



Directorate General for Communication
Direction C - Relations avec les citoyens
PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT

Brussels, 26 February 2009

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS **Based on cumulative results from EB surveys 68, 69, 70**

Attitudes and opinions of women in Europe prior to the 2009 EP elections

- Summary analysis -

On the eve of the International Day of Women's Rights on March 8 and in view of the European elections in June 2009, it seemed appropriate to conduct a socio-demographic study exploring the differences in attitudes and opinions between women and men on European issues and particularly on the European elections.

This study focuses on a year and a half of analysis of the results of the Standard Eurobarometer studies numbers 68, 69 and 70. Therefore, it is not a qualitative analysis on the reasons why Europeans surveyed responded in a particular manner, but a quantitative comparative analysis.

⇒ Noteworthy statistics:

Before treating the main trends of this study, we should point out the Eurostat statistics (see in annex) which speak for themselves. They can perhaps help to better understand some of the responses:

- The employment rate in the European Union in 2007: the employment rate of women was 14.2% lower than that of men;
- The unemployment rate in the European Union in 2008: the unemployment rate of women was 0.9% higher than that of men;
- Gross annual income (€) in 2005: 34,536 for men; 26,678 for women
- Hourly income: in 2007, the gap between men and women was 17.4 %

⇒ The personal situation of women

The analysis of results of the Eurobarometer studies shows that women see their current situation as more negative than that of men. This is the situation in practically all areas and especially:

- On their perception of the economic situation, both at a national and European level, which is less optimistic than that of men ;
- On their vision of globalization, viewed as more threatening by them than by men;
- On their support of the euro, which is significantly weaker than that of men.

⇒ **Being heard and confidence**

More occupied than men with the everyday things of life, women:

- Have practically the same level of distrust as men in the institutions, but they are more likely not to give a response to these questions: the level of "Don't know" is higher amongst women;
- Have less of a feeling of being listened to than men at a European level.

⇒ **Perception of the European Union**

- Negative views of men and women in relation to the EU are balanced;
- Positive views are lower amongst women as they are more likely to have a neutral view of the Union.

⇒ **Evaluation of EU membership**

The views are the same as for the previous point.

⇒ **Policies to be defended by the EP**

For women, priority should be given to consumer protection and public health, for men it is the fight against terrorism

⇒ **Campaign themes**

For women, the issue of unemployment should be addressed as a priority ahead of economic growth, but for men it is the opposite.

In addition, it is also important to highlight that the level of "Don't know" answers is higher amongst women for almost all the questions studied. One can consider this difference and ask whether this does not result in a higher propensity amongst men to consistently answer questions in the survey which they have been asked.

⇒ **Interest in the European elections and probability of voting**

Even if women declare lower interest in European elections than men, they have more or less the same probability of voting. In the last elections in 2004, the participation of women and men was more or less the same.

I. CURRENT SITUATION, LIFE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION TODAY and PERSPECTIVES OF THE FUTURE

Women are more pessimistic about:

⇒ **Personal situation**

- The financial situation of their household: 37% judge it as bad, compared to around 31% men,
- Feelings of economic hardship: 48% say they have difficulties paying their bills at the end of the month, compared to 44% men,
- More often, they feel that their financial situation has deteriorated over the past five years (53% compared to 48% men) and
- Negative expectations regarding their financial situation for the next twelve months: 29% believe the situation will worsen, compared to a quarter of men who feel this way.

If we control for other socio-demographic variables we discover that the sentiment of economic hardship increases with age and decreases with terminal education age. There are in fact larger differences within each gender group than between men and women.

⇒ **Economic situation at a national level**

- 72% of women say that their country's economy is bad (66% of men share this view),
- They are more pessimistic about the employment situation in their country: 72% evaluate it as bad compared to 67% men.

⇒ **European and global economies**

- Women perceive rising prices/inflation with more concern than men: 39% vs. 35%,
- More often they name it as the main issue facing them personally: 52% compared to 47%,
- Women give more "don't know" answers, showing a trend which is present throughout the entire analysis, that women may be less likely to hold an opinion than men on issues which do not concern them directly.

