason was less frequently chosen. Individually taken, 13% mentioned it as a reason. If one looks at the country where the respondents are located, then half of the respondents travelling for shopping are living in Belgium, Portugal and Slovakia.

Figure 13 provides a scaled picture of the choices. The number of respondents who chose each option is given in brackets behind each category.

Figure 13 Travelling within the EU, reason for travelling (multiple answers possible)



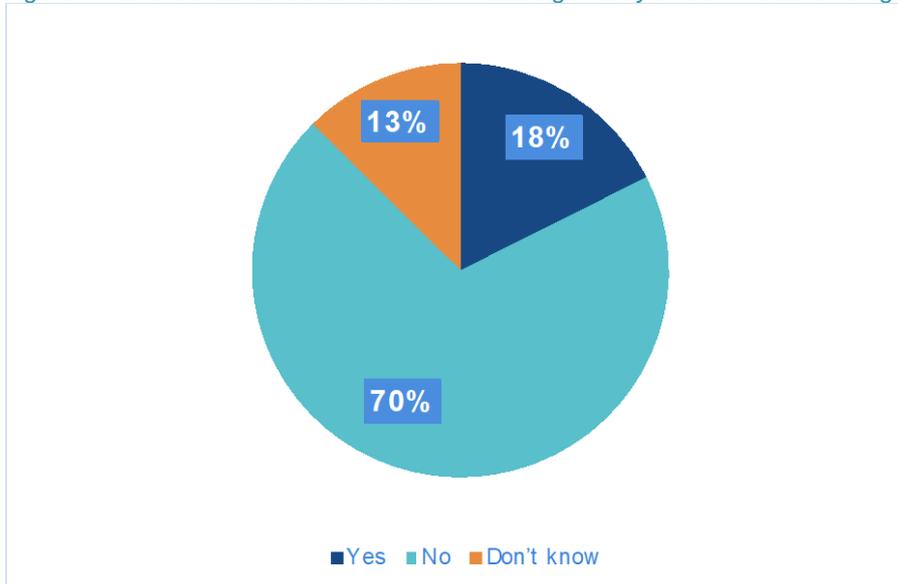
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =240, based on Q4.1. For what purpose? Scaled shares

Respondents were further asked if they had faced discrimination on the basis of their nationality when travelling in other EU countries. The vast majority of respondents (70%) reported not having faced discrimination, while less than 18% claimed they had and 13% did not know. In terms of nationality, mainly respondents from Ireland, Portugal and France reported discrimination on the basis of their nationality when travelling in other EU countries.

Respondents also had the opportunity to provide some additional information regarding their experience – 12 respondents provided comments. Among the examples given were language barriers (a reported unwillingness of authorities to communicate in English); unfriendliness at border checks; priority handling of national citizens; different entrance fees for cultural sights.

Figure 14 Share of citizens that felt discriminated against by an administration on grounds of nationality



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =239, based on Q5. In the past when travelling, have you ever been discriminated against by an administration on ground of your nationality? That is, have you ever been treated differently from someone who held the nationality of the country you were in?

There is a degree of complementarity between the position papers submitted by civil society and the results of this public consultation.

In order to be effective, the right to move and reside freely within the EU should be accompanied by appropriate measures making sure that it is “enjoyed by all [citizens] on an equal basis with others by drawing particular attention in this context to marginalised, discriminated and excluded groups” (Civil Society Europe). For instance, as stressed by the organisation in a recent Position paper, “persons with disabilities find many difficulties to move to another country because of lack of mutual recognition of disability across EU Member States causing people to lose their disability benefits or support services (e.g. personal assistance), as they will need to go through another disability assessment in the country they move to”.

Key findings on ... the right to move freely within the EU

- In 2019, most respondents travelled for their holidays. Work-related reasons or visiting friends and family come on second and third place, respectively.
- In a number of Member States, a large share of respondents did not leave their country in 2019. Given the small sample, no conclusions can be drawn as to why.
- 43 respondents believe themselves to have been discriminated against when exercising their EU citizenship right to free movement due to their nationality. Discrimination was felt at border controls or through a pricing system that treated nationals differently from other EU citizens.

4 The right to reside in another Member State

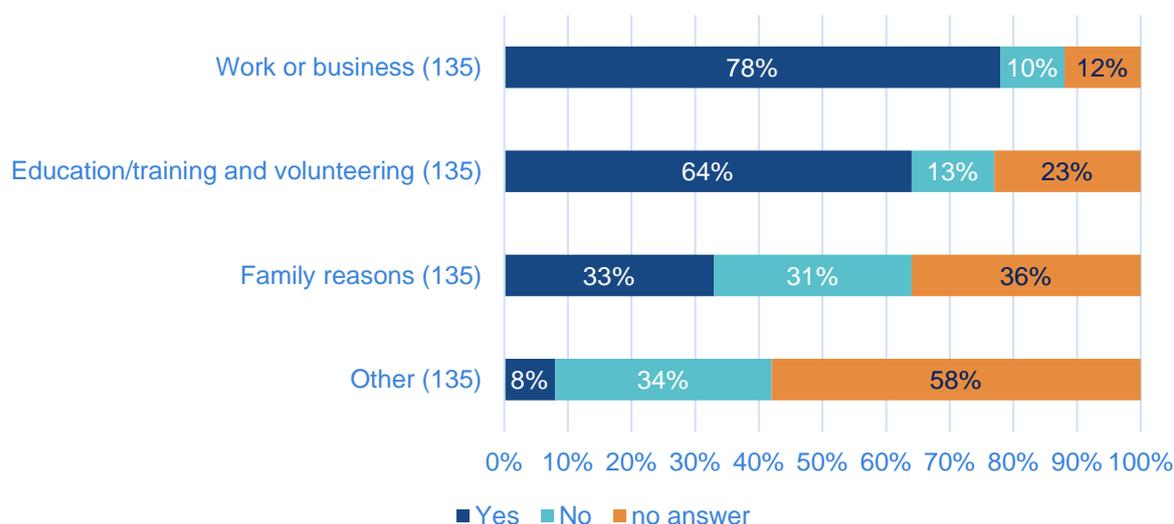
While the previous questions looked at short-term travel (i.e. lasting less than three months), EU citizens have the right to reside in another Member State. This may require different administrative procedures.

Based on Eurostat data⁴, in 2019, 3.3% of the EU citizens aged 20–64 resided in an EU Member State other than that of their citizenship. This share has slightly increased since 2009 (2.4%).

The results are very even: 50% of the respondents indicated they had resided in another EU country (135 respondents) while 50% had not lived in another EU country for longer than three months (136 respondents).

Figure 15 shows that the respondents who lived in another EU country for more than three months did so primarily for “work or business-related” reasons (78%) and for “education, training and volunteering” purposes (64%). Around one in three respondents lived out of his/her country of origin for family reasons (33%). It should be noted that respondents can have resided in another EU Member State more than once in their life and for different reasons.

Figure 15 Reasons for residing beyond the 3-month period in another EU country



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 135, based on Q6.1. What were the reasons for this?

Civil society addressed the 3-month period of unconditional residence. The European Citizen Action Service, for example, stated that we “*should not re-start every time an EU citizen leaves the territory of the Member State, with the effect that in the absence of an official system of registration, come-and-go residents struggle to establish residence-based rights*”. (Source: European Citizen Action Service)

When asked what kind of information citizens used regarding the administrative side prior to the move, more than 50% of the respondents provided an answer⁵. Most of them searched for work related **administrative information**. This includes information on how to obtain residency and work permits,

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_citizens_living_in_another_Member_State_-_statistical_overview

⁵ Question 7: “Before moving, what kind of information did you seek regarding the administrative side of your move?”

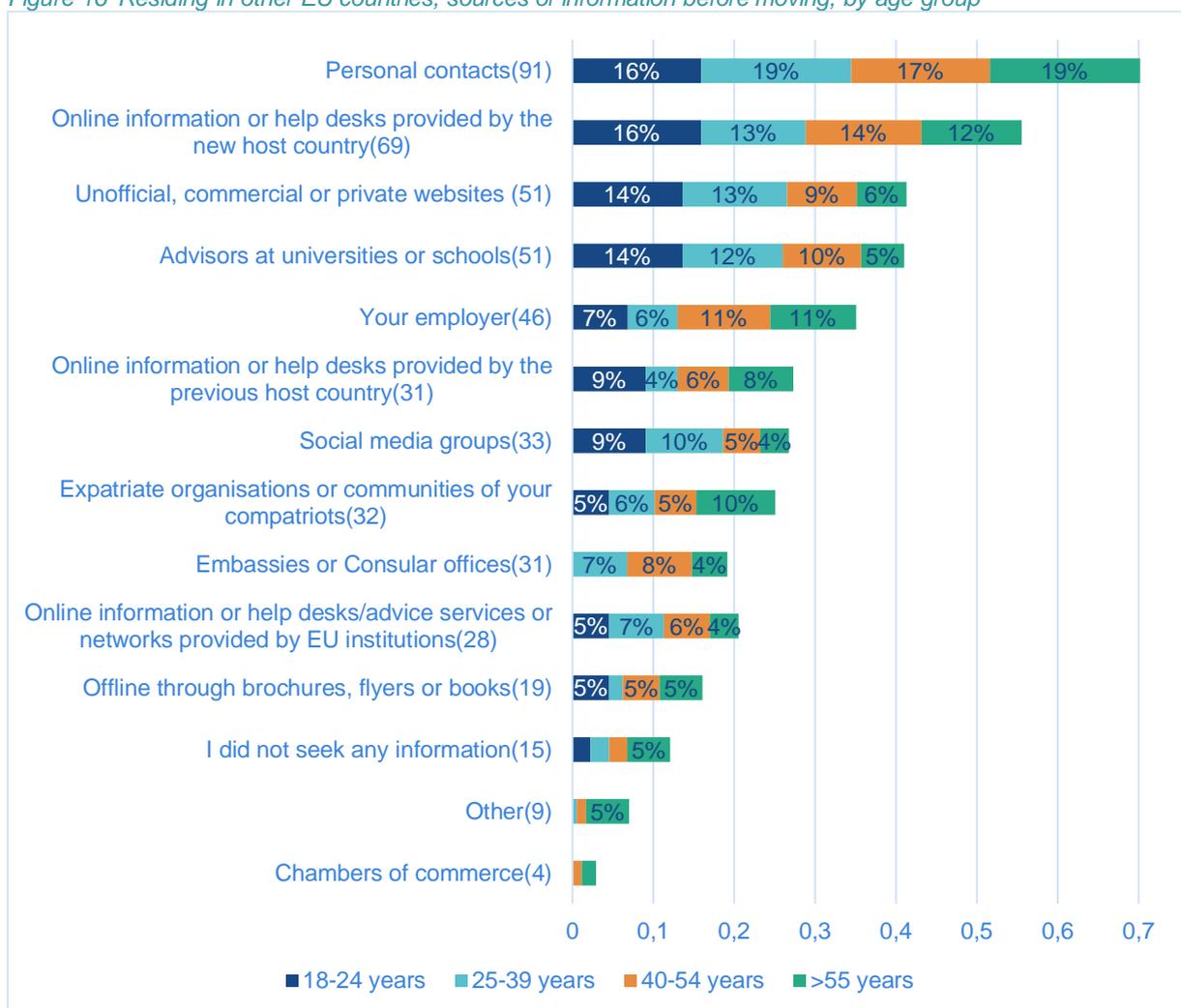
how to register in the new municipality, and on social security benefits (mainly to access the healthcare system and pension schemes).

They were also searching for information on **practical matters** such as the requirements to rent an apartment or buy a house, the process to get a phone number, the documentation and procedures to open a bank account, or how to register a car. Citizens moving for educational purposes or parents moving with children also searched for information regarding studying and employment schemes in the new country.

Non-EU nationals reported searching for information on a number of topics, such as access to healthcare and tax schemes, pension entitlement, extending driving licence validity or the renewal of residency permits.

The next question explored what sources of information tended to be used by individuals who are moving from one country to another. Respondents were asked to indicate all relevant sources.

Figure 16 Residing in other EU countries, sources of information before moving, by age group



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =131, based on Q8. Before moving, which of the following sources of information did you use for your transition from one country to another?

In terms of relative importance of the various options, “information through personal contacts” was the most important source (93 responses).⁶ This was echoed through all age groups, as shown in Figure 19.

Other sources of information mentioned by respondents were flyers and brochures from governmental agencies (e.g. on employment). Some respondents indicated that they had visited the new place of residence in advance and went to the local information helpdesks (where available), or consulted with private specialised relocation services.

Respondents who resided in another EU Member State were also asked to rank up to three of the sources they found most useful. The ranking of the sources consulted *before* the move (as in Figure 16 above) was almost identical to the ranking of sources consulted *after* the move. The usefulness of personal contacts was strongly confirmed – this source of information obtained the highest share with 19% of all options.

The same group of respondents was also asked whether they would have liked to have had more information prior to their move.⁷ Among the 30 answers given, about half stated “nothing”. The remaining ones indicated that they would have primarily been interested in sourcing more specific information about the administrative formalities (e.g. registration/deregistration or the tax regime).

Registration and in particular its impacts at a personal level seems to be a major problem for some of the respondents. They indicated that they would have searched for more precise information on the rights and obligations of residency, ways to potentially circumvent formal registration in order to prevent unwanted effects. They pointed to difficulties in identifying the relevant information sources, difficulties in obtaining this information in English and an unwillingness of people in the administrations to deal with foreigners who do not speak the language of the host country.

UK nationals in addition would have sought more information regarding health insurance and tax schemes in their new Member State of work and residency.

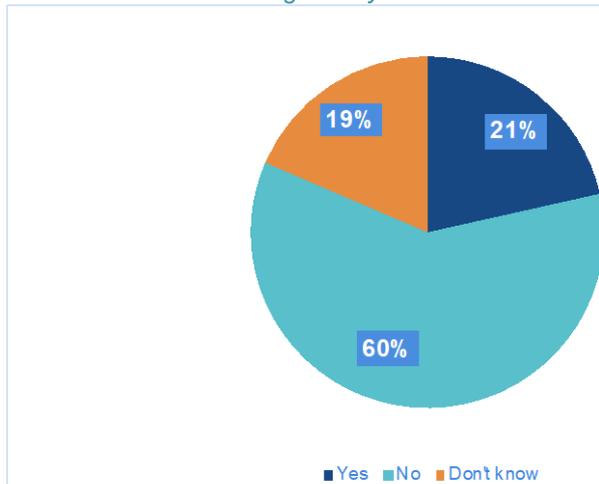
A position paper by civil rights associations also states that mobile citizens face persisting problems due to a lack of information when moving to another EU Member State. This is particularly the case when “*applying for residence documents, accessing healthcare or job market, trying to be politically active, etc.*” (European Citizen Action Service).

Finally, respondents were also asked whether or not they had faced discrimination due to their nationality by any administration. The vast majority (60%) answered negatively but more than one fifth (21%) indicated they had experienced some sort of discrimination, while 19% did not know.

⁶ The numbers in Figure 19 do not match entirely since some respondents did not reveal their age.

⁷ Question 9. “After having moved, what information do you wish you had sought prior to moving?”

Figure 17 When residing elsewhere in the European Union for more than three months, were you ever discriminated against by an administration based on your nationality?



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =135, based on Q10. When residing elsewhere in the European Union for more than three months, were you ever discriminated against by an administration based on your nationality?

When asked to elaborate, respondents shared experiences of discrimination linked to the behaviour of individuals or the administration's staff, as well as experiences that resulted from existing rules and procedures.

- For example, some students reported discriminatory situations when renting accommodation. While occasionally this is linked to the behaviour of private citizens (e.g. the private owners charging a higher price than to nationals), in other cases the discrimination seems to result from existing rules. A respondent noted that in France, for example, foreign residents need both a bank account and a registration certificate in order to rent accommodation.
- Some respondents reported cases of "indirect discrimination". In countries which use digital ID cards for their citizens, foreign residents without the opportunity to obtain a digital ID face obstacles in accessing some services (a case from the Netherlands).
- Another example provided in the consultation noted the Austrian practice of Austria-born children of mobile EU citizens. They need to obtain a registration certificate for their baby in order to obtain some social benefits for the child. According to the respondent, obtaining the certificate is a very lengthy process, whereas Austrian parents are not required to obtain such a certificate.
- Some respondents reported issues in accessing banking services, due to corporate policies (notably, difficulties in transferring money to an Italian bank for a Belgian citizen), or to open a bank account (in Slovakia).

Respondents were asked to select challenges they had faced once they had moved to another EU country from a predefined list of options. Respondents indicated "lengthy and unclear administrative procedures" (21%) in the new country and "a lack of sufficient or clear information on their rights" (17%) as key challenges. "Difficulties in the exchange of information between the public authorities of the previous and the new country of residence" was the third most often mentioned challenge with 13%.

