

Brexit, the EU and You

A survey by Europe Street News

Attitudes, expectations and fears
of mobile citizens impacted by Brexit

September 2019

EUROPE STREET
NEWS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Brexit, the EU and You” is a survey by Europe Street News designed to test attitudes, expectations and fears of EU nationals in the UK and British nationals in other EU countries, and to gauge their information needs on post-Brexit rights. The survey was however open to all and has succeeded in attracting responses from other EU mobile citizens (e.g. Germans living in France) as well as ‘non-mobile’ citizens (e.g. British living in the UK). Overall, **3,044 people took part in the survey**. Of these, the vast majority are ‘mobile’ citizens directly impacted by Brexit: 45% are UK citizens living in other EU countries, 25% are EU citizens living in the UK, and 10% are British citizens in the UK who have previously lived abroad.

The survey results emphasise the **implications Brexit has on the lives of mobile citizens**, with 93% saying they feel more anxious since the Brexit vote. 37% also report having experienced discrimination because of their nationality.

The survey results show that mobile citizens face **three core issues** with regards to Brexit and the European Union that may explain the anxiety:

1. **Information gaps:** The survey results highlight significant and continued uncertainty and major information gaps about the rights of mobile citizens, especially regarding social security and the recognition of professional qualifications. 59% and 51% of mobile citizens respondents, respectively, feel they lack sufficient information in these areas. Most strikingly, 70% do not know how to defend their rights if these are not respected. This alone can be a reason for anxiety.
2. **Political gaps** – Mobile citizens impacted by Brexit appear to be a highly engaged, but neglected, political audience. 69% report to have taken more interest in politics since the Brexit vote and 88% have participated in campaigns and petitions. Yet, 92% say they are not well-represented in the political debate and 85% do not feel correctly portrayed in the media. The responses also reveal strong support (90%) for granting full voting rights in the country of residence for people who move across the EU.
3. **Protection gaps** – The survey shows that 43% of mobile citizens have lived in three or more countries over their lifetime, and about 35% are considering moving to yet another country; the share is particularly high among those currently living in the UK. But very few (10%) want to return to their country of origin. Although the survey did not ask where people had lived in the past, it is likely that a high proportion has moved within the European Union. This high level of mobility should be considered in the Brexit negotiations. In the event of a no-deal Brexit, the negotiation of bilateral agreements on citizens’ rights between the UK and individual EU member states will not be a sufficient policy response to protect rights accrued across several borders.

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Our report. This report presents insights from the research carried out by Europe Street News in summer 2019 (online survey and supporting qualitative interviews).

Our ambition. The purpose of the research was to test attitudes, expectations and fears of those most impacted by Brexit: EU citizens in the UK (3.8 million according to Eurostat), and British nationals in other EU countries (1.2 million), and to gauge their information needs. The survey was however open to all and has succeeded in also attracting responses from other EU mobile citizens (e.g. Germans living in France) and individuals living in their country of birth (e.g. British citizens in the UK). Overall, 3,044 people took part in the survey.

The methodology. The online survey was ‘live’ from 28 May to 28 June 2019, and was distributed via two links: one targeted at the general public and one at Europe Street News subscribers. The survey targeted at Europe Street News subscribers contained additional questions regarding reading behaviours of the newsletter (results not publicly shared), but the main survey was identical for both groups. The survey links were circulated through the Europe Street News media channels (newsletter, Twitter, Instagram) and via various citizens’ rights groups. Respondents were able to skip individual questions, but the settings ensured each respondent was only able to complete the survey once. All responses were anonymous.

In July, as a follow up to the online survey, Europe Street News conducted five in-depth phone interviews with readers. In addition, a focus group meeting took place in London with the participation of five readers. Both qualitative research streams covered a range of nationalities and scenarios (e.g. British citizens in the EU, EU citizens in the UK, British citizens in the UK etc.)

Our special thanks. Prior to distribution, the survey was reviewed by Elena Remigi, Editor of the book “In Limbo”, and Kuba Jablonowski, Research Associate with the citizens’ rights group the3million and other readers who provided valuable feedback. We would like to thank all groups and individuals who have supported and shared the survey, and in particular the3million, British in Europe, Remain in France Together (RIFT), In Limbo, Brexit Hear Our Voice, Bremain in Spain, UK CEN and EU citizenship 2017 – A European Citizens Initiative. Thank you all very much!

Claudia Delpero

Founder and Editor, Europe Street News

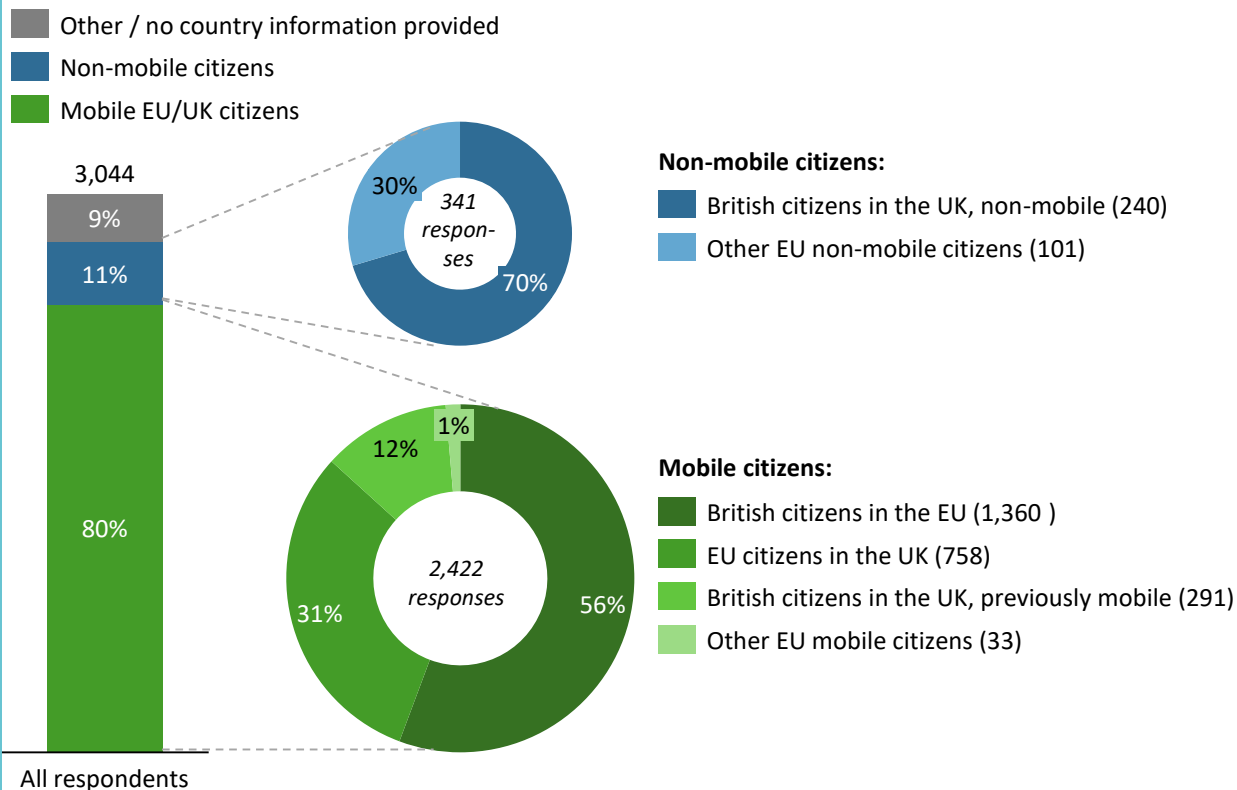
Christoph Schedl

Advisory Board, Europe Street News

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (i)

The survey achieved 3,044 responses, 80% from 'mobile citizens'. UK nationals in the EU (1,360 responses) and EU nationals in the UK (758) are the largest groups of respondents.

