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Digital political campaigning: introducing the DIGIEFFECT citizen survey

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Executive summary

The DIGIEFFECT citizen survey on digital campaigning investigates how the general public in the European Union Member States understands and perceives digital political campaigns. It examines the way in which people trust and understand digital campaigns, their online and offline political behaviour, their concerns about online political campaigning and content, and their digital political literacy in relation to electoral digital content. The survey was conducted from May to June 2025 by Mercury Research on nationally representative samples across all 27 European Union Member States with a final total sample of over 27.000 respondents.

Key Insights:

1. Survey demographics:

- The largest share of respondents are aged 55-64 (25%), with a slightly larger share identifying as women (51%). A substantial share hold at least a university degree (40%), while half of the sample have a high school degree.
- Most respondents are at least somewhat interested in politics, with a roughly even share feeling close to any political party. In total, there was a slightly larger share of right-leaning respondents.
- Respondents commonly viewed online political content but were much more reluctant to engage with it.
- The surveyed sample tend to hold a positive view of democratic norms, free participation and legal oversight.

2. Digital campaigning and political behaviour:

- Respondents are split on the trustworthiness of tailored and traditional political campaign material, leaning towards distrust, with most finding all forms of political content to have little to no persuasiveness.
- People rarely, if ever, talk about politics online and offline, though they are somewhat more likely to talk to people who share their views, and to do so face to face with people they know.
- Respondents are unsure of the impact of digital campaigning compared to traditional methods. Overall, they believe that politicians and political organizations are the most likely to benefit from online campaigns.
- Familiarity rests with the search engines such as Google and the most used platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram.

3. The risks of digital campaigning:

- A majority of respondents are concerned about the non-consensual use of their personal data, as well as about the spread of false and misleading information in the digital space.
- Generally, respondents express at least a moderate concern about the possible negative effects of digital campaigning.

- Microtargeted political adverts are perceived negatively, with most respondents expressing concern about the use of their personal data.

4. View of digital campaigning regulations and regulatory framework:

- People are generally in favour of regulating digital campaigning in various ways.
- National institutions were the most favoured regulators of digital campaigns.
- The most well-received online platforms measures were those generally aimed at protecting users' privacy, as well as those disproving false information.

5. Digital political literacy:

- Most respondents get their political information from a mix of traditional electronic sources such as television and radio, online news sites and social media and in person interactions.
- People tended to find it somewhat difficult to discern false, misleading or inauthentic content online, whereas they were confident in their ability to discern the intent of political content.
- The trustworthiness of online political content was found to rely mainly on the perceived independence, as well as familiarity with the source and dissemination of the content, as opposed to the social perception of and people's interaction with the specific piece of content.
- Respondents are generally in favour of measures to improve their digital skills.

6. Digital democracy and privacy:

- Respondents feel that digital tools should be used to promote and strengthen democratic processes and institutions, promote government accountability and enable equal participation.
- Most respondents are unaware of fact-checking organizations.
- Few respondents engage in activities to protect their privacy daily, instead opting to do so less often and without using specialized software.
- The judiciary, European Union institutions and traditional media are more trusted compared to other national institutions, political actors and parties, and social media.
- Self-efficacy and frustration with the status quo were major motivations to vote, with the large majority of respondents saying that they would vote if national elections were held next weekend.

Survey design

The DIGIEFFECT survey on digital political campaigning collected information across all 27 European Union Member States on the perception, understanding and perceived impact of political campaigning. The survey included items on *the general understanding of digital political campaigns, concerns related to online campaigning, view on the regulatory framework for digital political advertising, digital literacy, and digital privacy*.

Furthermore, the survey collected socio-demographic information about respondents' age, gender identity, education, personality, interest in politics, political attitudes and party support, internet usage and views towards democracy.

Data collection

The survey was fielded online between May and June 2025, by Mercury Research. It collected a representative sample across all EU Member States, aiming for a total proposed sample size of 27,000 and delivering a final sample size of 27,255 respondents.

At the level of each country, the survey design accounted for the population structure based on a series of basic demographic variables, such as gender, age and region, to best reflect the population of the country compared to the most recently available censuses. Individual sample sizes were proposed at the level of each country, and these were achieved or slightly exceeded in the case of all Member States. The largest shares of respondents came from Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain, Belgium and France (each comprising around 5.1-5.2% of the sample), with Cyprus and Luxemburg making up the smallest shares at 1.9% each.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a total of 96 complete interviews, drawn from test samples in Romania (n = 73) and Ireland (n = 23). Following pre-testing, the questionnaire was adjusted to achieve the targeted length of completion by respondents.

Table 1. *Sample size per surveyed country*

<i>EU Member State</i>	n	%
Austria	1,000	3.7%
Belgium	1,403	5.1%
Bulgaria	1,000	3.7%
Croatia	1,000	3.7%
Cyprus	507	1.9%
Czech Republic	1,005	3.7%
Denmark	1,004	3.7%
Estonia	701	2.6%
Finland	1,006	3.7%
France	1,403	5.1%
Germany	1,409	5.2%
Greece	1,002	3.7%
Hungary	1,000	3.7%
Ireland	1,000	3.7%
Italy	1,412	5.2%
Latvia	703	2.6%
Lithuania	702	2.6%
Luxembourg	505	1.9%
Malta	665	2.4%
Netherlands	1,002	3.7%
Poland	1,007	3.7%
Portugal	1,001	3.7%
Romania	1,406	5.2%
Slovakia	1,000	3.7%
Slovenia	1,000	3.7%
Spain	1,412	5.2%
Sweden	1,000	3.7%
Total	27,255	100.0%

Section 1 – Introduction

Looking at some basic demographic data, 51.5% of respondents identify as women and 48.5% as men (Q1.1). The average age of respondents is 48, with a median of 49. The largest share of respondents belongs to the 55+ age category (42.3%), while 33.7% are aged 35-54 and only 24% being 34 or below (Q1.2). Around half (50.3%) have a high school or post-secondary school education, and 40.6% having a bachelor's degree or higher (Q1.3).

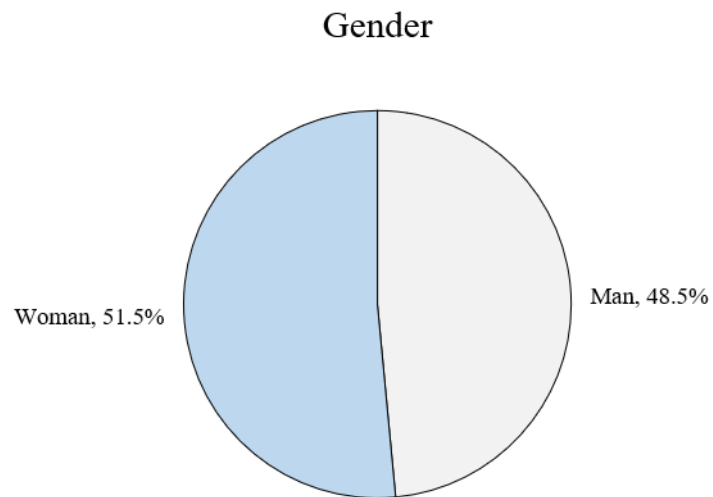
When asked about specific personality traits that describe them (Q1.4), most respondents tended to agree with being characterized as dependable/self-disciplined (81.5%), sympathetic/warm (78.3%), calm/emotionally stable (69.2%) and open to new experiences/complex (71.2%). Conversely, few saw themselves as disorganized/careless (17.8%), critical/quarrelsome (29.5%) or conventional/uncreative (24%).

One third of the sample (33.7%) described themselves as somewhat interested in politics, 36.3% as very or extremely interested, and 30% as only slightly or not at all interested (Q1.5). Around 44.5% said that they usually feel close to a political party in their home country (Q1.6). On the left-right ideological scale (Q1.7), the largest share gravitate towards the middle (42.5%, placing themselves at 4-6 on a 0-11 scale), with more identifying with the right overall than the left (38% to 19%). When asked about their interaction with political content (Q1.8), the largest share reported rarely interacting with it online. People who do interact, most commonly search, browse or view political content on social media, while rarely engaging in content creation, interaction or discussion.

On their view on democracy (Q1.9), respondents favoured free elections (81%), representation of more than one party (62.4%), respect for election results (68.7%), and a judiciary that oversees the legality of policies (72.1%). They also think that citizens should have more say in the policy process (76.2%), support a free press (59.7%), and that people should be able to criticize the government freely, even during times of crises (81.1%). Overall, respondents were split on their satisfaction with the quality of the democracy in their countries (35.2% dissatisfied versus 41% satisfied).