Figure 18 Challenges faced after the move from residing in other EU countries

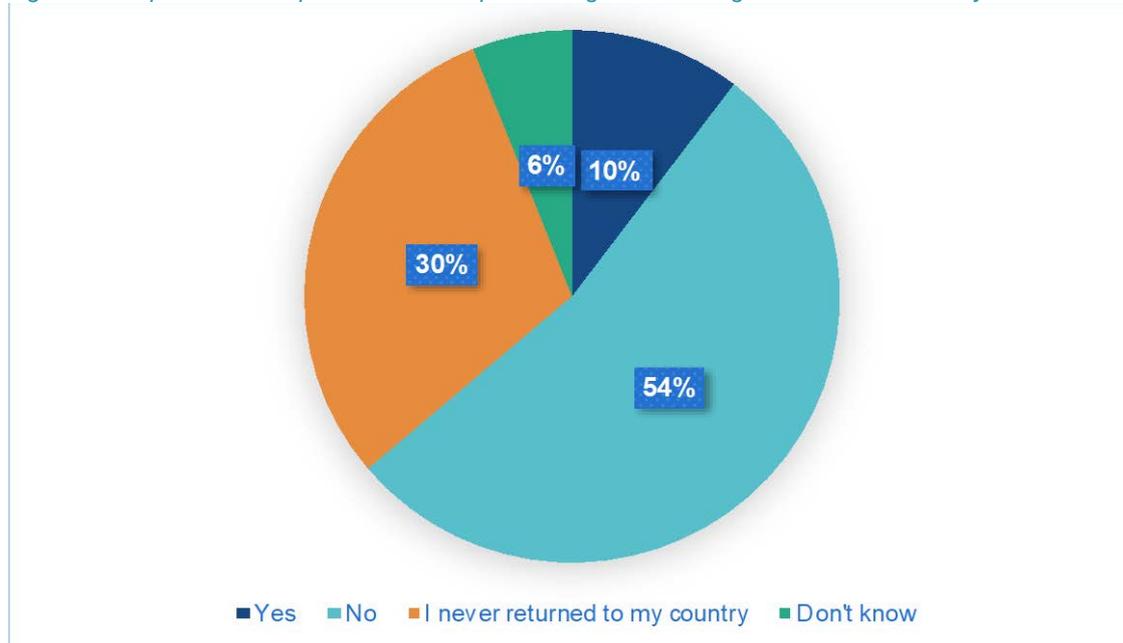


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =105, based on Q11. After having moved to another EU country, did you encounter any of the following? Please choose all answers that apply.

Among the rather large share of respondents that have lived abroad for more than three months (50% of the responding EU citizens), 30% have not returned to their country of origin (Figure 19). This was particularly the case for respondents residing in Belgium and the United Kingdom.

Figure 19 Experience with problems/issues proceeding from residing in another EU country



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =135, based on Q12. Have you ever faced problems when returning to your country because you had resided in another EU country (for instance, when transferring rights or claiming social services)?

Regarding the right to move, the position paper of the European House Budapest recalls that “administrative procedures in the different Member States when citizens are moving from one Member State to another are not at all standardised and sometimes difficult to follow. A new phenomenon in some Member States is the return of its citizens from another Member State: our experience is that it could pose extreme difficulties especially regarding social security and healthcare systems”. (European House – Budapest)

More than half of those who had returned to their home country reported no problems (53% of all responses). A minority of 11% encountered some issues.

Seven respondents provided more detailed information. They indicate difficulties in the recognition of accrued pension rights, getting a car through customs clearance, or extending car insurance from one country to the other.

All respondents, regardless of whether they had lived in another EU country before or not, were asked to assess the usefulness of a list of support measures for mobile EU citizens. A national website explaining rights of mobile EU citizens in a national context and an EU-wide online identification system for eGovernment purposes were identified as potentially being the most helpful (65% of respondents) followed by an online service/platform for receiving and exchanging information (60%) (Table 1).

Table 1 Potential support measures and their usefulness for moving to another EU country

Support measures	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not very helpful	Not helpful at all	Don't know	Total responses
1. A welcome session organised at local or community level to help you understand the basics about living in the country you have moved to.	37%	42%	12%	6%	3%	262
2. Roundtables and/or workshops on specific tasks and skills to help you participate effectively, such as on enrolment in education, finding work, setting up a business, voting etc.	39%	39%	11%	6%	5%	262
3. Social events with locals or other mobile EU citizens to share experiences.	35%	42%	12%	5%	6%	262
4. An online service/platform for receiving and exchanging information.	61%	31%	3%	2%	3%	261
5. A national website explaining rights of mobile EU citizens in a national context.	65%	22%	5%	2%	7%	260
6. An EU-wide online identification system for eGovernment purposes where electronic identity cards can be used to authenticate yourself for administrative purposes.	66%	14%	4%	7%	9%	258
7. Language courses.	59%	30%	5%	2%	5%	263
8. Other.	14%	2%	1%	2%	80%	137

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Based on Q13. If you were to move to another EU country, what would be helpful to settle in that country

Table 2 below compares the answers to the same question from the respondents who have lived in another EU Member and those who have not. Although for a number of support measures, the difference does not seem to be significant, there are three support measures where the data shows rather interesting comparison.

For example, a welcome session was seen as more helpful by those who have not lived in another EU country in the past (82% of them believed this would be either very helpful or quite helpful, compared to 76% of those who have lived in another EU country). Similarly, those without prior experience with living in another Member State saw roundtables and/or workshops on specific tasks and skills as more helpful than those who have lived in another EU country (83% vs. 73%).

On the other hand, social events with locals or other mobile EU citizens were found more helpful by those who have already lived in another Member State (79% vs. 74%).

Table 2 Potential support measures and their usefulness for moving to another EU country (shares of respondents who answered either “Very helpful” or “Quite helpful”)

Support measures	Respondents who have lived in another EU country for at least three months in the past	Respondents who have not lived in another EU country for at least three months in the past
1. A welcome session organised at local or community level to help you understand the basics about living in the country you have moved to.	76%	82%
2. Roundtables and/or workshops on specific tasks and skills to help you participate effectively, such as on enrolment in education, finding work, setting up a business, voting etc.	73%	83%
3. Social events with locals or other mobile EU citizens to share experiences.	79%	74%
4. An online service/platform for receiving and exchanging information.	91%	92%
5. A national website explaining rights of mobile EU citizens in a national context.	86%	87%
6. An EU-wide online identification system for eGovernment purposes where electronic identity cards can be used to authenticate yourself for administrative purposes.	80%	78%
7. Language courses.	89%	88%
8. Other.	20%	13%

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Based on Q13. If you were to move to another EU country, what would be helpful to settle in that country

Specifying what other items would be useful for settling in another EU country, ten respondents made suggestions such as “provide access to cultural events and libraries”, “to organise welcoming workshops about cultural misunderstandings in the new country”, or to create dedicated channels with competent administrators who can help on topics such as healthcare and social security schemes.

According to one of the submitted position papers, misinterpretation of EU rules causes problems for citizens: “EU citizens and non-EU residents meet a lot of administrative hurdles and also face problems due to the misinterpretation of EU rules, particularly related to the coordination of social security systems.” (Civil Society Europe).

Key findings on ... the right to reside in another EU Member State

- Almost 50% of the respondents have lived or live in another EU country other than their country of nationality for longer than three months (135 respondents). Mobile EU citizens are thus overrepresented in the sample, which helps understand their experiences better.
- Most respondents reside(d) in another country because of work, followed by education/study reasons.
- Before moving to another EU country, personal contacts are the main source of information. Various online content and helpdesks are also frequently consulted.
- While overall respondents felt well informed prior to their move, they encountered administrative problems when living abroad. In a number of cases, they wish they had been better informed about social benefits, health insurance, registration procedures and taxes prior to their move.
- 28 respondents experienced some form of discrimination based on their nationality while residing in another EU Member State. These experiences were linked to the behaviour of individuals or the administration's staff, as well as to existing rules and procedures. Renting property, accessing services and opening bank accounts were among the examples.
- According to respondents, an EU-wide online identification system for eGovernment purposes and country level websites explaining rights of mobile EU citizens in a national context would be a helpful means to support mobile EU citizens who choose to exercise this EU citizenship right.

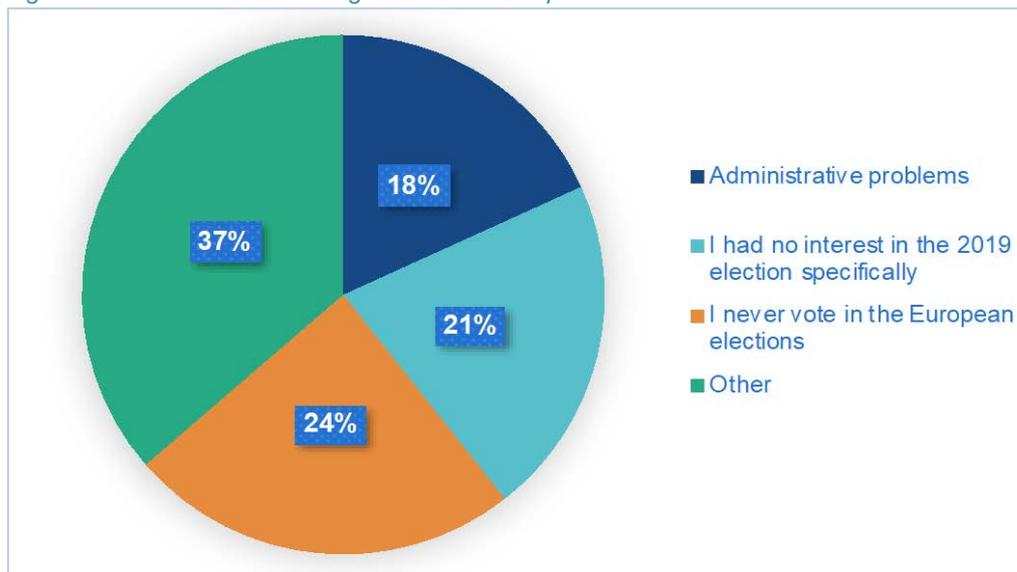
5 Right to vote and stand as a candidate

EU citizens who live in another Member State than their state of nationality have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament elections in the country in which they reside on the same conditions as nationals of that country. They may also retain their right to vote or stand as a candidate in their country of nationality. They may, however, not vote in more than one Member State in the same election. Mobile EU citizens also have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in local or municipal elections in the Member State in which they live, under the same conditions as nationals of that Member State.

The first question asked whether or not the respondent had voted in the 2019 elections to the European Parliament (EP). In 2019, the overall turnout of the elections to the European Parliament was 50.66%. The small sample of the public consultation shows that voters are therefore overrepresented among the respondents to the public consultation. Here, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (85%) reported having voted in the last EP elections, while a minority did not do so (12%).

Those who did not vote in the 2019 EP elections were asked about their reasons. One in four said they never voted in EP elections, while one in five indicated no specific interest in the 2019 elections. 18% mentioned administrative issues and another 37% indicated “other” as their reason (see Figure 20).

Figure 20 Reasons for not voting in the 2019 European Parliament elections



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 33, based on Q14.4 [If Q14=2] What was the reason for this?

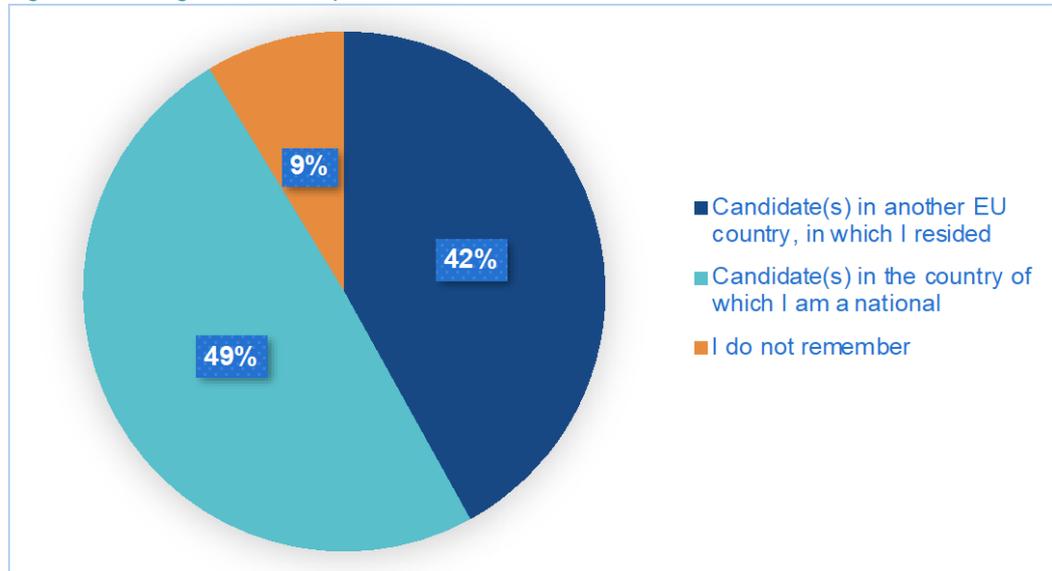
Ten respondents gave further information as to why they had not voted. Among the mentioned hampering factors, were

- Work commitments which did not allow two respondents the time off to vote
- Not having the minimum age requirement to vote
- The move to a non-EU country (e.g. Switzerland)
- Feeling of not being informed enough by the authorities and the media
- Administrative issues: despite duly registration, not having been included in the electoral roll

Returning to the respondents who indicated to have voted, 68% resided in their country of nationality while 32% lived in another EU country at the time of voting.

Among those who voted and lived abroad (one third of all respondents), almost half voted for electoral lists in the country of their nationality (Figure 21).

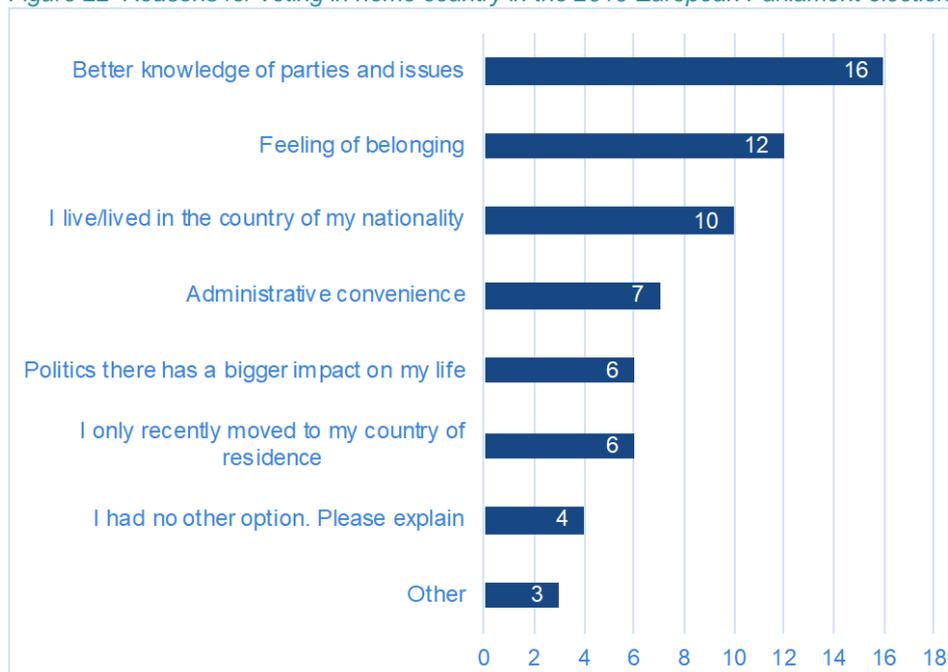
Figure 21 Voting in 2019 European Parliament elections, breakdown of choice for national lists



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.
Note: Nr of observations = 81, based on Q14.2 Did you vote for...

Those who chose to vote in their home country rather than in their host country did so primarily because they had a better understanding of the parties and political issues of their home country (a quarter of all responses fell on this reason). This was followed by a “stronger sense of belonging to their country of origin”. It is important to add that 13% of the respondents indicated that they had voted in their home country because they had actually lived in that country during the elections or they still lived there at the time of submitting the answer to the public consultation.

Figure 22 Reasons for voting in home country in the 2019 European Parliament elections, (absolute numbers)

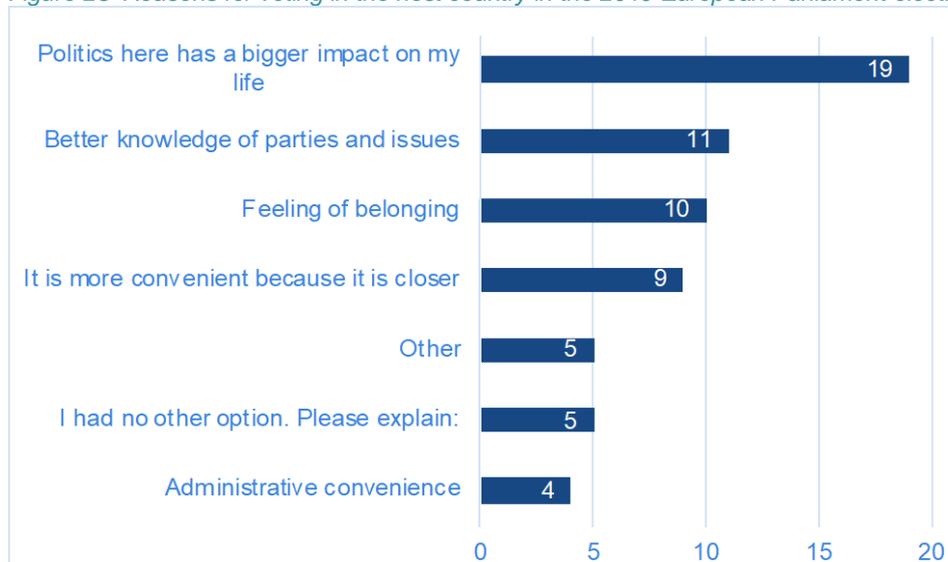


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =39, based on Q14.5 Why did you choose to vote in your country of nationality rather than in your country of residence? Please choose all answers that apply.

