



THE COALITION OF UK CITIZENS IN EUROPE

# Results of a 2023 survey of UK citizens abroad on exercising their voting rights as overseas electors

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Grassroots Roundtable 11 July 2023  
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# Who we are

- 1.2 million UK citizens living in EU27 + Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Switzerland
- **A total UK diaspora of 4.7 million globally**
- Largest populations – Australia, US, Canada, Spain, Germany, France
- In the EEA and CH, almost 80% of us are of working age or younger and that also seems to hold for outside Europe
- In the survey 60% of respondents were under 64 years of age
- 50% of us have had contact with a UK government entity in the previous 12 months

# Reasons for the survey

- Under the so-called 15-year rule UK citizens who have lived abroad for more than 15 years lose their right to vote in UK general and by-elections
- **The Elections Act 2022 repealed the 15-year rule but secondary legislation is needed before it enters into force**
- We needed data from the UK diaspora to influence that secondary legislation and make sure it was fit for purpose, so we ran this survey which is the biggest ever survey of its type

# Key concerns & issues for BiE

- Delays to the timetable for drafting and adoption of the legislation
- **UK citizens overseas being unable to supply the documentation the government was proposing to ask for to verify ID and/or last registration or residence in the UK**
- Identifying where the roadblocks are to registering and voting in practice so that we could gauge support amongst voters overseas for solutions that would work for them in real life

# Headlines (1) We are an electorally engaged population

- We received 7100 completed responses from 65 countries (SR was 1067)
- **Almost 60% of us are currently disenfranchised under the 15-year rule (top five countries for this were FR, ES, DE, NL, Australia)**
- UK govt estimates that **3.2-3.4 million UK citizens overseas** could be eligible to vote in 2024 (approx. 10% of the UK voting population in 2019)
- Over 85% of respondents have previously voted in a UK general election or referendum. **Other surveys show that where we can vote, our voting rates are higher in GEs than the UK resident population**
- Respondents last voted/were resident in constituencies from Shetland to the Scilly Isles and Belfast to Dover

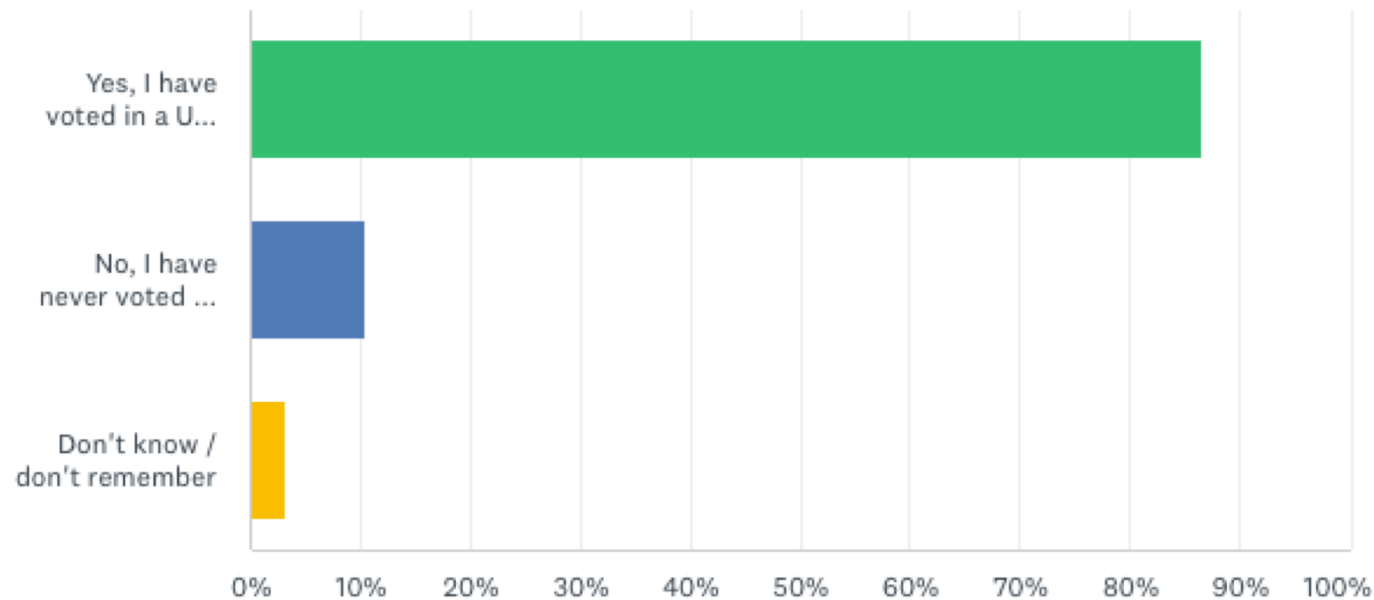


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# Have you ever voted in a UK election, in the Brexit referendum or in another referendum?