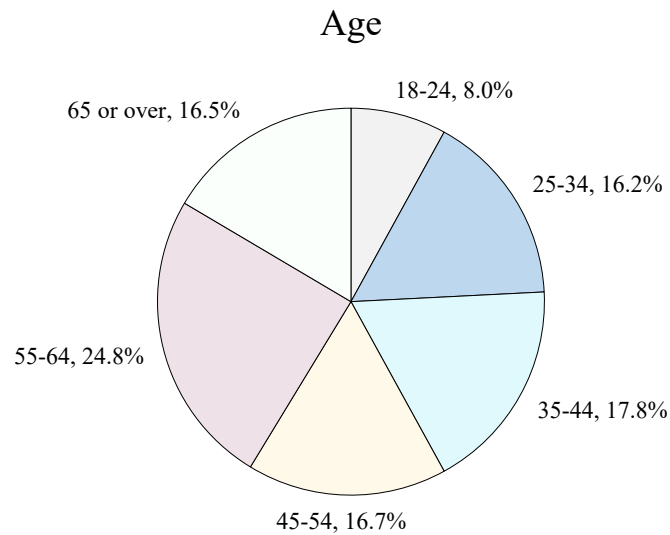
Q1.1 *How do you identify yourself?*

<i>Gender</i>	n	%
Man	13,215	48.5%
Woman	14,040	51.5%



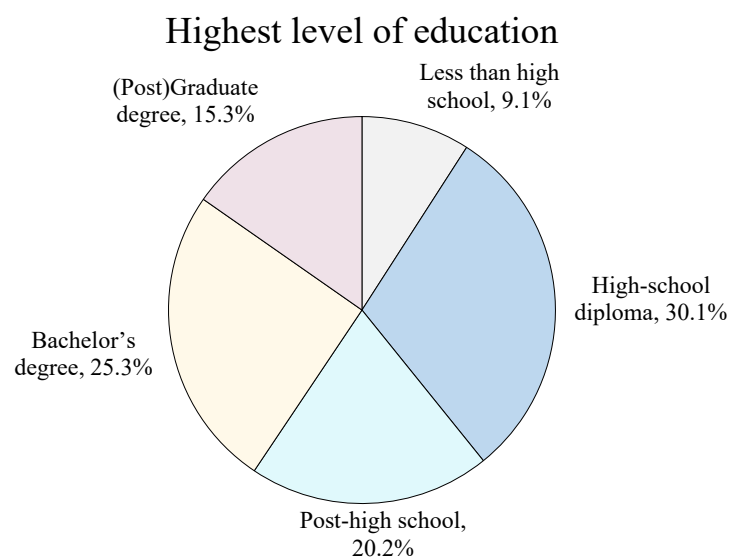
Q1.2 *What is your age [years]?*

<i>Age groups</i>	n	%
18-24	2,169	8.0%
25-34	4,429	16.2%
35-44	4,839	17.8%
45-54	4,561	16.7%
55-64	6,750	24.8%
65 or over	4,508	16.5%



Q1.3 *What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?*

<i>Highest level of education</i>	n	%
Less than high school	2,475	9.1%
High-school diploma	8,207	30.1%
Post-high school	5,500	20.2%
Bachelor's degree	6,898	25.3%
(Post)Graduate degree	4,175	15.3%

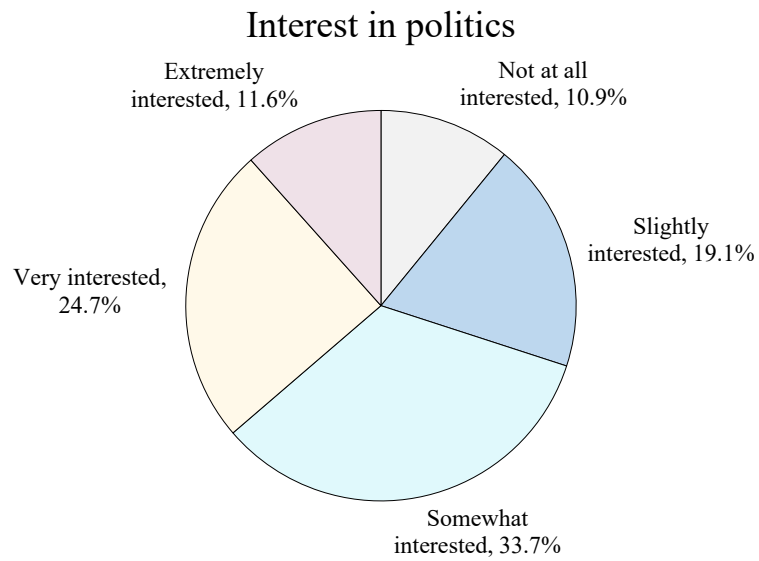


Q1.4 Here are a number of personality traits which may or may not apply to you. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you.

<i>Personality traits</i>	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Extraverted, enthusiastic	6.0%	7.9%	12.4%	22.6%	24.1%	15.5%	11.4%
Critical, quarrelsome	20.1%	13.7%	16.6%	20.1%	17.4%	7.9%	4.2%
Dependable, self-disciplined	1.7%	2.0%	4.1%	10.8%	24.1%	26.7%	30.7%
Anxious, easily upset	16.1%	14.8%	15.6%	19.5%	18.9%	8.8%	6.2%
Open to new experiences, complex	1.9%	3.5%	6.4%	17.0%	29.7%	22.4%	19.1%
Reserved, quiet	4.1%	6.0%	10.5%	17.7%	26.6%	19.1%	15.9%
Sympathetic, warm	1.7%	2.1%	4.4%	13.5%	25.7%	25.2%	27.4%
Disorganized, careless	33.8%	17.8%	16.0%	14.7%	10.4%	4.5%	2.9%
Calm, emotionally stable	2.1%	3.9%	8.3%	16.4%	26.2%	23.6%	19.4%
Conventional, uncreative	17.2%	15.3%	19.8%	23.7%	13.3%	6.9%	3.8%

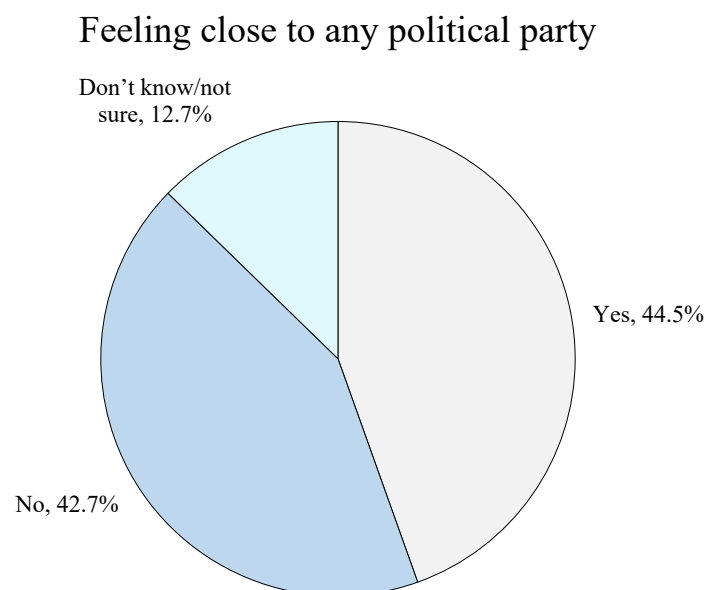
Q1.5 How interested are you in politics generally?

<i>Interest in politics</i>	n	%
Not at all interested	2,983	10.9%
Slightly interested	5,197	19.1%
Somewhat interested	9,185	33.7%
Very interested	6,732	24.7%
Extremely interested	3,158	11.6%



