



# ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF EUROPEAN WOMEN PRIOR TO THE 2009 EP ELECTIONS

The analysis report is based on  
the 3 last EB surveys: 68, 69,70



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# Introduction

This report has been produced on behalf of the European Parliament. With the 2009 European Elections approaching, the Parliament has requested an in-depth analysis of a selection of Eurobarometer indicators which highlight specific issues affecting the female population of the European Union.

This analysis treats a selection of indicators that have been asked in at least two out of the three latest waves of the Eurobarometer. In this report we will report mostly cumulative results in order to have a sufficient number of respondents for analyses. In some instances, when the analysis is time specific, we have presented figures from the latest wave, fielded in Autumn 2008 (EB70.1). Throughout the report, we indicate when the focus is specifically on the Autumn 2008 results.

The focus of the report is on differences in attitudes and opinion of European women compared to European men in order to better understand whether these differences may have an impact on the mobilisation rate during the next European elections.

## 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

- *Women perceive the current situation more negatively than men -*

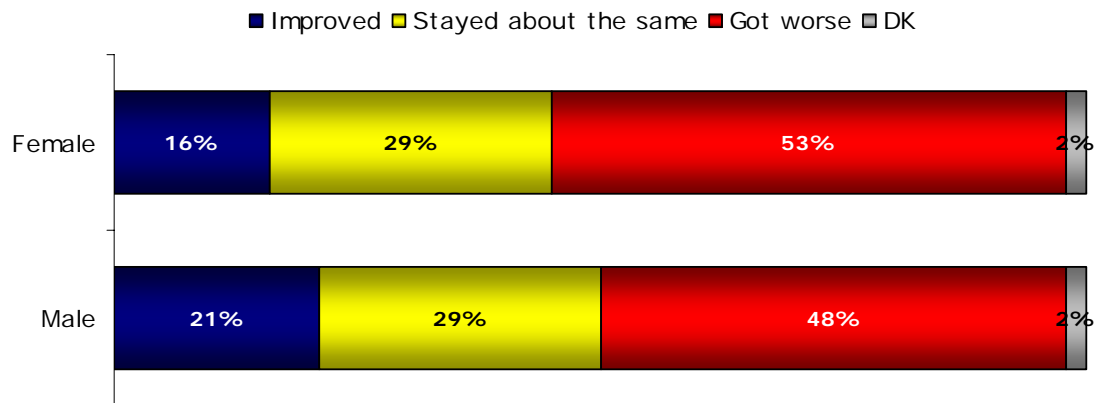
As illustrated by the latest Eurobarometer results, one consequence of the economic crisis is that a ‘feel-bad factor’<sup>1</sup> currently permeates all aspects of life, with public opinion being decisively negative.

In this current negative climate, the perceptions of women appear more downbeat than those of men, particularly with regards to matters that affect people more directly, such as financial matters. The following such indicators from the autumn 2008 Eurobarometer survey highlight the strong sense of concern among women<sup>2</sup>:

### *Purchasing power*

The data shows that 53% of women feel that their household’s purchasing power has deteriorated over the past five years, compared to 48% of men who feel this is the case<sup>3</sup>.

**QA20 Thinking about your purchasing power, that is to say the things that your household can afford in your daily life, if you compare your present situation with five years ago, would you say it has improved, stayed about the same, or got worse?**



\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

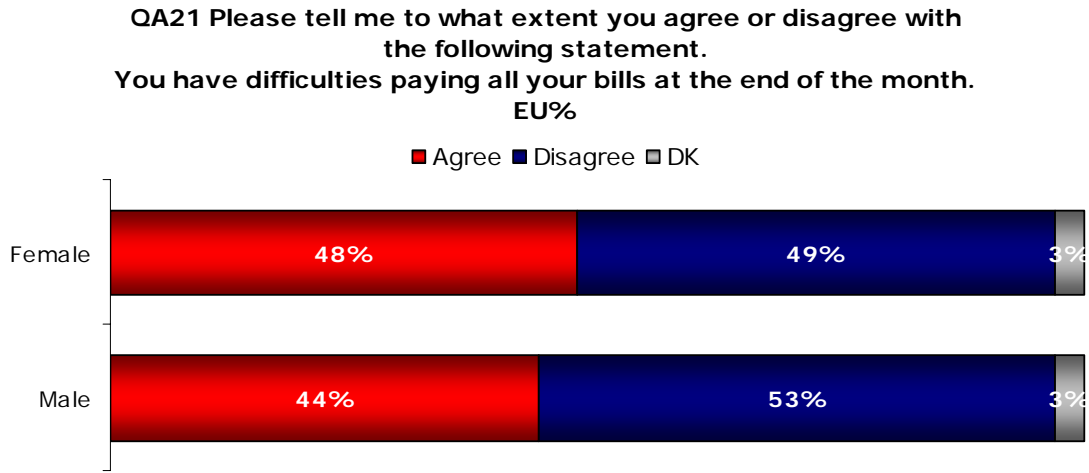
<sup>1</sup> This not only refers to how consumers feel about the economy which in turn affects their consumption habits but also to its extended impact over opinions beyond economic issues.

<sup>2</sup> Wave EB70.1 was fielded from the beginning of October to the beginning of November 2008.

<sup>3</sup> QA20 Thinking about your purchasing power, that is to say the things that your household can afford in your daily life, if you compare your present situation with five years ago, would you say it has improved, stayed about the same, or got worse?

*Ability to pay bills at the end of the month*

In autumn 2008 nearly half of European women reported economic hardship, saying that they have difficulties paying their bills at the end of the month (48%), compared to 44% of men<sup>4</sup>.



\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

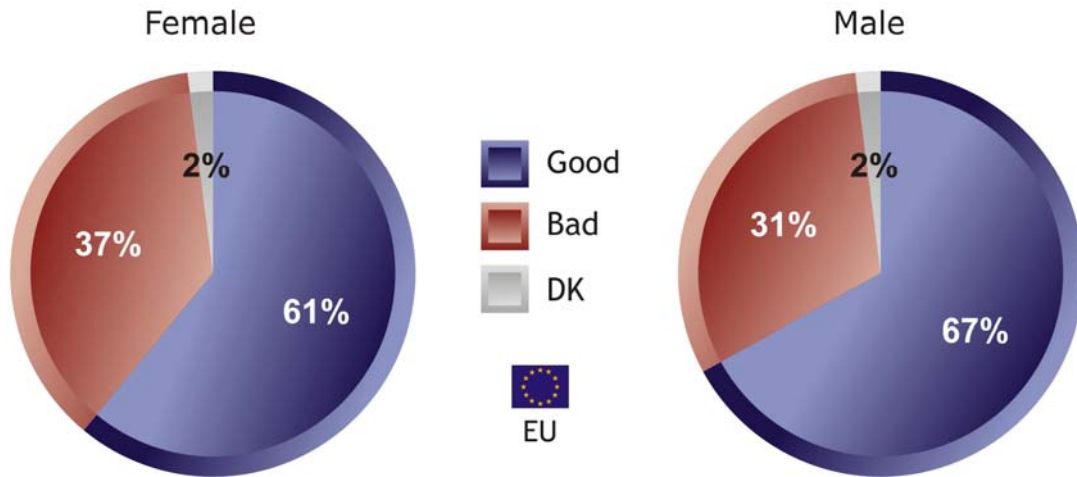
<sup>4</sup> QA21 Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: You have difficulties paying all your bills at the end of the month?

*Financial situation of the household*

Close to 4 out of 10 European women (37%) are pessimistic about the financial situation of their household, compared to around 3 out of 10 men (31%)<sup>5</sup>.

Question: QA4a.5 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?

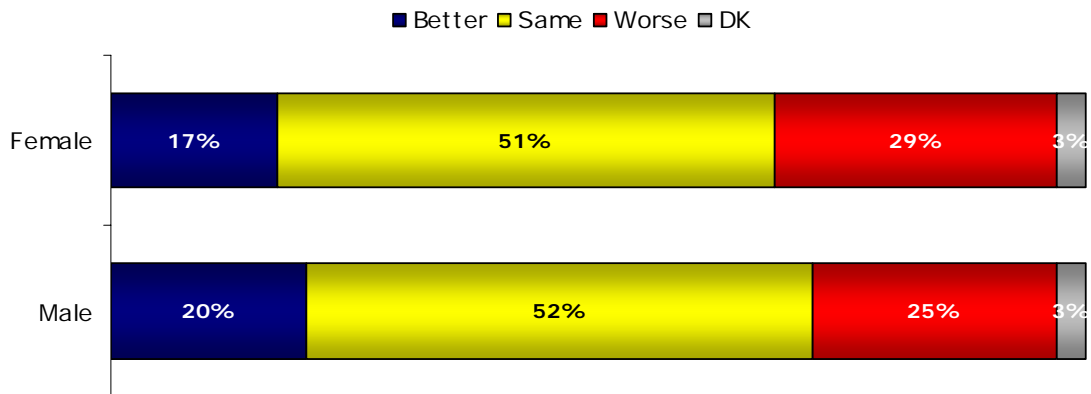
Option: The financial situation of your household



\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

Women's expectations about the financial situation of their household for the next twelve months are also more downbeat than those of men. Close to three out of ten European women (29%) believe the situation will worsen, compared to a quarter of men who feel this way<sup>6</sup>.