For respondents who chose to vote in their country of residence, politics in that country mattered more to their life than politics in their home country (roughly 30% of all answers). They also knew the parties and issues better (18%) and another reason was the feeling of belonging to the host country (16%).

Figure 23 Reasons for voting in the host country in the 2019 European Parliament elections (absolute numbers)



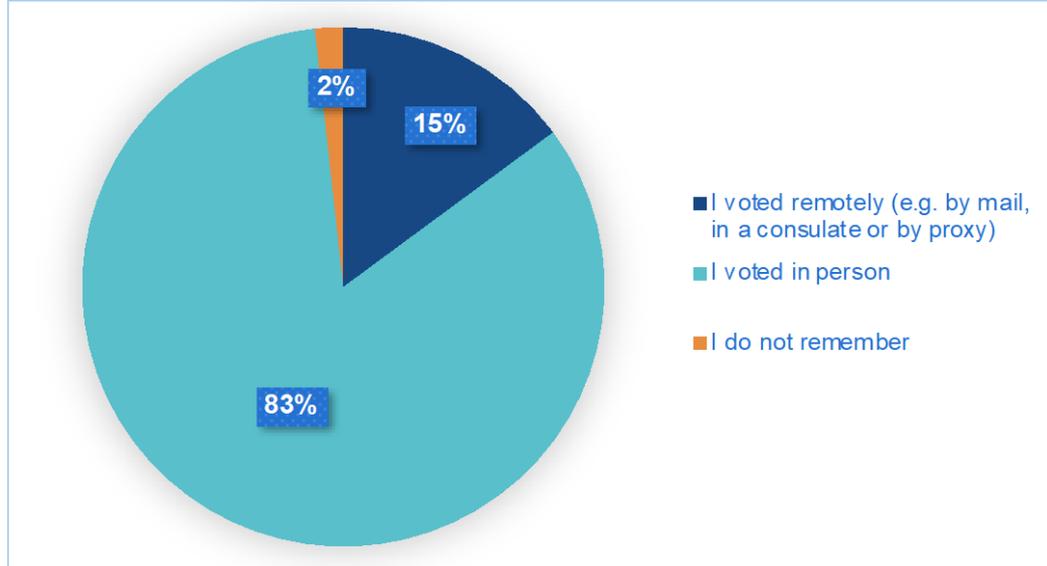
Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =34, based on Q14.6 Why did you choose to vote in your country of residence rather than in your country of nationality? Relative scale.

Among the “other” reasons for choosing to vote in the host country, one respondent provided testimony. They were based in the UK and, despite not being a national of the UK, they “wished to exercise the only (and limited) influence on Brexit by voting for the UK MEPs.”

Of all respondents who voted in the 2019 election to the European Parliament, the vast majority voted in person (83%) while 15% voted remotely (Figure 24).

Figure 24 Voting behaviour – In person or remotely

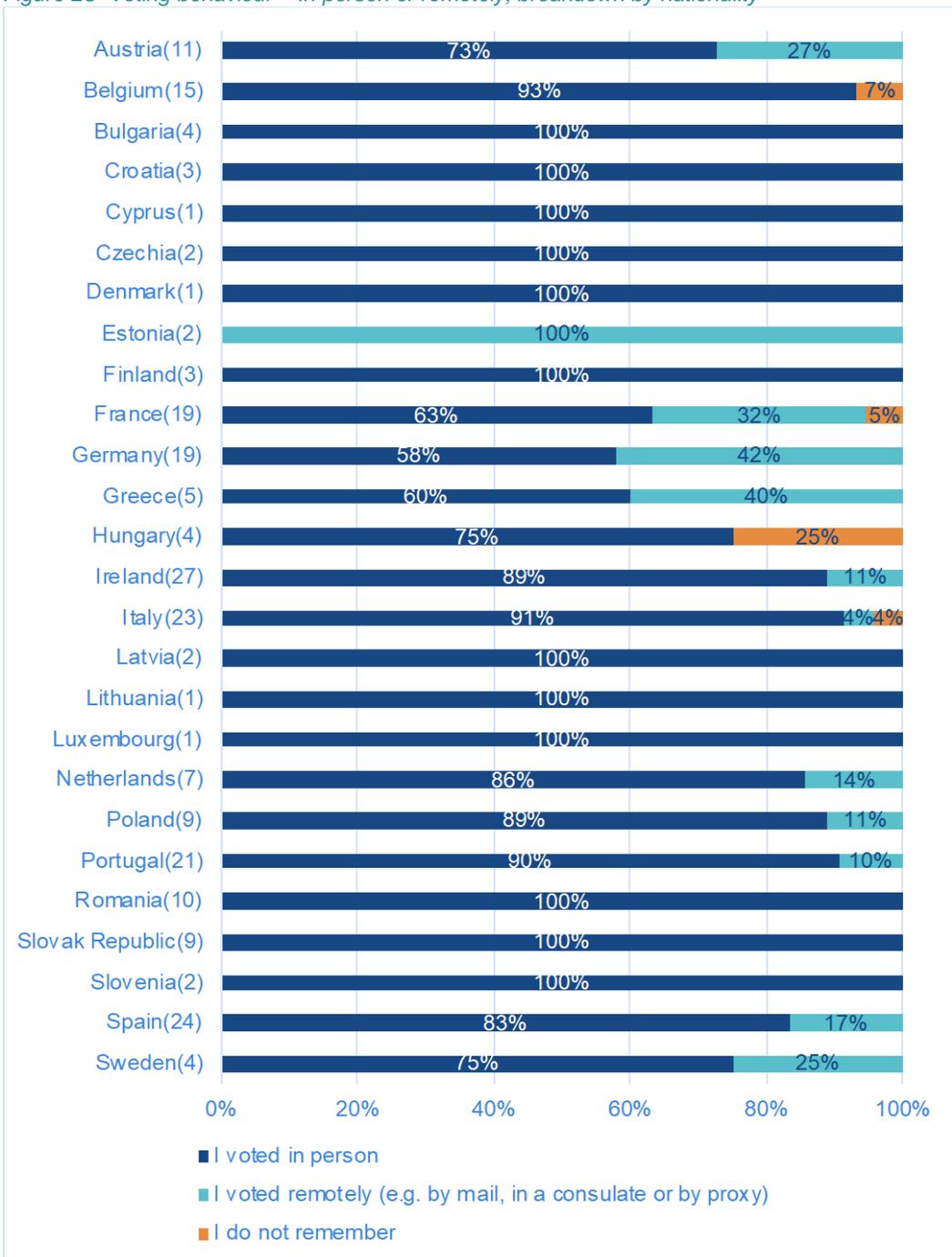


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =229, based on Q 14.3 How did you exercise your vote?

Preferences vary between countries, in part reflecting the national context when it comes to remote voting options and policies.

Figure 25 Voting behaviour – In person or remotely, breakdown by nationality

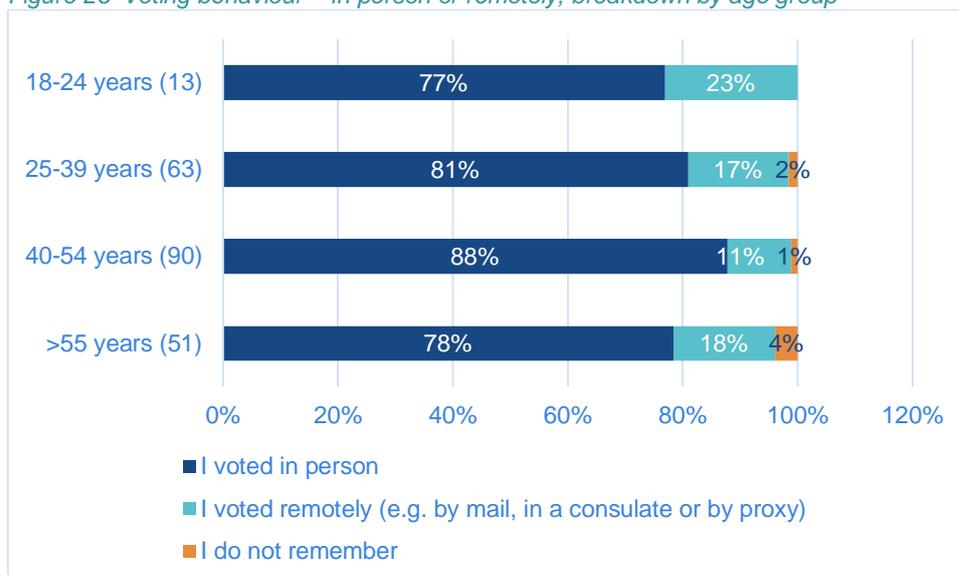


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =229, based on Q 14.3 How did you exercise your vote?

Overall, around 80% of all respondents voted in person. By age group, there are however some differences: while almost 90% in the age group of 40–54 years old voted in person, the youngest and the oldest age groups included larger shares of those voting remotely (23% and 18% respectively).

Figure 26 Voting behaviour – In person or remotely, breakdown by age group



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =217, based on Q 14.3 How did you exercise your vote?

Respondents were asked what would motivate them to vote in 2024.

Around 200 respondents answered they would certainly vote as voting in the next EP elections is “*their democratic right and duty*”, and that a high turnout “*may strengthen democracy and legitimacy of the EU project*”.

While many responded in a positive tone to this question, there were also a number of comments or suggested amendments on the functioning of the EU institutions and the course that European integration should take. Several argued that a different election campaign where political parties coordinate across borders in a truly pan-European way and where the media provide a better understanding of the functions of the EU institutions (instead of focusing on politics in the national contest) would definitely lead to an increase in turnout.

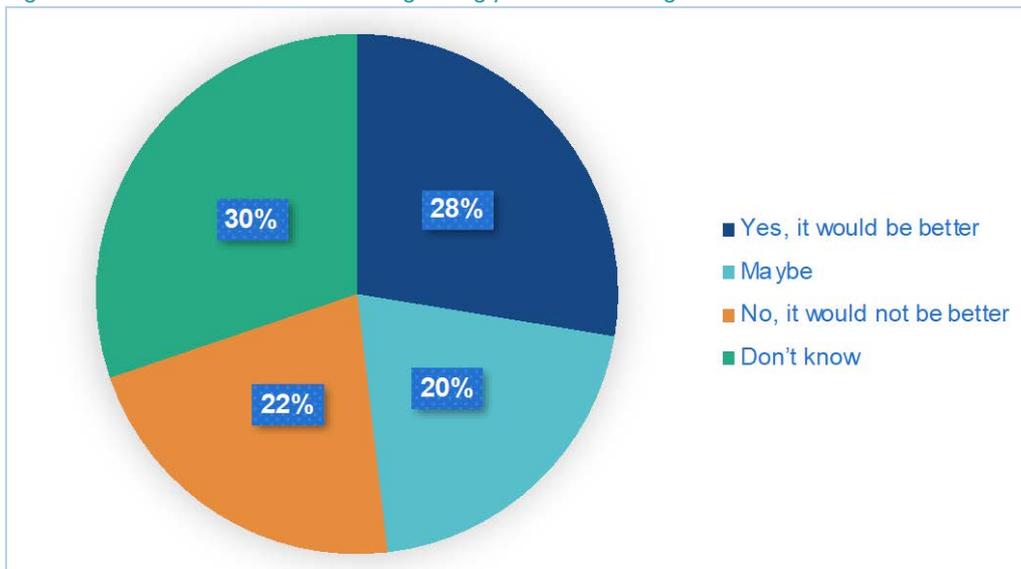
The participation in the EP elections might also increase should the EU institutions (Commission and Council) engage more in promoting democracy across the Union and strengthening the rule of law.

On a more operational level, electronic voting was mentioned as a potential participation booster: some responses mentioned the time to travel or having to work on the day of the elections as factors which had hindered their ability to vote and that this could be overcome with electronic voting in the future.

Inclusiveness was also raised as an issue: some polling stations are simply not accessible to wheelchair users and rectifying this would motivate and enable persons with a physical disability to vote.

Respondents were asked whether they would have welcomed further harmonisation of the voting periods for the EP elections and there was no clear opinion given. Almost one in three suggested that this would be a good idea (28%), and more than one in five were against it (22%). All the other respondents either did not know, did not answer, or answered “maybe”.

Figure 27 Views on the effect to bring voting periods close together



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =268, based on Q16. In 2019, European citizens were called on to vote at the European Parliament elections from 23 May till 26 May, depending on the country. Do you think that bringing the voting periods of the European Parliament election closer together would be better?

Almost 30 respondents also provided comments on bringing voting periods closer together. About one third selected “no, it would not be better”. The main argument provided by this group concerned the different voting traditions in the Member States that should be taken into account (“Different countries, different voting traditions. I respect that”). Another third of contributors chose “yes, it would be better”. Their main arguments concerned the feeling of belonging (“One single event would increase the feel of a single community”, “Having EU citizens voting at similar times across Member States could help foster a true transnational debate on EU issues rather than parallel campaigns partly framed by national politics”), and that it would also lead to less confusion and a better coordinated media coverage (“more uniform universal coverage in media [...] there would be less confusion on voting dates”) and less strategic polling. Among those responding “maybe”, one respondent suggested security issues as a potential problem for voting in different periods (“if the vote would have to be cast on a single day, manipulations from outside would perhaps be less likely”), while another respondent also suggested that the elections should take place over a period longer than the usual four days, such as in the case of the US presidential elections where voting is possible months ahead of the election day, via postal voting. The latter is already an option in EU Member States that allow postal voting (e.g. Germany).

Regarding this topic, pan-European civil society organisations, such as Civil Society Europe, are “in favour of a unique date for the European Parliament elections. This would give more visibility to European issues as well as to the results of the overall European elections, which would be available to all Europeans almost at the same time. Of course, it is also important that political parties declare their affiliations to the European political groups before the vote, to make the vote more informed and transparent and have access to the sharing of seats together with the results as this happens with national elections.” (Civil Society Europe)

The following question asked about voting behaviour in national and municipal elections. The majority of respondents voted in municipal and national elections in the EU Member State of which they were nationals (82% and 89% respectively) and a few even stood as candidates: 5% in local elections and 5% in national elections. Compared with this, a significantly lower share of respondents (25%) reported having voted at municipal elections in an EU Member State of which they were not nationals.

Table 3 Voting behaviour in municipal and national elections

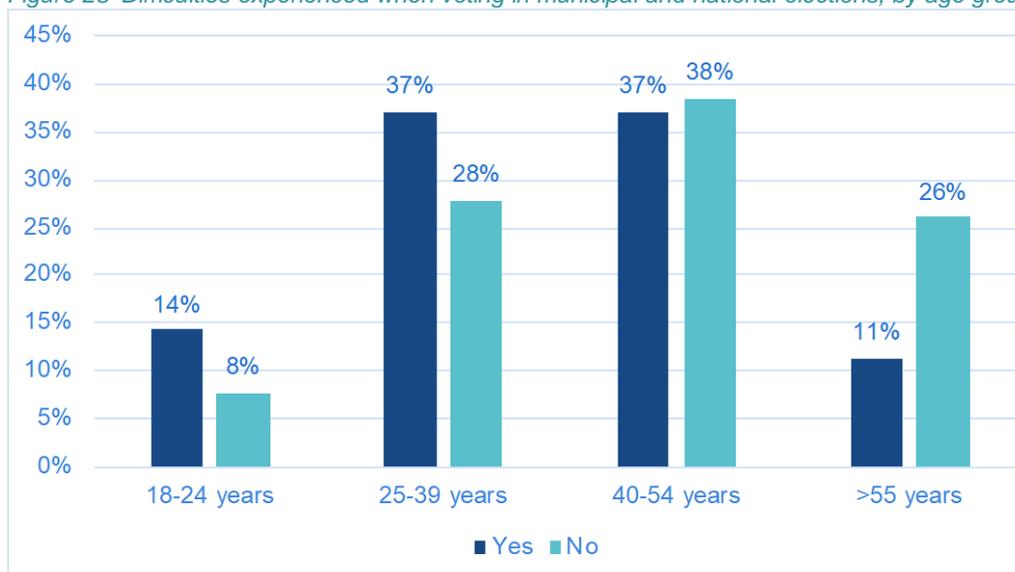
Statements	Yes	No	Not applicable	Nr of responses
I have voted at municipal elections in an EU country of which I am not a national.	25%	64%	11%	268
I stood as a candidate at municipal elections in an EU country of which I am not a national.	2%	87%	10%	263
I have voted at municipal elections in the country of which I am a national.	82%	15%	3%	268
I stood as a candidate at municipal elections in the country of which I am a national.	5%	89%	5%	264
I have voted at national elections in the country of which I am a national.	89%	9%	2%	263
I stood as a candidate at national elections in the country of which I am a national.	5%	92%	4%	263
I participate in local decision-making bodies (such as the municipality or schools council).	17%	77%	6%	263

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: based on Q17. Moving on to municipal and national elections, please, mark all sentences that apply

In exercising their rights in voting in European or local elections, the vast majority (more than 85%) declared not having faced any difficulties. Only one in five respondents reported to have had a problem (17% female and 12% of male respondents) when voting. Focusing on the distribution of respondents per age group, among those experiencing no difficulties, almost 40% were aged 40–54, while of those having experienced some difficulties, almost 40% were aged 25–39.