Q1.6 *Do you usually feel close to any political party in [country]?*

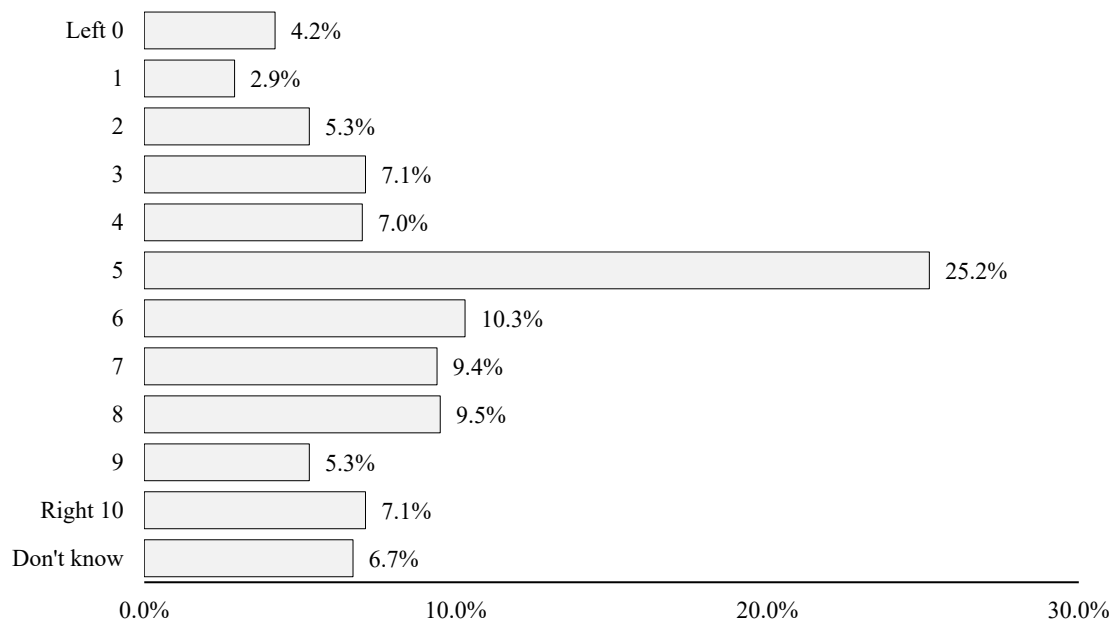
<i>Feeling close to any political party</i>	n	%
Yes	12,141	44.5%
No	11,643	42.7%
Don't know/not sure	3,472	12.7%



Q1.7 In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place yourself on a left-right ideological scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

Left-Right identification	n	%
Left 0	1,134	4.2%
1	794	2.9%
2	1,444	5.3%
3	1,929	7.1%
4	1,919	7.0%
5	6,875	25.2%
6	2,820	10.3%
7	2,560	9.4%
8	2,584	9.5%
9	1,431	5.3%
Right 10	1,945	7.1%
Don't know	1,819	6.7%

Left-Right identification



Q1.8 How often do you do any of the following on-line?

Online political activity	Never or hardly ever	At least once a month	At least once a week	Several times a week	Daily or almost daily
Search, browse, click or view political content on social media	34.6%	20.4%	18.7%	15.6%	10.7%
Search for more information on candidates' or parties' websites	50.1%	23.8%	13.7%	8.6%	3.9%
Comment on political content on the internet (e.g. social media)	60.5%	15.6%	11.9%	8.1%	3.9%
Post or share political content on social media	65.8%	14.1%	10.2%	6.8%	3.1%
Participate in decision-making on-line (e.g. on-line forums, party platforms)	66.2%	15.4%	9.9%	6.0%	2.5%

Q1.9 We are interested in your views towards democracy. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement?

Views towards democracy	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/not sure
Citizens should be free to criticize the government, even during times of crisis	2.1%	3.1%	11.7%	24.1%	57.0%	2.0%
The government should be able to censor any media sources that are too critical	43.3%	16.4%	17.0%	12.3%	8.1%	2.9%
The country would be worse off if there was only one political party	6.4%	6.8%	18.7%	17.4%	45.0%	5.6%
We should always respect the results of elections, regardless of which candidate or party wins	4.7%	6.6%	17.4%	25.5%	43.2%	2.6%
Judicial courts should be able to overrule the government's decision if a policy is deemed to be illegal	3.7%	4.4%	15.7%	26.3%	45.8%	4.0%
Citizens should get more of a say in the policy process in this country	2.3%	3.9%	15.3%	29.8%	46.4%	2.3%
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of democracy in this country	16.9%	18.3%	21.6%	27.7%	13.3%	2.1%

Section 2 – Political behaviour and understanding of digital political campaigns

Respondents are generally split on the trustworthiness of tailored political adverts (Q2.1), and feel similarly about traditional campaigns, although in the latter case, they lean more towards distrust, with 22.4% and 18.1% respectively not trusting them at all. Respondents also find all political content to have little to no persuasiveness (Q2.2), with emails from parties and politicians and celebrity promotions deemed not persuasive at all by the largest share of respondents (27.1% and 38.1% respectively).

Roughly one third of respondents (31.6%) do not talk online about politics at all, and a similar share say they rarely do (32.7%) (Q2.3). Talking online with people who share one's political views is somewhat more common than talking with those who hold different beliefs, but most people rarely if ever talk about politics online (67%). On the other hand, talking about politics face to face is more common, with only a tenth (10%) of respondents saying they never do so. Even so, regardless of the other person's belief, the largest share of respondents still report rarely talking about politics face to face (37.1% and 41.8%). Nonetheless, nearly half (48.9%) say that they discuss politics face to face with people who share their views at least once a week, while 46.1% do so with people with differing viewpoints from their own.

The largest share of respondents agrees that digital campaigning only happens during the electoral campaign (42.2%) and that it has a significant impact on the election results (48.1%) (Q2.4). They are split, however, on whether digital campaigning has a greater impact on their vote choice than traditional methods of campaigning (26.6% agree versus 35.2% disagree), and on whether it reduces the legitimacy and fairness of elections (32% agree versus 22.5% disagree). Asked who benefits from digital campaigning (Q2.5), the largest share of respondents felt that political parties, party leaders and candidates benefit the most, alongside influencers and the national government, while citizens and vulnerable people were seen as benefitting less.

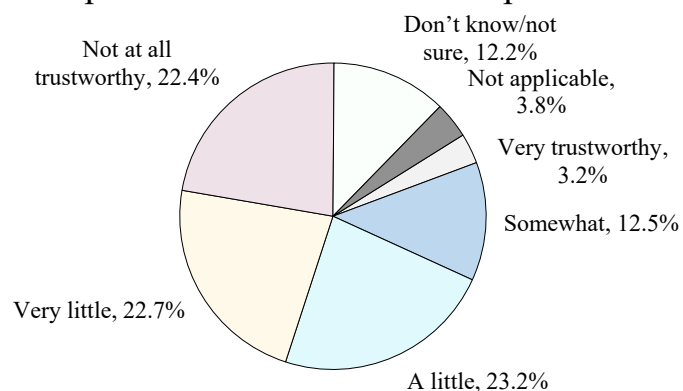
A majority of respondents are very familiar with the Google search engine (58.5%), while a plurality reported similar familiarity with Facebook (49%) and YouTube (47.3%), followed by Instagram (32.2%) (Q2.6). Respondents were least familiar with the Bing search engine, with 39.3% saying that they are not familiar with it at all.

Q2.1 How trustworthy do you find the following political information:

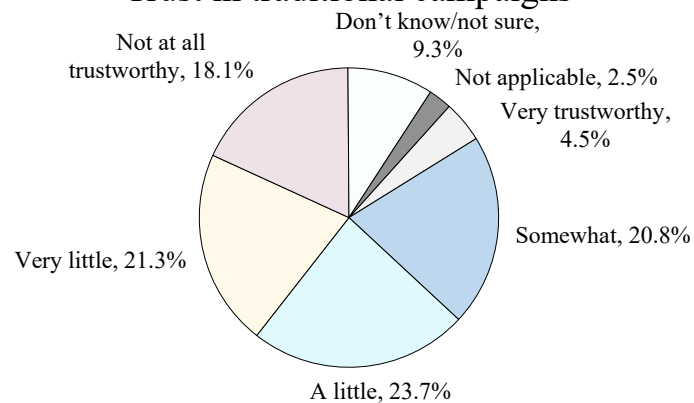
1. Political adverts tailored on personal data (e.g., location, gender, age) on social media, search engines or video streaming services
2. Traditional campaigns (e.g. billboards, leaflets, rallies, in person contact)

Trustworthiness	Political adverts tailored on personal data	Traditional campaigns
Very trustworthy	3.2%	4.5%
Somewhat	12.5%	20.8%
A little	23.2%	23.7%
Very little	22.7%	21.3%
Not at all trustworthy	22.4%	18.1%
Don't know/not sure	12.2%	9.3%
Not applicable	3.8%	2.5%

Trust is political adverts tailored on personal data



Trust in traditional campaigns



Q2.2 *How persuasive do you find political content in these formats?*

Online content format	Very persuasive	Somewhat	A little	Very little	Not at all persuasive	Don't know / not sure	Not applicable
Emails from political parties and politicians (i.e. newsletters)	3.3%	12.3%	21.4%	21.9%	27.1%	8.9%	5.0%
Party or politician websites	4.6%	18.2%	23.8%	21.2%	19.5%	9.6%	3.2%
Political live streams on online platforms	6.6%	21.7%	23.3%	19.5%	16.2%	9.3%	3.4%
Party or politicians' social media activity	4.5%	16.2%	23.3%	22.2%	22.2%	8.4%	3.3%
Famous persons promoting politicians (i.e. influencers)	3.2%	9.8%	17.1%	20.6%	38.1%	7.8%	3.4%
Party webinars e.g., training or online rallies	4.3%	16.0%	23.0%	20.6%	18.8%	12.6%	4.7%

