

The logo for the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) features the letters 'IMA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is centered between two horizontal teal bars of equal length.

**Independent Monitoring Authority**  
For the Citizens' Rights Agreements

# **European citizens' concerns after Brexit**

Report on the IMA's third survey

December 2023

# European citizens' concerns after Brexit

## The IMA's third survey, December 2023: report infographic

### We heard from a wide range of citizens



4% Other  
(e.g., family  
members),  
& 4% Dual  
nationals



Diverse socio-economic  
backgrounds (ages, length of  
residence, income & location)

### We analysed nearly 1000 responses from citizens

- ❖ 62% of respondents felt they had not been discriminated against based on their nationality
- ❖ 3 in 4 respondents indicated no or low trust in public bodies protecting their rights
- ❖ 42% of respondents reported experiencing difficulties in accessing their rights
- ❖ 7 in 10 respondents reported an awareness of their citizens' rights

### Concerns remain about the current and future protection of citizens' rights

86% indicated no or low  
trust in public bodies to  
protect their rights in the  
future

1 in 5 reported difficulties  
regarding entry into the UK  
faced by their community  
or family members

14% reported having fair  
or complete trust in  
public bodies

### We identified additional key findings about citizens' rights

- ❖ The top three areas where citizens experienced difficulties accessing their rights were: (1) Employment, (2) Travel and (3) Healthcare.
- ❖ Respondents believed the IMA's priorities should remain protecting citizens' rights.
- ❖ The top three areas for family and community members were: Entry into the UK, digital status and healthcare.

### Respondents shared their concerns about the future protection of rights



I feel it is still like a  
favour between  
countries

I don't trust the  
government and their  
'understanding' of the  
rules

Politics in UK is very  
divisive. No chance  
our rights will be  
protected



### Our Assessment

Feedback from respondents was mixed. Whilst a majority reported experiencing no difficulties in accessing their rights and not having been discriminated against by a public body on nationality grounds, 86% indicated no or low trust in public bodies to protect their rights in the future. In summary, present experience is being overridden by fears about the protection of rights in the future.

# Abbreviations & terms used

<b>IMA</b>	Independent Monitoring Authority
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU14</b>	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, & Sweden
<b>EU8</b>	Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, & Slovenia
<b>EU2</b>	Bulgaria and Romania
<b>EU Other</b>	Croatia, Cyprus, & Malta
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>EEA EFTA</b>	Iceland, Norway, & Liechtenstein
<b>EUSS</b>	EU Settlement Scheme
<b>TCN</b>	Third Country National
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service
<b>DEFRA</b>	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>DLUHC</b>	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>DVLA</b>	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
<b>HMRC</b>	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DHSC</b>	Department for Health and Social Care
<b>ONS</b>	Office for National Statistics
<b>CoA</b>	Certificates of Application
<b>SS</b>	Settled Status
<b>PSS</b>	Pre-Settled Status

# Introduction & Background

## About the survey

In order to effectively monitor the implementation and application of the Citizens' Rights Agreements, a core role of the IMA is to gather and assess relevant intelligence. Surveys are part of a range of methods used by the IMA and are particularly valuable to hear directly from European citizens and their family members about their lived experiences. This is the third survey since the IMA launched. The survey sought the views of European nationals and their family members currently living in the UK and Gibraltar. It is important to note that whilst based on our resulting sample size, our results are not statistically representative. The responses provide a key insight into the experiences of European nationals and their family members living in the UK.

The survey sought to establish the level of citizens' awareness of the IMA after two years of operation. The online anonymised survey ran for 8 weeks from mid-April to mid-June 2023. The IMA worked with advocate organisations including the3million, the Delegation of the European Union to the United Kingdom and many others to promote the survey and ensure it reached as many European nationals as possible. Nearly 1,000 citizens completed the survey, providing a rich source of information for the IMA to analyse. Topics covered by the 2023 survey included whether citizens felt they had been discriminated against on the grounds of their nationality, whether they could trust public bodies to protect their rights in the future as well as the extent citizens faced difficulties accessing their rights.

## About this report

This report contains key findings and assessments drawn from the third survey results by the IMA. Similar to previous years, the analysis helps guide the direction of work across the IMA by improving our understanding of citizens' specific concerns and how citizens view us as an organisation. The survey and this report represent the continuation of proactive direct engagement between the IMA and European citizens and their family members. Over the coming months and years, we will continue to gather further information and insights from European citizens and their family members, as well as specific groups and communities. Direct engagement is a fundamental aspect of the IMA's monitoring function.

We are aware this third survey is unlikely to have captured the perspectives and experiences of all European citizens and their family members, reflecting only those who chose to engage with online-only research, shared primarily via social media. The IMA will continue to carry out smaller information gathering exercises with specific cohorts over the coming year that aim to complement the findings of this report and other work streams currently being undertaken by the IMA.

## About the IMA

We protect the rights of EU and EEA EFTA citizens (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) in the UK and Gibraltar. We do this by monitoring UK public bodies to make sure they implement the rights of these citizens and by identifying any underlying issues. We can receive complaints and have powers to launch inquiries and take legal action. We are independent of government and are both professional and impartial in our work.