**QA6.3 What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to...?  
The financial situation of your household**



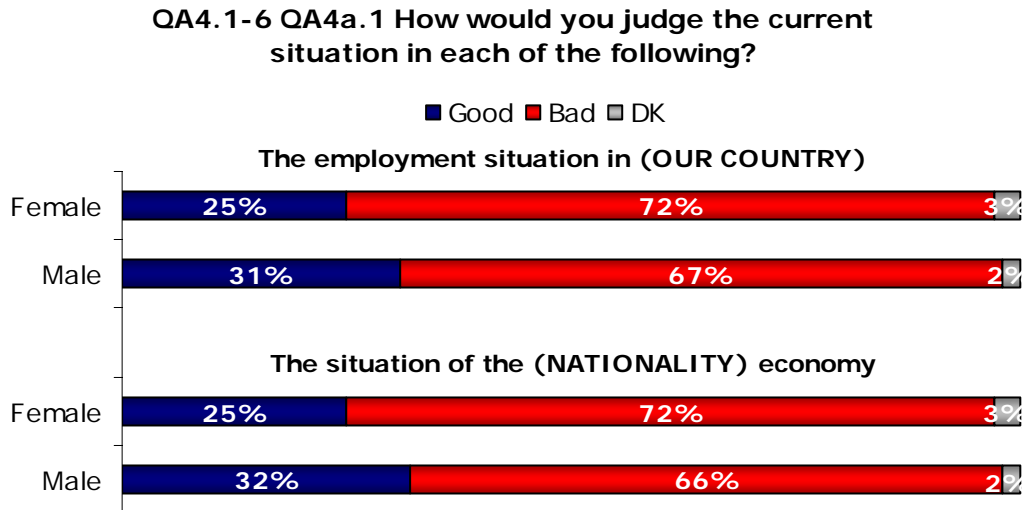
\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

<sup>5</sup> QA4a.5 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? The financial situation of your household

<sup>6</sup> QA6a.3 What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to...? The financial situation of your household

*Current national economic situation*

The more pessimistic attitude among women is also seen in the judgment of the current economic situation in their country.<sup>7</sup> 72% of women say that their country's economy and its employment situation are bad. This view is shared by around two-thirds of men (66% and 67%, respectively)<sup>8</sup>.



\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

The autumn 2008 survey show that women's more pessimistic attitude pertains particularly to their immediate situation. Women are less likely than men to hold an opinion when the situation they are asked to judge is more remote. Higher levels of "don't know" answers are recorded among women compared to men with regards to judgments and expectations of the European or global economies. When it comes to evaluating the situation of the European economy, the level of "don't know" is higher amongst women (11%) than amongst men (7%). The same applies to the situation of the global economy (women, 10%, vs. men, 7%). We observe the same pattern regarding the expectations of the European economy: women (14%) vs. men 10% ; and the economy in the world: women 13%, vs. men 9% (source, EB70).

In support of the assumption that women, more so than men, focus their attention on matters that affect them more directly, the data shows that whilst both sexes consider rising prices/inflation as their country's most important issue, more women voice concern than men on this issue (39% vs. 35%)<sup>9</sup>. More tellingly, 52% of female respondents name rising prices/inflation as the main issue facing them personally, compared to 47% of male respondents<sup>10</sup>.

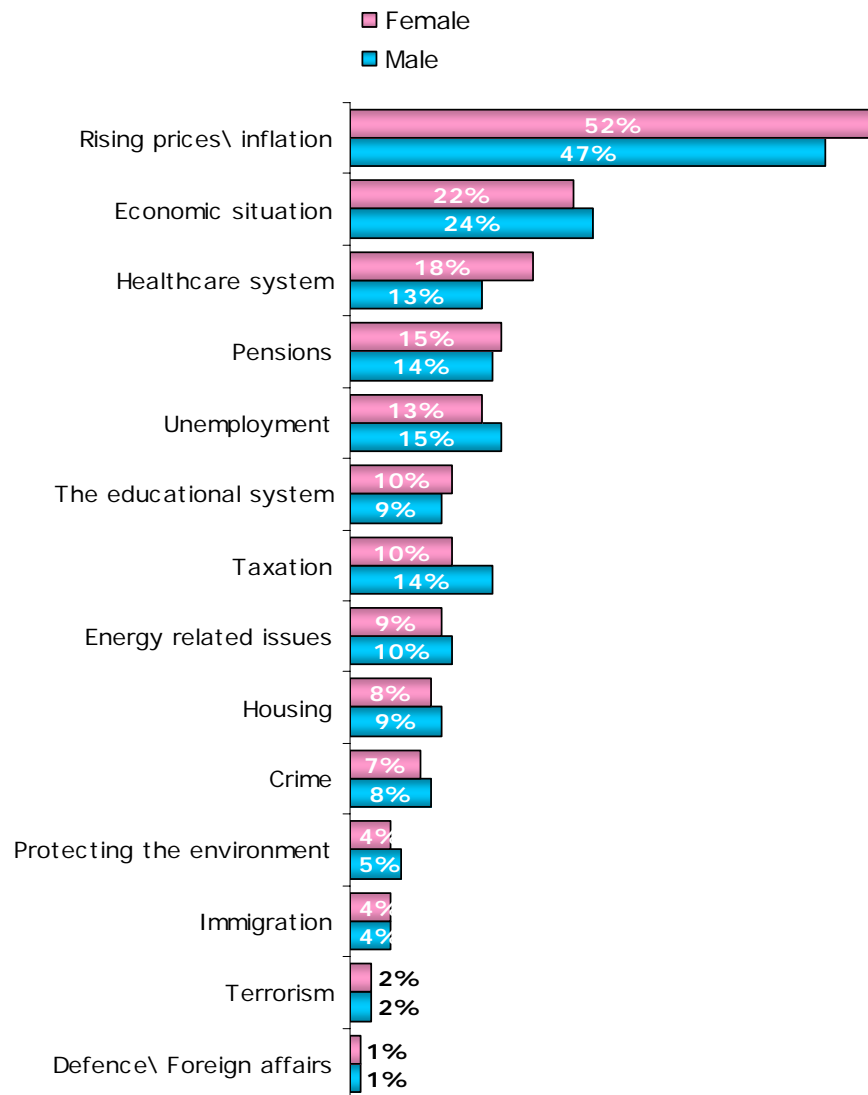
<sup>7</sup> For more detailed information regarding the impact of the crisis on the economy, see : [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=3273.75548807&dad=portal&schema=PORTAL#3](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=3273.75548807&dad=portal&schema=PORTAL#3)

<sup>8</sup> QA4a.1/6 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy / The employment situation in (COUNTRY)

<sup>9</sup> QA8a What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

<sup>10</sup> QA8b And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

**QA8b And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) - % EU**



\*EB70.1 – Aut.08

Overall, the latest Eurobarometer survey shows that women are more concerned than men about their immediate financial situation. Women more so than men feel that their financial situation has deteriorated over the past five years and they more often express economic hardship. Finally, the survey shows that over half of European women are worried about inflation and rising prices. It appears therefore that women are more likely than men to focus their attention on more immediate concerns. It is notably the case for the healthcare system: 18% of women gave this answer, vs. 13% of men.

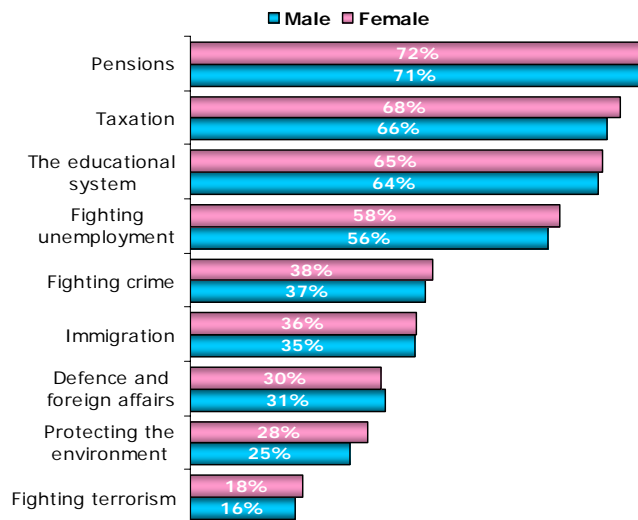


## 2. THE POLITICAL FOCUS OF WOMEN

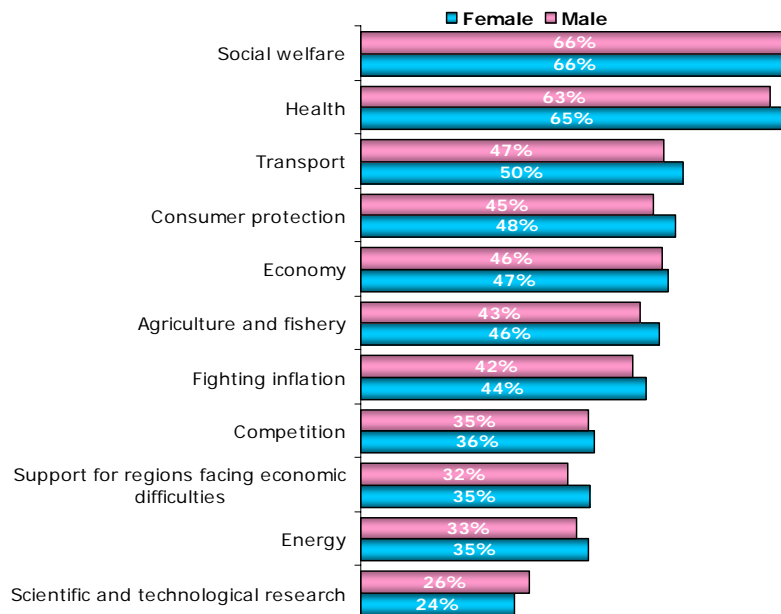
The more intense concern among women for issues that affect people directly is reflected in the focus of their political attention and involvement.

The cumulative results include a question that measures whether people believe decisions should be taken by the national government or jointly within the EU on a number of policy issues. As regards this measure, we find that in general female respondents more often than male respondents voice their preference for the level closest to home (in this case the national level)<sup>11</sup>.

QA25 Decision should be taken by the (NATIONALITY) Government when it comes to...