Figure 28 Difficulties experienced when voting in municipal and national elections, by age group

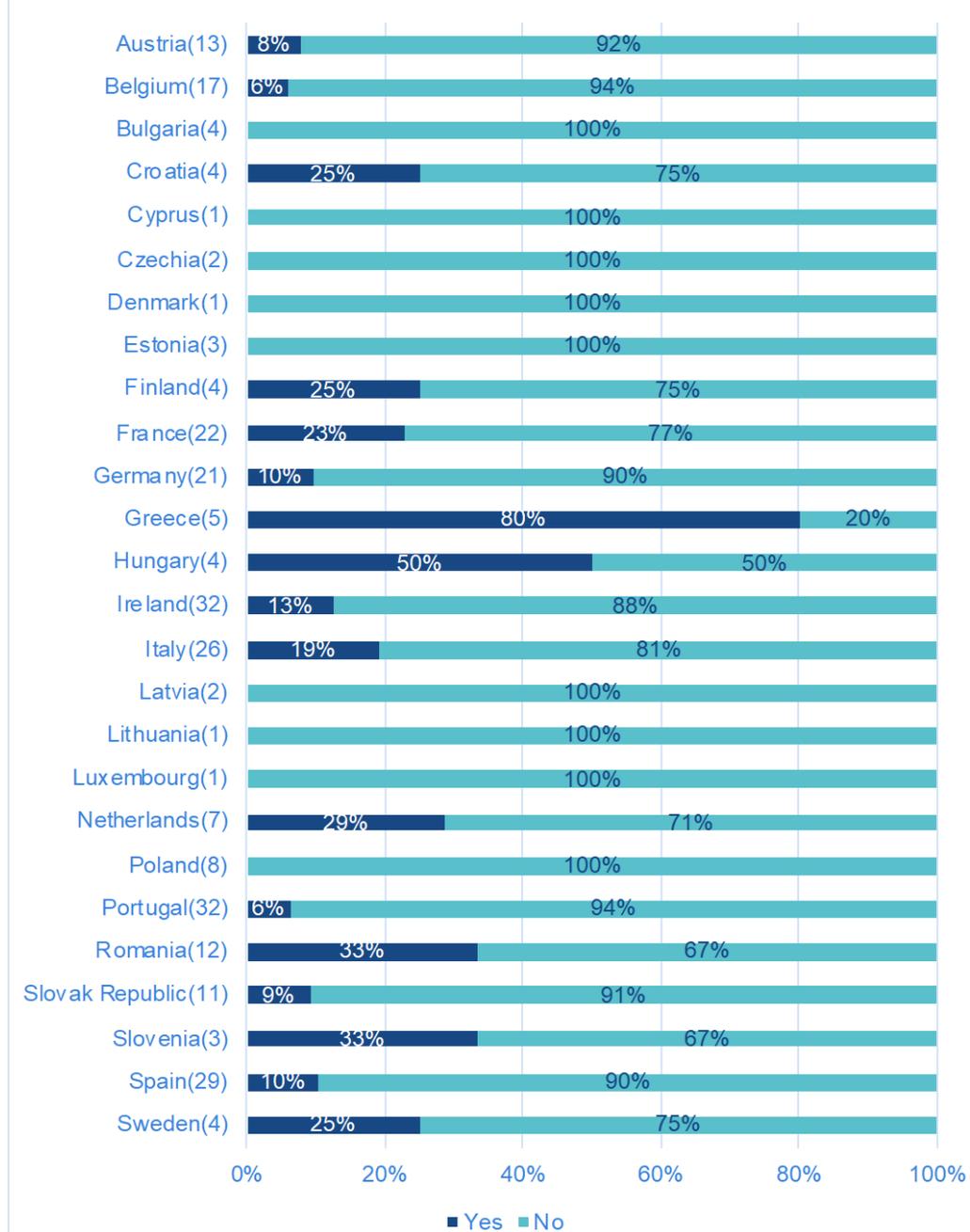


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =254, based on Q18. Have you ever experienced difficulties exercising your right to vote in European or local elections?

Looking closer at the country of nationality, it can be observed that several Greek nationals (80%) and half of Hungarian respondents experienced some difficulties when voting for local and the EU elections. The number of responses is too low to generalise though.

Figure 29 Difficulties experienced when voting in municipal and national elections, by country of nationality



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =269, based on Q18. Have you ever experienced difficulties exercising your right to vote in European or local elections?

When asked to provide additional information on the difficulties in exercising their right to vote in the EP and local elections while residing in another EU country, almost 30 respondents provided some additional details. Most of them had faced delays in receiving the necessary documents by mail to register on the electoral rolls, or lacked the relevant information on the procedures to register on the

electoral rolls as non-nationals. Only a few others stated not having been aware of their right to vote to the EP and in local elections while residing in another Member State. In addition, some respondents did not appreciate long queuing times at the premises of the Embassies or Consulates in order to be able to vote for MEPs of their country of nationality, as well as difficulties in accessing the polling station for people with disabilities (i.e. with mobility impairments, or in wheelchairs).

Pan-European civil society organisations report several problems mobile EU citizens face when participating in EU and local elections. These include a lack of awareness of these rights, as well as long procedures to register in the electoral lists:

- “Many people still do not know about this right, and an information campaign needs to be launched in time before the next Local/EU elections by the Commission local offices in cooperation with local authorities and associations”. (Civil Society Europe)
- “Other reasons behind low political engagement of mobile EU citizens include: difficulties in registration process, missed registration deadline, insufficient information on how to vote and the lack of knowledge of the local political system. (European Citizen Action Service)
- “The registration for local legislative elections is automatic for mobile EU citizens in only 13 of 27 Member States. In 12 Member States registration is non-automatic but one-off, while two Member States require to register for each election”. (European Citizen Action Service)
- “In order to participate, mobile EU citizens have to request to be added to the electoral roll, often several months before the elections and before the official start of the electoral campaign. This issue has been frequently reported by mobile EU citizens as one of the key barriers to their political participation. In addition, mobile EU citizens face challenges such as inadequate registration deadlines, inaccurate registries of voters and cumbersome registration”. (European Citizen Action Service)
- “In most of the Member States, public authorities provide electoral information only in the national language. However, several local authorities have been identified to contact mobile EU citizens using English or even citizens’ mother tongues. For instance, Regional Brussels Government sent letters to all mobile EU citizens, informing them of the local elections in October 2018 and explaining how to register. Seven out of 19 Brussels municipalities sent similar letters in French, Dutch and German, while Sint-Gilles addressed EU citizens in their mother tongues, and Etterbeek translated the official letter to English”. (European Citizen Action Service)

Around half of the total respondents provided additional information regarding difficulties citizens may encounter when voting in another EU Member State.⁸ The predominant group of answers looked at administrative problems. Approximately 50 respondents claim to have suffered from administrative burdens, which prevented them from duly registering to vote, or from administrative deficiencies, which did not provide the ballots on time. Others (approx. 20) also mention that language barriers seriously limited their capacity to complete the necessary administrative procedures.

Limited knowledge of the residents about the host country’s political system and difficulties in becoming familiar with the electoral system (in terms of registration rules, required documentation) of the host country, as well as insufficient understanding of the local politics (in terms of the party system and their political agendas) in the country of which they were not nationals were also flagged as potential problems. This is often linked to the limited information on the political agendas and on the modalities of voting in language(s) other than the one(s) of the host country.

Finally, for few respondents, there were two additional types of difficulty: the first was related to practical aspects, such as not knowing where the polling station was located, and the second was related to significant travelling time to the assigned polling station and queuing at the polling station.

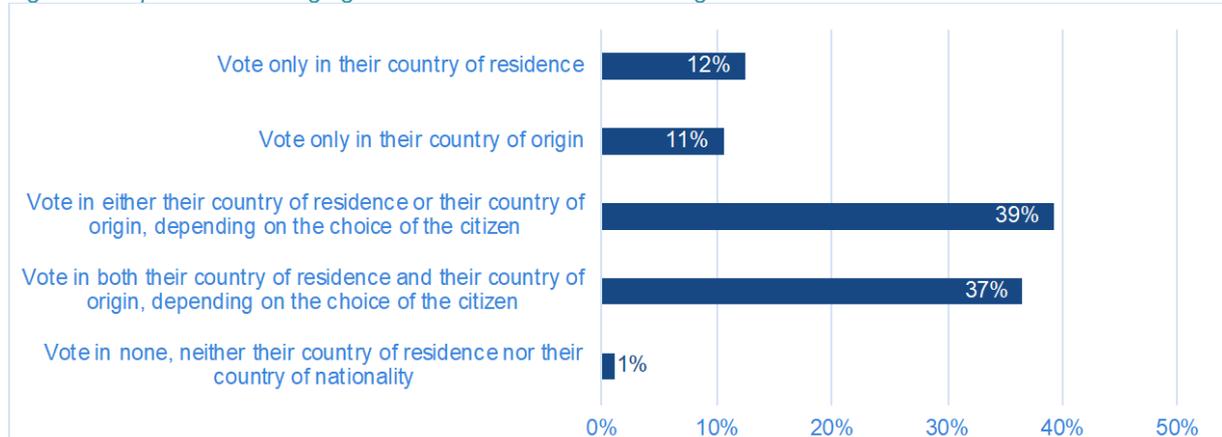
For non-EU nationals, the most common difficulty experienced when voting in another EU Member State was not understanding the voting system, not understanding the language very well and/or not being familiar with the political culture. Issues with registration and administrative procedures were also mentioned.

Some EU citizens residing in another EU Member State may lose their right to vote in the national elections of their home country, whilst, at the same time, not being granted the right to vote in the national elections in the new host country because, for example, they have not yet fulfilled the necessary criteria. In these cases, EU citizens who exercise their EU citizenship right to reside in another EU country are disenfranchised and disadvantaged politically.

The public consultation, therefore, created a hypothetical scenario of EU citizens who lived in another EU country. Respondents were asked whether in this scenario, the citizens should have the right to vote in national elections in either their country of residence or their country of nationality, provided they meet certain conditions.

The responses showed an almost equal split between allowing such a citizen to choose *between* the two countries or for being allowed to vote in *both* the country of nationality and of residence (respectively 39% and 37%).

Figure 30 Opinions on voting rights in national elections for foreign EU citizens

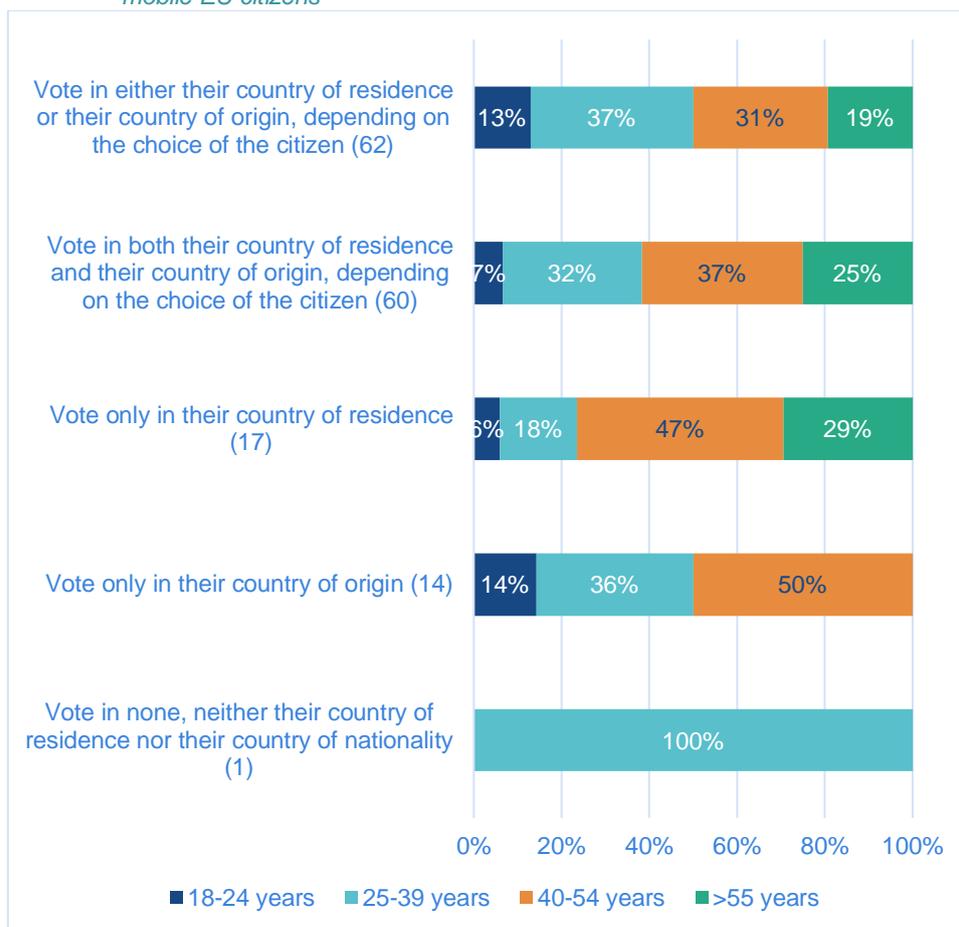


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =265, based on Q20. Let's take the same situation again where a citizen of the EU lives in an EU country other than their country of origin (i.e. the country of which they are a national). Providing certain conditions, do you think that for national elections this citizen should have the right to vote (various options)?

If we take the most mobile EU citizens, there is a similar distribution of opinion – 40% express a preference for the option to vote in either country while 39% opt for the voting in both countries. This group broken down by gender suggested that 54% female respondents preferred the option to vote in both country of origin and of residence while 54% of the highly mobile male respondents preferred having to choose between the two countries. There is no clear pattern between the various age groups.

Figure 31 Opinions on voting rights in national elections for foreign EU citizens, by age group and the most mobile EU citizens



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =154, based on Q20 and Q4. Let's take the same situation again where a citizen of the EU lives in an EU country other than their country of origin (i.e. the country of which they are a national). Providing certain conditions, do you think that for national elections this citizen should have the right to vote (various options)? As an EU citizen, you have the right to travel freely within the EU. In 2019, how often did you travel to EU countries other than the one of which you are a national or the one in which you reside?

More than 100 respondents commented on the conditions for granting EU citizens residing in another Member State the right to vote in national elections.

Forty of these respondents had previously indicated that people should be able to “Vote in *both* their country of residence and their country of origin, depending on the choice of the citizen”. About half of them suggested that it would suffice to have a certain minimum number of years (ranging from one to ten) to decide if that particular resident could vote in both countries – of origin and of residency. Several added a condition: on top of being a long-term resident, the person should also have been paying taxes.

The criterion of a certain number of years of residency was also the main reason given by the more than 50 respondents who had selected “Vote in *either* their country of residence or their country of origin, depending on the choice of the citizen”. Some argued that people who have left their home country should not have the right to vote there anymore and should basically be denied such a right.

Non-EU nationals present the same views on this topic: about half of the contributors supported the granting of the right to vote in national elections to citizens holding the nationality of another Member State under the condition that they have lived in the country for a set number of years (in this case, suggestions range from minimum of six months to maximum of five years).

The organisation Civil Society Europe suggested in its position paper that “Long term residents should also be allowed to take part in regional and national elections, as it is the case already in some Member States” and that “EU citizens residing in another [Member State] should also maintain the right to vote in their country of origin if they wish so regardless of their length of their residence abroad”. (Civil Society Europe)

The next question related to the option of voting in elections electronically. When asked about their concerns with online and other means of electronic voting, the main concerns expressed were “Potential fraud and manipulation of votes” and “Cyberattacks” (in relative terms, about 20% each). “Unequal access for people without access to the internet” and “Misuse of personal data” are also relevant concerns (17% and 15% respectively). The least frequently mentioned concern was not having any physical evidence accompanying the vote.

Figure 32 Opinions on concerns about electronic or online voting (multiple answers)



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =268, (based on Q21. If you had the opportunity to vote by means of electronic or online tools, would you have specific concerns about any of the following?)