II. REPRESENTATION

- **In general, women say that they discuss politics less often than men.**
- **Concerning the feeling of being listened to at different decision levels, there are only slight differences amongst women and men.**

⇒ There are strong differences in the extent to which men and women proclaim to **discuss politics**:

- 34% of women never discuss politics, while this is the case amongst less than a quarter of men (23%).

⇒ **The feeling of being listened to**

- Just slightly fewer women agree than disagree with the statement that their voice counts in their country (46% agree against 47%). It is the opposite for men (49% agree against 46%) but the differences amongst the two genders are not important.
- At a European Union level, only 29% women (and 32% men) believe their voice counts.

⇒ When asked whether decisions on different questions should be decided on a national level or jointly with the EU, in general, female respondents slightly more often than male respondents **voice their preference for the level closest to home, that is the national one.**

⇒ **Trust in political institutions**

- The share of women who explicitly do not trust **European Union** is more or less the same as the share of men (37% vs. 38%)
- A similar pattern in trust levels is recorded among men and women when it comes to **institutions operating at a regional and national level.** 58% of both women and men for example do not trust their national parliament: 44% of women vs. 45% of men do not trust their regional or local public authorities.
- Again, the more remote the institution is from day-to-day life, **the more women lack an opinion.** Share of "don't know" answers for trust in the European Union is 17% amongst women but only 7% for national government or national justice/legal systems. In comparison, these shares of "don't know" are 11% and 7% respectively amongst men.

When controlling for other socio-demographic variables, the results show that education has a stronger impact on the female population than on the male population. Women who left school very young give more "don't know" answers (22%) compared to 12% for women who finished their education at the age of 20 or after. In the male grouping, this difference is not so striking (12% vs. 8%).

III. **GLOBALISATION**

Globalisation is often defined as a rather abstract issue which according to previous results means that women have less formed opinions about it.

- **43% of women think that globalisation represents a threat** to employment and companies in their country.
- 34% of women judge globalisation as representing a good opportunity for national companies thanks to the opening of markets.
- Men are divided amongst the two opinions (42% for both answers).
- Women give much more "don't know" answers than men (24% vs. 16%).

In relation to this, women are also more opposed to the common currency, the euro (see chapter VI).

IV. PRIORITY POLICIES and PREFERRED ELECTION CAMPAIGN SUBJECTS - INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

➤ *When it comes to the preferred themes for the European elections, no strong cleavage of opinion between men and women is noted.*

A. Top EP policies:

⇒ **Women**

- Improving consumer and public health protection: 39%
- Combating terrorism: 38 %
- Combating effectively climate change: 36%

⇒ **Men**

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

The three most named themes are the same for women as for men although the ranking of the three top items is not the same. As the list shows, they all relate to the current economic situation (cumulative results of three survey waves).

Women name improving consumer and public health protection as the top policy priority. Could this be a further confirmation of women's tendency to want politics to deal with issues that affect people directly? They are also more limited and decided in their choice as results further indicate that men tend to consider a greater array of issues as top priorities. Interestingly, women are more selective in their choice of answers than men. Their top priority policies are there but the list contains seven policies for men.

B. Top 3 election themes

⇒ **Women**

- Unemployment: 49%
- Economic growth: 45%
- Inflation and purchasing power: 44%

⇒ **Men**

- Economic growth: 51%
- Unemployment: 47%
- Inflation and purchasing power: 45%

V. INFORMATION ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

- *Women feel and actually are less informed than men about issues relating to the European Union.*

⇒ Understanding of the EU:

- 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 amongst women are in this case not the consequence of higher “don’t know” levels** (9% vs. 8%).

The differences on this question are largely due to differences in terms of age and education. The longer respondents stayed in full-time education, the more likely it is they understand how the EU works. But as mentioned, the gap between women and men persists despite those factors.

⇒ The perceived lack of knowledge is compounded by an **actual knowledge deficit**:

- **Men generally give more correct answers to questions about the EU than women do** (The autumn 2008 Eurobarometer wave included 4 factual questions which on average 59% of men answered correctly, compared to 47% of women).