Q2.3 *How often do you talk about politics:*

1. *Online with others who share your political viewpoints and/or support the same political party?*
2. *Online with others who do not share your political viewpoints and/or support the same political party?*
3. *Face to face with family, friends, colleagues who share your political viewpoints?*
4. *Face to face with family, friends, colleagues who do not share your political viewpoints?*

How often do you talk about politics?	Online with those who share your political viewpoints	Online with those who do not share your political viewpoints	Face to face with those who share your political viewpoints?	Face to face with those who do not share your political viewpoints?
Daily	4.1%	3.5%	7.1%	5.7%
Several times a week	11.5%	10.3%	19.4%	16.0%
Once a week	15.8%	14.5%	22.4%	20.4%
Rarely	32.7%	32.7%	37.1%	41.8%
Never	31.6%	34.3%	10.0%	12.1%
Not sure/don't know	4.4%	4.6%	4.0%	4.0%

Q2.4 Please tell us the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Digital campaigning...	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not sure
Only happens during electoral campaigns	6.5%	13.7%	26.2%	29.3%	12.9%	11.4%
Is not On-line content shared by a politician	5.6%	11.9%	36.2%	20.2%	8.1%	18.0%
Has a significant impact on election results	4.0%	9.8%	28.2%	34.9%	13.2%	9.9%
Has a greater impact on my vote choice than traditional campaigning	18.4%	16.8%	30.1%	19.3%	7.3%	8.1%
Reduces the legitimacy and fairness of elections	7.0%	15.5%	34.0%	22.3%	9.7%	11.5%

Q2.5 To what extent do you believe the following categories are benefitting from digital campaigning?

1. Political parties (votes, members, broader audience)
2. Party leaders (visibility, popularity)
3. Party candidates (votes, visibility)
4. Social media platforms (profit, users)
5. Most citizens (accessibility, real time information)
6. Vulnerable citizens (i.e. accessibility for disabled categories)
7. Influencers (profit)
8. National Government (popularity)
9. Foreign interfering governments (influence)

Digital campaigning beneficiaries	A great deal	Somewhat	A little	Very little	Not at all	Not sure / don't know
Political parties	18.8%	32.3%	22.4%	10.9%	4.4%	11.2%
Party leaders	21.7%	31.7%	20.7%	10.5%	4.8%	10.6%
Party candidates	18.7%	32.2%	22.6%	11.1%	4.5%	11.0%
Social media platforms	19.0%	27.9%	21.6%	12.1%	6.2%	13.2%
Most citizens	9.9%	26.1%	27.3%	17.4%	8.1%	11.3%
Vulnerable citizens	9.8%	21.7%	23.3%	18.9%	12.2%	14.2%
Influencers	21.1%	25.2%	19.1%	12.3%	9.3%	13.1%
National Government	15.7%	29.6%	23.4%	13.3%	6.3%	11.7%
Foreign interfering governments	12.7%	25.3%	23.2%	14.8%	8.0%	15.9%

Q2.6 To what extent are you familiar with the following platforms and search engines?

<i>Platforms and search engines</i>	Very familiar	Somewhat	A little	Very little	Not at all familiar	Don't know / not sure	Not applicable
Facebook	49.0%	20.5%	10.6%	7.3%	6.5%	3.1%	3.0%
X (Twitter)	15.2%	15.0%	16.0%	14.4%	25.8%	5.1%	8.5%
Instagram	32.1%	19.6%	13.8%	10.8%	14.3%	4.1%	5.4%
TikTok	22.9%	15.5%	14.1%	13.5%	22.7%	4.1%	7.3%
Snapchat	12.1%	10.7%	13.8%	14.4%	33.8%	6.0%	9.3%
YouTube	47.3%	22.6%	12.1%	7.3%	4.7%	3.5%	2.6%
LinkedIn	13.6%	15.8%	16.4%	15.1%	25.3%	5.8%	8.0%
Google	58.5%	19.4%	8.9%	5.2%	2.8%	3.4%	1.8%
Bing Search	6.4%	9.5%	12.4%	12.2%	39.3%	9.3%	11.0%
Telegram	13.2%	14.1%	14.5%	13.2%	30.6%	5.9%	8.5%

Section 3 –Risks of digital political campaigning

Respondents are generally concerned with all the various issues related to digital campaigning (Q3.1). More specifically, the largest share indicated that they are extremely concerned about the use of personal data without consent (31.8%), the dissemination of false information (31.5%) followed by the dissemination of manipulative information (29%), the dissemination of malicious/harmful information (28.7%) and manipulative AI generated content (28.1%). Exposure to recommended biased information was of relatively low concern, though 45% of respondents indicated that they were still at least very concerned about it.

Respondents express at least moderate concern about all the possible negative effects of digital campaigns (Q3.2). More than half were very or extremely concerned about the possible reputational or personal harms, societal division and a lack of accountability among malicious political actors. By contrast, a lack of public debate was most often seen as not at all concerning, by the largest relative share of respondents (8.6%).

Looking at specific details of political campaigning (Q3.3), more than half of respondents (52.4%) find it very or extremely important to know who paid for the online political adverts. Close to half (47.2%) were also concerned about who actually creates the advert or content. While respondents are least moderately concerned about such details, when it comes to the use of AI in preparing political adverts and the address of the advert creator, more than a tenth of respondents (13% and 12.3% respectively) said it is not important at all. Respondents are also split on information about targeting techniques used in electoral communication strategies: 29.5% find it moderately important, 38.4% more important and 18.9% less important, while 13.2% said they did not know or were unsure how to answer.

Finally, 44.5% of respondents indicated that microtargeted political adverts make them angry, while at the same time more than two thirds (65.7%) were worried about what organizations do with their personal data (Q3.4).

Q3.1 During digital campaigns, to what extent are you concerned with the following:

Concern during digital campaign	Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned	Not sure / don't know
Dissemination of false information	3.7%	10.8%	20.2%	28.4%	31.5%	5.3%
Dissemination of manipulative information	4.0%	11.3%	21.3%	28.4%	29.0%	6.0%
Dissemination of malicious/harmful information	4.3%	11.4%	21.7%	28.3%	28.7%	5.7%
Manipulative AI generated content (e.g., deepfakes)	4.8%	12.2%	22.3%	25.4%	28.1%	7.1%
Dissemination of AI personality-tailored adverts	6.6%	13.5%	25.7%	24.3%	21.7%	8.1%
Use of personal data without consent	4.0%	11.8%	20.9%	26.3%	31.8%	5.3%
Exposure to recommended biased information	5.5%	13.2%	27.1%	26.2%	19.0%	9.0%
Foreign interference in elections	7.4%	14.2%	25.0%	23.3%	21.9%	8.2%

Q3.2 To what extent are you concerned with the following effects of digital campaigns?

Effects of digital campaigns	Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned	Not sure / don't know
Distorted perception of parties' policy position	4.9%	12.1%	28.0%	27.4%	19.0%	8.6%
Distorted perception of political candidates	4.8%	11.7%	27.1%	27.7%	20.2%	8.4%
Lack of public debates	8.6%	13.2%	28.2%	24.2%	16.3%	9.6%
Reputational/personal harms, hate speech, cyberbullying	4.4%	11.4%	22.5%	27.5%	27.9%	6.4%
Societal division	4.5%	10.8%	24.6%	28.0%	24.9%	7.1%
Lack of accountability of malicious political actors	4.0%	10.6%	22.2%	27.8%	27.4%	8.1%

Q3.3 *To what extent do you consider the following information important?*

<i>Information about digital campaigns</i>	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Not sure / don't know
Who paid for the on-line political advert	6.7%	10.7%	21.3%	27.9%	24.5%	9.0%
Who created and produced the content or advert	6.9%	12.5%	24.9%	28.0%	19.2%	8.5%
Targeting techniques used in electoral communication strategies	5.6%	13.3%	29.5%	25.2%	13.2%	13.2%
The use of AI for preparing political adverts	13.0%	13.9%	26.1%	20.1%	15.9%	11.1%
The address of the advert creator	12.3%	12.8%	24.9%	23.8%	15.9%	10.4%

Q3.4 *To what extent do you agree or disagree with following statements regarding microtargeted (personalised) political adverts?*

1. *Personalised political adverts make me feel angry*
2. *I am worried about what organisations do with my personal data*

<i>Agreement with statements</i>	Adverts make me feel angry	Worried about my personal data
Strongly disagree	6.3%	3.6%
Slightly disagree	11.1%	8.3%
Neutral	30.3%	17.4%
Slightly agree	26.3%	28.7%
Strongly agree	18.2%	37.0%
Not sure/don't know	7.8%	5.1%

Section 4 – Digital campaigning regulation

Overall, respondents largely favoured the regulation of digital campaigning (Q4.1). A majority (over 50%) strongly agreed that the dissemination of false, manipulative or harmful information should be more strictly regulated. Similar shares also strongly agreed with stricter regulation for the use of personal data, hate speech and accountability for manipulative information. In all cases, less than a tenth of respondents opposed stricter regulations. Notably, around 11% of respondents were unsure or did not know whether they would favour stricter regulations for content-recommendation systems.