Respondents were also asked to indicate the advantages of electronic and online tools for voting. “The convenience of voting from different locations” was most prominent and indicated as the main advantage, receiving a relative share of 23% of all responses. Another important reason was that

electronic voting would give “Easier access for people living abroad” and “people with disabilities” (about 20% of all responses respectively).

Figure 33 Advantages when voting by means of electronic or online tools (multiple answers)

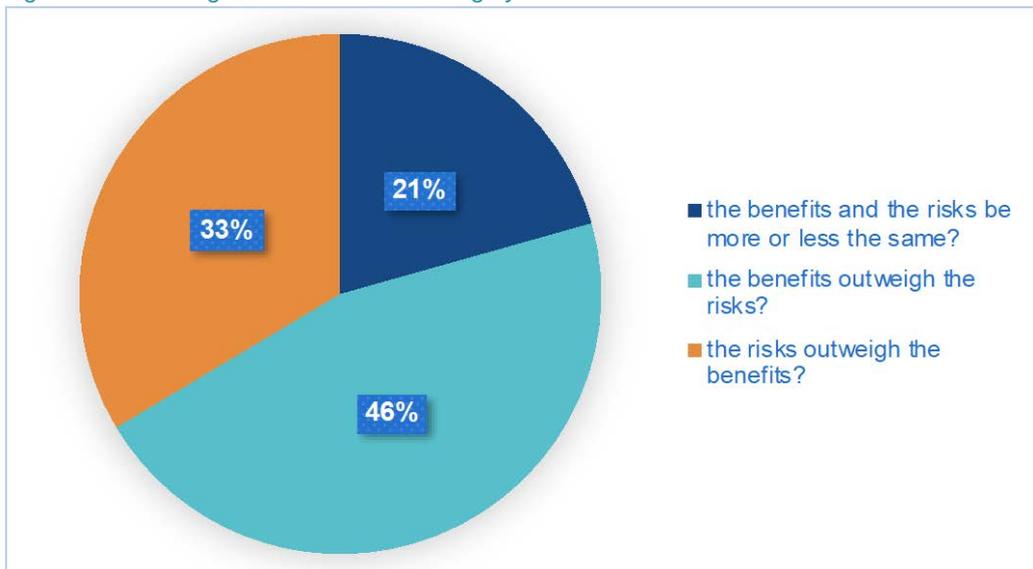


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 268, based on Q22. In your opinion, what are the main advantages of voting by means of electronic or online tools?

Respondents were asked whether they would consider the risks of electronic voting to outweigh its benefits, or the other way around. 46% of the respondents considered that the benefits of online voting outweighed the risks while one third thought the opposite to be true. For 21% the risks and benefits were considered equal. Broken down by gender, we note that the main difference is that men tend to have a stronger single opinion – either in assessing risks or benefits, while relatively more women believed that risks and benefits are more or less the same.

Figure 34 Advantages and risks when voting by means of electronic or online tools

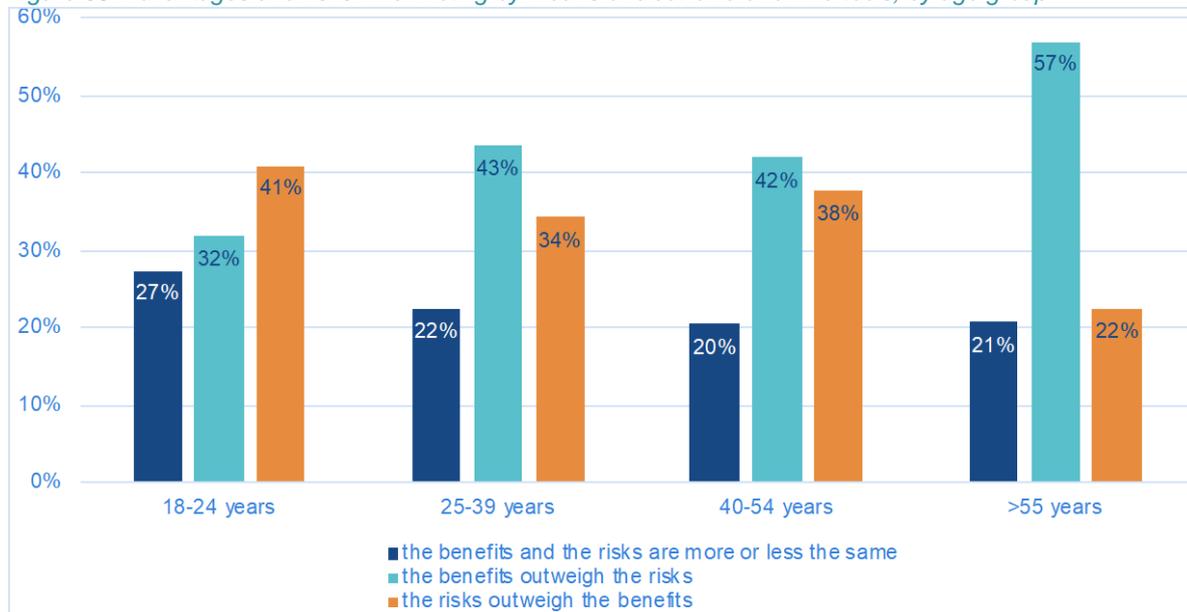


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =262, based on Q23. In your view, when it comes to voting by means of electronic or online tools, would...

An interesting pattern can be detected by age: while for all above 24 years old, the benefits outweighed the risks for electronic or online voting, the group of 18–24 year-olds thought that the risks outweighed the benefits. The majority of the respondents in the age group >55 years considered that the benefits of online voting outweigh the risks (57%).

Figure 35 Advantages and risks when voting by means of electronic or online tools, by age group

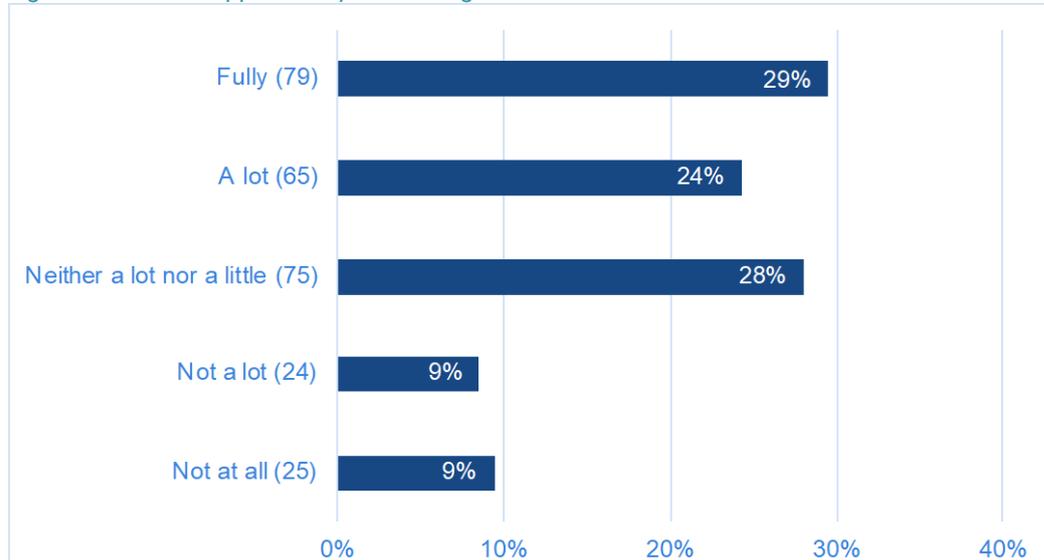


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =249, based on Q23. In your view, when it comes to voting by means of electronic or online tools, would...

The final question on voting related to postal voting. There was a range of views on the matter. 29% of the respondents fully supported postal voting and another 24% were very favourable toward it. Around 28% of respondents were neutral and only 9% were completely against postal voting (Figure 36).

Figure 36 Level of approval of postal voting

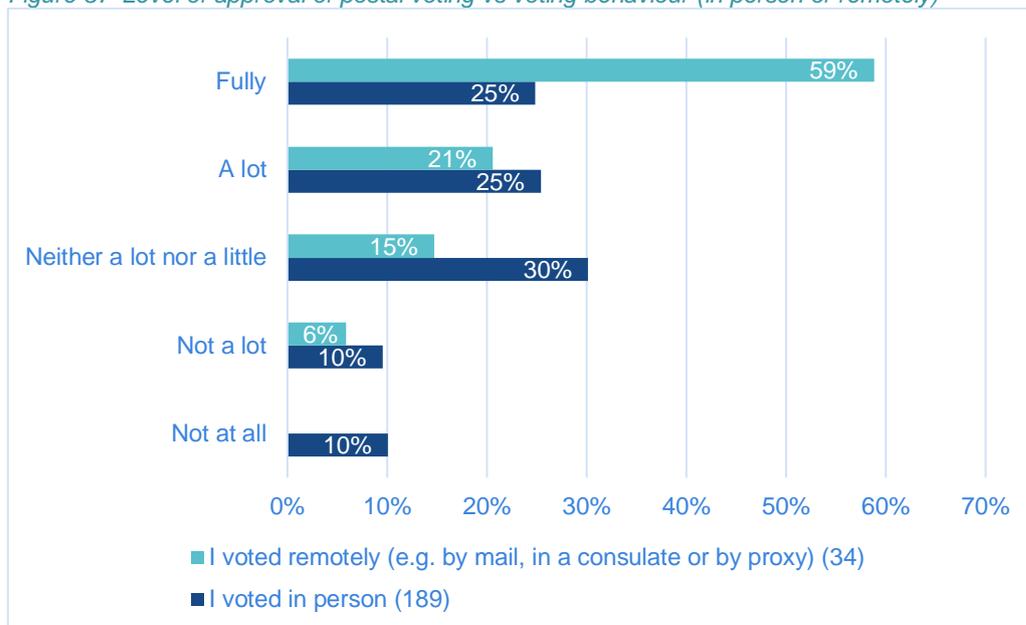


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =268, based on Q24. On a scale of 1 to 5, [...], how much do you approve of postal voting?

The majority of the respondents who voted remotely also fully supported postal voting and another 21% were very favourable. Among the respondents voting in person, 20% did not support (a lot or at all) postal voting while 30% of them were neutral.

Figure 37 Level of approval of postal voting vs voting behaviour (in person or remotely)



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =223, based on Q24 vs Q14.3. On a scale of 1 to 5, [...], how much do you approve of postal voting? How did you exercise your vote?

More than 30 respondents also indicated their reasons for opposing postal voting. The most common reason was the fear of fraud and manipulation and lack of trust in the correct functioning of the postal services. This cautious attitude can be found in individual responses from about half of the Member States. However, relatively more respondents from Portugal indicated their reservations while for example all responding German citizens fully supported postal voting – postal voting can be exercised at every level of election for German citizens

Key insights ... on the right to vote and stand as a candidate

- An overwhelming majority of the respondents voted in the last EP elections (more than 80%). This does not represent the wider public, seeing how the overall turnout for the EP elections in 2019 was 50.66%.
- Of the respondents who had voted, almost 70% lived in their country of nationality while 32% voted while residing in another EU Member State.
- Among those living in another EU Member State, 39 respondents voted for electoral lists in their home country and 34 voted for electoral lists in their host country.
- Reasons for voting in the home country included a stronger sense of belonging and a better knowledge of the political system. Several respondents also stressed that the vote in their home country had a direct impact on their life.
- For those voting in the host country, politics in that country mattered more to their life than politics in their home country and they also knew the parties and issues better. Feeling of belonging to the host country was also mentioned.
- Of all respondents who had voted in the 2019 EP elections, a clear majority (190 respondents) voted in person while 34 voted remotely.
- Regarding allowing EU residents to vote in national elections in Member States whose nationality they did not hold, the respondents equally believed voters should be allowed to choose between the two countries or to vote in both the country of origin and of residence. For many the length of residency is a criterion to grant foreign nationals the right to vote in national elections.
- When asked about electronic voting, 46% of the respondents (120 respondents) considered the benefits to outweigh the risks, and one third thought the opposite.
- “Potential fraud and manipulation of votes” as well as “Cyberattacks” were the main reasons for mistrust in electronic voting.
- While the convenience of voting from different locations and improved voting access for people living abroad and people with disabilities were mentioned as the main advantages of electronic voting.
- Regarding postal voting, more than half of the respondents supported it.

6 Responses on the right to consular protection

As part of their EU citizenship rights, EU citizens are entitled to seek help from the embassy or consulate of any other EU Member State if they find themselves in a situation where they need assistance outside the EU, with no embassy or consulate from their own Member State effectively in position to help them. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated EU solidarity in a joint European efforts to protect EU citizens abroad, in particular during crises.

The first question of this section asked whether respondents had travelled to a country where their country of nationality did not have an Embassy or a Consulate. According to the responses, this was only the case for about 24% of the respondents, while for 54% this was not and another 21% did not know.

Of the 24% of respondents who travelled to third countries where their Member State was not represented, only a few had made use of their right to consular protection. As reasons, they indicated “loss of travel documents” or “legal matters, including arrest”. Overall, respondents felt that this support could be further developed and promoted to reinforce the support.

89% of all respondents thought that EU Delegations should take a more active role in assisting unrepresented EU citizens, 5% thought that this role should be left to the Member States and 6% indicated that they did not know. When it comes to the type of support they envisaged, the evacuation and repatriation of EU citizens, the issuance of emergency travel documents, and the support of EU citizens who are victims of a crime or who have been arrested were supported equally by 30% of the respondents.

Respondents choosing the response “Other” from the abovementioned list suggested that EU Delegations might be given the task of supporting EU citizens facing health problems (e.g. in case of hospitalisation or death, particularly relevant in the current Covid-19 pandemic), or providing support in case of kidnapping and arrest in the third countries.

Civil Society Europe suggests that it “*would actually be more apt and inclined to support EU citizens that cannot benefit from the support of their own embassy. They could (i) provide support in the evacuation/repatriation of EU citizens to the EU in case of emergency situations, natural or man-made disasters; (ii) issue emergency travel documents, when regular travel documents are stolen, lost, destroyed; (iii) provide support to EU citizens who are victims of a crime or arrested outside the EU; and (iv) support families in case of victims*”. (Civil Society Europe)

Key insights on ... the right to consular protection

- The majority of respondents did not travel or did not know whether or not they travelled to a third country with no Embassy or Consulate of their home country.
- Experience with consular protection in third countries is very limited among respondents.
- Overall, respondents felt that this support should be further developed and promoted.
- Respondents thought that EU Delegations should take a more active role in providing support in third countries if necessary.
- Respondents supported the three suggested measures almost equally: “Support in the evacuation/repatriation of EU citizens”, “Issuing emergency travel documents”, and “Support of EU citizens who are victims of a crime or arrested”.

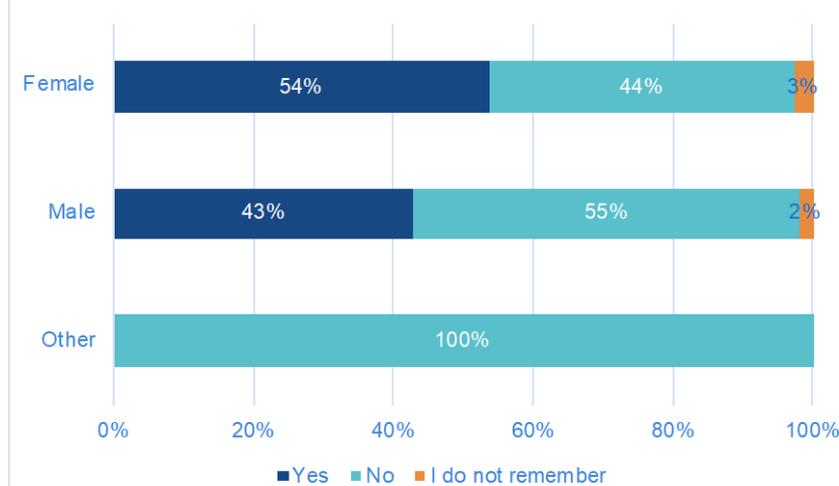
7 Responses on simplifying mobility and life in Europe

The public consultation also explored options for simplifying mobility and life in Europe. The section touched upon international train travel, medical visits abroad and working abroad.

International travelling by train

In the first question, the respondents were asked if they had ever booked a train journey across more than two EU Member States. 51% of the respondents had not done so while 47% have done so. Broken down by gender, more than half of the female respondents were experienced in booking train tickets across more than two Member States while the share for men was 11 percentage points lower.