Survey Respondents by Demographics (Overview)



The survey achieved a total of **3,044 responses**, with a strong coverage of 'mobile citizens':

- British nationals living in other EU countries (1,360, or 45% of the total) and EU nationals in the UK (758, or 25% of the total) are the largest participant groups
- Other 'mobile citizens' include British citizens in the UK who have previously lived abroad (10% of the total), and other EU mobile citizens (1%)

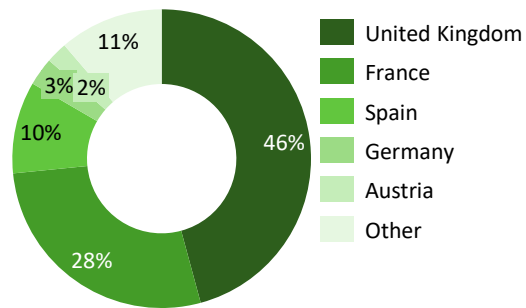
Based on this sample, the survey results are **most representative for mobile citizens**, i.e. for the groups most directly impacted by Brexit, which form the focus of this report.

Results for other groups are indicative only.

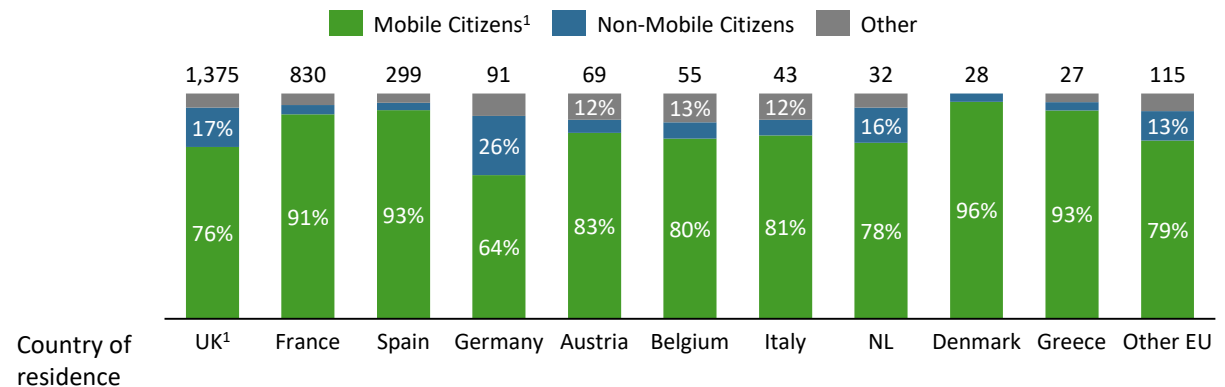
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (ii)

Individuals from a broad mix of demographics took part in the survey; large participation especially from the UK and France; high share of mobile citizens in all countries

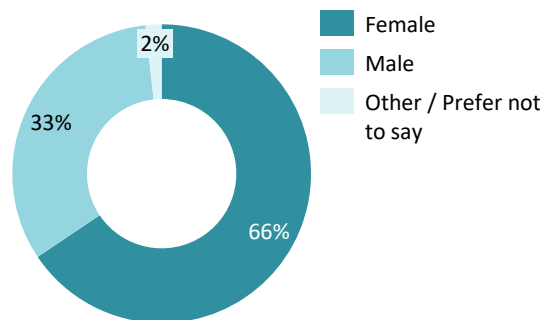
Respondents By Country of Residence



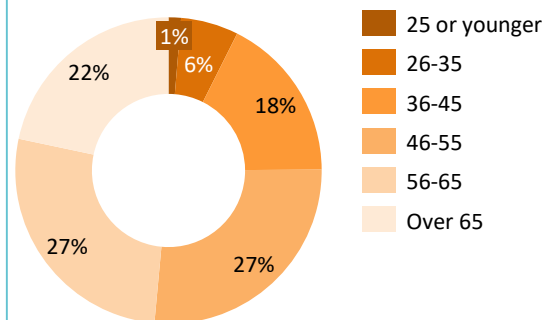
Respondents by 'Mobile Citizenship' Status; by Country of Residence



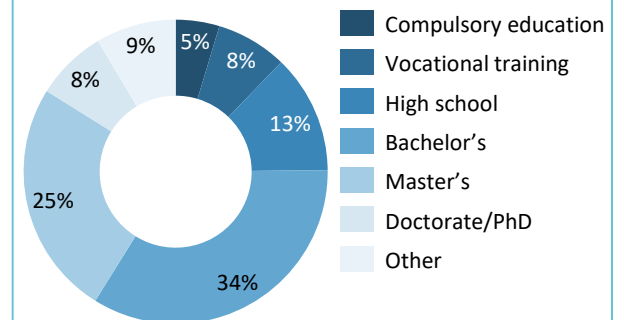
Respondents By Gender



By Age Group



By Level of Education



KEY FINDINGS (i)

Summary

The survey reveals that **Brexit has direct implications on the lives of mobile citizens**, with 93% saying they feel more anxious since the Brexit vote. **Three core issues** emerging from the survey with regards to Brexit and the European Union may explain the anxiety:

1. **Information gaps** - All groups of affected mobile citizens (European citizens in the UK, UK citizens in Europe, UK citizens who have spent time abroad in the past) feel heavily impacted by Brexit and display a high level of anxiety. This appears to be driven by the significant and continued uncertainty exacerbated by information gaps about their rights, especially regarding social security rights accrued across various countries and the recognition of professional qualifications. 59% and 51% of respondents, respectively, feel they lack sufficient information in these areas. Most strikingly, 70% do not know how to defend their rights if these are not respected. This alone can be a reason for anxiety.
2. **Political gaps** – Respondents to this survey appear to be a highly engaged, but neglected, political audience. They are interested, informed, and willing to take action, for example by joining campaigns. Paradoxically, Brexit may have awoken a stronger sense of EU citizenship as 69% report to have taken more interest in politics since the Brexit vote and 88% have participated in campaigns and petitions. Yet, 92% say they are not well-represented in the political debate and 85% do not feel correctly portrayed in the media. The responses also reveal strong support (90%) for granting full voting rights in the country of residence for people who move across the EU, wherever they reside.
3. **Protection gaps** – British nationals living in the EU and EU nationals in the UK are highly mobile: 43% of the surveyed mobile citizens have lived in 3 countries or more. Mobility remains a strong theme, as about 35% are considering moving to yet another country and the share is particularly high among those currently living in the UK. Relatively few (10%) want to return to their country of origin. This high level of mobility should be considered in the Brexit negotiations. In the event of no-deal Brexit, the negotiation of bilateral agreements on citizens' rights between the UK and EU member states will not be a sufficient policy response to protect rights accrued across several borders.

