

Brussels, 27 October 2009

Eurobarometer survey on poverty and social exclusion

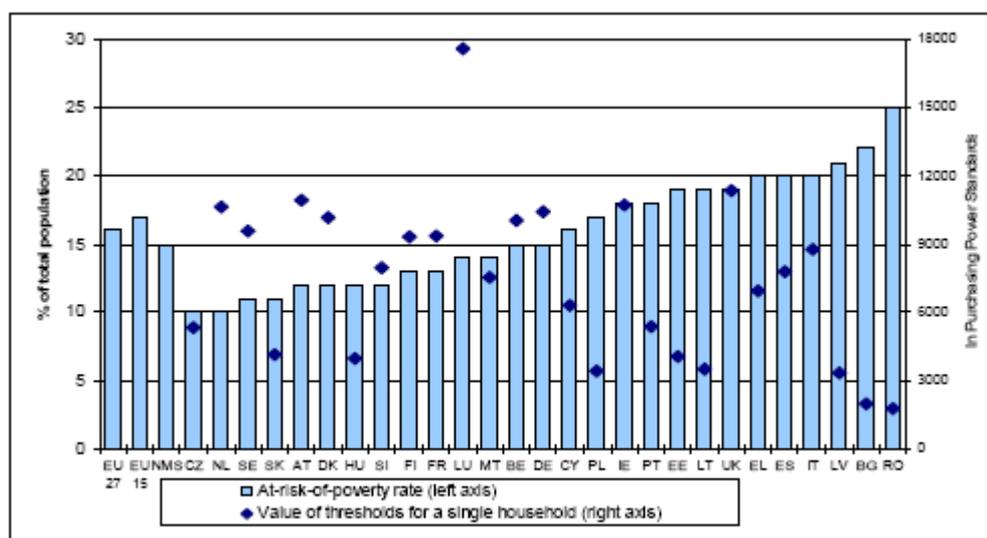
What is the survey about?

Nowadays in the European Union, nearly 80 million citizens, or 16% of the population, live below the poverty line, and many, therefore, face serious obstacles in accessing employment, education, housing, social and financial services. According to the EU-agreed definition, people are considered at risk of poverty when they live on an income below 60% of the median household income of their own country.

This Eurobarometer survey, carried out in September this year, sheds some light on the many facets of poverty and social exclusion. The survey examined, among other things, people's awareness of the extent of poverty within the European Union, the perceived personal and societal reasons behind poverty, who is thought to be most at risk, if people feel somehow threatened by the possible prospect of poverty, how poverty may prevent people from taking full advantage of society, as well as how easy or difficult they perceive access to financial services to be. People's perception about the urgency of governmental action to combat poverty is also examined, together with the level of administration felt to be mostly responsible for it.

Overall, nearly 27,000 citizens in all EU Member States were interviewed face-to-face between 28 August-17 September 2009, following a random selection of respondents.

At risk of poverty rates (% of population) and thresholds (in purchasing power standards) for EU-27