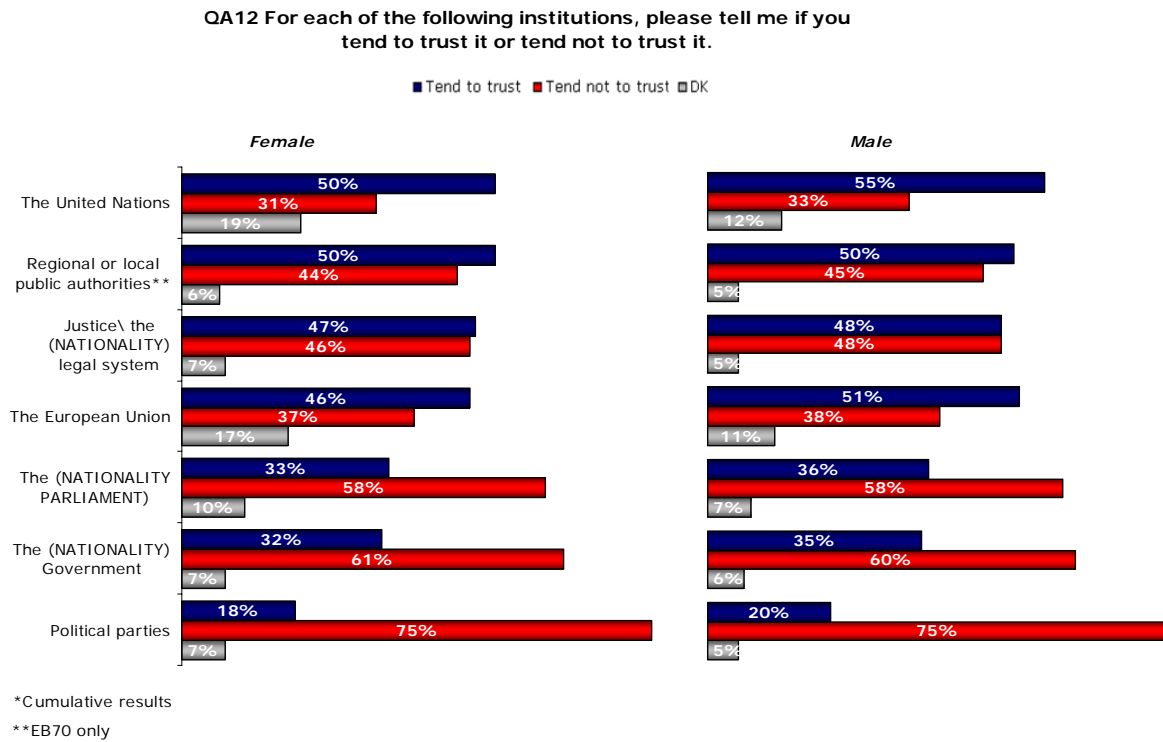
QA26 Decision should be taken by the (NATIONALITY) Government when it comes to...



\*cumulative results

<sup>11</sup> QA25/QA26 For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (NATIONALITY) Government, or made jointly within the European Union?

Furthermore, if we look at the level of trust women and men assign to various political levels, we find that the more remote the institution is from day-to-day life, the more women lack an opinion. It is important to note, however, that women do not lack trust more often for these institutions. Conversely, similar trust levels are recorded among men and women when it comes to institutions operating at regional and national levels<sup>12</sup>.

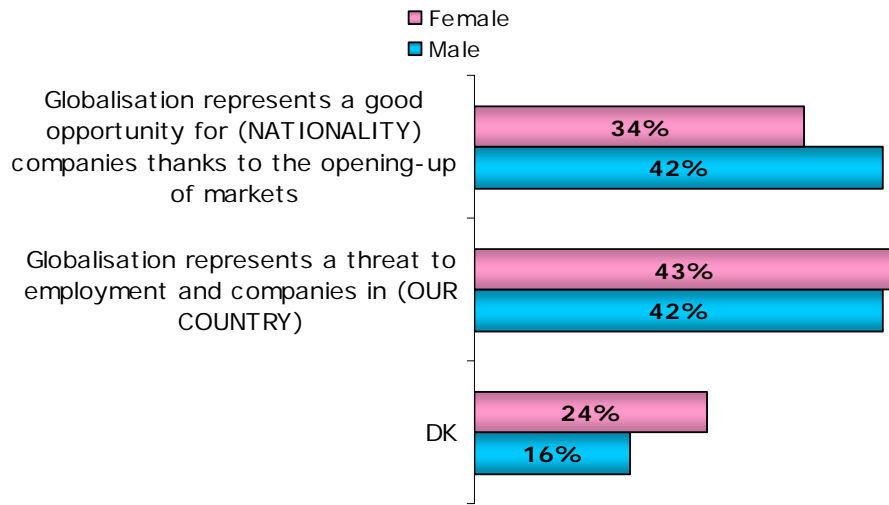


In substantive terms, the survey clearly indicates that when women are asked to judge matters that are unfamiliar to them, they more often than men lack an opinion. Globalisation is a good example. On this rather abstract issue women more often lack an opinion (24% vs. 16%), whilst not voicing stronger opposition<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> QA12 I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?

<sup>13</sup> QA33a Which of the following two propositions is the one which is closest to your opinion with regard to globalisation?

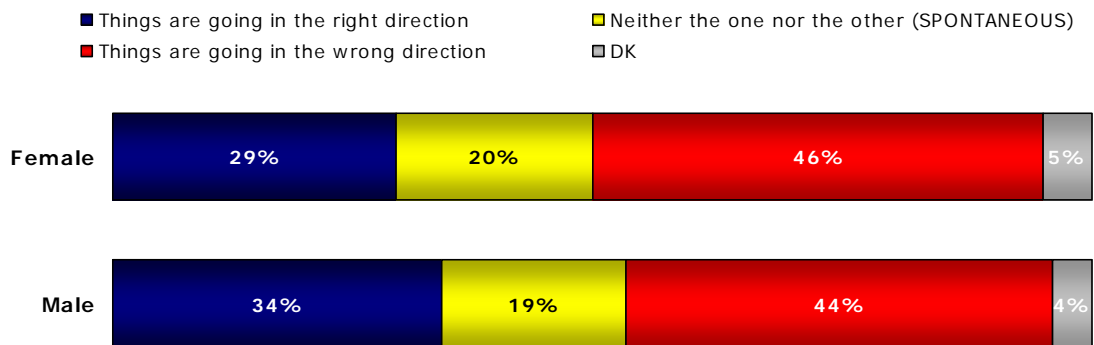
**QA33 Which of the following two propositions is the one which is closest to your opinion with regard to globalisation?**



\*Cumulative results

Finally, in this context, the cumulative results show that when asked to judge the direction in which things are going in their own country, women show equal “don’t know” levels to men (5% vs. 4%). However, when it comes to the EU, the level of “don’t know” replies is higher among women than it is among men (17% vs. 11%)<sup>14</sup>.

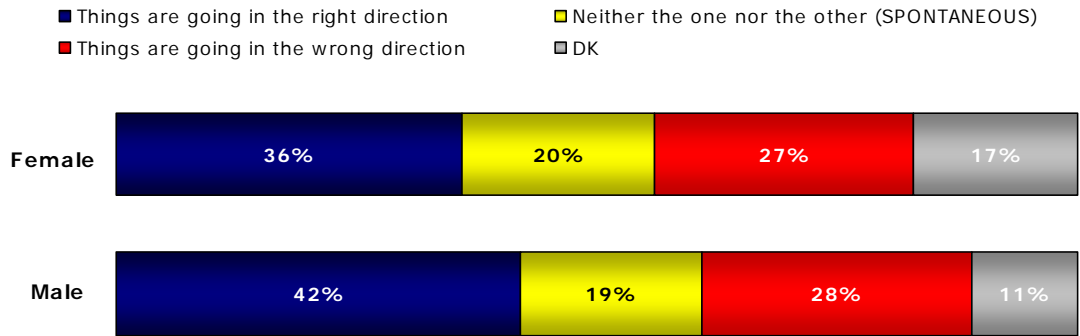
**QA11 At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...? (OUR COUNTRY)**



\*cumulative results

<sup>14</sup> QA11 At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in (OUR COUNTRY) / The European Union?

**QA11 At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...?  
The European Union**



\*cumulative results

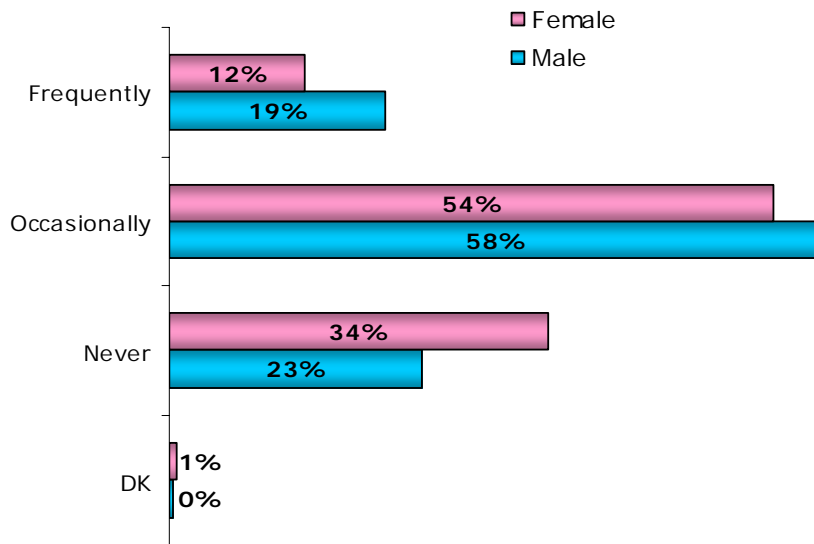
Thus, it appears that the more remote the political level is, the less involved women feel and the more they tend to lack an opinion.

### 3. INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

In understanding the perceived detachment of European women towards politics, it is also important to examine their interest and involvement in (European) politics.

At a very general level, it could be said that women are simply less interested in politics in general than men. This argument is supported by the strong difference in the extent to which men and women discuss politics: approximately a third of women (34%) never discuss politics, while this is the case amongst less than a quarter of men (23%)<sup>15</sup>.