KEY FINDINGS (ii)

Insights on mobile citizens groups

- **UK nationals in other EU countries** - British citizens emerge from this survey as being **very mobile**, and therefore likely hardest hit by the loss of free movement rights in the European Union after Brexit. 44% of UK nationals in the EU have lived in 3 or more countries for at least 3 months and, compared to other groups, they express **the lowest desire to return to their country** of birth (only about 3% want to go back to the UK). 96% feel personally impacted by Brexit and 93% report more anxiety since the referendum on Brexit. About two thirds (62%) say they are not aware about their post-Brexit rights. A high proportion (53%) also lack information about their social security rights, including pension, access to healthcare systems, benefits and social care, and 48% are not aware about the recognition of professional qualifications works. 85% of British nationals in the EU do not feel correctly portrayed in the media and 93% do not feel represented in the political debate, the highest proportion of all surveyed groups.
- **EU citizens in the UK** - Like British nationals in the EU, EU nationals in the UK feel anxious (93%) and personally impacted by Brexit (94%), but widely unrepresented in politics (91%) and the media (80%). In addition, they also feel discriminated against because of their nationality: **56% of respondents in this group reported discriminations**, the highest proportion of all groups, and the percentage reaches 60% for Polish and 59% for Germans in the UK. EU citizens in the UK also do not feel sufficiently informed about their rights. About two thirds (64%) say they are not aware of their post-Brexit rights. 63% are in the dark about social security provisions and 49% about the recognition of professional qualifications. This is also a highly mobile group: 41% have lived in three or more countries and more than half (55%) are considering moving again in the future. The proportion of those pondering a move is especially high for Italians (63%), Spanish (58%) and Germans (57%). A quarter (20%), the highest proportion among all respondents, **considers returning to the country of origin**.
- **UK citizens in the UK who previously lived abroad** - Almost 18% of participants in the survey were British citizens living in the UK, of which **55% have previously lived in at least one other country** (therefore also classified as 'mobile' in this survey). Overlooked in Brexit negotiations, this group clearly would want the UK to stay in the European Union: more than 90% have positive views about the EU. Like other groups, the vast majority (93%) feel impacted by Brexit and report more anxiety since the EU referendum (92%). British citizens in the UK who have previously lived abroad are the most likely to say they are considering moving elsewhere in the future (66%). At the same time, their **awareness of EU rights is the lowest** of all groups: almost 65% feel they are not sufficiently informed about their social security rights or about the recognition of professional qualifications. This group is also the most likely to have taken **political action** about **Brexit** (around 90%). Yet again, they feel not represented in the media (90%) and in the political debate (89%).

HIGH LEVEL OF ANXIETY (i)

95% of mobile citizens feel personally impacted by Brexit; the share is especially high for British citizens living in the EU; 93% report to feel more anxious since the Brexit vote

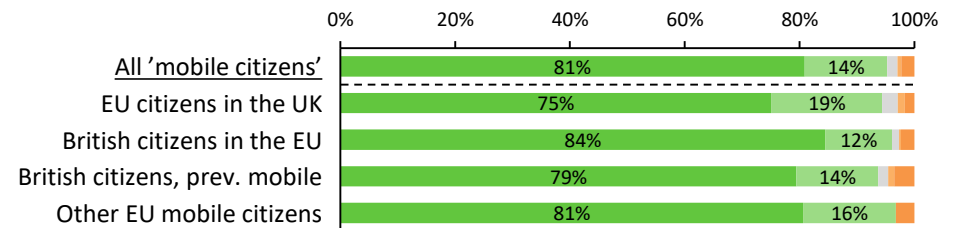
Brexit has far-reaching consequences for mobile citizens:

- **Personal impact:**
 - 95% of surveyed mobile citizens feel personally impacted by Brexit.
 - The share is consistently beyond 90% for all respondent groups.
- **More anxiety:**
 - Brexit is also affecting the well-being of respondents: 93% feel more anxious since the Brexit vote
 - The share is also surprisingly high for British respondents in the UK who used to live abroad (92% feel more anxious), suggesting concerns about past and future rights, but also that their European identity might have been hurt.

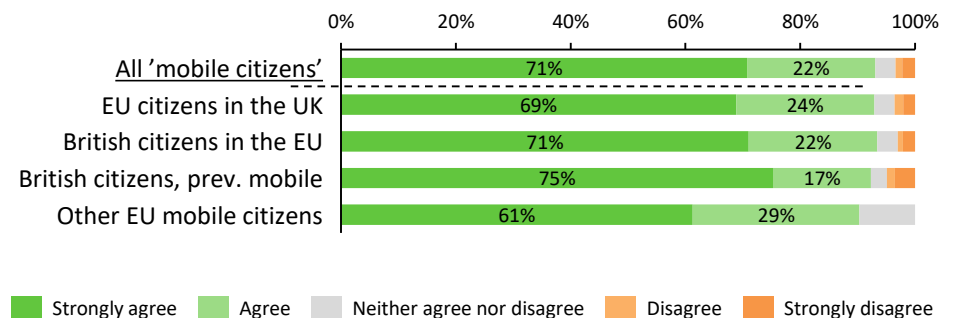
“Why [has the] safeguarding of the rights of the EU27 citizens in the UK and Brits in the EU27 after Brexit, which all EU28 say they agree with, still not been agreed after 3 years. This is inhumane!”
(Survey respondent)

“I feel my rights and freedoms as an EU citizen are being removed against my will...”
(Survey respondent)

*Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
‘I feel personally impacted by Brexit’*



*Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
‘I feel more anxious since the Brexit vote’*