Answered: 6,057 Skipped: 118



ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	
▾ Yes, I have voted in a UK election or referendum	86.48%	5,238
▾ No, I have never voted in a UK election or referendum	10.42%	631
▾ Don't know / don't remember	3.10%	188
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6,057</b>

# Where did you last vote in the UK? Please give postcode, town or constituency

Answered: 5,126 Skipped: 1,049

RESPONSES (5,126)

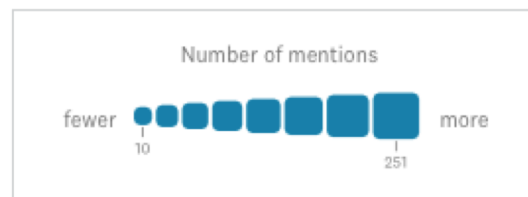
WORD CLOUD

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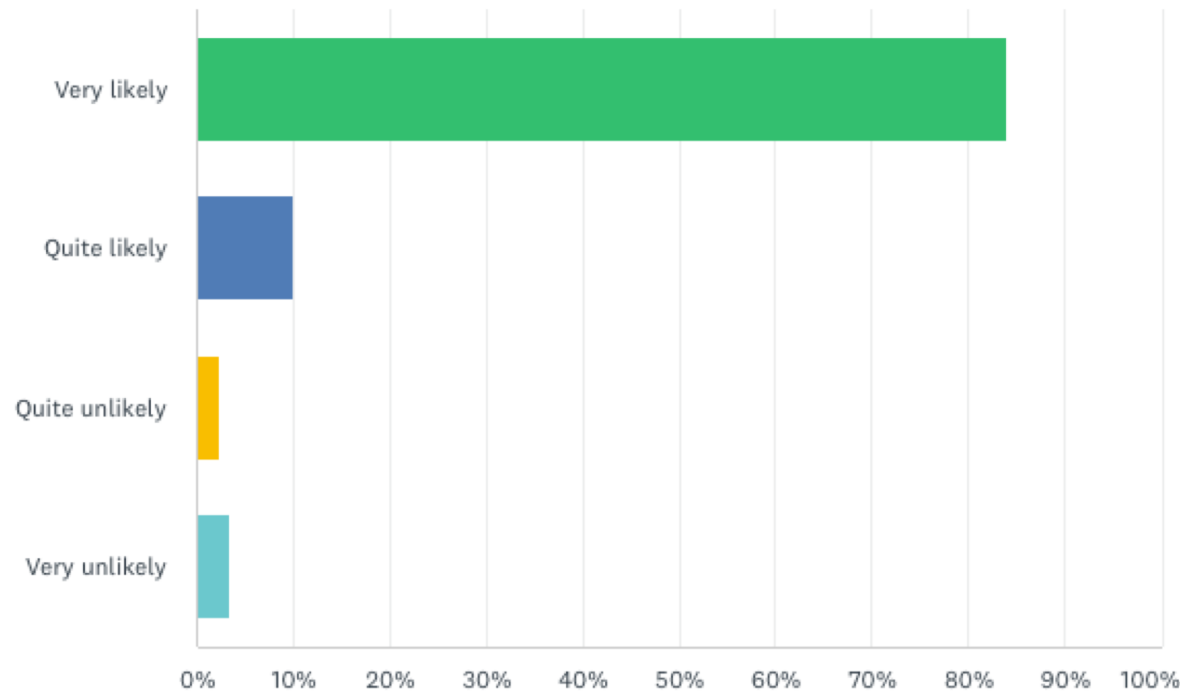
# Headlines (2) We want and intend to vote





If you have the right to vote in the UK at the next election, how likely is it that you will vote?