**QA1 When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?**



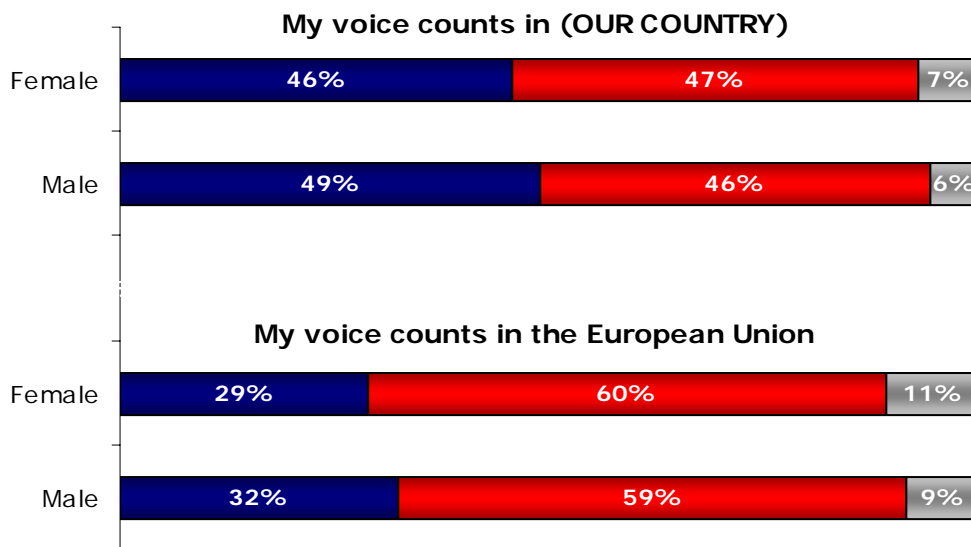
\*Cumulative results

<sup>15</sup> QA1 When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?

When it comes to the belief that the government listens – an element of external political efficacy - the cumulative results do not point to significant differences between men and women. The feeling that one’s voice counts, either at a national or EU level, is only slightly less often affirmed by women (46% and 29%, respectively) than it is by men (49% and 32%, respectively) and the proportion that feels this is not the case does not differ between the sexes<sup>16</sup>.

**QA15.3-4 Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree. - %EU**

■ Tend to agree ■ Tend to disagree ■ DK



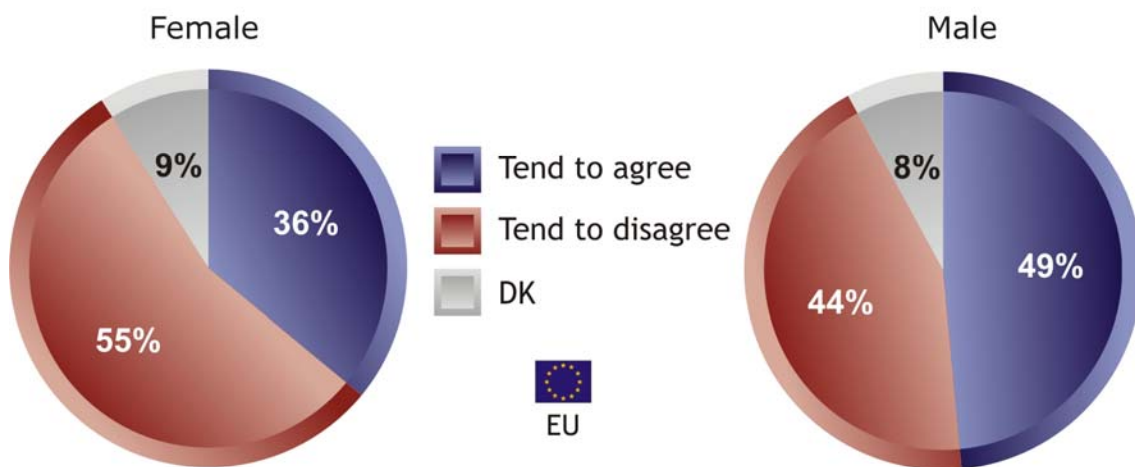
\*cumulative results

<sup>16</sup> QA15a Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree. 3. My voice counts in the European Union; 4. My voice counts in (COUNTRY).

However, when it comes to internal political efficacy – the belief that one can understand politics and therefore participate in it – women score significantly lower than men do. Only 36% of women indicate that they understand how the EU works, compared to close to half of male Europeans (49%). Furthermore, the lower positive scores among women are not the consequence of higher “don’t know” levels (9% vs. 8%). Rather, the surveys show that far more women than men disagree with the statement “I understand how the EU works” (55% vs. 44%)<sup>17</sup>.

Question: QA15a.5 Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree.

Option: I understand how the European Union works



\*cumulative results

<sup>17</sup> QA15a Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree. 5. I understand how the European Union works.

The lower internal political efficacy level of women is compounded by an actual knowledge deficit: men generally are more knowledgeable of the European Union than women. The autumn 2008 Eurobarometer wave included four knowledge questions which on average 59% of men answered correctly, compared to 47% of women. Conversely, on average, 31% of women didn't know the answers, compared to only 19% of men<sup>18</sup>.

Question: QA24 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false.



\*EB70.1 – Aut. 08

Survey results for the European Parliament provide further evidence of the knowledge gap between the two genders. The Autumn 2008 Eurobarometer indicates that 72% of European women do not know when the next European Parliament elections are, compared to 62% of men<sup>19</sup>.

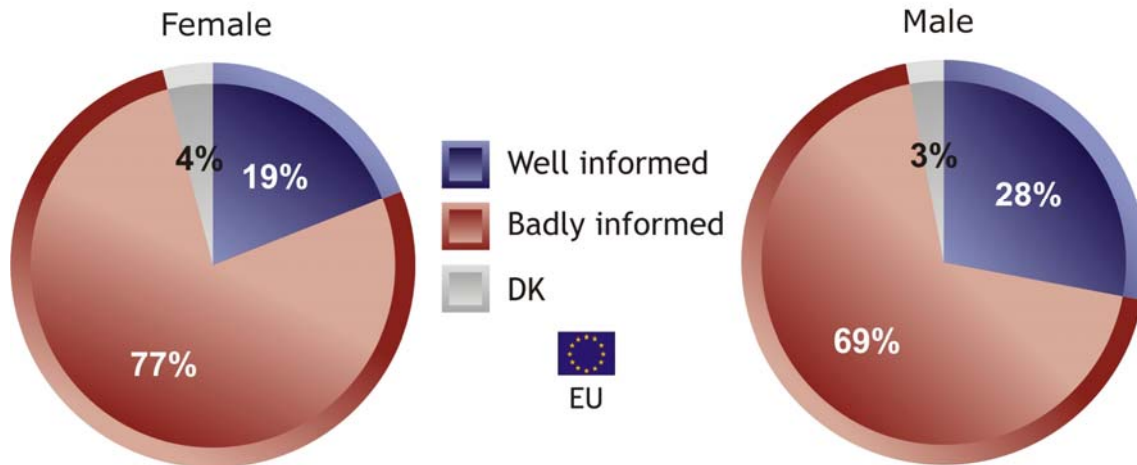
<sup>18</sup> QA24 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false. 1. The EU currently consists of fifteen Member States (false). 2. Every six months, a different Member State becomes the President of the Council of the European Union (true). 3. The euro area currently consists of twelve Member States (false). 4. Switzerland is a member of the European Union (false).

<sup>19</sup> QD3 In your opinion, when will the next European elections be held, here in (OUR COUNTRY)?



Not only is the actual knowledge level about the European Parliament lower among women, but they also indicate more frequently than is the case for men that they feel badly informed about it. In other words, their self-perceived knowledge level is lower. The autumn 2008 Eurobarometer survey has 32% of female respondents answering that they feel very badly informed about the activities of the European Parliament; 23% of male respondents voiced this sentiment. Overall, 77% of women feel (fairly and very) badly informed about the European Parliament, compared to 69% of men<sup>20</sup>.

Question: QD2 In general, do you consider that you are very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly informed about the European Parliament's activities?

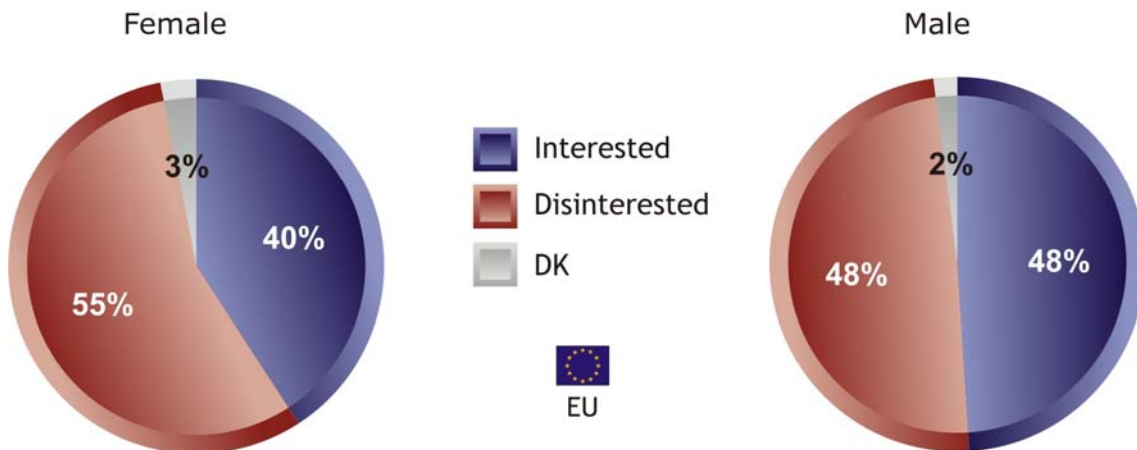


\*EB70.1 – Aut. 08

<sup>20</sup> QD2 In general, do you consider that you are very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly informed about the European Parliament's activities?

Furthermore, the cumulative results show that women are less interested in European politics than men. Four out of ten female respondents indicate that they are interested in the next European Parliament elections, compared to close to half of male respondents (48%)<sup>21</sup>.

Question: QD4 The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?



\*cumulative results

As we already analysed at the beginning of this section, the interest of women seem different from that of men. This is confirmed by the finding from the Autumn 2008 Eurobarometer that only 39% of female respondents – compared to 50% of male respondents - indicate that they have recently read, heard or seen something about the European Parliament in the media<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> QD4 The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?