Figure 38 Experience with booking train travel for journeys across more than two Member States

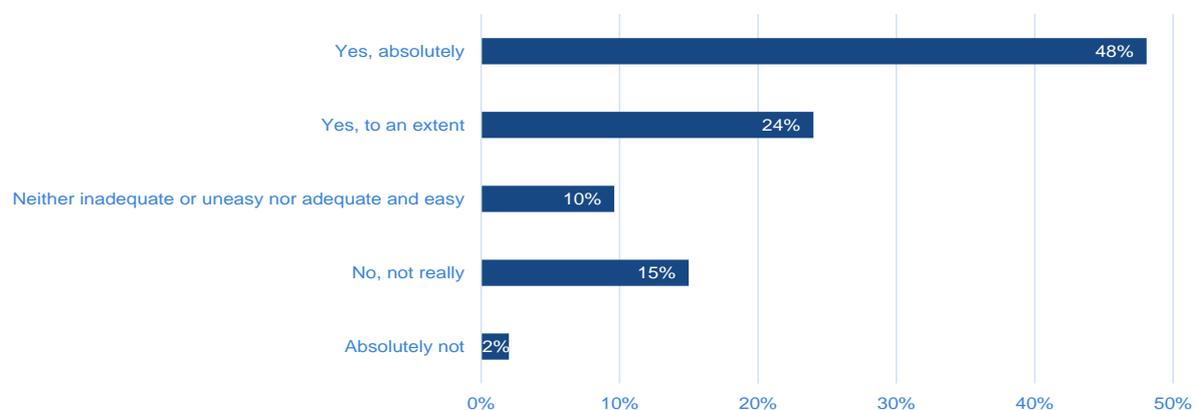


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =239, based on Q27. Have you ever booked train travel for a journey across more than two Member States?

Those 47% (126 respondents) having made a booking then provided their view on the usefulness of the information available.

Figure 39 Level of satisfaction with the availability of information, being adequate and easy to access for booking of train travel



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =124, based on Q27.1: Was the information available to organise this journey adequate and easy to access?

While for 72% the information was adequate and easy to access, or to an extent, for 17% this was not the case.

Almost 50 respondents who have experience with booking train journeys across more than two Member States provided comments. Almost half did not have any specific suggestion to make, or they indicated that they had found it very simple. Several suggested to introduce dedicated cross-border travel apps and to create a single website common to the various railway companies. Others, instead, would focus on setting common rules ensuring the availability of trustworthy online payments and the translation of the content of national railway companies into English or other common EU languages. The listed suggestions mostly tended to exist already, but perhaps not across all Member States or not all EU citizens have the same access or were aware of these options.

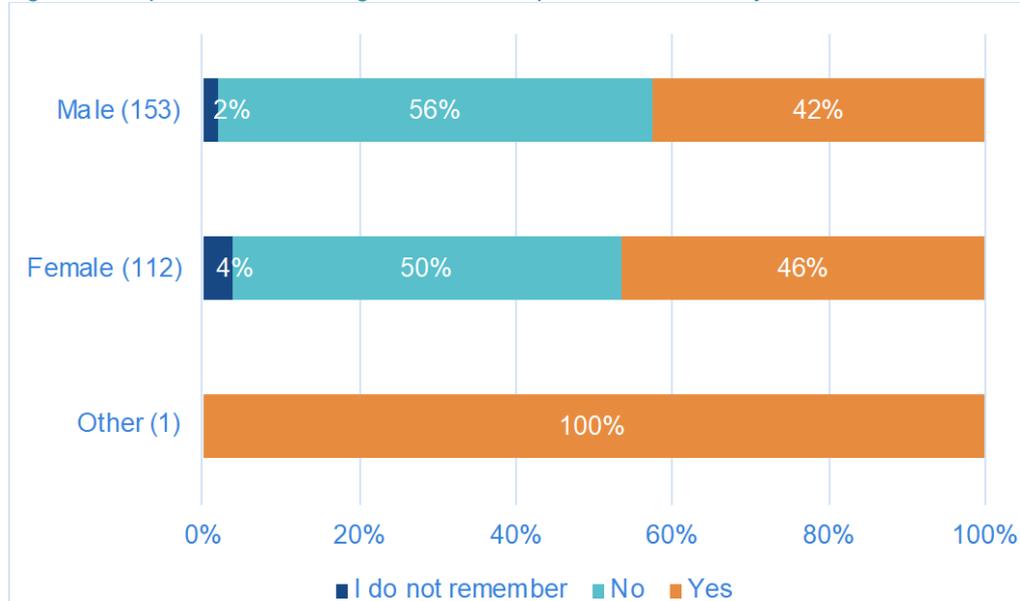
Non-EU nationals provided a similar set of suggestions to EU citizens, including to set up a “single booking platform, with consistency of pricing” and to ensure that national railway companies provide booking information in multiple languages.

Medical treatment

Under Directive 2011/24/EU on patients’ rights in cross-border healthcare, EU citizens have the right to access medical services in any EU country. Citizens need to pay the bill in advance or directly but can claim a reimbursement through their health insurance afterwards.

Since many people may need to see a doctor or visit a hospital while travelling abroad, the respondents were asked about this matter. About 53% had not visited a doctor or hospital abroad while 44% had. With 46%, relatively more women have used medical services abroad than men (42%).

Figure 40 Experience with seeing a doctor or hospital in an EU country other than the one of insurance

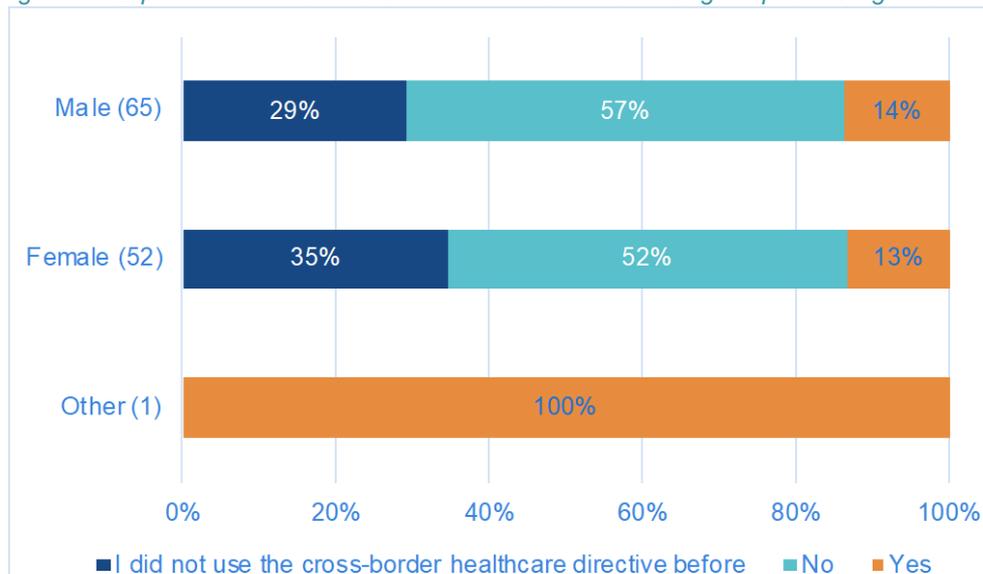


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 266, based on Q28. Have you ever seen a doctor, or did you ever go to a hospital in an EU country other than the one in which you are insured?

When asked whether respondents who had made use of this right ever experienced any difficulty when exercising it, almost 60% did not provide an answer. This suggests that awareness of this right might be low. Of those who answered, 31% had not made use of it. Difficulties were faced by roughly 14% of those who had used it, while about 54% did not face any problems.

Figure 41 Experience with difficulties and troubles when exercising the patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

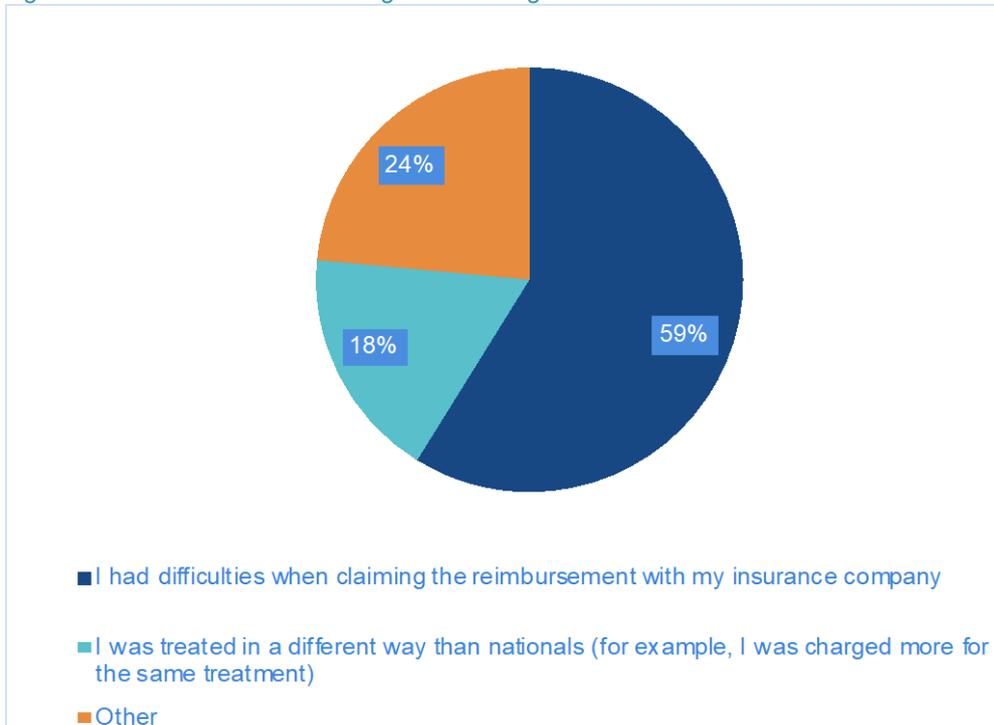


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =118, based on Q28.1. IF Q28=1[...] Did you ever experience any difficulty or trouble when using this scheme?

About 20 respondents provided information on the main issues they experienced. Different treatment due to nationality was not widely mentioned; more frequently, difficulties experienced related to reimbursement by the insurance company.

Figure 42 Main issues when making use of the right of cross-border healthcare



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

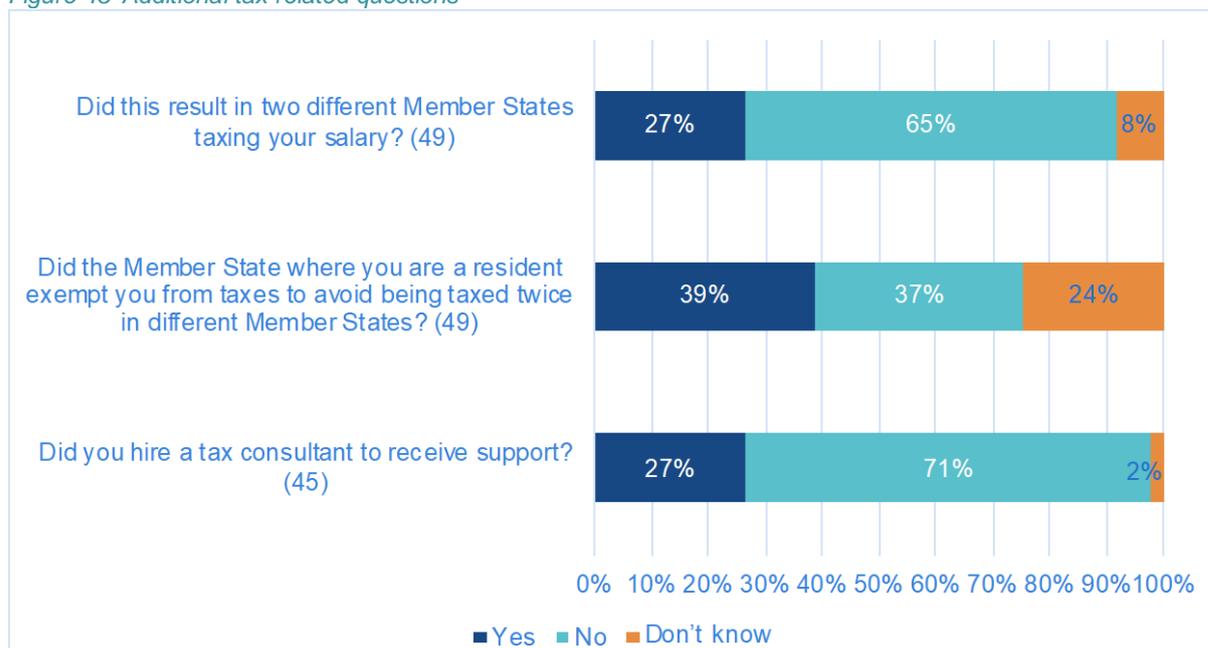
Note: Nr of observations =17, based on Q28.2. IF Q28.What was the main issue?

Experiences from living in one and working in another EU country

In the next question, citizens were asked whether they had ever lived in one Member State and worked in another. This was not the case for the vast majority (81%), but 18% of respondents had done so. For those 18%, questions then looked at their tax situation.

27% said that working in one Member State while living in another resulted in two Member States taxing their salary, while this was not the case for 65%. When asked whether the Member State where respondents were residents exempted them from taxes to avoid double taxation, one in three reported that this was the case for them. However, 39% of the respondents replied that they did not know whether that was the case for them. One in four of this small group of respondents hired a tax consultant.

Figure 43 Additional tax-related questions

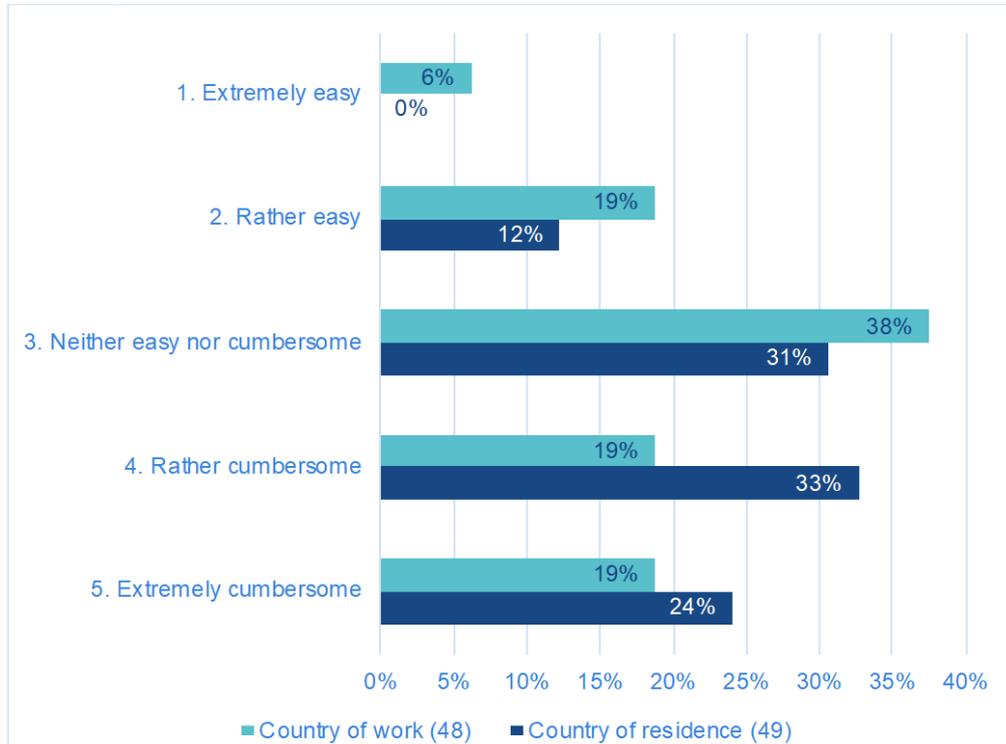


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 49, based on Q29. Have you ever worked in one country and lived in another country in the European Union? (If answer to Q29 is 'Yes')

The next two questions asked about the administrative burden for fulfilling the tax obligations in the country *of residence* and in the country *of work*. The following Figure 44 combines the responses on the experience with fulfilling tax obligations by country of residence and by country of work. Overall, most of the respondents found it more burdensome, but the experience with the country of work was seen more often as easy and less often as cumbersome than in the country of residence.

Figure 44 Experience with administrative burdens to fulfil tax obligations in country of residence and country of work



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =49, based on Q29.2 On a scale of 1 to 5, [...], how would you describe the administrative burden to fulfil your tax obligations in your country of residence? and Nr of observations =41, based on Q29.3 On a scale of 1 to 5, [...], how would you describe the administrative burden to fulfil your tax obligations in your country of work?

The majority of the respondents who found the exercise cumbersome – either in the country in which they work or in the country in which they reside – and who provided examples of the administrative burden in fulfilling tax obligations found them to be unnecessary complex and – for the self-employed person – not clear. The language of the declaration was also considered to be difficult to deal with. A solution to deal with this problem appears to be to hire a tax advisor – this being the position of the only respondent who found the whole exercise “very easy”.

The views collected by non-EU (British) nationals on the topic also confirmed that hiring a tax specialist was commonly seen as needed to navigate the cumbersome administrative procedures and understanding the rule for paying taxes in the country of *work* or of *residence* when living and working abroad.

