

# WHAT DO FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS MEAN FOR PEOPLE IN THE EU?

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The EU is founded on the values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. Yet these values, and discussions on fundamental rights at the EU and Member State level, can seem remote in people's daily lives.

With this in mind, FRA explored what people understand, know and experience with respect to their fundamental rights in practice. The resulting data provide comprehensive and comparable evidence on these aspects.

## Note on terminology

'Fundamental rights' is the term used for 'human rights' in the internal context of the EU. In the survey, some questions used the term 'human rights' because people who responded to the questionnaire more easily understood this term. This summary uses the two terms interchangeably.

This summary presents the main insights from FRA's research. These primarily aim to inform EU institutions, Member State governments and institutions, as well as human rights defenders and civil society organisations, about the place of fundamental rights in EU societies – based on what people think and experience.

The insights are essential reading for those who believe in evidence-based policymaking that is 'bottom up'. Those whose work encompasses fundamental rights can use the data to inform and also to challenge their own assumptions about what the public thinks and experiences.

The findings can also inform action on fundamental rights, and – ultimately – be used to achieve a positive impact on rights implementation in practice.

## Fundamental Rights Survey: key facts

The Fundamental Rights Survey collected data in 29 countries – 27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom (an EU Member State at the time of data collection), and North Macedonia (the only non-EU country with an observer status to FRA at the time the survey was designed).

In total, the survey collected data from 34,948 respondents. In each country, a representative sample of respondents – ranging from some 1,000 in most countries to some 3,000 people in France and Germany – participated.

The Fundamental Rights Survey was carried out online in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In other countries, interviewers contacted the respondents in person. The interviews took place between January and October 2019.

The results are representative at the EU level as well as for each country in terms of people who are 16 years old or older and have their usual place of residence in the country where they took part in the survey.

## Key findings and FRA opinions

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# WHAT PEOPLE THINK AND KNOW ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

**Most people think human rights are important for creating a fairer society, but the socially disadvantaged are less likely to feel that human rights benefit them.**

### FRA OPINION 1

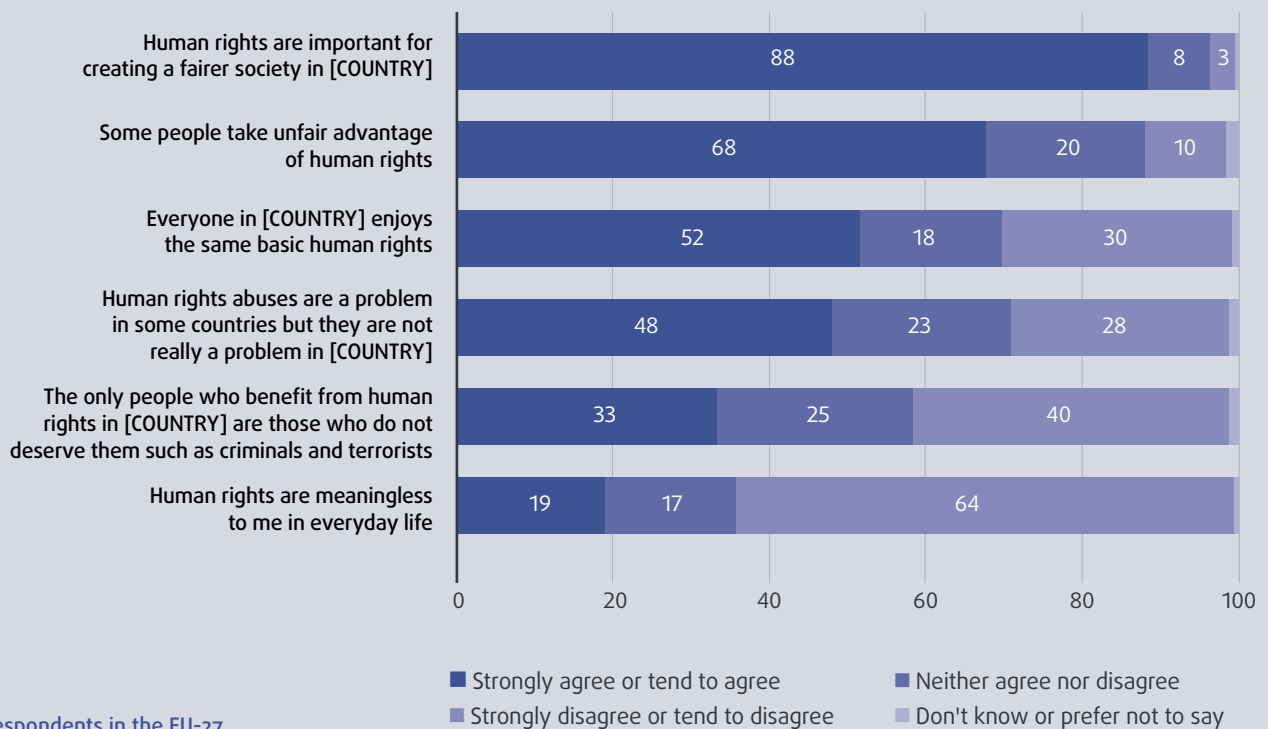
The EU and its Member States should undertake targeted measures to ensure that those struggling 'to make ends meet', who are more likely to think that everybody does not enjoy the same basic human rights, are effectively informed about their rights and how to claim them. They should also implement actions to help improve rights awareness for people who have lower levels of education. EU Member States implementing such measures at national level should consider using the available EU funding mechanisms and engaging relevant national actors, in particular National Human Rights Institutions, Equality Bodies and Ombuds Institutions.

Such measures should include efforts to communicate, promote and make accessible fundamental rights to which people are entitled. Member States could explore different forums and channels for effective communication on rights, targeting specific social groups and using social media alongside conventional media, in close cooperation with civil society organisations.