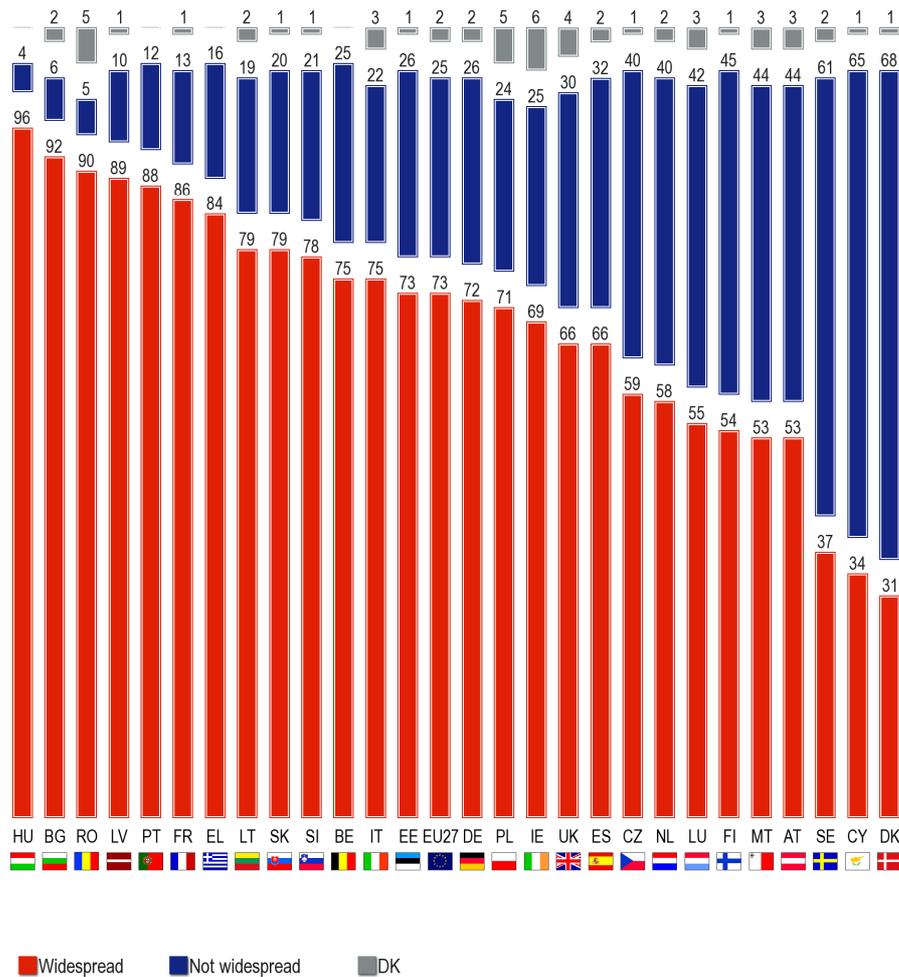
Source: EU-SILC(2007)

How widespread do people consider poverty to be?

EU citizens are strongly aware of the problem of poverty and social exclusion in today's society: three out of four Europeans (73%) feel that poverty in their country is widespread. However, the extent to which poverty is seen as widespread differs greatly from country to country. In three of the new Member States, 90% or more of citizens perceive it to be widespread (Hungary: 96%; Bulgaria 92%; Romania: 90%). Conversely, less than four in ten think poverty is widespread in Denmark (31%), Cyprus (34%) and Sweden (37%).

Q.A4 And would you say that poverty in (OUR COUNTRY) is widespread, or not widespread?

QA4. And would you say that poverty in (OUR COUNTRY) is ...?



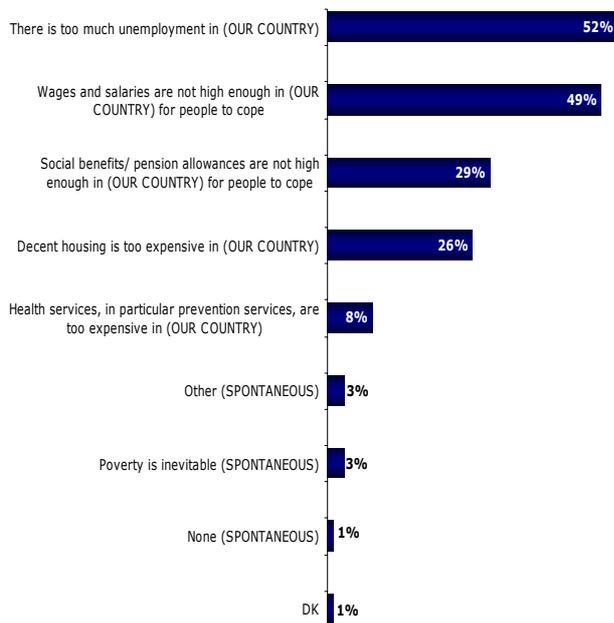
What do they consider to be the main causes?