The consultation continued with reminding respondents about the EU Citizenship rights they already benefit from and asked them to suggest which other right(s) they would add to the list.⁹

Out of the several suggestions provided, 17 of the EU citizens would like to have the right to vote and stand in national and regional elections (including referenda) after having lived and worked permanently in another Member State. Complementary to this, a few contributors specified that they would welcome the introduction of the right to stand for national and regional elections after having resided for a certain period of time in the country of work. Some others prompted other additional rights: the right to equal

⁹ Question 30: “This concludes all sections on your EU citizenship rights. Before we take a quick look at how they can be claimed, we would like to know: Would you like any additional EU citizenship rights?”

pay (between men and women); the right to have personal privacy guaranteed (particularly in response to misuse of personal data shared on online platforms); the right to access healthcare in all EU Member States (particularly in case of health emergency); the right to have an acquired civil status in one of the Member States automatically recognised in all the others (particularly relevant for same-sex couples); and the right to a minimum income ensuring fulfilment of basic needs.

Many of the UK nationals responding to the consultation were calling for assurances that UK nationals residing permanently in an EU Member State could keep their existing rights.

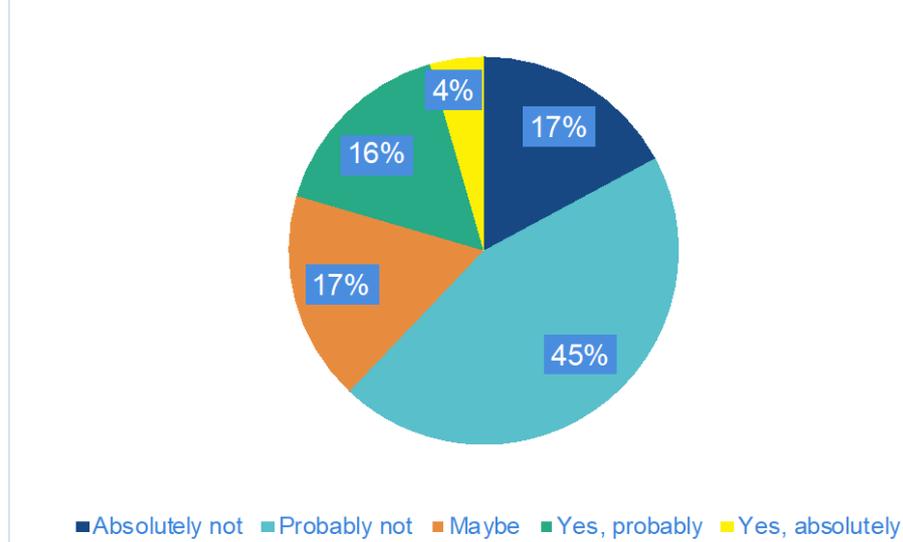
Key insights on ... simplifying mobility and life in Europe

- 137 respondents have no experiences with booking train journeys across more than two EU Member States. Women tend to have more experience in this than men.
- The majority (90 respondents) found the booking process easy and the information adequate, while 21 expressed difficulties.
- EU citizens have the right to access medical services in any EU country and to be reimbursed for care abroad afterwards by their insurance. The experience with cross-border medical services reimbursement is limited, many respondents have not used it – even though they have consulted a medical service abroad.
- 49 respondents have lived in one Member State and worked in another. For a quarter of this group, this resulted in two Member States taxing their salaries, while 20 respondents were exempt from taxes on their salary in their country of residence.
- When asked whether additional EU citizenship rights were needed, the most frequently mentioned idea concerned democratic rights, such as giving mobile EU citizens the right to vote in national and regional elections in their country of residence.

8 Responses on exercising EU citizenship rights

In order to exercise rights, citizens need to know of their existence. That is why respondents were asked if they felt that enough was being done to inform EU citizens about their rights. Only 4% of the respondents completely agreed while another 33% opted for “maybe” and “yes probably”. A considerable share of 62% thought that not enough was being done (answer items: “absolutely not” and “probably not”).

Figure 45 Opinions on whether enough is being done to inform EU citizens on their EU citizenship rights

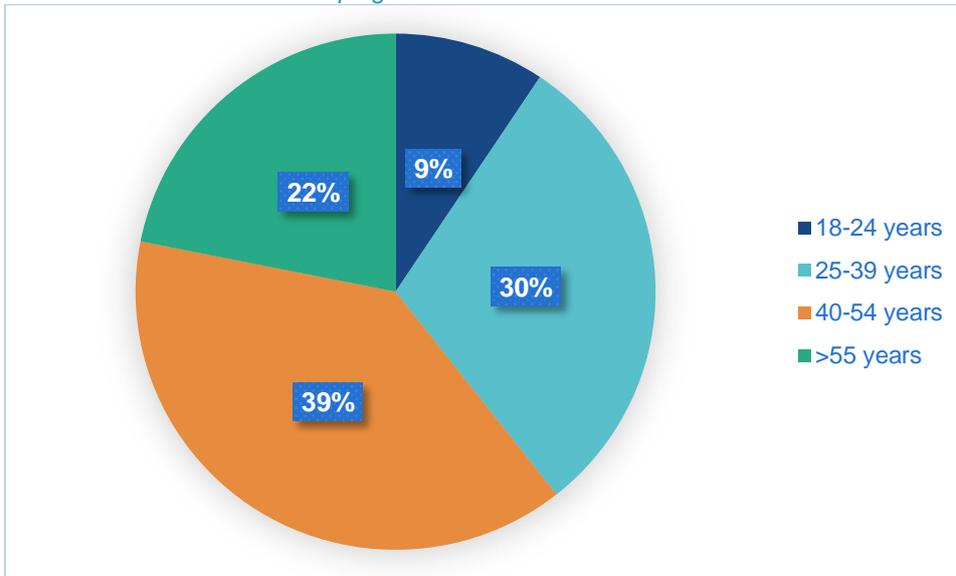


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =269, based on Q31. In order to exercise rights, you need to know of their existence. Do you think that enough is being done to inform EU citizens on their EU citizenship rights?

The following Figure 46 investigates those 62% in greater detail. By gender, we only find a slightly higher share of male respondents (54%). Regarding the age group, we can observe an increase of agreement with the increase of age. In other words, while among 18–24 year-olds only 9% agree that not enough is being done, this share increases to 30% and 39% respectively for older age groups. In the group of +55, the agreement then decreases again (22%).

Figure 46 Share of respondents by age group who think that not enough is being done to inform EU citizens about their citizenship rights.



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =160, based on Q31. In order to exercise rights, you need to know of their existence. Do you think that enough is being done to inform EU citizens on their EU citizenship rights?

Exactly 159 respondents commented on what else could be done to better inform EU citizens about their rights. The majority asked for more information and awareness raising campaigns, particularly via television ads, dedicated communication programmes and social media. Several other respondents suggested the launch of dedicated media content. Some suggestions indicated that existing information channels were not widely known, for example someone suggested broadcasting (live)stream sessions of the European Parliament, and that the creation of a dedicated news channel (such as the existing Euronews) could help. Communication on specific national channels would also be welcomed, such as on national TV (or radio).

In terms of the age divide, we notice that respondents over 65 tend to stress the importance of communication campaigns on national media (e.g. newspapers) and ask for simplified versions of the EU information websites, while younger respondents (under 30 years old) ask for improved communication campaigns particularly on social media, as well as a new focus on teaching EU values and rights at schools to the younger generations.

Around 20 respondents also stressed the importance of education and suggested that national and EU decision makers should invest in adapting school curricula to teach EU values and history (particularly in primary schools) and support schools with the necessary educational material. Finally, to increase inclusion (particularly, but not only, in relation to people with disabilities), it was suggested to provide the current communication materials in plain language.

Among the non-EU nationals, besides including relevant content on the EU citizenship rights in educational curricula, some proposed leaflets and informative booklets (distributed on special occasions, such as issuing a new passport or ID document).

In addition, a few respondents prompted the idea that regional and local administrations should play an active role in disseminating information on EU citizenship rights.

Respondents were asked to indicate which websites they knew. In total, 14 different websites were mentioned, multiple choice was allowed. On average, 2.3 sources were ticked. Calculating the relative share of each website, the “Europa” website enjoyed the highest visibility (24%), followed by the “Your Europe” and “European Commission Representation websites”, with 14% and 13% respectively. Other

information portals, such as the Europe Direct Contact Centres and the Enterprise Europe Networks (EENs) seem unknown to most, scoring 5% or less (Figure 47).

Figure 47 Use of information websites and assistance or problem-solving services for exercising EU citizenship rights (multiple options)



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =273, based on Q32. The following information websites and assistance or problem-solving services support you in the exercise of your EU citizenship rights. Please indicate the services you know

Only a few respondents mentioned additional other sources, namely the websites of organisations, such as “Toute l'Europe” and “Fondation Robert Schuman”, and the communication channels of other organisations, such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

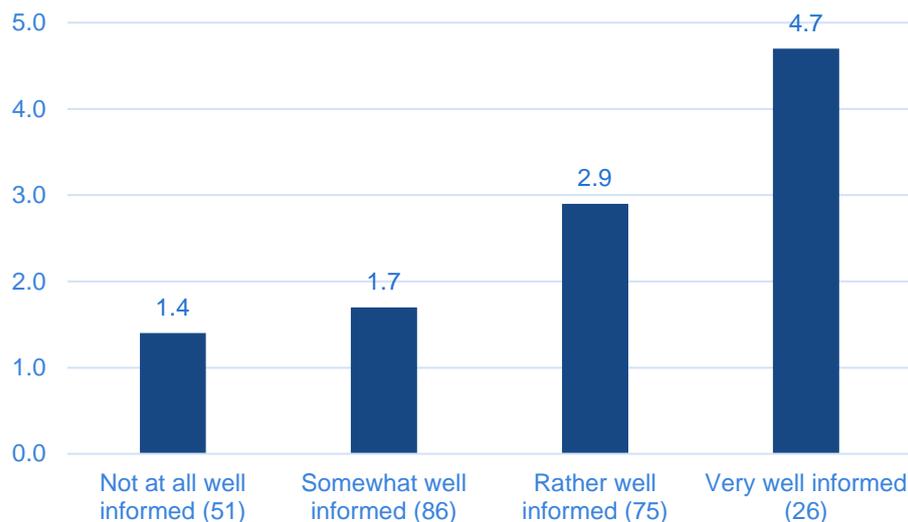
Regarding the set-up of new or improved information platforms, several civil society organisations suggested that the EU should focus on “Providing better information, in youth friendly format, all in one place: At the moment, information about European citizenship rights at work is scattered across many websites, is presented in a way that is not adapted for youth, and is not focused on enabling citizens to resolve problems they might have. A central website with information on the complete rights young people who are mobile in Europe have is required, designed in a way which relates to the kinds of problems young people might experience, and enabling them to know who to contact or what to ask for to resolve their problems” (European Alternatives). This position echoes what several young respondents replied to previous questions, namely the need to have a more centralised online presence of the EU services and more user-friendly platforms informing citizens of their rights and the services supporting their enforcement.

More specifically, regarding the EURES portal, European Alternatives considered that “Any young person who accepts a job offer through EURES or similar EU services should get targeted information on their rights and know who to contact if they experience problems. The information currently on the

EURES website concerning living and working in different countries is wholly inadequate". (European Alternatives)

We cross-checked if the feeling of being informed or uninformed about EU citizenship rights may be linked to the knowledge of various information sources. Initially, 17% of the respondents indicated that they did not feel well informed at all. In fact, there is a noticeable difference between the level of awareness of EU Citizenship rights and the use of information websites. The relatively small group of respondents with a very high level of awareness knows on average 4.7 information websites while those with a very low level of awareness know on average 1.4 websites.

Figure 48 Level of awareness of EU Citizenship rights and use of information websites



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =239, based on Q32. The following information websites and assistance or problem-solving services support you in the exercise of your EU citizenship rights. Please indicate the services you know and Q2 How well informed do you feel about what you can do when your rights as an EU citizen are not respected?

About 90 respondents provided suggestions on how the European Commission could better promote services to support EU citizenship rights.¹⁰ The most frequently mentioned promotion means were social media (24 respondents), followed by TV (11), newspaper articles (3), and radio content (3). The Commission should also consider communication campaigns on public transport rolled out in hubs, such as train stations and airports. In order to be more effective, more centralised communication efforts were deemed necessary by a handful of respondents. They considered the current communication campaigns to be too scattered on several channels and therefore rather inefficient: *"There seem to be so many portals, it all gets very confusing"*. In order to be widely accessible, content should be made available in all relevant national languages.

The need to promote EU rights to children – and therefore addressing primary education at national level as a means – was mentioned by eight respondents. An existing gap at national level seems to exist. The following quote summarises several responses which are however scattered among the responses to different questions: *"The political and social discourse in Member States is always national. People don't know they have EU rights. EU states should be more active in informing their citizens about their EU rights."*

¹⁰ Question 33: "How could the European Commission promote these services more effectively?"

The non-EU nationals also pointed at the variety of channels for providing consistent and accurate information to the citizens, suggested improving the use of social media, and called for dedicated courses on EU history and values in schools.

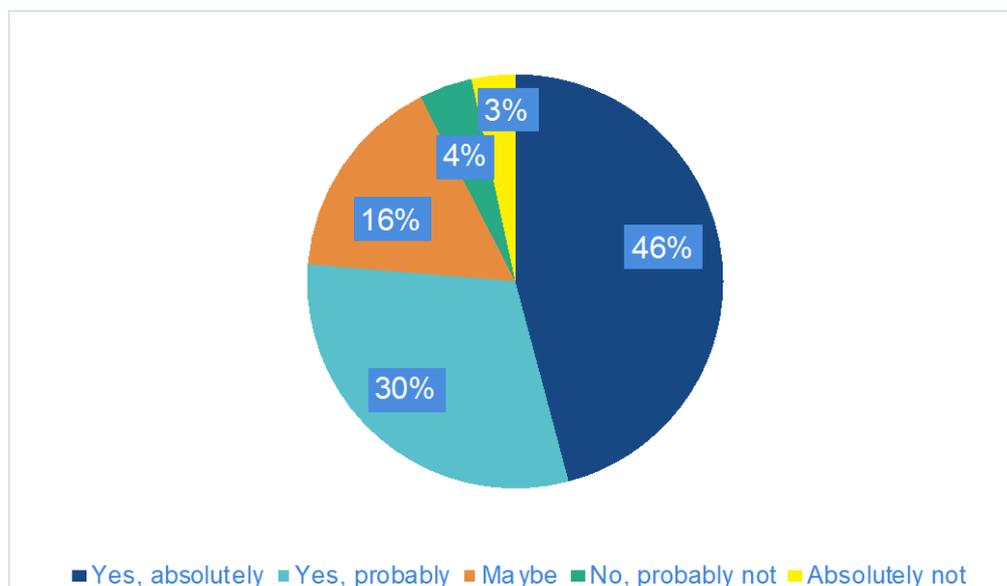
On this topic, European Alternatives in its position paper suggested to create a single site to inform citizens, and Civil Society Europe urges the EU to “*further access to information, not only by gathering all services in a single portal, but also providing a unique identity and name and avoid duplication of information sources*”. (Civil Society Europe)

A unique website providing relevant information on EU citizenship rights would be particularly useful in the case of minorities, such as people with disabilities, as “*all persons with disabilities find many difficulties to move to another country because of lack of mutual recognition of disability across EU Member States causing people to lose their disability benefits or support services (e.g. personal assistance), as they will need to go through another disability assessment in the country they move to*”. (European Alternatives)

Moreover, Civil Society Europe suggested that information “*should be available at schools, work and work-related agencies, in healthcare, travel agencies, and through associations that provide services to citizens, or where education, recreation and sports activities are done, etc. in order to reach out to a maximum of people where they are*”. (Civil Society Europe)

Asked if a dedicated authority at national level that complemented existing services would be helpful, more than three quarters of the respondents supported this suggestion (76%), while less than 7% did not find it useful.

Figure 49 Would a national supporting authority be helpful in exercising citizenship rights?



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =266, based on Q34. To complement the services listed before, would you find it helpful if you could contact a dedicated authority at national level to support you in your exercise of your European Union citizenship rights?

Those fourteen respondents who had answered “probably not” and “absolutely not” to the above question pointed to the additional bureaucracy and costs, as well as to a perceived division of labour between national and EU-level. Another respondent believed that the creation of a national authority at national level would not necessarily improve the situation, as “*The lack of tools isn't the problem. Many*

people will probably just accept their situation/wrong treatment because they are not aware that there are other option existing options besides legal proceeding”.

Regarding the creation of another organisation providing information at national level, Civil Society Europe in its position paper stressed the importance of counting on organisations at national level which already exist to support citizens in enforcing their rights; “Also national offices should take more responsibility and be adequately staffed and trained to support citizens with the necessary information. A dedicated authority at national level to support in the exercise of citizenship would be useful although there should be the possibility to also access the authority in its own country of origin”. (Civil Society Europe)

When asked about potential limitations to exercising citizenship rights, respondents were able to choose multiple answers from a given range. Individually, “Lack of information at national level” was mentioned most often (22%), followed closely by “Language barriers” and “Administrative barriers” (19% each), “Lack of information at EU level” and “Social inequalities” (16% each). Together with the results of the previous question, this could suggest that more information available to citizens at the national level would be helpful in bridging information gaps.