- ★ Nearly 9 in 10 people (88 %) in the EU think that human rights are important for creating a fairer society in their country. This ranges from a 'low' of 76 % in Hungary to a 'high' of 96 % in Malta. In addition, almost two thirds (64 %) disagree with the statement "human rights are meaningless to me in everyday life". This shows that people in the EU widely believe that human rights can play a useful and meaningful role in their lives.
- ★ At the same time, almost 7 in 10 Europeans (68 %) think that some take unfair advantage of human rights. One third (33 %) agrees with the statement "the only people who benefit from human rights are those who don't deserve them – such as criminals and terrorists".
- ★ The results indicate a link between people's income and education levels, and their views on human rights. People who say they struggle to make ends meet on their household income (that is, have difficulties to pay for the things they need), and those whose highest completed level of education is lower secondary education or less, are less likely to feel that everybody in their country enjoys the same human rights. Meanwhile, they also feel that some people take unfair advantage of human rights.
- ★ For example, 44 % of people who find it difficult to make ends meet agree with the statement that "the only people to benefit from human rights are those who don't deserve them, such as criminals and terrorists". By comparison, 27 % of people who are coping very easily with their current income do so. In addition, 38 % of older people – those aged 65+ – agree with this statement, compared with 27 % of people aged 16–29. Meanwhile, 43 % of persons who experience severe long-standing limitations in their usual activities – such as people with disabilities or long-term health problems – agree with the statement, compared with 32 % of those who experience no such limitations.

- ★ In 11 out of 27 EU Member States, 50 % or more agree or strongly agree that human rights abuses are not really a problem in their country, but instead are something that happens ‘elsewhere’.
- ★ Breaking down the results by socio-demographic characteristics reveals that people who are able to make ends meet with ‘difficulty’ or ‘great difficulty’ are less likely to agree (or strongly agree) that human rights abuses are not really a problem in their country: 43 % do so, compared with 54 % of people who make ends meet ‘easily’ or ‘very easily’. Men are also more inclined to express this view (52 %) than women (44 %).

FIGURE 1: VIEWS ON SELECTED ASPECTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS (EU-27, %)



Note:  
Out of all respondents in the EU-27 (n = 32,537); weighted results.

Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]

**“Estonia is generally a country where human rights are respected, but the problem is, in my opinion, that it is hard to cope for people with low incomes (pensioners, people with disabilities).”**

(Man, between 16 and 29 years old, survey respondent, Estonia)

In line with the new strategic agenda for the EU for 2019–2024<sup>1</sup>, building a fair and social Europe through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>2</sup> – alongside the ‘just transition’ to a green sustainable future<sup>3</sup> – is a core priority for the EU. In view of these commitments, being unemployed and living in conditions of poverty and social exclusion are detrimental to the full enjoyment of rights.

1 European Council (2019), **A new strategic agenda 2019-2024**.  
 2 European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, **Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights**, Brussels, 13 December 2017, OJ C 428. The **European Pillar of Social Rights** covers 20 principles delivering new and more effective rights for EU citizens. It has 3 main key areas: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion (Principle 3, on equal opportunities, declares that everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public).  
 3 See European Commission (2020), **Launching the Just Transition Mechanism – for a green transition based on solidarity and fairness**.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is directly relevant when implementing EU law, and several rights set out in the Charter will be difficult to meet with respect to the most socially and economically marginalised groups in the EU, which is reflected in the results to several survey questions. A number of Charter rights are relevant. These include human dignity (Article 1); the freedom to choose an occupation and the right to engage in work (Article 15); equality between women and men (Article 23); non-discrimination (Article 21); social security and social assistance (Article 34); healthcare (Article 35); and freedom of movement and of residence (Article 45), to name a few.

The right to access justice (Article 47 of the Charter) is also relevant when looking at the survey's results. Access to justice is compromised when people – especially those in marginalised groups, such as those who are unable to financially 'make ends meet' – perceive a system's checks and balances as being 'alien' to their daily lives, which is compounded by lack of knowledge about rights and how to access them.

## Knowledge about the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is lower than for other international human rights instruments, and depends on people's level of education.

### FRA OPINION 2

Following up on the 2019 conclusions by the Council of the EU on the Charter, EU Member States should consider how best to provide 'accessible information' to the public on the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter. This would also support national human rights actors in their efforts to promote awareness and improve the implementation of the Charter.

When promoting the Charter, the EU should support a regular exchange between EU Member States on practices and lessons learned to achieve higher levels of awareness and knowledge about the Charter, especially in Member States where the Fundamental Rights Survey shows lower levels of awareness. This could be done as part of the existing commitment at the level of the Council Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP) to conduct an annual dialogue on the Charter.

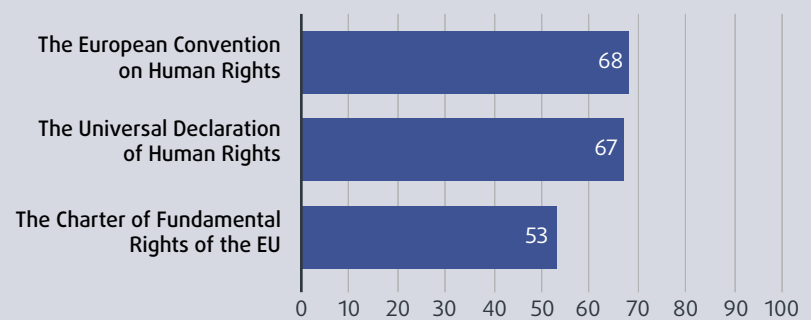
- ★ One in two people (53 %) have heard of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Fewer people have heard of the Charter than of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This finding is perhaps to be expected given that the European Convention on Human Rights is over seventy years old, whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU is comparatively 'young', having been adopted twenty years ago. However, the data do indicate that the gap between people's awareness of the Charter and the ECHR is smallest in those countries that joined the Council of Europe in the 1990s, and where the ECHR has been applied for a shorter time.

- ★ People with lower levels of education are less likely to have heard of any of the three international human rights instruments that were asked about in the survey – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.
- ★ In addition to people's education, other socio-demographic characteristics associated with a lower awareness of the human rights instruments asked about include difficulties with making ends meet with the current household income, higher age (65+ years), and being unemployed or retired.