High unemployment (52%) and insufficient wages and salaries (49%) are the most widely perceived 'societal' explanations for poverty, together with insufficient social benefits and pensions (29%) and the excessive cost of decent housing (26%). Meanwhile, a lack of education, training or skills (37%), as well as 'inherited' poverty (25%) and addiction (23%) are the most widely perceived 'personal' reasons behind poverty.

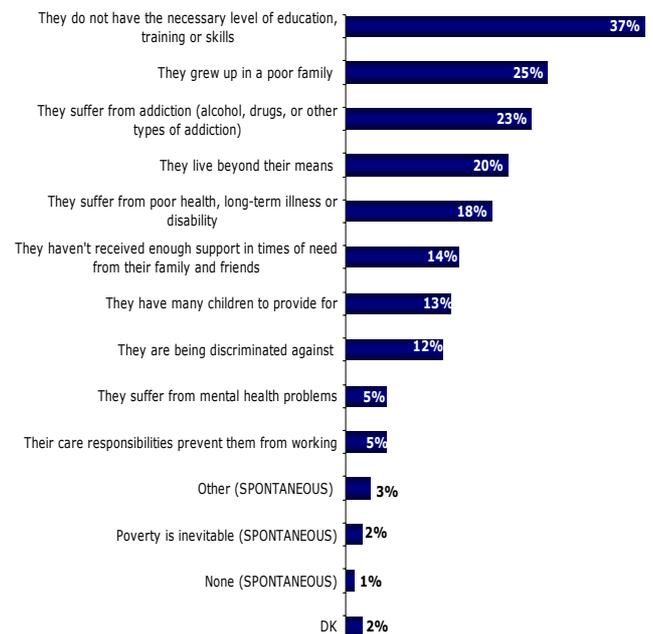
Q.A9a In your opinion, which two of the following social factors in society might best explain why people are poor?

Q.A9b Thinking now about poor people themselves, in your opinion, which two of the following reasons best explain why they are poor? (ROTATE - MAX 2 ANSWERS)

QA9a In your opinion, which two of the following things in society might best explain why people are poor? (ROTATE - MAX. 2 ANSWERS) %EU 27



QA9b Thinking now about poor people themselves, in your opinion, which two of the following reasons best explain why they are poor? (ROTATE - MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