Half of respondents (50%) thought that national governments and parliaments should be primarily responsible for regulating digital campaigning, followed by independent agencies (31.4%), and social media platforms (29.1%) (Q4.2). Supranational and international organisations were the least favoured (26.9% and 31% respectively), and 10% indicated that none of the listed organisations should be primarily responsible for regulating digital campaigning.

Asked how well various measures by online platforms address their concerns about the use of personal data (Q4.3), respondents were generally divided, with a large share unsure how to answer (13.7%-25%). By far the best-rated feature was Meta's reminder for Facebook users to update their privacy settings, which 39.2% of respondents said addressed their concerns very or extremely well. On the other hand, Meta's election reminders had the largest share of respondents (14.1%) saying they did not address their concerns at all.

On measures addressing concerns about the quality of political information circulated online (Q4.4), Google's short video campaign on fake information detection was the best received, 41.8% of respondents saying it addresses their concerns well, followed by Meta's requirement to disclose AI generated adverts (40.6%).

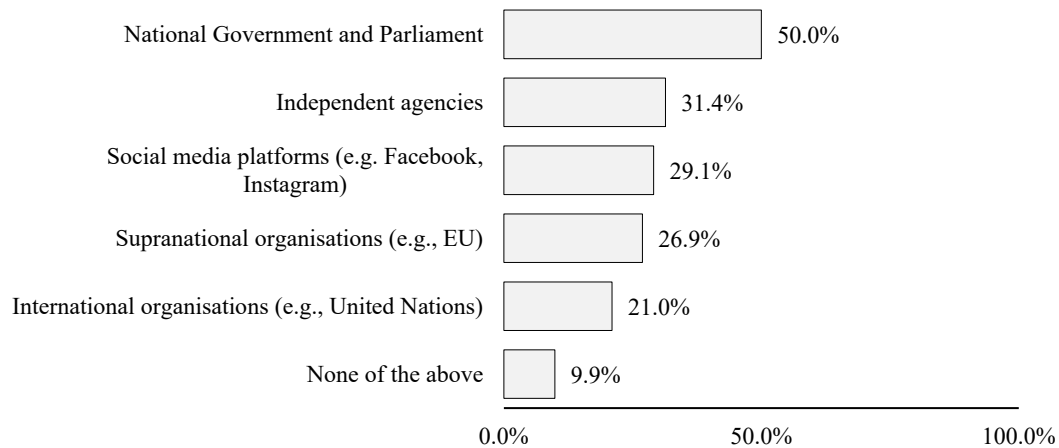
Q4.1 *In your opinion, which aspects of digital campaigning should be more strictly regulated?*

Aspects of digital campaigning	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not sure
Dissemination of false information	3.1%	4.1%	11.8%	19.5%	56.5%	5.1%
Dissemination of manipulative information	2.9%	4.1%	12.7%	23.1%	51.3%	5.9%
Dissemination of harmful information	2.9%	4.0%	12.5%	22.0%	53.0%	5.5%
Costs of running adverts	3.3%	6.4%	22.7%	28.6%	30.5%	8.5%
Who creates and pays for adverts	2.9%	5.4%	19.3%	29.6%	35.4%	7.5%
The use of personal data	3.1%	4.4%	13.1%	22.5%	51.6%	5.4%
Content recommendation systems	2.6%	5.5%	23.7%	30.9%	26.4%	10.9%
Foreign interference in elections	3.4%	5.2%	15.4%	23.4%	45.5%	7.1%
Hate speech	3.9%	4.5%	12.8%	19.1%	54.3%	5.5%
AI-generated content	3.2%	5.6%	18.2%	26.9%	39.1%	7.0%
Accountability for manipulative information	2.2%	4.1%	13.0%	24.4%	50.2%	6.1%

Q4.2 *Who do you think should be primarily responsible for regulating digital campaigning?*
(select all that apply)

Responsibility for digital campaigning	n	%
National Government and Parliament	13621	50.0%
Independent agencies	8551	31.4%
Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)	7932	29.1%
Supranational organisations (e.g., EU)	7327	26.9%
International organisations (e.g., United Nations)	5729	21.0%
None of the above	2702	9.9%

Responsibility for regulating digital campaigning



Q4.3 How well do the following measures of online platforms and search engines address your concerns about the use of personal data

Measures of online platforms and search engines	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very well	Extremely well	Don't know / not sure
Meta reminds Facebook users to update privacy settings	7.8%	11.7%	27.7%	26.3%	12.9%	13.7%
X allows users to request and store their data	10.0%	11.6%	26.9%	18.6%	8.0%	25.0%
Meta asks consent for personalised adverts or fees for non-personalised adverts	10.3%	12.3%	28.0%	21.1%	9.3%	19.1%
Meta's Political Adverts library shows targeting criteria of all adverts	9.1%	12.5%	31.1%	18.3%	6.8%	22.2%
Meta sends election reminders	14.1%	12.1%	26.4%	19.1%	8.5%	19.8%
Google updates election ads library with spending and targeting information	8.2%	12.5%	30.7%	21.1%	8.0%	19.5%

Q4.4 *How well do the following address your concerns about the quality of political information circulated on-line:*

<i>Measures addressing concerns about the quality of political information</i>	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very well	Extremely well	Don't know / not sure
Google launches short video campaign for fake information detection	6.6%	10.8%	22.8%	24.8%	17.0%	18.0%
X launches Community Notes for posts' context information	8.0%	11.4%	25.7%	18.4%	8.0%	28.5%
Microsoft updates Bing Search to promote reliable information	6.6%	10.6%	24.9%	23.5%	11.8%	22.5%
TikTok updates 'For You' feed to reduce voter manipulation content	8.9%	10.9%	22.9%	20.2%	10.6%	26.5%
Meta requires advertisers to disclose AI generated adverts	7.3%	10.6%	22.6%	23.5%	17.1%	18.9%
TikTok hires EU based content moderators	9.7%	10.2%	22.7%	19.5%	10.3%	27.6%
Political parties adopt codes of conduct on digital campaigning for members and staff	7.5%	12.0%	27.2%	22.6%	11.3%	19.4%

Section 5 – Digital political literacy and fact-checking

Most respondents (62.8%) named television as one of their main sources of information about political events and current affairs in their country (Q5.1). This was followed by online news sites (43.9%), social media (40.5%), radio (37.7%) and acquaintances in person (36.2%). Only 10.8% get their information from online blogs or forums, 14% read printed magazines, and 2.6% reported having no sources of information.

Asked about how difficult it is to tell false political information from the truth online, a slightly higher share of respondents found it difficult (36.3% versus 24.5% who found it easy), similarly they also found it somewhat harder to tell apart sponsored from non-sponsored content (34.1% to 26.6%) (Q5.2). Finally, more than twice as many respondents found it hard to distinguish AI-generated information from real information (44.1% to 20.1%). Respondents were somewhat more confident in their ability to distinguish facts from opinions (27.4% to 33.3%), while they were split on recognizing neutral information from politically motivated content (29.1% to 29.4%).

When judging whether online political content is trustworthy (Q5.3), the largest share of respondents think that it matters whether the website is independent and unbiased (46.4%), followed by familiarity with the site (36.4%) and knowing the creator of the content (33.9%). In contrast, only 11% of respondents find the number of likes or the number of shares to be a factor in determining the trustworthiness of online political content. Asking respondents about who they think should be responsible for providing citizens more information about the dangers associated with digital campaigning (Q5.4), the largest share of respondents named national governments (44.8%), followed by educational institutions (33%), national parliaments (30.5%), individuals (29.8%), independent third party regulators (29.2%), social media platforms (28.8%) and supranational organizations (27.2%). In contrast, only 19% thought that international institutions should be responsible, while 10% were unsure or did not know how to respond.