The Charter is one of the most modern and comprehensive legally binding human rights instruments. It has the same legal value as the Treaties of the European Union. Article 51 of the Charter requires the EU and Member States – when acting within the scope of EU law – to respect the rights, observe the principles and promote the application of the Charter’s provisions. The **2019 conclusions of the Council of the EU on the Charter** call on the Member States to increase awareness-raising and training activities on the Charter among key human rights actors – while acknowledging the role of FRA in this regard. The Council conclusions also emphasise the importance of providing accessible information about the rights enshrined in the Charter to the ‘general public’.

**FIGURE 2: AWARENESS OF KEY HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS (EU-27, %)**



►  
 Note:  
 Out of all respondents in the EU-27 who were asked to complete the section ‘Rights awareness & responsibilities’ of the survey (n = 24,354); weighted results.

Source: FRA, *Fundamental Rights Survey 2019* [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]



# VIEWS ON THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

**Young people attach a lower level of importance than older age groups to various aspects of the functioning of democratic societies asked about in the survey.**

## FRA OPINION 3

To enhance young people's engagement in the functioning of democratic society, as a key pillar for the enjoyment of fundamental rights, the European Commission and Member States should take account of the survey findings – which show that 16-29-year-olds attach lower levels of importance to key aspects of democracy – when implementing the **EU Youth Strategy** 2019-2027. That strategy, at the EU level, includes 'stepping up youth participation in democratic life, including access to quality information validated by trusted sources, and promoting participation in European and other elections'. It is important that young people are directly engaged in this process.

The EU and its Member States should consider the evolving patterns of youth political engagement and explore new ways of engaging and communicating effectively with young people across Europe.

- ★ 86 % of people believe that free and fair elections are very important for democracy. Overall, three in five people or more attach high importance to each of the six elements of democracy asked about in the survey. The results range from 60 % to 86 %, depending on the aspect asked about. (For a list of exact questions asked, see the box.)
- ★ Young people in the age group 16–29 years consistently attach a lower level of importance to the six aspects of democracy asked about in the survey, compared with older age groups. For example, young people (58 %) attach less importance to issues such as the freedom of opposition parties to criticise the government than older age groups do (70 % of people aged 54–64 years and 69 % of people aged 65 or older).
- ★ Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU requires the Union to take action to encourage young people's participation in democratic life in Europe. The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the framework for EU youth policy cooperation, fosters the participation of young people in democratic life while also supporting their social and civic engagement. Moreover, the **European Parliament Resolution of 15 January 2020 on the Conference on the Future of Europe** believes that ensuring youth participation will be an essential part of the long-lasting impacts of the Conference, and requests specific youth events to be organised in this context.





## What did the survey ask?

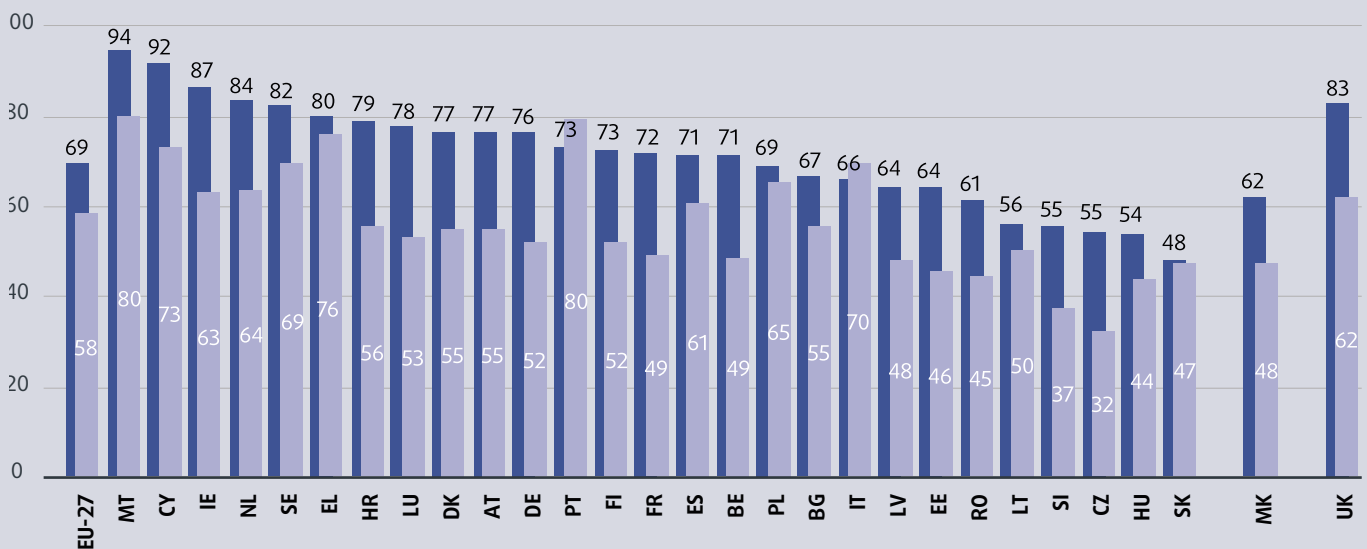
### How important do you think the following things are for democracy?

- That elections are free and fair
- That voters discuss politics with other people before deciding how to vote
- That opposition parties are free to criticise the government
- That the reporting by the media is free from government influence
- That the rights of minority groups are protected

- That citizens have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums

Respondents could answer each item by selecting a value from a scale, ranging from '1 - Not at all important' to '7 - Extremely important'. In addition, respondents who did not select one of these answer categories were given the option to answer "prefer not to say" or "don't know".