# Executive summary

# Key findings

## Context & focus

The report presents a detailed summary of the IMA 2023 Annual Survey results with its key findings. An online survey was launched for all EU and EEA EFTA citizens and their family members in the UK and Gibraltar from 12 April to 7 June 2023.

### Our overall assessment:

Feedback from respondents was mixed. Whilst a majority reported experiencing no difficulties in accessing their rights and not having been discriminated against by a public body on nationality grounds, 86% indicated no or low trust in public bodies to protect their rights in the future. In summary, present experience is being overridden by fears about the protection of rights in the future.

## Assessment & key findings

- 62% of respondents felt they had not been discriminated against based on their nationality.
- 3 in 4 respondents indicated no or low trust in public bodies protecting their rights.
- 58% of responses stated that they experienced no difficulties accessing their rights.
- 7 in 10 respondents reported an awareness of their citizens' rights.
- Respondents reported 3 main areas of difficulty in accessing their rights: Employment, travel, and healthcare.
- For family or community members, the top three were: Entry into the UK, digital status and healthcare
- 1 in 3 respondents stated they had no reason to complain to the IMA.
- Respondents stated the IMA's priorities should be to continue protecting the rights of citizens.

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# Who we heard from

# A typical survey respondent

## Overview

*We heard from a diverse range of nearly 1,000 EU and EEA EFTA citizens*

*All 27 EU countries and 2 of 3 EEA EFTA countries (except Liechtenstein) are represented*

*Engagement was strongest amongst "EU14" respondents*

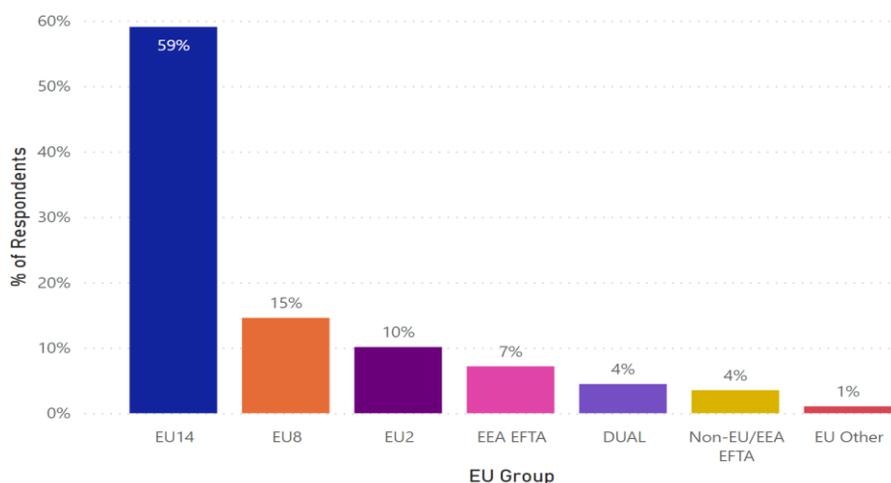
## Profile of a typical survey respondent:

- 
**From an "EU14" country - 59%** of respondents. The top three EU14 nationalities were **Germans (17%), Italians (15%) & French (12%)** respectively.
- 
**Aberdeen (Scotland), Bristol (England) & Manchester (England)** (The top 3 places in the UK where respondents live)
- 
**Diverse socio-economic background - 8%** of respondents reported earning less than **£10,000**. **11%** reported earning more than **£70,000** per year
- 
**Aged 35-44 and 45-54** (51% respondents)
- 
**65% Female, 34% Male and 1% Non-binary**
- 
**White or any other White background (89%)** of respondents. **7%** of respondents were from a Roma, Mixed/Multiple ethnic group background, Black/African/Caribbean, Asian or any other ethnic background ).

## European Union groupings

The majority (59%) of respondents hold 'EU14' nationalities. Engagement of EU8 citizens has decreased proportionally from last year's survey (20% to 15%). However, EU2 citizen participation has increased slightly from 6% to 10%.

## Nationality groupings of survey respondents



**EU14** (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden)

**EU8** (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia)

**EU2** (Bulgaria and Romania)

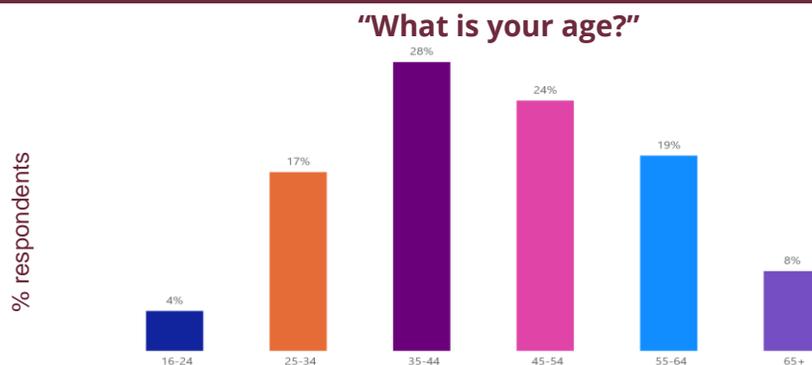
**EU Other** (Croatia, Cyprus and Malta)