<sup>22</sup> QD1 Have you recently read in the press, seen on the Internet or heard on the radio or television something about the European Parliament?

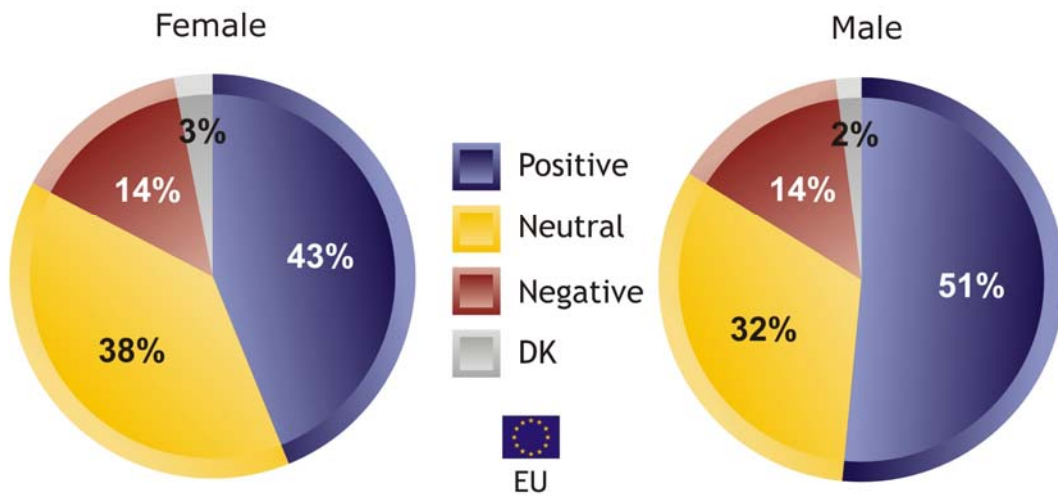
#### 4. THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the previous chapters we have pointed out that women feel more detached from the European Union than men do. They are less interested in (European) politics than their male counterparts and they know less about it. The consequence of this sense of detachment could be that women tend to take a more indifferent stance in their attitude to the European Union. They are not necessarily more opposed to it but simply seem to care less. This predicament is evident from many of the standard Eurobarometer indicators which measure public opinion about the European Union. We will now highlight a few of these measures.

##### *The image of the European Union*

Close to 4 out of 10 European women have a neutral image of the EU (38%), compared to just over 3 out of 10 European men (32%). This more neutral stance explains the lower positive scores among women. As the graph shows, they are not more negative about the EU (14% each)<sup>23</sup>.

Question: QA13 In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?



\*Cumulative results

<sup>23</sup> QA13 In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

*Support for membership of the European Union*

Women more often than men feel that their country's membership to the European Union is neither a good thing nor a bad thing (30% vs. 25%). Also, women more often do not express an opinion (6% vs. 3%) but they are not however more likely to find their country's membership to the EU a bad thing (14% each) <sup>24</sup>.

Question: Qa9a Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...?



\*Cumulative results

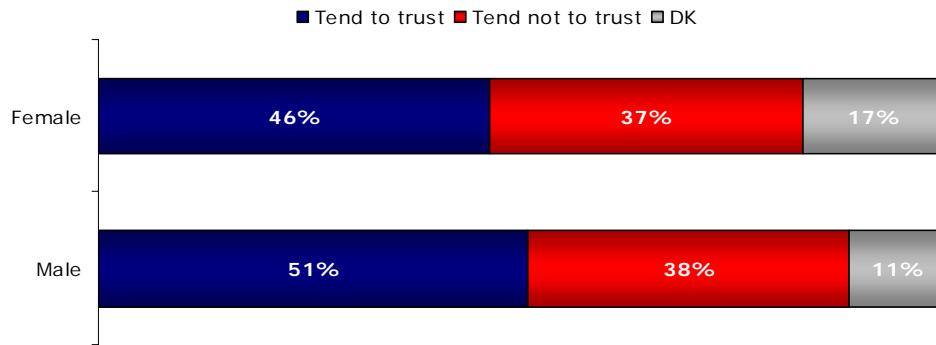
<sup>24</sup> QA9a Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...?

*Trust in the European Union*

In terms of trust in the EU, 17% of women lack an opinion, compared to 11% of men, whilst the proportion of citizens which does not trust the EU is more or less the same among women and men (37% vs. 38%)<sup>25</sup>.

**QA12.6 I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.**

**The European Union**



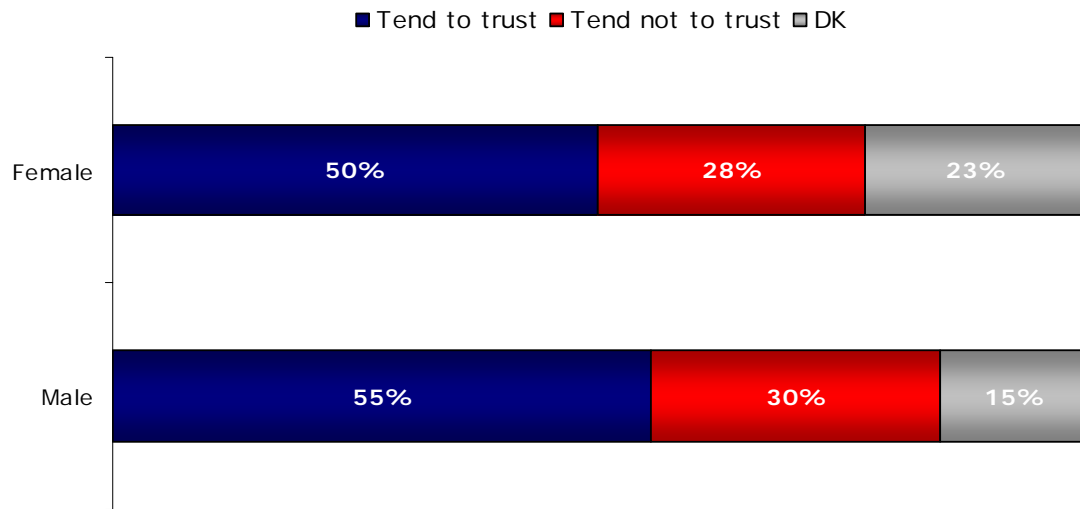
\*Cumulative results

<sup>25</sup> QA12.6 I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. The European Union

*Trust in the EU institutions*

Trust in the European Institutions is another example of this cleavage among men and women. Women and men equally tend to not trust the institutions. For instance, 28% of European women report not trusting the European Parliament, compared to 30% of men. Yet, fewer women indicate that they trust the European Parliament (50% vs. 55%), which is in fact an “equation distortion” caused by the far higher level of “don’t know” responses among women (23% vs. 15%)<sup>26</sup>.

**QA18.1 And, for each of them, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?  
The European Parliament**



\*Cumulative results

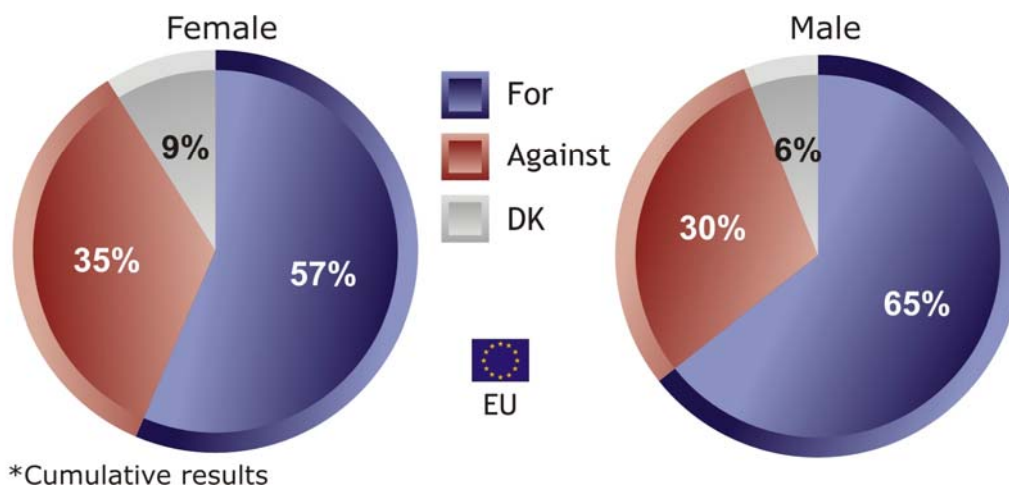
<sup>26</sup> QA18.1 And, for each of them, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? The European Parliament.

*Support for the euro*

There is one area where the cleavage between women and men is of a different nature from what we have described so far and this concerns the euro. Support for the euro is considerably lower among women than it is among men: 35% of women are against it, compared to 30% of men<sup>27</sup>.

Question: QA27.1 What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.

Option: A European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro



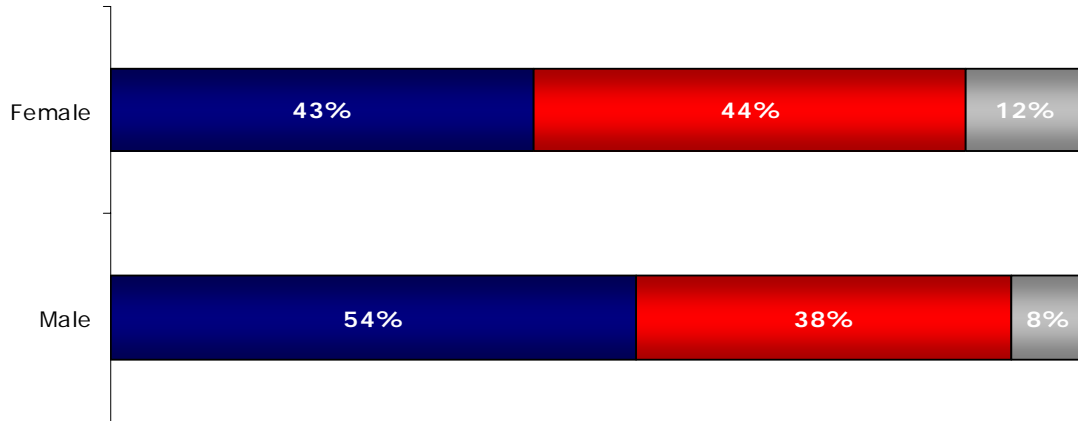
In fact, women feel less reassured by the euro than men. 44% of female respondents in the euro area indicate that they do not feel economically more stable because their country is a member of the euro area, compared to 38% of male respondents<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> QA27.1 What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it. A European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro.