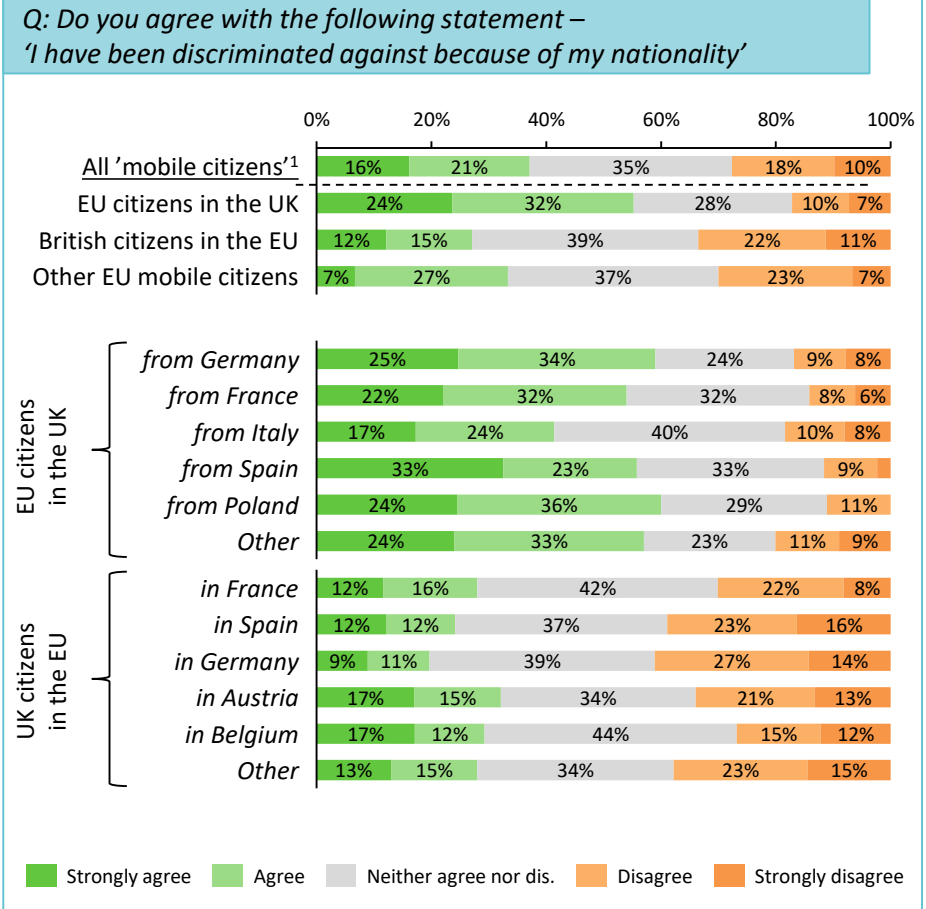


HIGH LEVEL OF ANXIETY (ii)

37% of mobile citizens report having been discriminated against because of their nationality; the share is particularly high among EU citizens in the UK (56%)

- **Discrimination:**

- 37% of mobile citizens report having been discriminated against because of their nationality.
- The proportion is particularly high for EU nationals in the UK (56%), with the percentage reaching 60% for Polish and 59% for Germans in the UK.
- A lower, but still worryingly high share of British citizens in Europe reports discrimination (on average 27%), with the highest proportion in Austria (32%) and the lowest in Germany (20%).



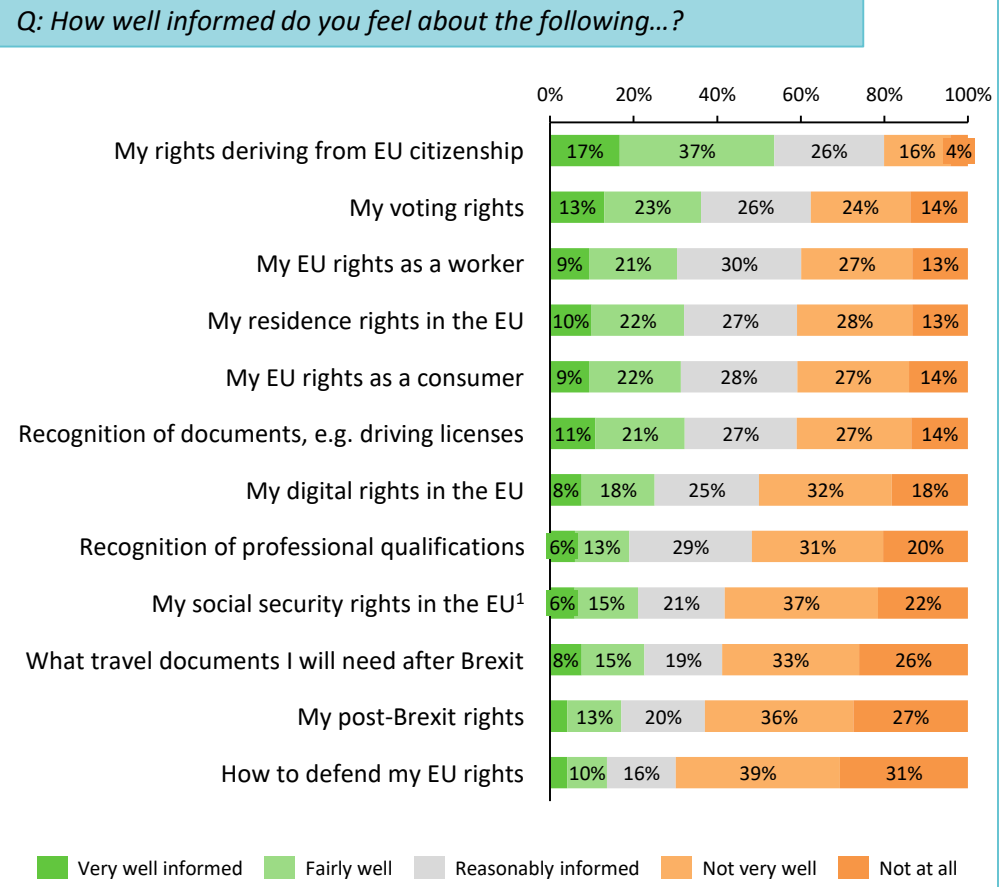
ISSUE 1 – INFORMATION GAPS (i)

Mobile citizens lack information about their post-Brexit rights; high level of uncertainty and lack of information especially on how to defend their rights if they are not respected

The high level of anxiety shown by respondents is likely linked to the ongoing uncertainty about Brexit and the poor awareness about future rights.

- Out of twelve topics tested, only two have a neutral or positive 'net information score' (% well-informed vs. % poorly informed): 'my rights deriving from EU citizenship' and 'my voting rights'. This could be explained by the fact that the survey was carried out just after the European parliament election.
- All other topics have a negative score. Key issues:
 - **59% lack information about their social security rights in the EU**, i.e. they feel poorly informed about their pensions, healthcare, children's allowances etc.
 - **Recognition of professional qualifications** (51%) is another topic mobile citizens struggle with
 - Given the ongoing uncertainty about the outcome of Brexit, it is not surprising that 63% report lack of information on their **post-Brexit rights**
 - Most strikingly, 70% **would not know how to defend their rights in the event these were not respected**.