**EEA EFTA** (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein)

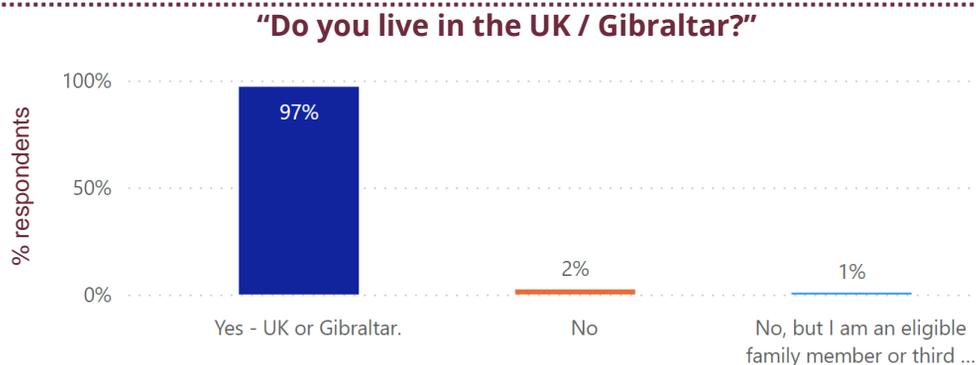
# Overall demographics

## Overview

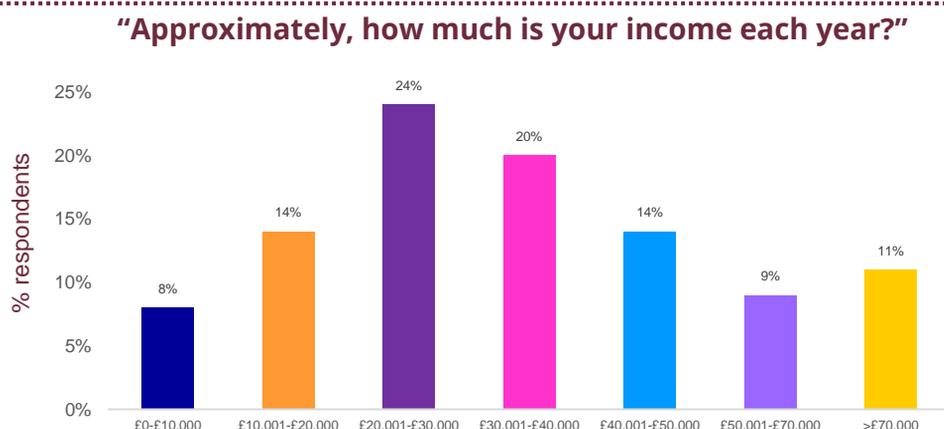
**1 in 2 respondents are aged between 35 and 54**



**The majority of respondents live in the UK**



**The median income earned by respondents is between £10,001 - £20,000**



## Spotlight on Ethnicity

- The vast majority (89%) of respondents reported being from a white or any other white background. 7% were Roma, Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Black/African/Caribbean, Asian or from any other ethnic background. 4% of respondents preferred not to say.

### Of respondents from a Roma, Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Black/African/Caribbean, Asian and any other ethnic background

- The top two nationalities reported were French (14%) and German (14%).
- Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  were aged between 25 and 54, a decade younger than the typical respondent from a white or any other white background.
- 55% of respondents were female, 42% were male and 1% identified as non-binary. A further 1% preferred not to say.

### Of respondents from a White or any other white background

- The top two reported nationalities were German (11%) and Romanian (10%).
- Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  respondents were aged between 35 and 64.
- 65% of respondents were female, 33% were male, 1% identified as non-binary, and 1% preferred not to say. There was a higher proportion of female respondents amongst respondents from a white or any other white background.



# **Citizens' Trust**

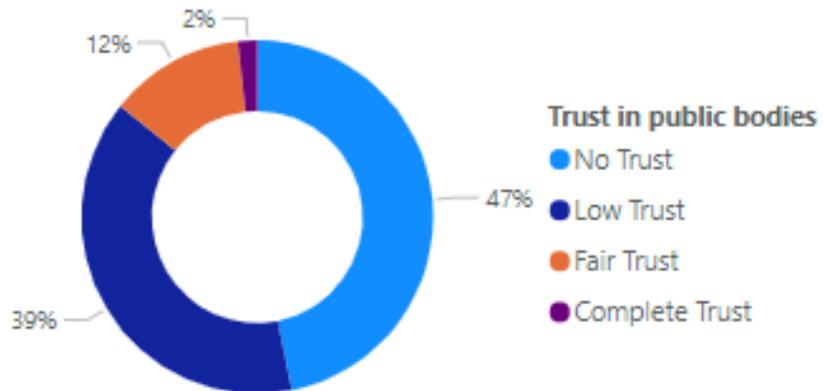
# Level of Trust

## Overview

The IMA asked respondents about their level of trust in public bodies. 86% of respondents reported having **no or low trust** that **public bodies** would protect their citizens' rights.

**86% reported no or low trust in public bodies**

### Respondents' level of trust in public bodies protecting their citizens' rights



The majority of respondents reported having no or low trust that public bodies would protect their citizens' rights under the Withdrawal and Separation Agreements. 12% stated that they have fair trust and only 2% reported having complete trust.