Answered: 5,820 Skipped: 355



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	83.99% 4,888
Quite likely	10.12% 589
Quite unlikely	2.39% 139
Very unlikely	3.51% 204
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,820</b>

# But...

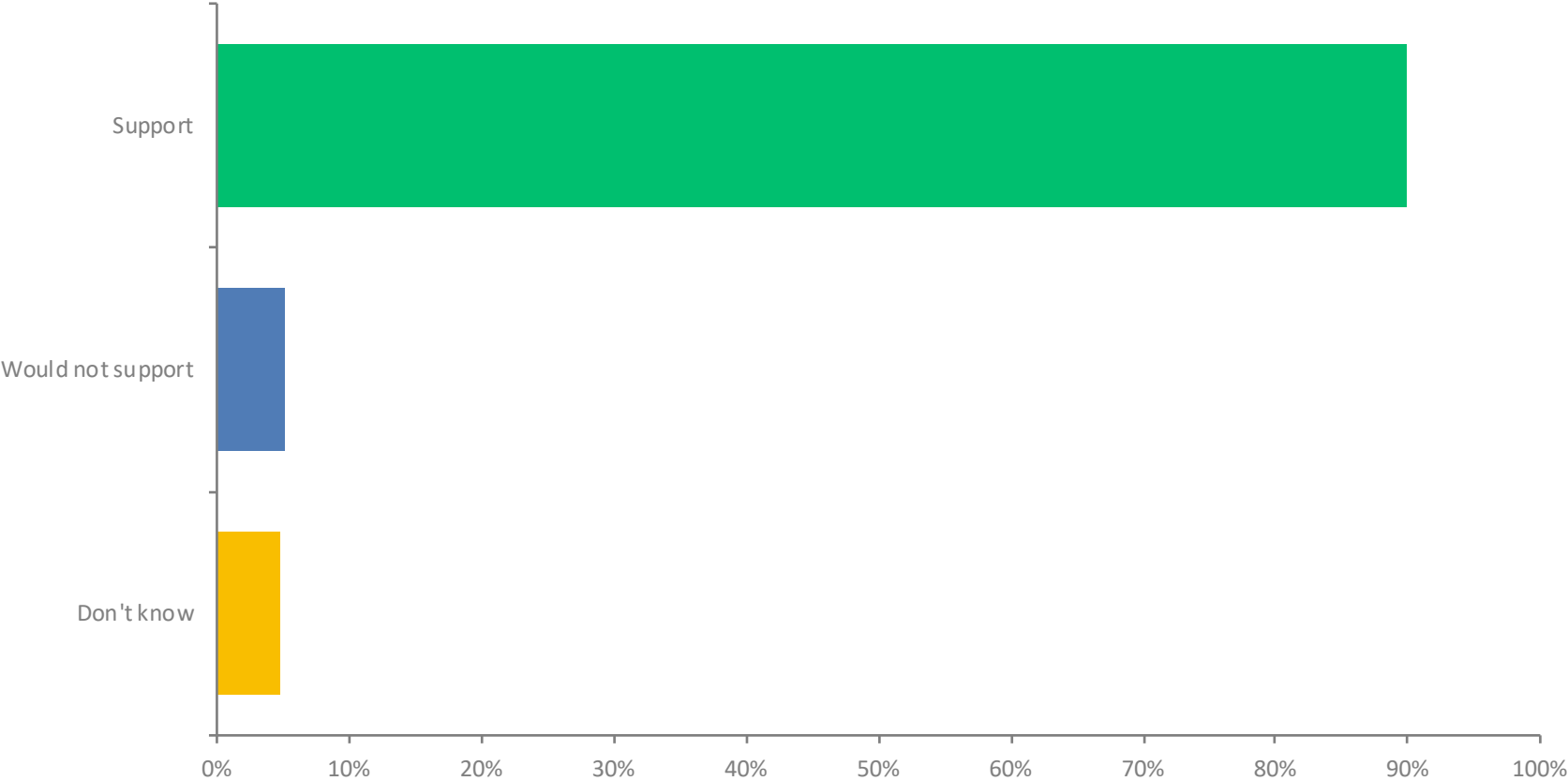
- **Only 60% who had previously voted by post reported a ‘smooth’ postal voting experience. 40% reported some problems and even the 60% were not sure their vote actually arrived and was counted**
- Despite this, 75% of us are intending to vote by post if re-enfranchised. The rest will vote by proxy, although a few will even travel to the UK to do so
- **Proxy voting** is not well understood in the diaspora or sometimes by volunteers at polling stations
- This doesn't just impact the rights of voters overseas. Sometimes, the right to vote of the person casting the proxy vote in the UK on behalf of the overseas elector has been called into question or even denied