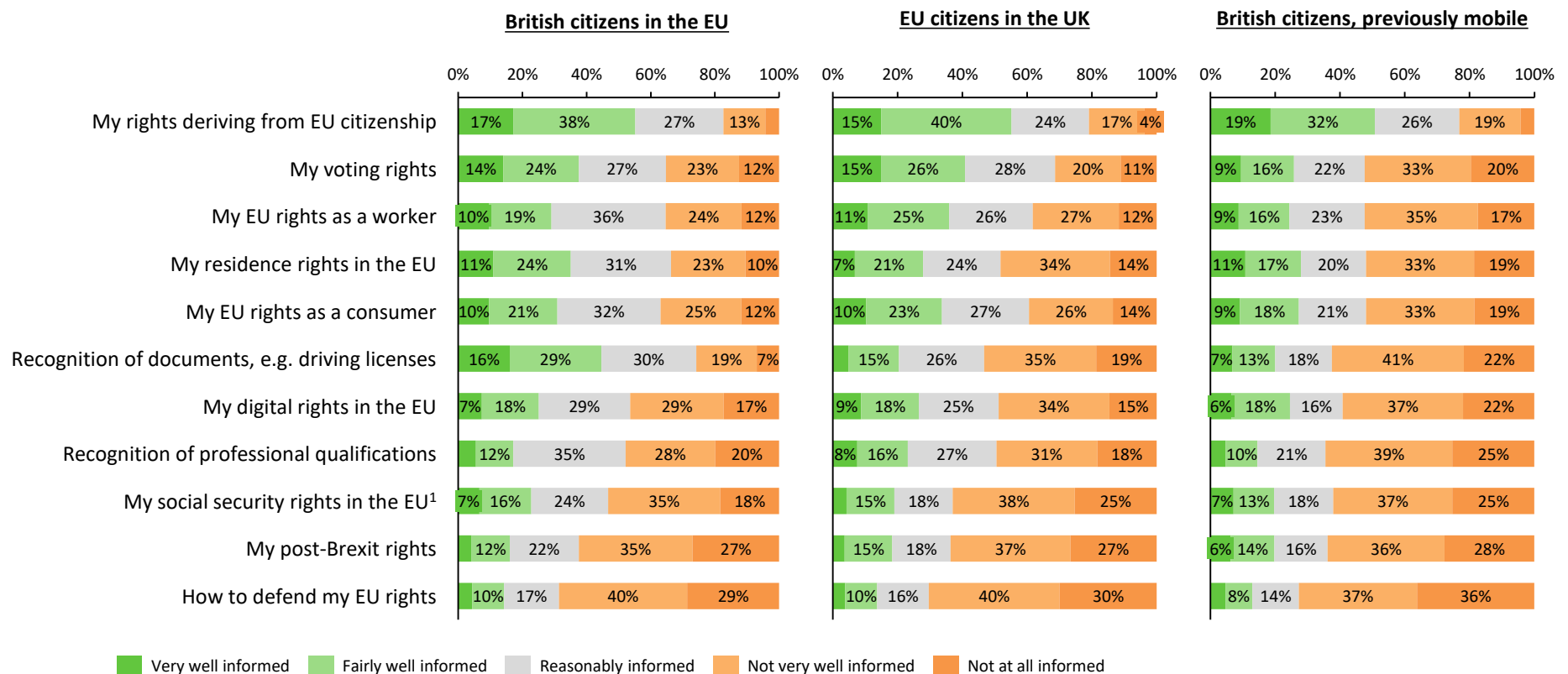
Results are similar across surveyed mobile citizens groups. UK citizens who previously lived abroad do appear to be worst informed.



ISSUE 1 – INFORMATION GAPS (ii)

Responses on information gaps are similar across surveyed mobile citizen groups; UK citizens who have previously lived abroad appear to be the worst informed group

Q: How well informed do you feel about the following?



ISSUE 1 – INFORMATION GAPS (iii)

52% of respondents would welcome more factual information about Brexit and the EU; results are similar across surveyed groups

The majority of survey respondents feel that more factual information about Brexit and the EU is needed. Results are similar across surveyed mobile citizen groups.

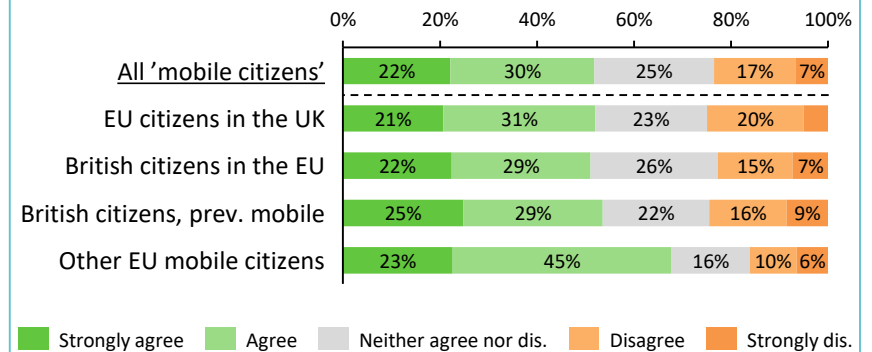
"What information is available, how to access it and what key information I should know when moving and living in another EU country. How and where do I find the latter?"

(Survey respondent)

"Portrayal of free movement in UK media is always negative. UK citizens can use free movement to live, work, study in the EU."

(Survey respondent)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
'I need more factual information about Brexit and the EU'



ISSUE 1 – INFORMATION GAPS (iv)

Additional commentary¹ received also points towards high level of uncertainty around residency, family unity, pension, healthcare and other post-Brexit rights.

Q: Are there any specific areas you do not feel sufficiently informed about with regard to free movement of people and the EU?

	Topics mentioned in qualitative feedback
Residency & citizenship rights	Respondents are especially concerned about their residency status and required paperwork. Issues also arise regarding mixed EU-UK couples currently residing outside the EU who would like to return but do not know where they would be allowed to live. There were further concerns regarding the residence rights of people living in Overseas Territories and of citizens with dual or multiple nationalities. Several UK nationals asked how they would be able to remain EU citizens. EU nationals in the UK had questions about the settled status scheme.
Family unity	Survey respondents worry about the rights of their partners, children and other family members: grandparents for example asked if grandchildren could still move across borders to study in the future. Other issues were related to free movement in the EU for British-EU families and the return of mixed UK-EU couples to the UK, the ability to look after elderly relatives abroad and parental rights for divorced EU-UK couples.
Pensions	Several questions emerged from people who lived in multiple countries on how to aggregate pension rights. There were also issues around pension transfers between countries, pension uprating and the Brexit impact on private pensions.
Healthcare & social benefits	Major concerns were expressed about post-Brexit access to healthcare in the country of residence and reciprocal healthcare, esp. for UK pensioners living elsewhere in the EU. Respondents also asked about the rights of people with disabilities and care support.
Work	Another concern emerging from comments is about the ability for self-employed people to provide cross-border services, a topic not addressed in the Brexit negotiations. There were also questions about cross-border work, including the status of seasonal, frontier and posted workers, and on what would happen with unemployment benefit rights.
Travel	Mobile citizens raised questions around business travel, the allowed length of stay in EU countries and the Schengen Area and about conditions for entry into the UK / EU post-Brexit. Some asked about travelling with pets.
Other	Further uncertainty was highlighted about e.g. voting rights, the recognition of documents such as driving licenses, the right to own property and open bank accounts in the EU, and taxation issues.

ISSUE 2 – POLITICAL GAPS (i)

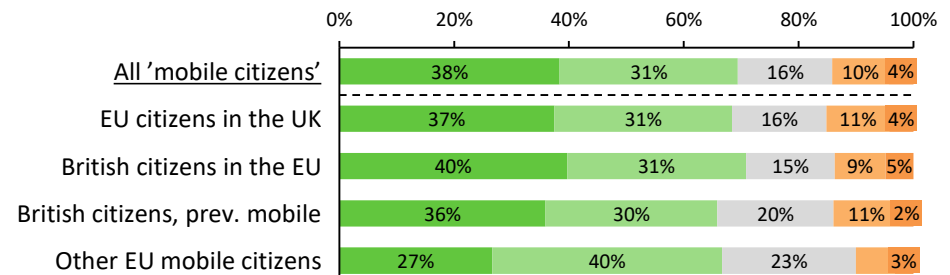
Mobile citizens are a highly engaged group, who have taken more interest in politics since the Brexit vote

For many of the surveyed mobile citizens, Brexit seems to have caused a political 'awakening'.