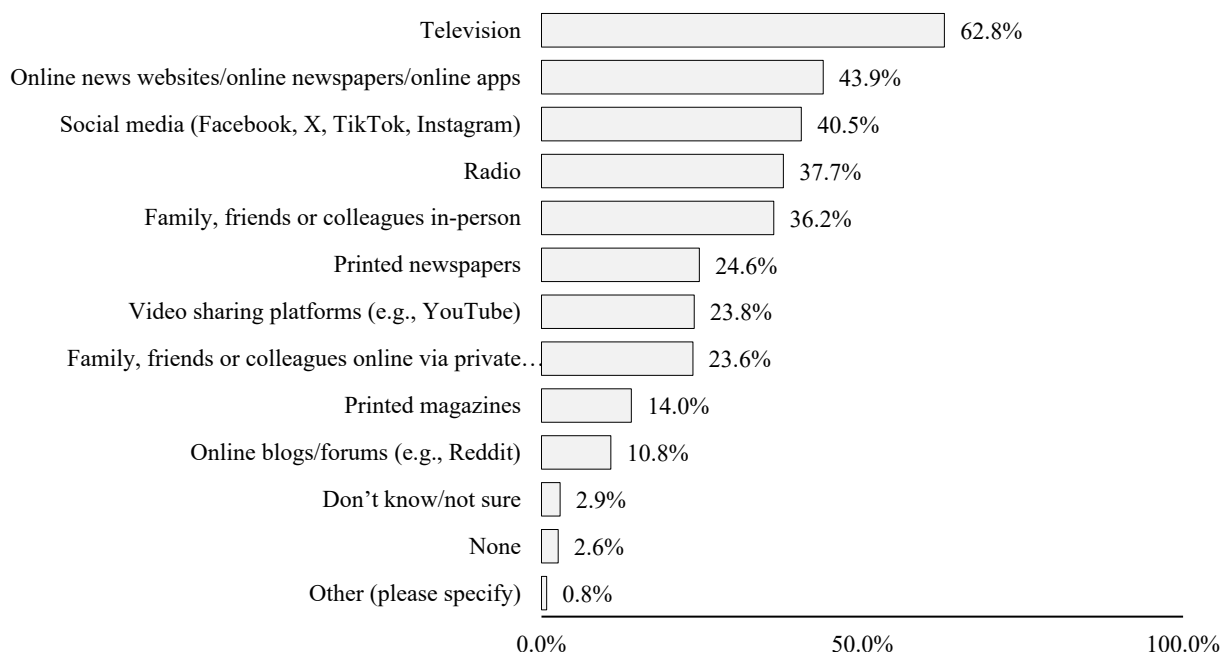
Asked how many member states the EU has (Q5.5), a majority of respondents (58%) correctly identified 27, while 5.6% said 25, and 12.1% said 29. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24.4%) indicated that they did not know.

When asked about their approval of actions to improve citizens' digital political skills (Q5.6), respondents were largely in favour of all proposed measures, with only around 6-8% being against them in general. Targeted support for vulnerable communities and institutional collaboration were the most strongly supported (64.6% and 64.5% respectively), while only 57.8% indicated that they were in favour of public awareness campaigns by civic organizations. Around 10-11% of respondents were not sure or did not know how to answer.

Q5.1 *What are your main sources of information about political events and current affairs in your country? (Please select all that apply)*

Main sources of political information	n	%
Television	17128	62.8%
Online news websites/online newspapers/online apps	11973	43.9%
Social media (Facebook, X, TikTok, Instagram)	11029	40.5%
Radio	10262	37.7%
Family, friends or colleagues in-person	9868	36.2%
Printed newspapers	6697	24.6%
Video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube)	6482	23.8%
Family, friends or colleagues online via private messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp)	6432	23.6%
Printed magazines	3824	14.0%
Online blogs/forums (e.g., Reddit)	2951	10.8%
Don't know/not sure	785	2.9%
None	703	2.6%
Other (please specify)	229	0.8%

Main sources of political information



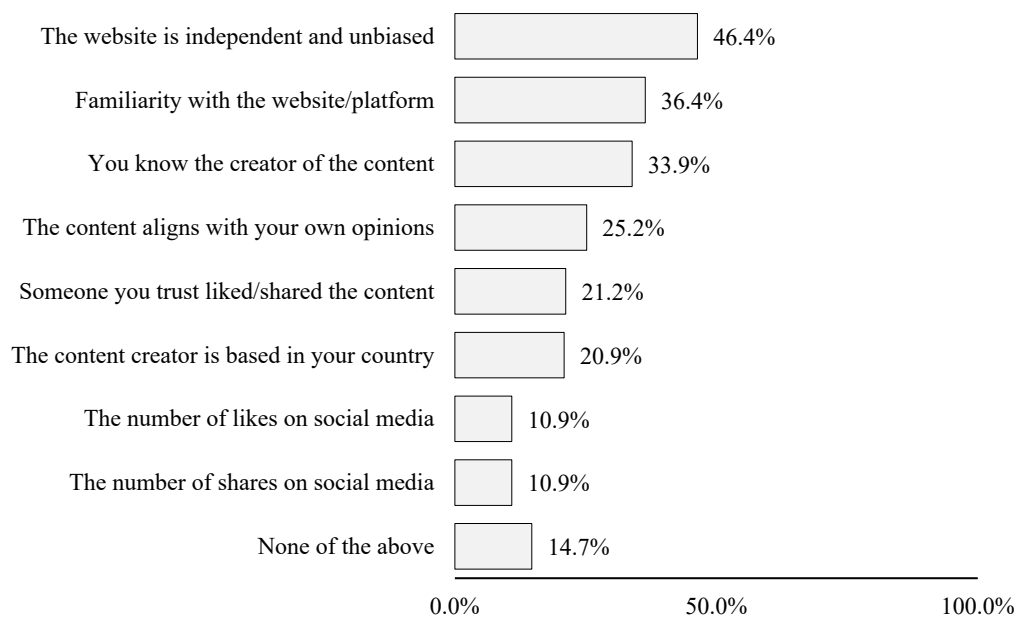
Q5.2 Below are a series of statements outlining different types of political information online. Please answer how easy is it for you to tell the difference between:

<i>Telling the difference between...</i>	Very difficult	Difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Easy	Very easy
True versus false information	8.8%	27.5%	39.3%	19.0%	5.5%
Fact versus an opinion	6.1%	21.3%	39.2%	26.2%	7.1%
Sponsored versus non sponsored information	8.5%	25.6%	39.2%	20.7%	5.9%
Neutral versus politically motivated information	6.4%	22.7%	41.5%	23.2%	6.2%
Real versus AI-generated information	12.3%	31.8%	35.8%	15.4%	4.7%

Q5.3 When deciding if on-line political content is trustworthy, which of these factors matter to you? (Please select all that apply)

<i>Factors affecting trustworthiness</i>	n	%
The website is independent and unbiased	12,642	46.4%
Familiarity with the website/platform	9,915	36.4%
You know the creator of the content	9,230	33.9%
The content aligns with your own opinions	6,875	25.2%
Someone you trust liked/shared the content	5,770	21.2%
The content creator is based in your country	5,700	20.9%
The number of likes on social media	2,977	10.9%
The number of shares on social media	2,978	10.9%
None of the above	4,003	14.7%

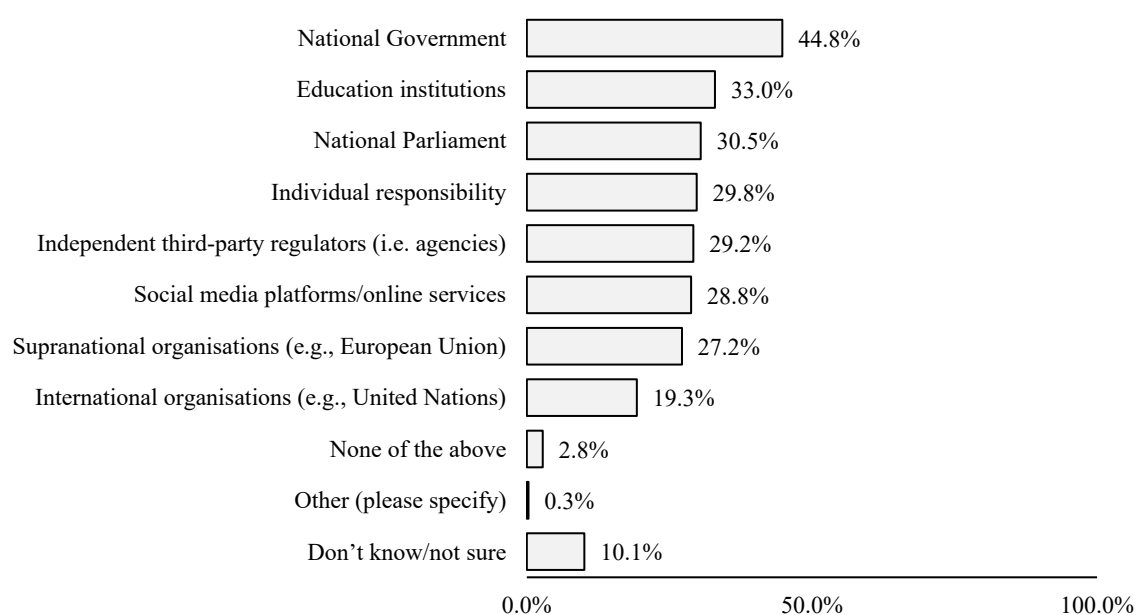
Factors affecting trustworthiness



Q5.4 *Who do you think should be responsible for providing citizens more information about the dangers associated with digital campaigning? (Select all that apply)*