These trends remain even after examining other socio-demographic variables.

Survey results on questions related to the next European elections confirm this lack of knowledge amongst women (presented in details in the following chapters).

VI. WOMEN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

⇒ Opinion on the EU :

- There do not appear to be more women than men with a negative opinion on the EU (14% in both groups).
- On the contrary, there are far less women with a positive image of the EU (43% women vs. 51% men)
- This is a consequence of the fact that European women more often than men tend to have a neutral image of the EU (38% compared to 32%).

⇒ The same phenomena can be observed with the **evaluation of the membership in the EU** :

- Less women than men evaluate their country's membership as a good thing (50% women vs. 59% men).

- The negative perception of the membership in the EU is equally widespread amongst both gender groups (14%)
- This is again a consequence of the fact that there are more women than men with a neutral perception (30% neither good nor bad, vs. 25% amongst men).
- Once again there are more women who give "don't know" answers than men (6%, which is twice as much as men).

⇒ On the other hand, an issue which divides men and women quite importantly is **support for the euro** :

- Support for the euro is considerably lower amongst women than men (57% versus 65%).
- Is this percentage difference related to their previously described feelings of financial hardship and to the fact that only 43% of them think that being part of the eurozone brings more economic stability (as opposed to 54% of men)?

VII. LEVEL OF INFORMATION ABOUT EUROPEAN ISSUES and EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

- *The level of perceived information amongst women is lower than amongst men, both about the European Parliament in general and about European elections.*
- *Level of actual information is also lower for women than men.*

⇒ Already, the **perceived knowledge** about the European Parliament is lower amongst women than men.

- The autumn 2008 Eurobarometer surveys 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.

Longer full-time education is once again a determining factor for this question. In both gender groups, managers and self-employed respondents are most likely to feel well informed.

⇒ Finally, the lower interest in politics amongst women, noted at the beginning of this section, is further confirmed by **lower media recall about the European Parliament** in the findings from the autumn 2008 Eurobarometer.

- 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.

VIII. KNOWLEDGE OF THE DATE, INTEREST IN EUROPEAN ELECTIONS and VOTING INTENTION

- *Women are less aware of the date of the next European elections.*
- *They also say they have less interest in European elections.*
- *But female respondents declare the same intention to participate in the European elections.*

⇒ **Knowledge of the date of the next European elections:**

- The autumn 2008 Eurobarometer indicates that 78% of European women do not know when the next European Parliament elections are (compared to 69% of men).

⇒ **Interest in the European elections:**

- 40% of female respondents indicate that they are interested in the next European Parliament elections, compared to 48% of male respondents.

Further socio-demographic break-down of these results demonstrates large differences within the group of women. Interest for European elections is increasing with the terminal education age. It is lowest amongst the youngest and oldest female respondents. Interestingly, the interest level among unemployed women is higher than amongst unemployed men (35% vs. 31%).

⇒ **Probability of voting:**

- Women and men express more or less the same probability of voting at the next European election: the number of respondents who will definitely vote is 28% of women and 31% of men.
- 15% of women have no intention to vote vs. 14% of men.

This is in line with previous academic research on women and European elections, indicating that when reported turnout is averaged across all Member States, women report equal levels of having voted to men.

Public Opinion Monitoring Unit
 Jacques Nancy - tel. 02/284 24 85
Jacques.Nancy@europarl.europa.eu
 Nives Zun - tel. 02/284 43 99
Nives.Zun@europarl.europa.eu
 Elise Defourny - tel. 02/284 11 23
Elise.Defourny@europarl.europa.eu
 Aine Cadogan - tel. 02/284 20 54
 Nathalie Lefèvre - tel. 02/284 12 26

ANNEX :

SOME GENDER SPECIFIC STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE EU

The followings economic indicators, provided by Eurostat, have been added in order to complement this sociodemographic analysis. They concern employment and unemployment rates and gender pay gap. They show some relevant discrepancies between genders, that confirm women perception that is often marked by their precarious economic situations

I. Employment rate

- On average in EU27, the employment rate for women was 14% lower than for men (in 2007).
- The smallest difference is noted between men and women employment rates in Finland (3,6%), Sweden (slightly below 5%) and Lithuania (less than 6%).
- The biggest differences are noticed in Malta (more than 37% difference in employment rate between men and women), Greece (27%) and Italy (just above 24%).