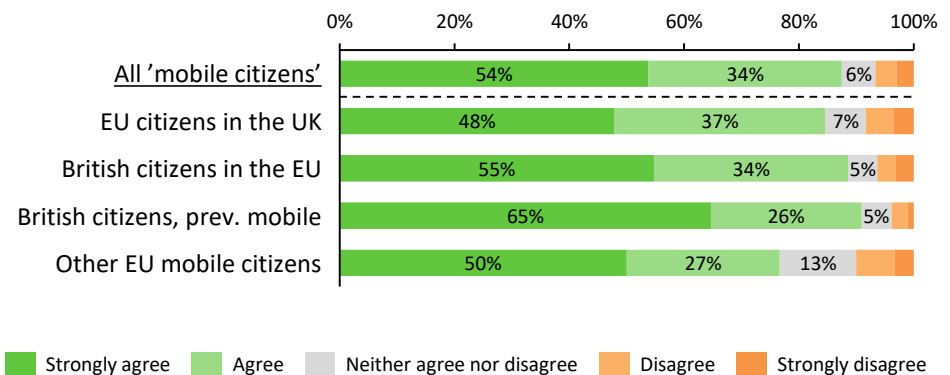
- **69% report to have taken more interest in politics** since the Brexit vote and **88% have participated in campaigns and petitions** about Brexit.
- All mobile citizen demographics report more activism, but the share is highest among British citizens. British citizens who have previously lived abroad are the most active group in respect to participating in campaigns and petitions (91% report to have done so).

"The damage is done but we [EU nationals in the UK] have to overcome the situation. Those of us who stay have to deal with the fact of living in a country that has rejected the concept of the EU, which for us has a value. We can become a political force, some could become MPs one day, we should be celebrating that. We cannot stay passive."
(Focus group participant)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
'I have taken more interest in politics since the Brexit vote'



Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
'I have taken part in campaigns, petitions etc. about Brexit'



ISSUE 2 – POLITICAL GAPS (ii)

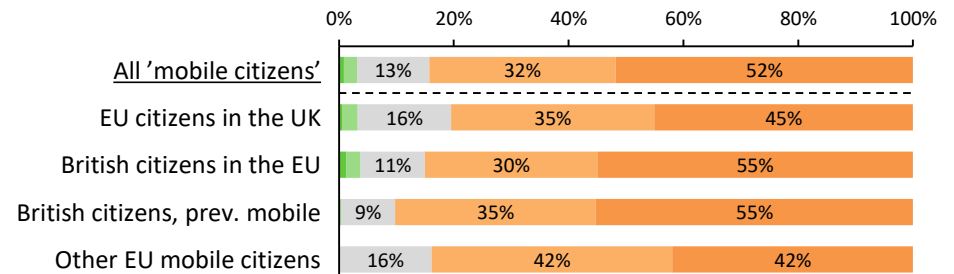
85% of mobile citizens feel incorrectly portrayed in the media and 92% feel ill-represented in the political debate

Surveyed mobile citizens feel incorrectly portrayed in the media and ill-represented in the political debate:

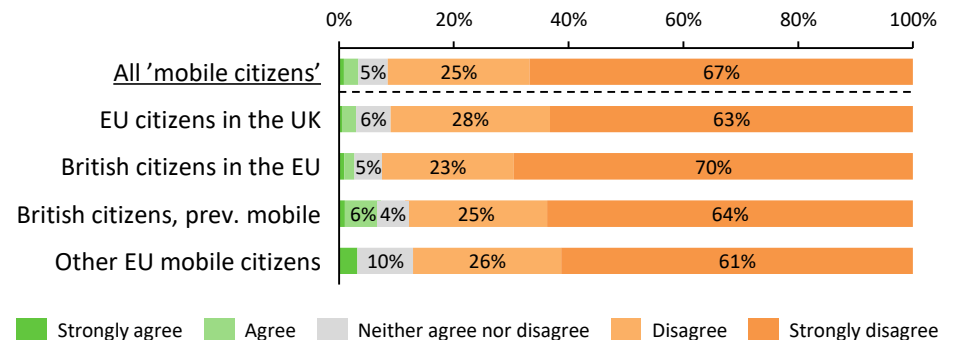
- **Overall, 85% do not feel correctly portrayed in the media**
 - Surveyed British citizens in the EU and British citizens in the UK who have previously lived abroad are especially unsatisfied with their portrayal in the media (85% and 90%, retrospectively)
- **Similarly, 92% say they do not feel well-represented in the political debate**
 - British citizens in the EU appear to be the least satisfied with their representation in the political debate.

“Citizens have rights but it seems the governments only see the rights as optional and not a government’s duty to uphold them.”
(Survey respondent)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
‘I feel correctly portrayed in the media’



Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
‘I feel well-represented in the political debate’



ISSUE 2 – POLITICAL GAPS (iii)

Mobile citizens remain strongly in favour of the EU; the vast majority of both EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU identify as European

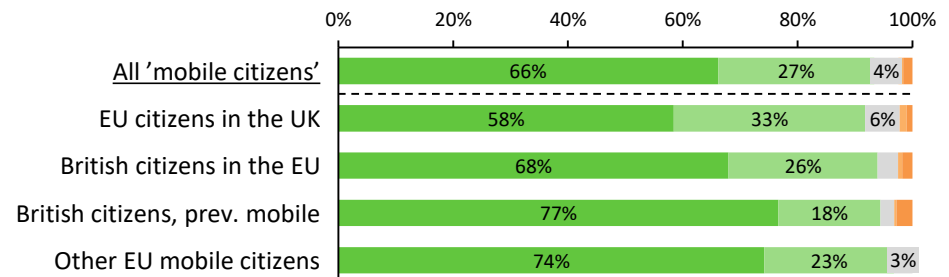
Approval of the 'European project' is generally high among mobile citizens:

- 93% have positive views of the EU
- 96% identify as Europeans
- Results are similar across different groups.

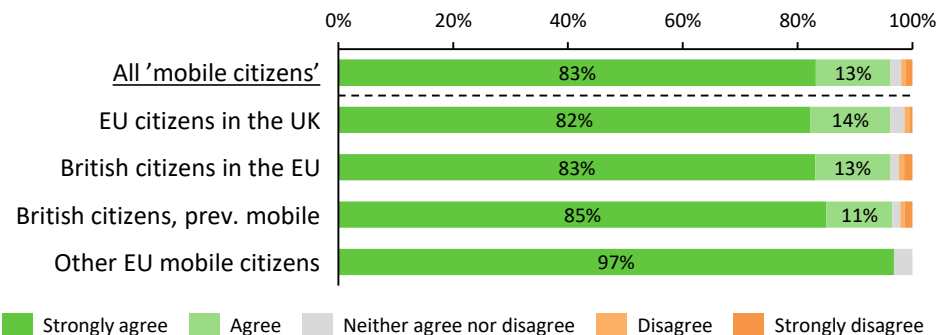
"In a digital era, I would love if the EU could create an app that would enable you to surf and get more knowledge in regards to what they do. This is especially very good for young people who get their info from relatives or media. I didn't know about my rights until Brexit happened and I realised how bad the impact would be. If there was an app I could get info from, it would make it easier for me to get to know my rights, my duties and get more involved in the construction of the EU."