Responsible for warning about dangers of digital campaigning	n	%
National Government	12,207	44.8%
Education institutions (schools, universities, lifelong education centres)	9,004	33.0%
National Parliament	8,302	30.5%
Individual responsibility	8,110	29.8%
Independent third-party regulators (i.e. agencies)	7,971	29.2%
Social media platforms/online services	7,836	28.8%
Supranational organisations (e.g., European Union)	7,426	27.2%
International organisations (e.g., United Nations)	5,273	19.3%
None of the above	766	2.8%
Other (please specify)	91	0.3%
Don't know/not sure	2,764	10.1%

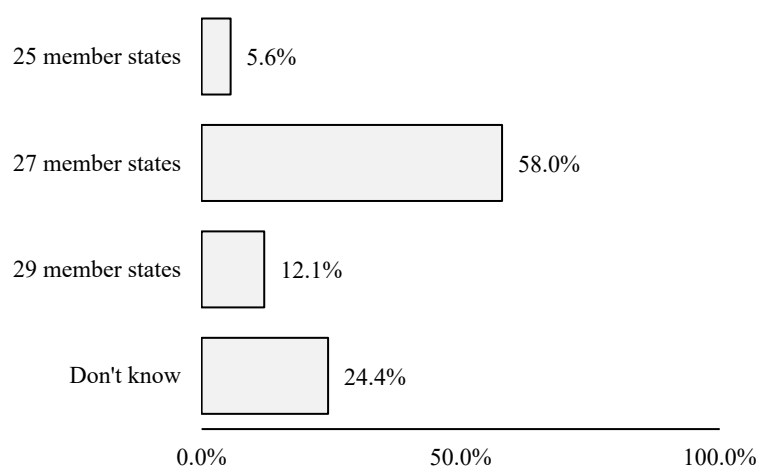
Responsible for warning about dangers of digital campaigning



Q5.5 *How many member states does the European Union have?*

Number of EU Member States answered	n	%
25 member states	1,531	5.6%
27 member states	15,795	58.0%
29 member states	3,286	12.1%
Don't know	6,643	24.4%

Number of EU Member States answers:



Q5.6 How much do you approve of the following actions for improving your digital political skills?

<i>Actions for improving digital political skills</i>	Strongly against	Against	Undecided	Support	Strongly support	Not sure / don't know
Public awareness campaigns by civic organisations	2.5%	5.1%	23.1%	40.8%	17.0%	11.5%
Collaboration between institutions, organisations and citizens	2.0%	4.0%	19.1%	44.3%	20.2%	10.5%
Targeted support for vulnerable communities (i.e. elderly, first-time voters)	2.8%	4.6%	17.8%	38.7%	25.9%	10.2%
Self-learning (i.e. video tutorials, books)	2.2%	4.4%	20.4%	42.8%	19.8%	10.5%

Section 6 – Digital democracy, privacy and motivation to vote

When asked about digital democracy in general, most respondents agree that digital tools used in elections should facilitate fair and secure democratic processes (64.9%) (Q7.1), that digital technologies should promote government accountability (62.7%), and that they should enable citizens' equal participation in political decision-making (62.4%). While still mostly in agreement, fewer than half of respondents agreed that online citizen consultative forums focused on the common good should influence policy making (47.8%), and that technologies used in political processes could worsen inequalities between social groups (41.1%).

Most respondents (62.5%) were unaware of any fact-checking organisations that investigate political or non-political claims made online (Q7.2).

Asking respondents about their tendency to engage in activities to protect their privacy online (Q7.3), reveals that few (6-12.7%) engage in such activities daily. However, 69.8% deleted their search history at least once a month, and 65.9% cleared their online cookies with similar regularity. Half of respondents (50.2%) also deregister from or delete apps or online profiles to protect their data at least once a month. By contrast, fewer than half (43.4%) used software to stop website tracking at least once a month, while 48.7% of respondents never or hardly ever used VPN to hide their IP addresses.

In terms of institutional trust (Q7.4), the most distrusted institutions were the country's politicians (at a mean of 4.87, based on a rating of 0 to 10), as well as social media (mean of 5) and political parties (mean of 5.04). Meanwhile on average the European Parliament and Commission were rated as the most trusted (with a mean rating of 5.93 for each), followed by traditional sources of media (mean of 5.9). It is also worth mentioning that, for every institution, around 10-15% of respondents consistently gave. Rating of 0, while only around 2-4% of people expressed full trust, indicating that many respondents hold little to no trust in institutions, while those that are more trustful are likely to still have a critical approach.

Asked about the importance of various reasons in encouraging them to vote (Q7.5), most respondents chose civic duty (with an average score of 8.02 on a scale of 0-10), and through voting they can make a positive change (mean of 7.94). Furthermore, most importantl was the sense that voting lets them stand up for the issues that they care about (mean of 8.04). Frustration with the way things are going was also an important reason (mean of 7.46), whereas the opinion of friends and co-workers were generally seen as unimportant (with an average rating of 4.72 on a scale of 0-10). Finally, asked whether they would vote if national elections were held the following weekend (Q7.6), 78.6% of respondents said that they would, 10.9% stated they would not, while 10.5% did not know.

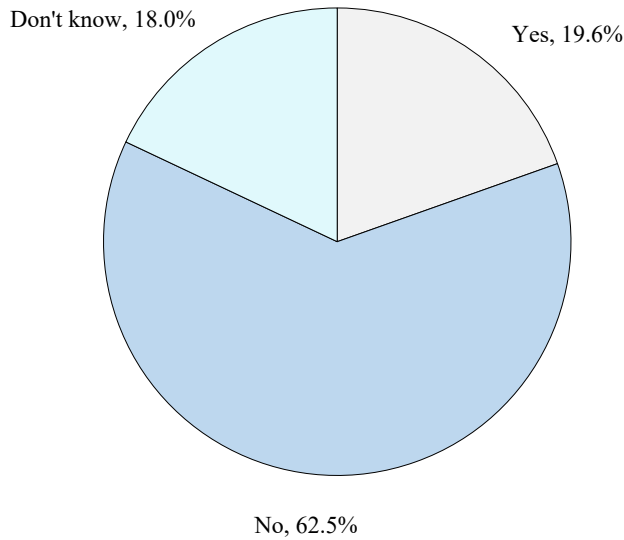
Q6.1 Finally, we are interested in your views towards digital democracy in general. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement?

<i>Views towards digital democracy</i>	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not sure
Transparent digital technologies should promote government accountability	2.0%	4.2%	21.0%	33.5%	29.2%	10.1%
Digital tools used in elections should facilitate fair and secure democratic processes	2.5%	4.8%	19.3%	31.0%	33.9%	8.4%
Online citizen consultative forums focused on the common good should influence policy making	3.5%	7.8%	28.9%	31.7%	16.1%	11.9%
Digital technologies should enable citizens' equal participation in political decision-making	2.3%	5.4%	20.9%	33.3%	29.1%	9.0%
Digital technologies used in political processes would worsen inequalities between social groups	4.2%	11.4%	31.2%	28.1%	13.0%	12.0%

Q6.2 Are you aware of any fact-checking organisations that investigate political or non-political claims made online?

<i>Aware of fact checking organizations</i>	n	%
Yes	5,333	19.6%
No	17,022	62.5%
Don't know	4,899	18.0%

Awareness of fact checking organizations



Q6.3 How often do you engage in the following activities to protect your privacy online?