Table 1: Employment rate by country in 2007

	Employment rate (15 to 64 years) Annual average 2007 in %			
	Total	Male	Female	Diff. %
EU 27	65,4	72,5	58,3	-14,2
Belgium	62,0	68,7	55,3	-13,4
Bulgaria	61,7	66,0	57,6	-8,4
Czech Republic	66,1	74,8	57,3	-17,5
Denmark	77,1	81,0	73,2	-7,8
Germany	69,4	74,7	64,0	-10,7
Estonia	69,4	73,2	65,9	-7,3
Ireland	69,1	77,4	60,6	-16,8
Greece	61,4	74,9	47,9	-27,0
Spain	65,6	76,2	54,7	-21,5
France	64,6	69,3	60,0	-9,3
Italy	58,7	70,7	46,6	-24,1
Cyprus	71,0	80,0	62,4	-17,6
Latvia	68,3	72,5	64,4	-8,1
Lithuania	64,9	67,9	62,2	-5,7
Luxembourg	64,2	72,3	56,1	-16,2
Hungary	57,3	64,0	50,9	-13,1
Malta	54,6	72,9	35,7	-37,2
Netherlands	76,0	82,2	69,6	-12,6
Austria	71,4	78,4	64,4	-14,0
Poland	57,0	63,6	50,6	-13,0
Portugal	67,8	73,8	61,9	-11,9
Romania	58,8	64,8	52,8	-12,0
Slovenia	67,8	72,7	62,6	-10,1
Slovakia	60,7	68,4	53,0	-15,4
Finland	70,3	72,1	68,5	-3,6
Sweden	74,2	76,5	71,8	-4,7
United Kingdom	71,5	77,5	65,5	-12,0

Source: Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

Employed persons: Employed persons are defined as persons aged 15 and over who during the reference week performed work, even for just one hour per week, for pay, profit or family gain or were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent because of, e.g., illness, holidays, industrial dispute and education or training.

II. Unemployment rate

- On average in the EU27, the unemployment rate for women was 0,9% higher than for men (in 2008).
- The biggest differences between male and female unemployment rates are noticed in Greece (7,6%), Italy (3,0%) and Spain (2,9%).
- Female unemployment rates are lower than male rates especially in Ireland (-2,6%), Romania (-1,8%) and Estonia (-1,2%).

Table 2: Average unemployment rate by country in 2008

	Unemployment rate Annual average 2008 in %			
	Total	Male	Female	Diff.
EU27	7,0	6,6	7,5	0,9
Belgium	7,1	6,7	7,6	+0,9
Bulgaria	5,6	5,5	5,8	+0,3
Czech Republic	4,4	3,5	5,7	+2,2
Denmark	3,5	3,1	3,9	+0,8
Germany	7,3	7,4	7,2	- 0,2
Estonia	6,0	6,6	5,4	-1,2
Ireland	6,3	7,4	4,8	-2,6
Greece *	8,3	5,2	12,8	+7,6
Spain	11,3	10,1	13,0	+2,9
France	7,7	7,3	8,2	+0,9
Italy *	6,1	4,9	7,9	+3,0
Cyprus	3,8	3,3	4,4	+1,1
Latvia	7,3	7,6	6,9	-0,7
Lithuania	5,7	6,0	5,4	-0,6
Luxembourg	4,4	3,3	5,7	+2,4
Hungary	7,9	7,7	8,1	+0,4
Malta	5,8	5,6	6,2	+0,6
Netherlands	2,8	2,6	3,0	+0,4
Austria	3,8	3,6	4,1	+0,5
Poland	7,1	6,4	8,0	+1,6
Portugal	7,7	6,6	9,0	+2,4
Romania *	6,4	7,2	5,4	-1,8
Slovenia	4,5	4,2	4,9	+0,7
Slovakia	9,6	8,5	11,0	+2,5
Finland	6,4	6,1	6,7	+0,6
Sweden	6,2	5,9	6,5	+0,6
United Kingdom *	5,3	5,6	5,0	-0,6