**14% reported having fair or complete trust in public bodies**

The IMA asked respondents for the reasons why they had no or low trust in public bodies. Following analysis of these responses, 6 key themes emerged:

- ❖ *Political environment*
- ❖ *Alleged Discrimination*
- ❖ *Digital Status*
- ❖ *Friends and family experiencing problems*
- ❖ *Lack of awareness of rights*
- ❖ *Application process is overly bureaucratic*

Responses were overwhelmingly about the UK political environment, which was followed by Windrush. Relating to these two themes were futureproofing of conferred rights:

One respondent exemplified this by stating that *"the government has already changed the rules retroactively without going through Parliament, which has led to the Windrush scandal situation, which remains unresolved. I don't trust it not to do it again."*

Digital status was also commonly reported as a factor in low trust that rights can be enjoyed. A lack of personal control over the system and experience of some authorities not having knowledge of share codes contributes to that lack of trust.

**Citizens voiced concerns regarding the future of their rights**

# **Citizens' experiences of discrimination based on nationality**

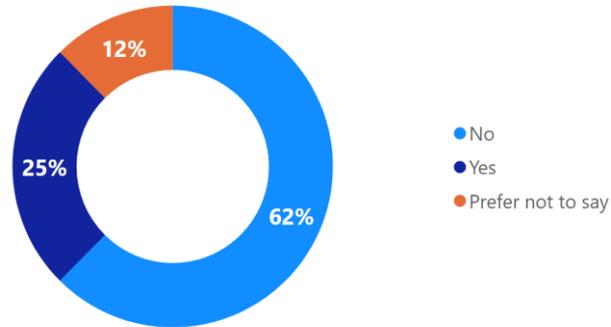
# Experiences of discrimination based on nationality

## Overview

**1 in 4 respondents reported facing discrimination based on their nationality**

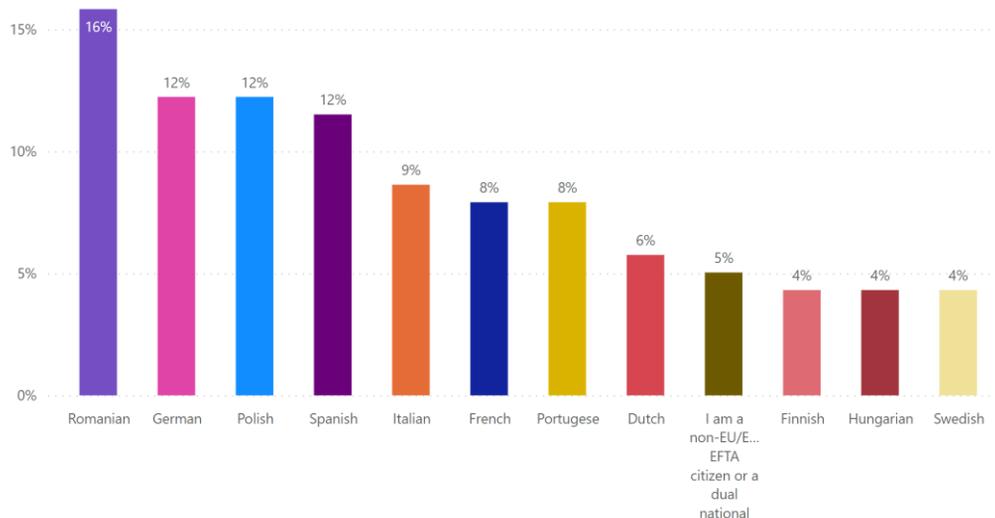
The survey asked respondents if they felt they had been discriminated against on grounds of their nationality. The **majority** (62%) felt they had **not been discriminated against**, whilst **25%** of respondents did feel a public body **had discriminated against them** on the grounds of their nationality and 12% of respondents preferred not to say.

**“Have you ever felt that a public body has discriminated against you on the grounds of your nationality?”**



The IMA also analysed whether there were any differences in respondents' experiences between nationalities.

**Nationalities with the highest proportion of respondents who feel they have been discriminated against on the grounds of their nationality**



**63% of respondents who feel discriminated against are EU14 nationals**

**Romanian respondents were most likely to report facing discrimination based on nationality**

- Romanian respondents were the most likely to report feeling that they had been discriminated against by a public body on the grounds of their nationality.
- Only 5% of non-EU/EEA EFTA or dual nationality survey respondents reported feeling they had been discriminated against on the grounds of their nationality. It is worth noting, however, that the sample size for this cohort was small.