**FIGURE 3: CONSIDERING FREEDOM OF OPPOSITION PARTIES TO CRITICISE THE GOVERNMENT TO BE OF HIGH IMPORTANCE, PEOPLE AGE 16-29 YEARS AND 65 YEARS AND OVER, BY COUNTRY (%)<sup>a,b</sup>**



Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]

- Notes:
- a Out of all respondents in the EU-27, United Kingdom and North Macedonia who were asked to complete the section 'Rights awareness & responsibilities' of the survey (n = 26,045); weighted results.
  - b Respondents could answer each item by selecting a value from a scale, ranging from '1 - Not at all important' to '7 - Extremely important'. In addition, respondents who did not select one of these answer categories were provided the option to answer "prefer not to say" or "don't know". The results above are based on respondents selecting values 6 or 7 on the seven point scale.

## People believe in democratic principles – but too many feel ‘left behind’ by mainstream politics and politicians.

### FRA OPINION 4

To improve political participation in the EU, concerted efforts are required to address the survey finding that the majority of people feel that ‘mainstream parties and politicians don’t care about people like me’, which is also reflected in the finding that people feel that their employment chances are reduced if they don’t belong to the political party in power. The EU and Member States need to pay particular attention to those groups in society who feel most detached from democratic processes – such as people who are struggling on their current incomes.

‘Citizens’ dialogues’, and related consultations, are an established engagement tool in the EU to try and reach out to different groups in society with respect to important policy issues. However, these tools require significant re-thinking in order to reach out to those who are economically disadvantaged and in an effort to engage with them systematically.

A vibrant civil society, alongside an independent, pluralist and responsible media – underpinned by freedom of expression – need support at the EU and Member State levels for the role they play in enhancing democratic engagement as a means of upholding fundamental rights.

- ★ The majority of people in the EU (60 %) agree or strongly agree that mainstream parties and politicians do not care about them.
- ★ The sense that “mainstream parties and politicians don’t care about people like me” is heightened among people who struggle to make ends meet with their household income, those who have completed at most lower secondary education, as well as people who face severe long-standing limitations in their usual activities (due to disability or long-term health problems). For example, 73 % of people who find it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet with their current household income agree with this statement. By comparison, 45 % of those who make ends meet easily or very easily do so.
- ★ 63 % think that people have better chances of being hired if they belong to the political party that is in power. The results show large variations between EU Member States in terms of the extent to which people think this is the case. Notably, such views are more common among people who are struggling to make ends meet.

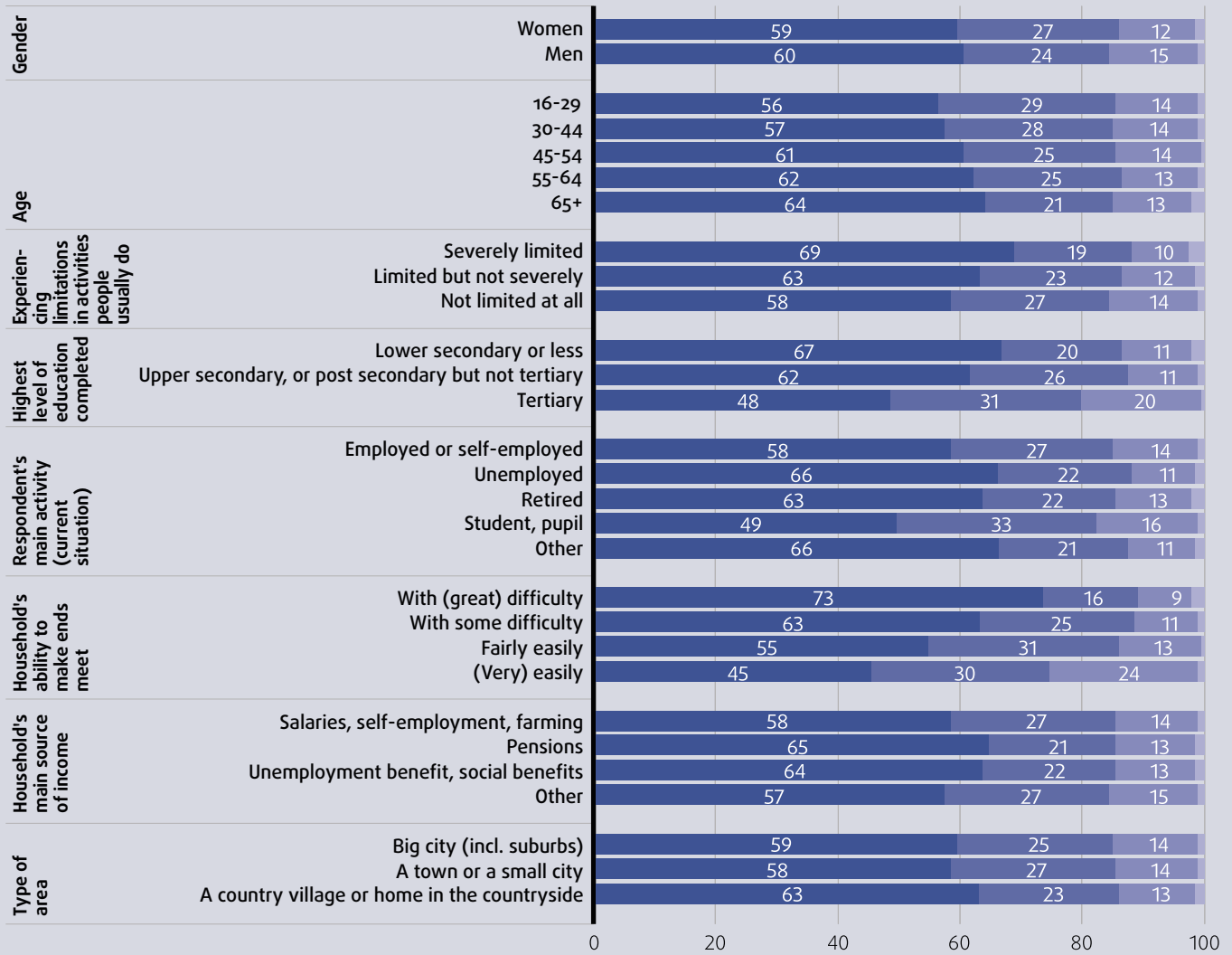
Democracy is, along with human rights and the rule of law, one of the three pillars that anchor the European Union, and all three are among the foundational values of the Union, as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. The separation of powers, political freedoms, transparency and accountability are internationally recognised principles of a well-established and well-functioning democracy. Human, or similarly, fundamental rights – as referred to in the internal context of the EU – are key for the good functioning of democratic societies in the EU.