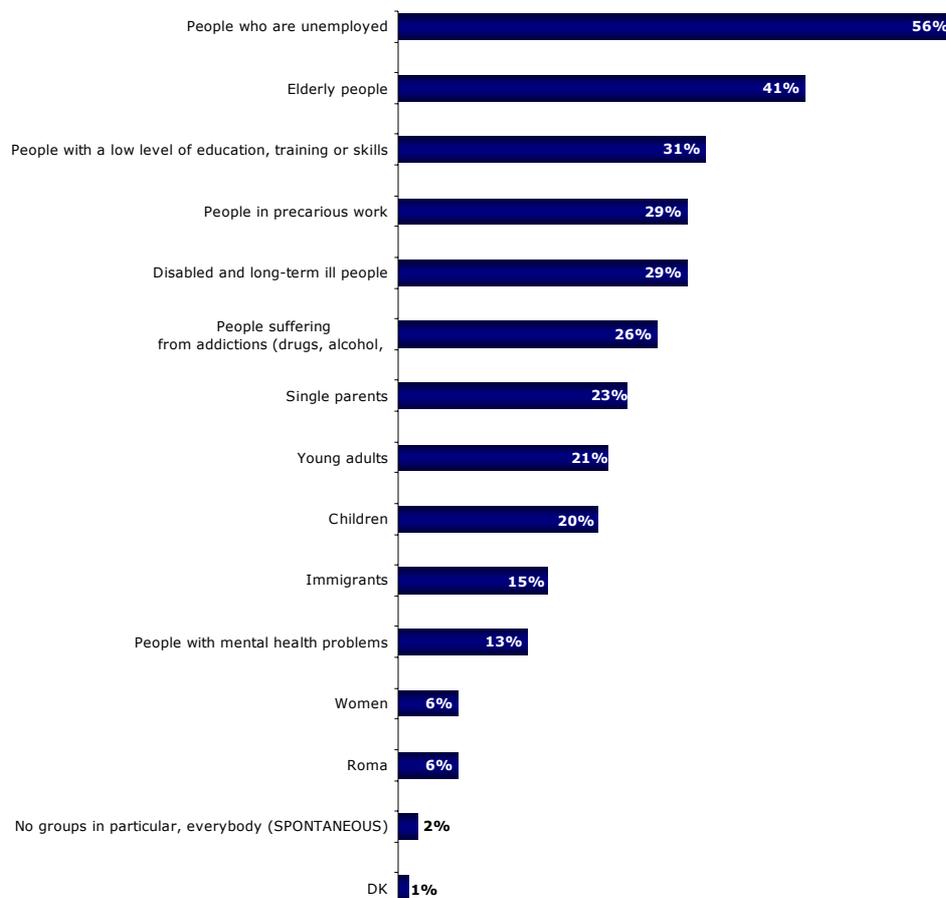


Who is considered most at risk of poverty?

Over half of Europeans (56%) believe that the unemployed are most at risk of poverty, while 41% believe that the elderly are most vulnerable, and 31% see those with a low level of education, training or skills as most at risk. Other social categories considered most vulnerable by Europeans are people in precarious employment situations, people with disabilities, and those suffering from some form of long-term illness.

Q.A10 In your opinion, among the following groups of the population in (OUR COUNTRY), which are those most at risk of poverty?

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What about the effects of poverty?

Close to nine out of ten Europeans (87%) believe that poverty hampers people's chances of gaining access to decent housing, eight out of ten feel that being poor limits access to higher education or adult learning, and 74% believe that it damages their chances of finding a job. The majority of Europeans (60%) believe that access to a decent basic school education is affected, and 54% believe that the ability to maintain a network of friends and acquaintances is limited by poverty.

How many Europeans have problems accessing financial services?

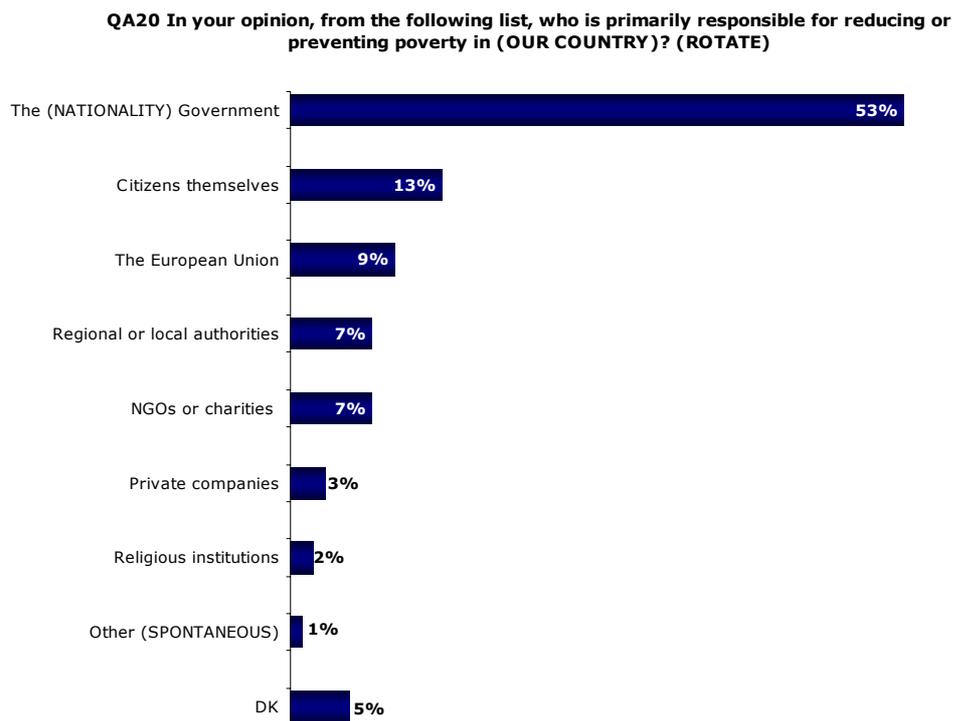
While the majority of Europeans do not report difficulties in gaining access to financial services, the picture for the most vulnerable is very different.