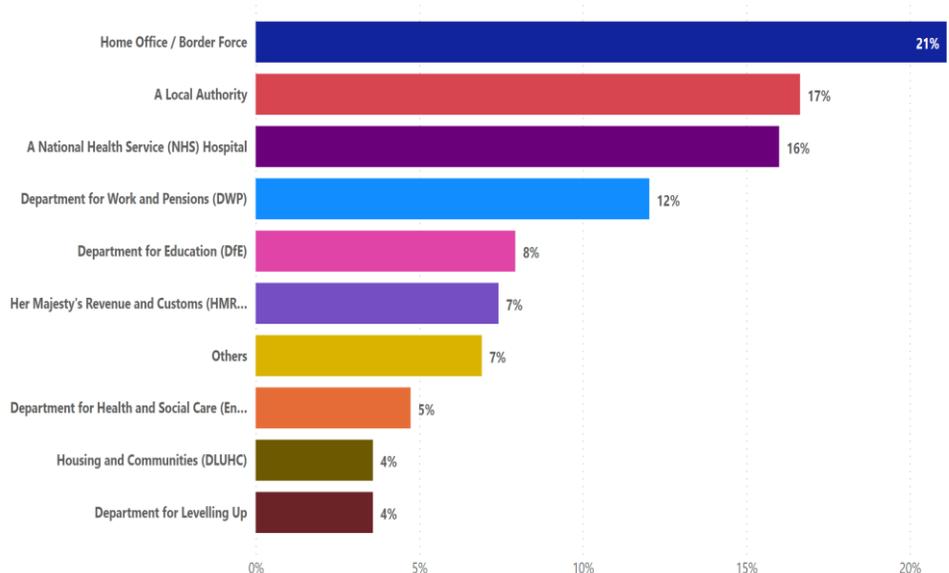
# Experiences of discrimination based on nationality

## Overview

**54% felt they had been discriminated against by the Home Office, NHS or a Local Authority.**

**Of the public bodies respondents felt had discriminated against them, the Home Office, NHS or a Local Authority were the top three.**

- Over 1 in 5 respondents reported feeling that the Home Office had discriminated against them on nationality grounds.
- 'Other' consisted of public bodies such as the Police, DEFRA, and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.
- A small number of respondents also cited public bodies such as the DVLA, DBS and other sub-national governmental bodies.



**Below are some comments from respondents in relation to some of these authorities:**

### Home Office/Border Force

- *"Border Guards attitude towards EU citizens with right to enter seems really hostile. Furthermore, UKVI system is not transparent"*
- *"Windrush scandal, public discourse about immigration and EU, no physical proof of status, losing status if away from the UK for a while."*
- *"My EUSS has been issued in the wrong name..."*

### Local Authority

- *"My Local Authority falsely requested a 'Home Office letter' to prove my SS...the govt website proved their request was unlawful. This was a direct threat to my social housing. I have been subjected to so much prejudice by my LA that has only increased..."*

### NHS

- *"Polish UK residents being kept on an NHS healthcare waiting list for longer than white British patients."*

**The Home Office/Border Force was the most reported public body.**

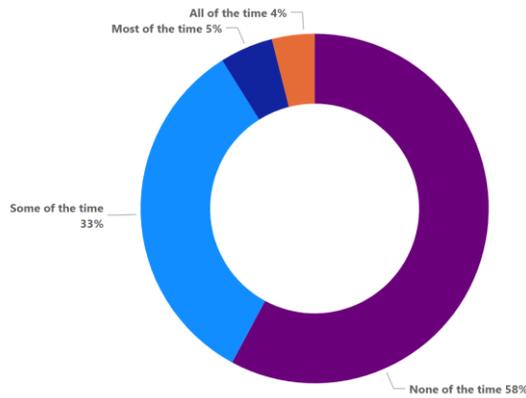
# Accessing Citizens' Rights

# Accessing Citizens' Rights

## Overview

The IMA asked a question about any difficulties respondents faced when accessing their rights.

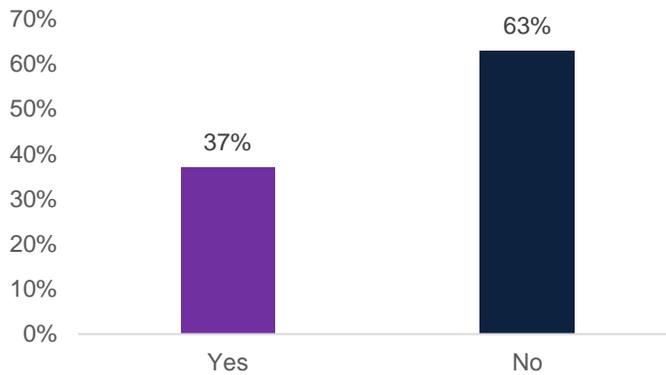
**"Have you encountered any difficulties accessing your rights?"**