Figure 50 Perception of potential reasons for limited access to EU citizenship rights



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =273, based on Q35. In your opinion, what could limit citizens' access to their European citizenship rights?

Asked to specify which other factors could limit citizens' access to their EU citizenship rights,¹¹ respondents provided nine reasons. The most frequently mentioned were: the lack of access to the internet, which may hamper some citizens in obtaining the relevant information; the dedicated websites providing highly streamlined information which citizens find hard to navigate through so to find the advice they need for their specific situation; the lack of civic education in schools in many Member States (quote: "*Failure to educate people about their EU citizenship rights which can be observed in many Member States*").

The answers provided by non-EU nationals (mostly British) pointed to Brexit as the main factor limiting their access to EU citizenship rights.

Key insights on ... exercising of EU citizenship rights

- 167 respondents thought that not enough is being done to inform citizens about their EU citizenship rights.
- Most respondents expect additional efforts to better inform EU citizens, particularly through awareness raising campaigns via television, dedicated communication programmes, and social media. However respondents suggest that more can be done to streamline and raise awareness of already existing communication services.
- Some information websites, such as "Europa", are well-known and used while others are less so. Respondents and civil society alike indicated that there are too many individual websites to navigate, and that consolidation could be useful.
- Respondents who felt well informed about their EU citizenship rights at the beginning of the survey, later also reported knowing more information websites.
- More than three quarters of the respondents support the creation of an authority at national level to improve the communication about EU citizenship rights, although concerns about the cost and bureaucratic effort were also raised.
- The lack of information at national level is the most often mentioned barrier (208 respondents) among the main limitations to exercising citizenship rights, followed shortly by linguistic and administrative barriers (181 and 180 respondents respectively). More information available to citizens at the national level would be helpful in bridging information gaps.

¹¹ Question 35: "In your opinion, what could limit citizens' access to their European citizenship rights? Please select all answers that, in your opinion, apply. You are also free to select no answer. (*Please specify for the answer 'Other'*)"

9 Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The public consultation was open in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (July–October 2020). It also included questions on the impact of the pandemic on EU citizenship rights.

Respondents were asked if they were aware of any European efforts in a range of areas. Respondents seem to be by and large well aware of the repatriation flights Member States and the European Commission organised for those EU citizens who were in the third countries at the moment of the COVID-19 outbreak: more than 60% declared being aware of them (more specifically, 31% were “absolutely aware” and 32% were “rather aware”).

Table 4 Level of awareness of EU and national efforts in coping with the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak

Efforts in coping with the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak	Absolutely aware	Rather aware	Rather unaware	Absolutely unaware	Don't know	Nr of responses
1. Organising and coordinating repatriation flights to safely bring back EU citizens from third countries.	31%	32%	18%	14%	5%	266
2. Promoting and coordinating the lifting of free movement restrictions to open our internal border again.	32%	37%	17%	12%	2%	265
3. Promoting factual content from health organisations online and fighting against disinformation on the COVID-19 pandemic.	25%	34%	26%	12%	2%	265
4. Other.	13%	9%	3%	10%	65%	134

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Based on Q36. National and European institutions alike are tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Are you aware of any European efforts in the following areas?

When asked which “other” European efforts respondents were aware of:

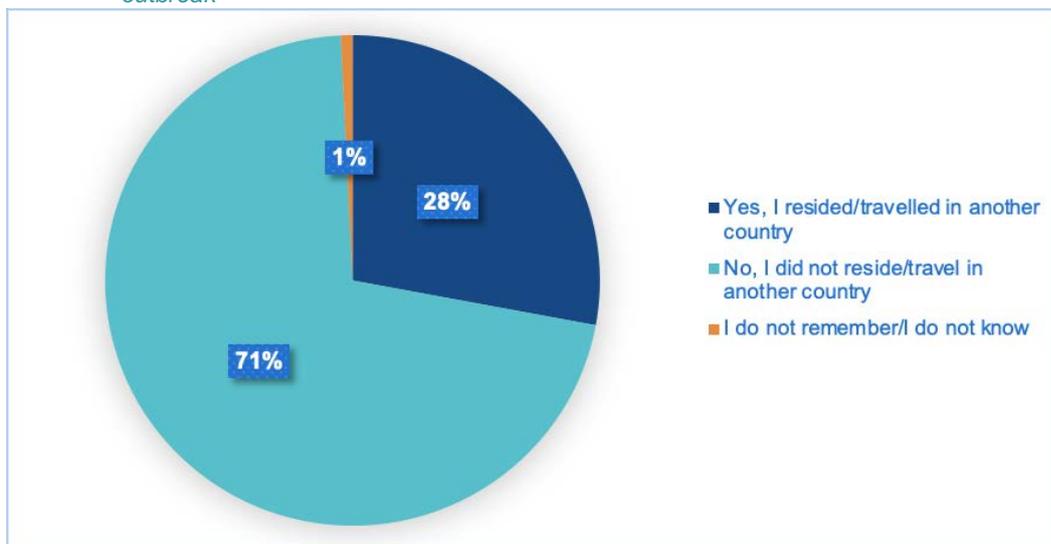
- Ten respondents listed financial support schemes to Member States and economic actors, such as the NextGenerationEU, SURE, and the temporary framework for state aid to support the economy.
- Eight respondents mentioned that the EU had helped coordinate the purchase of medical materials and finance vaccine trials.

Respondents also made suggestions of what more could be done:

- Four respondents suggested that the EU could develop a common set of rules in terms of data protection (notably for the tracing apps several Member States are developing), so as to increase data sharing and transparency.

Around a quarter of the respondents have resided in or travelled to another Member State during the outbreak while almost three quarters were in the country of origin at the beginning of the crisis.

Figure 51 Share of persons residing in a host country or travelling at the moment of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak

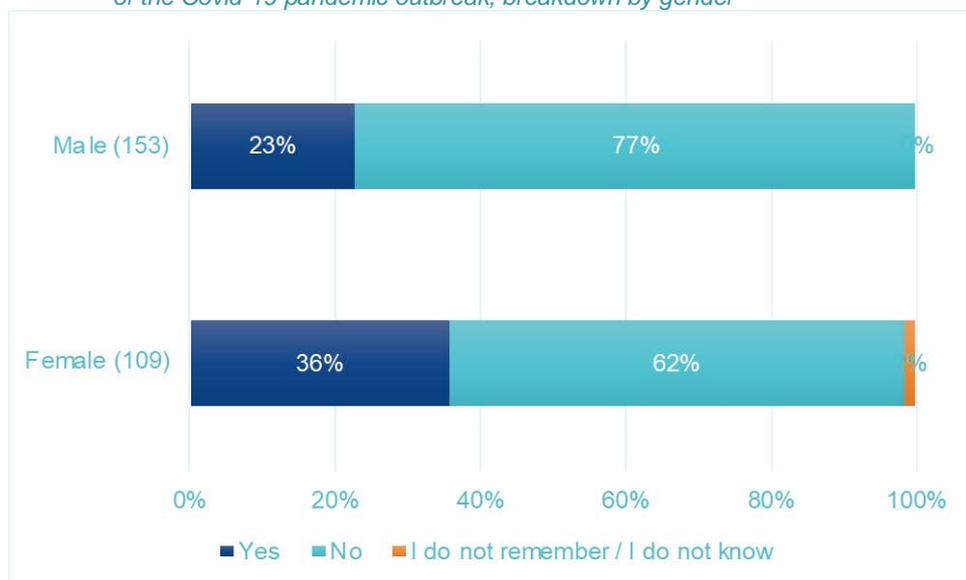


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations =265; based on Q37. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you reside in a Member State other than the country of your nationality or were you surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic while travelling to another EU country?

Broken down by gender (Figure 52), relatively more men (77%) than women (62%) were residing in their home country during the outbreak.

Figure 52 Share of persons residing in a Member State other than their home country or travelling at the moment of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, breakdown by gender

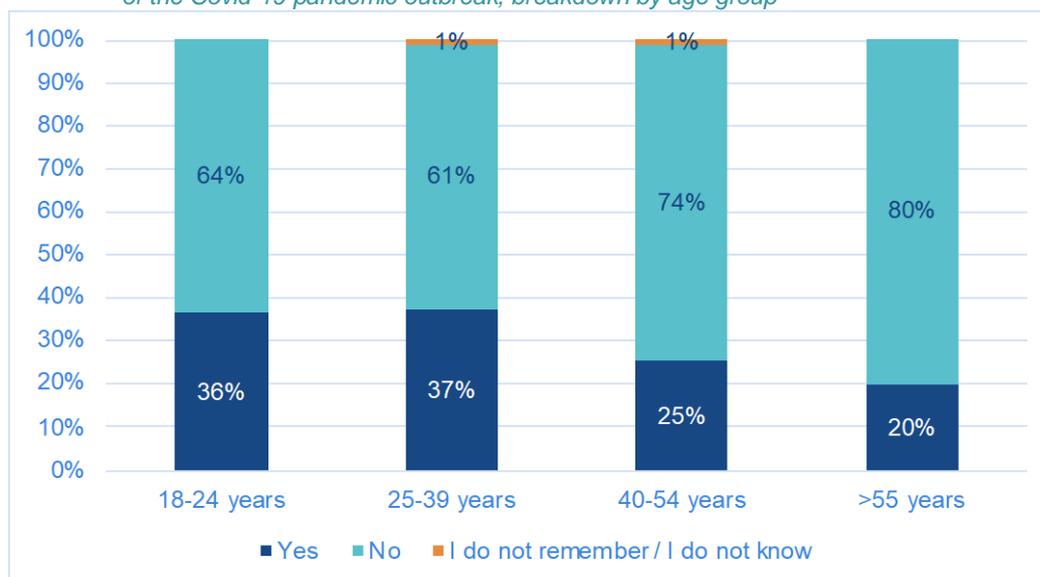


Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 262, based on Q37. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you reside in a Member State other than the country of your nationality or were you surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic while travelling to another EU country?

The majority of respondents who faced the pandemic while travelling or residing abroad were in the age group of 40–54 (52%), followed by the group of 25–39 year-olds (30%).

Figure 53 Share of persons residing in a Member State other than their home country or travelling at the moment of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, breakdown by age group



Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Nr of observations = 252, based on Q37. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you reside in a Member State other than the country of your nationality or were you surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic while travelling to another EU country?

The position paper of European Alternatives remembered the challenges faced by young Europeans when moving abroad, which were worsened by the Covid-19 crisis: *“If access to rights amongst this group has been worsening for some time [i.e. right to move], in 2020 with the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, it is clear to us on the basis of our surveys conducted in 6 countries that this situation is now significantly worse”* (European Alternatives).

Based on the experience of respondents at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, those responding that they had been either travelling or residing abroad were asked if they had experienced any difficulties in accessing information and/or support provided by the Member State they were visiting/residing in during the outbreak. The majority (well above 60%) had no difficulties in accessing information on the steps to be taken or on the border situation in a language they could understand. Also, the majority of those travelling or residing abroad had no need for repatriation efforts (66% indicated this option as “Not applicable”), neither did they need new documents from their country of nationality (52% “Not applicable”) nor from the country of residency (56% “Not applicable”).

Table 5 Experienced difficulties in accessing services during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak while residing or travelling in another EU Member State

Type of difficulty	Yes, difficulties encountered	No difficulties encountered	Not applicable	Don't know	Nr of responses
1. Necessary information about the pandemic and the steps that should be taken in a language you understand.	19%	70%	10%	1%	73
2. Necessary information about the border situation in your country of residence or the country you were travelling through in a language you understand.	29%	64%	5%	1%	73
3. Repatriation efforts to help get you back home safely.	12%	16%	66%	5%	73
4. Necessary documents from your country of nationality (such as renewed ID documents).	16%	26%	52%	5%	73
5. Necessary documents for your country of residence (such as residence documents or visas for family members from outside the EU).	15%	22%	56%	7%	73
6. Specific healthcare support.	18%	32%	48%	3%	73
7. Other specific support, such as childcare for key workers.	6%	15%	72%	7%	72
8. Other.	14%	9%	58%	19%	43

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Based on Q37.1: In relation to the measures taken nationally to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, did you experience difficulties in accessing any of the following while in another EU Member State?

In terms of “other” difficulties in accessing information or support facilities during the pandemic outbreak, respondents mainly reported a lack of information – or information given on a very short notice – on the border restrictions between Member States, which hampered the exercise of free movement.

Most of the respondents were rather positive about the level of information they had received from public national and EU institutions, as well as by the media, following the pandemic outbreak. More specifically, the majority felt well informed about the situation (70%), could find the information they needed (67%) and were provided with information which was considered reliable and consistent (50%). Some criticism on how information on the pandemic was communicated was raised: the EU institutions were not able to provide useful information for almost 28% of respondents (against 37% who thought that the EU had provided useful information via its institutional channels), while the media did not guarantee useful information for 47% of respondents (against 34% according to which they did). A further prompt on what type of media was meant could have rendered these opinions more accurate, because disinformation

was spreading relatively quickly through social media while the print media have received much less criticism on the COVID-19 communication.¹²

Table 6 Levels of agreement and disagreement with statements about the information received about the Covid-19 pandemic

Statements	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Nr of responses
1. I feel informed about the situation and the impact on me and my family.	33%	37%	10%	9%	9%	2%	263
2. I could find all the information I needed.	27%	40%	10%	11%	9%	2%	263
3. The EU institutions provided helpful information.	10%	27%	24%	16%	12%	11%	262
4. The information I've received has been reliable and consistent.	14%	36%	16%	18%	12%	3%	261
5. Media provide reliable information about the Covid-19 pandemic.	7%	27%	18%	25%	22%	1%	261

Source: EU Survey, Public consultation 2020 Citizenship Rights.

Note: Based on Q38. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the information you've received about the Covid-19 pandemic?)

European Citizen Action Service summarised in its position paper the situation: *“Mobile EU citizens have experienced unprecedented obstacles as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To address the outbreak, many Member States introduced partial or almost complete closure of their external and internal borders, restricting movements of those entering the country as well as movements out of the country. As a result, many mobile EU citizens were unable to return home. They had no choice but to stay in the host Member State, separated from their close ones. Their basic right to a family life was put at risk. ECAS is currently conducting research on the impact of the pandemic on mobile EU citizens. While it is too early to provide the conclusions, the initial findings show that the majority of respondents were not able to regulate their residence status during the lockdowns and experienced mental health problems as a result of Covid-19”.* (European Citizen Action Service)

¹² See for example Pennycook, G. (et al.): Fighting COVID-19 Misinformation on Social Media: Experimental Evidence for a Scalable Accuracy-Nudge Intervention. *Psychological Science* 2020, Vol. 31(7) 770–780; Cinelli, M. (et al.): The COVID-19 Social Media Infodemic, OA pre-print available from <https://arxiv.org/abs/2003.05004>

General comments

The last open comment in the consultation allowed respondents to provide additional information or comments on the survey. 52 respondents thanked the EC for the public consultation and the detailed questionnaire and 13 provided specific difficulties with regard to some questions. A contributor with dual citizenship suggested that the survey should provide respondents the opportunity *“to indicate joint nationality at the beginning as this affects your rights”*. Another suggested *“adding questions about discrimination – not only the public authorities can discriminate against EU citizens from other Member States, but also, for example, businesses during the recruitment procedures”*.

More than 30 non-EU citizens (mostly UK nationals) provided feedback on the questionnaire: while several appreciated the opportunity to take part in this consultation, the majority of them stated their frustration with the results of the Brexit referendum and the deprivation of their EU citizenship rights.

The ECIT Foundation used the opportunity to call for strengthened and somehow reformed EU Citizenship Rights via a number of means, including setting up *“a system to supply data and statistics on turnout and registration of mobile EU citizens in order to design more efficient policy solutions, (...) inform EU Citizens Individually in their own language”* and creating a dedicated Help Desk. (ECIT Foundation and Voters Without Borders)

Key insights on ... impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

- 168 respondents were aware of the repatriation flights that the Member States and the European Commission organised for those EU citizens who were in the third countries at the moment of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The vast majority of the respondents were in the country of their nationality at the moment of the outbreak, while around a quarter were residing or travelling in another Member State.
- Of those 73 respondents travelling or residing abroad during the outbreak, 51 had no difficulties in accessing information about the steps to be taken and 47 had no difficulties in accessing information about the border situation in a language they could understand.
- A solid majority of the respondents felt well informed about the situation and its impact on a personal and family level (70%, 184 respondents) and could find the information they needed (67%, 176 respondents) on the pandemic through the public national and EU institutions, or the media.

10 Conclusions

EU citizenship, a unique legal status, is one of the most significant achievements of the European project. The practical enjoyment of rights across borders, such as the right to vote, study, work or live in other EU Member States, affects the daily life of all Europeans. The protection and promotion of these rights is key to the Commission’s work. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated even more the importance of EU citizenship rights.

Although the results are not generalizable, this public consultation has provided the Commission with valuable insights in its efforts to bring tangible benefits to EU citizens in terms of effectively enjoying their EU citizenship rights.

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