<sup>28</sup> QA15a.2 Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree. I feel we are more stable economically because (OUR COUNTRY) is a member of the euro area

**QA15.2 Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree.**  
**I feel we are more stable economically because (OUR COUNTRY) is a member of the euro area**

■ Tend to agree ■ Tend to disagree ■ DK



\*Cumulative results

The perceived economic implications of the euro may be related to women’s preoccupation with their current financial situation and this in turn may affect their household or family, as noted in the first chapter.,

Apart from this particular area, the indicators show that women seem to be specifically interested in topics impacting their daily lives: therefore, their attitudes toward the EU are more neutral than those of men.



## 5. A SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

So far we have compared the views of European women to those of European men. The figures for women (and men) are averages: they represent the total for women of all socio-demographic situations. However, it is well known that people's views about the European Union often also differ depending on other factors of which age, education and occupational status have the most impact.

In this chapter we examine the impact of these factors for a number of the indicators discussed above. This examination will help the European Parliament in placing the issues that are highlighted in this report into context. Finally, we also highlight a number of relevant country differences, in order not to undermine the importance of this factor, as it is equally well-known that there are large differences in public opinion among the Member States of the European Union<sup>29</sup>.




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<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that it is beyond the remit of the report to provide a full analysis of the differences by country for the female population.

QA20 – Assessment of one’s purchasing power

The analysis by age, education and occupation amongst those Europeans who feel that their purchasing power has deteriorated over the past five years shows that this sentiment increases with age and decreases by terminal education age. This pattern holds for both men and women. There are in fact larger differences within each gender group than between men and women. Overall, unemployed men represent the most vulnerable socio-demographic group, with 67% stating that their purchasing power has worsened over the past five years. Among women, the most vulnerable group consists of those who left full-time education before reaching the age of 16, with 65% saying that their purchasing power has worsened over the past five years.

QA20 Thinking about your purchasing power, that is to say the things that your household can afford in your daily life, if you compare your present situation with five years ago, would you say it has improved, stayed about the same, or got worse?




		FEMALE				MALE			
		Improved	Stayed about the same	Got worse	DK	Improved	Stayed about the same	Got worse	DK
<b>EU27</b>		21%	29%	49%	2%	17%	28%	53%	2%
<b>Age</b>									
	15-24	31%	30%	34%	4%	28%	28%	40%	4%
	25-39	28%	28%	43%	1%	23%	28%	48%	2%
	40-54	19%	27%	53%	1%	18%	27%	55%	1%
	55 +	11%	29%	59%	1%	9%	30%	61%	1%
<b>Education (End of)</b>									
	15-	8%	27%	64%	1%	7%	26%	65%	1%
	16-19	19%	29%	51%	1%	16%	28%	55%	1%
	20+	30%	28%	41%	1%	27%	29%	44%	1%
	Still studying	29%	34%	32%	4%	28%	32%	35%	5%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>									
	Self-employed	22%	32%	45%	1%	21%	29%	50%	1%
	Managers	36%	27%	37%	1%	33%	28%	39%	1%
	Other white collars	27%	31%	41%	1%	22%	27%	50%	1%
	Manual workers	21%	27%	51%	1%	19%	26%	53%	2%
	House persons	13%	30%	56%	1%	12%	29%	57%	2%
	Unemployed	12%	20%	67%	1%	14%	24%	61%	2%
	Retired	9%	28%	61%	1%	8%	29%	62%	1%
	Students	29%	34%	32%	4%	28%	32%	35%	5%

\*EB70.1 – Aut. 08

QA4.1 – Assessment of the national economic situation

Overall education and occupation produce the largest cleavages in how people assess their country’s economic situation. This holds for both men and women. 68% of unemployed women and those who left full-time education aged 15 or younger and 67% of unemployed men judge the economic situation in their country as bad.

**QA4a.1 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?  
The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy**




		FEMALE			MALE		
		Good	Bad	DK	Good	Bad	DK
<b>EU27</b>		33%	61%	3%	41%	55%	2%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	38%	55%	6%	43%	49%	5%
	25-39	35%	62%	2%	42%	55%	1%
	40-54	34%	62%	3%	41%	56%	1%
	55 +	32%	62%	4%	39%	57%	2%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	26%	68%	4%	34%	62%	2%
	16-19	33%	63%	3%	38%	59%	2%
	20+	42%	54%	2%	51%	47%	1%
	Still studying	41%	51%	7%	48%	45%	5%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self-employed	36%	61%	1%	42%	55%	1%
	Managers	44%	53%	1%	56%	42%	1%
	Other white collars	36%	61%	2%	41%	56%	1%
	Manual workers	33%	62%	3%	38%	59%	2%
	House persons	30%	66%	3%	39%	54%	5%
	Unemployed	26%	68%	4%	27%	67%	4%
	Retired	31%	63%	4%	38%	58%	2%
	Students	41%	51%	7%	48%	45%	5%

\*cumulative results

QA12.6 – Trust in the European Union

As noted earlier, women do not lack trust in the European Union more so than men but more often lack an opinion in this regard. In terms of education, the data shows that overall, the longer people stayed in full-time education, the less likely it is that they lack an opinion. A more specific analysis of the socio-demographic break-down for each of the two sexes shows that education has a stronger impact among the female population than it does among the male population. Among women, the level of “don’t know” responses rise from 12% among those who stayed in full time education the longest to 22% of those who left school aged 15 or younger. The corresponding figures for men are 8% and 12%, respectively.

QA12.6 I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.  
The European Union

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	DK	Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	DK
<b>EU27</b>		46%	37%	17%	51%	38%	11%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	57%	27%	16%	60%	27%	13%
	25-39	50%	36%	14%	52%	37%	11%
	40-54	46%	39%	15%	49%	41%	10%
	55 +	40%	40%	20%	47%	41%	12%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	36%	42%	22%	41%	47%	12%
	16-19	44%	40%	16%	48%	40%	12%
	20+	57%	31%	12%	60%	32%	8%
	Still studying	63%	22%	15%	64%	22%	13%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self-employed	49%	38%	13%	51%	38%	11%
	Managers	53%	34%	13%	59%	34%	7%
	Other white collars	51%	37%	12%	55%	34%	11%
	Manual workers	46%	39%	15%	46%	43%	11%
	House persons	42%	38%	20%	39%	51%	10%
	Unemployed	43%	38%	19%	45%	43%	13%
	Retired	39%	41%	21%	47%	41%	13%
	Students	63%	22%	15%	64%	22%	13%

\*cumulative results




QA15.5 – Understanding how the European Union works

Women far less so than men understand how the EU works (36% vs. 49%). This is largely due to differences in terms of age and education. Overall, the longer people have stayed in full-time education, the more likely it is that they understand how the EU works and among people aged 55 and over this figure is far lower than it is among younger Europeans. This pattern holds for both men and women. Yet, despite the impact of these two factors differences between the genders remain: only 52% of women who left full-time education aged 20 and over say they understand how the EU works, compared to 64% of their male counterparts; equally 41% of women aged 15 to 24 know how the EU works, compared to 48% of young men.

Furthermore, the analyses show that differences by country, both for women and men, are in fact more extreme than the differences in terms of age and education. The proportion of female Europeans that understands how the EU works ranges from 21% in Italy to 57% in Slovenia. For male Europeans, the range goes from 30% in Italy to 70% in Cyprus.

Finally, it should be noted that the differences between men and women are particularly strong in the UK and Germany. In Germany, 59% of men know how the European Union works, compared to 42% of women. In the UK, 46% of men know how the European Union works, compared to 30% of women

QA15a.5 Please tell me for each statement, whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree.  
I understand how the European Union works




	FEMALE			MALE		
	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	DK	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	DK
<b>EU27</b>	36%	55%	9%	49%	44%	8%
<b>Age</b>						
 15-24	41%	50%	9%	48%	44%	8%
25-39	40%	52%	8%	51%	42%	8%
40-54	38%	54%	9%	52%	41%	7%
55 +	30%	61%	10%	45%	47%	8%
<b>Education (End of)</b>						
 15-	20%	70%	10%	35%	57%	8%
16-19	35%	56%	8%	47%	45%	8%
20+	52%	41%	7%	64%	30%	6%
Still studying	46%	44%	10%	52%	40%	8%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>						
 Self-employed	42%	50%	8%	53%	39%	9%
Managers	53%	39%	8%	67%	28%	5%
Other white collars	42%	50%	8%	54%	39%	7%
Manual workers	34%	57%	9%	44%	48%	8%
House persons	26%	64%	10%	40%	48%	12%
Unemployed	31%	60%	9%	38%	54%	8%
Retired	30%	61%	10%	43%	49%	8%
Students	46%	44%	10%	52%	40%	8%

\*cumulative results

QA24.1 – Knowledge quiz

We noted earlier that men tend to perform better on quiz items measuring knowledge of the European Union than women do. An analysis of one of the quiz items (QA24.1), to understand the impact of other socio-demographic factors, reveals small differences between the different age groups and large differences depending on people’s terminal education age. In terms of education, the differences pertain to both men and women. Among the people who left full-time education aged 15 or younger, 50% of men and 36% of women gave the correct answer. The corresponding figures among people who left full-time education aged 20 or older are 69% and 59%, respectively. The age differences, conversely, pertain only to women and not to men: 55% of young women know that it is false that the EU consists of 15 Member States, compared to 44% of women aged 55 and over.