The EU’s **Europe for Citizens Programme**, which sets out to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation of citizens at EU level, is an important part of the EU’s toolbox for fostering democratic engagement. The **Conference on the Future of Europe** is a major pan-European democratic exercise that sets out to engage more effectively with EU citizens. It is another mechanism whereby the EU tries to engage with citizens with respect to democratic processes – aligned with the principles set out in the Charter concerning citizens’ rights, such as the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament (Article 39), and the right to vote and stand as a candidate at municipal elections (Article 40).

**“Human rights are followed when one has political contacts. The common person is unprotected.”**

*(Woman, 65+ years old, survey respondent, Spain)*

**FIGURE 4: VIEWS ON THE STATEMENT “MAINSTREAM PARTIES AND POLITICIANS DON’T CARE ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE ME”, BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (EU-27, %)<sup>a,b</sup>**



Notes:

a Out of all respondents in the EU-27 who were asked to complete the section 'Rights awareness & responsibilities' of the survey (n = 24,354); weighted results.

b For details concerning the socio-demographic variables used in the analysis, see Annex I to the main report.

- Strongly agree or tend to agree
- Strongly disagree or tend to disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Don't know or prefer not to say

Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]

## A quarter of people think the judiciary are not independent, and one in five think that NGOs and charities are never free of government intimidation.

### FRA OPINION 5

The finding that just over one in four EU citizens think that judges in their country cannot do their job free from government influence – which is as high as one in two people in some Member States – indicates that concrete measures are necessary to improve public trust in the independence of the judiciary. Without such trust, key democratic principles and fundamental rights, such as the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial, as well as the right to equality and to good administration, are undermined.

Given that the survey's findings show that one in five people think that NGOs and charities are never free from government intimidation, it is essential that Member States uphold the freedoms and rights of civil society actors.

The EU and its Member States should systematically collect independent and robust data on public opinion concerning judicial independence, as well as on the ability of NGOs and charities to operate free from government influence. This will provide the Commission and other EU institutions, as well as Member States, with an additional evidential basis for formulating follow-up action. Such data can also inform important initiatives, such as the Commission's annual assessment of the rule of law in Member States.

- ★ One in four people (27 %) in the EU think that, in their country, judges are 'never' or 'rarely' able to do their job free from government influence. The results range from 47 % in Croatia to 11 % in both Denmark and Finland.
- ★ 37 % of people in the EU think that NGOs and charities are most of the time or always able to do their work free from government intimidation. Meanwhile, 34 % think that this is the case some of the time. One in five (21 %) believe that this is never the case or is rarely possible.

In line with Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial), independent courts are essential for guaranteeing the effective judicial protection of fundamental rights. Effective judicial protection, which is both a fundamental right and a general principle of EU law, is a "concrete expression" of the rule of law, as underlined by the Court of Justice of the European Union in its case law under Article 19 (1) of the TEU – for example, in case C-64/16, **Associação Sindical dos Juizes Portugueses** (judgment of 27 February 2018, para. 32).

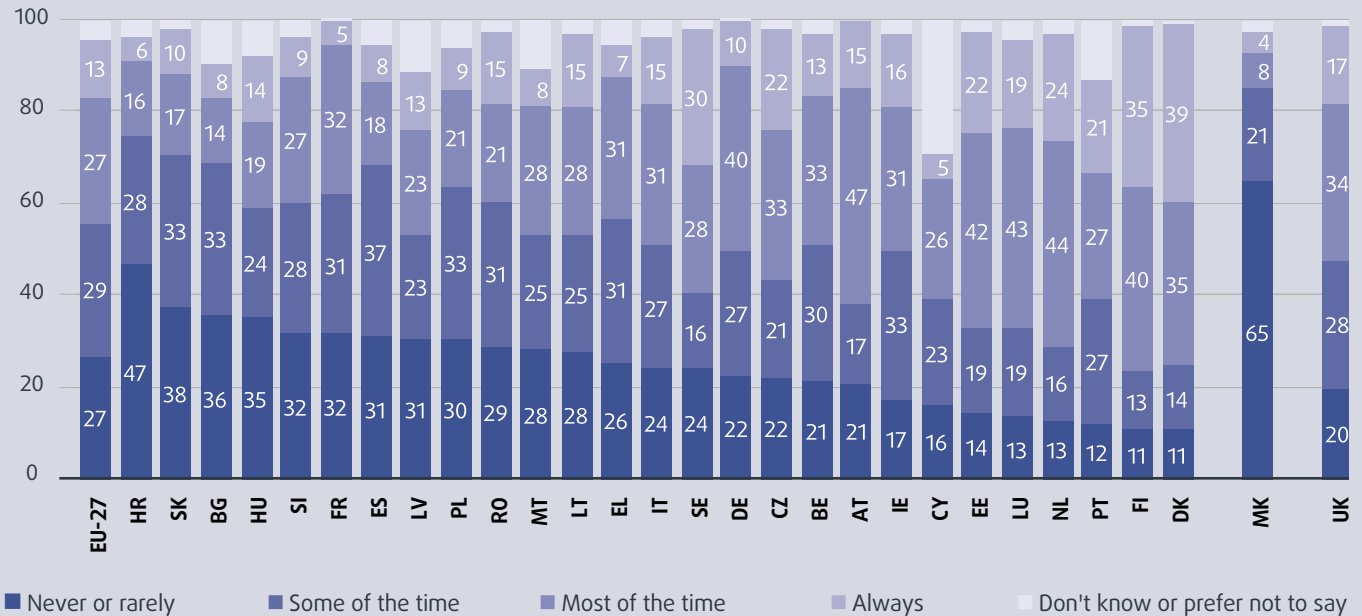
**"You need connections to be appointed a judge in the first place, so the influence begins even at this stage."**

*(Woman, between 45 and 54 years old, focus-group participant, Bulgaria)*

No democracy can thrive without an active civil society either, as outlined in the Commission's Communication on *Strengthening the rule of law within the Union* – published in July 2019. In this context, the Charter includes rights to freedom of assembly and of association (Article 12), and freedom of expression and information (Article 11). These apply to EU Member States when they are acting within the scope of EU law and are of particular importance in how they pertain to civil society organisations in the EU.