Source: Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>, * data only available for 2007

Eurostat produces harmonised unemployment rates for individual EU Member States, the euro area and the EU. These unemployment rates are based on the definition recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The measurement is based on a harmonised source, the European Union Labour Force Survey (LFS). Based on the ILO definition, Eurostat defines unemployed persons as persons aged 15 to 74 who:

- are available to start work within the next two weeks;

- and have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks.

The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people employed plus unemployed.

III. Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is one of the Lisbon structural indicators and is defined as the relative difference in the average gross hourly earnings of women and men within the economy as a whole.

Table 3: Gender pay gap by country in 2006 and 2007

	Gender pay gap in unadjusted form in %	
	2006	2007
EU 27	17,7^(p)	17,4^(p)
Belgium	9,5	9,1 ^(p)
Bulgaria	12,4	12,7 ^(p)
Czech Republic	23,4	23,6
Denmark	17,6	17,7
Germany	22,7	23,0
Estonia	30,3	30,3 ^(p)
Ireland	17,2	17,1
Greece	20,7	20,7 ^(p)
Spain	17,9	17,6 ^(p)
France	15,8	15,8 ^(p)
Italy	4,4	4,4 ^(p)
Cyprus	21,8	23,1
Latvia	15,1	15,4
Lithuania	17,1	20,0
Luxembourg	10,7	10,0
Hungary	14,4	16,3
Malta	5,2	5,2 ^(p)
Netherlands	23,6	23,6
Austria	25,5	25,5
Poland	7,5	7,5
Portugal	8,4	8,3
Romania	7,8	12,7
Slovenia	8,0	8,3
Slovakia	25,8	23,6
Finland	21,3	20,0 ^(p)
Sweden	16,5	17,9
United Kingdom	24,3 ^(p)	21,1 ^(p)

Source: Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>, (p) provisional value

The unadjusted Gender Pay Gap (GPG) represents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. The population consists of all paid employees in enterprises with 10 employees or more in NACE Rev. 1.1 aggregate C to O (excluding L). The GPG indicator is now calculated within the framework of the data collected according to the methodology of the Structure of Earnings Survey (EC Regulation: 530/1999). It replaces data which was based on non-harmonised sources. For further information please consult the detailed explanatory texts (metadata).

IV. Summary table: employment rate, unemployment rate and gross earnings

YEAR	Employment Rate Annual average EU 27 in %				Unemployment Rate Annual average EU 27 in %				Gross Earnings Industry and services (excluding public administration) Annual average EU 27 in Euro		
	Total	Male	Female	Diff. %	Total	Male	Female	Diff. %	Total (EUR)	Male (EUR)	Female (EUR)
2008	-	-	-	-	7,0	6,6	7,5	+0,9	-	-	-
2007	65,4	72,5	58,3	-14,2	7,1	6,6	7,8	+1,2	-	-	-
2006	64,5	71,7	57,3	-14,4	8,2	7,6	8,9	+1,3	31.302	-	-
2005	63,6	70,8	56,3	-14,5	8,9	8,3	9,6	+1,3	29.114	34.536	26.678
2004	63,0	70,4	55,5	-14,9	9,0	8,5	9,8	+1,3	28.226	31.143	23.985
2003	62,6	70,3	54,9	-15,4	9,0	8,4	9,7	+1,3	32.930*	37.194*	28.676*
2002	62,4	70,4	54,4	-16,0	8,9	8,3	9,7	+1,4	32.689*	37.001*	28.414*
2001	62,6	70,9	54,3	-16,6	8,5	7,7	9,4	+1,7	31.769*	35.936*	27.424*
2000	62,2	70,8	53,7	-17,1	8,7	7,8	9,8	+2,0	30.889*	32.992*	25.026*

* Data for EU 15