**58%** of respondents indicated that they have had issues with accessing their rights **"None of the time"**.

**Less than 5% of respondents have had issues with accessing their rights "All of the time".**

**"Are you aware of any issues or concerns affecting other EU EEA EFTA, including family members?"**

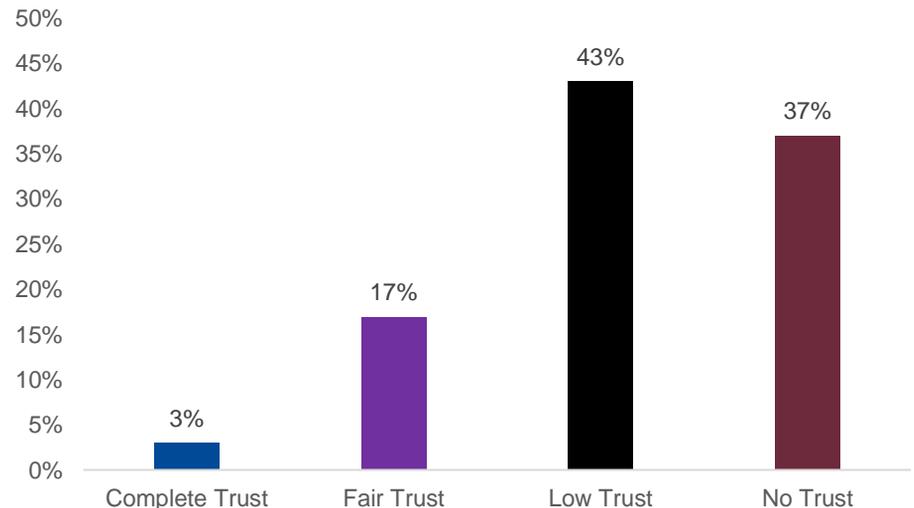


However, when we asked respondents who experienced no difficulties personally, 37% reported being aware of difficulties amongst family members and other members of their community.

**37% who experienced no difficulties themselves reported difficulties experienced by their community and family members**

## Experiencing Difficulties and Citizens Level of Trust

**80%** of respondents who reported **not having experienced difficulties** themselves still reported having **no or low trust** in their rights being protected. This indicates the lack of trust regarding citizens' future perception of their rights, regardless of their own experiences of difficulties.



**20% of respondents who experienced no difficulties had complete or fair trust in the future protection of their rights**

# Accessing citizens' rights

## Overview

*Nearly 1 in 2 experienced at least some difficulty in accessing their rights*

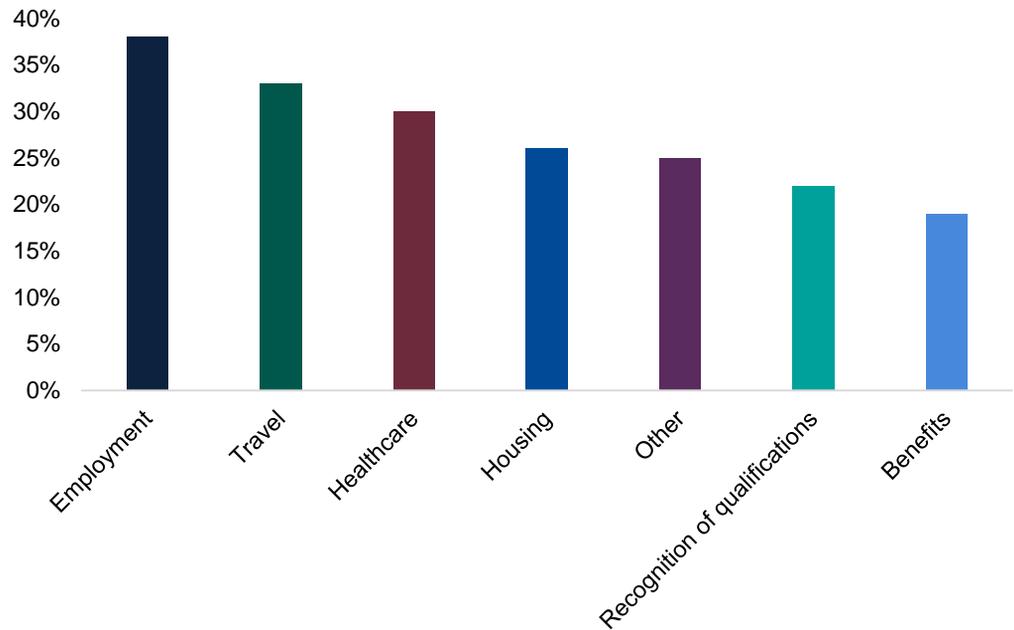
*38% of respondents reported experiencing difficulty with employment*

*1 in 3 respondents who experienced some difficulty reported issues with travel*

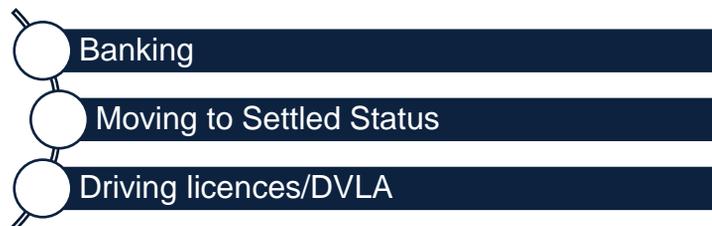
Respondents who stated they had experienced at least some level of difficulty (48%) were provided with a multiple-choice question and selected all areas in which they had experienced a difficulty in accessing their rights.

38% of respondents who experienced some difficulty in accessing their rights reported that employment was one area of difficulty, followed by travel and accessing healthcare. It is worth highlighting that respondents wanted to report multiple difficulties across different areas.