(Survey respondent)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
'I have positive views of the EU'



Q: Do you agree with the following statement –
'I identify as European'



ISSUE 2 – POLITICAL GAPS (iv)

The survey reveals strong support (90%) for granting full voting rights in the country of residence to citizens who move across the EU

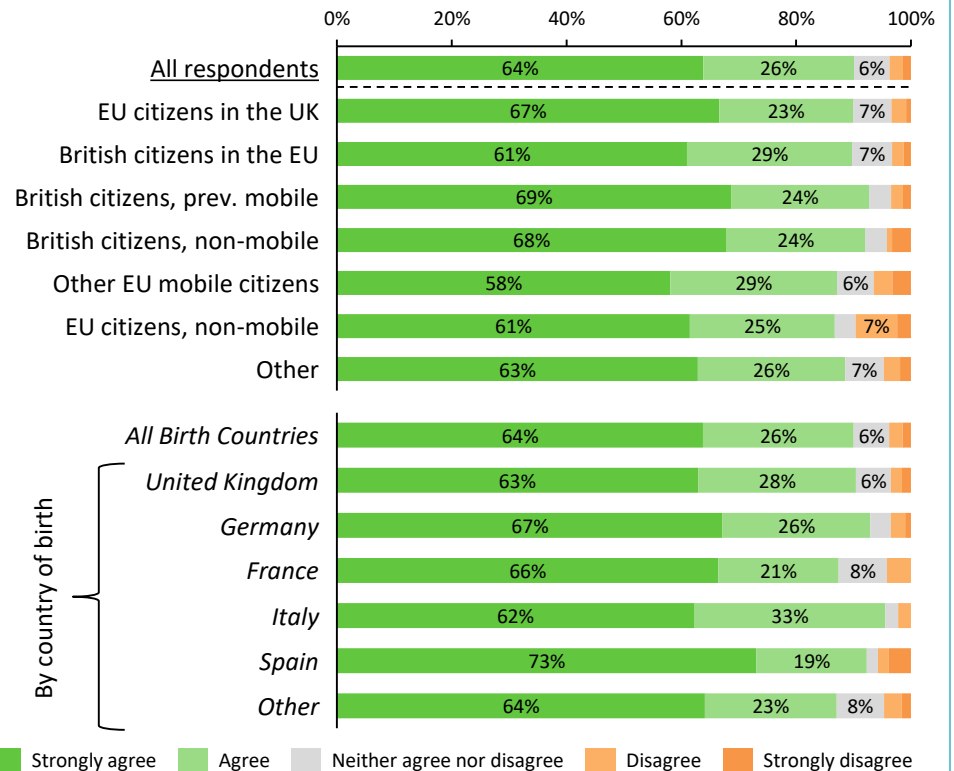
The responses also reveal strong support (90%) for granting **full voting rights in the country of residence** to citizens who move across the EU.

- Results are similar across different groups and by country of birth.

“The lack information to EU citizens living in the UK re: their voting rights has been absolutely appalling. And I am convinced this has been the result of deliberate inefficiency to keep them disenfranchised. Totally convinced.”

(Survey respondent)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement – ‘I believe people who move across the countries of the EU should have full voting rights where they live’



ISSUE 3 – PROTECTION GAPS (i)

Brexit hits highly mobile citizens: with 43% having lived in 3 or more countries, adequate post-Brexit solutions are needed to preserve their rights

EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU will be the most **directly impacted by Brexit**. A long tail of potential issues will need to be solved for these groups: from ensuring cross-border pension entitlements, access to healthcare, to the recognition of professional qualifications.

The survey shows an often overlooked complication: a high share of ‘mobile citizens’ have, over their lifetime, lived in multiple countries:

- **43% of surveyed mobile citizens have lived in 3 countries or more** over their lifetime, often even 4 or more countries. The survey did not ask in which countries respondents have lived in, but it is likely that a high proportion moved within the European Union.

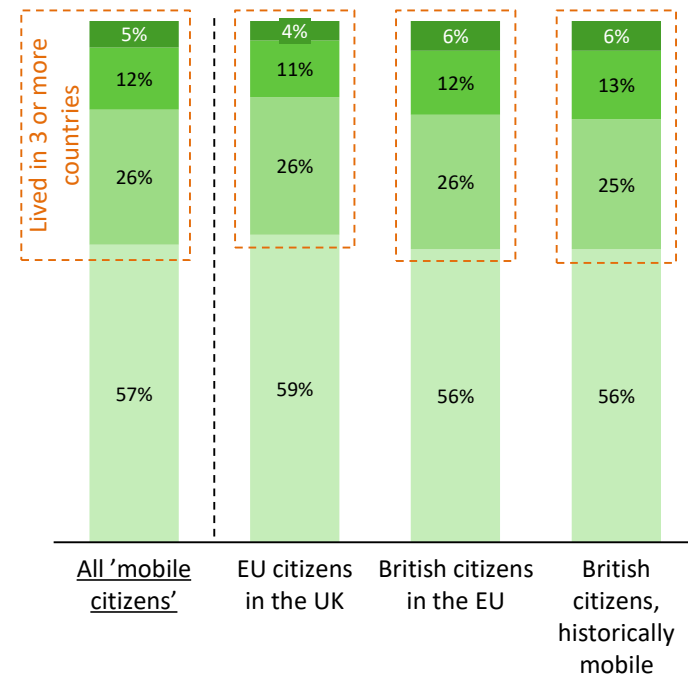
This high level of mobility should be considered in the Brexit negotiations. In the event of no-deal Brexit, the negotiation of bilateral agreements on citizens’ rights between the UK and individual EU member states will not be a **sufficient policy response** to protect rights accrued across several borders.

“We definitely need a sort of pension scheme regulation for anyone who had stints of working life in 2 or more EU countries.”
(Survey respondent)

Q: ‘How many countries have you lived in for a minimum of 3 months?’

No. countries:

2 3 4 5+



ISSUE 3 – PROTECTION GAPS (ii)

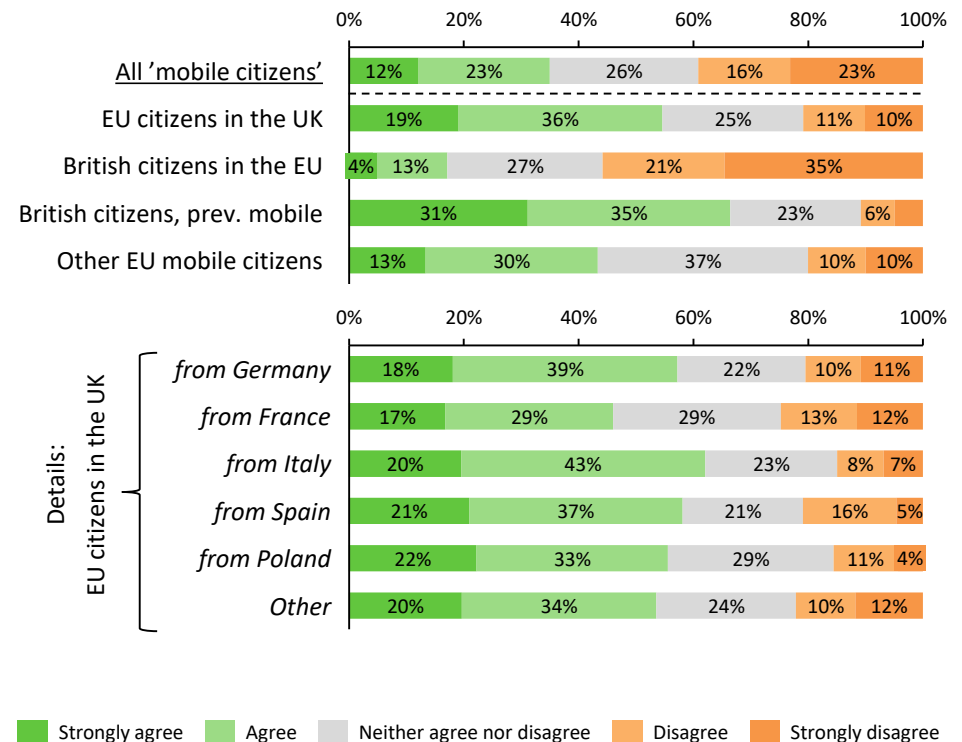
Mobility remains a strong theme as about 35% consider moving to yet another country; the share is particularly high among those currently living in the UK

Mobility remains a strong theme in the lives of the surveyed groups: **35%** of mobile citizens consider **moving to yet another country** at some point in the future. But there are significant differences.