**FIGURE 5: PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE ABILITY OF JUDGES TO DO THEIR JOB FREE FROM GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE, BY COUNTRY (%)<sup>a,b</sup>**



Notes:   
 a Out of all respondents in the EU-27, United Kingdom and North Macedonia who were asked to complete the section 'Rights awareness & responsibilities' of the survey (n = 26,045); weighted results.   
 b The answer categories used in the survey were 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Some of the time', 'Most of the time', 'Always', 'Prefer not to say' and 'Don't know'. In the figure, some of the original answer categories have been combined, as indicated in the category labels.

Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]



# GOOD ADMINISTRATION AND CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES

**Those most in need of good service provision by public administration – such as people with long-term health problems – indicate that they face particular challenges.**

## FRA OPINION 6

EU Member States should ensure that information on people's rights with respect to public services are delivered in good time and are accessible to all. They should place a particular focus on groups who may be most in need of such services – such as people with long-term health problems or disabilities, including older people.

- ★ In terms of problems when dealing with public administration and local authorities, people most often mention that their matter took a long time to process, and that they faced difficulties finding relevant information.
- ★ People who face long-standing limitations in their usual activities (due to disability or long-term health problems), as well as people with lower education or limited economic means, find it more difficult to find information on services provided by public administration and local authorities.

- ★ One in ten people (11 %) perceive that they were not treated equally to others by public administration.

For example, 17 % of people who make ends meet with difficulty or great difficulty believe they were not treated equally to others by public administration or local authorities. By comparison, 8 % of people who make ends meet easily or very easily believe this.

- ★ People who experience severe long-standing limitations in usual activities (due to disability or long-term health problems) are more likely to face problems with respect to services provided by public administration and local authorities: 54 %, compared with 39 % for people without limitations. Similarly, people who struggle to cope with their household's income are more likely to face such problems: 48 %, compared with 39 % of people who make ends meet fairly or very easily.



**“As a mother of a disabled child, it is appalling to experience how little help and guidance you get in relation to rights, opportunities etc.”**

*(Woman, between 30 and 44 years old, survey respondent, Denmark)*

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However, people with high education also indicate a higher rate of problems with services provided by public administration and local authorities, compared with people who have completed at most lower secondary education. This finding that may reflect higher expectations of service provision among the more educated.

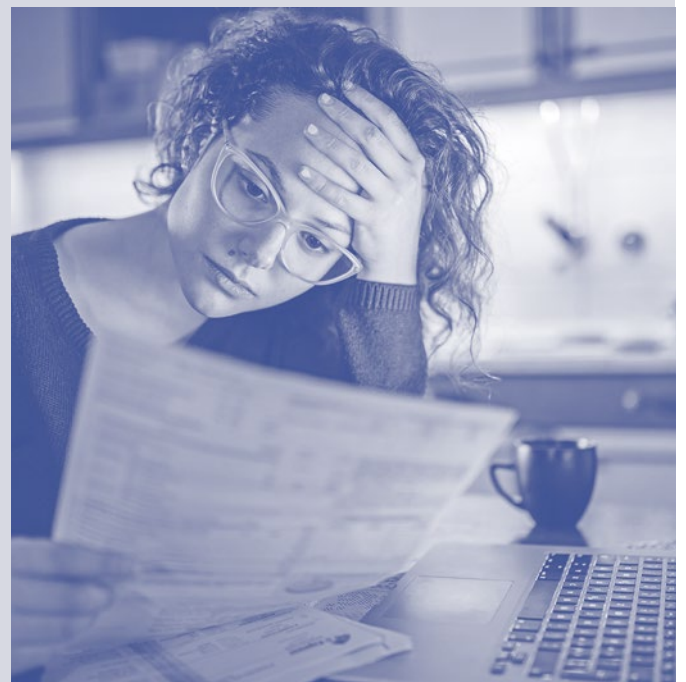
The right to good administration, as expressed in Article 41 of the Charter, is a fundamental right forming an integral part of the EU legal order. As a general principle of EU law, it also binds Member States when they are acting within the scope of EU law. General national obligations also stem from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and related case law of the European Court of Human Rights – related to the concept of good governance in particular. According to these minimum standards, every person has the right to have their affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by public authorities. Other related aspects include transparency and access to information, which are crucial tools in national checks and balances.

The role of public administration and local authorities in making information accessible and easy to understand – an essential service in normal circumstances – becomes of paramount importance in exceptional situations, such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic of 2020.