### Areas of difficulty in accessing rights



Having analysed responses from the qualitative choice 'other', the following key themes emerged:



**Banking** :- Responses mainly highlighted difficulties applying for a bank account;

**Moving to Settled Status** :- Respondents described facing technical issues upgrading.

**Driving Licences / DVLA** :- This largely focused on issues renewing licences or exchange EU driving licences.

# **Community and Family Members**

# Difficulties in accessing rights within communities

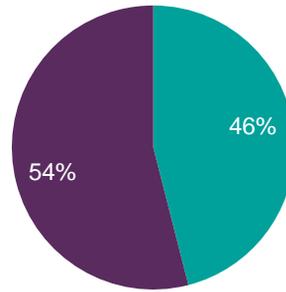
## Overview

**46% reported awareness of difficulties faced by community or family**

Unlike the previous two surveys, the IMA asked respondents about difficulties faced by their wider community or family members in accessing their citizens' rights. While citizens might not experience an individual issue, may still hear about concerns or issues affecting their family or other members of the community.

46% of respondents reported being aware of their community or family members facing difficulties with accessing their rights.

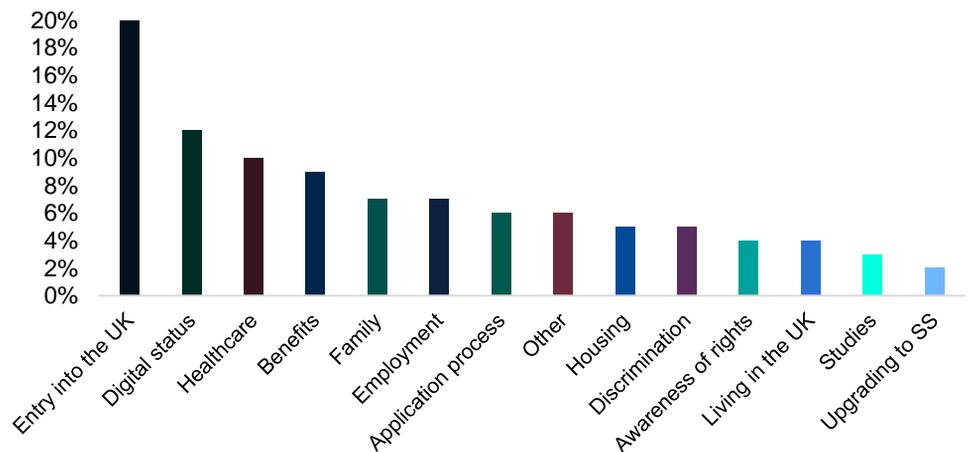
**“Are you aware of issues or concerns affecting family members and other members of the community?”**



■ Yes ■ No

The IMA has analysed these areas of perceived difficulty and broken these down into key themes.

### Awareness of community difficulties in accessing rights by theme



**1 in 5 reported difficulties regarding entry into the UK faced by community or family**

**1 in 5** respondents reported being aware of difficulties regarding **entry into the UK** affecting their **communities or family members**.

Following this, digital status was the second most cited issue (12%), closely followed by healthcare (10%) and benefits (9%). Other includes issues mentioned such as adults in care, domestic violence, issues with the DVLA, social security coordination, and voting rights to name a few.

# Perception of the IMA

# Awareness of the IMA

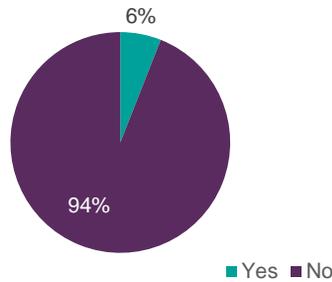
## Overview

**Only 6% of respondents reported having complained to the IMA**

**73% of respondents reported they would complain to the IMA**

**Of those who would not complain, over 1 in 3 stated they had no reason to do so**

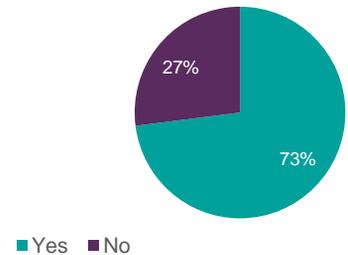
## “Have you complained to the IMA?”



**94%** of respondents indicated that they have not complained to the IMA.

## “Would you complain to the Independent Monitoring Authority?”

**A majority** of respondents indicated that they would complain to the IMA. **27%** said that they would not complain.



## “Why would you not complain to the IMA?”



## Why would you not complain to the IMA?

- “Your website says ‘we would not resolve the individual complaints reported to us’. What’s the point if you are not able to solve or give me any advice whatsoever?”
- “Not sure. I guess that as a single person vs state machinations, I’d feel it wouldn’t be worth my time and effort. Of course, I would complain if I felt that my rights had been severely impinged.”
- “Issues I’ve had (struggles to gain employment post-Brexit) are circumstantial and may also be tied in with Covid and the economy. However, my fortunes have suffered post-Brexit and I have an unsubstantiated feeling that some of that is down to non-British status.”
- “I have no issues with IMA and I would not want to be anywhere on records complaint to any official body as this could follow me with i.e getting a mortgage or such, or declare it on any forms, even if I was right the record will still remain and I could be discriminated as a dissident - history proved so”