**QA24.1 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false.  
The EU currently consists of fifteen Member States**

		FEMALE			MALE		
		True	False	DK	True	False	DK
<b>EU27</b>		24%	47%	29%	24%	59%	17%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	22%	55%	24%	24%	59%	17%
	25-39	26%	49%	25%	26%	59%	16%
	40-54	26%	47%	27%	26%	59%	15%
	55 +	20%	44%	36%	21%	59%	20%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	20%	36%	44%	24%	50%	26%
	16-19	27%	46%	27%	26%	57%	17%
	20+	24%	59%	17%	22%	69%	9%
	Still studying	22%	60%	19%	22%	66%	13%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self-employed	24%	51%	25%	25%	60%	16%
	Managers	25%	56%	19%	21%	69%	10%
	Other white collars	27%	52%	21%	27%	60%	14%
	Manual workers	27%	45%	28%	27%	55%	18%
	House persons	23%	39%	38%	33%	44%	23%
	Unemployed	23%	43%	34%	25%	51%	24%
	Retired	20%	45%	35%	21%	58%	21%
	Students	22%	60%	19%	22%	66%	13%




\*cumulative results

QD2 – Feeling informed about the European Parliament

Overall, Europeans who stayed in full-time education until the age of 20 or older, managers and the self-employed are most likely to feel well informed about the European Parliament whereas this figure is lowest among unemployed Europeans. For the female population, we find the lowest figures among the unemployed and those who completed their full-time education aged 15 or younger (13% each) and the highest figure among managers (27%). The proportion of male Europeans who feel well informed about the European Parliament ranges from 18% among the unemployed to 36% among managers. Whilst these figures highlight a similar pattern, overall, women less often report feeling well-informed.

It is important to note that an even larger range of “feeling informed” levels exists between the countries, both among the female and male population in Europe. For women, the range goes from 11% in the UK to 34% in Ireland and Luxembourg and for men the range goes from 19% in France to 46% in Luxembourg.

QD2 In general, do you consider that you are very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly informed about the European Parliament’s activities?

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Total "Well informed"	Total "Badly informed"	DK	Total "Well informed"	Total "Badly informed"	DK
<b>EU27</b>		19%	76%	4%	27%	68%	3%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	18%	75%	4%	23%	71%	4%
	25-39	17%	77%	4%	25%	70%	3%
	40-54	19%	75%	4%	28%	67%	3%
	55 +	19%	75%	5%	29%	66%	3%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	13%	81%	5%	21%	76%	3%
	16-19	18%	76%	4%	28%	68%	3%
	20+	26%	70%	3%	35%	62%	2%
	Still studying	21%	73%	4%	26%	69%	3%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self-employed	25%	70%	3%	31%	65%	2%
	Managers	27%	69%	3%	36%	61%	2%
	Other white collars	19%	75%	4%	31%	63%	4%
	Manual workers	16%	79%	3%	23%	73%	3%
	House persons	15%	78%	5%	24%	68%	5%
	Unemployed	13%	81%	4%	18%	75%	4%
	Retired	19%	75%	5%	27%	68%	3%
Students	21%	73%	4%	26%	69%	3%	




\*cumulative results

QD4 – Interest in the next European Parliament elections

Overall, the proportion of Europeans who are interested in the next European Parliament elections is - in socio-demographic terms – lowest among citizens who left full-time education aged 15 or younger or who are unemployed and highest among managers. Among female Europeans the range goes from 29% of those who completed full-time education aged 15 or younger to 55% of managers and those who stayed in full-time education aged 20 or older. Among their male counterparts, the range goes from 31% of the unemployed to 62% of managers. It is interesting to note a higher interest level among unemployed women (35%) than is the case for unemployed men.

The noted importance of the country factor also applies when it comes to understanding “interest levels”. For both men and women, large differences are noted between the countries in the proportion who are interested in the next European elections. For women the figures range from 17% in Latvia to 57% in Ireland; for men, the range goes from 21% in Latvia to 63% in Ireland.

QD4 The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Total	Total	DK	Total	Total	DK
		"Interested"	"Disinterested"		"Interested"	"Disinterested"	
<b>EU27</b>		40%	55%	3%	48%	48%	2%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	38%	57%	4%	42%	52%	4%
	25-39	43%	53%	3%	49%	47%	2%
	40-54	43%	53%	2%	50%	45%	2%
	55 +	38%	56%	3%	50%	46%	2%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	29%	66%	3%	39%	57%	2%
	16-19	39%	56%	2%	47%	49%	3%
	20+	55%	42%	2%	61%	36%	1%
	Still studying	43%	52%	4%	46%	48%	4%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self-employed	50%	46%	2%	55%	41%	3%
	Managers	55%	42%	1%	62%	36%	1%
	Other white collars	46%	49%	3%	55%	41%	2%
	Manual workers	37%	59%	2%	43%	54%	3%
	House persons	36%	59%	3%	36%	54%	9%
	Unemployed	35%	60%	3%	31%	64%	2%
	Retired	37%	58%	3%	48%	48%	2%
	Students	43%	52%	4%	46%	48%	4%

\*cumulative results






QA18.1 – Trust in the European Parliament

Trust in the European Parliament – in socio-demographic terms – is lowest among unemployed Europeans and highest among European students. Among the female population trust levels range from 38% among those who completed their full-time education aged 15 or younger to 62% of students and women who stayed in full-time education until the age of 20 or older. Among the male population, the range goes from 43% of those who look after the home to 65% of students.

For both sexes the largest differences are noted between the countries. Trust levels among women range from 22% in the UK to 68% in Slovakia. For men, trust levels range from 31% in the UK to 71% in Slovakia.

These analyses show that the noted “equation distortion” caused by the far higher level of “don’t know” responses among women remain, even when we control socio-demographic factors and country factors.

QA18.1 And, for each of them, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?  
The European Parliament

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	DK	Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	DK
<b>EU27</b>		50%	28%	23%	55%	30%	15%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	55%	22%	23%	60%	21%	20%
	25-39	54%	26%	21%	56%	29%	14%
	40-54	51%	29%	20%	54%	33%	13%
	55 +	44%	30%	26%	53%	32%	15%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	38%	32%	30%	46%	36%	18%
	16-19	49%	30%	22%	53%	31%	15%
	20+	62%	22%	16%	63%	26%	11%
	Still studying	62%	17%	20%	65%	18%	18%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self- employed	55%	28%	17%	58%	29%	13%
	Managers	58%	27%	15%	61%	29%	10%
	Other white collars	56%	26%	18%	61%	26%	14%
	Manual workers	49%	29%	22%	51%	33%	15%
	House persons	45%	28%	27%	43%	38%	19%
	Unemployed	44%	30%	27%	46%	33%	21%
	Retired	44%	31%	26%	52%	32%	16%
	Students	62%	17%	20%	65%	18%	18%




\*cumulative results

QA13 – Image of the European Union

An analysis of the proportion of citizens with a positive image of the EU shows that positive views increase with education and decreases with age. This pattern holds for both men and women. Among both sexes, students most often have a positive image of the EU (64% of male students and 58% of female students).

It should be noted, however, that for both genders, country differences are even more telling with the highest proportion of positive views noted in Romania: in this country 68% of men and 63% of women hold a positive image of the European Union. The image of the EU is lowest – both among men and women – in the UK (30% vs. 20%).

QA13 In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Positive	Negative	DK	Positive	Negative	DK
<b>EU27</b>		43%	14%	3%	51%	14%	2%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	51%	8%	4%	58%	6%	2%
	25-39	45%	12%	2%	52%	13%	1%
	40-54	43%	16%	2%	50%	16%	2%
	55 +	37%	18%	5%	48%	18%	2%
	<b>Education (End of)</b>						
	15-	32%	20%	6%	40%	21%	2%
	16-19	41%	15%	3%	48%	15%	2%
	20+	54%	10%	1%	60%	11%	1%
	Still studying	58%	6%	3%	64%	4%	1%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self- employed	47%	14%	2%	52%	11%	1%
	Managers	52%	11%	1%	59%	12%	1%
	Other white collars	47%	12%	2%	57%	11%	2%
	Manual workers	40%	15%	3%	46%	15%	1%
	House persons	40%	14%	5%	45%	22%	2%
	Unemployed	38%	17%	3%	42%	20%	3%
	Retired	37%	19%	5%	47%	19%	2%
	Students	58%	6%	3%	64%	4%	1%

\*cumulative results

QA9a – Support for membership to the EU

Overall, in socio-demographic terms, support levels are highest among students and lowest among people who left full-time education aged 15 or younger. Whilst this also holds specifically for women (66% vs. 36%) among men the highest support levels are noted among those who stayed in full-time education until age 20 or older (72%), followed by students (71%).

For both genders, the largest differences are noted by country. Support among women ranges from 27% in the UK to 77% in Luxembourg. Among men, it ranges from 34% in Latvia to 80% in the Netherlands.

QA9a Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...?

	FEMALE				MALE			
	A good thing	A bad thing	Neither good nor bad	DK	A good thing	A bad thing	Neither good nor bad	DK
<b>EU27</b>	50%	14%	30%	6%	59%	14%	25%	3%
<b>Age</b>								
15-24	58%	8%	28%	6%	66%	8%	23%	3%
25-39	54%	12%	30%	4%	60%	13%	25%	3%
40-54	51%	15%	30%	4%	58%	15%	25%	3%
55 +	44%	17%	31%	8%	55%	17%	25%	4%
<b>Education (End of)</b>								
15-	36%	20%	34%	10%	46%	21%	28%	4%
16-19	49%	14%	32%	5%	55%	15%	28%	3%
20+	65%	10%	23%	2%	72%	9%	18%	2%
Still studying	66%	6%	24%	4%	71%	6%	20%	3%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>								
Self-employed	53%	16%	29%	2%	61%	11%	25%	3%
Managers	64%	10%	24%	2%	71%	10%	18%	1%
Other white collars	55%	12%	29%	4%	63%	11%	23%	3%
Manual workers	49%	15%	32%	5%	53%	17%	28%	3%
House persons	46%	15%	30%	9%	47%	22%	26%	5%
Unemployed	43%	15%	35%	7%	51%	16%	29%	4%
Retired	43%	18%	32%	7%	53%	17%	26%	4%
Students	66%	6%	24%	4%	71%	6%	20%	3%

\*cumulative results




## QA10a – Benefit from membership to the EU

Among the socio-demographic groups examined, students most often feel that their country has benefited from its membership to the EU (72%), while people who left full-time education aged 15 or younger are least inclined to hold this view (41%). This pattern holds for both men and women, although generally men are more positive than women.