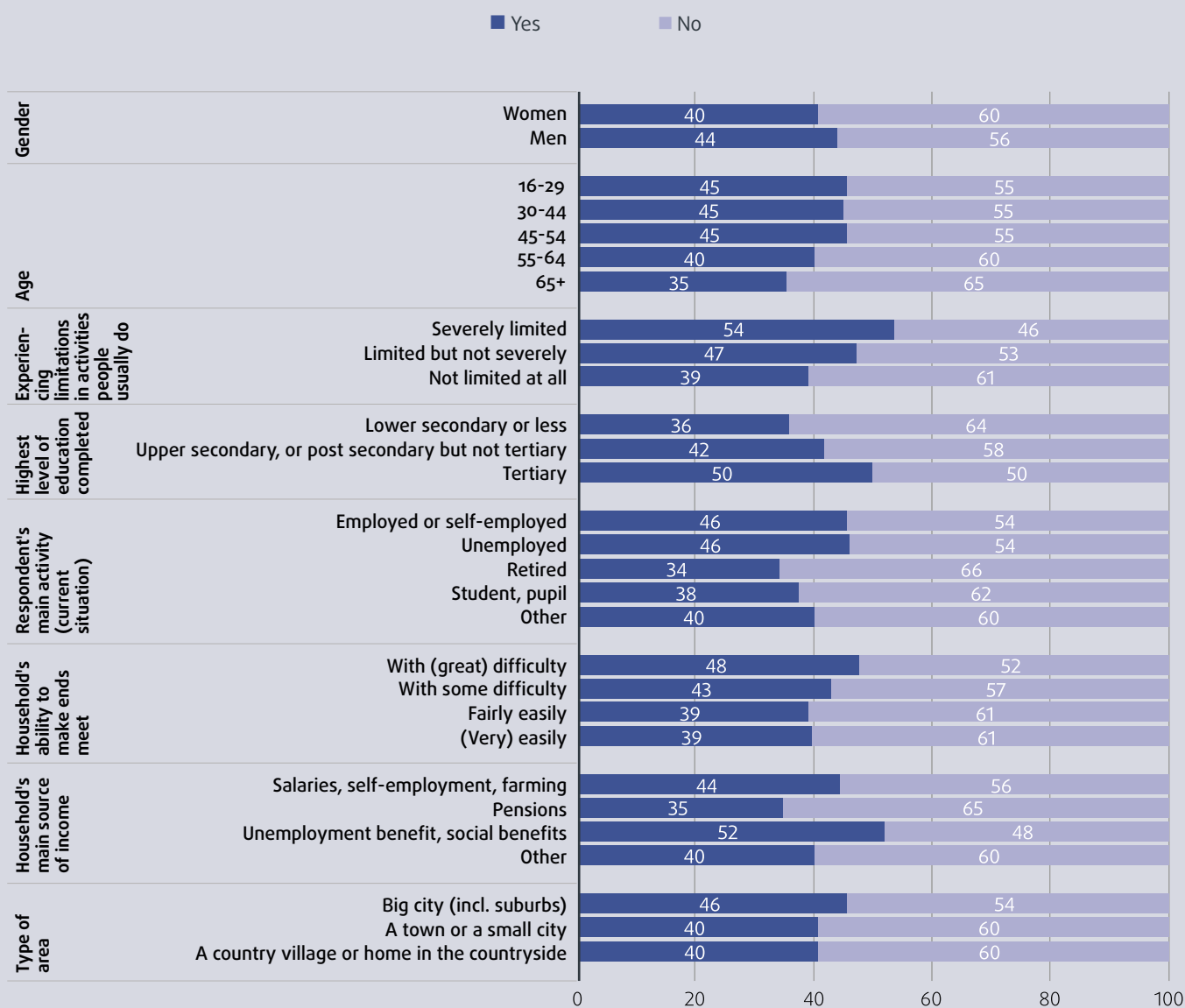
**“The public administration works too slowly, it sometimes takes weeks to receive a response to requests, and when it does, the information is so cluttered that it cannot be understood.”**

*(Man, 65+ years old, survey respondent, Germany)*

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**FIGURE 6: EXPERIENCING ONE OR MORE PROBLEMS WHEN DEALING WITH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION/LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE FIVE YEARS BEFORE THE SURVEY, BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (EU-27, %)<sup>a,b,c</sup>**



Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]

Notes:

- a Out of all respondents in the EU-27 who were asked to complete the section 'Everyday life experiences' of the survey (n = 26,493); weighted results.
- b Category 'Yes' shows the proportion of people who have experienced at least one of the six problems listed in the survey with respect to public administration and local authorities.
- c For details concerning the socio-demographic variables used in the analysis, see Annex I in the main report.



## Corruption is a problem in some Member States more than others, and particularly affects the health sector. Half of young people consider low level bribery to be acceptable.

- ★ Only few people (4 %) in the EU have experienced a public official or civil servant asking or expecting a favour, such as a gift or a donation, in exchange for a particular service. However, in some EU Member States this is more common, rising to nearly one in five people experiencing this form of corruption in some countries.
- ★ Corruption in relation to health services is considered to be a particular problem. In Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia and Latvia, over 60 % of people say that one has to, at least sometimes, give a gift or do someone some other type of favour to get better treatment in public hospitals.
- ★ However, one in four people (24 %) believe that it would sometimes or always be acceptable to give a gift to a public official or a civil servant to expedite matters in urgent cases. Over 50 % of people in Slovakia, Czechia and Croatia would at least sometimes consider it acceptable to give a gift to or do a favour for a public official or a civil servant to have them react more quickly to an urgent request. By comparison, 20 % or fewer hold this view in Sweden, Malta, Finland and Portugal.
- ★ Notably, 48 % of people in the age group 16-29 years would find it acceptable to give a gift or do a favour, compared with under 35 % in other age groups.

Corruption affects fundamental rights under the Charter, the ECHR, and other international human rights instruments. In particular, it breaches the principles of equality and non-discrimination (Article 20 and 21 of the Charter). Depending on the sector – ranging from employment to healthcare – it then breaches other rights as well.

### FRA OPINION 7

The link between high prevalence or acceptance rates for corruption and their resulting impact on people's core rights – such as equality of access to government services – needs to be acknowledged and addressed directly by public administrations across the EU. This can be done by focusing on workers in certain key sectors – such as healthcare – where there is a high prevalence of corruption, and on parts of the population – such as the young – where acceptance of some forms of bribery appears to be higher, by underlining the illegality of corruption and of people's right to good administration and equality in this regard.