# Awareness and priorities of the IMA

## Overview

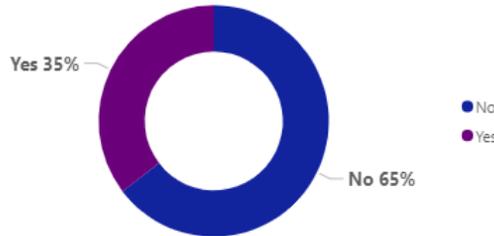
*More than 1 in 3 respondents were aware of the IMA*

*Social media was a critical tool for building engagement with the survey*

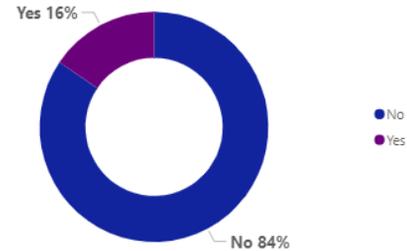
*Upholding rights of citizens in the UK was the dominant theme from respondents*

**35% of respondents stated that they had heard of the IMA prior to completing this years' survey.** This indicates a 7% increase in awareness when compared to the 2022 annual survey.

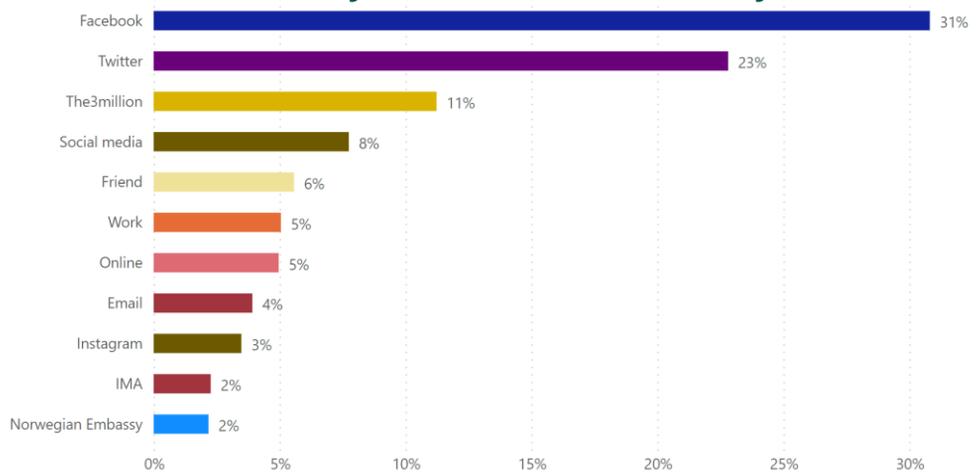
**"Have you previously heard of the IMA?"**



**"Have you completed previous IMA surveys?"**



**"Where did you hear about this survey?"**



**"What do you think should be the priority for the IMA?"**

The IMA additionally asked respondents what they thought ought to be the IMA's main priorities going forward.

Monitoring mechanism for discrimination

**Work rights**

We need a proper ID, not sharecode

The IMA is not needed

Voting rights in general elections

**Upholding rights of citizens in the UK**

Online status is not enough

Scrapping of high fees for naturalisation

Where to find who to turn to if you have a problem

**Access to benefits**

**Vulnerable groups**

Whether people are aware of access to rights

Support for non-EU spouses

Upholding all citizens' rights, physical status and protecting the rights of vulnerable cohorts were amongst the most suggested priorities. In terms of upholding rights, it is important to note some respondents' concerns about upgrading PSS to SS, particularly ensuring eligible PSS holders to achieve settled status.

# Methodology

# Methodology & limitations

## Approach

**Once again, the IMA undertook a solely online research approach to this survey.** As was the case with the first and second IMA surveys conducted in 2021 and 2022, a relatively concise question list was devised with opportunities for qualitative responses, but with a focus on questions which would complement quantitative data analysis. Unlike the previous surveys, we asked respondents to provide not only their personal experience, but also what they are hearing from family members, friends or other members of the community. The aim was to provide a sense of the sentiments amongst those citizens who did not engage with the survey. This is with the understanding that those citizens who might experience difficulties are less likely to be aware of or engage with an IMA online only survey.

**Notwithstanding what is outlined above, this approach likely resulted in certain groups of citizens facing barriers to access this survey,** especially where digital literacy or English literacy is limited. Undertaking the survey solely online and in English continues to curtail the ability of the IMA to reach groups and individuals who are less proficient. Moving forward, the IMA has started actions to engage citizens beyond an online only platform e.g., face-to-face meetings, focus groups and engaging with on-ground community-based organisations. Although this will not yield the same number of responses as the online survey, it will expand the IMA's understanding of what 'all' EU EEA EFTA citizens are experiencing in relation to accessing their rights, be it positive or negative. Any additional responses from these different sources will be reported as separate pieces of research.

## Statistical significance

The census completed in 2021 indicates that 3.6 million EU citizens were living in the UK. As a more recent proxy, Home Office applications to the EU Settlement scheme as of 30th June 2023 stood at 7.4 million, with around 6.2 million individual applicants.

The IMA received nearly 1,000 responses to the 2023 Annual Survey. Despite this, **our overall findings are not statistically significant.** In addition to this, it is worth bearing in mind that the sample reported on is self-selecting as a result of the digital and English-only nature of the survey.



# IMA

**Independent Monitoring Authority**  
**For the Citizens' Rights Agreements**

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