- **55% of EU mobile citizens currently residing in the UK** are considering a move to another country.
 - In this group, the share of respondents considering is fairly similar across countries of origin, but highest among Italians (63%), Spanish (58%), Germans (57%) and Polish (55%).
- **British citizen in the EU** are the group least likely to move again in the future: only **17%** are considering a move.
- British citizens who have previously lived abroad are the group most keen on another move: **66%** consider moving to another country.

Q: Do you agree with the following statement –

'I am considering moving to another country at some point in the future'



ISSUE 3 – PROTECTION GAPS (iii)

Despite a high share considering a move to another country, only 10% of mobile citizens want to return to their country of origin, suggesting continued strong cross-country migration within the EU

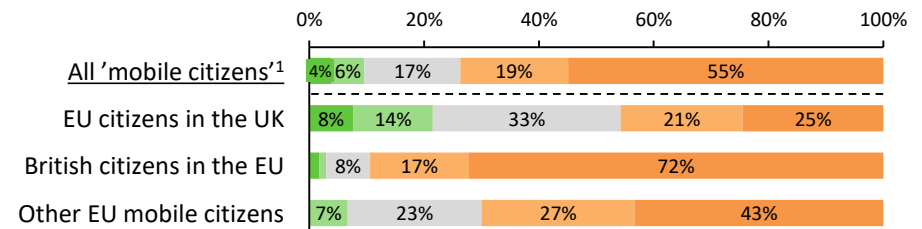
Despite high interest in moving to another country in the future, there is **only limited intention to return to the country of origin**:

- **22% of EU citizens** in the UK say they want to return to their country of origin, the largest share of all groups
- **UK citizens in the EU**, on the other hand, are almost completely unlikely to return to the UK: **only 3%** reported they want to move back

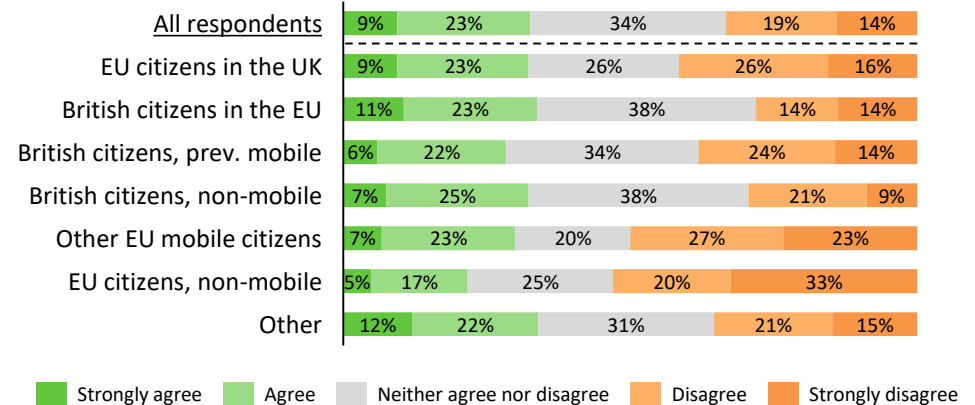
Moving to another country is also still seen as relatively difficult. 32% of respondents find moving to another EU country ‘too complicated’ and the proportion is similar across most groups.

“[I do not feel sufficiently informed about the] impact of Brexit on my freedom of movement to go back to my country of origin or another EU country – not simple when all life savings, pensions etc. are in the UK...”
(Survey respondent)

Q: Do you agree with the following statement – ‘I want to return to my country of origin’



Q: Do you agree with the following statement – ‘I feel moving to another country in the EU is too complicated’



GLOSSARY

Terminology used in this report:

British citizens

British citizens in the EU	<i>Respondents born in the UK currently residing in another EU country (e.g. born in the UK, live in the Netherlands)</i>
British citizens in the UK, previously mobile	<i>Respondents born in the UK and currently residing in the UK but who have lived in the past in at least one other country for a period of 3 months or more</i>
British citizens in the UK, non-mobile	<i>Respondents born in the UK and currently residing in the UK, who have not lived in any other country.</i>

Other EU citizens

EU citizens in the UK	<i>Respondents born in an EU country other than the UK currently residing in the UK (e.g. born in France, reside in the UK)</i>
Other EU mobile citizens	<i>Respondents born in an EU country other than the UK currently residing in a different EU country other their own or the UK (e.g. born in Portugal, live in Spain)</i>
Other EU non-mobile citizens	<i>Respondents born in an EU country other than the UK currently residing in the country where they were born (e.g. born in Sweden, live in Sweden)</i>

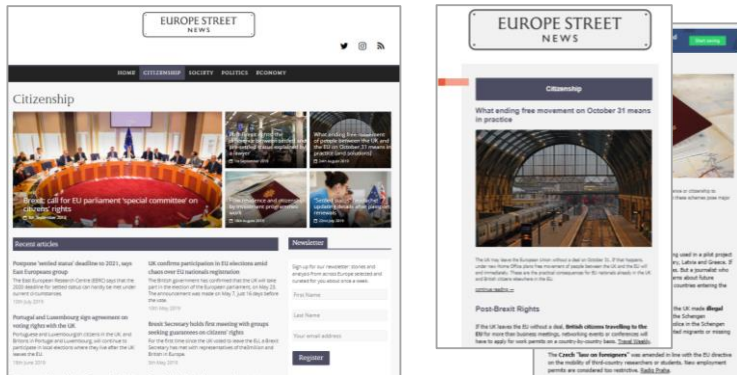
Other respondents

Other respondents	<i>Other situation / No country information provided.</i>
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Note: Due to sensitivities involved in asking about citizenship, we abstained from asking about nationalities but instead used ‘country of birth’ and ‘country of origin’ as a proxy. Several respondents suggested to use only one terminology (e.g. ‘country of birth’) to avoid confusion; we believe this has not altered the results but acknowledge the feedback and will ensure a more stringent use of terminology in future research.

ABOUT EUROPE STREET NEWS AND THE AUTHORS OF THIS REPORT

EUROPE STREET NEWS



Europe Street News is a news outlet covering citizens' rights in Europe. Launched in August 2016 to inform EU nationals in the UK and British residents in the rest of the EU about their changing status in the context of Brexit, the online magazine covers, through a website and a newsletter, everything related to EU rights and freedom of movement in the European Union. It is a unique source of information for anyone interested in a European perspective on the changing relationship between the UK and the European Union. To receive the newsletter, sign up [here](https://www.europestreet.news).

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