For those Member States where the survey indicates that the actual prevalence or acceptance of corruption may be more common, government bodies – supported by civil society – need to make every effort to bring down these rates. One way to address this is by ensuring that in the disbursement of EU funds, in particular European Structural and Investment Funds, the proposed enabling conditions include reference to Article 41 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights on the right to good administration. This should be systematically monitored by the relevant EU bodies, such as the Court of Auditors and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

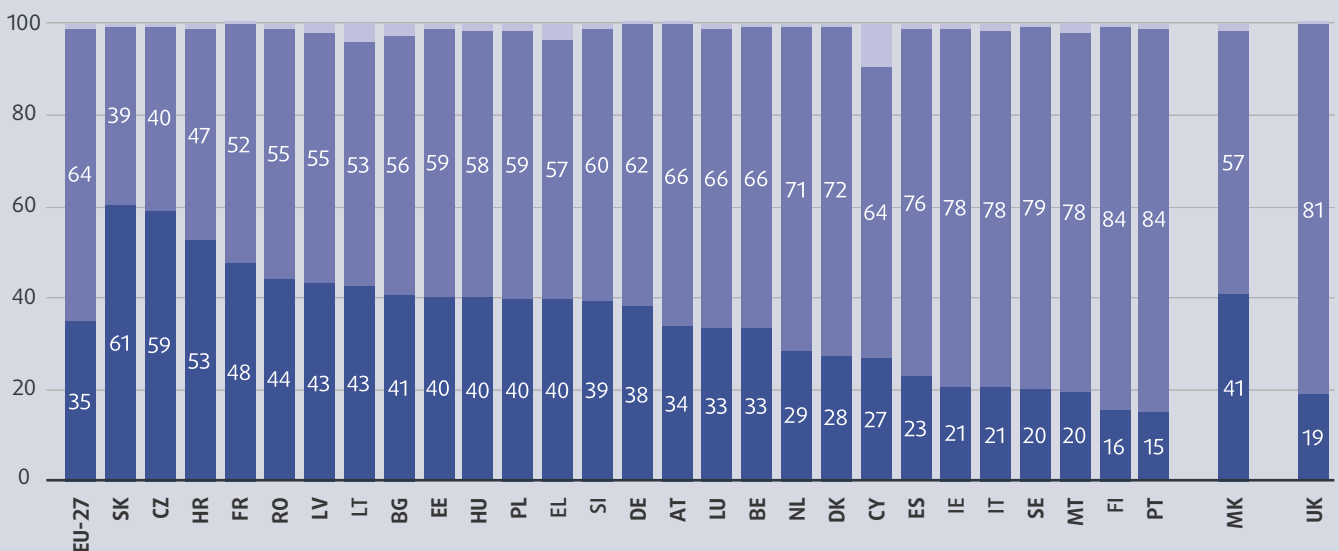
Given that corruption constitutes a significant systemic obstacle to the realisation of fundamental rights, it should become a permanent aspect for monitoring as part of the new European rule of law mechanism – based on robust and comparable evidence. This can serve to support the EU's role with respect to existing bodies working to fight corruption, in particular the Council of Europe group of states against corruption (GRECO).

In practice, social rights are most often affected. Corruption in the health sector affects the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 35 of the Charter). In the education sector, the right to education (Article 14 of the Charter) is at issue. On the other hand, corruption in the judicial sector violates the right to a fair trial and to an effective remedy (Article 47 of the Charter), which are instrumental in the enforcement of all other human rights and in preventing impunity. Moreover, the absence of an independent judiciary fosters distrust in public institutions, undermining respect for the rule of law and democracy.

**“Public hospital doctors always expect a gift in order to take better care of you.”**

*(Man, between 16 and 29 years old, survey respondent, Cyprus)*

**FIGURE 7: VIEWS ON ACCEPTABILITY OF GIVING A GIFT TO OR DOING A FAVOUR FOR A PUBLIC OFFICIAL OR CIVIL SERVANT IF NEED SOMETHING URGENTLY FROM THEM, BY COUNTRY (%)**



- Acceptable sometimes or always
- Never acceptable
- Don't know or prefer not to say

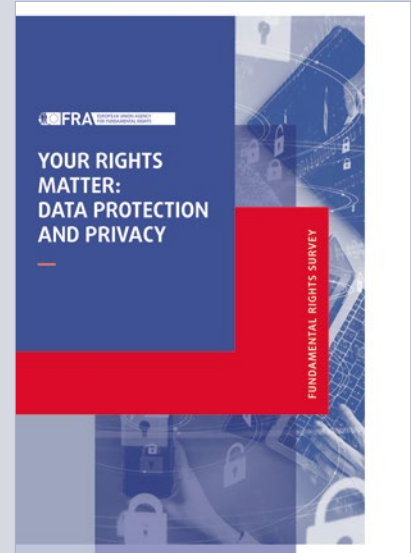
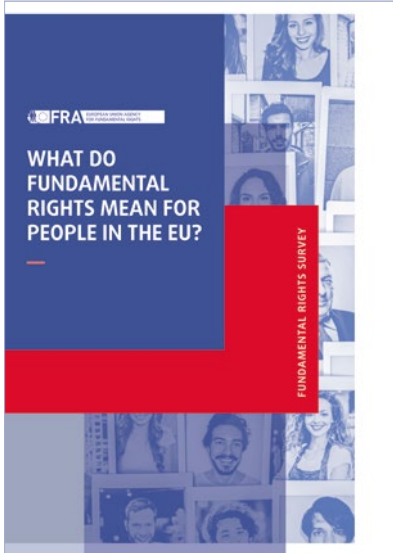
Notes:

Out of all respondents in the EU-27, United Kingdom and North Macedonia (n = 34,948); weighted results.

Source: FRA, Fundamental Rights Survey 2019 [Data collection in cooperation with CBS (NL), CTIE (LU) and Statistics Austria (AT)]



This summary presents the main findings from FRA's first report on the Fundamental Rights Survey. FRA has published several other publications that present select results from the survey. These are available on [FRA's website](#).

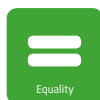




# PROMOTING AND PROTECTING YOUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ACROSS THE EU —

This summary presents the main insights from FRA's first report based on its Fundamental Rights Survey. The survey collected data from around 35,000 people about their experiences, perceptions and opinions on a range of issues that are variously encompassed by human rights.

The summary focuses on findings with respect to respondents' opinions about human – or fundamental – rights; their views and perceptions on the functioning of democratic societies – as a pillar on which human rights can flourish; and on their thoughts on and engagement with public services that have a duty to enforce human rights law and to protect people's rights.



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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