# (3) Diaspora voters are way ahead of UK voters on some key issues...

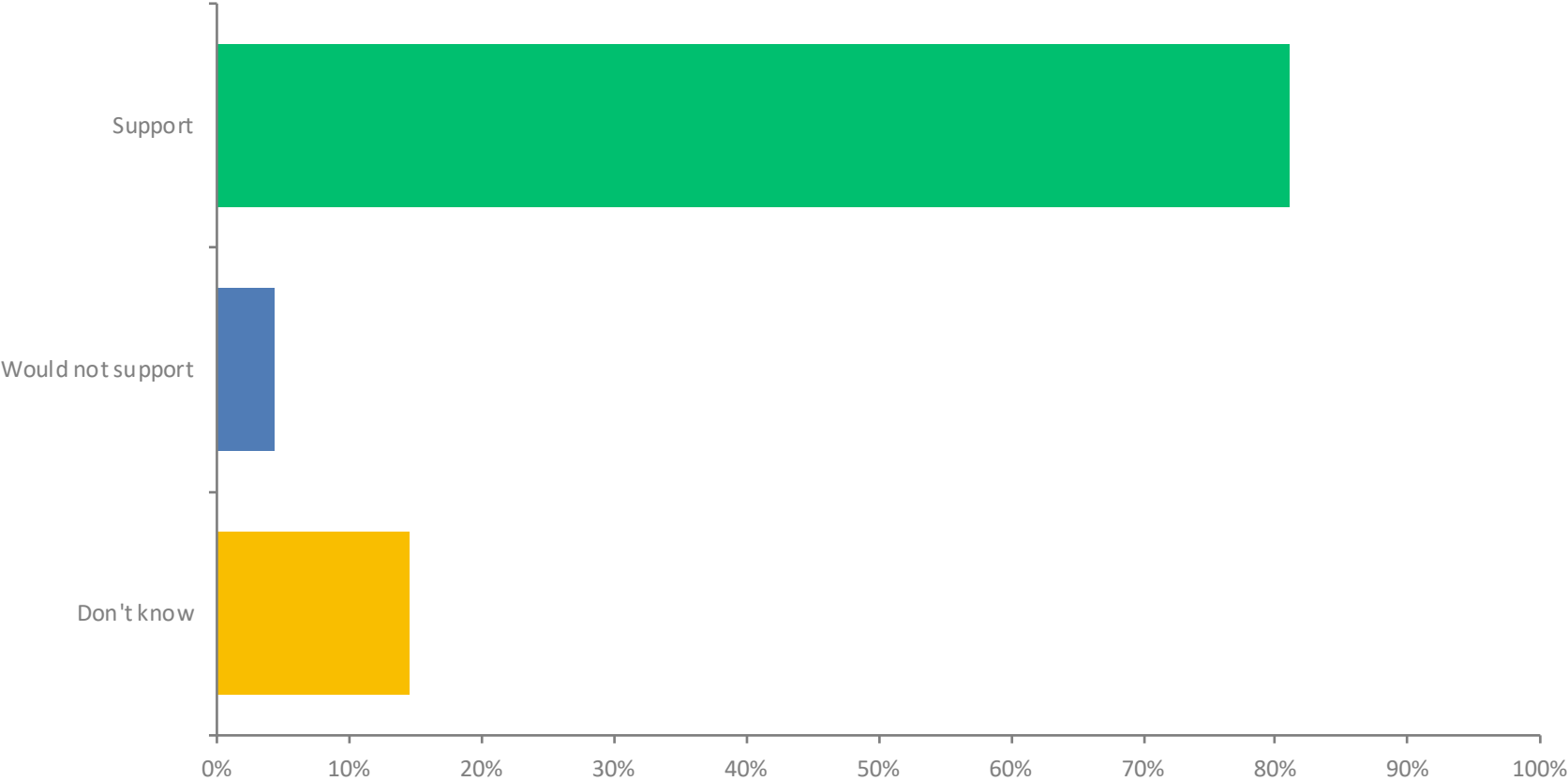
- Online voting
- Overseas constituencies

Q50: Currently UK voting is entirely via physical ballot papers. **If security and privacy could be assured, would you support a move to electronic / online voting?**

Answered: 5426



Q52: Some countries have overseas constituencies in which citizens abroad vote. This means that there are members of the relevant Parliament who answer directly to overseas voters. This is not currently the case in the UK where overseas voters are registered in their last constituency. Would you support a system of overseas voter constituencies in the UK?



# Why is this relevant to campaigners in the UK?

- If we get the secondary legislation the UK diaspora will be voting in 2024
- **BiE's target is to add 700,000-800,000 overseas voters to the 2024 electoral roll**
- **In total, eligible voters overseas make up nearly 10% of the eligible UK electorate & we are spread across the country – you do the maths for the 1/3 of constituencies that Best For Britain now thinks are marginal**
- There are many opportunities for UK political parties to reach out to diaspora voters and engage with them e.g. **via proxy voting offers ahead of the 2024 general election**