Yet again, it should be noted that for both men and women, the country factor produces the largest cleavages. The proportion of citizens who feel that their country has benefited from membership to the European Union ranges among women from 31% in the UK to 79% in Ireland. Among men, it ranges from 40% in Hungary to 86% in Ireland. It is interesting to note that women are particularly skeptical about the benefits of their country's membership to the EU. The majority of British men find that their country has benefited (44% vs. 46% not benefited), but the reverse pattern can be noted amongst British women (31% vs. 50% not benefited).

In this chapter we have shown that whilst age, education and occupation are important factors in understanding European public opinion, gender can not be set-aside as being simply a by-product of these variables. Gender is a very important divider in European public opinion. Furthermore, we have highlighted that differences among the Member States generally produce far larger differences both among men and women than is the case for the socio-demographic factors which we examined.

QA10a Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?

		FEMALE			MALE		
		Benefited	Not benefited	DK	Benefited	Not benefited	DK
<b>EU27</b>		52%	31%	16%	61%	29%	10%
<b>Age</b>							
	15-24	64%	19%	16%	68%	19%	13%
	25-39	56%	29%	15%	62%	28%	10%
	40-54	53%	33%	14%	60%	31%	9%
	55 +	45%	36%	19%	56%	34%	10%
<b>Education (End of)</b>							
	15-	38%	40%	23%	48%	40%	12%
	16-19	51%	34%	16%	58%	32%	11%
	20+	66%	24%	10%	72%	21%	7%
	Still studying	71%	16%	14%	74%	15%	11%
<b>Respondent occupation scale</b>							
	Self- employed	59%	29%	13%	63%	28%	10%
	Managers	63%	27%	10%	71%	23%	6%
	Other white collars	58%	29%	13%	65%	24%	11%
	Manual workers	51%	33%	17%	55%	34%	11%
	House persons	47%	32%	21%	47%	46%	8%
	Unemployed	46%	36%	19%	53%	33%	15%
	Retired	44%	37%	18%	55%	34%	11%
	Students	71%	16%	14%	74%	15%	11%

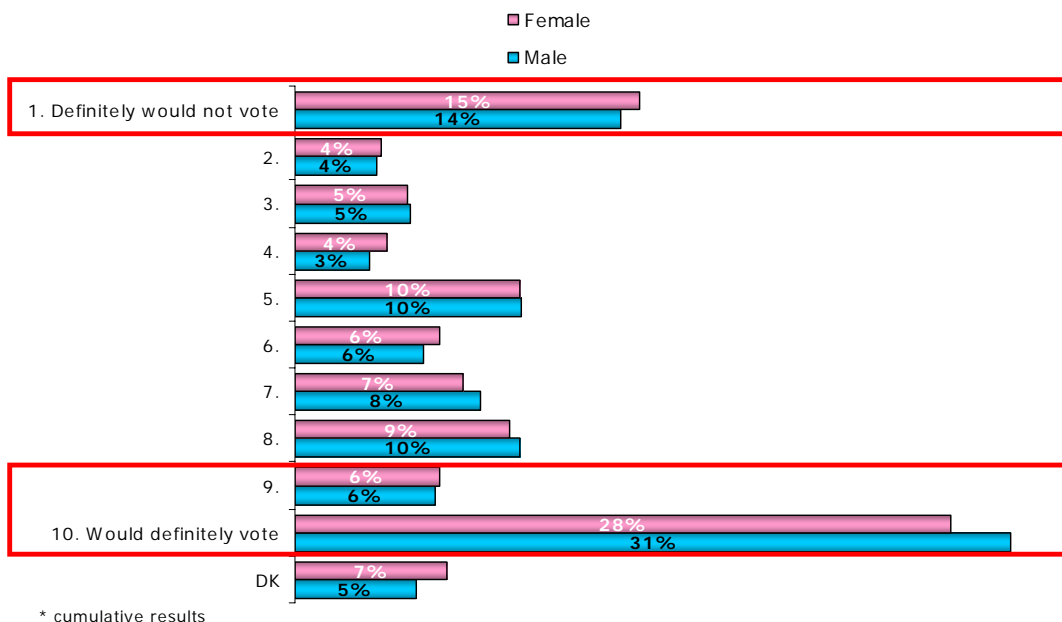
\*cumulative results

## 6. THE MOBILISATION OF THE FEMALE ELECTORATE FOR THE NEXT EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Academic research on women and European elections indicate that when reported turn-out is averaged across all Member States, women show equal levels of having voted to men<sup>30</sup>.

The Eurobarometer further indicates that women and men express more or less the same intention to vote at the next European election: The proportion of Europeans which has no intention of voting is 15% for women and 14% for men while the proportion that will definitely vote is 28% for women and 31% for men<sup>31</sup>.

QD5 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next European elections in June 2009?



Thus, despite the lower interest levels reported among women and their more distant and neutral relationship with the European Union, on the whole, female respondents as frequently as their male counterparts express an intention to participate in the European elections.

A socio-demographic analysis of the declared voting rate shows that for both women and men, the intention to cast a vote at the next European elections increases with age and the number of years people stayed in full-time education.

<sup>30</sup> Susan A. Banducci: Women, Elections and European News. 2005: paper presented at ECPR Meeting, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>31</sup> QD5 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next European elections in June 2009? Please place yourself at a point on this scale where '1' indicates that you would "definitely not vote", '10' indicates that you would "definitely vote" and the remaining numbers indicates something in between these two positions.

We next analyse what issues women want to see on the European political agenda.

When it comes to the preferred themes for the European election, no strong cleavage of opinion between men and women is noted. Although the ranking of the two top items is not the same, the three most reoccurring themes are the same for women and men. As the tables below show, they all relate to the current economic situation<sup>32</sup>.

**Top 3 Election themes for women**

1. Unemployment – 49%
2. Economic growth – 45%
3. Inflation and purchasing power – 44%

**Top 3 Election themes for men**

1. Economic growth – 51%
2. Unemployment – 47%
3. Inflation and purchasing power – 45%

\*cumulative results

For both genders, crime is the fourth most popular theme.

When it comes to which policies women and men think the European Parliament should defend most, the analyses point to some important differences<sup>33</sup>. In particular, we see that women name improving consumer and public health protection as the top policy priority. This could be a further confirmation of women’s tendency to want politics to deal with issues that affect people directly. The results further indicate that men tend to consider a greater array of issues as top priorities.

**Top 3 EP policy priorities for women**

1. Improving consumer and public health protection – 39%
2. Combating terrorism - 38%
3. Combating effectively climate change– 36%

**Top 3 EP policy priorities for men**

1. Combating terrorism – 35%
1. Combating effectively climate change – 35%
3. Improving consumer and public health protection – 33%
3. A security and defence policy that enables the EU to face up to international crisis – 33%
3. A common energy policy intended to ensure the EU’s energy independence – 33%
3. A foreign policy that enables the EU to speak with one voice – 33%

\*cumulative results

<sup>32</sup> QD6T For you, among the following themes, which are the ones that the electoral campaign for the next European elections should concentrate on?

<sup>33</sup> QD12 The European Parliament defends the development of certain policies at European Union level. In your opinion, which of the following policies should be given priority? (MAX. 4 ANSWERS)

## Conclusion

In this report we have examined a number of areas where the Eurobarometer survey results for women differ from those for men. The purpose of this examination has been to provide the European Parliament with a better understanding of the position of women in light of the next European elections in May 2009.

The examination highlights that women are more worried than men are about their immediate economic situation. This more intense concern among women appears to be reflected in their more local political focus: the more remote the political level is, the less involved women feel.

Women differ particularly from men in the expressed level of internal political efficacy – the belief that one can understand politics and therefore participate in it. The Eurobarometer furthermore points to an actual knowledge deficit among women as they perform less well on knowledge quiz items about the EU than men do. They also indicate more frequently than is the case for men that they feel badly informed about European matters.

The consequence of this sense of detachment among women appears to be that they take a more neutral stance in their attitude to the European Union. They are not necessarily more opposed to the EU but more often express a somewhat disaffected attitude.

The euro forms an exception, with women more opposed to it than men. Women, in fact, feel less reassured by the euro than men. These more negative feelings may be related to women's preoccupation with their current financial situation. It seems that women more so than men have a tendency to 'blame' the European Union for the perceived worsening of their financial situation.

In trying to understand the differences between men and women, it should be noted that other socio-demographic cleavages interact and affect the results. First of all, the female European population is on average older than the male population. In particular, 37% of women are aged 55 and over, compared to 31% of men. Secondly, on average, older people tend to have attained lower educational levels. As both the elderly and those with a lower educational level are generally less informed, interested and knowledgeable, the impact on the average results is greater for European women than it is for European men.

Yet, the simple comparative analyses have shown that even when we control age and education factors, the results for men and women often continue to differ. This indicates that gender really matters in understanding public opinion to the European Union.

Furthermore, we have highlighted that when it comes to attitudes relating specifically to the European Union, the Member State country is a factor that produces far larger differences both among men and women than is the case for any of the socio-demographic aspects.

Despite this proven gender gap, women appear to participate in the European electoral process as much as men do. For both genders, the voting intention rate increases by age and the number of years people stayed in full-time education.

The extent of the current economic crisis colours the political interests of Europeans, with both women and men wanting unemployment, economic growth and inflation to be the main theme of the next elections. However, our analyses also show that women want their political representatives to focus on matters that may affect them directly, such as consumer protection and crime, whereas men prioritise a broader range of issues in line with their more widespread political interest.

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