- The unemployed: seven out of ten unemployed Europeans find it difficult to get a mortgage according to the survey results, while the EU average of people facing difficulties in this area is 49%. A further 58% of unemployed people, compared with an EU average of 34%, have problems getting loans, and 47% find it difficult to get a credit card (the EU average is 27%).
- Europeans who have difficulties making ends meet: close to three out of four of these citizens (72%) find it difficult to get a mortgage, 64% find it difficult to get a loan, and 55% find it difficult to get a credit card.

Who do Europeans think should take action?

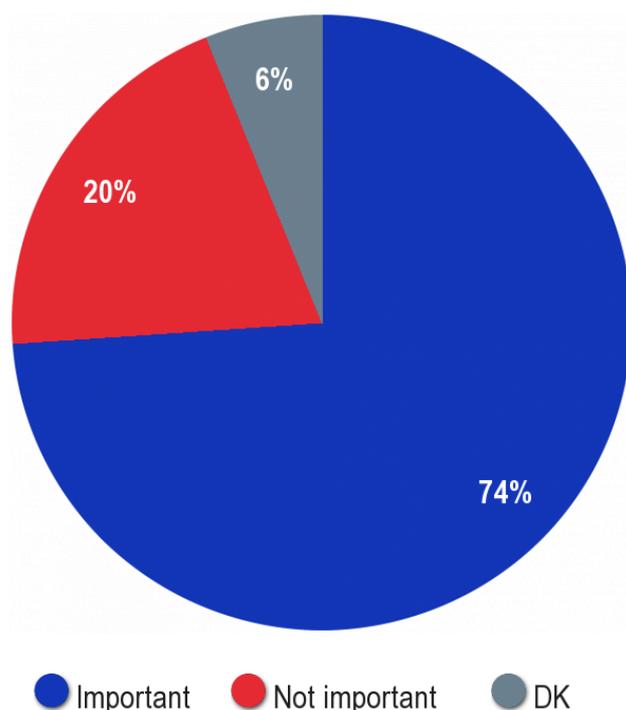
On average, 89% of Europeans say that urgent action is needed by their national government to tackle poverty. Across Europe, 53% feel that their national governments are primarily responsible for combating poverty. Even if Europeans do not regard the European Union as primarily responsible for combating poverty, its role is nonetheless seen as important by many (28% see it as 'very important', and 46% 'somewhat important').

Q.A20 In your opinion, from the following list, who is primarily responsible for reducing or preventing poverty in (OUR COUNTRY)?



Q.A21 Overall, how important would you say is the role of the European Union in the fight against poverty?

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What does the EU do to help combat poverty?

Making sure that every citizen is part of society is vital for Europe's prosperity and quality of life. The EU combats social exclusion and poverty by helping its Member States to work together and to share experiences on the action they take through the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process. This sees the EU coordinate and encourage Member States' efforts to combat social exclusion and poverty, and to reform their social protection systems, on the basis of shared experience.

The added value of action at EU level is to develop common EU-wide objectives and approaches that Member States implement by means of national action plans. Meanwhile, EU funding is made available for activities aiming to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion, for example under the European Social Fund (which represents 10% of the EU's annual budget) and PROGRESS programme (which has a budget of around €100 million per year).

The European Commission also organises regular pan-European meetings to pool ideas and share successful policy approaches, for example through the annual roundtable on poverty and meetings of people experiencing poverty.

Further information

[IP/09/1585](#)

Eurobarometer survey report

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

European Year Against Poverty

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>