<i>Activities to protect online privacy</i>	Never or hardly ever	At least once a month	At least once a week	A few times a week	Daily or almost daily	Don't know / not sure
Delete search history	23.4%	28.6%	16.1%	13.0%	12.1%	6.8%
Clear online cookies	25.1%	24.1%	15.4%	13.7%	12.7%	9.0%
Use software to stop website tracking	40.0%	12.3%	12.0%	9.5%	9.6%	16.4%
Activate a VPN to hide IP address	48.7%	10.0%	9.6%	9.0%	7.9%	14.7%
Deregister/delete apps or online profile to protect data	35.0%	21.7%	12.7%	9.8%	6.0%	14.7%

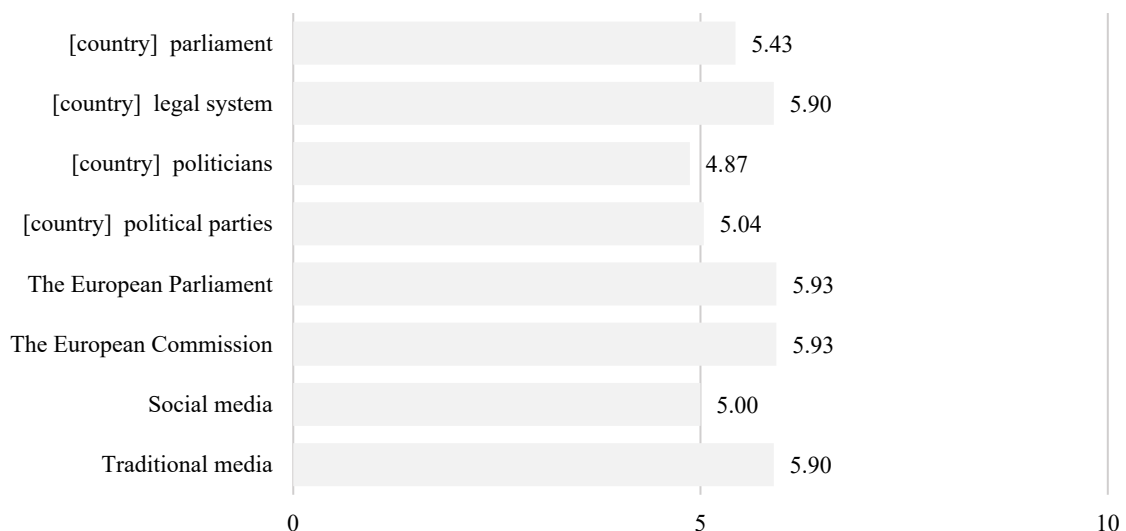
Q6.4 On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust, how much do you personally trust each of the following institutions?

<i>Institutions</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
[country] parliament	15.3%	5.3%	7.3%	8.5%	8.5%	17.2%	11.8%	11.6%	8.3%	3.5%	2.9%
[country] legal system	11.8%	4.5%	6.4%	8.2%	8.5%	15.8%	12.0%	12.9%	10.7%	5.1%	4.1%
[country] politicians	17.9%	7.3%	9.0%	10.1%	9.4%	17.2%	11.1%	9.2%	5.2%	1.7%	2.0%

[country] political parties	15.6%	6.3%	8.8%	10.4%	9.8%	19.1%	11.5%	9.7%	5.2%	1.7%	2.1%
The European Parliament	12.4%	3.9%	5.3%	6.9%	8.4%	17.4%	13.2%	14.0%	10.4%	4.2%	3.8%
The European Commission	12.6%	3.8%	5.1%	7.0%	8.1%	18.0%	12.8%	13.6%	10.9%	4.3%	3.7%
Social media	13.0%	6.3%	10.2%	11.8%	11.7%	20.6%	10.7%	7.6%	4.6%	1.5%	2.0%
Traditional media	9.5%	3.7%	5.7%	8.6%	9.6%	20.1%	13.3%	14.0%	9.4%	3.4%	2.7%

<i>Institutions</i>	Mean	Median
[country] parliament	5.43	6
[country] legal system	5.9	6
[country] politicians	4.87	5
[country] political parties	5.04	5
The European Parliament	5.93	6
The European Commission	5.93	6
Social media	5	5
Traditional media	5.9	6

Institutional trust (mean)

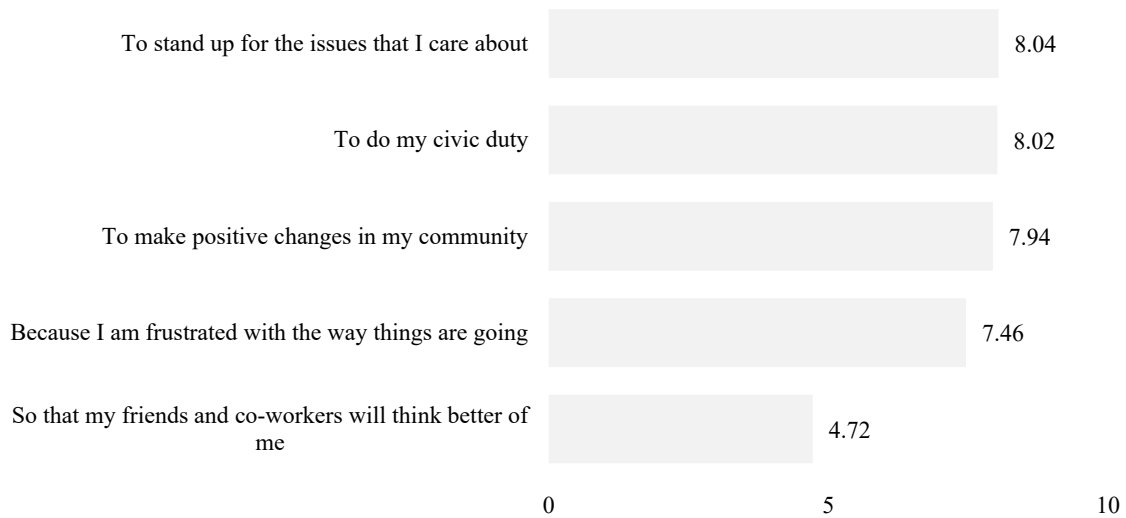


Q6.5 Using a scale from 0 (not at all important) to 10 (very important), please indicate how important that reason is to you personally to vote in [country] elections.

Reasons to vote	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
To do my civic duty	4.8%	1.2%	2.0%	3.0%	4.4%	13.1%	9.4%	12.6%	13.9%	9.1%	26.7%
To make positive changes in my community	3.4%	0.9%	1.8%	3.0%	4.7%	14.9%	10.9%	14.0%	15.4%	8.4%	22.5%
To stand up for the issues that I care about	3.1%	0.8%	1.6%	2.7%	4.6%	14.0%	10.8%	15.0%	15.9%	8.9%	22.7%
Because I am frustrated with the way things are going	4.9%	1.3%	2.9%	4.4%	6.1%	17.2%	11.0%	13.6%	12.5%	6.7%	19.4%
So that my friends and co-workers will think better of me	29.8%	4.6%	6.7%	6.2%	6.9%	16.1%	8.5%	7.6%	5.8%	2.9%	5.2%

Reasons to vote	Mean	Median
To do my civic duty	8.02	8
To make positive changes in my community	7.94	8
To stand up for the issues that I care about	8.04	8
Because I am frustrated with the way things are going	7.46	8
So that my friends and co-workers will think better of me	4.72	5

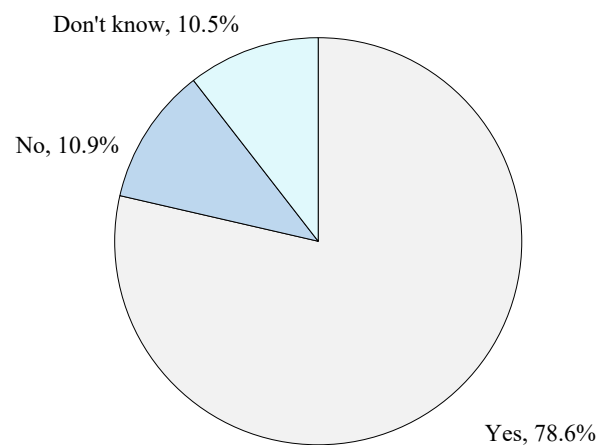
Reasons to vote (mean)



Q.6 *If national elections would be held next weekend, would you vote?*

<i>Would vote</i>	n	%
Yes	21,431	78.6%
No	2,960	10.9%
Don't know	2,864	10.5%

Would vote if national elections would be held next weekend



Overall, the results of our survey reveal that, in general, people are distrustful of explicit digital political campaigns and materials, finding that campaigning favours those in politics. Citizens are concerned about the quality of on-line information (i.e. false, misleading and harmful information) and about the nonconsensual use of their data. On aggregate, European respondents are in favour of national regulation on digital campaigning, as well as of measures by platforms aiming to protect the privacy of users.

When it comes to sources of political information, on aggregate, a large share of Europeans relies more on traditional sources of political information alongside social media. Respondents are confident in their ability to identify political content, while finding it difficult to discern misinformation. They mainly rely on the perceived independence of on-line sources and familiarity with online political content in order to determine its trustworthiness.

Lastly, respondents favour the use of digital tools in order to strengthen democracy, though themselves rarely use or engage with digital fact-checking or privacy protection tools. People were generally less trustworthy of national political organizations and groups, as compared to the various institutions of the European Union, while self-efficacy and frustration with the status quo were common reasons, which motivates them to vote.